



Mwalimu in 1950s Dar

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It is a pity that the late Mwalimu Julius Nyerere did not reveal much about his early life in Dar es Salaam of the 1950s, where he came to as a budding 30-year-old politician fresh from Edinburgh University.

One can only speculate why Nyerere was secretive about those days, the period when the Tanganyika African Association (TAA) was transformed into the Tanganyika African National Union (Tanu).

The closest Nyerere came to speaking about that period was in 1985 at the Diamond Jubilee Hall where, in an emotional farewell speech before he stepped down from the presidency, he paid tribute to “the Wazee wa Dar es Salaam” who supported him from the day Tanu was founded in 1954.

Mwalimu mentioned two people forgotten in the history of Tanganyika — Abdulwahid Sykes and Dossa Aziz. Abdulwahid was TAA president in 1953 and was among the four financiers of the movement along with his young brother Ally, Dossa and John Rupia.

Abdulwahid died young in 1968 but Dossa lived on to a ripe old age — though, sadly he died a poor and lonely man at Mlandizi in 1997.

However, they did not benefit from the fruits of Independence, for which they had worked so hard, nor were their names associated with Tanu, Nyerere or the independence movement.

One could write volumes about the contributions and sacrifices made by the two Sykes brothers and Dossa; and the elders like Mwinjuma Mwinyikambi, Kiyate Mshume, Jumbe Tambaza, Sheikh Hassan bin Amir and Sheikh Suleiman Takadir to mention only a few.

In those days, these names made up who's who of the municipality. They were the rich and the famous of the town.

Dar es Salaam was then divided into four areas: Kariakoo, Gerezani, Kisutu and Mission Quarter. Kisutu was the oldest and had the oldest mosque in Dar es Salaam, the Mwinyikheri Akida Mosque, which is more than 100 years.

Across Morogoro Road was Kariakoo, which still exists, and the first street stretching from the north to the south parallel to Mnazi Mmoja was a narrow road — New Street — where the headquarters of the African Association stood, a building of stone and lime built in the 1930s through self-help during the leadership of Mzee Bin Sudi and Kleist Sykes, president and secretary respectively.

It was in this building that Tanu was born in 1954. The building was situated at the point where Kariakoo Street and New Street intersect. The house still stands.

To the west of Kariakoo was the Mission Quarter, an exclusive African mission area set aside by the British to separate the Christian minority from the Muslim majority in the town.

Even street names in Mission Quarter had names of settlements in Tanganyika where missionaries had managed to penetrate and establish themselves. Street names such as Masasi, Likoma, Ndanda, Muhonda, Muheza and Magila have survived to this day.

This was the only area in Dar es Salaam where missionaries managed to build a chapel. African Christians were confined to this area. And if a Christian ventured into Kariakoo, a majority Muslim area, to ask for a room, he would be advised to try his luck at Mission Quarter.

Mwalimu Nyerere thus arrived in a town that was structured along lines of prejudices.

Two prominent Africans and members of the African Association who lived in Mission Quarter during the emergence of nationalist politics were Thomas Plantan, elected president of the African Association once, and John Rupia a rich African businessman.

Rupia's house, situated at Likoma Street and Magila, is where the African Association was founded in 1929. The house still stands today though not in its original structure.

An interesting fact about Mission Quarter is that it had the only printing press owned by an African — Mashado Plantan — which the pro-African Association newspaper Zuhra was published. This paper came to be Tanu and Nyerere's first mouthpiece.

On the west of Kariakoo was Gerezani, home of Omari Londo, Ally Sykes, Zuberi Mtemvu, Mashado Plantan, Muhsin Mende and Dossa Aziz.

These were the first patriots from Gerezani to come into contact with Nyerere. Zuberi Mtemvu, Mashado Plantan and Muhsin Mende were later to resign from Tanu to form an opposition party, the Tanganyika African Congress, and the three became bitter opponents of Tanu and Nyerere.

Among prominent personalities from Kariakoo the young Nyerere interacted with were Mzee Mshume Kiyate, Sheikh Hassan bin Ameir, Sheikh Suleiman Takadir, Idd Faizi, Idd Tosiri, Abdulwahid Sykes and Dossa Aziz.

