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“For Poor Nations a Library Service Is Vital”: Establishing a National Public Library Service in Tanzania in the 1960s

Author(s): Anthony Olden

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“FOR POOR NATIONS A LIBRARY SERVICE IS VITAL”:  
ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE IN  
TANZANIA IN THE 1960S<sup>1</sup>

Anthony Olden<sup>2</sup>

The Tanganyika Library Service (TLS) was the national public library service set up in Tanzania, East Africa, in the 1960s. By the end of the decade, it was generally regarded as a model of Western-style public library development in Africa. This is an account of its establishment and early years based on accessible documentary sources in Tanzania and the United Kingdom, on printed sources, and on interviews with 1960s staff members in the two countries. Topics include the background of educational and library underdevelopment during the colonial era; the African Socialist philosophy of Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere; TLS readers and what they wanted to read in English or Kiswahili; the link with adult education and with literacy education in particular; the attempts to reach as many as possible with books and service in spite of resource constraints; the urban/rural debate; staffing and staff development; the contribution of E. M. Broome, TLS founding director; and the issue of overseas aid and cultural imperialism.

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2. Senior lecturer, Centre for Information Management, Thames Valley University, St. Mary's Road, Ealing, London W5 5RF, UK; Telephone 0208-231-2983; E-mail TonyOlden@aol.com or tony.olden@tvu.ac.uk.

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## Tanzania

President Julius K. Nyerere demonstrated a lifelong commitment to education and literacy. He said that libraries were vital for poor nations like his own [1]. Nyerere became the leader of Tanganyika (later Tanzania) when it gained its independence from Britain in 1961. On being asked how people should address him, he replied *Mwalimu*, the Kiswahili word for teacher (teaching was his profession before he entered politics). With his backing, the Tanganyika Library Service (TLS) was set up in the early 1960s. By the end of the decade, it was generally regarded as a model for national public library development in Africa.

Present-day Tanzania is made up of the mainland and Zanzibar (the offshore islands of Unguja and Pemba). Zanzibar came under Arab rule in the early nineteenth century and, later, under British influence. The mainland was under the control of Germany from the 1890s until World War I, after which Germany lost its colonies. Mandated to Britain by the League of Nations, Tanganyika remained under British rule until it gained its independence. Nyerere, initially prime minister, became president in 1962. Zanzibar became independent in December 1963. In January 1964, its sultan was overthrown in a revolution. The mainland and the islands merged later that year, and the name Tanzania was adopted. However, although the name changed, the jurisdiction of mainland organizations such as the Tanganyika Library Service was not extended to the islands, and the Tanganyika Library Service continued to be the name used into the 1970s. Even today in Tanzania the former word can still be seen occasionally, for example, in Tanganyika Motors.

According to the 1957 census, the population of Tanganyika and Zanzibar was just over 9 million. By 1967, the population exceeded 12 million, including approximately 135,000 people of Asian descent and 15,000 Europeans. This breakdown is noteworthy because Asians and Europeans were to make disproportionate use of the Tanganyika Library Service in its early years. The population of Dar es Salaam, the capital city, was around 250,000 in 1967 [2, p. 29].

Tanganyika was poorer than its neighbors in British East Africa, Kenya to the north and Uganda to the northwest. Investment in education in the colonial period was very limited. At independence, according to Nyerere, "we inherited a society which was basically illiterate, and where the number of people with even secondary school education was very small indeed. Thus, for example, in 1961, there was a total of only 11,832 children in the secondary schools in Tanganyika, and only 176 of these were in the Sixth Form!" [3, p. 29]. With education at such a low level, one could expect little in the way of library development.

## Library Background

In the 1930s, the Secretary for Native Affairs, P. E. Mitchell, had written to F. P. Keppel, president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, to ask for help in establishing "village institute type" libraries in some of the larger towns. He wanted recreational and cultural centers for the African urban population, but he also wanted these centers to be open to young educated Indians and Arabs. The centers should include a hall for showing films and stock as much "wholesome vernacular and English literature" as possible. Mitchell acknowledged that the task was "plainly an obligation of the local Government . . . [but] our financial situation is such that I can see no prospect of public funds for capital expenditure being available for many years to come." That was on October 13, 1933. On April 12 of the previous year, he had told Sir Henry Miers, president of the Museums Association, that "assistance from the Carnegie Trust makes all the difference between a dream and a practicable proposition" [4].

Mitchell's letter was one of a number that the Carnegie Corporation received from British territories in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Money was granted for the setting up of subscription services for white settlers in Kenya and for the European and African elite in Lagos, Nigeria [5]. Very substantial sums were given for library development in South Africa. But Tanganyika was out of luck: it was a mandated territory rather than an integral part of the British Empire. After discussions with Carnegie staff, the Museums Association's empire secretary, S. F. Markam, wrote to Mitchell on June 29, 1934, to say that there was a legal difficulty about the Corporation making grants to mandated territories [4].

*The East African Literature Bureau*

The East African High Commission was set up in 1948 to administer services common to Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Kenya, and Uganda. In the same year, it established the East African Literature Bureau as a department for supplying books to the four territories. The bureau was the outcome of a government-commissioned report into the provision of literature for Africans. The report's author, Elspeth Huxley, recommended that its main function be "the mass production of cheap reading material" [6, par. 41]. The bureau's founding director was a bookseller and publisher, Charles Granston Richards, manager of the Church Missionary Society Bookshop in Nairobi. Richards was a self-taught publisher, and by 1946-47, his bookshop was selling 250,000 of its own publications [7, p. 14]. Many of these were booklets such as the popular *Woman's Work in the Home* and were in Kiswahili and other African languages as well as in English [8]. The bureau's range of activities was ambitious: "(a) textbooks for schools; (b) general literature and the tutoring

of African authors; (*c*) the publication of a magazine; (*d*) the development of libraries; (*e*) the establishment of a business section with a publishing fund to develop the sale of the Bureau's publications and assist in the general development of bookselling" [9, p. 88]. Its greatest difficulty in providing library service was to find suitable books: "The number of books really suitable for African libraries in the present stage of development of the Territories is very small" [10, p. 9].

