

Ujamaa, Julius Nyerere and Political Morality in Contemporary Tanzania

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After two decades of impatient popular and academic expectations which followed the end of the Ujamaa policy¹, with the adoption and taking root of a free market economy and a multiparty political system under President Ali Hassan Mwinyi (1985-1995) and President Benjamin Mkapa (1995-2005), Tanzania has witnessed the return in the public sphere of a reconfigured version of Ujamaa as a set of moral principles. In popular discourses, in the political arena and in the media, this refined moral code is used to debate about social, political and economic morality in a post-socialist situation characterized by increasing economic inequalities and the high visibility of practices of corruption in the political sphere. If this new version of a socialist ethos constitutes a nebulous set of broad and flexible moral concepts from which individual and collective actors can draw to pursue different agendas, and which they connect to other political repertoires of morality, it has gained coherence through its embodiment in the figure of its founder and tireless promoter, the first President of Tanzania Julius Nyerere. Indeed, since his death on 14th October 1999, the relative former relegation of Mwalimu from the political landscape – for he was associated with the economic failure of Ujamaa – was suddenly inverted. The *baba wa taifa* (father of the nation) reappeared on the scene and was brandished as a symbol of humility, integrity and incorruptibility in the face of today's corrupt economic and political elite. Claiming to walk in Nyerere's footsteps has become a common stand among politicians of the ruling party and of the opposition when they strive to build their personal legitimacy and attract votes, as the 2005 and 2010 general elections have shown. In a similar vein, popular discussions about the present-day conditions of living and the attitudes of political leaders in power tend to resort to a revisited image of Nyerere. In other words, the persisting traces of Nyerere and Ujamaa in the present post-socialist context are not so much to be looked for in actual political practices or public policies but rather in debates and controversies about politics, morality and the common good – in short, in contemporary imaginaries of the nation. To do so, the article explores how and why a shared historical memory of Nyerere in association with a revisited Ujamaa political language are being built and used by official and non-official actors to define and mediate Tanzanian conceptions of the morality in the *polis* today. It also provides insight into the production and uses of alternative narratives, not eulogistic but on the contrary strongly negative, about Nyerere in Tanzania.

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¹ Officially, the United Republic of Tanzania still follows the Ujamaa policy. The Constitution states that the building of the nation is to be accomplished “through the pursuit of the policy of Socialism and Self Reliance which emphasizes the application of socialist principles (...)”, p.18.

The Past Ups-and-Downs of Nyerere and Ujamaa

In scholar circles as well as among common people, in Tanzania as well as abroad, the figure of Julius Nyerere, the first President of the newly independent Tanganyika in 1961 and the United Republic of Tanzania in 1964, is undeniably linked with what was referred to as the “Tanzanian experiment” and conflated with Ujamaa. Ujamaa (“familyhood” in Swahili), the “basis of African socialism”² which Nyerere and the single-party of TANU (Tanganyika African National Union) instituted as a government policy at the Arusha Declaration in 1967³, consisted in a societal project associating nation-building policies with a social and economic development strategy. Based on the idea that development could only be achieved in full autonomy (*kujitegemea*, “self-reliance”) rather than on relying upon foreign aid or investment, Ujamaa as a political thought articulated modernist socialist principles and a set of values and ways of living considered traditional and typically African.⁴ Promoting justice and equality for all, it was built upon concrete government policies such as the communitisation of the work force, the collectivisation of the means of production, the nationalisation of private businesses and housing, and the provision of public services – notably in health and education.⁵ The implementation of this development strategy relied upon the installation of a powerful state controlled by the bureaucracy and the single party. A ‘Leadership Code’ was adopted as a moral framework and a set of concrete prescriptions to control the activities of political leaders (Ministers, MPs, TANU officials and civil servants)⁶ so as to “bring the era of the “Wabenzi” to an official demise”.⁷ Because Nyerere was, at the time of the socialist experiment, Tanzania’s most prominent political figure, but also because he was “one of the most reflective and articulate African socialist leaders”⁸ who developed his political thought in several essays and proved a gifted public speaker and outspoken advocate of Ujamaa principles, not only was Ujamaa equated with Nyerere and vice-versa – which the term “nyerereism” used as an equivalent of Ujamaa accounts for – but the development policies implemented by the government of Tanzania were also conflated with his powerful presence in the political life of the country.

But at the time of the Tanzanian experiment, Ujamaa was more than strictly a development strategy: it provided a new political lexicon that the state used to articulate its national narrative.⁹ Referring to Nyerere’s oft-cited definition that “the foundation, and the objective, of African socialism is the extended family”¹⁰ as a point of departure, several academic works provided an analysis of Ujamaa key concepts that showed how official conceptions of national belonging were expressed through the discursive fields of family and

² Nyerere, *Ujamaa: The Basis of African Socialism* reprinted in Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity*.

³ TANU, *Arusha Declaration and TANU’s Policy on Socialism and Self-Reliance*.

⁴ For the romanticization of the African past and tradition in Ujamaa, see Stoger-Eising, “*Ujamaa Revisited*”; Martin, *Tanzanie, l’invention d’une culture politique*.

⁵ For general overviews of the Tanzanian experiment, see Cliffe & Saul, *Socialism in Tanzania* and Coulson, *Tanzania: A Political Economy*.

⁶ The last part of the Arusha Declaration, the “Arusha Resolution”, states five conditions for leadership, asserting that leaders should not engage in any capitalist activities and prohibiting them to hold shares or directorships in any company or business, own property for renting, or receive more than one salary.

⁷ Mohiddin, “Ujamaa na Kujitegemea”, p.175. The term “Wa-benzi” refers to the rich, with reference to their aspiration and capacity to own luxury commodities such as Mercedes Benz cars.

⁸ Mohiddin, “Ujamaa: A Commentary on President Nyerere’s vision of Tanzanian society”, p.130.

⁹ As several works have shown, state nationalism had no monopoly on the production of nationalist thought and actions. Other nationalist narratives not only existed alongside Ujamaa, but dialogued with it. See Brennan, “Blood Enemies”, Geiger, *TANU Women*, Maddox & Giblin, *In Search of a Nation*.

