

JACEK GÓRKA OFM

A TANZANIAN CULTURE:
CATALYST OR INHIBITOR OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT?
A SHORT COMPARISON OF THE CASES OF DR. J.K. NYERERE
AND DR. J.P. MAGUFULI

Abstract. Undoubtedly, culture is a unique way in which every human being identifies himself with a group of people and, in parallel, differentiates from others. It is also obvious that culture is not stable in its form, mostly because it is considered as an average of many factors determined by time, place, etc. Hence, culture searches for uniqueness, and that makes it the overriding objective for a group of people. On the other hand, it provides an ancillary support through common values that makes us human. On top of that, culture expresses itself through unique form of communication and as such might become a irreplaceable tool in the whole process of sending and receiving information. In our study, we made an effort to analyze the above-presented ambiguous concept of culture and to compare it with two exemplary leaders of Tanzania, namely Nyerere and Magufuli. Such analyses meant to help us to understand how they understood, lived, and used culture in their struggle for the development of Tanzania.

Keywords: culture; development; communication; Tanzania; J.K. Nyerere; J.P. Magufuli.

INTRODUCTION

It has never been easy to talk objectively or scientifically about a culture within the Tanzanian or, co-called, African context.¹ It often appears as a sort of taboo that a priori is often considered as unquestionably good. Consequently, any existence of a negative (or less positive) comment about a culture is automatically interpreted in some defensive terms. Often, some

JACEK GÓRKA OFM—Jordan University College; address for correspondence: P.O. Box 1878, Morogoro, Tanzania; e-mail: jacek.gorka@juco.ac.tz.

¹ Due to the common understanding of belonging and similarities expressed in these two terms: *Tanzanian* and *African*, considered locally as synonyms, the author will permit himself to use these terms alternately.

negative aspect of this culture may also be apologetically explained by pointing fingers at foreign cultures as a source and cause of it. In other words, there usually exists an external reason that might explain the existence of negative elements within the Tanzanian culture. Most probably those external reasons might be identified with foreign cultures. Perhaps this is why Tanzanian researchers avoid culture as a main topic in their research and critical studies.

Before starting this research, I looked in vain for scientific and objective studies of a *Tanzanian culture* that would be written *by* a Tanzanian *for* Tanzanians. Another surprising fact is to find some studies where, for example, the term “Tanzanian culture” is used interchangeably with “African culture”, so often that they sound like synonyms. Certainly, there are many similarities but they should overshadow differences like, for example, between Bantu and Nilotic or between cultures in North Africa and in Sub-Saharan Africa.

We should not be surprised then, when reading studies on African culture, that have been defined by applying cultural meanings developed by thinkers living in the Greco-Roman concept of it.² This is a very big misunderstanding, especially when we realize that the co-called African culture is based on oral tradition as opposed to the literary one; and although these two are not necessarily mutually exclusive, it seems very important to avoid the copying and pasting of definitions between these two.³

Hence, on the one hand, there is the tendency to present the African culture as ideal, and on the other, critical analyses of it from the local perspective are neglected. Originally from a European country, based on literary tradition, I am careful not to make a similar misinterpretation of a culture based on the oral tradition; therefore, I have decided to employ (among others) Umberto Eco’s semiotic theory as a theoretical framework here. Additionally, collected speeches of J.K. Nyerere and J.P. Magufuli should help in enhanced elaboration of the problem presented in the title of my study.

² This is not a separate observation, as recently Dr. George Mofulu (Mzumbe University, Morogoro, Tanzania) prepared a valuable research article entitled “The Influence of Cultural Values on the Entrepreneurial Behavior of Aspiring Entrepreneurs,” where he too had to define the term of a *culture* according to the “non-African” sources due to the significant lack of Tanzanian scientific literature dealing with their culture.

³ A broad elaboration of this argument has been explored and described in Walter Jackson Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

CONCEPT OF CULTURE

Culture is the essence of the identity of a particular community and is defined by some scientists as a creative force of collective consciousness shaped by historically transmitted patterns used “to communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge and attitudes toward life.”⁴

Some other thinkers would argue that cultural values are not the result of self-conscious acquisition but are transmitted and acquired in an “unthinking, unreflected way.”⁵

Undoubtedly, a culture gives a person the sense of belonging to a particular community and helps them to be oriented in the world. Tarimo⁶ argued that without a cultural identity, a person might be disoriented, incapable of leading a meaningful life and in consequence deprived of a stable personality or self-esteem. Nevertheless, such a person will continue to be a person and will have all values that are necessary to be considered as a human being.

For that reason in this article we would like to oppose the above-mentioned view by Aquiline Tarimo and other scholars in order to present a different view, where so-called basic human values/instincts—for example, drive for survival, desire to keep good health and to care about it, learn from the successes and mistakes of ancestors, produce sufficient amount of food, advance housing capacity, make life easier as one remembers it from childhood, to work in order to satisfy own needs, etc. In other words, following these instincts, and having no clear understanding of a culture one may still develop self-esteem and be stable personally. Consequently, we might say that the desire for any kind of development (understood in a wide sense) seems to be existing within each one of us since we were born, and naturally, along years of life, we learn how to make use of it for ourselves and for the needs of others.

In this short article I will attempt to find out the role that culture plays in such a process. In order to avoid a purely abstract discussion, I resolved to keep this discourse within a Tanzanian context and support it by analyzing the significant roles of two great leaders: Dr. J.K. Nyerere and Dr. J.P. Magufuli.

⁴ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 89.

⁵ Richard G. Cote, *Re-visioning Mission: The Catholic Church in the Postmodern Divide* (Ottawa: St. Paul University Press, 1955), 105.

⁶ Aquiline Tarimo, *Human Rights, Cultural Differences, and the Church in Africa* (Morogoro: Salvatorianum, 2004), 29–30.