The fact that Richards was not a librarian was to be both a strength and a weakness from the point of view of library development. His mission was to get books to people who needed them, for example, teachers and others working far from towns and cities. His ways of doing this included the mail and book boxes. The boxes of approximately 100 books were to go to local authorities, welfare centers, schools, hospitals, police training centers, and sisal or tea estates. They were to be changed three times a year and were to be under the supervision of a local person who took on the task in addition to his or her day-to-day work. The importance of having someone who "will regularly open the box at the time laid down and who will help borrowers in their choice of books" was made clear to all provincial commissioners in Tanganyika. The member for local government, R. de Z. Hall, wrote to them on October 6, 1951, to say that the twenty-one libraries that were about to be launched experimentally should be "genuine public libraries, open to all," with a mix of standard English, basic English, and Kiswahili books in each box. The Literature Bureau's branch manager in Dar es Salaam was to visit each library in person to train the person looking after it [11].

Unlike Kenya and Uganda, the bureau did not have a librarian in Tanganyika. The crown agent for the colonies had selected one, and she arrived in East Africa in mid-1951. However, "it soon became evident that this officer was unsuited by temperament and outlook to the work in hand," and the appointment was terminated early in 1952. Neither this debacle nor the size of Tanganyika helped: "The great distance involved, with the consequent difficulty of keeping in close touch with the centres, tend to make development in this territory rather slower than in the others" [12, pp. 8-9].

The book box libraries had mixed success. The district commissioner of Morogoro, a town to the west of Dar es Salaam, admitted that "there is little keenness even from the librarian himself." The librarian was a secondary teacher at the native authority school, and the bulk of his readers appeared to be "conscripts from Standard IV." The library had 146 volumes and was "nominally open" from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. One book was borrowed on February 3, 1953, then nothing was borrowed until February 18. The district commissioner felt unable to justify spending native authority funds on the project, and the provincial commissioner was of the same mind

when he wrote to the member for local government on February 28. With reluctance, he suggested that the library be closed [11].

Between the beginning of the scheme in February 1952 and the end of 1953, a total of fifty-one library centers were established in Tanganyika. A meeting between the commissioner for social development, Charles Richards, and others in Dar es Salaam on February 4, 1954, recognized the need for promotion. Reader development was important: "It was noted that the habit of using libraries could best be built up in schools" [11]. The emphasis on young people was to be an important theme in reader development and library development in Africa.

#### *Some Other Libraries and Collections*

The King George VI Memorial Library, Tanga, provides an example of who was using a larger general collection in the years leading up to Tanganyika's independence and what they were reading. Tanga is a coastal town and provincial capital not far from the border with Kenya. The George VI was a new subscription library with 200 members on April 30, 1958: 110 Asians, 83 Europeans, and 7 Africans. At a meeting of the management committee on June 5, the small number of African members was noted. The limitations of the Kiswahili stock were put forward as one reason for this. Although the library had purchased all the Kiswahili titles published by the Literature Bureau, their number was still quite small. Another limitation was pointed out at the committee meeting on January 22, 1959: these titles were mainly translations of books for young people. The membership fee of 25 shillings was not considered a deterrent to African teachers and clerks, but the half fee charged to school children was clearly a problem. The town council announced that it was prepared to assist fifty "bona fide students" by paying the greater part of this fee [13].

By June 30, 1963, the library had 15,655 books on the shelves and 638 waiting to be processed. There were a total of 778 members on July 3: 500 Asians, 219 Europeans, 50 Africans, 6 Americans, 1 Libyan, 1 Arab, and 1 person from the Seychelles [14]. The preponderance of Asian and white readers reflected the times and the nature of the collection. Both were to change, as was the name: in 1964, it became the Tanga Library. In 1965, it was absorbed by the new Tanganyika Library Service, and subscriptions were abolished [15].

A very different library service was organized by the Ismaili community. This comprised small libraries and reading rooms in every urban center. However, the stock was mainly in Gujarati, and it was housed in Ismaili religious and social centers. These were open to all after independence, but Max Broome discounted them as the basis for the Tanganyika Library Service when he became the founding director in 1963 [16].

University College was established in Dar es Salaam in 1961 as a con-

stituent college of the new federal University of East Africa. Under Harold Holdsworth, its founding librarian, and Michael Wise, his deputy, it quickly built up a fine library collection. A British consultant, Frank Hogg, was to state in 1969 that this collection was too important to remain outside the control of the Tanganyika Library Service Board [17].

*The Hockey Report*

The libraries development organizer, described as “the one to lead us to the Promised Land,” arrived in East Africa in 1960 [18]. This was Sidney Hockey, who had extensive experience with public library work in England and in the Caribbean [19]. Richards had met him in England and had been very impressed. He told Hockey that his coming to East Africa as libraries development organizer would be the first breakthrough into new ground in thinking and planning: “I have no illusions about the professional quality of our existing service. It is just the best we could do with what we could get in the way of staff and funds.” Richards wanted someone who would work in East Africa, not just visit and comment [18].

Hockey concluded that there were no public library services “in the accepted sense of the term” in East Africa in 1960: what was there was limited by the terms of reference under which it was established or by the need to charge subscriptions. He proposed that each government should establish a central free public library service in its territory to integrate what existed. He referred to the fear that only the capital cities—“which already get everything”—would benefit, and he said that it was essential that work to establish good branch libraries should start from the very beginning [20, pars. 2.1, 2.2 ].