¹⁰ Nyerere, *Ujamaa*, *op.cit.*

community¹¹ (e.g. *wananchi*, literally the ‘children of the country’, for ‘citizens’; *ndugu*, ‘extended family members’, for ‘comrades’). But far from solely fostering inclusion as a nation-building strategy, the socialist rhetoric also drew upon metaphors of exploitation and blood-sucking (*unyonyaji*) to define and exclude “enemies of the nation”¹², among them *mabeberu* (imperialists), *mabepari* (capitalists) and *kupe* (parasites).¹³ As it permeated the whole society, Ujamaa official political lexicon was also transformed into a popular language widely in use among common citizens to reflect upon the new political landscape. Through her close reading of the local press in the Kilimanjaro area in the months after the Arusha Declaration, Emma Hunter shows that the vocabulary related to Ujamaa and *kujitegemea* was appropriated and used by common citizens to think, argue and debate about social, political and economic morality, thus engaging local issues with the broader national frame of reference of socialist-appropriate behaviours and attitudes.¹⁴ The popular appropriation of the state official language was possible because the set of ideas, values and principles developed in the frame of Ujamaa was broad enough to allow a large range of concerns to fit in it, and flexible enough to resonate with strictly local or pan-ethnic idioms of morality.¹⁵ But through this process of popular appropriation of the official language crafted by TANU cadres, government authorities and academics, shifts in content and meaning occurred, and new categories even emerged. As James Brennan argues, a specific urban vocabulary developed to speak about the social reality of an economic differentiation that the state tended to ignore, and consequently, that Ujamaa categories were unable to grasp: the personages of *kabwela* and *naizi* embodied respectively the ordinary poor yet cunning town-dweller (or the have-not) and the recently emerged wealthy ‘middle-class’ African (the have) as two products of an urban world whose existence and specific conditions, in the rural-oriented state ideology and policies, were not fully acknowledged, even less taken into account.

The retreat from socialism, which was in sight since the end of the 1970s when the economic shortcomings and failures of Ujamaa became manifest, actually took place in the 1980s with the adoption of a National Economic Survival Programme (1981-1982) and structural adjustment plans (1982-1986). At that time, the Ujamaa lexicon was abandoned in favour of a vocabulary related to change and modern capitalism: *mageuzi* (trade liberalization), *kwenda na wakati* (going with the times), *utandawazi*, (globalization), *vyama vingi* (multi-partyism), etc.¹⁶ If the opposition had the lead in introducing this new political language, the state and CCM politicians adopted it too. The Ujamaa-bashing of the 1980s was prejudicial to the iconic image of the formerly wise Mwalimu (the teacher) that enthusiastic developmentalist intellectual spheres had long disseminated abroad.¹⁷ It showed in full light the existence of fault lines in what had long been presented as a popular consensus on African socialism, and consequently on its more visible defender and representative, the head of the state.¹⁸ It is from the end of the 1970s that humoristic or pejorative nicknames were commonly in use to refer to Nyerere in popular discussions, such as *Sungura* (the rabbit) that targeted his cunning and tricky facet, *Mussa* (Moses) that ironically pointed to his pretension

¹¹ Martin, *op.cit.* Regarding the ubiquity of the family metaphor in official postcolonial discourses in sub-Saharan Africa, Tanzania being one of his case studies, see Schatzberg, *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa*.

¹² Brennan, *art.cit.*

¹³ See Scotton, “Some Swahili political words”; Temu, “The development of political vocabulary in Swahili”.

¹⁴ E. Hunter, “Revisiting Ujamaa”.

¹⁵ Martin, *Ibid.*; Crozon, “Maneno wa siasa”; Geiger, *op.cit.*

¹⁶ Askew, *art.cit.*, p.27 ; Crozon, “Dire pour séduire”, Saleh, “Going with the Times (*Kwenda na wakati*)”

¹⁷ Mazrui’s neologism, ‘tanzaphilia’, ironically targets the way most Western intellectuals, in the 1960s-1970s, uncritically supported Ujamaa and idealized Nyerere. See Mazrui, “Tanzaphilia”. See also Constantin, “Les images de la Tanzanie en France”. Interestingly, this tanzaphilia has been reproduced until today in the shape of a ‘Nyerere-philia’. A good example of it is to be found in Legum & Mmari, *The Legacy of Nyerere*.

¹⁸ The failures of the socialist experiment raised debates in the whole Tanzanian society. See Ibhawoh et Dibua, “Deconstructing Ujamaa”.

to guide and save the Tanzanian people, *Haambiliki* (the stubborn, lit. ‘the one who cannot be advised’) who would not listen to advice given to him that economic and political reforms were needed, or *Mchongameno* (‘the one who sharpens teeth’) to highlight his cruelty. At the same time, Ujamaa and *kujitegemea* were lampooned as Unyama (bestiality) or Utamaa (lust/ambition) and *kujimegea* (to serve oneself first).

Although he voluntarily stepped down in 1985, Nyerere continued to be a political force and a dominating figure on the national political scene (he remained chairman of CCM until 1990 and influenced debates about the introduction of political pluralism and controversies about the Union between Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar) as well as on the African political scene, being strongly involved in the mediation process in Burundi and Rwanda. As he accompanied the political evolutions of 1990s, Nyerere slowly came to epitomize the figure of the old wise man concerned about national and international peace, who aspires to rest, read and write literary and philosophical works, and meditate¹⁹ in his family property in Butiama-Mwitongo, his natal village situated in the north of the country. Nyerere thus managed, after the decrease in his popularity from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, to re-establish his reputation as a respectable man and to ensure the posterity of his status of founding father of the Tanzanian nation. By doing so, Nyerere triggered a rehabilitation process of his political legitimacy which has gained momentum after his death. A posthumous historical memory of Nyerere is being built today and tends to take the shape of myth-building and personality cult. Indeed, in the same as in other national contexts, the posthumous inclusion of Nyerere in the national history as a historical figure entails the simplification of the intricacies of history and politics. His personality, life and actions are reduced to “striking images, familiar terms and moral examples”²⁰ which are being used as a reservoir of positive moral principles – also called here a moral toolbox or “moral matrix”²¹ – from which individual and collective actors can draw to pursue different agendas. It is partly upon this selective and reconfigured figure of Nyerere which conflates with similarly adapted and reshaped Ujamaa tenets that contemporary representations of the nation, as an entity imagined with reference to a shared set of values and of political and cultural attributes, are articulated and debated today.²² Far from thinking that today’s “making” or “invention”²³ of Nyerere is the effect of the hegemony of the state on popular imaginaries of the nation, we seek to demonstrate here that this invention is the result of incessant debates between various levels of the Tanzanian society.