The word *culture* comes from Latin *colere* which means “to nurse, to cultivate, to care for”. The word was not used in the Middle Ages. Instead, one spoke of *humanitas* or *civilitas*. It was not until the 17th century that the Latin word *cultura* was introduced in relation to *natura* and for the development of the spiritual and cognitive capabilities.

During the 17th and 18th centuries everything man added to the nature of himself or his environment was considered as cultural goods. There was a distinction between *nature* and *culture*. By *nature*, it was meant that everything which existed of its own and which was innate, whereas *culture* signified everything that man, of his free will and competence, had created. The purpose and goal of *culture* was the perfection of man. In the humanities,⁷ *culture* has been defined and treated in different ways that I am not going to elaborate further within this study.

Once we have understood *culture*, we have a much more open and correct view for the needs of a properly done process for communication. Seeing the *culture* through the eyes of the people all over the world, it is very easy to realize that there is more than one definition of what communication means. This helps us to see that *culture* can be considered as a system of meanings, and that the main instrument for communication in this system is language. For example, Umberto Eco considers all cultural processes as communication processes. He claims that the whole *culture* has to be studied as communication, i.e. semiotic⁸ phenomena and every aspect of *culture* become a semantic unit.⁹

Already in his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle distinguished between the speaker, speech and audience.¹⁰ One could say that the process of learning about a *culture* should contextualize the understanding of its creation, realization and transformation by considering different contexts that in fact are historical and dynamic.¹¹ That is to say, methods dealing with what is social and his-

⁷ An academic disciplines that study aspects of human society.

⁸ “Semantic is the study of the meaning and reference of linguistic expressions, while semiotics is the general study of signs of all kinds and in all their aspects. Semiotics comprises semantics as a part”—Dagfinn Føllesdal, “Semantics and Semiotics,” in *Structure and Norms in Science*, Synthese Library, Studies in epistemology, Logic, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science 260, ed. Maria Luisa Dalla Chiara et al. (Dordrecht: Springer, 1997), 449.

⁹ Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 27–34.

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Topic (Topica)*, trans. Arthur Wallace Pickard-Cambridge, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1:167–314.

¹¹ Franz J. Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission* (Manila: National University Press, 2004), 46–49.

torical must keep on changing. This is because the truth of historic events shapes reality in which the history realizes itself.¹²

Surprisingly, in the Tanzanian context we might bring out three terms that are often misused, thus loosening their semantic role, namely: *mila*-tradition, *desturi*-custom, and *utamaduni*-culture. It is obvious that the first two (tradition and custom) might change even within a short period of time, while *culture* transforms itself slowly through generations. Unfortunately, there is a strong common consideration that in the case of Africa, these three values—with special emphasis placed on culture—remain almost stagnant.

Nevertheless, we are going to argue that an action of a person cannot be fully understood or justified unless it is linked with historical factors that have impacted the whole process creating patterns, symbols, etc. that later on, had been accepted as the ethos of a particular culture and practice.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF TANZANIA

If we want to talk about Tanzania we should start the discourse from 26 April 1964, when two sovereign states, Tanganyika and Zanzibar, formed the United Republic of Tanzania. However, understandings of Tanzania can't be reduced to geographical boundaries or political treaties themselves; rather, it should be analyzed and understood from a historical point of view because, as we said already in the introductory part, that analysis of a culture should include different contexts that are rooted in the dynamics of historical facts.

Let us go back to the East Africa's Trade that took place between 1000–1500 and was operated mostly by Arab merchants. During that period there were different regions and lands that exchanged goods with the territory that we know today as the Central East Africa, within which Tanzania is located. Back then, goods were transported to and from Egypt, Arabia, Persia, India, Burma, China and Spice Islands. Among those goods we may mention gold, ivory, iron, copper, skins, copal, cowries, rhinoceros horns, tortoise shells, ambergris, spices together with slaves. The historical fact of slave trade in East Africa is today often minimalized for reasons of political correctness, ignored or dissembled, whose foundation of what might be considered as a culture and sense of belonging is shaken.

The next period in the history of East Africa was even more slave-oriented and might be called by different names, such as the Arab-Slave

¹² Tarimo, *Human Rights*, 29–30.

Trade, the Indian Ocean African Slave Trade or the Arab-Muslim Slave Trade.¹³ It is very important to stress here that Zanzibar was a sultanate and played an active role in the inhuman practice of slavery.¹⁴

In any case, this practice of slavery lasted for four (4!) centuries, from 1500–1900, and was eventually brought to the end through the historical arrival of European explorers and then by Christian missionaries who initiated some political actions that peaked during the Berlin Conference, convoked by Bismarck (1884–1885), where promises of ending slavery were overshadowed by a scramble for Africa and by spreading the fruits of the Industrial Revolution.

As a consequence, Tanganyika became a part of German East Africa for 34 years (1885–1919). Likewise, at this moment we can't ignore the historical fact that Zanzibar did not become a part of the German Colony. Unfortunately, political and economic treads prevailed once again and were materialized in the form of the First World War that found its battlefields also on the soil of Tanganyika.

In accordance with resolutions of the Treaty in Versailles (1919), Tanganyika became a part of the British Empire for 42 years, first as Tanganyika Protectorate, and then from 1920 as Tanganyika Territory until 9 December 1961, when the inhabitants of Tanganyika won its independence.

Looking back at these historical facts, they might be summed up like this: people who lived in the territory of what we now call Tanzania were treated for about 500 hundred years as a place where goods could be exchanged for slaves; then for next 400 years they were seen as potential slaves; and then for 76 years they were victims of colonization.

At this point, I can even venture a theory at this point that these people were ready to rise up and gain independence, not by the strength of their culture (let us not forget that there were many tribes that differ one from another), but by their strive for freedom driven by common values/instinct that are common to every human being regardless of the race, color or religion (for

¹³ For more information, see the following books: John Alembillah Azumah, *The Legacy of Arab Islam in Africa: A Quest for Inter-religious Dialogue* (London: One World Publications, 2016); and Jean Maria Dia, *Arab Muslim World: Architect of Slavery in Africa* (Breinigsville: CPSIA, 2016).