It took almost three years for his recommendations to start to have an impact in Tanganyika. In August 1963, E. M. Broome, former County Librarian of the North Riding of Yorkshire, took up appointment as the founding director of library services. He found 30,000 books, most of which were in “an appalling condition.” These were housed in temporary premises with makeshift equipment. Another 20,000 volumes had been awaiting processing for two years. These had been presented by the British Council in anticipation of the start of the new service. The staff was made up of three clerks. Two services were provided: books were lent through the post to students, and collections of books were lent to institutions ranging from schools to police stations and prisons [21, pp. 60–61].

Setting up the Tanganyika Library Service

The Tanganyika Library Services Board came into operation on November 1, 1963. According to Minister of Education S. N. Eliufoo, it had a “king



size" job to do: help "Tanganyika build up and develop a central library service which . . . will penetrate to the remote corners of the country" [22, p. 1]. Faced with this immense task, Broome believed that the best way to start was by establishing a sound administrative structure and a strong headquarters organization. Without these, any attempt to set up branch libraries would be a "sure recipe for disaster" [16, p. 8]. The temptation was there to "rush around opening dozens of small service points in temporary premises," but he resisted it. Instead, he concentrated on the transfer of the small number of staff, finances, and services from the East African Literature Bureau to the new library board, and on planning [23, pp. 18–19].

The first "truly public library" to open in the country did so in December 1963 [22, p. 2]. It was located in Iringa, a town 300 miles west of Dar es Salaam. The initiative came from the town council, an adult education lecturer, and a qualified Danish librarian who happened to be living there. A small shop was acquired and turned into a library. The stock amounted to 3,000 books and the circulation to 1,400 a month. Despite this encouraging start, Broome was later to conclude that the Iringa initiative was premature because both lecturer and librarian moved elsewhere within a year and the library had to be left in the hands of two young assistants [21; 24, p. 2].

Early in 1965, the TLS opened a pilot library in rented premises in Dar es Salaam. Charles Ilomo, then in the United Kingdom as a young TLS trainee, inquired about African usage and was told that

for the first week the response certainly came from primarily Africans. Many of these however seemed merely to be satisfying their curiosity and did not register as members. By the following week the library had been practically taken over by the young Asian children which is I suppose inevitable as we are sited close to the centre of the Asian District. As soon as we realized what was going on we stopped registration of children except those accompanied by their parents. We have now managed to restore a semblance of order and have started to enrol new children through the schools. In doing this we have asked the headmasters to give priority to children who came out of the town and this should result in many more African student members. As far as the adult readers are concerned it would probably be true to say that the vast majority are Europeans but we do get quite a number of the Africans using the library particularly for study and reading. [Cited in 25, pp. 20–21]

The queues of people lining up to use the pilot library in the first weeks were such that the pavements were blocked, and police had to come to control the crowds. By June 30, 1965, there were 3,762 registered readers, of whom 2,108 were children. Staff visited schools to give talks, and because the children had no experience with public library use, the schools provided monitors to assist with discipline. Daily issues rose from 237 in Feb-

ruary to 469 in June [26, p. 7]. Despite limitations of space, problems of finding appropriate stock, and "above all the necessity of limiting the number of children enrolling as readers," demand continued to grow at "an almost embarrassingly high level." There were 7,835 registered readers on June 30, 1966, and 164,458 books had been issued in the previous twelve months [27, p. 8]. As usage increased, the space limitations of the pilot library became more obvious. The series of children's story hours had to be discontinued, while readers who wished to use the library for study and reference purposes were at a particular disadvantage [28, pp. 7-8].

Meanwhile, the TLS was constructing its new National Central Library. The official opening took place on December 9, 1967, the sixth anniversary of the country's independence. At the ceremony, President Nyerere assured his audience that his government would continue to give all the support that was within its power: "For the Library Service of this country is important to us; we believe it will play a vital role in the development of a rich and fruitful life for our people and our society" [29, pp. 7-8]. The chairman of the TLS Board, and former mayor of Dar es Salaam, A. Y. A. Karimjee, made a politically charged remark, presumably with the political philosophy of his guest of honor in mind. He said that public libraries were founded on the policies of cooperation and socialism—"surprisingly so in view of the fact that . . . [they were] first conceived in the intensely capitalist societies of Britain and America in the mid-nineteenth century" [30, pp. 1-2].

The floor area of the new building was 38,000 square feet, and the design made provision for possible future extension. The TLS was also moving ahead with the construction of new purpose-built libraries in other major urban centers, if more slowly than originally intended. With financial support from Denmark, branch libraries were built at Iringa, Bukoba (on the western shore of Lake Victoria), and Mwanza (on the southern shore) by the end of Tanzania's first five-year national development plan on June 30, 1969 [1, pp. 14-15]. A library to serve the secondary school and the community was constructed at Kibaha (twenty-five miles west of Dar es Salaam) as part of the Nordic Tanganyika Project [28, p. 12].

#### Financial Support from Tanzania and Elsewhere

The British government and the British Council provided £51,000 sterling toward the National Central Library, and the Danish government gave furniture and equipment worth £20,000. But more than half the cost had been raised within Tanzania itself [30]. One striking aspect of the development of TLS is the extent to which it was supported financially by the Tanzanian government. British Council staff members were well aware of this. According to Bill Emslie, the Council's representative in Tanzania, "The country is well-

disposed to the Library services and has, of developing African countries (Eastern Nigeria apart) shown an almost unique acceptance of the needs of capital expenditure, recurrent expenditure and the need to spend money on training staff" [31].<sup>3</sup> In London, the deputy director of the books department, Roy Flood, believed that, had he the time to conduct research, he would discover that "the Tanzanian Government financial support of library services as a proportion of national income is a hell of a lot more than the British government provides for public libraries in this country (even including local government provision)" [32].

The Council was arguing the case for supporting the building of a new library in Arusha (in the northern part of the country, 400 miles from Dar es Salaam) in 1969. It was pitted against the Treasury in London, which was not particularly sympathetic. One Treasury civil servant said that, while the opening of a new library was obviously commendable, it seemed to him that the Tanzanians were shrugging off their responsibilities far too lightly [33]. A Foreign and Commonwealth Office colleague said that he could understand why British money should go toward providing and training staff, but when it comes to building material and labor, "is it really too much to ask the authorities in the developing country to help themselves to that extent?" [34].

