

The Post-War Co-operative Development in colonial Tanzania

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Abstract: This paper has extensively utilised primary evidences obtained from Tanzania National Archives (TNA) to provide examine the post-war policies on the co-operative development and its implementation in Tanzania. Historically, the growth and development of the co-operative movement footprint among the natives in Tanzania before the outbreak of WWII was confined within some few geographical areas. This was so owing to the colonial hesitancy policy in promoting the policy based on political and personal interest. A policy shift was evident in the post-war years due to the intervention from the United Nation Organisation, ILO and Fabian Colonial Bureau that prompted the British colonial power to expand of co-operative movement footprint in Tanzania largely for its own economic and political interests. The intervention of the British colonial power in promoting the co-operative movement was based on the modernisation policy. However, the co-operative movement was top-down demonstrating a desire to control not only the co-operatives but also agricultural exports.

[Somo M.L. Seimu. **The Post-War Co-operative Development in colonial Tanzania.** *Rep Opinion* 2015;7(11):71-77]. (ISSN: 1553-9873). <http://www.sciencepub.net/report>. 10. doi:[10.7537/marsroj071115.10](https://doi.org/10.7537/marsroj071115.10).

Key Words: Tanzania, colonial authority, co-operative movement, intervention, development

1.1: The Background

This paper has extensively utilised primary evidences obtained from Tanzania National Archives (TNA) to examine the growth and development of the co-operative movement footprint among the natives in Tanzania before the outbreak of WWII was confined within some few geographical areas mainly coffee producing areas such as the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro where the Kilimanjaro Co-operative Union and its affiliated societies were set-up by the colonial authority from January 1933, also in Ngara there was the Bugufi Coffee Co-operative Society was set up in 1936; similarly, in Ruvuma region where the Ngoni and Matengo Co-operative Union (NGOMAT) and its affiliated societies were marketing tobacco from 1936. The promotion of the co-operative movement in most parts of the country as Kagera and in Cotton Growing regions in Western part of Tanzania was either discouraged despite the existence of the co-operative legislation from 1932 and growing demand from the natives who were crop producers to register their co-operative agricultural marketing societies. This was so because the colonial authority feared the rise of a natives' political force that could be a threat to the establishment; a disruption the exploitation of agricultural produce by the colonial authority; and for fear of tension that could between the natives and Indian traders who with legal and political support from the colonial authority dominated agricultural produce marketing. Additionally, it was argued it was so because natives

lacked capital, knowledge and experience in handling agricultural produce for export.

1.2: The policies roadmap and implementation

The discouragement of natives to form co-operative societies not only created uneven but also, it led to biasness, inequality and the stunted growth and development of the co-operative movement in the country. In the post-war years there was clearly increased the colonial authority commitment on the post-war policies in utilising the co-operative movement in realisation of economic development and in the modernisation the rural sector particularly, to foster cash crop production. This enthusiasm was widespread globally and in the British colonies in particular because the co-operative movement, particularly agricultural marketing co-operatives were one of a piece meal programmes, strategies and a strong post-war element of colonial development policy for the colonies in which the co-operative movement was considered vital to play the role.¹ It was considered vital as it could easily embrace the rural producers to participate in cash crop production to elevate the British war-ravaged economy owing to its commitment to the Second World War.²

The British policy shift regarding the promotion of the co-operative movement in the post-war period was not only prompted by its economic woes. Many agencies were involved that significantly provided an impetus. Such stakeholders include the UNO and its agencies. For example, such impetus on promotion of the co-operative development was given at the United Nation Organisation (UNO) Conference held at Hot

Springs in 1943. The emphasis was due to the role played by co-operative movement in assisting the UNO agencies in relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes during and post war.³ The conference examined how co-operatives could be employed in post-war reconstruction efforts. It was during this period when co-operative movement was internationally accepted as an instrument for invigoration of development in poor countries. Similarly, the 26th ILO Session conference recommended for the colonial authorities to play an integral part in promoting the co-operative movement.⁴