Abdulwahid Sykes was 28, two years younger than Julius Nyerere, when one afternoon Nyerere came to Abdulwahid's house at Stanley Street (now Max Mbwana Street) accompanied by Bantu Kasella Bantu.

It is said Mwalimu Nyerere had a letter of introduction from Hamza Mwapachu (who was still in Britain studying) to Abdulwahid Sykes.

At that time, Sykes was the president of the Tanganyika African Association. The fact that Abdulwahid Sykes preceded Nyerere in the presidency of the TAA is a point often not mentioned even by Chama cha Mapinduzi.

This denies the history of nationalist politics in Tanganyika, "friendly silent power struggle" within the association between the incumbent and well established townsman Abdulwahid Sykes, son of a prosperous businessman and founder member of African Association, Kleist Sykes and the unassuming challenge from an unknown school teacher from Butiama, Julius Nyerere.

It denies the young generation inside information of what TAA did to outsmart the British and send Mwalimu Nyerere to the United Nations to address the Trusteeship Council. Most importantly, it denies them knowledge of the burning issues that were discussed at the "Sunday baraza."

This weekly meeting was generally held either at Dossa's house on Congo Street or at Abdulwahid's house on Stanley Street (now Max Mbwana), where Nyerere used to come every Sunday to meet the TAA leadership and discuss the politics of the day.

Various schemes against the British were hatched from these two houses. The meetings at TAA headquarters in New Street, now Lumumba, was merely to rubber stamp the decisions arrived at the Sunday barazas.

Any student of Tanganyika's nationalist politics wishing to trace Mwalimu Nyerere's formative years needs to walk down this path. It is saddening that it has been neglected by researchers.

In 1963, Mwalimu Nyerere talked to Lady Judith Listowel, who had come to Tanganyika to research a book she was writing (*The Making of Tanganyika*). Lady Judith was the wife of William Mare, the last governor of Gold Coast (Ghana).

She was put in contact with Ally Sykes by Peter Colmore in Nairobi. Lady Judith came to Dar es Salaam and interviewed Abdulwahid and Ally Sykes and Julius Nyerere.

In that book, Mwalimu paid a glowing tribute to the nationalists who had preceded him in the political arena. A copy of the book, which is out of print, can be found at the University of Dar es Salaam Library or from Ally Sykes.

There are reports that Nyerere was under pressure to write his memoir but he declined. It is reported that Mwalimu even refused to meet an Oxford University Press representative who wanted to discuss the writing of his memoir.

It was only when Mwalimu Nyerere was severely criticised in two books — *Conflict and Harmony in Zanzibar* by Ali Muhsin Barwan and *The Life and Times of Abdulwahid Sykes 1924 -1968* by this writer — that he succumbed to pressure and told his confidants to form a committee to which he would talk about his life, from which interaction they would be able to write his biography. But although the committee was formed, it never got off the ground as Mwalimu was in failing health and soon died on October 14, 1999.

But equally important in tracing Mwalimu's steps from Butiama particularly after the founding of TANU in 1954 is the house of veteran politician and former secretary of the TAA Mzee Clement Mtamila who was overthrown from TAA leadership along with the president Thomas Plantan in a coup de grace led by Abdulwahid Sykes and Hamza Mwapachu in 1949.

The house of Mtamila was, situated at the junction of Kipata, (now Kleist Sykes Street) and Sikukuu Street now Zaramo Street.

In those days the president of the party was not necessarily the chairman of the executive committee.

In 1954 Clement Mtamila was the chairman of the executive committee of TANU.

It was in this house Nyerere then president of TANU presented the letter from Father Walsh in which he was given the ultimatum of either to continue to teach at the Catholic school in Pugu or resign to pursue politics.

This important meeting in which Mwalimu Nyerere decided to resign from teaching and work for TANU was chaired by Clement Mtamila in this house. Other members of the TANU Executive Committee present at that meeting were: John Rupia, Oscar Kambona, Bibi Tatu Binti Mzee and Bibi Titi Mohamed.