¹⁴ Slaves had been collected first in inhumane conditions in Bagamoyo and later on transported to Zanzibar. In this context it is hard to understand the reason why up to now, in the whole of Tanzania, there is only one small museum maintained by the Catholic Parish of Bagamoyo that keeps alive the historical facts of the horror of slavery that was practiced for centuries in this part of Africa.

example, instinct of survival, desire to keep good health on, learn from successes and mistakes of the ancestor, produce sufficient amount of food, advance housing capacity, make life easier as one remembers it from childhood, work in order to satisfy one's needs, etc.).

As we said before, Tanzania inhabitants—as we understand the word in terms of people (human beings) that had had their own language, beliefs, principles, their codes, rituals—they had their own culture (with some variations that characterized each of the multitude of tribes). When we want to talk about their culture, we have to—in order to avoid any unhealthy and unprofessional manipulation—try to understand how these centuries of slavery and some years of colonialism eroded the culture, and in consequence their perception of cultural patterns like social relationships, community of the living and the death, ancestors believes, responsibility of common goods, etc.

Of course, on the one hand, we take it for granted and agree with J. Mbiti's statement that for an African (in general) the community is at the center of one's life and personality. One's individuality, personal responsibilities and identity are intertwined with the concept of community. Mbiti goes even further arguing the African philosophy: *I am because we are, and we are because I am.*¹⁵ But, on the other hand, one may ask: Where was my community when I was sold as a slave? Why are my own people, my own community exchanging me and my family for a weapon or some valuable goods? Why are members of my community, with whom I shared our values, accepted, irresistibly, some foreign ideas for the sake of money and individual glory? Maybe in some cases the social relationship in traditional African community had stifled the personal space so much that it led to exaggerated communalism where the *I* lost its value and meaning for the sake of the *We*?

Such analysis helps as to comprehend what was said already in the introductory part of this study, namely, that the process of learning about a culture should contextualize the understanding of its creation, realization and transformation by considering different contexts that in fact are historical and dynamic.

Of course, we could multiply questions like these *ad infinitum*, but it is not the main case here. For that reason, let us move forward and see how *culture* was understood by J.K. Nyerere and then we will make a similar effort in relation to J. P. Magufuli.

¹⁵ John Samuel Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1986), 14–15.

NYERERE AND THE ROLE OF CULTURE

Right from the beginning, Nyerere places a lot of effort on communicating the culture to people that were about to completely create a new chapter in the history of the Central Eastern part of Africa. He was aware of being faced with a very difficult task of uniting the heterogeneous 127 tribes under one flag. Apart of it, there was Zanzibar (and other islands) with its painful history of Arab-Muslim domination turned for centuries into slave trade.

In order to reach every single person of the new free state, the first President used cultural patterns, comprehensible to each and every inhabitant. We could even broach an idea that Nyerere was aware of what we presented already: that by understanding the culture, we gain a much broader and appropriate view of the needs of a properly done communication process. This might be the secret to the accuracy of speeches of Mwalimu, especially in the early stage of independence.¹⁶

Following what happened shortly before the independence of Tanganyika, it is quite easy to form a conclusion that Nyerere wanted to build unity among his people, among tribes and among African nations as well. It became for him the overriding factor of the local culture that had been forgotten along the painful paths of history of the land and a value that was about to be put once again under a very difficult test.

In 1958, he analyzed the current situation and on the basis of historical experience he said:

what is coming next it is the second scramble for Africa and warned his fellow Africans that in this second scramble, it will not be the Europeans doing the actual fighting and shedding of blood, but brother Africans fighting each other through the machinations and manipulations of the non-African powers, if the Africans permit it.¹⁷

Nyerere decided to lead Tanzania toward unity aligning with neither the East nor the Western Block, and consequently, Tanzania didn't join the extremist and Marxist-oriented Casablanca Conference, or the revolutionary, or the anti-Western Monrovia Conference.¹⁸

¹⁶ This idea gets brighter if we remember that J. K. Nyerere was well educated and that he obtained his master's degree in Edinburgh, where he explored the Greco-Roman philosophical thoughts.

¹⁷ "The African political scene (Communism in Tanzania, 1961–1964)", vol. Z9, n. 5: 2, Schildknecht Fonds, Archives of the White Fathers, Rome.

¹⁸ Jacek A. Gorka, *Youth Ministry in the Face of Unemployment: A Historical-Critical Study*

He was aware of the painful history of his people that destroyed their culture, sense of belonging, self-consciousness and pride of their origin. The president did not underestimate the stagnant character of his culture, where any novelty has to be accepted first by majority, in order to be adopted and followed by all. This is because, generally, the Bantu culture does not favor a single voice of change.¹⁹

On 21 February 1971, Nyerere delivered one of his most influential speeches at a mass rally at the TANU Headquarter and he laid a historical context of the land:

Now I should try to explain what our Party's guideline are but I should like first to refer you to previous events. These guidelines begin with the repetition of the words contained in the Arusha Declaration. These are very important words and perhaps more important than any words in the Arusha Declaration. I repeat these words: "We have been oppressed a great deal. We have been exploited a great deal. It is our weakness that has caused us to be oppressed, exploited and humiliated. And now we want Revolution—Revolution to do away with our weakness so that we should no longer be oppressed, exploited and humiliated.... I said that I would like to go back to the past events. Our continent has gone through, and is still going through, the various stages of exploitation, oppression and humiliation. We reached a stage when we used to be caught and sold like goats—the stage of slavery. It was not a short period. It went on for whole centuries and over when Africans were hunted and caught and sold as you sell charcoal, clothes and beds. There were sold by Arabs.... What followed next was the second phase of slavery, namely, the Colonization."²⁰

In his book "*Nyerere on Socialism*" we read as follows:

Years of Arab Slave Trading, and later years of European domination, had caused our people to have grave doubts about their own abilities. This was no accident; any dominating group seeks to destroy the confidence of those they dominate because this helps them to maintain their position, and the oppressors in Tanganyika were no exception. Indeed, it can be argued that the biggest crime of oppression and foreign domination, in Tanganyika and elsewhere, is the psychological effect it has on the people who experience it. A vital task for any liberation movement must therefore be to restore the people's self-confidence.²¹

Once again, the President stressed cultural, social and moral consequences of historical facts that deprived the people of strong values and made them susceptible to further manipulation, both externally and, worse

of the Development of the Church and its Concern for Youth Formation and Employment in Mwanza Tanzania (Morogoro: Salvatorianum, 2017), 199–200.

