The Blind Eye of Indirect Rule

Pragmatism versus ideology among the British administrators of interwar Tanganyika

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Picture credit: *Map of East Africa, 1922;* detail

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I

INTRODUCTION

In 1922, the League of Nations awarded German East Africa[1] to the British to rule under a mandate until such time as the native peoples are able to stand by themselves under the 'strenuous conditions of the modern world.'[2] The British would henceforth administer the region in trust, undertaking the necessary economic and social reform to enable it to one day stand on its own feet – although when that day might come was never specified. This region would become known as the Tanganyika Territory.

In the past, upon victory in a war, the British might have been expected to annex the colonies of a defeated European power. But the world was changing. Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, outlined in 1918, had suggested that in determining questions of sovereignty 'the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government.'[3] The British thus had to evolve their idea of what imperialism meant in order to justify its continued existence in this new international environment. In essence, imperialism came to be seen as a tutelage programme to convey European ideas on civilisation. As Sir Donald Cameron, the Governor of the Tanganyika Territory between 1925 and 1931, said, 'It is clearly the duty of the Mandatory Power to train the people so that

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[1] With the exception of 'Ruanda-Urundi', which went to Belgium.
[2] 'The Covenant of the League of Nations,' Article 22, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp; retrieved: 08/08/2018.
[3] 'President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points,' Point V, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp; retrieved: 08/08/2018.

they may stand by themselves, at least as part of the whole community of the Territory, however long that training may take, and [to make sure that] a full place in the political structure shall be found for the native population.'[4]

What is interesting about Cameron's comments is that he was not suggesting that the Tanganyika Territory would one day become an independent, African-ruled state. Rather, he envisaged that the 'native population' would form either one or several self-governing communities within a multi-community state – which left open the opportunity for Europeans to create their own self-governing community and through it retain a share of power. The British fully expected that upon achieving self-rule, the territory would remain within the British Commonwealth as a Dominion.[5] The mandate system thus stood at a crossroads of imperial ideology. It retained many of the older assumptions about colonialism, along with the prejudices that the British had towards the African populations and their capabilities for self-rule, but repackaging them in a manner that was more palatable for twentieth century sensibilities. It is thus hardly surprising that when the British sought to develop an administration for the mandated territory they chose a system that likewise retained many of the old assumptions about colonialism but which sought to reframe them as a 'tutelage' programme to uplift 'backward' African societies: they chose indirect rule.

'Indirect rule' was developed in Nigeria under Frederick Lugard at the end of the nineteenth century – although, as Sir Charles Dundas[6] pointed out, it was essentially a 'systemisation of a long-standing British colonial practice [wherein] we controlled subject races through their indigenous authorities.'[7] It was an approach to colonial government that sought to 'govern the people… not directly but through the medium of their own tribal or other local authorities.'[8] According to Sir Donald Cameron, a major advocate of indirect rule, its goal was 'to do everything in our power to develop the native on lines which will not Westernise him and turn him into a bad imitation of a European… We want to make him a good African.'[9] At a time when some members of the international order were beginning to question the validity of empire, indirect rule seemed to offer an enlightened way for imperialism to move forwards,

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[4] Donald Cameron, *My Tanganyika Service and Some Nigeria* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1939) p.86.
[5] Elizabeth Watkins, *Oscar from Africa: The Biography of O.F. Watkins* (London: The Radcliffe Press, 2002) p.168.
[6] Secretary for Native Affairs in Tanganyika, 1924-1928.
[7] Charles Dundas, *African Crossroads* (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1955) p.133.
[8] Anton Bertram, *The Colonial Service* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930) p.70.
[9] John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) p.321.

preserving African identity and allowing Africans a stake in their own government under the auspices of European eyes. In theory, British officials would pinpoint the traditional chiefly authority within a tribal group, appoint them as the Native Authority, and gazette a Native Court – which would then pass judgement on certain aspects of law according to the customs and practises of the tribe. It would be financed through a Native Treasury, which would be in charge of raising taxes within the Native Authority. This was not, contemporaries insisted, an abdication of rule by the Government, but rather an attempt to train Native Authorities in the responsibilities of local administration. Over time, the theory went, more duties would be handed over to them, with the British maintaining a managerial overview at the centre.[10] However, this was not to be a 'zoological garden' where the African was carefully fenced off and left to manage their own affairs.[11] Indirect rule had a proactive element: the British would encourage the indigenous population to develop a method of limited self-government that combined traditional authority with European ideas of fiscal function and responsibility.[12]

Crucially, this ambition was vague enough to allow a considerable amount of experimentation, as different individuals on both the British and African sides had different ideas about what aspects of African culture should be preserved, and how they should be integrated with European ideas on the modern state. This paper will explore the contradictions in the British attitudes towards indirect rule, looking at the practical compromises that officials had to make as they sought to get their ideology to work. It will look at the plans that the British had for the future of the territory, and consider how those plans were forced to change in the face of economic and political reality. And it will consider how indirect rule, far from preserving traditional African society, actually hastened the breakdown of old tribal and economic networks, as the British sought to install the 'progressive' alternatives that they believed were necessary to the successful running of a modern state.

The seminal work on Tanganyikan history is John Iliffe's *A Modern History of Tanganyika,* published in 1979. Iliffe argues that indirect rule was flawed from the start due to the fact that, unlike in Nigeria where tribal definition was relatively clear, in Tanganyika power structures were not necessarily as clear-cut as the officials wanted them to be. This set off 'the creation of tribes', whereby British officials essentially

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[10] Bertram, p.71.
[11] Philip Mitchell, *African Afterthoughts* (London: Hutchinson Books, 1954) p.129.
[12] ibid, p.127.

sought to manufacture autocratic tribal structures so that they could devolve power to a suitably strong chieftain figure.[13] Austen, writing at about the same time, agrees with Iliffe, adding that indirect rule was chosen not so much because officials sought to preserve African culture, but because it offered a way of governing Tanganyika 'on the cheap' – he points out that the central Government in Dar es Salaam still retained far-reaching authority, especially when it came to dismissing chiefs.[14] Their arguments provide a strong baseline for the study of indirect rule. However, both Iliffe and Austen were part of a very Eurocentric approach to imperial history – a historiography that unwittingly ignored non-European voices. With the advent of postcolonialism in the 1980s, historians have sought to refocus their conclusions about empire through African agency. The majority of these postcolonial histories of Tanganyika have been regional studies. Their authors have acknowledged that the boundaries of the Tanganyika Territory were a European creation and chosen instead to focus on smaller, more homogenous areas, seeking to interrogate the exchanges between the local peoples and the colonial administrators. Steven Feierman, for example, has argued that the strongest political chiefs in the Usambara region were actually the ones that the British had least influence over, since those leaders who collaborated with the Government were seen as weak and out of touch by their subjects.[15] Peter Pels, meanwhile, emphasises how indirect rule in the Uluguru Mountains of Eastern Tanganyika did not unilaterally invent Luguru ideas of leadership; rather, colonial understanding of Luguru tradition 'masked a number of shifts and renegotiations, sometimes directly occasioned by the flexible use Luguru authorities made of these "traditions".'[16] Then there is Justin Willis, who highlights how officials in the Bonde region avoided the implementation of indirect rule for over a decade, mainly because the area was part of the territory's sisal industry, which relied upon migrant workers. Colonial officials thus felt that a Native Authority, operating within the full parameters of indirect rule, would be unequal to the task of dealing with 'non-native' disputes.[17] And then there is T. O. Beidelman, who argues that the absence of a useful tradition for indirect rule to leverage in the Ukaguru region 'was so great that the resulting native

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[13] Iliffe, p.318.

[14] Ralf Austen, 'The Official Mind of Indirect Rule: British Policy in Tanganyika, 1916-1939,' in Prosser Gifford and W. M. Roger Louis, eds., *Britain and Germany in Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967) pp.557-608.

[15] Steven Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990) p.136.

[16] Peter Pels, 'The Pidginisation of Luguru Politics: Administrative Ethnography and the Paradoxes of Indirect Rule,' *American Ethnologist,* Vol. 23 (1996) p.737.

[17] Justin Willis, 'The Administration of the Bonde, 1920-60: A Study of the Implementation of Indirect Rule in Tanganyika,' *African Affairs* Vol. 92 (1993) pp.53-67.

authority could maintain itself only by high-handed measures and abuse inconsistent with both traditional values and with the new values urged by Europeans.'[18] Ukaguru, for Beidelman, was the ultimate failure of indirect rule in the Tanganyika Territory. Taken together, these postcolonial historians reveal that, far from being a monolithic project, indirect rule was more a series of negotiations and compromises at local level between British officials and African elites.

The sternest takedown of indirect rule, however, has come from Mahmood Mamdani. Mamdani argues that indirect rule was adopted by British elites because they had realised that direct rule had a sell-by-date built into it. The more the economy of a colonial state developed, the more dependent it became on 'urbanised' or 'detribalised' Africans. These urban populations were usually better educated than their country cousins, and they presented the British with a vocal, concentrated opposition, that increasingly expected a say in their own government. The British, in the face of this movement, looked like an alien minority exploiting an indigenous majority against their will. In Egypt and India the British had seen how these urban communities had become the leadership of the Nationalist movement, and they were looking for ways of avoiding similar confrontations in sub-Saharan Africa. Indirect rule, in Mamdani's opinion, was a conscious attempt to stabilise white racial dominance by grounding it in a decentralised system of self-contained tribal institutions. There was no such thing as a 'Tanganyikan'. Instead, there were Shambaa and Wakukwe. As a result, everybody, white and African, victims and beneficiaries, appeared as minorities – although the white authorities always made sure that the separately functioning institutions were ultimately subservient to the colonial state so that they could maintain ultimate control. This resulted in 'regional despotism' where the British allied with micro-dictators, who had a vested interest in curbing the ambitions of educated Africans who might threaten their dynastic rule; and these micro-dictators were encouraged to consolidate their control over a local area at the expense of territory-wide alliances that could threaten the colonial government.[19]

Mamdani's argument aroused a lot of interest when it was first published, and there is a lot in it that holds true for Tanganyika. However, his conclusions on Tanganyika are ultimately based on his reading of Iliffe rather than his own original research. Indeed, with the exception of an article by Thomas Spear,

[18] T.O. Beidelman, 'Chieftainship in Ukaguru: The Invention of Ethnicity and Tradition in Kaguru Colonial History,' *The International Journal of African Historical Studies,* Vol. 11 (1978) p.229.
[19] Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject Citizen and Subject; Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) pp.6-8.

which, like Pels, argues for more acknowledgement of African participation in the so-called 'invention of the tribes',[20] territory-wide surveys of indirect rule have been sparse in Tanganyika since Iliffe. This paper intends to take the insights that postcolonial historians have had at regional level, and look at them in the context of the entire colonial state. In doing so it will interrogate Mamdani's conclusions, and argue that indirect rule was not so much a conscious project by British officials to create a reactionary regime based upon 'regional despots', but rather an ideology that encouraged flexibility and experiment, even as it was undercut by long-held British prejudices concerning the ability of Africans to rule themselves. It *did* destroy the old territory-wide networks of the Africans, but it also sought to create new ones to replace them – albeit with limited success.