In general terms, the colonial authority intervention in promotion of co-operatives, in Tanzania was impressive compared to other East African countries where it faced opposition in the 1930s. However, no matter how impressive the progress was in Tanzania, this was a matter of concern in the Colonial Office which in 1944 appointed Mr W.K.H. Campbell to conduct an investigation into opportunities for co-operative development in East African countries. In his report on Tanzania Campbell identified five key factors that led to the slow progress in Tanzania which were; shortage of staff, the KNPA experience as well as nervousness created by the 1937 coffee riots in Kilimanjaro, the inability of growers to manage societies, and fears that the movement would interfere with affairs of the NA.⁵ In his report it was made clear that, 'time was ripe to embark in promotion of co-operatives owing to prevalence of embryonic associations that suggested some degree of spontaneous growth that required legislation and government guidance for their promotion, formation and registration'.⁶ He also emphasised that, co-operatives should be formed to accommodate soldiers returning from WWII battle fields in Ethiopia and Asia. This was widely viewed as important policy to defuse or divert their interest in engaging in the struggle against the colonial rule.

In his report, Campbell recommended the encouragement of growers to form co-operative societies. Ideally, he argued that, 'the co-operation ought to spring spontaneously from the people themselves and the government should have no need to help in its propagation'.⁷ However, he indicated the inability of growers to form co-operatives without the government's encouragement and support. In this case, he believed that, 'the government intervention is justified' in but cautioned for the greatest care to be taken not to devitalise the co-operative movement that lack the lifeblood of belief by their members.⁸

In response to the Campbell recommendation on the spontaneous growth of the co-operatives, the Tanzania colonial authority challenged the policy on the view that it cannot succeed owing to lack of

knowledge on co-operation,⁹ also, the experience that Tanzania had in the years between the two wars when the spontaneous policy failed to bring about changes. This signified a policy shift and justification of top-down approach employed in the formation and registration of the co-operatives in the post-war years. In this case, it was strongly held by the colonial authority that, the government should intervene in the formation of co-operatives.¹⁰ Such societies had to be encouraged at every centre of native authority in the country where various types of co-operatives should be formed such as agricultural and animal products as well as consumer societies resulting to the registration of such societies in the country,¹¹ as the Mwanza African Traders Consumer Co-operative Society in 1946 which became a driving force and significant impetus to the growth of the cotton marketing co-operatives in the WCGA and the Bukoba Co-operative Union (BCU) in 1950. Both locations lagged behind Kilimanjaro and Ruvuma regions where the co-operative movement was active from 1930s.

The Tanzania's colonial authority position was that the co-operative movement was of the greatest value in the construction of a prosperous African community.¹² It was argued that, *Ushirika* (co-operation) popularity had been growing year after year among progressive farmers.¹³ However, there was a lack of knowledge in formulating plans for social and economic progress that required government intervention.¹⁴ This clearly demonstrates a justification by the colonial authority to employ a top-down approach in promoting the co-operative movement particularly where local conditions were viewed as irresponsive such as in Kagera where the top-down approach was employed because of a lack of enthusiasm from native coffee growers. This was prompted the colonial authority intervention; an approach was reinforced under the 1949 African Agricultural Products (Control and Marketing) Ordinance. This commitment formed a basis for promotion of co-operative of the BCU.

Furthermore, Campbell's report coincided with influence from the Fabian Colonial Bureau to the Colonial Office. As the War neared its end they established a Special Committee in 1941 to report on what co-operatives had already achieved and what they might achieve in the future. A member of the Special Committee was Arthur Creech Jones, MP who became Colonial Secretary in the Labour Government. Its report, published in 1945, described the co-operative movement as being 'all but non-existent in the majority of the British colonies' and recommended the setting up of a co-operative department with central department in the Colonial office.¹⁵ The Fabian report helped influence British colonial policy in

relation to co-operatives by outlining advantages of co-operatives as:¹⁶

- a) Lowering of the costs of production;
- b) Distribution and marketing;
- c) Obtaining credit on reasonable terms;
- d) Ending the monopolization of trading by big European firms; and
- e) Improving agriculture by the use of better stock and seeds, and by the use of fertilisers, machinery.

