agricultural change in modern Tanganyika

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An outline history

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The argument
In Tanzania today, rural development is the main concern of Government policy and public discussion. This paper is designed as a contribution to the discussion. It is not based on specialised agricultural or economic knowledge, and it probably has no direct relevance to development policy or its implementation. Rather, the paper attempts to define the most important ways in which Tanzanian agriculture has changed over the last century, in order to set contemporary development problems in a historical perspective and suggest certain ways of thinking about them.

Tanzania's rural development policy originates from the historical analysis given in President Nyerere's paper on Socialism and Rural Development. In that paper and his other writings and speeches, the President has sketched a picture of Tanzania's modern economic history which can be summarised briefly. First, he suggests that the colonial period brought very important economic and social changes. "Our society, our economy, and the dominant ambitions of our own people are all very different
Agricultural change in modern Tanganyika

now from what they were before the colonial era. The main trend of change was from a relatively equal and undifferentiated society to one with greater social differentiation and inequality. This was caused mainly by the impact of European capitalism on Tanzanian societies, the incorporation of those societies in the international economy, and the acceptance of individualistic, capitalistic attitudes by some Tanzanians. The trend towards inequality took three main forms. First, inequality between urban and rural areas was produced by the growth of towns and wage labour. Second, inequality between different rural areas resulted from the much more rapid development of certain favoured regions, such as Kilimanjaro. Third, within particular rural areas there developed new forms of inequality between individuals, largely owing to the production of cash crops for sale on the world market. "The basic difference between Tanzania's rural life now and in the past stems from the widespread introduction of cash-crop farming." These changes, however, did not alter two fundamental features of the pre-colonial economy: they did not alter its basic poverty or produce any major change in its technology. "Our farmers have expanded the acreage they cultivate; they have worked harder. But almost everywhere they are still using the hoe, jembe and shoka. They have not yet changed the tools they work with."

Thus, according to President Nyerere, the main process taking place in Tanzanian agriculture during the colonial period was change through differentiation—regional and social—as a result of the impact of capitalism, but not associated with any major technological change. Following this analysis, the present paper has two objects. The first is to use the greater space available here to investigate and document the process the President has described, by showing how these changes actually occurred in certain areas of the country. The second object of the paper is to suggest that certain other changes have also been at work in Tanganyikan agriculture to reinforce or modify the changes analysed in Socialism and Rural Development. Four points will receive special attention. First, it will be suggested that very significant changes were taking place within Tanga-
Agricultural change in modern Tanganyika

Agricultural change in the nineteenth century

It is tempting, but mistaken, to think of pre-colonial Tanganyika as an undifferentiated area in which each family and village
produced purely for its own subsistence. Certainly, compared with the complex exchange economy of nineteenth-century West Africa there was relatively little specialisation of production. But in many parts of Tanganyika the sort of changes associated with the colonial period had begun long before the Germans arrived.

Already by the early nineteenth century the varied environments of Tanganyika supported a number of different agricultural systems. It is likely—although virtually nothing is known of this—that the most common pattern of agriculture at this time was the cultivation of millet and sorghum by means of shifting cultivation: the clearing of bush and its cultivation for perhaps two to three years, followed by from six to twelve years in which the land was left unused to recover its fertility. Such systems, which varied greatly, had important advantages, for they conserved the soil's fertility where fertilisers were not available and required relatively little labour. But they could support only very sparse populations—perhaps between ten and forty people to the square mile—and were suited only to the less fertile areas. More specialised environments supported different agricultural systems: pastoralism; the banana cultures of especially well-watered areas like Kilimanjaro, Buhaya, and Usambara; and special areas of intensive cultivation such as the irrigated settlement at Engaruka or the integrated livestock and crop husbandry of Ukara Island in Lake Victoria, which may have been capable of supporting up to 500 people to the square mile through the use of irrigation and animal and vegetable manure.

One way in which this agricultural pattern was changed in the nineteenth century was through the spread of new crops. The basic alternatives of millet, sorghum, or bananas were diversified by the introduction of maize and rice. Maize seems to have spread eastwards across the country, possibly following the trade routes. It is said to have entered Unyamwezi in the nineteenth century and to have been spread by Nyamwezi traders to Ukimbu and Karagwe in the early years of that century. During the same period, it appears, maize began to replace bananas as the staple crop in the Pare Mountains and Usambara (whose name derives from a word meaning "where the bananas thrive").
Maize probably began to be grown widely in the Kilombero Valley in the 1880s, while by 1890 a German traveller noted that it was the staple crop everywhere in the Pangani Basin save among the Digo (who preferred cassava) and on the coast (where millet still remained the staple diet). Rice is more difficult to trace at present. It was apparently introduced into Unyamwezi by the 1850s. It became the staple food in Matumbi during the nineteenth century, while in the Pangani Basin it was still regarded in 1890 as a luxury crop and grown mainly for export to the coast.

The effects of these crop changes on agricultural systems are very uncertain, but there is some evidence that they were associated with, or permitted, another nineteenth-century trend, population growth. The adoption of upland rice in Matumbi seems to have been simultaneous with a growing fragmentation of clan land and an increasing number of inter-clan disputes, which suggests a growing population. During the nineteenth century population increase and the introduction of maize led the Pare people to begin grazing their cattle and cultivating in the plains below their mountains. Besides these examples, there are other indications of nineteenth-century population growing in the spread of settlement up and down the slopes of Kilimanjaro and Meru and in the colonization of new land in Unyanyembe and Usukuma. Added to this was a constant stream of immigrants into Tanganyika from neighbouring areas: Luo into the Mara region; Rundi into Ngara; peoples of Congolese origin into the Kigoma region; peoples of Mozambique origin into the south of the country. Although warfare, the slave trade, and famine may have depopulated certain areas, it is likely that the country's total population grew significantly in the nineteenth century, and it is possible that this was one reason for the larger political units created in that period.