Tanzania had broken off diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom in December 1965. This was Julius Nyerere's reaction to the refusal by the former colonial rulers to intervene forcibly in Southern Rhodesia, where a white minority government had made a Unilateral Declaration of Independence on November 11. Aid from Tanzania's main overseas donor was now at an end, and one of the TLS trainees who had just arrived in Britain to study thought that he and others would be sent home—"but fortunately we weren't." Relations were restored in 1968, but some London civil servants needed reminding that British aid could be good for British business. According to the Council, in 1969 the Tanganyika Library Service was spending £30,000 sterling a year on books and periodicals, nearly all imported from Britain. Accordingly, the purpose for which money had been provided under the Public Libraries Development Scheme—"to create channels for the dissemination of British books and to increase their use"—was being fulfilled [35].

Two years into his directorship, Max Broome told a conference that when he accepted the job, he thought that finding sufficient money would be his greatest problem in running the service. This did not turn out to be the case. The Ministry of Education (the parent ministry) and local

3. Emslie might also have included Ghana, where remarkable progress was made in the years when Evelyn J. A. Evans was director of the Ghana Library Services Board and Kwame Nkrumah was prime minister and then president.

authorities were providing a budget of £60,000 sterling a year. The UK government and the British Council had been "particularly sympathetic" [21, p. 69]. Three months later, diplomatic relations ruptured, and aid stopped. But the Nordic countries were well disposed toward Nyerere and Tanzania, and Denmark stepped in to fill the gap.

Even though assistance from overseas donors with new library buildings was valuable, the "absence of any assured source of capital finance" from within Tanzania itself was a handicap. In 1969, the government graded library development as essential; from then on Tanzanian government money was to be available for the capital requirements of the TLS. Broome regarded this as "a milestone of major importance in the history of library development in Tanzania" [36, p. 1].

#### Books and Readers

From its inception, the new public library service in Dar es Salaam proved extremely popular. Staff members recollect long queues outside the National Central Library at opening time. There were civil servants coming to research speeches for government ministers and expatriates "helping the government in its transition to Africanisation." Hindi, Gujarati, and Urdu stock was provided for Asian Tanzanians wishing to read in Indic languages. There were also white Tanzanian readers. Agriculture was not a subject in much demand in Tanzania's main city (although vital for a primarily agricultural country), whereas accountancy books were borrowed heavily. An analysis conducted by one of the senior librarians, Jack Haselgrove, in 1969 found that ninety accountancy titles were on loan, and only fifteen remained on the shelves. One conclusion that he drew from the analysis was that "the majority of African readers regard the library service as an institution of informal education rather than a social amenity service." By 1969, a "slow decline" had been observed in European readership over the previous two to three years, together with a "substantial increase" in the number of African readers. The number of registered readers went up from 3,110 in 1966 to 7,707 in 1969. When categorized as African, Asian, European, or not known, the percentage of African readers went up from 28.3% to 58.5% over the same period [37].

However, by the late 1960s a number of TLS staff members were unhappy about the direction of the library service, which they felt was not in accord with Nyerere's radical policies that were set out in the 1967 Arusha Declaration and elsewhere. The declaration reminded Tanzanians that TANU [Tanganyika African National Union] was a party of peasants and workers, and the party resolved to put more emphasis on the policies of socialism [38]. One library staff member, M. L. M. Baregu (later to become an

academic and, ultimately, professor of politics at the University of Dar es Salaam), believed that the library service was geared toward minorities and the local elite. Because the expatriates were familiar with public libraries at home, they naturally wanted to use libraries in Tanzania. But their interests were different, and they “thus exploit the service at the expense of the nation.” As for the local civil servants, students, and “the petty bourgeoisie in general,” their interests were basically Western. They “probably read a lot of fiction . . . [and] the value of most of this kind of material [thrillers, romance, and detective stories] can hardly be described as lasting or as relevant to the country” [39, p. 2]. A colleague argued that the library service was being established in a country committed to a socialist revolution: “I cannot see how such a service can hope to stand aloof from that revolution, yet in order to play a revolutionary role it must surely be equipped with a revolutionary bookstock” [40].

Broome’s argument was that “a library can only work with the books that are available.” He described this as one of the major difficulties in trying to establish a library service in a developing country [41, p. 71]. By 1970, the TLS was buying as many as 300 copies of titles suitable for wide circulation. Had the service developed to the extent anticipated in the 1964–69 Five-Year Development Plan, the number might have gone as high as 500. The lack of appropriate material was a continuing problem. Broome told the Ministry of National Education that in most developing countries “the general level of education and literacy and the absence of cash in the pockets of the people result in a most unsatisfactory economic base for the establishment of book production and bookselling agencies” with the exception of those publishing textbooks prescribed for schools [42]. This is a widespread problem in Africa, but in countries such as Tanzania and Zambia, the situation was worsened when state publishing houses were established in the 1960s. These had a monopoly on textbook production, and this had an adverse effect on the development of private sector publishing. *Printed in Tanzania*, for 1970, listed just 264 items, 109 books and 155 pamphlets. Out of these, 143 were in Kiswahili [43, p. 119].

### Kiswahili

Kiswahili (sometimes abbreviated as Swahili) is the language of the coastal people of East Africa. It is the national language of Tanzania, although over 120 other languages are spoken there also [44]. Some foreigners found Tanzania’s language policy hard to comprehend. The Treasury civil servant in London who recommended that Tanzanians “should dig deeper into their own pockets” for the Arusha library referred to a report that the country would use Kiswahili for all official business because the continued use of

English was an “insult to the nation.” In his opinion, this “neither argues well for the benefits we hope to reap from the library development scheme nor provides a very powerful argument for further support” [33]. The British Council was more sensible. In Leslie Buchan’s view, whatever the use of Kiswahili for official business, “the fact remains that the books necessary for the country’s educational, technological and cultural development are printed in English and I cannot imagine that informed local opinion would tolerate their exclusion from public libraries” [45].