To explore these issues, this paper will draw heavily on government papers sourced from the National Archives and the British Library – in particular the annual reports for the Commission of Provincial Native Affairs, the annual reports on Tanganyikan progress to the League of Nations, Colonial Office correspondence and sessional papers, and newsletters produced by the Chief Secretary and Provincial Commissioners. These documents will be supplemented by the papers from Lord Hailey's rigorous report on the state of African imperialism from 1947-8, the journals and memoirs of key figures in the British Administration, and contemporary non-official publications concerning indirect rule. Inevitably, these resources are all heavily biased towards Europeans' opinions of themselves: as Philip Curtin points out British ideas about Africa were moulded in Europe to suit European material and intellectual needs, and as a result they say more about the European view of Africa than they do about Africa itself.[21] This paper will thus be primarily concerned with one, limited and heavily biased historical 'knowledge' of indirect rule in Tanganyika, that of the British – although it will also seek to acknowledge the alternative 'knowledges' that existed during this period.[22] In doing so, it will make use of the methodologies developed by Subaltern historians like Ranajit Guha to uncover African agency by reading 'against the

[20] Thomas Spear, 'Indirect Rule, the Politics of Neo-Traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in Tanzania,' in Gregory H. Maddox and James L. Giblin, eds., *In Search of a Nation; Histories of Authority and Dissidence in Tanzania* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) p.77.
[21] Philip Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850,* Vol.1 (London: Macmillan, 1965), passim.
[22] See: D.A. Washbrook, 'Orients and Occidents: Colonial Discourse Theory and the Historiography of the British Empire,' in Robin W. Winks and Alaine Low, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume V: Historiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) pp.597-612.

grain' of colonial records in search of gaps and silences,[23] and adapt it to seek out what the colonial officials are *not* explicitly saying about their own prejudices, biases, fears, anxieties, hopes, and crises.

[23] Ranajit Guha, *A Subaltern Studies Reader, 1986-1995* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) p.xvi.

II

FOUNDATION STONES

Magnificent Arbitrators: the British Official

To understand indirect rule, one must first understand its champions. At the top of the British administration in the Tanganyika Territory was the Governor, Sir Donald Cameron, who was credited as being the architect of indirect rule in Tanganyika, and his two Secretaries for Native Affairs, Sir Charles Dundas (1924-1928) and Sir Philip Mitchell (1929-1934). Of the three, Dundas was perhaps more alert to the fact that traditional African political structures did not always offer a good fit with Cameron's vision of indirect rule, whilst Mitchell was less concerned about preserving African cultural identities and more interested in making indirect rule work economically and judicially.[24] None of them, however, were rigid in their beliefs, and their expressed opinions on indirect rule show a mixture of ideological passion and pragmatic realism. 'What is the alternative?' asked Sir Donald Cameron. It was not, he argued, direct rule – the cost in a state like Tanganyika would be prohibitive, and besides, 'In places they *say* they [rule directly], as in Kenya, they do not in fact achieve their aim.'[25] Indirect rule, according to Cameron, was a way of penetrating deeper into the lives of Africans at a fraction of the cost.

[24] See Dundas *African Crossroads,* and Mitchell, *African Afterthoughts*, passim.
[25] Margery Perham, *East Africa Journey* (London: Faber & Faber, 1976) p.43.

It was 'empire on a shoestring' – a method of rule that would overcome problems like the lack of personnel, the difficulty of communicating over long distances, and the high death rate among officials.[26] This seems to back up Mamdani's argument about indirect rule being a cynical grab for power by the British. But indirect rule genuinely caught the imagination of many administrators who saw themselves as defenders of the traditional, tribal Africa in the corrupting face of twentieth century society. Cameron himself said, 'We came to the conclusion that for the present and for many years to come the only way in which we could prevent the Africans from going under and becoming a servile people… was by the system of Native Administration.'[27] Iliffe sees the undesirability of assimilating non-Europeans into European culture partly as an expression of despair at post-war European values, but partly also as a white intellectual fear that Africans might die out unless their institutions were deliberately preserved.[28] To what extent the British properly understood the 'native affairs' that they were trying to protect is debatable, and as we shall see their incomplete understanding meant that they often spent a lot of effort revising and re-evaluating African power structures as they sought to pinpoint the 'true' versions of them. But their struggle to understand was, on the whole, genuine.

It was a struggle for understanding, however, that was always undercut by European prejudices towards African capabilities, and in particular by European prejudices about the 'natural' structure of African societies and how that structure could be leveraged for self-rule. The idea of introducing a democratic form of government in the Tanganyika Territory, for example, was quickly dismissed by Cameron because it would 'have destroyed valuable loyalties of the people to their own institutions… without having created anything to take their place.'[29] Dundas agreed that tribalism and democracy were incompatible: 'The essence of indirect rule was tribalism, and as such it was everything else but a preparation for democracy, the very basis of which was national unity… By its nature tribal rule puts peculiar obstacles in the way of representative government.'[30] Mitchell, in contrast, saw African tribalism as *inherently* democratic – but he was thinking more in terms of its tribe-level checks and balances than in

[26] Cameron, p.94.
[27] ibid, p.87.
[28] Iliffe, p.339.
[29] Cameron, p.114.
[30] Dundas, p.136.

terms of representative democracy.[31] What Cameron, Dundas and Mitchell thus all shared was an unquestioning belief that the only legitimate method of administrating the African population was through 'tribal institutions', and that Africa was a 'tribal' society. This, needless to say, was an assumption based upon their European 'common knowledge' of Africa, drawn from children's books, Sunday school tracts, and the popular press, rather than from African ideas of their own identity.[32]

Cameron, Dundas and Mitchell, as members of the central Government, had to maintain a broad overview of indirect rule and justify it as a state-wide ideology to Colonial Office officials and international journalists. In contrast, further down the administrative scale, it was practical considerations and personal self-interest that coloured the opinions of officials towards indirect rule. Prior argues that the concern British officials had for the 'decay of the tribal unit in the face of imperial change' has been overstated, and that they were in reality quite alert to the fact that African political structures had the capacity to adapt to social and economic change. Instead, he suggests that the enthusiasm officials had for indirect rule had as much to do with the fact that it passed a lot of the grinding administrative work that had hitherto dominated their lives onto the Native Administrations, and thus freed the British to become managers and teachers – just as the public school system in Britain had trained them to be.[33] The self-importance of the British official was thus magnified: he was no longer a mere administrator; instead he was a 'magnificent arbitrator', above the petty problems of the African, but always able to intervene if the situation failed to live up to his expected standards. He could, for example, remove the young Chief William Mukakubwa of the Bukoba Province from school in Tabora and send him to St Mary's College in Kisubi, Uganda, for further tuition, regardless of the chief's opinions on the matter.[34] Indeed, if he so wished, he could orchestrate the dismissal of a chief altogether, either temporarily so that they could be 're-educated' under the instruction of a more favourably regarded chief,[35] or permanently.[36] Indirect rule

[31] Mitchell, p.129.
[32] Curtin, p.iv.
[33] Christopher Prior, *Exporting Empire: Africa, Colonial Officials and the Construction of the Imperial State, c.1900-39* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013) pp.164-5.
[34] National Archives (henceforth NA) CO 736-10, Colonial Office: Tanganyika: Annual Reports of the Provincial Commissioners of Native Administration for the year 1931*,* p.1.
[35] For example: Ndugulile of Usanda, after he wrongfully appropriated land and labour, was allowed to retake his position upon completion of a year's tuition in the Kwimba District, where he learned the 'true ethics of good administration' from Chief Masanja. NA CO 736-15, Colonial Office: Tanganyika: Annual Reports of the Provincial Commissioners of Native Administration for the year 1935*,* p. 43.
[36] CO 691-139-12, Colonial Office: Tanganyika: Official Correspondence: Native Authority Ordinance 1934: exercise of power for removal of native chiefs from government posts, passim.

thus boosted the status of British officials at the lower strata of the colonial administration. However, to see this solely as a status-building exercise is to miss a subtlety. These district-level British officials genuinely believed that they were putting their time and talents to the most effective use.

The District Officers and Provincial Commissioners were perhaps more aware than the central government of the difficulties and compromises that it required to get indirect rule to work. Cameron might talk about how important it was to find Native Authorities that were 'popular' and acceptable to the people.[37] But it was the District Officers who had to pinpoint who this person was (not always easy – or indeed possible, as we shall see later), and mould them into a figure that conformed to European ideas of what African rulership should be like. How indirect rule was implemented was thus heavily influenced by judgements made at local level. This element of subjectivity meant that the decisions made by one district official could easily be reversed by his successor. 'Unfortunately, my predecessor allowed Lusimbi's claim to revive and recognised him as chief, though in fact he exercised no control over the land and its native population,' said one district official as he sought to use the death of a chieftain in Ujiji to shift authority to somebody he felt was better qualified to rule.[38] To see indirect rule as a monolithic ideology that outlined a clear path for British officials is thus a misnomer. Instead, British officials had to improvise solutions to local problems that took into account both traditional tribal practices and the need for 'progressive' reform – with the weight that was given to one side or the other up to the individual officer.

That said, there was a generally accepted idea of what constituted a 'good' African chief among the British. They had to be 'popular' – with the assumption being that a ruling chief could only achieve popularity if they had hereditary authority and if they ruled in a manner that conformed to traditional tribal practices. Any chief who tried to ape Western methods too closely was believed to be at risk of alienating his people. The chiefs thus needed to be properly educated within the foundation of tribal laws and customs. But more than that, they needed to be engaged with the people, strong without being

[37] Cameron, p.96.
[38] NA CO 735-15, p.95.

autocratic, willing to take advice, proactive, able to deliver on 'progressive' policies like road improvement and field terracing, and above all able to orchestrate the successful collection of tax.[39]

In short, the British at both the top and bottom of the administration wanted chiefs that would deliver on *British* policies created by *British* officials under the auspices of indirect rule – but who would do so using 'African' methods.

African Agendas: Collaboration and Resistance

It would be wrong, of course, to dismiss the Africans as a passive component of this system. Establishing African attitudes to indirect rule is hampered by the fact that written sources on the African side are sparse. Postcolonial historians like Pels and Shetler have got around this by making extensive use of oral history, which is beyond the scope of this paper. However, by using their research and conclusions at local level as a framework, it is possible to carry their insights back into the British official documentation at a territory-wide level and 'read between the lines' in the manner developed by the Subaltern Studies historians. This is a methodology that will be used throughout this paper.