Population growth and new crops were to be major causes of agricultural change in the colonial period, but it is important to remember also that it was not colonial rule that introduced Tanganyika to capitalism and the world economy. This had already happened through the establishment in Zanzibar in the
early nineteenth century of a slave plantation economy producing cloves for the world market and acting as the focus of a long-distance trading system which gradually penetrated the mainland. It is common to think that the main effect of the Zanzibar economy was to drain labour from the mainland, either as slaves or as porters for the trading caravans—and this, of course, was very important. But, as will be seen later with reference to the sisal industry, plantations not only demand labour, they also require supplies of agricultural produce from the surrounding population. In this indirect way, the Zanzibar economy had profound effects on many mainland agricultural systems, which were thus drawn into commercial production long before the Germans came. By the second half of the nineteenth century, Zanzibar had become a major market for food from the mainland. The main suppliers were naturally the areas near the coast where transport was easiest. The coast itself supplied rice and millet. In the northern hinterland, the Muheza area grew rice solely for export to Zanzibar, Usambara sold sorghum to the coastal peoples, while the most important export producer was Uzigua, as Oscar Baumann, a German traveller, saw it in 1890:

The Wazigua produce considerably more grain than they need for their own consumption. As a result they export grain in very considerable quantities to Sadani and Pangani. Because of this continuous trade with the coast, which is carried on in addition by numerous Swahilis traders who pass through the land, the door has been opened wide to the import of European goods and the spread of the culture of the coast.... In Mgera [in the heart of Uzigua] everyone wears fine, white cloth, muskets and powder are common and almost every child speaks Swahili.6

Further inland, the same pattern was repeated in order to supply the trading caravans, which sometimes contained as many as a thousand men. Along the central caravan route from Bagamoyo to Tabora the main suppliers of food were the Gogo and Nyamwezi. "Many Nyanyembe families [in central Unyamwezi] employed men or bought slaves to assist in grain production, so that they would benefit from soaring prices of food."7 By the 1880s some Nyamwezi were driving herds of goats and cattle to the coast to sell as meat. Moreover, the new long-distance trade
Agricultural change in modern Tanganyika

stimulated further specialisation and exchange among African societies. In the late nineteenth century, for example, the Fipa people near the shores of Lake Tanganyika began to sell grain to the Bungu slave raiders of Lake Rukwa, receiving in return slaves whom they then sold to coastal traders in exchange for guns.

Gradually, then, the demands of the Zanzibar plantation economy radiated out into mainland Tanzania, drawing many areas into a network of agricultural specialisation and exchange. One of the still unanswerable questions this raises is whether it led to the emergence of a group of African entrepreneurs responding to new market opportunities by introducing innovations into the agricultural system, as was to happen in the colonial period. One such entrepreneur has been identified on the coast: Sheikh Ramiya, a Congolese slave who was freed by his master in Bagamoyo and became the town’s major producer and exporter of copra, a pure export crop which spread rapidly on the coast in this period. In the central Nyamwezi chiefdom of Unyan-nyembe there emerged at the same date a distinct group of notables, wandewa, who were originally businessmen without specific political functions. But in general the question of African entrepreneurship in nineteenth-century Tanganyika has scarcely been explored.

The point, then, is that many of the pressures that were to change Tanganyikan agriculture in the twentieth century had already begun to do so before the colonial invasion. New crops, population growth, the intrusion of a capitalist sector and its radiating effects were all features of the nineteenth-century economy. What is not known is how this nineteenth-century pattern affected developments during the colonial period. It is known that Zanzibar retained its economic influence over the mainland well into German times: as late as 1899, 69 per cent by value of the mainland’s exports were shipped to Zanzibar and 66 per cent of its imports were drawn from there. And it is known—as will be seen later—that the peoples who provided caravan porters also provided many of the migrant labourers for the first European estates. But whether the African producers who had
been drawn into the Zanzibar economic pattern were to perform similar roles in the early colonial economy is uncertain. If there was this economic continuity between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it has not yet been identified.

The impact of capitalism: the plantation economy

The German invasion of Tanganyika began in 1884. One of its main motives was to exploit the country’s resources for the benefit of Europe. In order to do this, it was necessary for the colonial people to be drawn as far as possible into the international economy. To do so remained the most fundamental and consistent policy of colonial governments in Tanganyika from the first German invasion until Independence. "The first object of the Government,” wrote a British governor in 1926, “is to induce the native to become a producer directly or indirectly, that is, to produce or to assist in producing something more than the crop of local foodstuffs that he requires for the sustenance of himself and his family.”

There were two main ways in which this policy could be carried out. One was for Europeans to establish capitalistic enterprises such as farms and plantations employing African labour. The other was for the attraction of European imported goods to stimulate Africans to produce export crops on their own land and under their own control. In either case the primary products usually found their way to Europe, but the effects of the two methods on African agricultural systems were entirely different. In Rhodesia, for example, European settlement robbed many Africans of their land and turned them into proletarians who owned neither land nor capital. In Ghana, by contrast, the lack of European settlement and the enterprise of some Ghanaian farmers built up in the 1890s the most valuable cocoa-growing industry in the world, with the production entirely under African control. Viewed from this angle, the economic history of modern Tanganyika has been particularly interesting, for Tanganyika was one of the few African countries—Ivory Coast and the Congo
were others—where neither the European nor the African farmer was able to dominate the economy in the colonial period. Instead, the economy contained simultaneously a major plantation industry and several important areas of African cash crop production, so that a constant struggle took place between the two, with the European farmer seeking to reduce the African to a proletarian and the African seeking to retain the maximum amount of economic independence. Given this situation, it is important to discover which Africans remained relatively independent in an economic sense and to try to explain the different experiences of different African societies. This section of the paper will consider those who came under the control of the plantation economy; the next will deal with those who remained largely outside it.