The British consultant who visited for three months in 1966 to advise on government libraries, Frank Hogg, concluded that “language is a barrier and a problem in Tanzania.” Primary school education was through the medium of Kiswahili, and, in his opinion, there were not sufficient books in the language to support this. He did not believe that the country had the resources to carry out the program of translation that would be required, and he recommended that Tanzania reconsider its educational policy [17, p. 28]. This recommendation displayed a lack of familiarity with Tanzania’s culture and approach to development.

However, the lack of published material was certainly a problem. The first printed books in Kiswahili date from around the mid-nineteenth century, although the language had a written tradition going back much further. Printing was introduced for specific purposes: to teach the language to foreigners, to provide basic education to African children, and to translate parts, and eventually all, of the Bible [46]. The publication output by the East African Literature Bureau in the mid-twentieth century was the subject of criticism from some post-independence librarians. Broome’s successor as TLS Director, E. E. Kaungamno, and his deputy, Charles Ilomo, state in their book that “most of the general literature that was produced [in the colonial era] had no relevance to adult life and gave the impression that Swahili could not express anything worth reading by adults” [1, p. 155]. Material for Muslim readers was an exception to this. At the opening of the National Central Library in 1967, President Nyerere set his audience a challenge. He said that a good librarian backed by a good library could encourage people to write books as well as read them: “Our traditional stories and histories can be written in Swahili so that the whole nation can read them; personal experiences which are of wider interest can be written as a story or a book; knowledge gained through practical development work can be written down so that it is shared” [29, p. 6]. Nyerere himself translated Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* and the *Merchant of Venice* into Kiswahili. But as one 1960s TLS librarian recollected, “The problem was there, literature wasn’t there, and people wanted books but who would write? Even to get other people to write . . . it wasn’t easy, it wasn’t easy at all.”

### Staffing the New Service

In the first annual report of the TLS, the lack of qualified staff was identified as “the single biggest brake on rapid progress.” The “complete lack of any Tanganyikan qualified librarians” made it essential to recruit staff from abroad, while at the same time introducing a training scheme [47, p. 7]. In the 1960s, the expatriate staff included some recruited in Tanzania on local contracts, as well as volunteer librarians from the Nordic countries, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Some of the British librarians had either known or worked with Broome in the United Kingdom.

Librarianship was a completely new career for young Tanzanians. One recalls the U.S. teacher who looked after the library in his school, cataloging and classifying material, and how he became fascinated by “this system of storing knowledge.” Another, whose parents were not well off, was encouraged to stay on at school by his headmaster, who spoke to the TLS director and helped him get a traineeship. A third remembers Jack Haselgrove (secretary of the new Tanzania Library Association as well as a TLS senior librarian) visiting her school and talking about librarianship work. According to one of the earliest recruits, “When they advertised they stated categorically that those who would be successful would be sent to England for professional education. That was the attraction as well, you’d go overseas.” Higher education in the country only commenced in 1961, when University College, Dar es Salaam (later the University of Dar es Salaam) was founded. As a consequence, the number of Tanzanian graduates in the 1960s was still very small. The TLS recruited school leavers and sponsored them for placements in Britain and study programs that prepared them for the examinations of the (British) Library Association. Public librarianship was not a graduate profession in the United Kingdom at that time, although the situation was changing. Later, some trainees were sent on to the new undergraduate degree programs in library and information studies in the United Kingdom or elsewhere. Some of the early trainees had the opportunity to add to their qualifications later in their careers. Charles S. Ilomo (later to become assistant director and, ultimately, deputy director) went on to study for his master’s at the University of Pittsburgh. E. E. Kaungamno, the Tanzanian who succeeded Broome as director on October 15, 1970, had a different background. He received all his university education in the United States, including his master’s at Kent State University, before returning home and taking up appointment as tutor librarian at the Dar es Salaam College of National Education in 1966. In May 1969, he joined the TLS as training officer [48].

The TLS gave its staff on-the-job training, and the Tanzania Library Association arranged training events. To provide formal training programs, the East African School of Librarianship was established at Makerere University



College (later Makerere University), Uganda, in 1963. It was intended to serve as a regional school for Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. A non-graduate certificate was the first program offered, followed by a non-graduate diploma. For TLS purposes, professional education programs were now available in East Africa as well as overseas. Professional education for library and information work in Tanzania itself was not to get under way until after the 1960s with a non-graduate certificate (started by the TLS) in 1972, a non-graduate diploma (started by the TLS and the National Archives of Tanzania) in 1989, and a master's program (started by the University of Dar es Salaam) in 1997 [49].

In Broome's opinion, the lack of qualified staff was still the major brake on future development in 1970 [36]. However, Kaungamno and Ilomo were to give him credit for his "crash programme" of training local librarians. By July 1969, the TLS had eleven qualified local librarians and another eleven at library school, while six others were undergoing in-service training to prepare them for study at Makerere or overseas. There was "one big snag," however. The TLS had recruited trainee librarians "on the multi-racial principle to which Tanzania was and is politically committed." The assumption was that "all those recruited would be committed to Tanzania's policy of socialism and self-reliance, and that on qualifying they would remain in Tanzania" [1, p. 106]. This did not happen because "Asians with capitalist ideas and tendencies" were to leave the country [1, p. 130]. By 1973, twelve TLS librarians of Asian origin had left for new lives in Canada or elsewhere—nearly half the total number trained by the organization. Nationalization of property was one reason for this exodus. One of the resolutions in the 1967 Arusha Declaration was that no TANU or government leader should own houses for renting to others [38]. In the urban areas some Asians owned property that they rented out, as well as houses in which they lived themselves. Eventually in Tanzania, all property rated as surplus to a person's needs was nationalized. In neighboring Uganda, the property of all locally born Asians was appropriated in 1972. They were expelled from the country. This was not encouraging for Asians elsewhere in East Africa. As far as the TLS was concerned, the leaching of professionally trained and educated staff was a "bitter experience." In their book, Kaungamno and Ilomo described the board's recruitment policy in the 1960s as "deplorably faulty" because its Tanzanian appointees were not necessarily "imbued with the basic tenets of socialism" [1, p. 130].