¹⁹ Tarimo, *Human Rights*, 29–31.

²⁰ "Discours et livrets de Nyerere: Nyerere's speech at TANU Headquarter," February 21, 1971, vol. Z11, n. 3: 1–2, Schildknecht fonds, Archives of the White Fathers, Rome.

²¹ Julius Kambarage Nyerere, *Nyerere on Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 5.

still, internally. Perhaps he stressed terms of oppression and suffering as referencing. Hence, the cultural reconstruction had to start from the grass roots. Then, it was possible to adopt and protect “the chosen principles on *non-alignment* and *self-reliance*,²² as well as protecting Tanzania from the neo-colonial penetration that had already been active in Africa.”²³

Another try, aimed at restoration of the lost cultural values, was done by promoting equality and unity which meant to include all of society that should be seen and understood as *one race* and *one tribe*. For that Nyerere argued:

Our struggle has been, still is, and will be a struggle for human right. As a matter of principle, we are opposed, to one country ordering the affairs of another country against the wishes of the people of that country. Our position is based on the belief of the equality of human beings, in their rights and their duties as human beings and in the equality of citizens, in their rights and duties as citizens.²⁴

When this new and free nation was being constructed, it was necessary to connect cultural values with social and economic development and to ensure that local culture had strong and sufficient factors to upgrade the lifestyle of all citizens. In this early period of independence, social development played a supportive role for the primary process of rebuilding the sense of belonging among Tanzanians. In order to achieve it, Nyerere promoted a tool that was successful at least for the first phase of *Ujamaa* and was described as “self-reliance”.²⁵

Addressing the national conference of the TANU, the first President said:

We will not organize our country and our life in such a way that there will be no development unless we get foreign money. And most of all, we have said firmly that we shall not bend our political, economic or social policies in the hope of getting overseas aid as a result. But if we get outside assistance to carry out purposes decided by us, then we shall welcome that assis-

²² Gorka, *Youth Ministry*, 204.

²³ “Discurs divers: Conference of the implementation of the Arusha Declaration and the policy statement on education for self-reliance”, vol. Z11, n. 4: 1–14, Schildknecht fonds, Archives of the White Fathers, Rome.

²⁴ Julius Kambarage Nyerere, “Speech to Parliament”, in *The Critical Phase in Tanzania, 1945–1968: Nyerere and the Emergence of a Socialist Strategy*, ed. Cranford Pratt (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 63.

²⁵ Nyerere borrowed the idea of *self-reliance* from Mao Tse-Tung who in the first half of the 20th century promoted isolationism in foreign policy while emphasizing on China self-reliance and of the rapid industrialization. See Michael Yahuda, *Towards the end of isolationism: China's foreign policy after Mao* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1983).

tance. Thus, we welcome the Chinese decision to help the Tanzania Railway. Thus, we shall welcome an American decision to help build road from Dar-es-Salaam to Tunduma.²⁶

It was obvious that fear of any form of cultural syncretism, and the desire for reconstructing both cultural and self-identity of Tanzanians on the other, demanded an even deeper isolation that often was justified in speeches like this:

To us development is that which elevates our status as human being.... We shall remain as we are. We value our dignity more.... We do not eat anybody's food. We eat our own ugali²⁷ and mchicha.²⁸ But it is our own food. We wear our own clothes. We respect one another. We are ready if somebody wants to provoke us.... We can respect ourselves and despise the enemy who want to come and despise us.... Those who are after these things and who want to sell their respect, let them do so, but not we Tanzanians.²⁹

We may conclude here by agreeing that cultural restoration partially helped to build a self-esteeming nation that started to believe in its own capacity to base economic and political strength on culture, which in turn started to overemphasize its distinctiveness and uniqueness.

One important element that had not been foreseen during the application of *Ujamaa* principles was that in the long term people were not able to assimilate and embrace the idea that the value of a person did not depend on what he owned, and consequently, so too, his dignity should not depend on his wealth, but on his strong ties with the society in which he lives.³⁰ The equality aspect of the so-called African culture and by the same time the principle of *Ujamaa* had never been accepted and never tolerated to the extent of becoming a source of blatant corruption and violence.³¹ As a side effect, value of unity had been affected as well.³²

One could make an effort to try to justify it by tracing remaining effects of dominant forces that penetrated the land of Tanzania for centuries, persuaded minds of the locals by letting them slowly agree with supremacy of values and factors from foreign cultures. This, on the one hand, was pro-

²⁶ Julius Kambarage Nyerere, *After the Arusha Declaration: Presidential Address to the National Conference of the TANU, October 16, 1967* (Dar-es-Salaam: Government Printer, 1967), 3.

²⁷ A stiff porridge made of maize, millet or cassava flour.

²⁸ A common plant with edible leaves used as a vegetable.

²⁹ Nyerere, *After the Arusha Declaration*, 15–16.

³⁰ Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism* (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1969), 11.

³¹ This painful history of Tanzania can be understood even better if we analyze reaction from Oscar Kambona, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the government of Nyerere that eventually escaped to England and publicly accused Nyerere's Administration of misusing public money. See Gorka, *Youth Ministry*, 182–83, 187.