Although the motive of the initial German invasion was to acquire land for white settlement, European settlement never in fact became the official colonial policy in Tanganyika as it did in Kenya. Instead, white settlers and planters arrived individually and obtained land in an unsystematic way. The first European plantations experimented with tobacco and sugar near Pangani in the late 1880s. Then in the early 1890s a number of coffee plantations were established in and around East Usambara. The main development came after 1898, when sisal began to be planted along the newly-built Tanga-Mombo railway and private settlers began to establish farms in West Usambara and on the foothills of Kilimanjaro and Meru. Later, after the central railway reached Morogoro in 1907, a new area of sisal plantations was established around Kilosa and Morogoro. In the British period a few settlers took up land in Oldeani and the Southern Highlands, but basically the pattern of land alienation was to remain that established in the German period, with European enterprise concentrated mainly in the north-eastern corner of the country and only one per cent of Tanganyika's land—not always the most productive—alienated to Europeans.

The plantation sector gained a powerful position in the economy only shortly before the First World War. In 1904, Tanganyika's major export was still rubber, collected wild by
Africans in the south of the country, but by 1912 sisal exports (worth £368,000) and the exports of mainly plantation rubber (worth £421,000) together made up exactly half of the country’s export earnings. Rubber then died away as the world market collapsed, while the sisal industry was dislocated by the First World War. It was not until 1926 that the volume of sisal exports again reached that of 1913, but then exports grew rapidly from 25,022 tons in 1926 to 93,110 tons in 1939.10

The plantation sector, then, grew fairly slowly and became really substantial only in the 1930s, by which time—as will be seen—a rival African sector of cash crop production had emerged to balance it. Partly for this reason, the plantations never came to dominate the economy as did the European farms in Kenya. An analysis of their effects on African agricultural systems reveals this contrast clearly. The most common consequence of the establishment of plantations in an otherwise peasant economy is to proletarianise the peasants who have previously owned the land. In Kenya, for example, the development of European farming involved the destruction of the economy of the Kikuyu people who were its neighbours. Part of their land was seized, leaving them with insufficient to maintain their economic independence or to earn the tax demanded from them by the government, especially when they were forbidden to grow coffee. The Kikuyu were therefore forced to seek wage labour, and a process of involution—gradually falling productivity—took place in the Kikuyu reserves as over-population exhausted the land. The plantations did not have these effects in Tanganyika. It is true that the European planters tried to break the economic independence of the neighbouring African societies. The plantations along the banks of the River Pangani were deliberately interspersed with African “native reserves” so that the latter could provide labour for the plantations. A proportion of the labour force in the sisal industry was indeed always provided by the local population, many of them people from elsewhere who had settled round the estates. A rough survey made in 1929 suggested that 50 per cent of the work on the estates was done by “squatters”—probably largely voluntary migrants—30 per cent
by local people, and 20 per cent by migrant labourers on contract.\textsuperscript{11} Local labour generally did the cultivation work but remained sufficiently independent to be able to refuse the more highly paid but unpleasant task of cutting sisal. On Kilimanjaro and Meru the European estates which ringed the lower slopes of the mountains prevented the African peoples from expanding their land, so that land shortage began to threaten in certain very limited areas even before the end of German rule. At first the European farmers in these areas employed a number of Chagga, Meru, and Arusha workers, but by the late 1920s this supply had largely ceased. Only in West Usambara was European agriculture able to recruit its labour predominantly from among the local people, although even here it required severe compulsion in the early years. Towards the end of the German period, the wages of estate labour were two or three times as high in Tanganyika as they were in Kenya.

In general, then, plantation agriculture did not succeed in proletarianising the neighbouring peoples as it did in Kenya. The reasons for this were that plantations required not only labour but food, which the neighbouring peoples were best situated to supply, and that the local peoples were also sometimes able to adopt the commercial crops which the plantations produced. The Chagga and Meru largely ceased to work on European farms once they began to grow coffee themselves, which both German and British Governments refused to prohibit despite strong settler pressure. The population of the sisal estate areas, who were prevented from adopting sisal by the need for expensive processing machinery, instead specialised in producing food for the estates—after an initial period of estate work, the Bondei turned to supplying grain to the estates in the same way as they had previously supplied it to Zanzibar. Only in West Usambara was this impossible, for there European mixed farms produced their own food, no fully successful cash crop was ever found, and land rapidly became very scarce. This explains why the supply of labour was greater in West Usambara and wages much lower.