Pels, as we have already seen, argues that the Luguru elites negotiated with the British to find a method of indirect rule that suited both their interests.[40] The power structures that were ultimately created, although they might contain artifice and rigidisation and bias, were the result of a two-way process. This seems to have been quite common across the Tanganyika Territory – wherever the British sought to set up indirect rule, they did so in negotiation with local forces. Those Africans who already had power were able to use the implementation of indirect rule to consolidate that power: after all, the British could not 'reconstruct' tribal Tanganyika without input from the Africans, and the people that they chose to consult with were invariably the elders and chiefs that already existed.[41] Mamdani argues that this resulted in the British co-opting the chiefs as regional despots – although he stresses that the British first

[39] For an example of an ideal chief from the British point of view see Gwasa of Uha: NA CO 736-9, Colonial Office: Tanganyika: Annual Reports of the Provincial Commissioners of Native Administration for the year 1930, p.35.
[40] Pels, p.737.
[41] See for example: NA CO 736-10, p.2, NA CO 736-10, p.13, NA CO 735-15, pp.63-64.

had to 'thrash' the chiefs into subservience before they could conciliate them.[42] But the British did not think of themselves as either enablers or perpetrators of autocracy. They preferred to advise and pressurise rather than directly overrule a chief, and although they wanted strong chiefs who could enforce their policies and police the general African population, they also looked for checks and balances in the tribal structures. As a result it was not just existing chiefs who could gain power by allying themselves with indirect rule. For example, upon discovering that the Wakukwe and Wanyakyusa had advisory officials called Amafumu who had been sidelined by the Native Authorities, there was a push to get them reintroduced as a deliberate counterbalance to the chiefs.[43] Power was thus being consolidated in more than one individual. A Nyasaland report into indirect rule in Tanganyika highlighted the importance attached by the British to these checks and balances: 'Chiefs tend to push their constitutional advisers into the background and substitute their own favourites. There are always people whose duty it is to keep an eye on the Chief; these should be discovered and encouraged.'[44] Although this can be read as another manifestation of British power – the magnificent arbitrator choosing who should have authority over who – the British conclusions were always dependent upon the anthropological knowledge provided by collaborative Africans. As Margery Perham pointed out at the time, 'Political officers were not qualified to carry out expert anthropological research.' Due to time constraints they had to make 'rough-and-ready arrangements with the groups,' and the 'recognition of native institutions became a continuous, or at least a prolonged, task.'[45] The extent of this dependence can be seen best on those occasions when the Africans refused to collaborate. The Maasai, for example, declined to explain the logic behind their power structures to the British, and as a result the British struggled to create a successful Native Authority, abortively devolving power to different factions like the Laibon (a religious leader) then the 'Maasai Council' (whose precise membership was never specified) without success.[46]

Africans also had considerable input into who got chosen as a chief. Even in the more well-defined tribes, it was not always easy to pinpoint who among the different chiefly factions was the legitimate

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[42] Mamdani, p.77.
[43] NA CO 736-9*,* p.30.
[44] NA CO 1973-155, Colonial Office: Nyasaland: H.D. Aplin, Report on Native Administration in Tanganyika Territory (1932) p.13.
[45] Margery Perham, 'Some Problems of Indirect Rule in Africa,' *Royal Africa Society,* Vol. 34, No. 135 (1935) pp.7-9.
[46] NA CO 1018-71 Colonial Office: Lord Hailey: Papers, 1946-1955: Tanganyika: Provincial Commissioner's Reports 1944 and 1945, Northern Province, p.5.

leader, and the British regularly set up elections for a new chief or subchief. Popularity, after all, was seen by the British as being nearly as important as hereditariness when it came to a chief's legitimacy. Only a popular chief, so the argument went, had the authority to carry out the Government's will. The African population thus had some leeway within the strictures of indirect rule to self-define themselves. Popular leaders were also treated more leniently by the British than unpopular ones when they erred. Chief Kaswende, for example, could be permitted to retake his chieftainship after twelve months of exile, despite there being reasonable suspicion of his involvement in serious crimes, because he was popular.[47] Another chief, meanwhile, was not so lucky: 'The deciding factor in regard to his deposition was the fact that he had lost the confidence of the headmen and elders.'[48] Once again, a negotiated process was going on, not just between the British and the elites, but also between the British and the wider African community.

A curious example of this negotiation process in action can be seen in the Barabaig Native Authority. When the Sarja (chief) was deposed in 1933 the people admitted to the District Officer and Provincial Commissioner that they only chose him in 1931 because there was nobody else and they were afraid of being amalgamated with Iraqw. Essentially, they had accepted the parameters of indirect rule as dictated to them by the British ('all tribes must choose a chief'), and then manipulated those parameters through misinformation to achieve a result that they desired (independence from the Iraqw). The British response to this revelation was to accept the concerns of the Barabaig, redraw some of the local boundaries, and then let the people of Barabaig select a new chief.[49] Perham, meanwhile, wrote of an example where a tribe put forward a young district clerk who fully understood the ways of the white man as their chief, and 'arrayed [him] in what was understood to be suitable insignia.' When the British came to realise that the real moving spirit and prompter of the chief was 'a sardonic old man in a blanket' they decided not to force the tribe to switch chiefs, but instead accepted the situation, reasoning that if one day there was a general agreement that the 'sardonic old man' should be recognised as chief then it should happen.[50] Indirect rule thus became less of a clearly defined ideology, and more of a series of arbitrary compromises

[47] NA CO 736-10, p.71.
[48] ibid, p.72.
[49] NA CO 736-12, Colonial Office: Tanganyika: Annual Reports of the Provincial Commissioners of Native Administration for the year 1933*,* p.60.
[50] Perham, 'Some Problems of Indirect Rule in Africa,' p.10.

based upon the interests and prejudices of African and British brokers at district level. As a general rule of thumb, the weaker the tribal integrity, the more leeway the Africans had to redefine themselves. The Chagga, for example, with their clearer tribal identity underwent less experimentation with power structures under indirect rule than the 'stateless' peoples of the Dar es Salaam district.[51]

It is a lot harder to ascertain the opinion of the common African to indirect rule. A British study of attitudes among the Wabena of the Ulanga Valley concluded that they regarded the Government as arbitrary, capricious and inevitable, soaking up taxes, but failing to deliver on policies that would directly benefit them – such as keeping rice and cotton prices up. As a result of this cynicism, the writers argued, it was difficult to motivate the Wabena to 'develop' themselves under indirect rule – by which they meant it was difficult to get them to increase their yield of cash crops – even though the Native Authority was working in-step with the Government.[52] Their conclusion perhaps says more about the British stereotype of the 'lazy' African than it does about the subtleties of African attitudes, but it is nonetheless clear that there was extreme disinterest among African farmers to British interference. Indeed, the frustration that British officials had with African refusal to engage with 'progressive' projects like cash crops, field terracing, and forest management is palpable throughout the official record. It was a passive resistance that would ultimately cripple indirect rule: indirect rule was eventually considered a failure by many British commentators mainly because it did not mobilise the rural African economy in any meaningful way. In the battle of wills between the African farmer and the British champions of indirect rule, the African farmer won.

Africans could also engage in more direct forms of resistance. Shetler highlights how people voted with their feet in the difficult Musoma district. Although colonial officers liked Nata's Chief, Rotegenja, he began to lose his constituency when a large part of the Bongirate age-set left the chieftaincy to live elsewhere, and as a result the Nara population dropped from 1,870 in 1927 to 1,028 in 1934. In contrast, Chief Nyambeho of Ikoma, who was unanimously elected in 1925 and who was seen by the British as being in the thrall of his headmen and their villages, retained his population. Western Serengeti peoples, Shetler argues, only tolerated 'colonial chiefs' insofar as they did not interfere with previously existing

[51] For examples of the Dar es Salaam district, see experiments with headmen as administrators: NA CO 736-8 pp 42-3, NA CO 736-12 p.14, NA CO 736-14 p.7; see also below.

[52] Culwick, G. M., 'What the Wabena Think of Indirect Rule,' *Journal of the Royal African Society,* Vol. 26 (1937) p.6.

patterns or make onerous labour or tax demands.[53] If they did, then the people simply left. A similar story can be seen elsewhere in the Tanganyika Territory: for example, a variation in the tax rate caused migrations of people from the Rufiji District to the neighbouring Kilwa and Liwale areas.[54] The Ngindo of Liwale, meanwhile, were described by the District Officer, W.B. Tripe, as being inclined to regard the growing power of their recognised headsmen with alarm. 'Rather than do something they dislike, the more intransigent of the people will often forsake the comparative security of these little settlements for the hazards of the bush.'[55] The British invariably blamed these migrations on the weakness of local tribal structures and authorities, and they were convinced that if they could just find the right formula for the Native Authority, the problem would go away. But for the Africans it was a time-honoured way of avoiding commitment to an authority that they did not approve. The upshot of this was an inherent instability to indirect rule. Because its foundations at the very bottom of African society were unstable, the political structures built upon it were inclined to collapse in the face of crisis (such as locusts, drought, and local political instability). The British, in seeking to prop up those structures, thus had to enter into a continual process of support, negotiation, and occasional political conflict with the local elites. Indirect rule was thus not a system that, once set up, remained rigid: instead it morphed and changed depending upon the local situation; and factions on both sides had to constantly improvise to keep it afloat.

Inconvenient Realities: Tribeless Tanganyika

Naturally, that instability grew stronger the further you moved from the model of the cleanly-defined, hierarchical tribe that indirect rule was designed for. In particular, there were three settings in which the British had to significantly bend the ideological parameters of indirect rule in order to make it fit with the complexities on the ground: areas of weak tribal coherence (what Iliffe calls 'stateless peoples'); goldfields, mining camps, and plantations dependent on migrant labour; and urban environments. The compromises that the British made in these areas helps to throw into relief their priorities under indirect rule.

[53] Jan Bender Shetler, *Imagining Serengeti; A History of Landscape and Memory in Tanzania from Earliest Times to the Present* (Athens O.H.: Ohio University Press, 2007) p.177.
[54] NA CO 736-12, p.16.
[55] NA CO 736-14, Colonial Office: Tanganyika: Annual Reports of the Provincial Commissioners of Native Administration for the year 1934*,* p.26.

From the start, the British knew that there were parts of the Tanganyika Territory that lacked tribal coherence. Usually, this was blamed upon the Germans – the British logic was that the tribal structures had been destroyed under German rule, and that if the district officials just looked hard enough, the old structures could be recovered.[56] Where a tribal unit was weak but identifiable, it might be encouraged to form a union with another similar tribe or tribes. The ruling authority in this case would be a council of the chiefs, rather than a single chief.[57] But there were also areas like the Swahili Coast, the country around Tabora, and the north-west of the territory where – either due to centuries of migration or because of historically decentralised power structures – even in pre-colonial days there had been no obvious tribes. In these circumstances, the British were quite happy to 'create' tribes out of scattered communities. As the Acting District Officer of Upangwa said in 1931, 'Prior to 1926 the Pangwa could hardly be regarded as a tribe but rather a collection of families tucked away in the recesses of the mountains. Today they are a tribal entity under Chief Kidulile.'[58] In other words, if a 'tribe' could be made to work, the British did not mind if its historical precedence was dubious. They were less concerned about preserving historical legacies than about creating functioning governments. Similarly, if a cohesive tribe had invaded an area in recent memory, like the Ngoni did in the Songea District, the British did not penalise it for its lack of indigenousness, but happily incorporated it into indirect rule. Indeed, as Edwards shows, the 'egalitarian, stateless Ndendeuli' were placed under the authority of the more centralised Ngoni Native Authorities, even though they had inhabited the area longer, because the Ngoni seemed to offer a better structure through which indirect rule could be established – although Edwards points out that when economic priorities shifted in the 1950s, the Ndendeuli with their enthusiastic adoption of tobacco production and Islam came to be seen as 'industrious and progressive' whilst the Ngoni were characterised as 'conservative and indolent' and 'a deteriorating tribe'.[59] In areas where the people were scattered or semi-nomadic, meanwhile, the British went further. They used threats like the tsetse fly as an excuse to force resettlement into concentrated communities – seeking to create not just a new 'tribe' but also a new way

[56] Cameron talking to Perham in: Perham, *East Africa Journey,* p.43.
[57] E.K. Lumley, *Forgotten Mandate* (London: C. Hurst and Co. Publishers, 1976) p.15.
[58] NA CO 736-10, p.17.
[59] David Edwards, 'Settlement, Livelihoods and Identity in Southern Tanzania: A Comparative History of the Ngoni and Ndendeuli,' PhD diss. (University of Edinburgh, 2003) pp.2-3 and pp.246-247.

of life for the African population that had little foundation in historical precedent.[60] British ideas of what constituted progress thus overrode any desire to keep Africa static or preserve the 'native savage'.