In the wake of the Report, the greater emphasis was placed on co-operatives. For example, in 1947 the Colonial Office appointed an Advisor on Co-operatives. He was B.J. Surridge who had served as Registrar of Co-operatives in Cyprus between 1934 and 1943 and later became a Vice Chair and Trustee of the Plunkett Foundation. The impetus for promotion of co-operatives in British African colonies was accelerated by the Labour Party's victory at the 1945 General election.¹⁷ From the beginning the Labour government was overburdened with unprecedented difficulties regarding colonial questions, economic and political. India was on the way to independence with other Asian colonies following suit. Another is the so-called dollar crisis.¹⁸ Britain had to repay its war debts in dollars, but the export capacity of the damaged economy was still limited.¹⁹

In order to lessen the burden of external debts and to finance its domestic move to a welfare state, the Labour government opted for a policy of massive "export drive" from the colonies. Africa and the Caribbean suddenly turned out to be valuable assets for the ailing British economy²⁰ and this perception led to hasty, reckless agricultural projects such as the highly mechanized groundnuts production scheme in Tanganyika, only to produce disastrous failure.

The Labour Party's victory was an impetus for development of the co-operative movement, especially with the appointment of Arthur Creech Jones from Fabian Colonial Bureau to the position of the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Creech Jones greatly reorganised and reshaped the Colonial Office to reflect the demand for changes in the colonies and to respond to both international and local pressure for the encouragement of co-operatives.²¹ This was achieved by pressuring colonies to pass or amend co-operative legislation to enable the establishment of the Co-operative Departments which were pivotal in fostering the co-operation. At this juncture, the Colonial Office policy towards the co-operatives was that 'the value of co-operative societies is no longer a matter of any dispute'²² and it should be used as an instrument for the construction of a prosperous African community.²³ Against the backdrop, colonial authorities in British colonies were called upon to

realise a planned development of co-operative associations and enterprises by employing them as instruments in introducing an appropriate and modern agricultural policy.

The colonial authority in Tanzania took Campbell's recommendations seriously to further its efforts in promoting the co-operative movement. Among its recommendations was to employ the co-operatives to absorb the returning soldiers who served Britain in the Second World War. For example, between 1945 and 1948 co-operative and native agriculture marketing policy was reviewed leading to the adoption of Northcote's previously rejected proposals mentioned previously except setting up of the co-operative apex body due to shortage of staff;²⁴ when Northcote retired the government had to appoint the Director of Lands and Mines, Mr R.S.W. Malcom to act as the Registrar.²⁵ This was in addition to his responsibility as Director of Lands and Mines. As his predecessor, he had no staff to assist him that raised a concern to the CS 'I feel that I have neither time to spend in Kilimanjaro' to supervise societies which were experiencing some management problems.²⁶ This was the earliest impact that the government fell as a result of rejecting Northcote proposal. The co-operative legislation was amended in 1945 to provide for setting up of the Department, under a Registrar of Co-operative Societies who was charged with giving advice to and promotion of the producers' societies²⁷ unlike during Northcote era.

Therefore, a combination of both supportive policies and the availability of individuals who were committed to execute the policy was not only an impetus, but also unveiled a new era of co-operative renaissance in Tanzania. All these provided for expansion of the movement to cover areas that were starved or viewed as deserts due to lack or limited number of societies. But again, to facilitate marketing of agricultural produce, most of which were exported to Britain.