The sitting room in Mzee Mtamila's up to late 1960s had many black and white photographs depicting Tanganyika's history. The photographs depicted Nyerere's early days in TANU showing him addressing the people from a make shift platform at Mnazi Mmoja Grounds overlooking where now stands the Adult Education Centre.

The open space opposite Mnazi Mmoja Grounds was John Rupia's plot which he later donated to TANU to build the centre. Mzee Mtamila's house is no more. It has given way to a high rise building now common in Gerezani, Mwalimu's history buried with it in the rubble of stones, lime, dust and rusted corrugated iron sheets.

Another place which Mwalimu Nyerere frequented during those early days was the Kariakoo Market. Kariakoo Market building housing the market resembled a huge shack made of steel, concrete and corrugated iron sheets.

The market was busy around the clock with all kind of business being carried inside the market and within its environs. One could tell the tribe of the traders from the kind of trade he or she was engaged in.

The Mashomvi were selling fish, the Zaramo were into coconut business, the Nyamwezi particularly women confined themselves to selling dried tobacco leaves and snuff, and their men were selling yams grown in Kigamboni.

The Luguru were into oranges and vegetables. Arabs owned butchers and sold flour, cereals and spices.

This retail business Arabs were in competition with Indians. Kariakoo Market was a fertile place for TANU to recruit members and Abdulwahid did not lose that opportunity. Among the traders to support TANU from Kariakoo Market was Mzee Mshume Kiyate.

At that time in 1952 when Abdulwahid Sykes met Mwalimu Julius Nyerere he was working as Market Master of Karikoo Market. His office was at the junction of Tandamti Street (now Mshume Kiyate) and Swahili Street.

The afternoon after resigning from teaching Mwalimu Nyerere took a bus from Pugu and got off at Kariakoo which was the main stand and went straight to Abdulwahid's office to give him the news.

Abdulwahid accommodated Mwalimu Nyerere at his house at Stanley Street until when Mwalimu left for to Butiama to get married to Mama Maria.

This house exists today but has undergone massive renovations altering its original look. Shariff Attas who was working as market auctioneer recalls that he used to escort Mwalimu Nyerere from Abdulwahid's office to Sykes' house for lunch wait for him and come back together.

Mwalimu would sit in Abdulwahid's office reading *The Tanganyika Standard*. After closing of business at 4.30 Abdulwahid and Nyerere would come back home together. Many people in Dar es Salaam first saw and therefore came to know Mwalimu Nyerere during that time.

During this period Abdulwahid nearly lost his job as Market Master when Nyerere and TANU's message began to be understood by the people. Abdulwahid was accused of selling TANU cards in Her Majesty's Office.

Shariff Attas recalls the thrilling shouting match between Abdulwahid Sykes and the white colonial officer inside Sykes's office when Abdulwahid in his impeccable English and

without fear took out his TANU card and challenged the mzungu to take him to court if he feels he has contravened any law and TANU was not a legally registered party.

The veranda which used to be a meeting place where TANU leadership used to hold its meeting and where many people came to know Mwalimu Julius Nyerere is now a bazaar, the people who come to the place to buy and sell completely unaware of its rich history.

But the liveliest meeting place – Mwalimu Nyerere frequented outside the ‘Sunday Baraza’ at Congo and Stanley Street at Dossa’s house and Sykes’ place was at Sheikh Suleiman Takadir’s auction mart.

Sheikh Takadir was the Chairman of the TANU Elders Council the powerful body which had people like Mshume Kiyate, Mwinjuma Mwinyikambi, Jumbe Tambaza and others as members.

Sheikh Takadir was an auctioneer and was conducting his business from a house situated at Nyamwezi Street belonging to Mwinjuma Digosi, a jumbe appointed by the government.

The auction used to be the meeting place of TANU members. TANU members used to meet at Sheikh Takadir’s premises to drink coffee discuss politics and while away the time.

When Digosi, the landlord realised that Nyerere was visiting Sheikh Takadir at his place of business, he asked Takadir to seek accommodation elsewhere.