However, this arbitrary creation of Native Authorities often ran into difficulties. The unfamiliar and artificial power structures struggled to overcome the more complicated and diffuse relationships that already existed. The Dar es Salaam hinterland provides a good example of the difficulties that the British faced when they tried to construct a Native Authority in a detribalised area. At first the British tried to make the standard model of indirect rule fit – rooting it in the village community, 'the only definite administrative unit that can be traced.' There was great optimism that the villagers would choose as headmen those people whose hereditary right had always been tacitly acknowledged. By 1932, however, the British had conceded that this had not worked out as planned: 'the majority of headmen selected by the people themselves were of no practical experience as chiefs or headmen, and in many cases, by intent or accident, the weakest and most characterless people were selected.'[61] Experiments with 'akidas' took place – educated African officials appointed from outside the tribe in the fashion of the Germans, a form of direct rule that had previously been condemned under indirect rule.[62] By 1944 'Wakilis', chosen by District Commissioner on merit, had replaced the headmen. 'One was a hut counter, the other a Baraza clerk, and the other was actually one of the old Wandewa (headmen), but does not function in his own area.'[63] The British were prepared to completely rip up the ideology of indirect rule in a desperate search for a form of local government that would work. Even in the 1940s, the Native Treasuries still largely functioned under the District Commissioner as different attempts to organise the Native Authorities failed. In other parts of the Territory, such as Mafia Island, indirect rule was withheld for many years precisely because the local British officials considered the areas too mixed to support a Native Authority.[64]

Part of the problem was that when the British felt that they had no strong faction to negotiate power structures with, they went ahead and imposed solutions of their own creation based on their limited

[60] NA CO 736-11, Colonial Office: Tanganyika: Annual Reports of the Provincial Commissioners of Native Administration for the year 1932, pp.68-70.
[61] ibid, p.10.
[62] NA CO 736-12, p.14.
[63] NA CO 1018-69 Colonial Office: Lord Hailey: Papers, 1946-1955: Tanganyika: Provincial Commissioner's Reports 1944 and 1945, Eastern Province, p.37.
[64] ibid, p.46.

understanding of the local area. Beidelman argues that the gap between actual tradition and social structure, on the one hand, and the system newly formulated for indirect rule, on the other, was so great that these pseudo-Native Authorities could only be maintained through autocratic high-handedness.[65] Mamdani's argument of regional despotism is thus strongest in those areas where the British were forced to bend the central tenets of indirect rule most out of shape.

The gap between the ideology of indirect rule and the practicalities of a functioning administration grew even wider when you stepped beyond agricultural communities. The British vision for Tanganyika's future was essentially an agricultural one based upon tying Africans to the land and customs of a tribe so that they could produce cash crops in organised communities. But the Territory had other industries as well, such as gold mining and sisal production, which relied upon migrant workforces – usually because recruitment among local populations had proven unsuccessful. This was not ideal from the British point of view. They believed that when an African was removed from the confines of the tribe, he was prone to degeneration, and as a result he would grow dissatisfied with authority, and turn to crime and drunkenness. 'Detribalism in Africa means demoralisation,' wrote Bertram.[66] There was also a belief that the local Native Authorities, being rooted in a different culture to the migrants, would lack the authority to control these populations of outsiders.[67] But such were the economic imperatives of industry that the British were prepared to bend the tenets of indirect rule in order to make sure that they could continue working as before. It helped that migrant workers often moved en masse, so one solution, as tried in the Lupa goldfields, was to constitute special Native Courts that consisted of indigenous headmen of both the local Native Administrations and representatives of the principal tribes employed in the area. Responsibility for law and order was thus shared between the indigenous and the migrant, under the ultimate aegis of the indigenous Native Authority.[68] It was still indirect rule, but it was a form of indirect rule that ignored one of the basic tenets of British belief in 'traditional' Africa: that the African was only a 'proper' African when he was working the land of his tribe.

Indeed, the British attitude to migration was always more nuanced than one might expect. Although there were many cases when the British sought to encourage African chiefs to clamp down on the

[65] Beidelman, p.231.
[66] Bertram, p.83.
[67] See for example: Perham, *East Africa Journey,* p.52.
[68] NA CO 736-14, p.38.

practice of migratory work, not least because it complicated tax collection,[69] their attitude shifted depending on local factors – as can be seen in the example of the Nyakyusa of the Rungwe District and their migration into the Mbeya District. The peoples of the Mbeya District and the Nyakyusa had very different cultural traditions, and the chieftains and headmen of the Mbeya District were pressing for the British to check the influx, not least because the Nyakyusa were refusing to assimilate. The British might have been expected to side with the peoples of the Mbeya District to protect the traditional tribal structures – after all, there was a very real fear that the migrations were breaking down local authority. However, a British report on the matter concluded that the Nyakyusa were 'an essential part in the scheme of non-Native development in Mbozi, the indigenous population having proved, in general, unsuited to work on the coffee farms.'[70] The Nyakyusa were seen as being agriculturally ambitious – the sort of 'native' that the Government wanted to encourage because they supported the Government's agricultural vision for the Territory's future. It was hoped that they could influence the peoples of the Mbeya District by example to adopt better farming practices. The British were thus eager to let the migrations continue, at least in a limited form and on the understanding that the Nyakyusa would obey the local Native Authorities. In other words, the alien settlement could continue, as long as it was managed through the indigenous chiefs and headmen, and as long as the District Officer did not allow the alien migrants to appoint their own subchiefs and headmen – after all, the British wanted to avoid alternative nexuses of power forming that might challenge the local Native Authorities. There was certainly no desire to return settled aliens to their point of origin, not least because many of them had lost ties with their original home, and so would probably be a destabilising force if returned.[71] What examples like the Nyakyusa migrations illustrate is that the British always had an economic agenda that was independent of indirect rule, and when forced to choose between indirect rule and that agenda, it was economics that invariably won out.

But it was perhaps the urban environment that presented the greatest challenge to indirect rule. Indirect rule required a 'chieftain' figure or figures to devolve power to, and also a shared tribal culture to support a Native Court. But neither of those existed in the urban environment, and as a result the British

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[69] NA CO 736-9, p.17.

[70] R. de Z. Hall, 'Local Migration in Tanganyika,' *African Studies* Vol. 4, No. 2 (1945) p.54.

[71] NA CO 736-17, Colonial Office: Tanganyika: Annual Reports of the Provincial Commissioners of Native Administration for the year 1937, p.64.

invariably retained direct rule whilst they looked around for a solution. In Dar es Salaam, the governership of the town was divorced from the hinterland as indirect rule made its slow headway through the rural areas, and even when a municipal council was set up in 1948, the British still chose Africans to sit on it rather than allowing them to be selected by Africans.[72] Tanga, meanwhile, was also divorced from its hinterland and did not come under indirect rule until 1944; up until that point Native Treasury had 'operated almost entirely as a branch of the District Office.'[73]

Attempts *were* made to involve local tribes in government. In Dar es Salaam, for example, a non-statutory body known as the Native Advisory Board was formed, which consisted of six elected elders from the most important tribes. It acted as a medium between the municipal secretary and the townspeople and it arbitrated in minor disputes and helped to collect tax.[74] However, Brennan has argued that the British, in their obsession with tribe, ignored 'sub-racial' urban identities that would have offered a more stable foundation for the creation of Native Authorities. Fine gradations of ancestral prestige, so important to coastal Swahili culture, and the relational mode of identity that separated *wenye mji* (owners of the town) and *watu wa kuja* (immigrants) had little purchase among urban administrators.[75] The form of administration being imposed by administrators was thus once again not one based on historical practice; rather it was based upon those indigenous practices the British felt most comfortable about. Indirect rule in urban environments was thus superficial at best, and at worst non-existent. The ideology, designed with rural 'tribal' Africa in mind, simply did not fit with the realities of the town.

Mamdani sees the educated, urban Africans as the antithesis of indirect rule: a class that was deliberately sidelined from power because they posed the biggest threat to British hegemony.[76] Certainly, the British showed little enthusiasm for encouraging new 'urban' identities in the same way that they were willing to manufacture new 'tribal' identities, because they feared that this would lead to Nationalism, an ideology that they were hoping to avoid. The closest they got was some half-hearted experimentation with the 'Associations' that had formed among Africans in the towns. In Ujiji, for example, the Provincial

[72] NA CO 1018-69, p.12.
[73] NA CO 1018-74, Colonial Office: Lord Hailey: Papers, 1946-1955: Tanganyika: Provincial Commissioner's Reports 1944 and 1945, Tanga Province, p.1.
[74] NA CO 1018-69, p.15.
[75] Brennan, James R., *TAIFA; Making Nation and Race in Urban Tanzania* (Athens O.H.: Ohio University Press, 2012) p.64.
[76] Mamdani, p.76.

Commissioner reported that there was a general tendency for urban Africans to consolidate into either 'Watanganyika' or 'Arabiani' Associations as a 'natural result of their detribalisation, for they have abandoned their tribal leaders and organisations as unsuitable to town life'.[77] The Provincial Commissioner and the Government both discussed the possibility of using these associations as the basis of indirect rule in the town, and although this never fully materialised, by 1939 the heads of each faction had honorary seats on the bench of the Luichi Federation Court.[78] Tabora and Dar es Salaam had similar associations[79] – the highest profile of which was the African Association (probably founded in 1929), which sought to create a pan-African sense of unity regardless of 'tribe, religion, or territorial origin'. The British were, in general, ambivalent towards these organisations. As long as they concerned themselves with social and economic issues, they tolerated their existence; but if they looked as if they were becoming too political the British attitude grew more threatening.[80] They certainly never intended to let them develop into nascent political parties capable of functioning as a local government.

However, there was one overarching identity that the British were willing to engage with in the towns, and that was religion. Cameron himself had declared that he envisaged a time when the importance of tribe would fade in African society, and that instead it would be religion that provided the gel that kept the hierarchies of indirect rule together.[81] This, of course, fitted with British ideas of progress. Tribalism, however 'natural' to Africa, was also 'primitive', whereas the true mark of a civilised society was monotheism – Christianity, or failing that, Islam. Bertram talks about the creation of a 'Commonwealth of God' as being one of the justifications of Empire.[82] In urban environments, where tribalism had already collapsed, the British looked at ways of leveraging monotheistic religion to make indirect rule work. The Liwalis (Islamic religious leaders) were seen as key figures of authority in towns all across the Territory. In Dar es Salaam they were the only person listed on the Native Court warrant, and as such they were responsible for many of the duties that were carried out by Native Authorities elsewhere:

[77] NA CO 736-11, pp.67-68.
[78] NA CO 736-17, Colonial Office: Tanganyika: Annual Reports of the Provincial Commissioners of Native Administration for the year 1939*,* p.108.
[79] NA CO 736-9 p.20.
[80] Iliffe, pp.406-7.
[81] Cameron, p.167.
[82] Bertram, p.192.

administering the Tax Ordinance, Trade Licensing Ordinance, and 'Markets and Cocoanuts'.[83] It did not matter if they were non-indigenous to the area – the Liwali of Dodoma, for example, was of Coastal origin.[84] What mattered was that they had authority through religion, and as a result they were somebody that the British could work with to effect the administration of the towns. Religion had the advantage over other extra-tribal identities like Nationalism in that it was pan-national and apolitical, and so was less likely to create a separate 'Tanganyikan' identity that would be hostile to the British. It thus seemed to offer the promise of a framework for a functioning, networked state, without the threat of an anti-British uprising. The British, of course, never got close to implementing this goal, but the idea illustrates how British ambition was not, as Mamdani argues, a drive towards localisation. Instead, they were looking at ways to build new territory-wide networks without undermining their stake in the state.