In early 1946 George Hall, the under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, dispatched circular to the colonies detailing a roadmap for co-operative promotion.²⁸ This is when serious attempts were made by the CO in promoting the co-operative movement in the colonies. A model co-operative Ordinance which was based on the India Co-operative Societies Act II of 1912 was circulated to all British colonies including Tanzania. To ensure the policy was enforced co-operative adviser and advisory committee was appointed in 1947. The adviser operated from the Colonial office charged with a responsibility to monitor progress in the colonies.

All in all it has to be realised that, the colonial strategies on promotion of the co-operative movement were designed based on the modernisation thinking of

the colonised. This was an assumption that was strongly underscored by the colonial authority in promotion of co-operative movement was that it would be beneficial to the overall development process in transforming the rural population;²⁹ it was envisioned to provide a forum for increasing agricultural productivity and preserve the communitarian basis of traditional Africa.³⁰ The contention was widely held by the CO which maintained that, co-operation could provide for a transition from the primitive to the modern economic and social worlds. This was a significant departure from a position held by the Labour in the 1930s, which the co-operatives were envisaged to could be employed for preserving traditional Africa.³¹

Along with the argument put forward for promotion of the co-operatives the Circular by Hall was important because it provided impetus and confidence in the course taken by the colonial authority in Tanzania in amending co-operative legislation. This came at an important time when post-war policy on agricultural produce marketing emphasis was primarily geared towards rationalization and synchronization of crop purchase in favour of a single government appointed buyer which was in line with bulk purchase.

In the post-war years there was a widespread understanding that the co-operative movement as an essential tool for development that required the CO to play its part; for example, this was demonstrated in its Circular dispatch that gave detailed guidance in regard to the establishment and management of the co-operative societies. Models of the co-operative Ordinance, Regulations and Rules were circulated to colonies in which it was stressed that they had to be adopted in accordance with local conditions and culture. However, the circular did not prescribe approaches under which co-operatives could be promoted; but, the ILO 1944 recommendation on the government intervention³² was seemingly in mind among the colonial officials. This suggests that, individual territories had a mandate to assess the best way to promote co-operatives. It is obvious that, the circular ushered the British policy regarding co-operative development in her colonies. The circular emphasized the role that the government had to play, embodied in the office of the Registrar not only in encouraging the movement but also controlling and supervising societies.

The promotion of co-operative movement policy was embedded in the Colonial Office post-war Marketing Policy for Colonial Primary Products which was circulated to the colonies³³ stressing that; first, to ensure that producers were organized either in producers' associations or under some form of Government statutory marketing organization so that

they could market their produce in an orderly manner and to obtain the best possible price. Secondly, there is no doubt that the policy took into consideration the success and weakness of the bulk purchase system with its emphasis on marketing and production was neglected. It is clear that, the marketing boards played a part in the supervision of production but, they were limited as they were not directly in contact with growers. Thirdly, the success of the agriculture improvement or modernisation policy had to be linked to the employment of the co-operatives as an instrument to facilitate improvement in cultivation methods was strongly held as outlined by Fabian Colonial Bureau.³⁴ Importantly, the co-operative movement was much favoured by the left and especially Arthur Creech Jones, the Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1945 – 1950 as once envisioned that the co-operative movement is one of most important element is raising standard of life and in invigorating economic development in the colonies.³⁵

1.3: The promotion of the co-operatives

The achievement in implementation of above-explained policy commitment had two critical challenges which were first, a lack of co-operative movement promotion policy. Secondly, the 1937 Native Coffee Control legislation provided the native coffee marketing boards had immersed power such as the Bukoba Native Coffee Board (BNCB) in Kagera region. Under the legislation, the BNCB was not responsible in facilitating the promotion of the co-operative movement. Thirdly, the native marketing boards were granted exclusive powers decide and appoint coffee handling agents as seen suitable which were not necessarily co-operative societies. All these were critical setback to the whole idea to promote co-operative movement in for example Kagera where the natives produced coffee.