#### Serving the Rural Areas

In his 1965–66 report, Broome said that the decision to concentrate on the townships was not "an act of deliberate discrimination against the rural



areas, but a hard fact of library logistics" [27, p. 2]. Indeed, at its opening in December 1967, Nyerere described the new National Central Library as the "hub of a wheel, from which spokes will reach out to towns and villages throughout mainland Tanzania" [29, p. 2]. Broome had aimed for a new national central library (the first phase at any rate) and fifteen branch libraries by the end of the 1964–69 Five-Year National Development Plan. Because of the ending of British aid and the difficulty of finding the necessary capital for construction projects, the TLS had only succeeded in building three branches by June 1968. In light of this "comparatively poor performance and today's changed conditions," Broome reflected on his original priorities. Town libraries had seemed "a means of extending the service to the greatest number of people in the shortest possible time and in the most economical way." They would demonstrate "the truly national nature of the library service" and serve as focal points for future growth. In giving urban libraries priority, he had taken a "calculated risk" that the demand for other types of service could be contained and that work on rural school, special, and government departmental libraries could be restricted to forward planning. But the "changed political situation" was now looking for proof that the TLS could provide a service for the rural areas [50, pp. 1–2].

The Arusha Declaration had outlined various types of exploitation. All the big hospitals, it pointed out, were in towns, and they benefited only a small proportion of Tanzanians. Yet, if the hospitals were built with loans from abroad, how were the loans repaid? They were repaid with the foreign exchange earned from the overseas sale of what the peasants produced from the land. Those whose earnings paid for the hospitals did not benefit from them. One could divide Tanzanians into capitalists and feudalists, on the one hand, and farmers and workers, on the other hand. But one could also divide them into urban and rural dwellers, and "if we are not careful we might get to the position where the real exploitation in Tanzania is that of the town dwellers exploiting the peasants" [38].

Writing in their book some years after, Kaungamno and Ilomo summed up the library service in the late 1960s as catering mainly to an educated elite living in urban enclaves: "It was becoming increasingly obvious that insufficient attention was being offered to African culture and literature, nor was the TLS doing anything for the masses in rural areas" [1, p. 125]. The organization was continuing to provide the postal book supply service set up by the East African Literature Bureau to registered readers throughout the country, but these were teachers, civil servants, and others with good levels of formal education. In June 1968, Broome still felt that it was "probably in the interests of efficient forward planning that the development of the rural service will have to be on a more restricted and cautious basis than had originally been envisaged." However, he wanted at least one

mobile library and one adult literacy/library center within the coming five years. The ideal location for the center would be a large village in the Mwanza area (on the shores of Lake Victoria), in cooperation with the Unesco Adult Literacy Project [50, p. 2].

The TLS rural services librarian, M. L. M. Baregu, conducted a survey of the Mwanza region between April and June 1969. He summed up Tanzania's rural environment as harsh and cruel, demanding maximum physical exertion for minimum returns. It was on this that the peasant farmer depended for his food, clothing, soap, paraffin, and other needs. The government was trying to eradicate rural misery and decay. It was essential to explain poverty to the people "not as a tradition but as an unfortunate state of underdevelopment. . . . Reading must not only be functional but also for the intellectual development of the reader for a wider political and cultural perspective." The local people could be categorized as follows: the illiterate, the newly literate, the adult student, and the educated. The book stock should be mainly in Kiswahili. Libraries should be developed in association with Nyanza Co-operative Union and be located in cotton ginneries, "the only industrial undertakings in the rural areas providing seasonal employment." Ginneries had electricity. Whoever was in charge of a library should be literate and capable of writing a factual report. As far as education was concerned, mission priests were usually agents of progress and should be asked to help [51, pp. 2, 20].

Baregu was an educator who wanted to "lift the attitudes of the people politically, that is, to imbue them with socialist thinking. They must become good socialists ideologically" [41, p. 63]. *Ujamaa* villages were being set up by the authorities at this time. *Jamaa* means "family," and *ujamaa* was intended to be a process under which resources would be pooled for the benefit of all. Instead of being scattered over wide areas, peasant farmers and their families would gather together in collective villages where services such as water, electricity, health care, and education could be provided more easily. Cash crops would be grown on communal fields. Incentives were offered for people to move (although forcible relocation was to replace incentives in the mid-1970s). Adult education was receiving more and more attention from Nyerere's government, and the political message was obvious. According to G. K. Nagri, the role of the librarian in Tanzania was completely different to that in Western and even in some socialist countries: "Basically the Librarian should assist in making the General masses fully aware of the Government policies apart from supplying them with relevant materials and persuading them to read" [52, p. 21].