Not-so-Customary Law: The Native Courts

Once a suitable Native Authority had been identified, the next step was to gazette a Native Court. It was reasoned by the British that Africans were more likely to obey their own laws than European ones, so the laws of each tribal area were written down and canonised as 'customary law'. There were two classes of Court – the first class courts of the chiefs, and the second class courts of the subchiefs[85] – with a Native Court of Appeal above that, and the possibility of further appeals to the District Commissioner.[86]

Mamdani argues that push towards customary law 'containerised' the African as a tribesman, shackling him with the laws of the tribe rather than the country, and driving the process of localisation. He points out that, unlike with civil law, customary law was enforced by those who defined it – and as a result he argues that it was skewed heavily in favour of state-appointed customary authorities, encouraging despotism.[87] It is true that the system, theoretically at least, helped strengthen the definition of the tribe, and reinforced its hierarchies by giving lawful 'legitimacy' to the decrees of the ruling class – both processes that the British thought were key to the successful implementation of indirect rule. But the

[83] NA CO 1018-69, p.12.
[84] NA CO 1018-68, Colonial Office: Lord Hailey: Papers, 1946-1955: Tanganyika: Provincial Commissioner's Reports 1944 and 1945: Central Province, p.23.
[85] As determined by the Provincial Commissioner, based upon the ability and importance of the individual chief.
[86] NA CO 1073-155, p.8-10.
[87] Mamdani, p.22.

Courts also forced the chiefs and headmen to engage with their people in a predictable and non-arbitrary fashion, and they engaged the common Africans directly in the institutions of indirect rule and gave them a stake in their own government: the use of the Native Court of Appeal in particular was closely monitored by officials as evidence of African engagement with the administration.[88]

There was an underlying expectation by the British that the Courts would function in a manner consistent with basic European legal principles. Although efforts were made to 'avoid too much formality and to eliminate any attempt at aping the procedure of the subordinate courts too slavishly,'[89] the British wanted the Courts to adopt European ideas of good practice. Record taking in particular was seen as critical. The Native Court thus might leverage local African tradition, but they were very much a hybrid institution, and they often expected the Africans to adopt practices that were unfamiliar to them. Officials, for example, grew frustrated when the Courts failed to enforce their own verdicts, usually because the enforcement of judgement had never been the responsibility of a Court's antecedents.[90] The division of executive and judicial power of the chief, meanwhile, was not always historically justified. This resulted in a curious situation whereby 'traditional' laws were often being enforced by a very non-traditional body. The British saw no contradiction in this. They saw the Native Courts as a critical stepping stone on the path to the territory's modernisation, and they were happy to let European ideas of progress blur the 'traditional' structures of African society. In essence, the Native Courts were seen by the British as a vehicle for remoulding African societies along lines that the British considered progressive, adapting 'natural' African law for the modern world. As Cameron himself said: 'We endeavour to purge the native system of its abuses, to graft our higher civilization upon the soundly rooted native stock.'[91]

Unfortunately, this drive towards the rule of law was undermined by the fact that the British could intervene in the process whenever they liked – although in general they preferred to do it through pressurising tribal leaders rather than directly overruling the authority of the Court.[92] A 'repugnancy' clause in the Ordinances stated that nothing 'shall be administered which is repugnant to natural justice or

[88] See for example: NA CO 736-8, p.8; NA CO 736-9, p.34; NA CO 736-15, p.47.
[89] NA CO 736-10, p.30.
[90] NA CO 736-11 p.43.
[91] Quoted in: H M Government, 'Development of African Local Government in Tanganyika,' *Local Government Memoranda No. 1, Part 1* (London: H.M Stationary Office, 1954) p.1.
[92] For example: Among the Nzeza, the British pressurised the Native Authority into repressing millet beer sales to preserve foodstuffs. NA CO 736-18, Colonial Office: Tanganyika: Annual Reports of the Provincial Commissioners of Native Administration for the year 1938, p.105.

morality or which, in principle, is in conflict with any law in force in the Territory.' 'Injustice' and 'illegality' were both repugnant, and it was up to the white official to quash any ruling that they felt overstepped the limits of the Court's powers[93] – which gave local officials considerable leeway in defining what was acceptable and what was not, invariably by their own European standards. The British were also keen to make sure that the Native Courts upheld their economic agenda for the Territory: in the Luichi Federation, for example, the British successfully got the Native Court to prohibit the cutting and destruction of oil palms for the making of palm wine, in order to foster the production of palm oil (a cash crop).[94] In Sukumaland, meanwhile, the 'young' were seen as having too much freedom, so the British allied with the fathers and elders to make sure that sons contributed to tax contributions and dowries because they felt that this encouraged the young to find employment, which would in turn solve local labour problems.[95] British morality and British economic agendas thus continued to play an intrusive role in what was supposed to be an African institution run by African people for African people – although as before, the individual opinion of the official on the ground had considerable impact: Dundas highlights an example where in one area different officers had exhorted the locals to pass laws both to clear their banana groves of withered leafage for sanitation's sake and then to leave them to lie and rot for mulch.[96]

The contractions in the British attitude to the Courts can be best seen in regard to witchcraft and rainmaking. Supernatural beliefs presented a unique problem for British officials. On the one hand it looked suspiciously like arbitrary superstition to their European eyes. On the other hand, as Feierman has shown in the Shambaa region and Pels has described in Uluguru, rainmaking powers were often a key part of a chief's authority. The British thus sought to make a division that was not necessarily obvious to local African cultures: they would stamp out the use of 'witchcraft' in the Native Courts, whilst at the same time showing sympathy towards witchdoctor or rainmaking powers that bestowed legitimacy on a chief.[97] They did not whole-heartedly embrace the latter – Pels describes how one potential chief's status as a rain doctor caused British belief in his suitability to fluctuate – but in general, they made allowances

[93] Sally Falk Moore, 'Treating Law as Knowledge: Telling Colonial Officers What to Say to Africans about Running 'Their Own' Native Courts,' *Law and Society Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1992), p.25.
[94] NA CO 736-18, p.105.
[95] NA CO 735-15, p.27.
[96] Dundas, p.137.
[97] NA CO 736-11, p.44.

for these legitimising powers in the belief that they could be ironed away at a later date.[98] Thus in the Lindi Province, two headmen were recommended for suspension having allowed an alleged wizard to practice divination in the case of theft,[99] whilst in the Mahenge District attempts were made by the British to secure cooperation of local medicine men and soothsayers – the reasoning being that the lack of success at improving the 'sociological condition' of the area had been due to an underestimation of the power of those men.[100] In short, the British were shaping what got used as material for the structures of indirect rule and what did not: they were encouraging what they saw as 'positive' African culture and suppressing what they saw as 'negative' African culture.

This filtering process was greatly helped by the process of institutionalisation that African law was going through. After all, once customary law was out in the open and written down, the British were able to review and control it more effectively: 'The litigation formerly conducted by the aid of witchcraft and ordeal is now being brought before a bench of native magistrates in open court.'[101] By recasting African law as a set of rule statements, 'repugnant' elements could be removed, whilst the rest could be accorded its full dignity and adapted for modern court use.[102]

It would be wrong to see this filtering as a one way process. As Sally Falk Moore points out, British officials seldom had the time, the language skills, or the interest to learn much about local customary law.[103] The British were thus reliant upon African co-operation to tell them what the local customary law was – and this allowed those already entrenched in power to manipulate the codification for their own ends. Martin Chanock, Jean Allman, and Victoria B. Tashjian have argued that the recording of customary law under indirect rule elsewhere in Africa allowed senior males to codify the laws to their advantage.[104] The extent to which a similar process happened in the Tanganyika Territory is beyond the scope of this project,[105] but even a superficial reading of the historical record suggests that there was a drive in that direction. In Tunduru and Newala, for example, there was a clampdown on female adultery, as customary

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[98] Pels, p.755.
[99] NA CO 736-10, p.31.
[100] NA CO 736-16, Colonial Office: Tanganyika: Annual Reports of the Provincial Commissioners of Native Administration for the year 1936, p.11.
[101] NA CO 736-9, p.14.
[102] Moore, p.14.
[103] Ibid, pp.41-2.
[104] Martin Chancock, *Law, Custom and Social Order: Colonial Experience in Malawi and Zambia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p.12; Jean Allman and Victoria B. Tashjian, *I Will Not Eat Stone: A Woman's History of Colonial Asante* (Bloomingdon: Indiana University Press, 2000) p.169.
[105] It would require significant oral history research.

law was 'tightened' in order to discourage it.[106] The role that the British played in this process was ambivalent. They had their own European ideas about gender roles, which they wanted to see enforced, and those ideas were often at odds with the female identities favoured by the tribal patriarchies. British officials, for example, could be dismissive of attempts by elders to punish adultery with prison sentences, because they believed that the problem was the result of the old or middle-aged men 'unnaturally' marrying all the available girls.[107] Meanwhile, in Arusha, the British passively supported the female side when the elders tried to stymie the growth of independence among young women: 'The elders are beginning to realise that [the reluctance to follow a father's choice of husband] is an inevitable departure from ancient customs.'[108] But although the British were uncomfortable with women being treated as property, they were not prepared to intervene too directly. Instead, they saw 'education' as a way of improving the lot of women and discouraging things like temporary husbands[109] – something that Cameron referred to as managing the people rather than the law.[110] The idea was that, given suitable instruction, and having developed some experience of the rule of law, the African leaders would eventually come to the 'right' decisions on these matters.

This process of filtering customary law through European assumptions about what was 'morally right' meant that a certain degree of levelling took place across the Territory, which was accelerated by the fact that, although each Native Court was unique, it's basic structure was the same throughout the state. This process was further reinforced by the fact that the British, in general, felt that broader Courts were fairer than narrower ones, and that courts of appeal managed by councils of chiefs were better than courts of appeal managed by individual chiefs – because collectively, a body of chiefs and elders would give fair judgement, whereas individually there was always a danger of self-interest or the fear of antagonising an influential litigant could warp the judgement.[111] These trends combined to create a counter-pressure to Mamdani's process of 'containerisation', one that the British anticipated would grow as time progressed. A 1957 memorandum declared that homogenisation and standardisation were the 'natural' direction in which the legal system would evolve. It predicted that as more customary law was recorded, 'the general

[106] NA CO 736-11, p.34.
[107] NA CO 736-12, p.74.
[108] NA CO 736-11, p.42.
[109] NC CO 736-13, pp.42-43.
[110] Cameron, p.94.
[111] NA CO 736-17, p.9.

principles of Bantu Law which it is thought are effective throughout the patrilineal area of the Territory should begin to emerge and become capable of definition, to the great benefit of all concerned with their practical application.'[112] Local variation would fade away, leaving a solid framework on which to base a law code that would cover a considerable portion of the Territory. The British thus anticipated that any movement towards localisation would be temporary, and that the future of the Tanganyika Territory was not one of mini-dictators supported by their own unique laws, but one of local leaders whose authority was supported and controlled by an extensive, state-wide legal system.

[112] H M Government, 'Development of African Local Courts in Tanganyika,' *Local Government Memoranda No. 2* (London: H.M Stationary Office, 1957) p.15.

III

THE BREAKING AND BUILDING OF NETWORKS

So far, we have considered how, under indirect rule, the British sought to negotiate the creation of stable local administrations that were rooted in tribal practise but which successfully delivered on British moral and economic agendas. We have seen how this fluid and unstable process on the one hand 'containerised' African communities, but on the other sought to establish new territory-wide networks based around British plans for the future of the Territory. The next section of this paper will explore in more detail the breaking of old networks and the building of new ones, and it will offer a closer look at how the British imagined the territory would develop in the future. It will begin with the nadir of British intervention in the Tanganyika Territory: education.