The full weight of the plantation economy in Tanganyika
Agricultural change in modern Tanganyika
did not fall on the local population, as in Kenya, but on the more remote areas of the country which were gradually compelled to supply migrant labour. Here again the impact was unequal. Pastoral peoples were not forced into labour migration because their products were relatively easy to transport, as cattle on the hoof. The main burden, therefore, fell on those African societies which had few cattle and were unable—for reasons which must be examined later—to commercialise their own agricultural systems. In early German times, migrant labour for the plantations came mainly from those areas which had previously supplied labour for the Zanzibar-based economy, especially the Nyamwezi and Sukuma peoples who had provided many caravan porters. A list of the plantation workers living in the Pangani South native reserve in 1910 shows the tribes most heavily represented as 236 Nyamwezi (probably including Sukuma and other related tribes), 79 “Swahili” (presumably local people from the coast), 42 Ngoni, 24 Yao, 23 Nguru, 21 Manyema, 18 Zaramo, and 17 Nyasa. All these tribes, save the Nguru, are known to have been deeply involved in the nineteenth-century trading economy. The list also contains smaller numbers from 44 other tribes, including peoples as distant as the Bemba and Bisa of Zambia, the Mambwe on the Tanganyika/Zambia border, the Makua on the Tanganyika/Mozambique border, the Rundi, and the “Kavirondo” (Luyia or Luo) from Kenya.¹² As these figures indicate, the pressures of taxation and labour recruiting were by this time forcing many new peoples into the migrant labour net. By about 1909 Ubena had become a major labour reservoir and large numbers were coming also from Upangwa, Ukinga, Ufipa, and Iramba. Shortly before the First World War the Makonde peoples from Mozambique began to enter Tanganyika in large numbers to work on the sisal estates. After the war, Rungwe district and Bemba country in Zambia became important sources of supply, supplemented after 1924 by Buha and in the 1930s by remote and over-populated Burundi. Of the 24,202 contract labourers recruited in Tanganyika in 1929 and 1930, nearly 60 per cent came from the Western Province.¹³ Still larger numbers made their own way to the estates, especially from the Southern
Agricultural change in modern Tanganyika

Highlands, for many tribes—including the Bena, Ngoni, and Irangi—normally refused to make a contract in order to be free to choose an estate whose conditions they preferred. By the mid-1950s, one of every thirteen adult male Tanganyikans was a long-distance migrant labourer at any time.

Labour migrants were driven mainly by the need for money. Most were young men, usually unmarried, who needed money to set up a home and begin serious cultivation, as well as to pay tax and buy clothes. In a study made in Songea District in 1953, Professor Gulliver was told that a man normally left home only once or twice in his life and stayed away for nine to eighteen months each time, during which he would make an average overall profit of Shs. 185.00. Migration was an incident in a man’s life, rather than a pattern of life as it has become in much of southern Africa. Migrants usually came from societies which, because of their remoteness or for other reasons, were unable to market their own agricultural products profitably, and this withdrawal of labour in turn impeded innovation in the agricultural economy at home, so that a vicious circle built up, with poverty compelling migration and migration in turn hindering the alleviation of poverty. In the Bugufi chiefdom of Ngara District, which supplied labour to African coffee and cotton growers in Uganda, it was observed in 1937:

The large exodus of men from the district to earn money has thrown the burden of coffee work on the women, and this always adds to the difficulties in the production of economic crops, since it is obviously unwise to allow such work to interfere unduly with the all-important production of adequate food crops.14

However, it would be an exaggeration to say that in Tanganyika migration prevented the labour-exporting areas from commercialising their own agriculture when the other factors permitting this were available. The coffee crop in Bugufi did flourish temporarily in the 1950s, when world prices rose sufficiently to make coffee-growing more profitable than labour migration. The Ngoni were able to build up a successful tobacco industry and the Sukuma a prosperous cotton industry, thereby escaping from labour migration patterns established in the nine-
teenth century. The Nyakyusa, who migrated in large numbers to the sisal estates in the 1920s, the Lupa goldfield in the 1930s, and the Zambian Copper Belt and South African gold mines in the 1940s and early 1950s, were nevertheless able to become important producers of rice and coffee. One factor which assisted these peoples to combine cash crop production with labour migration was that the younger migrant labourer was usually a different man from the older cash crop farmer: as Professor Gulliver observed, migration was an incident rather than a career.

In the full sense, therefore, no African society in Tanganyika was proletarianised by the plantation economy during the colonial period. Those close to plantation areas were usually able to respond by commercialising their own agriculture. Those more distant were drawn into migrant labour if the opportunity for earning money at home was absent, but once that opportunity came to exist, they were generally able to turn also to cash crop production. No Tanganyikan society lost its economic independence in the sense that the Kikuyu did in Kenya or the Sotho in southern Africa: that is, none lost the capacity to transform its own agriculture once it was linked to a wider market and could specialise its production. The plantations formed a sector in the Tanganyikan economy which influenced the development of many other sectors, but they never succeeded in dominating the economy.

**The impact of capitalism: African commercial agriculture**

One method by which Africans could be drawn into the world economy was by direct European investment in plantations employing African labour. The second was by stimulating the production of export crops by Africans on their own land. As has been explained, many Tanganyikan peoples had exported agricultural produce in the nineteenth century, but with the coming of the colonial economy this activity grew quickly and new export crops were introduced, especially coffee, cotton, and tobacco.
Agricultural change in modern Tanganyika

The Haya, who had long grown coffee for internal consumption and export to Uganda, were the first to find an export market outside Africa, in 1898. Exports were relatively small until the end of the First World War, when they began to rise rapidly from 1,138 tons in 1918 to a peak of 10,881 tons in 1935. The second main region to develop an export market was Kilimanjaro, where the first substantial area of African-owned coffee seems to have been planted in about 1900. Production was again small until the 1920s, rising from some 32 tons in 1923 to 2,141 tons in 1939-40. The only other important cash crop established in German times was cotton in Sukumaland and the Musoma area, where it was initiated by German settlers in the early 1900s and then adopted by the local people. The highest output in German times was 3,714 bales of lint in 1913, but production grew steadily in the British period, averaging 34,681 bales a year between 1935 and 1939. The high price of primary products on the world market in the 1920s made this decade a major period of expansion for African-grown cash crops. These years are known in Bukoba as the otandibatira: the years of “do not tread on”, meaning “do not tread on my land or my coffee”. During this period several new cash crop areas also emerged. The Meru and Shambaa began to grow coffee in the early 1920s.