³² Gorka, *Youth Ministry*, 214.

nounced as a *civilized mission* but on the other had been characterized by uncritical approval of the status quo.

The intentional use of “uncritical” proves our idea of cultural degradation that lasts for centuries and has often left the citizens of the Central-East part of Africa socially, morally, psychologically and economically disarmed.³³ Others may try to understand this phenomenon by analyzing the negative effects of cultural isolation and the exaggerated emphasis of local values that, in the end, did not survive social and generational transformations.

In any case, we should admit that J. K. Nyerere succeeded in using culture as a driver to build a free state where citizens could identify themselves with a national personality and common goal. As he said in the previously quoted speech: “We need Revolution to do away with our weakness so that we should no longer be oppressed, exploited and humiliated.”³⁴ Economic development in that period should be seen as secondary—it was important only if it served to build national self-esteem, unity, sense of belonging and acceptance of traditions and rituals.

Even if the economic development of early Tanzania was at the service of reestablishing principles of culture, Nyerere’s leadership drew international attention and attracted worldwide respect for his consistent emphasis upon ethnical principles as the basis of practical policies. He built a nation out of a collection of tribes,³⁵ basing his effort on cultural aspect and by first facing all historical facts without any complex or fear, and then by analyzing them critically.³⁶ Tanzania during his time made great strides in vital areas of social development: infant mortality was reduced from 138 per 1000 live births in 1965 to 110 in 1985; life expectancy at birth rose from 37 in 1960 to 52 in 1984; primary school enrollment was raised from 25% of age group (only 16% females) in 1960 to 72% (85% females) in 1985 (despite the rapidly in-

³³ This aspect is further developed by Piotr Sztompka in his *Sociologia: Analiza społeczeństwa* (Kraków: Znak, 2021), 648–72.

³⁴ “Discours et livrets de Nyerere,” 1.

³⁵ Some local writers uncritically repeat a slogan that “others” drew boundaries for raising countries in Africa often cutting one tribe between two nations. Although such view might be justified with some examples, we have never heard such easy justification coming from Nyerere. He would rather protect the given boundaries of his nation. On the other side, majority of countries all over the world should claim the same that their current boundaries differ from the historical ones. For that reason, we can’t treat seriously such emotionally-based argument that had been opposed by local African leaders as well.

³⁶ Gorka, *Youth Ministry*, 214.

creasing population); the adult literacy rate rose from 17% in 1960 to 63% by 1975 (much higher than in other African countries) and continued to rise.³⁷

Nyerere's idea's incorporated in this study's theoretical framework reflects the unexpectedly fast-growing division between his idea and the reality of rampant corruption in Tanzania. Although he had never betrayed his ideas, he shared the power with people who could not resist such temptation. He had been aware of the growing injustice and divisions on the continent of Africa, especially the ethnic conflicts that delayed for years every possible attempt towards democracy.³⁸ In 1969 he described his dream for Tanzania.

A dream? ... My dream? ... We want our people to live in the 20th century. It is not necessary for us to go to the moon. Man has developed ... this development is good and healthy. I would want for our people good housing, good water, good food, freedom from disease and the development of our mind. I would want our people to cooperate and live in harmony. If you say a dream ... it is a very mundane dream. As for obstacle ... we need organizers and modernizers. We know man does not live by bread alone. However we should be concentrating on our needs. We should not get involved in conflicts. But the problem of South Africa is a part of us. We cannot accept the claim that Portuguese Mozambique is part of Europe. Malaria is bad ... we cannot accept it ... we must help remove it. The belief that some people are superior or inferior ... we cannot accept it ... it is like leprosy and must be removed. This is a matter of priorities ... we must give as much help as we can. You cannot postpone it until you are strong enough ... it is a terrible thing ... Yes, I have a little dream!³⁹

Nyerere stepped down as president in 1985, although he continued to be the chairperson of the ruling party CCM until 1990, two years before multi-party politics were introduced with his full support. Nevertheless, the first President of Tanzania made a strong effort to transform the stagnant aspect of his culture into a tool that played a dominant role in building the nation.

In the following paragraphs I would like to compare these findings with the aspect of culture and development in the presidency of Dr. J.P. Magufuli, who was elected President in October 2015 (30 years after Dr. J.K. Nyerere) and became the fifth leader of the nation.

³⁷ James S. Read, "Human Rights in Tanzania," in *Mwalimu: The Influence of Nyerere*, ed. Colin Legum and Geoffrey Mmari (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na nyota, 1995), 127.

³⁸ Gorka, *Youth Ministry*, 213.

³⁹ "An African President's dream (Socialism)", vol. Z11, n. 1: 1, Schildknecht fonds, Archives of the White Fathers, Rome.

MAGUFULI AND THE ROLE OF CULTURE

Similarly to what we have said about Nyerere, the current President placed similar efforts on communicating the culture to people of Tanzania. Naturally, there are similarities and difference in methodology employed in the process.

In order to hold the attention of the Tanzanians, the President used the same cultural patterns that are comprehensible to each and every inhabitant and similarly to Nyerere, who stressed self-esteem, sense of belonging, and the pride of being a son of this great nation.

We may still remember his historic speech from February 2016 when he said:

Nimezaliwa Tanzania, nimesomea Tanzania, nimefanya kazi Tanzania, nitafia Tanzania na nitazikwa Tanzania. (I was born in Tanzania, I studied in Tanzania, I work in Tanzania, I will die in Tanzania and I will be buried in Tanzania.)⁴⁰

These words sound like an echo from the life of the First President and assure us about his respect for cultural principles. We may even repeat what has been stated in the previous section here: that by understanding and promoting culture, we form a much more open and appropriate view for the needs of a properly conducted process of communication. This has to be considered as similarity to the analyzed concept of culture. As I stated at the outset, Magufuli exceedingly identified uniqueness of his culture by avoiding the exaggerated generalization of an “African culture”.

