Book Review[1]

Pan-Africanism or Pragmatism? Lessons of Tanganyika and Zanzibar Union, Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, Dar-es-Salaam: OSSEREA ISBN 978-9994-455-21-8 (2008)

by Issa G. Shivji

Shivji offers a revealing, detailed description based on intensive research and exclusive interviews with selected people of the historical, political and legal intricacies on the evolution of the Union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar. In the course of the recounting events, Shivji also provides insights on the history and challenges faced by Africa States in their effort to amalgamate under the philosophy of Pan-Africanism. The author argues that imperial powers had some significant role in some of the successes and failures of the efforts by independent States of Africa to merge, including Tanganyika and Zanzibar. His main thesis on the Union is that it is illegal from a constitutional and international law point of view. Shivji maintains that the leaders from Zanzibar were not adequately consulted, did not have access to adequate legal advice and on some occasions made some effort to reject the move. He suggests that where some of the leaders in Zanzibar appeared to show any interest in the Union, the driving force was to propagate their hold onto power, banking on support from Nyerere. In some cases, Nyerere (the pragmatist) pushed for the merger beyond limits.

The foundation set up by Shivji in the course of his analysis is grounded on the dominant and sometimes controversial issues of class and ethnicity in the political struggle to assume State power in Zanzibar and the subsequent merger of Zanzibar and Tanganyika to form one State. The laying of his foundation on the issue of class and ethnicity in Zanzibar has been tactfully set to provide a basis for the arguments advanced by the author in his effort to dismiss other views, including Nyerere's, on yet another

[1] See *CHEMCHEMI* Bulletin, Mwalimu Nyerere Professional Chair in Pan African Studies, University of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. Issue No. 1 April 2009. See also Pambazuka News – Pan African Voices for Freedom and Justice, Issue No. 450, 01/10/2009 available at http://pambazuka.org.en/category/books/59157

contentious issue that has troubled the minds of great political scientists: what constitutes nationalism?[2]

In his analysis preceding the Union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar, the author provides some insights on episodes that led to the revolution in Chapter two. He admits that there many versions of the revolution and states that it is not important to go into the argument of which is true. However, he dismisses other accounts and draws the reader on his theory, which is to some extent based on a combination of respondents, notes from former colonial officers and books purposefully selected to make his case.[3] Interestingly, the author does not fully appreciate the role played by Okello in the revolution. Shivji seems to rely on Jumbe's account of the revolution but tactfully brushes aside Okello's. He does not make an attempt to critically analyze Okello's claims published in his autobiography. It is also clear that the choice of respondents on the issue of the revolution is lopsided. Some of the key figures mentioned by Okello in his biography on the revolution, for example, Job Lusinde and Rashid Kawawa were not interviewed.[4] There is also no explanation why these important people were left out especially in view of the fact that Shivji generally seems to underestimate Okello's account of the revolution and his contribution to it.

In some cases Shivji dismisses some of the recollections of persons who were deeply involved in the government of Zanzibar due to what he refers to as "memory lapses." There is a clear indication of concentration on recollections of respondents from Zanzibar. The author does not state exactly why he omitted interviewing prominent personalities and then TANU stalwarts who are still alive on the Mainland to back his arguments. These people are certainly also quite knowledgeable and some worked very closely with Nyerere, not only on issues of the Union but on some of the contentious

[2] See pages 66-67of the Book

[3] See pp. 243-244. The author does not make any reference to Baregu *et al,*: Tanganyika Rifles Mutiny, Published by the Tanzania Peoples Defence Forces (TPDF) in his discussion of the mutiny where he suggests that imperial powers played a role in 'bailing' out Nyerere

[4] See Okello at p. 173 and 205. On the contrary, Okello's account of events and his role in the revolution seem to be acknowledged and corroborated by Lofchie, M. (1965) Zanzibar: Background to the Revolution, Princeton University Press, New Jersey (See specifically pages 274-277)

issues relating to the politics of Zanzibar as well.[5] view It is also clear that the author relies on a lot of information from Jumbe, who the author considers as probably most knowledgeable on the history of what led to the formation of the Union and other issues pertaining to the history of Zanzibar. However, on some occasions Shivji dismisses the recollections of Jumbe (and others in some cases) on the argument of "memory lapses" and in some instances cautions the reader, for example, that Jumbe's information should be taken with *"a pinch of salt"* – implying that he is not credible.[6]