Hangaza migrant labourers returning from Bukoba and Uganda introduced coffee into Bugufi in the mid-1920s, but it had little success before the Second World War. The first coffee was planted in Mbinga in 1926 and the first tobacco in Songea in 1928.

Africans began to plant coffee in Rungwe by 1923 and in Mbozi in 1929. These were the main areas of African commercial agriculture before the Second World War.

Since only certain areas of the country adopted these new crops and succeeded in building up a large commercial production, it is necessary to ask why they succeeded while other areas did not. Five factors seem to have been necessary for success. First, obviously, the natural environment had to be favourable, and areas of exceptional rainfall like Kilimanjaro, Bukoba, and Rungwe had a clear advantage over more arid regions. Second, for African cultivators to adopt a cash crop it was necessary for
them to possess surplus resources of land and labour so that the new crop could be added to their subsistence economy without harming it. Labour was most easily available in the banana-growing regions, but it could be provided also in grain-growing areas like Sukumaland by spreading the planting over an extended period, while much surplus labour was made available during the colonial period by improvements in transport. Land was generally available everywhere in the early days, and it was not until the 1930s that land shortage became a constraint on cash-crop production: the production of coffee in Bukoba in 1935, for example, was only twice reached again before Independence because the suitable land had been exhausted.

A third factor important in deciding which peoples became the pioneers of cash-crop production was the availability of relatively cheap transport. It was the building of the Uganda Railway to Lake Victoria that stimulated the export of Bukoba coffee and Sukuma cotton. High transport costs made cash-crop production difficult in many areas. In Bugufi, the cost of transporting coffee by lorry from Ngara to Bukoba in the 1930s amounted to nearly twenty per cent of its selling price in Bukoba, so that with a product whose quality was roughly equal, Bugufi coffee paid the grower only two-thirds of the price received by Chagga coffee growers who had the advantage of cheap rail transport. It was therefore not surprising that while Chagga coffee production rose steadily during the British period, Bugufi’s stagnated until very high prices became obtainable after the Second World War.

A fourth factor affecting success in cash-crop production was the policy of the colonial governments. Much compulsion was used by both Germans and British to establish cotton growing in Sukumaland. It was the government that in 1930 decided to encourage tobacco in Songea as a cash crop to replace the income from migrant labour which was no longer available to the Ngoni owing to a depression in the sisal industry. By contrast, the government discouraged cotton production in the Pangani Valley in order to ensure the sisal estates a supply of food and labour, so that this area is today one of the few fertile parts of the country.
where no major cash crop is grown. But government policy was not normally a decisive factor. The Matengo coffee crop flourished despite numerous attempts by the government to destroy it, while in 1928 an agricultural officer reported that “the area of Native coffee in Arusha is increasing against all the discouragement which it is possible for my Department to give”.

The last factor to be considered, entrepreneurship, is the most complicated, but without it African commercial agriculture could not have started. An entrepreneur is a man who innovates, who makes changes in existing methods of production in order to produce things for which he sees a demand. To do so, he must be capable of seeing the chance of advantage and breaking with the old production methods customary in the society. He must therefore be a man of unusual vision, and he must possess or be able to acquire the resources necessary to put his vision into practice. These two qualities do seem to have been the characteristics of the entrepreneurs of commercial agriculture in Tanganyika. As a broad generalisation, three sorts of people in an African society in the early twentieth century might be expected to have an unusual breadth of vision: its leaders, who often had greater political awareness and more knowledge of the outside world than most other members of society; those who had travelled widely, as traders, migrant labours, or in other capacities; and those who in one way or another had detached themselves partly from the society, perhaps through education or conversion to Christianity. Most Tanganyika entrepreneurs fell into one or more of these categories. From the scanty evidence available, it seems to have been the chiefs who first saw the possibility of exporting coffee from Buhaya and began to popularise it among their people: “Mutahangarwa [the chief of Kiziba] planted coffee without listening to the warnings of the old people about what the spirit world (okuzimu) would say.”

The chiefs were the first to grow cotton in Ikizu, and it was a chief, Makongoro—a former soldier in the German army and trader in Uganda—who popularised cotton among the people in the 1930s: “Even at the age of 60, he could be seen coated with dust clinging on the steering wheel of his tractor and turning
upside down the soil in his field.”20 In neighbouring Majita, labourers were the first to plant cotton, but the chief rapidly saw the advantage:

While the Jita were working on Yebete’s field [Yebete was a European planter] some of them took seeds with them and planted in their own fields. They then went to sell their produce to Yebete. When the chief saw this he tried to force the Jita to have a plot of cotton each.21

Chiefs were not the only innovators. An African Lutheran pastor formed the first coffee growers’ association in Usambara in 1931, while it is said that most of the early coffee growers in Rungwe were Christians. This suggests that innovation in one field of life facilitated innovation in another, and this was certainly true of the two entrepreneurs of this period about whom most is known, Joseph Merinyo on Kilimanjaro and Chrisostomus Makita in Mbinga. Joseph Merinyo, who was the educated son of the Chief of Moshi’s war leader and had visited Europe, began to plant coffee in about 1907 or 1908 at the suggestion of the German settler for whom he worked. He was not the first Chagga to grow coffee: Sawaya Mawalla, a councillor to the Chief of Marangu, had started a coffee plantation in about 1900, obtaining his seed from an Italian settler, and he had been followed by the Chiefs of Marangu and Moshi. But Joseph Merinyo was to be the leading entrepreneur who in the early 1920s toured the mountain exhorting the Chagga to plant coffee and form a marketing organisation, the Kilimanjaro Native Planters’ Association, which came into formal existence in January 1925. Chrisostomus Makita was perhaps an even more remarkable entrepreneur. He was the son of a Matengo chief and was educated by the Benedictine Mission. In 1924 he travelled to Tanga to work as a clerk on a sisal estate. There he realised how profitable agriculture could be, and on returning to Mbinga he persuaded the District Commissioner to obtain coffee seed from Moshi. When it arrived, Chrisostomus took over the control of coffee planting and persuaded his friends and relatives and the court elders to experiment with the crop. Later he also pioneered wheat and tobacco growing in Mbinga. Mr. Haule’s account of the early
Matongo coffee growers reveals very clearly the sort of people who became entrepreneurs in Tanganyika:

The majority were Christians with at least some formal education. Many were either Chrisostomus's own relations—sometimes very distant relations—or were his schoolfellows, or were court elders who were his agents in persuading the people to grow coffee. A number had also been migrant labourers. Thus the great majority of the early coffee-growers were men who in one way or another had experience wider than that of ordinary people.22

Wide experience and unusual vision were the main requirements for entrepreneurship so long as this meant adding a new crop to the previous system of subsistence agriculture. But another sort of entrepreneurship was also possible: to break away from peasant agriculture altogether and instead become a large-scale farmer employing labour. This sort of entrepreneurship needed not only vision but also capital to pay the labourers in the early years and possibly to purchase new implements. Since it was difficult for Africans to accumulate capital, entrepreneurship of this type was rarer in the colonial period. One example was in the Ismani area of Iringa District, on either side of the main road from Iringa to Dodoma. This area was sparsely inhabited until 1949, when very high maize prices and special grants to large producers induced a number of lorry drivers, shopkeepers, and mechanics from Iringa town to obtain large acreages there. Not themselves living in the area, they hired labourers to cut and burn the bush and scatter maize seed broadcast on the land without any attempt at cultivation. In 1949 one pioneer planted 190 acres of maize, while by 1957 there were 68 farmers with holdings of over 50 acres in the area. Ismani was thus an example of the application to agriculture of capital drawn from urban trade. Other sources of capital, before credit systems were established, were either salaried employment or agriculture itself. A good example of the latter was wheat growing in the north of Mbulu District, which became important during the Second World War and has vastly increased since Independence, until today some African farmers cultivate over 500 acres. Mr. Raikes has described the sources of entrepreneurship in this area:
The origins of the large farmers are not yet fully known to me. A number had been workers on estates and gained their experience of machinery there, as to the means of “primary capital accumulation” by which they had made the money to invest in reaper-binders etc., some had made money in onion growing in the years before 1950 when the price was high. Some came from the stratum of large cattle owners [cattle being a major potential source of capital], while others had bought cattle locally and sold them in Arusha in the boom conditions after the war, when a skilled buyer could (with luck) make very high profits for a relatively low capital outlay. These men were very clearly commercially oriented.

As this discussion of entrepreneurship indicates, commercial agriculture for a territorial or international market offered new opportunities for inequality within African societies. This can be seen very clearly in the large-scale, mechanised farming of Ismani and Mbulu, but it took place on a smaller scale wherever cash crops were grown. A survey of coffee growers on Kilimanjaro in 1933 revealed that differentiation had already begun. Approximately one taxpayer in three grew coffee. Of those who grew it in one part of the Machame chiefdom, 84 per cent owned less than one acre of coffee, while four per cent (some 30 people) owned over two acres and therefore probably needed to employ wage labour. (During the 1920s the Kilimanjaro Native Planters’ Association had successfully resisted attempts to limit each grower to a maximum of 500 trees.) Of Songea tobacco growers in 1940, 76 per cent produced less than 100 kilogrammes while two per cent (158 people) produced over 250 kilogrammes. Four-fifths of the total Matengo coffee crop in 1937 was produced by four of the 230 growers. These figures suggest the normal pattern of differentiation in cash crop areas: a mass of small growers from among whom a few larger producers had emerged as actual or potential employers of labour. Wage labour for African employers was becoming increasingly common in Tanganyika by the 1930s. It was estimated in 1926 that some 20,000 Hangaza and Rundi labourers were employed each year by Haya coffee growers (even, occasionally, to carry the employers to church on Sundays). The Bondei employed Nyamwezi immigrants to cultivate for them. Ha migrants travelled every year to cultivate rice in the Luiche Delta for townsmen from Kigoma and Ujiji. A survey made in Mbozi in 1944 suggested that 45 per cent of all
Nyiha coffee growers employed labour for wages. The beginnings of a capitalistic agriculture were becoming apparent in several areas where the market economy had stimulated African commercial farming.

**Development and underdevelopment in the 1930s and 1940s**

By the Second World War, Tanganyikan agriculture had been restructured into a pattern which, with minor variations, was to survive until Independence. The pattern had been created by the impact of the world economy on the country and by the different responses of African societies and individuals to the demands and opportunities which this impact had brought. It is well to pause at this point in the late 1930s and early 1940s and analyse the agricultural pattern as it existed then.

First, there had been development and progress. This was especially true of the export sector of the economy, on which depended not only the population’s purchasing power but also the limited development and welfare projects financed by government. Coffee exports brought some £246,048 to Buhaya and £85,842 to Kilimanjaro in 1939, while smaller sums reached all the cash crop areas. Besides the export crops, there had probably been significant advances in food production in many areas, either through improved varieties of seed or through diversification of food supplies due to the introduction of European crops like wheat and potatoes and the further diffusion of maize, rice, and other crops which had been spreading since the nineteenth century. Finally, there had been certain technological improvements, particularly in transport, the use of more efficient, imported hand-tools, and the rare adoption of the plough, mainly on the Lake Nyasa shore, in Mbozi and Arusha, and by small numbers of farmers around Lake Victoria.