However, looking closer we may notice that unlike in the past, the role of development and culture was twisted and that in the present reality culture plays a supportive role for the economic development. In other words, the principal task for Magufuli is development. For once, it appears as a natural and obvious consequence of building a nation upon a strong economy; however, he employed once again Nyerere’s principle of *self-reliance*, that was a little neglected by other leaders.

The first attempt to update the culture on the semantical level, was a campaign to promote *hapa kazi tu* (it might be translated in English as “hard work is needed”), meaning to replace the previous and pejorative *pole na kazi* (“I am sorry for your work/fatigue/status”). We may indicate three aspects

⁴⁰ “Hotuba ya Rais John Magufuli kwa Wazee wa Mkoa wa Dar es Salaam, aliyotoa katika Ukumbi wa Diamond Jubilee, Dar es Salaam mnamo Februari 13, 2016,” *Jamhuri*, February 18, 2016, accessed February 1, 2018, <http://www.jamhurimedia.co.tz/tumejitoa-sadaka-kwa-watanzania-magufuli>.

from within it. Firstly, it underlies the dynamic and always adaptive nature of culture; secondly, it indicates superiority of economic development over any other social aspect; and thirdly, it emphasizes the self-reliance policy.

Another strong impact that came right at the beginning of Magufuli's presidency was pulling funds intended for Independence Day celebrations in 2015 and redirecting them to anti-cholera operations. He said that

“it's so shameful that we are spending huge amount of money to celebrate 54 years of self-rule while our people are dying of cholera” and for that he decided that funds meant for the Uhuru fete would instead be used for a major clean-up campaign aimed at stemming the spread of cholera in the country.⁴¹

Consequently, in February 2016 the President announced that every first Saturday of the month in Tanzania should be a general cleanliness day because major cities and towns continue to struggle with poor sanitation and lack of proper infrastructure for the disposal of waste and garbage. Among other principal reasons there is a lack of local leaders' commitment when it comes to addressing the public sanitation problem. Magufuli's reaction couldn't be different after finding out that more than six and half percent of Tanzanians had no proper toilet and that there is a lack of a septic tanks too.⁴² Similarly, there is lack of a transparent primary health care strategy that would help increase community participation.⁴³ The President asserted a strong stance against public spending also by reducing to minimum visits any unnecessary foreign travels. Along the six years of his presidency, he visited only eight African. But this was not enough, as in 2019 he told the Burundian refugees to return home and do not insist on staying in Tanzania as refugees or expecting citizenship. This action revealed once again Magufuli's appreciation of Tanzanian culture vis-à-vis the co-called African culture.⁴⁴

If we still remember the efforts done by Nyerere, we may understand even better the process of attaching people to the land that was about to be

⁴¹ “Magufuli Strikes Again: Uhuru Day Scrapped,” *The Citizen*, April 21, 2021, <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/magufuli-strikes-again-uhuru-day-scrapped--2539372>.

⁴² “Watanania asilimia 6,5 hawana vyoo kabisa, Mwananchi,” *Mwananchi*, March 15, 2021, <https://www.mwananchi.co.tz/mw/habari/makala/afya/watanania-asilimia-6-5-hawana-vyoo-kabisa-2881862>.

⁴³ Syriacus Buguzi, “Tanzania: Clocking 100 – Clean-up Campaign Loses Steam,” *The Citizen*, February 12, 2016, accessed February 1, 2018, <https://allafrica.com/stories/201602121447.html>.

⁴⁴ “Tanzania president tells Burundi refugees to go back home,” *Deutsche Welle*, October 11, 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/tanzania-president-tells-burundi-refugees-to-go-back-home/a-50803967>.

their own. The current trend goes further and calls for active responsibility over people's property that should be taken care of in terms of common responsibilities. For that reason, Dr. Magufuli discontinued Nyerere's model of culture supremacy and transform the same culture into a secondary tool (one among other) that should help to obtain intended goals.

Nonetheless, if we understand the place of culture and its relation to economic development, it becomes more understandable and agreeable that the Magufuli's fifth Five Years Plan restores industrialization to the heart of government policy in a way unseen since the 1970s.⁴⁵

In relation to corruption that I mentioned while analyzing the early period of independence in Tanzania, we may notice other differences linked to the priority of reestablishment of cultural values. The present thrift and intolerance for corruption speak out for itself assuring that there shouldn't be place for a "value" that hinders or stops the process of social development and prosperity for all citizens. Obviously, on such a scenario, culture becomes the major supportive tool in realization of the plan.

This might be best illustrated by Magufuli's legal action of forcing to resign thousands of civil servants that gained employment with fake certificates. The President argued that "there are thieves like any other thieves" and because of that they could be jailed for seven years as the Tanzania law regulates.⁴⁶ This event serves as strong evidence in supporting our study. Also in this example, the fifth President of Tanzania doesn't look for external enemies—rather, he uses his language to stress Tanzania as collective responsibility of every single Tanzanian. He opposed this phenomenon of "doing so makes it so". Of course he did it by using a cultural factor as a tool for building a healthy economy of his country. President Magufuli went even further, directing the Prime Minister, Kassim Majaliwa, to publish in every media the identities of those lawbreakers.⁴⁷ Through this act, the President contradicted the co-called Tanzanian *mila* and *desturi* and underscore once again subordinate role of culture in his style of leadership. We shouldn't ig-

⁴⁵ Dan Paget, "John Magufuli Has Changed Tanzania in Just Two Years as President", *Quartz Africa*, November 8, 2017, <https://qz.com/1123780/tanzanias-president-john-magufuli-is-changing-his-country-for-better-and-for-worse>.

⁴⁶ "President Magufuli Sacks 9,932 Civil Servants at a Go", *The Citizen*, April 28, 2017, <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/president-magufuli-sacks-9-932-civil-servants-at-a-go-2587390>.