The Directorate of Adult Education within the Ministry of Education began buying primers for literacy classes in 1970, which was dubbed Adult Education Year in Tanzania. Kaungamno and Ilomo tell how initially the directorate asked TLS to buy follow-up reading material and distribute it

to districts where small rural libraries were to be established. Then it decided to do the distribution itself, which led to the development of two parallel systems. Adult education, literacy, and functional literacy programs “enjoyed greater political support” and were well funded. But the books were distributed without being processed and sometimes without any safeguard against loss. Books either disappeared or were locked up in boxes to prevent them from disappearing. Attempts to find a solution were unsuccessful: “The problem was not one of policy but of personality constraints” [53, p. 172]. Nearly twenty years later, the TLS acknowledged that

since 1970, TLS has only supplemented the efforts of the DAE in providing rural library services. Much as TLS would wish to provide books to the rural libraries on a large scale, it does not have the necessary funds. However, the Ministry of Education realizes that TLS is the right organization to run public libraries including rural libraries. The Ministry’s long term objective is therefore to handover its rural libraries to TLS and this will be possible after TLS has established libraries in all regional and district centres and when the Government is ready to provide more and adequate funds. [53, p. 175]

Distributing appropriate reading material to people throughout an entire country has rarely proven easy in colonial or postcolonial Africa. One adult educator pointed out that “commercial articles like Fanta and Sportsman cigarettes reach the remotest areas, while reading materials do not” [54, p. 127]. Ensuring that the material would be both accessible and safe from disappearance is another issue, as is active and enthusiastic promotion to readers and potential readers. Sidney Hockey could never understand why so many “experts” wanted small collections of books placed in community centers without any supporting service. In his opinion, the books might just as well be dumped in the Nairobi dam [55, p. 8]. By the late 1960s, some TLS staff were criticizing the provision of Western-style buildings and book stock as “expensive luxuries unrelated to the essential work of the services.” Hockey believed that this criticism was a fallacy [56, p. 167].

As far as Broome was concerned, a library—even a very large library—had a limited range of effectiveness. A determined reader might well find his or her way to it, but no service should restrict itself to determined readers only. The task of a library service was “to go out and find readers and it can only do this if it can find facilities in close proximity to the places where the people live and congregate.” The possibility of extending the service in Dar es Salaam itself through the city’s existing three community centers was suggested by city council officials. The council had made considerable efforts to turn them into adult education centers, but the turnover of center managers was high. In any case, they tended to have little interest in the library, or they lacked the time to supervise the untrained clerks who were usually

in charge of the collections. As for the stock, the books “would not be out of place in an English country vicarage, augmented by outdated texts culled from the discards of the libraries of the British Council and the United States Information Service.” The only new items appeared to be gifts from the Novosti Press Agency in Moscow. Eighty-five copies of Maksim Gorky’s *Mama* were in the community center at Arnatoglu [57, pp. 2, 10].

#### Other National Responsibilities

The function of the Tanganyika Library Services Board was “to promote, establish, equip, maintain and develop libraries in Tanganyika” [58, par. 4.1]. The primary concern of the board, according to its 1963–64 report, was the development of public library services, “but its responsibility for creating a fully integrated and comprehensive national service covering all types of libraries has not been neglected” [47, p. 14]. Mary Tizzard was recruited as school and children’s librarian, and Emma Frost later came under UNESCO auspices as a school library specialist.

Advice was also given by TLS to government libraries. Frank Hogg came from the United Kingdom for three months in 1966 to report on these libraries. One of his recommendations was that the library of University College, Dar es Salaam, was “too important a collection to remain outside the overall control of the N. L. S. Board and should therefore be integrated into the National Pattern.” However, he was willing to leave stock “immediately required” by university staff and students on the campus [17, p. 67]. The university librarian should rank as a very senior member of TLS, possibly even having a seat on the board [17, p. 68]. This recommendation would not have pleased the university college librarian, Harold Holdsworth, or his staff, and was never followed up. One Ministry of Overseas Development civil servant in London expressed the gravest doubts: “It is one [recommendation] I feel that the Government in Tanzania will also find difficult to swallow” [59]. Hogg’s final report was not submitted until the beginning of 1969, a delay which caused upset in both Dar es Salaam and London.

#### Change of Director

In the TLS annual report for 1964–65, Broome explained that qualified expatriate librarians were only recruited on the understanding that they would surrender their jobs as soon as qualified and experienced Tanzanian librarians would become available [26, p. 4]. The replacement of expatriate civil servants by locals had been an obvious priority after Tanganyikan independence in 1961. By the late 1960s, the pressure was on to localize the

staffing of parastatals such as the TLS. In their book, Kaungamno and Ilomo explain that “this was necessary because Tanzania believed and still believes that Tanzanians and not hired experts know what is best for Tanzania” [1, p. 113]. It was time for Broome to go. In his farewell message to the staff and friends of the TLS on October 12, 1970, he said the following:

The road we have followed has not always proved easy and there have been many frustrations and set-backs along the way, but somehow together we have created a service which is the envy of neighbouring countries and which has been described, by others better qualified to judge than myself, as a model of its kind. Perhaps only I am aware of just how far this model falls short of the ideas and hopes I had once entertained, and of how much there still remains to be done. But whatever its shortcomings I am confident that the Tanganyika Library Service is soundly based. [60]

Earlier that year, the head of the British Council in Tanzania, Bill Emslie, said that what the TLS had become was “without question the result of 7 years total identification of Broome with the job. Every decision that has been made on matters large and small has been his. It has been autocratic but it has worked with the result that the T.L.S. is a model for other African countries richer both financially and educationally” [61]. The appointment of a library adviser to support the new director was considered, but despite advertisements and personal approaches, no suitable candidate could be found. By September 1972, Hockey, then assistant director of the British Council Libraries Department in London, concluded that the search should be abandoned: by then the new director of TLS must have adapted to “life without father” [62]. Back in the United Kingdom, Max Broome became library adviser at the Department of Education and Science in London and, later, director of Hertfordshire Library Service.

“A Model for Other African Countries”—or, a Success for Cultural Imperialism?

From the 1980s onward, criticisms have increasingly appeared about the limitations of the Anglo-American model of public librarianship for a continent in which the standard of living is far from Anglo-American [5; 63–67]. Even in the late 1960s, a number of TLS staff had reservations—referred to earlier—about the direction their library service was taking. In 1970, the British Council in Tanzania summed up the TLS as a model for other African countries [61]. But was British support disinterested or was this simply another example of cultural imperialism?