These developments must be weighed against the forms of underdevelopment which had also taken shape within the economy. “Underdevelopment” is a word used very loosely to mean at least three different things. It may mean “absolute under-
development": that is, the overall impoverishment of a country. This may have happened in certain African countries, such as Mozambique, and—as will be seen—in certain areas of Tanganyika, but it would probably not be true of the country as a whole in this period. The second possible usage, "relative underdevelopment", means that a country's overall living standards have improved more slowly than those of some other country: for example, that the gap between the "third world" and the industrial nations has widened. That is undoubtedly true of Tanganyika in the colonial period, but is too general a statement to be useful in analysing what actually happened within the country. The third meaning of the term—and the one which will be used here—is "structural underdevelopment": that is, the evolution of certain economic and social structures which are characteristic of underdeveloped areas and which tend to be self-perpetuating. Underdevelopment in this sense refers to the economic structure of a country rather than its total level of wealth, although a country whose economy is structurally underdeveloped is unlikely to be able to achieve rapid and sustained economic growth.

Tanganyika at the time of the Second World War had become underdeveloped in two main ways. First, it was underdeveloped in the sense that it was dependent: the control of its economy was not in the hands of its own inhabitants. This was demonstrated by the impact on Tanganyika of the international economic depression of the 1930s. Beginning in the United States in 1929, the depression brought crisis—reduced consumption, production, and employment—first to European countries and then to their colonies. As production fell in Europe, so the market for primary products collapsed and Tanganyika was unable to sell its export crops at reasonable prices. Between 1929 and 1933, for example, the value of Bukoba's coffee exports fell from £59 to £20 per ton. Throughout the 1930s the price of sisal followed exactly the fortunes of the American economy. From £32 per ton in 1929 it fell to £11 during the depths of the American depression in 1932, rose again to £23 during a temporary recovery in 1937, and then fell to £14 when a renewed depression shook America in 1938.30
The collapse of prices, of course, had effects throughout the economy. "We scan the sisal prices anxiously each week", wrote the District Officer in Kondoa, where migrant labourers were returning home without finding jobs and cattle prices were dropping from Shs. 49.00 per head before the depression to Shs. 10.84 in 1934. The wages of sisal cutters in the Tanga area, which had reached a peak of over thirty shillings a month in 1927, were reduced to Shs. 15–18 by 1935 and did not regain their 1927 level until 1951. Government revenue fell by a quarter between 1929–30 and 1931–32, which prevented any serious development expenditure throughout the 1930s. The one thing that did not fall during the depression was output. Sisal production roughly doubled during the 1930s, while the output of coffee on Kilimanjaro and cotton in Sukumaland both multiplied five times. This expansion was due partly to the need to maintain incomes by increasing production and partly to a deliberate "plant more crops" campaign by the government, designed to maintain public revenue and prevent peoples like the Sukuma from abandoning the commercial economy entirely.

Dependence was demonstrated most vividly by the collapse of prices, but it operated also in other ways. Soon after the depression began, sisal growers combined in the Tanganyika Sisal Growers Association in order to prevent price-cutting among themselves and facilitate a joint reduction of wages. They succeeded in lowering wages but were unable to form a single marketing organisation controlled by the producers. The reason for this failure was that several large plantation companies were dependent on sisal merchants in London. After the First World War, these estates had borrowed capital through the London merchants to re-equip their factories and develop their land, contracting in return to market their sisal only through the merchants concerned. As late as 1948, a small minority of the large growers (22.5 per cent of those voting) were able to reject a proposal for a single marketing organisation. It is not clear at present whether African cash-crop producers were similarly sacrificed to the interests of the marketing agents they were obliged to employ in Europe, but in 1930 the government des-
cribed the treatment of the KNPA by its London agents as “undisguised robbery”.

Thus dependence on the colonial metropolis was one major indication of Tanganyika’s underdevelopment. The second—and more important for the present purpose—was the development within the country itself of a pattern of regional inequality which became relatively fixed and rigid during the 1930s. By this period, Tanganyika was divided into three types of economic regions. First, there were regions which specialised in production for export: the sisal estates, the main cash crop areas, and the towns. These were surrounded by a second category of regions which supplied the export-producing regions with food and other services: Uzaramo, Uluguru, and Rufiji supplying food to Dar es Salaam; Bonde, Ukaguru, and Ulanga supplying food to sisal estates; Kondoa supplying cattle for the Tanga and Korogwe markets; and so on. Finally, spreading out beyond the export and food producing regions were peripheral regions which either supplied migrant labour or stagnated in near-isolation from the territorial economy. This pattern of regional specialisation—all of it focused ultimately on export production—is one of the main characteristics of an underdeveloped economy. To understand the economic history of any particular area of Tanganyika in the colonial period, it is necessary to define how the area fitted into this pattern at different periods (for the pattern was never entirely static). And to understand the agricultural situation in the country as a whole in the late 1930s and early 1940s, it is necessary to realise that by this period different but equally serious problems had arisen in both the export-producing and peripheral regions.