The mentioned stumbling block was noted by the Colonial Office as viewed them as setbacks to its policies in promoting the co-operative movement and in realisation of modernisation of the colonial subjects. In an attempt to address them the CO unveiled its post-war policy on agriculture development³⁶ that prompted the colonial authority in Tanzania to amend the marketing legislation that provided for integration of the co-operatives in the marketing.

In developing the policy the Registrar of Co-operative Societies was accorded powers to draft some legislation, the African Agricultural (Control and Marketing) Ordinance 1949 that provided for a forum for exerting pressure to existing Marketing Boards, mainly the BNCB in Kagera to promote the co-operatives. One of the objects of the legislation was to foster co-operation. Under the legislation, all the marketing boards in the country were treated largely

as an interim measure pending the formation of producers' co-operatives. The Boards became instruments of the government to promote the co-operative societies in their respective areas.

The African Agricultural (Control and Marketing) Ordinance, 1949 was not only a key prime mover in promoting the co-operative movement. This was a significant policy shift and a clear victory to the Co-operative Department which had been empowered by the colonial authority to engage itself directly in promotion of the co-operative societies. Thus, it was a facilitating policy for the growth of co-operative movement as it compelled the Marketing Boards to promote the co-operatives. Its application proved effective and successful. While development of co-operative movement was uneven, the legislation led to expansion of the co-operative footprint as demonstrated by a number of societies in new locations such as Rungwe district in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania and Kagera regions (then Bukoba district) see Table 1 below.

Table 1: Geographical Distribution of Co-operative Societies in 1959 and 1960

S/No	Provinces	Total
1	Northern	61
2	Southern	33
3	Southern Highlands	59
4	West Lake	79
5	Lake	341
6	Tanga	8
7	Eastern	34
8	Western	1
9	Central	1
Total		617

Source: Annual Report on Co-operative Development 1959, Dar Es Salaam, 1960

In this regard, the Department exerted its dominance over policy decisions and direction ultimately implementing them in favour of promoting co-operative societies. However, this was a significant step and necessary policy that provided for the weakening of the powers that the colonial Provincial administration and BNCB in preventing the promotion of co-operative societies. This represented the colonial government asserting its authority over the Provincial administration and BNCB. As a result, the Provincial administration and BNCB were both obliged to engage in promoting co-operatives. Under the Ordinance the Board's functions were further extended to include the promotion and development of the co-operative movement.³⁷

Consequently, the marketing legislation weakened the Provincial administration and BNCB powers to impede the Co-operative Department's

attempts to promote co-operatives by compelling Boards to appoint co-operative societies as their crop handling agencies. It has to be noted that, the policy shift was significant and necessary not only to control agricultural products but also to ensure that production and marketing had to play a part in the recovery of the post-war British economy. Additionally, the legislation went hand in hand with ensuring that surpluses that were accrued by the Boards be returned to growers through the co-operatives.³⁸ The co-operatives in Kagera were formed and registered from 1950 under which the primary societies were all affiliated to the Bukoba Co-operative Union (BCU). Thus, under the legislation the Boards lost control over the surpluses, which were now to be distributed amongst growers as co-operative members in line with the ICA and Rochdale co-operative principles. However, the BCU and its affiliated societies handled crops on behalf of the BNCB.

On the other hand, enthusiasm from district colonial officials in Geita where by early 1952 there were emerging embryonic growers' associations mainly in Buchosa and Karumo Chiefdom such as *Wakulima wa Kiafrika*, Wafikiri African Union Association of Sengerema, *Wakulima Stadi*, Sukuma Union and Zinza Union. These societies came under one umbrella, the Mweli Co-operative Union in July 1952.³⁹ In other areas, growers through the Mwanza African Traders Co-operative Society (MATCS), later on the Lake Province Growers Association (LPGA) which was a significant impetus to the growth of agriculture marketing co-operative ideals in the WCG in the early 1950s. However, the promotion of the agricultural marketing co-operative policy and initiatives by the Department was not consistent as provided under the legislation. This was not advantageous to all native produced cash crops in Tanzania. This was particularly with cotton growers in the Western Cotton Growing Area (WCGA) that comprised of the current Geita, Mwanza, Shinyanga, and Simiyu regions.