The Contemporary State-built imagery of Nyerere

The state is a major figure of the current production of an official public memory of Nyerere as a “Titan”.²⁴ Various government measures and rhetorical strategies of memorialisation have been implemented in the 2000s to create “memory places”²⁵ of Nyerere in the form of tangible sites, images, performances and narratives. Nyerere is increasingly referred to as “baba wa taifa”, a term that was less commonly in use during his life. Every

¹⁹ Gakunzi & Obe Obe, *Rencontre avec Julius K. Nyerere*.

²⁰ Agulhon, *De Gaulle*.

²¹ In Schatzberg’s work (*op.cit.*), the concept of “moral matrix” designates a set of metaphors upon which actors draw to think and speak about power and state-citizens relations.

²² See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*; Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*.

²³ The term “invention” is used with reference to Mudimbe’s usage in his book *The Invention of Africa*, to highlight how the reiteration of Nyerere’s attributes entails interpretations and reconstruction processes through which the contemporary figure of Nyerere is composed.

²⁴ Mazrui, *The ‘Titan’ Nyerere*.

²⁵ Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoires*; Nora, “Between Memory and History”.

14th October, on the date of his death declared a public holiday, official ceremonies of commemorations are organized in the major cities of the country during which local or national politicians deliver speeches that pay tribute to Nyerere. That same “Nyerere Day”, in Butiama-Mwitongo, a special mess gathering together Nyerere’s family members, government or administrative officials and common citizens is celebrated in his honour. After the celebration, people go and pray on his grave and visit his museum situated in the family property, nearby the Church. Officially opened on 2nd July 1999, the Mwalimu Nyerere Museum presents Nyerere’s personal and political biography, displays many portraits of him (sculptures, photos, printed fabric, paintings), and exhibits official presents he was bestowed on several occasions in Tanzania and abroad as well as personal objects, such as his radio, his shoes and his favourite tea set. Comments jotted down on the Visitor’s Book by officials or common citizens express respect and deference for Nyerere, thus reflecting the museum’s purpose of honouring Nyerere and revering the Tanzanian nation at the same time: “Mchango wa Mwalimu kwa Taifa hili hauwezi kupimika, ni mkubwa alijitoa mno kwa ajili ya taifa”²⁶ (02/09/2009); “He is real a hero and we Tanzanians are supposed to be proud of him and ourselves” (13/10/2009); “Nimeguswa sana na uzalendo wa baba wetu wa taifa kiasi kwamba natamani angekuwa bado hai” (18/09/2010).²⁷ Statues are being erected in major political sites of the country: in the capital city of Dodoma, an impressive Stalin-like statue stands in front of the Parliament. Streets, squares and official buildings have been renamed after him, like Julius Kambarage Nyerere International Airport. Public administrations but also private businesses are required to hang a photograph of Nyerere next to that of the incumbent president. If the national budget covers for these memorialisation costs, it happens that foreign countries join their forces in the celebration of Nyerere’s memory and contribute financially. In 2009, the Sino-Tanzania Friendship Association in collaboration with the Dar es Salaam City Council announced they would build a statue of Nyerere and a memorial hall, for the estimated amount of 1.5 million dollars at Mnazi Mmoja grounds in Dar es Salaam, an open space in the heart of the city used for official political occasions, where Nyerere used to welcome foreign politicians on their official visits to Tanzania.²⁸ Although financially and institutionally independent from the state, the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation, an organisation created by Nyerere in 1996 which aims at preserving Nyerere’s memories and pass down his legacy to the coming generations, contributes to the visibility of his image : it published several collections of his writings and speeches – it is currently working on the transcription and collection of original scattered speeches which have never been published before; it has planned to broadcast a series of interviews with members of his family, close friends and fellow politicians on television; and is preparing a video documentary of his life with the contribution of American scholars.²⁹

The media, sometimes acting as simple sounding boards of political concerns yet more often as instruments of the state or of the opposition in a country where the control on the media remains strong³⁰, is a significant channel of diffusion of an idealized image of Nyerere. It has significantly contributed to build his official memory in the public space. During the month of October, Nyerere’s voice can be heard on every radio and television channel. In the

²⁶ “The contribution of Mwalimu to this nation is incommensurable, it’s big and he really gave himself to the nation”.

²⁷ “I’ve been very much touched by the patriotism of our father of the nation so much so that I wish he would still be alive”

²⁸ “Mwalimu Nyerere statue set to be erected in Dar city”, *The Guardian*, 23/02/2009.

²⁹ Interview with Joseph Butiku, director of MNF in July 2010; and personal communication.

³⁰ Since the *Newspaper Act* of 1976, directors of the main titles are appointed by the President of Tanzania and their activities supervised by a sub-committee linked to the leading party. See Konde, *Press Freedom in Tanzania*. The press, often accused of calumny or of jeopardizing social peace and national unity, is regularly suspended or banned.

morning of the 14th October 2010, three songs of lamentation by famous Tanzanian singers and music bands (Remmy Ongala; Tanzanian One Theatre; African Star Band) were transmitted in a continuous loop on TBC television, the government channel, praising Nyerere's qualities and deploring his death. The same channel showed a recent documentary (2009) on his life and legacy, called *Mwalimu: The Legacy of Julius Kambarage Nyerere*, which presents Nyerere in a positive light. On various channels, images of archives showing significant political events of the 1960s and clips of his speeches, some of them now well-known of Tanzanians, were shown on television. Academic debates discussed the legacy of Nyerere in the Tanzanian society today, such as "Kumbukumbu ya Mwalimu Nyerere" (Memories of Nyerere) in the 'Tuongee Jamii' programme on Star TV. On TBC radio, the "Wosia wa Baba" (The father's speeches), short recorded speeches of Nyerere, are even broadcast all year long, several times a day, at pick audience hours. The fact that general elections are held every five year during the month of October, in the same month as Nyerere Day, accounts for the fact that the visibility of the figure of Nyerere in the media in October 2005³¹ and October 2010 was high. Most speeches selected for diffusion during these electoral years emphasized the importance of national unity, of the qualities expected of political leaders, of the inanity of corruption and of the need to respect the Union and the constitution.