He told Sheikh Takadir that he could no longer have him as a tenant because he as a jumbe appointed by the government cannot allow his house to be a meeting place of ‘troublemakers’ like Nyerere and other riff - raffs.

Sheikh Takadir had no choice but to shift his business to Msimbazi Street. Sheikh Suleiman Takadir was to oppose Nyerere’s decision to participate in the controversial tripartite election of 1958 and the two became bitter enemies never to reconcile resulting into expulsion of Sheikh Takadir from TANU.

But one the most touching story of sacrifice, love and commitment to Mwalimu Nyerere, TANU and the struggle is that of Mzee Mshume Kiyate. Mwalimu Nyerere was to call Mshume’s commitment to the struggle – the TANU spirit.

This story was retold to the author by Ahmed Rashad Ali who said he was at Msasani, Mwalimu’s residence on that day with Dossa Aziz and Lucy Lameck when Nyerere told them the level of commitment which members of TANU had for the struggle.

There is a story of Said Chamwenyewe one of the earliest members to have joined TANU who mobilized the first members for TANU from Rufiji his home town when it was difficult to have a full register of members to fulfill a condition which would have made TANU qualify as a party and hence be registered.

Chamwenyewe used to ride a bicycle from Dar es Salaam to Rufiji to mobilize membership for TANU travelling through a forest infested with lions and other wild animals. But Mwalimu Nyerere had no fitting story to tell than that of Mzee Mshume Kiyate.

Mzee Mshume Kiyate was a fishmonger at Kariakoo Market. One day Mwalimu Nyerere was on his way to Kariakoo Market walking from Magomeni Majumba Sita where he was residing.

Upon reaching Mwembe Togwa (now known as Fire) at the junction of (Ronald Cameroon Road (now United Nations Road) and Morogoro Road Mwalimu Nyerere met Mshume Kiyate.

Mwalimu Nyerere told Mshume Kiyate that he was going to Kariakoo Market to buy provisions but he did have a single sent in his pocket. Mshume Kiyate dipped his hand into his pocket and gave Mwalimu Nyerere two hundred shillings.

At that time with two hundred shillings one could purchase a six bedroom house at Kariakoo. Mshume Kiyate from that day volunteered to provide food for Mwalimu' family and he did this until 1961 when Tanganyika achieved its independence and Mwalimu Nyerere became Prime Minister.

There is a very famous photograph of Mwalimu Nyerere with an old man in coat, kanzu and Muslim cap taken in 1958 during the tripartite elections.

The photograph shows Mwalimu at Arnautoglo Hall going to cast his vote. That old man in the photograph with Mwalimu Nyerere escorting him to cast his vote is Mzee Mshume Kiyate.

The ruling party Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) has used this photograph in its mobilization effort urging people to vote. Unfortunately for almost five decades the photograph has been published without caption and Mshume Kiyate remains unrecognized to this day. Not many people know who Mshume Kiyate was or of his contribution to the struggle.

In 1995 when Mayor Kitwana Kondo honoured Mzee Mshume Kiyate by changing the name of the street Tandamti which he lived to Kiyate Mshume the press protested asking who Mshume Kiyate was.

Likewise the new street names in honour of Tatu Binti Mzee, Max Mbwana, Omari Londo were equally disputed. Strangely Mwalimu Nyerere did not utter a word.

It is interesting that with these changes of street names Mwalimu Nyerere was also honoured. Pugu Road was changed to Nyerere Road. The reason was that this was the road which Mwalimu Nyerere used to travel to Dar es Salaam during the struggle either riding a bicycle or walking on foot. When called by the press to comment on this change Mwalimu was quoted to have said that he should not be associated with those new developments.

His father, Affendi Plantan came into Tanganyika from Imhambane in Mozambique with Von Wissman, Commander of German Forces in East Africa to quell the Abushiri uprisings which began in Pangani.

The mosque is opposite College of Business Education. Kisutu sprawled from where now is the Libya Post Office up to Mzizima Secondary School to the west and to the east Kisutu went up to where now is the Tanzania Library to the north and to the south up to Morogoro Road.