Writing about neighboring Kenya, one critic argues that, as the colonial state came to an end, “libraries ceased being its tool and became the tool of the new state which represented the interests of the new African ruling

class. . . . The public library system continued its pre-colonial outlook, although with the door slightly opened to let a few more black faces and managers inside an elite system" [68, pp. 21, 27]. He says that colonialism had encouraged the growth of an in-between comprador class of *Nyaparas* (*wanyapara*, foremen or headmen) and *Wabenzi* (owners of Mercedes-Benz cars). Local librarians promoted to senior positions held their jobs "with the blessing of the British Council or the United States Information Service. . . . [Their] loyalty lay not among the people but with their foreign power brokers and technocrats" [68, p. 22]. Education was Western oriented, and "thus information in libraries continued to serve a minority who were rich, western-educated and oriented" [68, p. 28].

How applicable is this to Tanzania? There were significant differences between the two countries in the 1960s. Tanganyika had been a territory held by Britain under UN mandate. Kenya had been a British colony dominated by white settlers. Tanganyika achieved independence in 1961, two years before its more prosperous neighbor. The road to independence from British rule in Tanganyika was peaceful, unlike that in Kenya, which experienced the bitter *Mau Mau* liberation struggle in the 1950s. Julius Nyerere advocated self-reliance and African Socialism. Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta took the capitalist path. Nyerere, committed to education and literacy, said that libraries were vital for poor nations like his own. He encouraged the use of Kiswahili. In terms of infrastructure, Dar es Salaam was much less developed than the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, which had served as capital of British East Africa and headquarters for organizations such as the East African Literature Bureau. There was no public library system in Tanganyika in 1961 for "a few more black faces and managers" to enter. Few users of the service that the TLS introduced in the 1960s would have described themselves as "rich" [68, pp. 27–28].

Libraries were the tool of the colonial state in the sense that the earliest collections had been built up around agricultural and mining research institutes, which were concerned with maximizing cash crops of value to the imperial power or with the exploitation of mineral resources and with the running of government secretariats and law courts [69]. But, as has been shown, library provision in Tanganyika at the time of independence was meager indeed. Unlike Nairobi, which had the Royal Technical College (later University College Nairobi), or Kampala in Uganda, which had Makerere College, Dar es Salaam did not have a higher education library until 1961, when University College was established.

Certainly, those who used the TLS in the 1960s were educated following the Western model. According to one historian, after the suppression of the *Maji Maji* uprising by the Germans in the early 1900s, "Tanzanians increasingly resigned themselves to working for the time being within the colonial framework, and realised that education was the key to success

within it" [70, p. 131]. Education meant Western education. Some Africans benefited on a personal level from colonial rule—it would be strange if none had—and were among those who took over from the Europeans on their departure. Some had been groomed to do so, as some young Tanzanians were encouraged to join the new Tanganyika Library Service, to take advantage of sponsorship opportunities for professional education, to become professionally active in the new Tanzania Library Association, and to take over from the expatriates when they left. The models introduced in the 1960s may have had limitations, but the documentation from the period indicates that they were introduced in good faith by librarians who were committed to their work. Identifying limitations is easier with hindsight than it must have been for busy practitioners who were building from the beginning in the first years of independence.

As for the British Council, it was set up in the 1930s to promote Britain abroad. In West Africa during World War II, its senior representative was mainly concerned with providing a service for the European and African educated elite. But some of his colleagues there and in London had very different ideas and worked to open up services, not to restrict them [5, pp. 58–75; 19]. The Council reminded the Ministry of Overseas Development, in 1969, that British aid was good for British business—in that particular instance, the dissemination and increased use of British books—in Tanzania [35]. It gave similar reminders to the Treasury in London on various occasions. It needed to do so because some politicians and senior civil servants saw aid for libraries in former British territories as a questionable way of spending British taxpayers' money. But, as with the TLS, the 1960s documentation shows that some British Council staff strongly believed in library development and tried to do all in their power to advance it in Africa.

### Aftermath

The population of Tanzania is currently estimated to be over 35 million [71]. Unlike some other parts of Africa, the country is peaceful and democratic, although its president, Benjamin William Mkapa, acknowledges that it is still poor [72]. The support of the Tanzanian armed forces for the insurgents attempting to overthrow the dictator Idi Amin in neighboring Uganda in 1979 was a heavy expense. The idealism of the early years of independence proved hard to sustain. When Julius Nyerere stepped down voluntarily as president in 1985, his philosophy of African Socialism did not survive him, nor did the *ujamaa* villages, but he continues to be remembered with respect as *Baba wa Taifa* [father of the nation]. Nyerere once remarked that "people have gone to the moon and we are



still trying to reach the village and the village is getting farther [away]" [73]. As far as book supply goes, providing a service to the villages is almost as far away now as it was when the Tanganyika Library Service was set up over forty years ago. Urban areas, however, have privately run Internet cafes, while the Tanzania Library Association puts on short courses to familiarize long-serving library staff with the new technology.

The 1980s and 1990s were hard years for public library services in Africa. This included Tanzania, where much had been achieved in the 1960s in building attractive libraries in a number of urban areas, in stocking them, and in training and educating staff. At times in the 1980s and 1990s, the only money available seemed to go to pay staff salaries. Books that arrived tended to come from overseas donors such as Book Aid International in London. By the 1990s, the National Central Library building in Dar es Salaam was very run down. Since then it has been transformed through a business deal between the TLS and the private sector. The structure has been extended upward, and the business partners have leased out the upper stories as office accommodation. After a number of years, the library will take over the space and secure a reliable income through continuing to lease. As part of the arrangement, the library has been refurbished and redecorated. But although the National Central Library is once again as physically attractive as when President Nyerere opened it in 1967, it continues to be the only TLS service point in Dar es Salaam, a city whose population has grown from 250,000 to over 3.5 million in the intervening years [74, p. 1]. One change from the policies of the 1960s is the introduction of subscription charges by the Tanzania Library Service some years ago. Another change is in the composition of the membership. Like elsewhere in contemporary Africa, almost all Tanzanian public library users now are young people reading to advance their level of formal education.

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