⁴⁷ Ismail Akwei, "Thousands of Tanzanian Civil Servants Sacked Over Fake Certificates," *Africanews.com*, April 28, 2017, <https://www.africanews.com/2017/04/28/thousands-of-tanzanian-civil-servants-sacked-over-fake-certificates>.

nore here the semantic role of his speech: “You cannot perform if you don’t have deserving qualifications.”⁴⁸ This statement wasn’t reduced to simply moralistic character, but it had its profound connotation. In other words, President Magufuli said “I mean it!” He particularly avoided anything ponderous. This explains his common attitude as well of pointing out publicly, during official meetings with citizens corrupted leaders and removing them from their government offices with immediate effect.⁴⁹ The principal aspect of Tanzania’s economic wellness kept culture in its subornative form and the president wished all citizens to understand it with no exception.

The break out of the COVID-19 confirmed Magufuli’s style of leadership, where communication process shaped the country’s culture. Apart from the already-mentioned maxim “Hapa kazi tu!”, he used to repeat *Sitawaangusha!* (“I will not let you down!”). He came out with this slogan during the election campaign in 2015 when he proclaimed in his famous statement: “Nataka niseme kwa dhati sitawaangusha, nitafanya kazi kweli kweli, sitamuogopa mtu na wala sitapenda mtu wa chini aonewe” (I want to say honestly that I will never let you down, that I will work as hard as possible, I won’t be afraid of anyone, and that I will never allow the poor to be oppressed).⁵⁰

President Magufuli did not change his priorities even during the outbreak of COVID-19, when he questioned continuously the validity of the data available at the time. Also in this case, he used his culture as a main tool to prevent his fellow citizens from what might be called as possible consequences or side effects of restrictions suggested by WHO and other international bodies.

It can best be illustrated by refusing the Chinese coronavirus test kit that was secretly validated. The President instructed security forces to obtain randomly several non-human samples, like a pawpaw, a goat and a sheep but assigning to each one of them real name and age and then submitting them to Tanzania’s laboratory without reviling samples’ origin. Surprisingly, samples from the pawpaw and goat were tested positive for COVID-19. The President argued that “there is something happening. I said it before we

⁴⁸ “President Magufuli sacks 9,932 civil servants.”

⁴⁹ There are many articles and videos stored online, mostly in Swahili, documenting discussed by as issue; see, for example, “Rais Magufuli kamsimamisha mwingine Dec 22 20215”, *Millardayo*, December 23, 2015, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://millardayo.com/magudec2215>.

⁵⁰ “Dk. Magufuli: Sitawaangusha, sitamuogopa mtu na hakuna atakayeonewa,” *Mwananchi*, July 14, 2015, <https://www.mwananchi.co.tz/mw/habari/kitaifa/dk-magufuli-sitawaangusha-sitamuogopa-mtu-na-hakuna-atakayeonewa-2786256>.

should not accept that every aid is meant to be good for this nation.”⁵¹ This meant it was likely that some people were being tested positive in Tanzania when in fact they were not infected by the coronavirus.

It is highly probable that this situation pushed the President to turn to the traditional local medicine, that has long been valued and practiced among Tanzanians, as to the remedy against the virus. He has also stressed the value of spiritual and religious values in his nation when he called upon leaders of every religious denomination to fast and pray to God. It is another proof of communicating culture to his citizens, as we tried to present and justify it in it this article. Magufuli freed himself from the deadly vicious circle of the status quo by glorifying the uniqueness of his culture on the one hand, and by redirecting its course, on the other.

The President’s approach might have been noticed once again, during the 39th Ordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Southern African Development Community held in Dar es Salaam on 17–18 August 2019.⁵² Another crowning achievement took place in December 2021 when the President courageously restored the teaching of history⁵³ at secondary schools as a compulsory subject.⁵⁴ That decision, yet again, goes against to the co-called “African tradition”, where past events should be forgiven and forgotten.⁵⁵

Magufuli’s decision confirmed his strong disagreement with the idyllic notion of an African culture that has been discussed in the introductory part of our study. The President held the model of supportive role of culture in

⁵¹ Elias Biryabarema, “President Queries Tanzania Coronavirus Kits after Goat Test,” *Reuters.com*, May 3, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-tanzania-idUSKBN22F0KF>.

⁵² SADC Tanzania 2019, “Hotuba ya rais Dk. Magufuli Akifunga Mkutano,” *YouTube*, August 18, 2019, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBUklXzrr0M>.

⁵³ The precolonial history of Tanzania (Tanganyika) is almost unknown by students of all academic levels. History textbooks omit historical facts concerning tribal wars and expansion of Bantu tribes. Very little is known about the Arab-Muslim Slave Trade controlled in this part of Africa for several centuries. Colonialism and European history, on the other hand, are covered in details and often presented in a pejorative way. This is another factor that creates the common but uncritically accepted opinion that the African culture was always “perfect” until it became contaminated by the European one (European understood in terms of the Colonial Powers).

⁵⁴ Pius Msekwa, “President Magufuli Orders Compulsory Teaching of History in Tanzania’s Secondary Schools,” *Daily News*, February 13, 2021, accessed February 22, 2021, now available at <https://allafrica.com/stories/202102150321.html>.

⁵⁵ Some better understanding of such phenomenon might be found in existing articles, like for instance, Jonathan A. Obika and Emilio Ovuga, “I Forgive to Forget: Implication for Community Restoration and Unity in Northern Uganda,” *Journal of African Conflicts and Peace Studies* 4, no. 1 (2018): 1–17.

developing the society that he himself advanced. Then, despite some signs of resistance, he remained faithful to it until his sudden death on 17 March 2021.