Controlling Education

One of the core tenets of Mamdani's argument against indirect rule – and the area on which he is strongest – is his belief that the British deliberately sought to side-line educated Africans as a threat to political stability. When the Germans departed from East Africa after the First World War, they left behind a body of well-trained and literate akidas – African officials who could have been used as the basis

of a subsequent administration.[113] But the British chose to ignore these men and instead based their government on the chiefly authorities. As a result, the educated African was seen as a threat rather than an ally. His mission education, his emancipation from tribal authority, his peripatetic instincts, and his ambition, all risked undermining the authority of the chiefs. The British much preferred the common African to be tied to the local land and community, partly because they felt that this was his 'natural' environment and that only there could he realise his full potential – as a farmer – but partly also because this made him easier to control.[114] Education was not seen as a path to higher purpose, as it was in Europe; instead it was a way of teaching Africans to stay put. As a result, the curriculum of education that the British favoured was agricultural, reinforced with European ideas of 'character' and 'moral principles'. There was a drive to 'associate lessons with the affairs and problems of village life and environment,' the ambition being to create a docile, hardworking agriculturalist.[115] It was considered a great success when African school boys could produce burnt bricks, wash daily, and exhibit a dislike of vermin and dirt.[116] By forcibly narrowing the ambitions of the common African through their control of education, the British sought to isolate him from territory-wide movements like Nationalism, and ground him in the local community.

That said, British attitudes to African education exhibited a clear class divide. British officials showed a strong preference for educated chiefs over uneducated ones – after all, it was believed that only an educated chief could be both effective and morally upright. The British were thus eager that the tribal elites be literate and well-versed in the customs and laws of their tribe, and a lot of the early schools run directly by the Native Administrations (as opposed to mission schools and Government run village schools), gave preference to the sons of chiefs and headmen.[117] In this context, the British saw education as a tool to teach the local elite what they needed to know in order to rule in the manner that the British expected of them.

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[113] C. Cohen, ''The Natives Must First Become Good Workmen', Formal Educational Provision in German South West Africa and East Africa Compared,' *Journal of Southern African Studies* Vol. 19, No. 1 (1993) pp.115-134.
[114] NA CO 736-7, Colonial Office: Tanganyika: Annual Reports of the Provincial Commissioners of Native Administration for the year 1928, p.12.
[115] NA CO 736-17, p.14.
[116] ibid, p.15.
[117] For example, those in Luhira and Mahenge: NA CO 736-9, pp.45-6.

The British inevitably found allies for this two-pronged approach among the chiefs and elders, who were as unenthusiastic as the British about education among the wider African population. In the Tanga area, for example, there was great concern among the elders about the 'Kijana Cha Mambo Leo', or Modern Young Man, who read, wrote, and paid great attention to his dress, but who 'comes over a tremble at the sight of a job of work.' The reluctance of these men to do 'real' work was blamed on the fact that education took them away from the fields during their childhood, so they never learnt manual labour or paternal discipline. 'As a result they have no stake in their county, no houses, no family, cattle or shamba. They are an unpleasant reminder of that medieval scourge, the masterless man.'[118] Education was thus seen as undermining the very glue that bound the tribes together, damaging the chief's authority, and fracturing rural African society. The chiefs, headmen and British all had an interest in looking for ways to re-engage men with their local communities, encouraging them to invest in houses and wives and shambas that would tie them to the village.[119] They sought to discourage networks built upon mobile individuals clever enough to make their way in the world without the need for traditional hierarchies.

However, there was an acknowledgement by the British that a small number of Africans would need to be educated in non-agricultural matters: the Native Courts and Treasuries needed their clerks, and the medical dispensaries needed their tribal dressers. The British were willing to support this, provided that the individuals remained attached to their community of origin – they made it clear that no appointment of an 'outsider' should be encouraged in tribal service unless it was certain that no local individuals could fill the post.[120] They did not want a central body of medical or legal men who could be parachuted into posts as needed, but instead wanted individuals from the local community to be trained up to a suitable standard. This, of course, took time, and the results were rarely satisfactory: throughout this period a common complaint against the Native Courts was the lack of suitable clerks.[121] Worse, when an individual did show talent, the British invariably panicked. They disliked it when African clerks became too efficient and gained ascendancy over chiefs (particularly if the chief could not read and write),[122] and they did not want educated men to undermine the authority and prestige of the local hierarchies. As a result, the

[118] NA CO 736-11, p.50.
[119] ibid, p.51.
[120] NA CO 736-14, p.49.
[121] See for example: NA CO 736-15, p.90, NA CO 736-17, p.84, NA CO 736-18, p.33.
[122] NA CO 736-17, p.66.

British preferred clerks who were related to those in power.[123] Instead of creating a new educated class, they were reinforcing local oligarchies.

This attitude perhaps explains why the British were much more enthusiastic about educating tribal dressers than they were about educating clerks. After all, a medical man was never much of a threat to the power of the chief, and they encapsulated the sort of domesticated progress that the British wanted to encourage. Some officials went so far as to call them the vanguard of indirect rule. They believed that, through health care, the people would be able to see an immediate return for the taxes that they paid to the Native Administration, and they believed that the tribal dressers helped combat witchcraft by showing people a scientific alternative to superstitious practices.[124] But despite British enthusiasm for the idea, time and again the training of tribal dressers failed to reach its potential, and initiatives had to be postponed due to lack of personnel.[125] Money was partly to blame. As Hailey noted in 1948, Native Administration schools and dispensaries were only funded by Native Administration when they could afford it; otherwise they relied upon Government grants, which also could be cut in lean times.[126] With their financial underpinnings shaky, it is not surprising that the medical dispensaries and the Native Courts were throughout this period chronically short of trained staff.

But even the difficulties of balancing the budget cannot adequately explain why the percentage of revenue spent on education decreased during the 1930s. 'From direct Native tax, the collection of which often entails great hardships, the percentage spent on Native education has been reduced from 17½ percent, (1931) to 11½ percent (1933), and of general revenue from 8 percent (1931) to 6 per cent. (1933).'[127] The excuse was that the reduction was necessitated by the fact that there were not enough jobs for those Africans who completed their studies. But although this might have been true in more tribally-developed areas (like among the Chagga), it was certainly not true of the territory as whole. Instead, the root of the problem seems to have been a distaste on the part of the British for educated Africans: essentially, it was racism.

[123] NA CO 736-12, p.15.
[124] NA CO 736-9, p.21.
[125] NA CO 736-14, p.42.
[126] NA CO 1018-69, p.1.
[127] W. Bryant Mumford, 'Education in Tanganyika,' *African Affairs,* Vol. 34, No. 85 (1935) p.198.

Even among the most pro-indirect rule officials, there was little enthusiasm for the idea of an African becoming the social equal of the white-man. Rather, as Homi Bhabba points out, British officials wanted 'a reformed, recognisable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite.'[128] Take, for example, T. Kayamba, the Chief Clerk in the Provincial Commissions Office in Tanga. Kayamba was a highly-educated African whose name was put forward for promotion to the rank of Assistant Secretary in the Native Affairs Branch of the Secretariat – a post normally held by a European. This could have been a positive step forward for indirect rule: proof that the Mandated Territory was moving towards its expressed purpose of giving Africans a stake in the rule of their own country. But officials were split on whether it was a good idea. Some praised his loyalty, intelligence, and work ethic; others were less enthusiastic – 'I wish the Government could have created a new post for him rather than given him a European post' said one official. In the end it was decided that he should be appointed to the post at a lower scale of pay (the excuse being that he was 'serving in his own country') and that it should be made clear that he was not being appointed a member of the Colonial Administrative Service; rather he was to be regarded as belonging to the higher branch of the local services.[129] Whatever the theoretical ideology of indirect rule in the early 1930s, there was still a firm belief that the African was not the equal to the European, and that even with a superior education he was not suitable for central government. Indirect rule, for the time being at least, placed the African firmly in the regions, not at the centre.

This, naturally, was frustrating for the Africans. A survey by the Phelps Stokes Commission of 1924 suggested that most schoolchildren wished to become clerks. They wanted literacy and assimilative education in a European language, for this was seen as a route to high wages, equality, and power.[130] Agricultural education was regarded as a dead-end: the teachers resented being part-time peasants, and the children could learn more about farming by working on the family shambas. The more 'advanced' tribes in particular were eager to break out of the farming ghetto. When British officials told the Chagga that 'care must be taken that youths with small clerical knowledge are not turned out in excess of requirements', the Chagga responded that education was the only way that the succeeding generations

[128] Homi Bhabba, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) p.85.
[129] NA CO 691-126-12, Colonial Office: Tanganyika: Official Correspondence: Promotion of H M T Kayamba, to assistant secretary, Native Affairs Branch of the Secretariat (1932), passim.
[130] Iliffe, p.338.

could 'maintain their place in the sun.'[131] The Chagga envisaged a world where the Government would help provide clerical jobs for everyone who left school; the British wanted the Chagga to remain on the coffee plantations.[132] Africans saw education as a path to status and self-actualisation; the British saw education as a way of inculcating the tribal and agricultural thought-processes that they wanted to encourage in Africans in order to keep the Territory governable.

This largely backs up Mamdani's argument about containerisation. But although the British believed that they had to 'domesticate' the African in order to make him a useful member of society, this was seen as the first stage of a longer process. They still believed in their civilising mission, and as one official put it: 'How many times have I been asked 'What is civilisation' and how many times have I told the boys that it is a synonym for progress.' Although they believed that there was 'no virtue in destroying anything indigenous until something better can replace it', at the same time there was an understanding that 'economics will ultimately be the most potent force in this country'. As a result, the British were endeavouring to correlate their education programmes 'to the realities and possibilities of the future' – a future that would see the Tanganyika Territory as an international producer of cash crops.[133] In other words, once the ground work was in place, the old regional networks of tribe could fade, and the agriculturally-educated Africans would be in a position to take advantage of new networks – ones based around capitalism – which, under the watchful eye of the British, would tie the Tanganyika Territory into the global market.

Economies of Wishful Thought: the Native Treasuries.

This economic vision of the future meant that the British were at their most interventionist when it came to the Native Treasuries. The Native Treasuries were set up to raise taxes within the Native Authorities and to allocate a percentage of those taxes to local government. The hope was that if the Africans saw their taxes being used for local initiatives, they would be more supportive and engaged with their administrations. Theoretically, the Native Treasury would expand over time to fund things like the

[131] NA CO 736-14, p.15.
[132] NA CO 736-17, p.51.
[133] NA CO 736-6, Colonial Office: Tanganyika: Annual Reports of the Provincial Commissioners of Native Administration for the year 1927*,* p.27.

creation of administrative buildings, road construction programmes, forestation projects, and the salaries of teachers and tribal dressers. This would teach the Native Administrations European ideas of progressive, 'responsible' government – although there was also a hope that the approach would help make economies at central government level.[134] In practice, however, the bulk of the money went into paying the salaries of the chiefs and their dependents. The Usamabara District Native Treasury estimates for 1936, for example, allocated 88% of its budget to clerks, chiefs, headmen and their messengers.[135] Government grants, meanwhile, invariably propped up Native Administration schools and dispensaries. A slow realisation emerged among the British that the Native Treasuries, in their current form, were not enough to fund any significant expansion of social services: 'As the desire for increased social services comes from the people themselves, it has continually been impressed upon them that their present resources do not permit of increased services under existing taxation.'[136] From the start, the Native Treasuries struggled to achieve what they had been designed to do.