The press has been particularly active in celebrating the anniversary of Nyerere's death.³² Since 2004³³, the headlines of most newspapers remind readers that Nyerere Day is being commemorated and the main national titles published consistent supplements. The most striking feature is that articles published on this occasion focus more on the man than on history and politics. Many articles feature short biographies in which Nyerere's personal qualities are described in length in a hagiographic tone. Titles are evocative: "Nyerere: a human star that twinkles since childhood", "Nyerere: a glimmer of hope that left us in darkness".³⁴ Selected excerpts of speeches pronounced by heads of state who attended his national funerals are reprinted to emphasize Nyerere's qualities: he was a "hero", a "great man", an "example to follow".³⁵ Referring to his personal attitudes and lifestyle, articles assert that simplicity, absence of ostentation, honesty and generosity best describe his personality. The food he liked, *ugali*³⁶, the way he used to dress or to talk³⁷, the places where he used to live³⁸ would illustrate these qualities. It is often suggested that Nyerere's nickname "Mwalimu", was not spontaneously given to Nyerere by the population but was deliberately chosen and diffused by Nyerere himself as a way to highlight his modesty – in comparison to many African megalomaniac heads of state– and remind citizens of what the main quality of a good leader is: the ability to explain things in a simple and clear manner.³⁹ In a similar vein, the moral values he promoted during his life are described in length. 'Freedom', 'justice', 'unity' or 'equality' – terms which Nyerere himself used in his essays and speeches⁴⁰ – appear

³¹ The 2005 elections had to be postponed until December due to the death of an opposition candidate.

³² This general presentation is based on my press review from 2004 to 2010.

³³ I have carried out a press review of this anniversary every year since 2004.

³⁴ "Nyerere: Nyota ya utu iliyong'ara tangu utotoni", *Nipashe*, 13/10/2004; "Nyerere: Mwanga wa matumaini ulioacha kiza kinene", *Majira*, 14/10/2004.

³⁵ *Mtanzania*, 14/10/2004 ; *Majira*, 14/10/2004.

³⁶ *Ugali* is a thick porridge made of maize flour.

³⁷ "Nkrumah's" khaki suits, communist "Chou-En-Lai" vests or "safari" costumes all share the common features of simplicity and absence of ostentation.

³⁸ In Dar es Salaam, Nyerere did not live in the impressive presidential palace situated by the Indian Ocean but in a modest house in the area of Masaki.

³⁹ The insistence of the media on Nyerere's humility echoes Mmari's statement that Nyerere disgraced "grandiose and ostentation words" ("The Legacy of Nyerere", p.178): he is said to have refused to be called *Mheshimiwa* (Honorable), *Mtukufu* (His Excellency) or *Mkombozi* (the liberator).

⁴⁰ See Nyerere: *Freedom and Unity*, *op.cit.*; Nyerere, *Freedom and Development*.

again and again. Instead of being considered the result of pragmatic considerations and political strategies, politics is presented as an application of these core values (themselves seen as a transposition of Nyerere's personal quality) into the social, political and economic realm. The production of this idealized and uncritical image of Nyerere follows the typical three-step process (predestination, initiation and symbolical rebirth) of the building of the 'fathers of the nation' in Africa highlighted by Memel-Fotê.⁴¹ In biographic articles, Nyerere's childhood is indeed being explored to find events that could be interpreted as "signs" of his future career: being a good-tempered child, he was ready for the stress and responsibility of the position of president; his hard-working attitude is associated with the later socialist discipline and steady work expected from leaders and common citizens; and his generosity is seen as a sign that he would give himself to the nation and promote the socialist principles of equality and justice for all. Education is compared to an initiation rite he successfully overcame to enter the age of wisdom. As for Nyerere's decision to stop working as a teacher and instead get involved in the liberation movement, it is regarded as a turning point in his life, a kind of symbolical "rebirth" into the field of politics. Recurring analogies with the figure of Moses and the Christ⁴², for Nyerere is said to have given his life to save the Tanzanian nation from tribalism, racism, poverty and dependence, reveals a classical mechanism of the production of political legitimacy by conflating power and the sacred.⁴³ In this context, the beatification process which was launched in January 2006 by the Church of Tanzania⁴⁴, and is expected to lead to the sanctification of Nyerere, is evidence of the current process that consists in extracting Nyerere from the secular realm and bringing him to the sacred. If this disconnection is to take place, it would definitely erase the historical, political and intellectual context of the 1950s-1980s which gave birth to a man and the values he defended during his life and instead, produce a totally de-contextualized figure. The media coverage of the commemoration of the death of Nyerere clearly reveals this shift from knowledge to imaginaries, from history to myth, and from the secular to the sacred. In other words, it contributes to the contemporary "invention" of Nyerere.

Strikingly, however, incessant references to Ujamaa and Nyerere are built on a "national silence on socialism"⁴⁵ as a development strategy. As Kelly Askew pointed out in her analysis of the many songs of lamentations (*nyimbo za maombolezo*) composed after the death of Nyerere, the terms of peace, unity, solidarity, unity, and the elimination of tribalism (*ukabila*) and religious divisiveness (*udini*) come songs after songs but the term of Ujamaa itself does not arise and no mention is made of the socialist orientation and economic dimension of the Tanzanian experiment. Only the moral facet of the socialist policy and of Nyerere is remembered with reference to the broad concepts of justice, equality, peace and freedom as well as to the values of honesty, integrity or sacrifice for the common good. These concepts constitute a nebulous set of moral principles which can easily be disconnected from the historical context which gave them birth in Tanzania and reconnected to the global ethical repertoires of the great religions of the world or of the Human Rights. At the national level, the disjunction between political morality and African socialism makes it possible for the political elite to continue to capitalize on the past. The imaginary continuity between socialism and post-socialism allows the promotion a national ethos for national unity against

⁴¹ Memel-Fotê, "Des ancêtres fondateurs aux Pères de la nation".

⁴² The association between African leaders and religious figures such as prophets and the Christ is a common feature on the African continent. See for example the case of Lumumba discussed by Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Figures des mémoires congolaises de Lumumba: Moïse, héros culturel, Jésus-Christ".