The growers through mentioned organisations actively pressed for the formation and registration of cotton marketing co-operative societies in the WCGA, but the colonial officials and Co-operative Department, particularly the Commissioner of Co-operative Development were not prepared and not in any case a primary stimulating factor in promoting the cotton marketing co-operatives in the area. Instead, they proved to be a stumbling block. For instance, R.K.M. Battye who was Ukerewe District Commissioner (DC) in particular was sceptical about such the Ukerewe Famers Society, perceiving it as an unreliable means for the natives to undertake their own cotton marketing; 'such a scheme in Ukerewe' he claimed, 'would be calamitous'.⁴⁰ He was of the

opinion that it would lead to exploitation by a few individuals for private gain.⁴¹ He strongly argued that 'I offer the opinion that such scheme would be a calamitous failure if introduced in Ukerewe because there is no spirit of co-operation among the people'.⁴²

The Commissioner was sceptical regarding the prospects for co-operatives in the WCGA and cited Uganda's difficulties as an example.⁴³ He disregarded the colonial officials in the WCGA efforts to promote co-operatives and rejected the proposal for the formation of cotton marketing co-operatives by pointing out that 'I do not see clearly what is envisaged and I am not in faith (favour) with cotton marketing organisation in Tanganyika'.⁴⁴ The Commissioner's position was contrary to the prevailing idea to use co-operatives as instrument for development advocated by the UNO, and Fabian Colonial Bureau. This indicates that, the idea was out of the question in the Tanzania's colonial policies. In an extreme case, it shows that there was a lack of informed policy making and discrepancies between the CO policy intent and policy outcome in Tanzania, which emerge in the process of policy implementation or the colonial officials who were the key policy implementing agents who had either distanced themselves or had no idea of how to implement the policy.

Unpleasant attitude shown by the colonial officials and the Commissioner of Co-operative Development did not distract the growers under the LPGA as they formed a committee to press for realisation of their demands which was the formation and registration of cotton marketing co-operative societies. This was realised through a series of meetings with district, provincial colonial officials eventually the Commissioner of Co-operative Development who again indicated lack of support for example, he asked members of the delegation to recommend individuals with some secondary school education for co-operative course training. This appeared to be a good idea in the long-term but would not resolve the immediate need. However, this was a

positive development, but prevented an immediate engagement of producer co-operatives in cotton marketing. In realising lack of support from the colonial authority, the LPGA threatened the colonial authority the intention to boycott selling cotton unless co-operatives were registered so that they could have control over handling their produce.⁴⁵ It was under the threat and mounting pressure from the LPGA that forced the Co-operative Development Department to deploy co-operative officers in 1952, October 16th which was followed by the formation and registration of societies in early 1953 that ended decades of uncertainty and marked the beginning of formal co-operative marketing though a bottom-up approach. But, the co-operatives handled in accordance to the agricultural marketing policy handled cotton on behalf of the Lint and Seed Marketing Board (LSMB).

1.4: Conclusion

The post-war years witnessed the colonial authority persistently encourage agricultural marketing co-operatives. Importantly, this was a period when colonial policies regarding co-operatives and African produced marketing were being brought into line with the Colonial Office post-war marketing and development policy. The encouragement of the co-operative societies was mainly to facilitate marketing and in aiding and sustaining the post-war British economy. At this juncture, the growers and Tanzania agriculture industry as a whole was increasingly linked directly to address the colonial power's post-war reconstruction. Against the background, the existing co-operative societies maintained and new ones had to be promoted in the course of enabling Britain to accelerate its access to export crops to address the British economic woes. Against the backdrop, the use of the movement was a viable way to provide for exploitation of colonial resources by pooling them with an excuse to promote and encourage co-operatives which were controlled by the government through the marketing boards and they had no power to bargain price for commodities.

11/25/2015

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