The collection of Hut and Poll Tax in particular proved difficult. Tax was seen as a way of transforming the 'primitive and barbaric' Africans into 'good, industrious and governable colonial subjects'.[137] The imposition of tax was supposed to exert a moral influence on colonial subjects, and an 'efficient and just' system was considered an improvement on the supposed arbitrary and exploitative demands that had occurred under the traditional chiefly tribute.[138] However, as Andrew Burton points out, unlike chiefly tributes, tax demands were rigid and implacable, forcing the African rulers to resort to an unprecedented degree of compulsion towards their subjects.[139] This inevitably caused friction, particularly during times of economic crisis, such as the locust plagues of 1932 and the Great Depression of the early 1930s.[140] The British had hoped that the chiefs and headmen would prove more effective at collecting tax than European administrators, because their local knowledge meant that they would be better at chasing down defaulters. But ironically, 1926 (the last year before indirect rule) came to be seen

[134] NA FCO 141-17733, Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Tanganyika: Provincial Commissioner's monthly newsletters to the Chief Secretary 1932-1935, Western Province (June 1934) pp.2-3.
[135] NA CO 736-15, p.103.
[136] NA CO 736-19, p.77.
[137] Barbara Bush and Josephine Maltby, 'Taxation in West Africa: Transforming the colonial subject into the `Governable Person',' *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, Vol 15, No 1 (2004) p.7.
[138] Andrew Burton, 'The Eye of Authority': 'Native' Taxation, Colonial Governance and Resistance in Inter-War Tanganyika,' *Journal of Eastern African Studies* Vol. 2, No. 1 (2008), p.80.
[139] ibid, p.88.
[140] NA CO 736-11, p.1.

as a peak tax year.[141] With the advent of indirect rule, British officials found themselves in a constant battle to get the supposedly devolved tax collection to work. Taxation thus became an exercise of 'sovereign not disciplinary power,' dependent upon and reinforcing colonial authority.[142] The British tried to browbeat reluctant chiefs into taking a sterner line with defaulters, threatening to withhold their pay if they refused to pull their weight.[143] But those chiefs who tried their hardest to enforce tax collection often found that their support dropped among their people. As one official pointed out, 'The collection of Hut and Poll Tax continues to be our chief concern…there is no doubt that in Lushoto as well as the Handeni areas there is an increasing disobedience to the Chiefs and their orders and continual pressure has to be brought to bear on certain sections of the population to make them attend barazas, and carry out the lawful orders of the Native Authority.'[144] Time and again, if tax collection lagged after eight or nine months, British officials would have to go out to 'boost up collections'.[145] They even devised a 'Grow More Crops' campaign during the Depression to try and increase taxable produce, using the threat of conscription to enforce legal requirements about the minimum acreage of cotton grown; but support among the African population was thin, and the expected economic benefits of the crops were undermined by poor agricultural management and drought.[146] The self-defeating education policies, meanwhile, meant that there was a shortage of African clerks trained to British standards of financial expertise, so Government tax clerks were maintained to 'help' with assessments.[147] Broad areas, like the Morogoro District, meanwhile, showed little evidence of independent financial responsibility,[148] and Hailey, in his overview of the Tanganyika Territory in 1948, concluded that the amount of financial devolution was slight.[149]

This catalogue of failures was reinforced by the fact that the British, in their restructuring of the Tanganyikan state under indirect rule, had destroyed a lot of the old interconnections that supported

[141] NA FCO 141-17733, (June 1934) pp.2-3.
[142] Burton, p.76.
[143] NA FCO 141-17737, Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Tanganyika: Provincial Commissioner's monthly newsletters to the Chief Secretary 1932-1935, Iringa (Southern Highlands) Province (November 1931), p.2.
[144] NA FCO 141-17741, Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Tanganyika: Provincial Commissioner's monthly newsletters to the Chief Secretary 1932-1935, Tanga Province (August 1932) p.2.
[145] NA CO 1018-70, Colonial Office: Lord Hailey: Papers, 1946-1955: Tanganyika: Provincial Commissioner's Reports 1944 and 1945: Lake Province, p.28.
[146] Andrew Coulson, *Tanzania: A Political Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) p.48.
[147] NA CO 1018-70, p.28.
[148] NA CO 1018-69, p.1.
[149] NA CO 1018-70, p.28.

African communities. Because tax collection was routed through the Native Authorities rather than through a centralised body, it required Africans to be settled in local communities: if they moved about too freely, they got lost to the system. This not only led to a partial clampdown on the practice of migratory labour, but it also discouraged Africans from engaging in wider trade networks. Local authorities found that they could collect taxes more easily at a limited number of district markets serving local taxpayers. As a result, focus turned inwards, and was internally confined to the tribe. Feierman argues that the British were deliberately seeking to create 'an impression of stasis' in the rural economy.[150] But although it was true that the British wanted to tighten the association between Africans and the land in order to boost farming, they also wanted those farmers to produce cash crops capable of sustaining a modern economy. The breakdown of the old trade networks and migratory labour patterns, although economically damaging, was thus seen as a temporary problem. Instead the British intended to build up new networks based around federations and co-operatives to take up the slack.

New Networks: Federations and Cooperatives

In the first half of this paper, we considered how indirect rule required a continual process of improvisation to function, and we looked at how many of its structures were considered to be of a temporary nature. Cameron himself said that, 'Put briefly, the Native Administrations in their present form should be regarded as stepping stones.' He believed that local government based on tribe would in time fade and that it would eventually develop into a local government of a more European character, 'probably on a representative basis'.[151] Whilst this process was being fulfilled, the British would continue to encourage the territory to develop its agricultural output in the belief that it was only through the delivery of cash crops to the global economy that the state could support itself. To achieve these two goals – one political, one economic – there was an understanding that the British could not allow the process of localisation that had accompanied the implementation of indirect rule to continue indefinitely. If Tanganyika wanted to compete in the modern world, it needed to function as a single political and economic unit. 'It is too small in area or population to suggest it could ever be remodelled on a federal

[150] Feierman, p.122.
[151] Cameron, p.116.

basis,' wrote Cameron.[152] The British thus needed to encourage political and economic bodies that stretched beyond the narrow confines of the tribe: they needed to encourage federations and co-operatives.

Cameron had a clear idea of how he envisaged the political structures of the Territory should develop. 'I ventured to predict in 1930,' he wrote in his 1939 memoir, 'that a time would come when it would be useful to form regional Councils for the discussion of common subjects among the Chiefs… a stage that has already been reached.' Later he anticipated that a Central Native Council would emerge. 'This Council might eventually become a General Native Council sending delegates to sit with a similar non-native Council for the transaction of the business which would ordinary fall to a Legislative Council.'[153] In other words, Cameron envisaged a hierarchical system, created stage by stage, in which broader powers were slowly devolved to a ladder of African Councils – although, as ever, he still assumed that 'non-natives' would remain outside their influence.

The Central Native Council never emerged, but the process of building regional councils gathered pace during the 1930s. The British compared local Native Authorities for affinities looser than the clear structures of the tribe, such as common ancestors and origins, or long intermixing and intermarriage. If several Native Authorities shared enough common ground, the British encouraged them to form a federation – a semi-artificial 'superstructure' that rarely had any historical basis.[154] The model varied a little, but in general a federated Native Authority was headed by a ruling council composed of the local chiefs, which had executive authority over the region in matters affecting the common welfare. Each chief, however, retained executive authority in his own particular area. The Chagga Council, for example, was set up as a superior authority to which all Chagga chieftainships were subordinate, and the Council represented the views of the Chagga on issues like land alienation to the Government; but individual chiefs were still paramount in their own areas.[155] Sometimes these Federations had a premier chief who maintained authority over the others – the Sukuma Federation elected Chief Makwaia as President of the Council; on other occasions, control of the Council passed between each of the fellow chiefs in turn, as

[152] ibid, p.116.
[153] ibid, p.115.
[154] H M Government, 'Development of African Local Government in Tanganyika,' p.5.
[155] NA CO 736-9, p.63.

happened in the Uvinza Federation.[156] These federations still operated within the core parameters of indirect rule – they were, after all, contingent upon the perception of 'shared heritage' – but they were a sign that the British were building upwards. They were seen as having several key advantages over the independent Native Authorities: they could help balance out weak chiefs, encourage co-operation and healthy competition between chiefs, and lead to the standardisation of customary law.[157]

Not all federations were so formal. In Mwanza, for example, where the tribal structures had never been clear, the Provincial Commissioner presided over a conference of fifty-two chiefs, representing 830,000 people, to discuss issues like the marketing of African produce, the proportion of Hut and Poll Tax paid to the Native Treasuries, and the unification of tribal law with particular reference to marriage customs. The Provincial Commissioner hoped that such meetings would henceforth be held twice a year.[158] Alternatively, the British could press for the amalgamation of Native Treasuries in order to save money on the cost of overhead staffing charges, and to create a broad 'scheme of mutual benefit'. The British particularly liked this sort of merger because they believed that it did not interfere with the identity of the Native Authorities.[159] Two 'countries' in the Kibondo District, for example, Muhambwe and Buyungu, could unite their treasuries for efficiency's sake, yet remain two distinct units with their own Native Authorities and Native Courts.[160]

This drive towards closer political union, however, was always hampered by the fact that the British were worried that if the process happened too quickly they would lose control of it. 'We have found it to be of importance to check too rapid a tendency in [the direction of Federal Council consolidation] because of the mutual jealousies of the Chiefs and of the danger that in the Council a Chief may go further than his advisors and people are prepared for.'[161] There was a genuine fear on the part of the British of creating autocrats – men who would use the process of consolidation to seize unprecedented power. Some felt that if the Federal Councils were to gain true authority they would have to include 'not only the Chiefs but their principal advisors and the people who represent the peasantry before the Chief.' Others believed that the chiefly councils would have to be 'progressively abandoned or refashioned in

[156] NA CO 1973-155, pp.3-4.
[157] NA CO 736-14, pp.38-39.
[158] NA CO 736-11, p.31.
[159] NA CO 736-19, p.18.
[160] NA CO 736-10, p.24.
[161] NA CO 1973-155, p.13.

favour of European models of which township authorities, Legislative Councils, and the proposed provincial councils are the forerunners;' they saw a developmental process that began with appointed members of Council, and moved towards elections. Certainly, there was a belief among many officials that the broader the membership of the Council, the better the chance that the voice of the people would be heard; and as legislation became more and more a function of the Federation, it was hoped that it would operate as a constitutional check on the individual chiefs.[162]

However, it would be wrong to see this process as a move towards democracy, at least during the 1930s. Mitchell summed up British attitudes best when he said that the future will 'know nothing of the ballot box, but it will be representative in the true sense that the peasant will be in direct touch with his representative and will be able to bring direct pressure to bear on him.'[163] Although the British were aware that the federations were likely to fail if they were solely associated with the chiefs, they preferred it when prominent headmen and commoners were 'invited' to sit on meetings of the Native Authorities rather than elected. 'The appointment of nominated non-officials may lead to a general demand for an electoral system of representation…. [This should be avoided because] it would encourage a class of African politicians – short-sighted, self-interested, materialistic in the sense of looking on a short Mission education as stepping-stone to personal advancement.'[164] The British distaste of the educated African is once again clear, and the system that they were encouraging was largely oligarchic: after all, the chiefs were not likely to invite people onto the Councils who were a threat to them. As a result of this disconnect between popular participation and the federal councils, it seems that federal councils did not present much of a reality to the common African – there was no sense, for example, that the people living in the Sukumaland Federation were aware of the fact that they belonged to the Sukumaland Federation.[165] Indirect rule still had a long way to go before it connected with the general African population.

Whilst the British were experimenting with the expansion of the political structures of indirect rule, they were also experimenting with co-operative societies to create new local economic networks – although the two processes were not always separate, and they often got mixed. Co-operative societies were seen as an effective way of re-integrating Africans into the wider state economy after the

[162] NA CO 1018-70, pp.82-87.
[163] Mitchell, p.130.
[164] NA CO 1018-74, p.2.
[165] NA CO 1018-70, p.82.

implementation of indirect rule had caused the tribes to turn inwards. They often started as credit societies, like the Chasalawe Union, which allowed members to use society loans to purchase hoes, selected seeds, and food supplies. But over time there was an expectation that they would develop into supply societies – buying wholesale from merchants in order to get discounts for their members. As one officials said, 'There is no doubt that the union will in time embrace the normal activities of societies of production, sale, distribution and thrift.'[166] They thus had the potential to become major economic forces.