⁴³ Frazer, *The Golden Bough*; Balandier, *Le pouvoir sur scène*; Kantorowitz, *The King's Two Bodies*.

⁴⁴ The official inauguration of the beatification process took place in Butiama on 21 January 2006. Until now, Nyerere was granted the status of 'Servant of God', the very first step towards sainthood. Fouéré, "La fabrique d'un saint en Tanzanie postsocialiste"; Mesaki & Malipula, "Julius Nyerere's influence and legacy"

⁴⁵ Askew, *art.cit.*, p.38.

fragmentation, and the fostering of citizens' adhesion to a national imagined community sharing basic moral tenets. At the international level, in accordance with aid conditionality, it pledges that socialism, as a political and economic system, will never come back⁴⁶.

Nyerere and Ujamaa in the Eyes of Party Competition

Politicians, in their search for political legitimacy, have been instrumental in figuring Nyerere in the public sphere by speaking words of respect and deference, if not veneration. CCM politicians, and most specifically the incumbent President Jakaya Kikwete, had the lead in capitalizing on an idealized image of Nyerere. I have shown elsewhere that at the time of the 2005 presidential elections, the then CCM presidential candidate did not wait for the official launch of the electoral campaign to publicize and promote his candidacy.⁴⁷ In May 2005, his meeting with the widow of the late Nyerere, Maria Nyerere, in Butiama constituted a turning point in Kikwete's personal campaign. Even if the actual content of the meeting was not released, what was abundantly recounted and discussed in the media was the fact that Nyerere's widow bestowed upon Kikwete the present of a Bible. The event was first praised as a deferent way to pay tribute to the first president of Tanzania, for the visit of Kikwete to Nyerere's widow implied that the CCM presidential candidate would follow in Nyerere's footsteps. By accepting the gift of a Bible, he also showed a moderate Muslim who would enhance religious tolerance if elected. Last, meeting with Maria Nyerere had a special significance for a man who, in 1995, had been overlooked by Nyerere for candidacy, the latter giving his full support to Benjamin Mkapa. Paying a visit to the family of Nyerere in 2005 was therefore a powerful strategy to rub out this past event from people's memory. This specific episode shows that, as by Kristin Phillips asserted in her analysis of political rallies and idiom, Kikwete derived his authority to govern "through a myth of maturity and of lineal descent from the national father – Nyerere".⁴⁸

But in the competition for power, controversies are hot over who can claim to be the legitimate heir of the moral legacy of Nyerere. In the mid-1990s, opposition parties appropriated the rhetoric of economic liberalization and free competition⁴⁹ to attract all those who resented socialism and the party representing it, CCM, but shifts occurred in the mid-2000 when the opposition started to advocate for social equality and economic justice with manifest references to the political principles defended by Nyerere during his life and to his personal behaviours as a head of state. The controversy which emerged between CCM and the Chadema opposition party over the public use of the name and memory of Nyerere, towards the end of the third multiparty elections campaign from October to December 2005, is a good example of the return of the figure of Nyerere in the political arena. During campaign rallies, not only did the presidential aspirant on the Chadema ticket, Freeman Mbowe, insist on his close friendship with the former president, but he also repeated many times that CCM "had died with Nyerere". To him, what remained was a party that gathered people with the sole aim "to exploit the wealth of their country to get rich while the rest of the population was stuck in abject poverty".⁵⁰ He did not hesitate to explicitly attribute these negative changes to former president Benjamin Mkapa (1995-2005). Had these claims not become a matter of public debate – be they wrong or not – they would have proved just another strategy for political legitimacy comparable to that of many other presidential candidates. But Mbowe's repeated claims intensely irritated CCM members. The then Chief CCM Campaign Strategist for the

⁴⁶ Fouéré, "Tanzanie".

⁴⁷ Fouéré, "The Legacy of J. K. Nyerere and the Tanzanian Elections of Oct.-Dec. 2005".

⁴⁸ Phillips, "Pater Rules Best".

⁴⁹ Crozon, "Dire pour séduire".

⁵⁰ "CCM hapo ilikufa na Nyerere – Mbowe", *Taifa Letu*, 05/09/2005 ("Today's CCM died with Nyerere").

elections and Chief Political Advisor to President, the stalwart CCM politician Kingunge Ngombale-Mwiru, turned away Mbowe's claims that the latter used to be a good friend of Nyerere. He declared that like many ex-CCM politicians in Tanzania⁵¹, Mbowe had indeed known Nyerere but had never been his close acquaintance.⁵² Ngombale-Mwiru went on to say that presidential and parliamentary candidates of the opposition, Mbowe included, were using Nyerere's name as a means of endearing themselves to the electorate, "although their calibre and integrity [were] nowhere near Mwalimu's".⁵³ He then insisted that CCM presidential candidate Jakaya Kikwete was the only person entitled to mention Nyerere in his rallies for he used to be close to Tanzania's founding father and had "never used Mwalimu Nyerere's name to earn cheap publicity". The reply to Ngombale-Mwiru came from the Chadema spokesman, Mwisiga Baregu, a political scientist at the University of Dar es Salaam, who stated that Nyerere was neither a personal property nor the property of any political party.⁵⁴ As a consequence, there should be no partisan monopoly on the use of the values and principles the former head of state defended during his life. The issue lying at the core of this contest clearly centres on the question of who can claim to be the depositary of Nyerere's legacy. The CCM main direction conflates Nyerere with the single-party TANU, later CCM, to declare that Nyerere is first and foremost the property of the party. As the former president Benjamin Mkapa made it clear during the controversy, "no one can claim to respect Nyerere more than Chama Cha Mapinduzi".⁵⁵ On the contrary, what opposition parties were keen to claim is that Nyerere is more than that. He is a national figure. He is the property of the nation and as such, anyone can mention his name, quote his words, and declare to respect his legacy.