In chapter three Shivji assesses the Union in the context of the East African Community, suggesting (although elsewhere he makes effort to deny this) that forces behind the formation of the Union, were predominately driven by imperialist pressure rather than the urge for the peoples of both sides of the Union to link up for common purposes and objectives. The author also seems to suggest, in a rather strategically cautious tone in some cases, that Nyerere was driven (and in some cases supported) by imperial powers in forming the Union between Zanzibar and Tanganyika. In coming to this conclusion, Shivji relies heavily on communiqués of former US and UK diplomats and officers (stationed in Zanzibar and Tanganyika at that time). Ironically, at times the author brushes aside some of the communiqués (ostensibly those not in his line of thinking) as exaggerations.

Surprisingly, the author omits to make a critical analysis of Nyerere's vehement denunciation of allegations that he was a puppet of Western powers in the course of establishing the Union. In his address to the special Meeting of the National Assembly on 25th April 1964, on the Union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar, Nyerere stated:

"It is an insult to Africa to read cold war politics into every move towards African Unity. Africa has its own maturity and its own will. Our unity is inspired by a very simple ideology – unity. We do not propose this Union in order to support any of the "isms" of

[5] Okello states that he was welcomed by Kawawa on his visit to Dar-es-Salaam after the revolution to collect supplies requested from Nyerere. See p. 171 Kawawa's views would have thrown some light on the genuineness of Okello's claims on his role and contribution in the revolution.
[6] See p. 121: footnote 63; See also p. 59, footnote 60, where the author admits that one of his interviewees was apparently lying to him.

this world. We propose it in order to support any and strengthen Africa, and our particular part of Africa."[7] (Emphasis underlined)

Nyerere is also on record to have refuted similar insinuations when he stated: *"It has been suggested by some stupid people that I advocate Federation because I am a stooge of the British and I want to impose on East Africa a form of government acceptable to my British masters. I believe in the unity of Africa. I do not mind, therefore, what appellations stupid people give me as a result of that belief. But let us examine the true position."* [8]

Shivji admits that he has made a u-turn relating to the legal status of the Union. He "disowns" his Professorial Inaugural Lecture delivered in 1990. He appears more convinced eighteen years later, that there is no evidence in law to give credence to the Union between Zanzibar and Tanganyika. What is interesting is the reason he gives for the round about turn: basically documents retrieved from the archival records of the British High Commission and CIA records, further interviews and readings.[9] Mark you, as pointed out elsewhere, in some cases the author has dismissed records from these sources as having been exaggerated. This time around, the author showers a lot of credit to these sources, to the extent of "disowning" his own findings duly presented at his Professorial Inaugural Lecture. It will also strike the reader that some of the prominent people who would have provided some information for the author to work on were not interviewed, although they are mentioned in the chapter as having played key roles in negotiating the instruments from both a political and legal point of view. Some of the persons who were party stalwarts at that time and played a key role could certainly not be traced. One would have expected the author to make more inquiry from close associates, just as he did in respect of respondents from the Zanzibar. With regard to the former diplomats, the author even went to the extent of interviewing one of the spouses, whom

[7] Nyerere, Freedom and Unity/Uhuru na Umoja, p. 292 (Shivji in fact cites this quotation, though from a different source at p. 83)
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 92
[9] Including Wolfgang Dourado, former Attorney General of Zanzibar, whose character a prudent reader would find inconsistent and opportunistic.

the author credits as having "*been well informed about the President's (Nyerere) thinking…*"[10]