CONCLUSION

There are no doubts about the inimitable role of culture within a society. The introductory part of this paper took us through different understandings of it, and on this basis we were able to prove that culture shouldn't be perceived as a stagnant reality, but rather it should be defined as flexible and adaptive perception of life. Because of that, we emphasized the historical context on today's Tanzania and the impact of historical events on both form and condition of culture.

After completing this task, we went further to examine how culture was seen and used first by Dr. J.K. Nyerere and then by Dr. J.P. Magufuli, in order to understand the *why* in connection to their priorities in building of Tanzania. The examples of these two great figures were meant to help answer the question posed in the title. As a result, we concluded that both presidents did not want to embrace culture in a "traditional", rather stagnant way, and looked for every way to redirect principles of their culture in a way that would help Tanzanians to find the strength to build social, economic and statal structures in their respective historical periods.

Analyzing the collected materials presented in the article, we could conclude that they were pioneers in understanding the culture as an element accelerating economic development, that often placed them at the opposite pole of what the majority considered the culture is like, namely, an unchangeable and superior factor of belonging, to which the inhabitants are uncritically subjected without a real possibility of interfering with its principal and never changing or stagnant structure.

As we have indicated along the study, they did not share the traditional view of culture as a stagnant and purely normative aspect of life. This progressive view on culture became an essential tool in realizing their respective programs dedicated for continuous development of Tanzania. Remarkably, for Nyerere culture played dominant role, while Magufuli turned it into a tool. Nevertheless, for both presidents, culture in Tanzania was not equal to the general term of an African culture.

Below are some final conclusions and recommendations that might serve as a resume of general arguments put forward in this study.

1. Let us recall first some parts of the famous words pronounced by Martin Luther King Jr. on 10 February 1961 at the New York University:

Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable.... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.⁵⁶

2. Based on our findings, we came to conclusion that, on the one hand, culture identifies specific group of people and, on the other, it is constantly created by the same people and is used by them. In this view, culture may have its overriding task within society (as was the case of Nyerere) or may play its secondary or relative character (like in the case of Magufuli), however, in both cases inhabitants identify themselves with it.

3. Another important reflection was on the difficulties or impossibilities of living in a culture that has a form of a hybrid. It is when one strives to upgrade or develop a culture, but at the same time keeps some archaic forms of it in the daily life. For that we indicate incompatibility if somebody would like to live Nyerere's understanding of culture (or custom or tradition) within the historical period of Magufuli. Such action might create misunderstanding, tension or even frustration. Such a situation would create a cultural vacuum because culture in itself naturally strives to embrace every single activity of a human being—it is never done selectively. The main drivers that keep culture self-transforming are the human values common to every person on Earth, regardless race, color and religion.

4. Consequently, economic development, as a crucial part of the overall social development, should be seen as a measurement of the culture's condition.

We have come out with an idea that culture should serve as a major tool in achieving all undertaken goals of social development. Of course, along this paper it was proven that a culture has to be always analyzed according to all historical events that happened in the past. Then, in the case of Tanzania, it is a great mistake if one analyzes the culture looking at it, exclusively, from the post-independence point of view. In the same vein, one shouldn't talk about the history of Tanzania and its impact on the local culture by reducing the history to a relatively short colonial period and by denying impact of the centuries of Arab-Muslim Slave Trade.

⁵⁶ "A letter from NYU President, Andy Hamilton", *NYU*, accessed February 10, 2021, <https://www.nyu.edu/washington-dc/nyu-washington--dc-events/events-by-year/2013/realizing-a-dream.html>.

If we want Tanzanian culture to become a catalyst of any development, including the social one, then the nation's history must be studied from possibly oldest times. It seems to be the only way to can track down and to understand origin of many principles characterizing this cultural. Otherwise, cultural heritage (even the most painful) will be destroyed,⁵⁷ or maybe erased for the sake of some unhealthy political correctness; as a result, culture would turn into an inhibitor that will slow down or hinder any kind of development.

In conclusion, one should respect the culture within which was brought up, but by the same time, should avoid, by any means, to be enslaved by it. Rather, we should live our culture, learn from it and transform it with our lives' efforts.

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⁵⁷ There are some scientific studies describing the alarming fade of pre-colonial cultural heritage in Tanzania; see B. B. Bertram and Paul Msemwa Mapunda, eds., *Salvaging Tanzanian's Cultural Heritage* (Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press, 2005).

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KULTURA TANZANII – KATALIZATOR CZY INHIBITOR ROZWOJU SPOŁECZNEGO?
KRÓTKIE PORÓWNANIE PRZYPADKÓW DRA J.K. NYERERE I DRA J.P. MAGUFULI

Streszczenie

Bez wątpienia, kultura jest wyjątkowym sposobem, dzięki któremu każdy z ludzi utożsamia się z daną grupą ludzi i równolegle wyodrębnia się z innej. Oczywiście jest również, że kultura nie jest niezmienna w swojej formie, głównie dlatego, że może być traktowana jako wypadkowa wielu czynników uwarunkowanych np. czasem, miejscem itp. Stąd też dąży ona do zachowania odrębności, a to czyni ją nadrzędnym celem dla omawianej tu grupy ludzi. Z drugiej strony zapewnia pomocnicze wsparcie wyrażane przez wartości wspólne ludziom. Co więcej, kultura wyraża się poprzez unikalną formę komunikacji i jako taka może stać się niezastąpionym narzędziem w całym procesie nadawania i odbierania informacji. W niniejszym studium została podjęta próba przeanalizowania przedstawionego powyżej niejednoznacznego pojęcia kultury i tego, jak je rozwijali dwaj przywódcy Tanzanii – J.K. Nyerere i J.P. Magufuli. Analizy miały na celu pokazanie, jak obaj politycy rozumieli, przeżywali i jak używali kultury w swoich zmaganiach o rozwój Tanzanii.

Słowa kluczowe: kultura; rozwój; komunikacja; Tanzania; J.K. Nyerere; J.P. Magufuli.