During the last general elections of October 2010, the figure of Nyerere has been used again by politicians of various parties in search for political legitimacy and votes. Many declared that, if elected, they would follow the example of integrity, probity and incorruptibility of the father of the nation. Again, Chadema took the lead in investing on Nyerere's idealized image. Its presidential candidate, Dr Wilbroad Slaa, repeatedly invoked the memory of Nyerere in his condemnation of corruption and corrupt CCM politicians. He promised that, when in power, he would "consider the position of Julius Nyerere, that is to say to ensure that public services in health and education are provided at the expenses of the state" and "follow in Nyerere's footsteps of a meaningful leadership so as to bring the country to a better place".⁵⁶ On 26th October 2010, the newspaper *Tanzania Daima* showed a picture of Chadema's supporters waving a banner bearing the words: "Kutoka Nyerere hadi Slaa" (From Nyerere to Slaa). The symbolic filial descent with Nyerere on which Kikwete strove to derive his legitimacy when he campaigned for presidency in 2005 seems to move away from him and is, instead, associated with Dr Slaa, a point that was not lost by the media. Interestingly, the controversy over who can claim to be the depositary of the legacy of Nyerere, which had been central in the 2005 campaign, lost relevance in 2010. However, what the 2010 campaign explicitly revealed is how much Nyerere, over the last 5 years, has been made a moral icon against which politicians are being judged. References to the figures of Nyerere are not simply made to build one's legitimacy, but also to delegitimize opponents, accused of not being up to the standards of integrity and incorruptibility set up by Nyerere. Since the end 2007, when successive scandals of grand corruption were revealed and led to the resignation of Prime Minister Edward Lowassa, opposition parties massively resorted to

⁵¹ All politicians who got involved in politics before the adoption of multipartyism in 1992 necessarily used to be members of the single-party CCM.

⁵² "Kingunge awajia juu ya akina Mbowe", *Majira*, 02/12/2005 (Kingunge comes back to Mbowe and Cie).

⁵³ "Don't misuse Mwalimu's name, opposition warned", *The Guardian*, 02/12/2005.

⁵⁴ "CCM yaonywa Mwalimu Nyerere si mali ya mtu", *Majira*, 05/12/2005 ("CCM warns that Mwalimu Nyerere is not a personal property").

⁵⁵ "Mkapa awashambulia wapinzani", *Mtanzania*, 21/10/2005.

⁵⁶ "Slaa anamtumia Nyerere kummaliza Kikwete", *Raia Mwema*, 06-12/10/2010.

the rhetoric of political and economic morality to attack CCM leaders' legitimacy and accuse them of being just a bunch of corrupt people. And this exchange of words of war did not end with the 2010 elections as Chadema has remained strongly vocal since then, organizing post-electoral rallies to denounce electoral manipulation, blaming the state for its violence after Chadema's supporters were killed by the police in Arusha and Mbeya in January 2011⁵⁷, publicizing the Dowans corruption scandal and pointing the finger at CCM corrupt leaders, and finally reaffirming its commitment to walk in Nyerere's footsteps by paying tribute on his grave. Again, the CCM reacted to Chadema's memory pilgrimage to Butiama through the voice of his General Secretary Wilson Mukama who complained that Chadema politicians were hypocritically going to "cry on Nyerere's grave" while they were a party of "capitalists".⁵⁸ Using Nyerere's words pronounced when he stepped down in 1985, that is to say "without a solid CCM, the country will become unstable (*bila CCM imara nchi itayumba*), he both reminded people that CCM should be the only legitimate depository of Nyerere's legacy and the sole viable party for the country.

Similarly to what has been observed concerning the state-built imagery of Nyerere and Ujamaa, there is an obvious silence on Ujamaa and the socialist experiment in these attempts to build individual or party legitimacy as well as in the controversies which arise over who can claim to be the depository of the legacy of Nyerere. When Ujamaa is mentioned, which is not frequent, it is dismissed as an old-fashioned ideology in the new liberal global economy or as economically harmful. The necessity to revise the Constitution and erase references to Ujamaa and *kujitegemea* is frequently mentioned not only among politicians but also in the academic sphere. However, the disjunction between Ujamaa as a development path and Ujamaa as a moral reservoir embodied in the figure of Nyerere is again manifest in the partisan competition. As an instrument for building political legitimacy, the figure of Nyerere remains powerful; yet, it is an instrument that can easily backfire, for the one who claims he will walk in Nyerere's footsteps takes the risk to be dismissed as a liar who will never be up to the leadership standards set by the father of the nation.

Popular re-imagination of Nyerere and Ujamaa

Partisan competition both reflects and orientates the way Nyerere is remembered among common citizens. Indeed, it has been shown that the Ujamaa language is a shared popular language that populations use in everyday interactions to reflect upon the present. Nostalgic memory narratives about education and health are commonly heard among the generation who grew up under socialism and confront former imaginaries of social justice and equity with today's difficult conditions of life. As shown by Vinay Kamat, in situations where socialist nostalgia arises, Nyerere is associated with the "good old days" when the socialist government provided households, free healthcare, subsidized food and social security.⁵⁹ The socialist ethos built in the 1960S-1970s seems to still permeate the remembering of the past in the present. Yet, these nostalgic remembrances vary from one place to another and from one group to another: according to Kamat, the ones who could economically benefit from the opportunities opened up by the market economy tend to cast off the time of Ujamaa and despise people who regret it and call to its return today.

Moreover, part of the critique that accompanies social struggles since the adoption of a free-market economy has re-appropriated the official language of the former socialist state. The case of the Tanzania Zambia Railway (Tazara), built with the financial and technical help

⁵⁷ "Tamko la Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (Chadema) juu ya mauaji ya wananchi wakati wa maandamano ya amani yaliyofanyika Arusha tarehe Januari 5", *Tanzania Daima*, 13/01/2011.

⁵⁸ "Mukama: Chadema mabepari waliokubuhu", *Jambo Leo*, 16/05/2011.