The most famous example of these societies was the Kilimanjaro Native Planters Association (K.N.P.A.) and its successor, the Kilimanjaro Native Co-operative Union (K.N.C.U.). Together, they illustrate the difficulty of getting expanding economic networks to integrate with localised political systems. The K.N.P.A. was set up to manage the coffee growing industry around Kilimanjaro. It was supposed to be a purely economic endeavour, and the British hoped that by focusing Chagga interest on the coffee industry, it would divert them from becoming 'cheap politicians with imaginary grievances against Government and their own tribal institutions.'[167] However, the organisation was built around the chiefs, because the chiefs were seen by the British as the only legitimate African power structure, and because the British did not want to risk undermining their power or prestige by putting the economic reins of the area in somebody else's hands.[168] As a result, a political element was present in both the K.N.P.A. and the K.N.C.U. from the start. This became particularly acute as the K.N.C.U. grew to such a scale that by 1934 every African in the Moshi district had to sell their coffee through it under what was known as 'Chagga Rule'. The savings that came with the economies of size in bulk marketing were evident to the central government – and they saw the expansion of the K.N.C.U. as crucial if it was to have a presence on the international coffee market.[169] But it came with an inherent danger: by meshing the economic co-operative with indirect rule politics, and then expecting the Native Authorities to act as enforcers of K.N.C.U. policy, it meant that when unrest broke out as a result of Chagga Rule (an economic policy), the focus of growers' anger was the local political authorities (the chiefs).[170] What was

[166] NA CO 736-14, p.71.
[167] NA CO 736-18, p.42.
[168] D. M. P. McCarthy, *Colonial Bureaucracy and the Creation of Underdevelopment: Tanganyika 1919-1940* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1982) p.96.
[169] M. A. Ogutu, 'The Cultivation of Coffee among the Chagga of Tanzania 1919-1939,' *Agricultural History*, Vol 46, No 2 (1972) p.283.
[170] Iliffe, p.280.

supposed to be an apolitical economic entity thus became politicised in a way that threatened the authority of the chiefs. The British responded by transferring the policing function to the semi-Governmental Moshi Native Coffee Board, which had three British officials and three Africans on the board, independent from the chiefs, and they hoped that this would separate the economic from political.[171] They blamed the unrest on the fact that the Chagga had 'unfortunately learned to run before he has mastered the art of walking' and had as a result fallen foul of 'industrial agitators'.[172] But arguably, what the K.N.C.U. illustrated was that if the British were going to encourage wider political and economic networks, they needed a safety valve. It was not enough to expect the prestige of the chiefs to overcome local dissatisfaction at what was essentially a central Government policy. By acting as the K.N.C.U. enforcers, the chiefs had shown themselves to be stooges of the British rather than independent African rulers responding to the concerns of their people. Either the British would have to allow the African rulers more independence (by the time of Hailey's survey in 1947-8, there was serious talk of appointing a British official as a 'Resident' to the Chagga in the manner of the Indian Princely States, which would be the next logical step of this hierarchical approach to indirect rule),[173] or they would have to concede to some form of representative government.

The British, however, insisted on seeing the collapse of the K.N.C.U. as a problem unique to the Chagga. They were able to do this because economic and political development across the Tanganyika Territory was highly uneven, so few areas shared the Chagga's level of political and economic engagement. The British thus continued to use co-operative unions to bind the local African economy together even after the K.N.C.U. crisis, encouraging them to establish things like communal cattle plots, buying and selling societies, and new ways of installing technologies like village milling machines. As one official said, 'It requires but little imagination to envisage a time when [these co-operative unions] will become the most powerful propaganda machine in the district for the promotion of all measures designed for welfare of people as a whole.'[174] It was believed that they would discipline young Africans and teach them how to conduct themselves in a constitutional manner, giving them an outlet for their

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[171] Edwin S. Munger, 'African Coffee on Kilimanjaro: A Chagga Kihamba,' *Economic Geography*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (1952), p.185.
[172] NA CO 736-18, p.41.
[173] NA CO 1018-71, p.102
[174] NA CO 736-18, p.42.

education and their talents that was not political. Meetings of the unions' primary societies would enable a peasant to express themselves in free speech environment with proper decorum 'on a variety of subjects which relate closely to his welfare – such as crops, prices, and the correct use of his land.' They were seen as an agricultural outlet for intellectuals, where they would not be a threat to the chiefly hierarchies.[175] The danger, of course, was that unless these co-operatives were linked to the wider political environment, they would become too isolated and fractured to be useful. However, as the example of the K.N.C.U. had shown, if they *were* linked to local political hierarchies, those hierarchies would then take the brunt of any dissatisfaction that locals had at British economic policy, and thus become flashpoints for unrest. Indirect rule was thus caught in a Catch-22 situation. As a result, it needed to rethink some of its basic tenets if it was to carry the development of the Tanganyika Territory forwards.

[175] NA CO 736-14, p.71.

IV

CONCLUSION

In 1934, Margery Perham gave a talk to the Royal Society of Arts entitled, 'Some Problems of Indirect Rule in Africa.' During the question and answer section at the end, she found herself having to defend the ideology of indirect rule (which she was largely supportive of) from accusations that it was propping up aristocracies at the expense of the educated African. 'In trying to discover African institutions there was some tendency to shy off from the educated classes as not real Africans [said a member of the audience]… Indirect rule…ought to mean *local government*.'[176] The sense that indirect rule was out of touch with modern liberalising movements would gather pace after the Second World War. It was reinforced by the acknowledgement that the British attempts to link dynamic economic change to traditional African values had not delivered. Mitchell blamed the failure on 'Hitler and locusts', arguing that if they had been allowed more time they could have got indirect rule to work.[177] But his was a lone voice, and increasingly, it was the inability of the localised Native Authorities to successfully raise enough money to support their development through taxation that came to be blamed for indirect rule's inadequacies. By the time Iliffe came to write his history of Tanganyika in 1979, the consensus was that indirect rule had been a dead end – although Mamdani would later argue that indirect

[176] Perham, 'Some Problems of Indirect Rule in Africa,' p.17.
[177] Mitchell, p.132.

rule had actually achieved what it had set out to do, which was to marshal the 'autocratic possibilities in indigenous culture' in order to achieve 'hegemonic domination'.[178]

Both Iliffe and Mamdani argue, in different ways, that indirect rule by the 1930s was moribund and static. Although Iliffe sees Cameron as a proactive agent during the 1920s, he argues that Cameron's successor in 1932, Sir Stewart Symes, was 'utterly bored by Tanganyika' and that indirect rule became 'an end not a means'.[179] For Mamdani, in contrast, indirect rule was from the start an ideology that used customary law to confine Africans to their tribes and lock them in a pseudo-feudal environment that was controlled by the threat of armed intervention from the central government.[180] Indirect rule for them both is a failure. However, as this paper has shown, indirect rule was as much about innovation at local level as it was about innovation at the top, and that innovation continued throughout the interwar period and beyond. 'From the outset stress was laid on the importance of evolutionary methods of development,'[181] said a 1951 report on local government. Indirect rule was always a work in progress, a framework that would eventually morph into something unrecognisable. When the British adopted 'tribal' hierarchies and customs as the foundation for indirect rule, it was not their intention that African identity would be kept static indefinitely. Instead, they foresaw a decades-long process in which Tanganyikan society would 'progress' towards 'civilisation' – 'progress' and 'civilisation' in this context both being nebulous concepts based upon European assumptions that their Enlightenment-based institutions were the logical pinnacle of society's development. Cameron's oft-quoted comments about making a 'good African' rather than a 'good European' should not be seen as the goal of indirect rule; instead they were a comment on how he envisaged indirect rule should develop in the immediate future. Theoretically, at least, the *distant* future would see the African and the European on a more equal basis – although, as we have seen, when faced with the possibility of seeing that future happen within their lifetimes, British officials often found excuses to delay it; whatever their theoretical beliefs about the future of indirect rule, British officials rarely managed to overcome their un-interrogated assumptions about the superiority of the white man.

[178] Mamdani, p.286.
[179] Iliffe, p.356.
[180] Mamdani, p.286.
[181] H M Government, 'Development of African Local Government in Tanganyika,' p.4.

Perhaps because indirect rule had, from the start, a strong improvisatory element that allowed pragmatism to override ideology, the British were able to quietly drop their support for those components of the system that they felt were not working. By 1951 indirect rule had diverged into two forms: the 'Kisarawe' pattern, established in areas where tribal cohesion was weak, which used a form of administration 'of which the firm basis was village unity, as a modified form of the old Akida system'; and the 'Usambara-Chagga' pattern where it was possible to build administrations on top of 'strong traditional systems'.[182] Although British support for the chiefs remained, particularly in areas where the hierarchies were strong and stable, officials were now working on the assumption that democratic representation was the logical conclusion of the indirect rule project. Where there was a 'liking for politics' there was a growing willingness by the British to foment change. In Sukumaland, for example, which covered fifty chiefdoms and about a million people, advisory bodies consisting of commoners sat with their chiefs as a 'counterpoise to the autocratic tendencies likely to be engendered by a large congregation of chiefs acting in concert'.[183] And this too was seen as merely a transition stage: 'It is clear,' said the 1951 memorandum, 'that in dealing with these large tribal groups we have to find a workable formula for the introduction of popular representation in a more dynamic form of government… Our task is to convince [the African population] not only of the desirability of democratic development, but also of its inevitability.'[184] The development of industries and the resulting labour demands meant that increased population movement had accelerated the understanding that methods of local government could not be based indefinitely on local and traditional tribal organisations, whilst rises in the standard of living and improved education were causing a younger generation to 'kick over the traces' of traditional tribal discipline.[185] The British were forced to adapt their policies accordingly.

As the executive functions of the native authorities were transferred to democratically constituted councils, the British folded those parts of indirect rule that they felt worked into a more European form of local government. The Native Courts, for example, became the Local Courts, losing their chiefly oversight, but retaining their grounding in customary law.[186] These Local Courts survived independence

[182] ibid, p.6.
[183] ibid, p.9.
[184] ibid, p.9.
[185] ibid, p.10.
[186] H M Government, 'Development of African Local Courts in Tanganyika,' p.11.

as a parallel judicial system to the national one, and despite being (as we have seen) a partially British manufacture, Moore argues that in today's postcolonial Africa, 'many Africans themselves have come to think of these colonial local courts and their postcolonial successors as African institutions. [They] have made these once colonial institutions their own.'[187]

Indirect rule was an ideology that had evolution built into its D.N.A.. In the early years this meant that it could be bent and twisted into all sorts of areas that it was not originally designed for – like tribeless Africa, and the Lupa goldfields. As time progressed, its flexibility and its pragmatic grounding in the complex ambiguities of the African reality meant that it could blur itself into a more classical approach to local government. Certainly, there was no assumption on the part of the British that indirect rule, as an ideology, would remain rigid and recognisable in the decades to come. Rather, its eventual disappearance was fore-ordained from the start. But although its interaction with African agendas caused the ideology to shift and morph in unexpected ways, its ultimate goal – the goal it largely achieved – was the creation of a Europeanesque post-Enlightenment state. Indirect rule was always, at heart, a British policy, committed to delivering British ideas of morality and fiscal responsibility.

Word count: 16,435

[187] Moore, p.11.

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