What the author acknowledges, without necessarily saying it, is that research is essentially on on-going process aimed at generating knowledge, with the passage of time. Along the same line, what is discovered today may be refuted later. This reality equally applies to the authors findings, not only on the issue of the legality of the instruments that were used to establish the Union, but the whole thesis he advances, especially in the light of the observations on choice of respondents, among others. Equally, this explains the deviation that the author makes from his own findings in 1990. The author seems to suggest that his study now provides conclusive evidence that there was no ratification or enactment of any law ratifying the Articles of the Union on the part of Zanzibar. Accordingly the author argues that a court of law would certainly agree with his argument. The choice of respondents who formed the Commission which concluded that the Revolutionary Council actually ratified the Articles of the Union would also not escape a critical eye. One of the key members of this Commission is mentioned by the author, but again there is no reason why his views on this matter were not probed further by way of interview. A court of law would certainly want to satisfy itself by inquiring into some of the evident discrepancies before reaching a verdict whether the evidence the author presents borders on conclusiveness.

In the fourth chapter, the author paints a vivid picture of the events that followed after the signing of the Union, culminating into the assassination of Jumbe and the increasing usurpation of Constitutional power by Nyerere. According to the author, the creation of a Union Constitution by Nyerere and the purported cementing of the Union by him led to the progressive erosion of Zanzibar autonomy. The erosion and subsequent cementing of the Constitution was achieved thorough, among other strategies, the creation of a party-state, dismantling of the independence of the judiciary and the elimination of those who opposed the move.

[10] See footnote 64 at p. 115 of the book

The differences between the founding fathers of the Union on substantial matters which according to Shivji, almost led to the break up of the Union are discussed in chapter five. The author provides an illuminating analysis of what he insinuates as efforts made by Jumbe to uphold Zanzibar's autonomy and the ploy employed by Nyerere to counter the efforts. Accordingly, Nyerere's endeavours paid off with the promulgation of a Permanent Constitution for the Union which in the author's view, was structured in a manner that put matters to rest, in so far as the autonomy of Zanzibar within the Union framework, was concerned.

Also in this chapter, it will not take the reader any effort to realize that the type of respondents the author picks to corroborate some of the documents retrieved from the archives in Zanzibar and London reveals that there has been an inclination to focus more on those who have vivid memories of the events and in some cases who took part. The author also made some effort to trace relatives and close associates of people who either took part or who were knowledgeable on the events that led to the formation of the Union, in some cases, their spouses. Again, conspicuously absent in those sourced for information in this chapter are the respondents who were influential in the formation of the Union from Tanzania mainland. It would have been helpful if the author explained this bias, or at least the limitation confronted in pursuing other renowned people who are alive and still active in politics. Suffice to point out here that some of these people have been involved (directly or otherwise) in initiatives to resolve what the author refers to as the "head ace" of the Union that Nyerere did not live to see.

In chapter six, Shivji carries on his analysis and judgment on the increasing marginalization of Zanzibar within the framework of the Union. He maintains that the chronologies of events from the judicial and military reforms, among others, that Nyerere crafted were aimed at demeaning Zanzibar within the Union. Accordingly, Jumbe became more adamant in efforts to protect the "sovereignty" of Zanzibar and fell out of Nyerere's favour. Since this time, Shivji argues, there has always been a crisis on the nature of the Union as a result of Nyerere increasing the list of Union matters at the

expense of Zanzibar, and subsequent political gimmicks to legalize and legitimize the usurpation of Zanzibar's sovereignty.

By way of concluding his study, the author analyses the problems that have hindered the example of a Pan African Union and points out to the lessons that can be drawn from the Tanganyika-Zanzibar merger and implications for the future of Pan-Africanism, in the wake of globalization and imperialism. The solutions to circumvent the legal problems in a manner that will ensure tranquillity considering the 40 years of the life of the Union discussed by the author, are not critically analysed, especially in light of the ripples that may unfold, threatening the existence of the Union. Of course, the author makes an implicit and rather remote reference to a constitutional court and consulting the people. The attempts being made by the fourth phase government, which had commenced before the author's study, to find a solution to the problems that have plagued the Union are interestingly not analysed. On the contrary, Shivji suggests that Nyerere's predecessors have made things worse.[11]

The book provides food for thought and is certainly a valuable addition to the history of Zanzibar from a legal and political perspective. It is an eye-opener providing thought-provoking insights on efforts to revitalize Pan Africanism.

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[11] See p. 251 of the book