⁵⁹ Kamat, "This is not our Culture!".

of Communist China at the beginning of the 1970s in order to link the port of Dar es Salaam to the heart of the Zambian Copperbelt⁶⁰, is a good example of this. In 1994, the management of Tazara not only sought to make the railway more efficient by cutting costs and reducing its staff, but contemplated privatizing the railway. Tazara's workers and the leaders of villages situated along the railway, whose local economy was strongly dependent on the railway, sent letters of protestation to the Tazara direction and to the national authorities, saying "This railway was built by our Chinese brothers for our benefit and for the benefit of Zambia. Therefore I do not see the reason why some of the stations should be closed due to pressures from the World Bank" or "We called this railway the Freedom Railway because we Tanzanians are free. Now where is this freedom if we are being returned to slavery?"⁶¹ As Jamie Monson shows, these letters clearly revived the Bandung spirit and the "language of exhortation that had been used by the socialist state during the period of the construction of the railway and villageization"⁶²: international solidarity among workers, solidarity between the peoples of Africa, the fight for independence and freedom against Western exploitation and (neo-) colonialism. One cannot simply attribute the re-appropriation of the nyererist rhetoric in social struggle to the existence of a deep-seated socialist *habitus* which the hegemonic state would have built. Many academic works have shown that, at the time of Nyerere, popular adhesion to socialism was variable, and the populations remained "uncaptured"⁶³ by the state. References to Ujamaa in contemporary social struggle should be seen as a strategic tool, selected for its expected efficiency in a certain situation, and which can be combined to other moral reservoirs such as the international language of democracy and good governance.⁶⁴

As years pass on, similar phenomena are observed elsewhere. In 2002, praising songs to Julius Nyerere were being sung when Tanesco's workers opposed the privatization of the electricity national enterprise and its selling to a South-African firm.⁶⁵ It is therefore not surprising to see that the successive scandals of corruption which have made the headlines since the end of the year 2007⁶⁶ triggered imaginaries of political and economic morality related to the socialist period. The high-level and high visibility of practices of corruption are indeed associated with the decrease of the principles of honesty and integrity which Nyerere embodies and which every political leader is expected to follow. Considering that the free-market economy has facilitated the development of straddling practices of the political elite between the political arena and the economic sphere, and contributed to the increase in bribery and corruption⁶⁷, strong claims to re-establish the Leadership Code have emerged in the civil society and were given visibility in the media.⁶⁸ The existence of such claims shows that the criteria of political and economic morality are drawn, again, upon the idealized figure of Nyerere and the return to leadership principles associated with the Ujamaa period. Ujamaa and Nyerere are contemporary popular toolboxes used to give intelligibility to the present, to act upon it by engaging into protestation and contestation, and to produce alternative representations of leadership and governance.

⁶⁰ Bailey, *Freedom Railway*.

⁶¹ Monson, "Defending the People's Railway in the Era of Liberalization", p.117.

⁶² Monson, *art.cit.*, p.113-114.

⁶³ Hyden, *Beyond Ujamaa*.

⁶⁴ Fouéré, "Tanzanie", *art.cit.*

⁶⁵ Kelsall, "Governance, Democracy and Recent Political Struggles in Mainland Tanzania".

⁶⁶ Two major scandals of grand corruption have rocked the country since 2007. The first one is "EPA", named after the External Payment Arrears accounts of the Bank of Tanzania used for illicit payments worth hundreds of billion shillings. The second one, called "Richmond" after the name of the electricity company contracted by the state to produce electricity for the national grid in 2006, led to the resignation of the former Prime Minister Edward Lowassa in February 2009 and the dissolution of the Cabinet. See Fouéré, "A Democratic Purge?".

⁶⁷ Havnevik & Isinika, *Tanzania in Transition: From Nyerere to Mkapa*.

⁶⁸ The Leadership Code was abolished at the Zanzibar Declaration in 2001.

The press review carried out over the last 7 years, from 2004 to 2010, clearly shows the shift which slowly occurred in the use of the moral toolbox represented by the figure of Nyerere, and which seems to echo popular concerns: laudatory comments that simply contribute to build Nyerere as an iconic representation of the unity of the Tanzanian nation are still very much present in newspapers, but they increasingly give way to the figuration of the first president as a role model for good leadership and good governance. In other words, Nyerere has become a reference point, a benchmark against which the qualities and behaviours of today's leaders are being measured and judged. During the last 2010 general elections, Nyerere Day was again the occasion to celebrate the said perfection of Nyerere but also to wonder whose presidential candidate he would have supported. The headline of *The Citizen* of 14th October asked: "Why Nyerere wouldn't have okayed many candidates?" and continues, on the following page, with the sub-title: "Mwalimu's probable stance in the elections".

Contesting Mwalimu, Contesting the Nation

The prominent presence of the idealized figure of Nyerere in the public space and the wide diffusion of its uses in local and national debates about social, political and economic morality in Tanzania does not entail that there are not any critical perspective, if not alternative historical memories of Nyerere. To understand the significance of these critical narratives, we assert that the analysis needs to go beyond the assessment of their accuracy with the historical reality, i.e. their veracity, but instead explore how they are productive in the present—in conceptualizing the political space and purporting to act upon it.

Among the negative narratives of Nyerere which have emerged in the public sphere and strongly contrast with the current consensual imagery of Nyerere, one finds the presentation of Nyerere as an evil man by the *Democratic Party*. In the mid-2000, the leader of this populist opposition party, Reverend Christopher Mtikila, developed a harsh critic of the actions and personality of Nyerere. He suggested that the failures of Ujamaa were deliberately organized by Nyerere and were the results of his fiendish personality. In the weeks which followed the death of Nyerere, Mtikila was accused of disseminating recorded tapes vilifying and insulting the deceased, who was called a "devil" and his mortal remains irreverently referred to as "a corpse". In 2005, Mtikila wrote an essay – which was not published⁶⁹ – entitled *The information of the Democratic Party on the sins of Julius Kambarage Nyerere*, in which he depicted in detail how Nyerere, far from following any ethical conduct, cheated the Tanzanian population by stealing money and stirring religious divisiveness. He insisted again that Nyerere was genuinely possessed by the devil. If Mtikila's intentions were definitely to knock Nyerere off his pedestal, his attack against the general trend of idealizing Nyerere undeniably targeted CCM politics and politicians and, consequently, was aimed to feed his reputation of not mincing his words, to present his party as the only real political alternative, and to attract disenchanted voters. Discrediting Nyerere was, therefore, a partisan tactics.

Although, to my knowledge, Mtikila has been the only politician to try to dismantle publicly the iconic imagery of Nyerere in such a radical way, it is noticeable that his attacks echo a couple of publications which have purported to reveal the 'hidden facets' of Tanzania's former leader. In his book *The Life and Times of Abdulwahid Sykes*, Mohamed Said has rewritten the history of the building of the nationalist movement before independence with a view to highlight the decisive role of many other figures who have been erased from the official history. Doing so, he does not only challenge the central position of Nyerere in the fight for independence as depicted in the official history – therefore

⁶⁹ In an interview I carried out with him in June 2006, Mtikila complained that he could not find any place to print his text because printing works were being controlled by the state.

questioning the neutrality and veracity of the historical narrative produced by the state – but he also reintroduces the religious factor in the nationalist movement, showing how the national educated elite committed to the fight for independence was, in a great majority, composed of Muslims (among them, the Sykes family). The book is now well-known of the educated Muslim elite today and selected excerpts have recently been printed in *An-Nuur*, a newspaper promoting a politicized Islam, so as to reach a wider audience.⁷⁰ In his biography entitled *The Dark Side of Nyerere*, Ludovick Mwijage retells his long years of persecution and imprisonment which he attributes to Nyerere himself. Aiming to unveil the murky facets of the Nyerere regime, depicted as the reign of arbitrary rule and personal power, the book points to the fate of many political companions turned opponents who were put to prison or had to leave for exile, such as the second most prominent figure of the early post-independence government, Oscar Kambona, or the most active female figure in the political mobilization of women in the pre-independence movement, Bibi Titi Mohamed.⁷¹

In Zanzibar, a negative narrative of Nyerere is also in circulation today. Drawing upon the collective memories of the 1964 Revolution and of the Karume years (1964-1975), this alternative narrative of Nyerere has brought about the publication of biographies and re-readings and re-writings of history by the members of populations targeted by the revolutionary regime (ZNP opponents and people of foreign origins, the more vocal today being people of Arab origins) in exile in Europe and in the Arabic Peninsula.⁷² These books circulate in the Zanzibari society and are read by the educated elite and the opposition. A nationalist-oriented newspaper called *Dira* was particularly active in articulating and diffusing this narrative more widely⁷³, thus reaching a less-educated audience.⁷⁴ The very first issue of the newspaper in 2002 opened with an article by the Chief Editor Ali Nabwa entitled “Nyerere si Malaika” (Nyerere is not an Angel) which, based on the latter’s personal memories and his re-readings of the words and actions of the first President, was aimed to dismantle Nyerere’s contemporary eulogistic image. The article depicts Nyerere as a condescending, disloyal and self-interested man who resorted to backroom deals, intrigues and machinations to reach and keep power, manoeuvred to get rid off popular politicians who got in his light, and stabbed even faithful companions in the back. Nabwa’s piece of work specifically aimed to reveal the role played by Nyerere, in great secrecy, in the 1964 Revolution and in the Union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar. Indeed, both historical events are said to result from Nyerere preconceived ideas that Zanzibar was the place of the all-Arab inhumane slave trade and slavery; he also considered Zanzibar a place where the Arab and Islamic-referenced cosmopolitan Swahili cultural specificities which took shape and flourished over the centuries contributed to develop, among Zanzibaris, collective attitudes of distinction and dissociation from the African continent – and for Nyerere, the article says, such separate Zanzibari identity needed to give way to a black African- and Mainland-centred culture. This would explain why – as a recent book that purports to revise the country’s history *Kwaheri Uhuru, Kwaheri Ukoloni!* (Goodbye Freedom, Goodbye Colonialism!) also asserts by drawing on personal testimonies of people who were involved or witnessed the organization of the 1964 Revolution⁷⁵ – Nyerere would have organized, with his right-hand

⁷⁰ *An-Nuur*, 4-10 mars 2011, p.13

⁷¹ Geiger, *op.cit.*

⁷² See Shahbal, *Zanzibar, the rise and fall*; Fairouz, *Ukweli ni huu* (This is the truth); Muhsin, *Conflicts and harmony*; Al-Barwani, *Unser Leben vor der Revolution*.

⁷³ Fouéré, “Reinterpreting Revolutionary Zanzibar in the Media Today: the Case of *Dira* Newspaper”.

⁷⁴ The popular success of the newspaper is depicted as tremendous: The assertion that the pages of *Dira* would never be used to wrap doughnuts (“*Dira halitafungiwa maandazi*”) was repeated many times over the course of the research.

⁷⁵ The veracity of the personal testimonies collected and presented in Harith Ghassany’s book is questioned by foreign scholars but also by members Zanzibari educated elite.

man at that time, Oscar Kambona, the coup which overthrew the post-independent constitutional monarchy of Zanzibar in 11-12 January 1964.⁷⁶ Regarding the Union of April 1964, it is said that the real aim of Nyerere was not to bring development to the Isles but, under the pressure of United States who feared that Zanzibar might become their ‘Cuba of Africa’⁷⁷, to get rid off the Marxist influence of the *Umma* Party and its popular leader Abdulrahman Babu, and impose a black African regime. Nabwa’s article even defends the idea that the Union was not just meant to control the political destiny of the Isles but had the underlying objective to destroy the economy and the culture of a place that, not so long before, as the author reminds the reader, Nyerere wanted to “tow out into the middle of the Indian Ocean”.⁷⁸ The religious factor is essential in this making of Nyerere as an “*adui wa taifa*” (“enemy of the nation”, the term ‘nation’ referring to Zanzibar) as he is said to have striven to dismiss the central role of Islam in the Swahili coastal culture, to limit its diffusion and to control its political influence. This provocative introductory article paved the way for a radical revision of the revolutionary ideology until *Dira* was banned by the government of Zanzibar, one year only after it was launched.⁷⁹ Since its inception, the aim of the newspaper was clearly asserted: it was to produce a historical narrative which would compete with the national official history and ideology; and doing so, it was aimed to destabilize the political elite in power in Zanzibar who, until today, have built their political legitimacy on their lineal descent with the Revolutionaries. Articulating a historical memory of Nyerere which challenged the idealized imagery in circulation today served this purpose well.

⁷⁶ Lofchie, *Zanzibar: Background to Revolution*; Clayton, *The Zanzibar Revolution and its Aftermath*.

⁷⁷ Wilson, *US Foreign Policy and Revolution*.

⁷⁸ The sentence pronounced by Nyerere, “If I could tow that island out into the middle of the Indian Ocean, I’ll do it”, is cited in Smith, *Nyerere of Tanzania* p. 90, also published as *We Must Run While They Walk: A Portrait of Africa’s Julius Nyerere*.

⁷⁹ The newspaper *An-Nuur* is now following the path of *Dira* in re-writing the history of the Isles, notably since the debates about the revision of the Constitution which followed the last general elections of October 2010.

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