In those areas which produced cash crops for export, the major problems were land shortage and exhaustion, the unsatisfied ambitions of the larger farmers, and a growing discontent with dependence on the production of cash crops for the world market. Already in the late 1930s shortage of suitable land, due to cash-cropping and population growth, was reducing the output of coffee in Bukoba. Land shortage, coinciding with a rapidly growing production of rice, maize, and coffee, had by 1941 led some 3,000 Nyakyusa families to leave Rungwe for the
neighbouring Mbeya District. In the early 1930s, Sukuma peasants, who for many years had been colonising southwards and eastwards, began also to move west across Smith Sound to colonise the Geita area, while the government began to show concern with the steady exhaustion of the soil by the pressure of human and animal population in northern Sukumaland, where landless youths were already numerous. By this period, also, the successful cash-crop growers were beginning to recognise the insecurity of their economic position. A perceptive Chagga politician expressed this dilemma vividly in 1952:

Let us get some glimpses of the Chagga economic structure. Almost the whole of it is built on the coffee industry. The industry has done exceptionally well but its climax seems to be in. An economy based on one cash crop is never quite secure. Disease, fall in prices, war, alternative synthetic products or any other disturbing factor may affect ruinously the economic position of the country. One type of this visitation hit Uchagga in the middle thirties.

Coffee is peculiar in that growers, besides helping themselves to a few cups of coffee, would have hardly anything to do with it should they fail to sell the crop. The growth of coffee is limited by environmental factors and the suitable belt in the mountain is pretty narrow. The extensive cultivation of the crop has almost reached a limit now. This means the concentration of its cultivation within a well-defined limited area. The cultivators have to cater not only for their source of income but also try to raise subsistence crops within the same limited area. With the increase of population the area under food crops is comparatively small. Another grave problem associated with the introduction of coffee is the almost complete disappearance of the pasture grounds. This has meant a reduction in the local production of meat, but over and above this, which can be supplemented by outside supplies, there is the shocking shortage of fresh milk. This is an economic deadlock. This affects the general standard of the health of the country a lot; the land which needs a more intensive type of practice suffers due to overuse and lack of animal manure. With fluctuations of prices in the world market outside the control of the cultivators, can we regard our coffee economy as a secure proposition?...

What then is the way out! Thé intensive scientific use of the agricultural land now under cultivation is essential ... Can the womenfolk with the traditional hoe achieve this stupendous feat of agricultural development! Obviously no. Not even the menfolk and womenfolk put together. The heyday of the Jembe is an anachronism in the twentieth century.32

Petro Njau's analysis reveals another and more fundamental problem resulting from the nature of cash-crop production.
Nowhere, on the present evidence, had commercial crops done more than supplement subsistence agriculture. They had not replaced it and thereby induced greater specialisation from which, perhaps, increased exchange and economic growth could have resulted. The caution of the peasant matched that of the colonial governments in dictating that primary importance should be given to subsistence food production. “To save a native community from famine is more important than the export of many bales of cotton,” the Governor had declared in 1926. Moreover, not only were commercial crops merely added to subsistence farming, but they do not seem to have altered the methods of subsistence farming to any noticeable extent, save to reduce the land available for it. The profits of commercial agriculture were devoted to housing, education, trade, or further cash crops, but, as Petro Njau complained, at the most basic level of food production Tanganyika’s agriculture was little changed in this period.

If the export-producing areas suffered from unbalanced development, the peripheral areas experienced stagnation or involution. One form of this was depopulation. Parts of the Tabora and Kigoma regions, for example, seem to have entered a vicious circle of labour migration and the expansion of the tsetse fly, the absence of the men reducing the labour available to clear the bush and thereby allowing the fly to advance and make the area totally uninhabitable. This combination seems to have entirely depopulated the Ugogo/Ukimbu border by the 1930s, and it may have been one of the most important of all factors in regional underdevelopment—the evidence at present is too scanty to permit a conclusion. In other areas the reverse process happened: a rapidly growing population, which because of an unsuitable environment or inadequate transport could not produce a cash crop, could reach the point where land shortage and the exhaustion of the soil produced a gradual involution of agriculture in the form of reduced yields and periodic famine. Much of the modern agricultural history of West Usambara is probably contained in the process by which the land “where the bananas thrive” has gradually exchanged its staple crop first for maize and then in recent years increasingly for cassava, the
Agricultural change in modern Tanganyika

highest-yielding but least palatable and nutritious of foods. Baumann in 1890 had described the Mlalo Basin in northern Usambara almost as a paradise:

On the slopes one sees thick clumps of banana palms and between these fields of sugar cane, maize, beans, pumpkins and tomatoes. All the fields are extremely well tended. In the pastures numerous, well-fed cattle graze... All the settlements and inhabitants of this delightful area display a certain prosperity.36

By 1945 isolation and population growth had reduced the same area to crisis:

The population of the area ... has now experienced semi-famine conditions for three years running and it is difficult to see any prospect of self-sufficiency in the future except in occasional years of ideal rainfall. The hard facts are that the whole region has reached a very low level of fertility owing to over-cultivation, over-grazing and failure to manure the land.37

The lines of communication of the colonial economy had by-passed Usambara, once one of the most sophisticated political and economic units in the country, and it had consequently become underdeveloped.

The analysis suggests that the impact of capitalism, leading to structural underdevelopment, had by the Second World War produced in Tanganyika a differentiation between export-producing, food-producing, and peripheral areas. In each of these areas—although for quite different reasons—critical agricultural problems had arisen by the 1940s. It remains now to consider the attempts made after 1945 to solve these problems.

The development of underdevelopment 1945-61

By 1945, perceptive Africans and colonial administrators were aware that a new deal was needed for African agriculture. In that year the African Association called attention to a widespread discontent:

If African agriculture is to be advanced, the Government must take immediate steps to introduce widely new methods of farming. Effective means should be taken to replace the time-and-energy wasting age-old hoe
with an ox-drawn plough... Africans are anxious to be able to cultivate land on modern lines, and in the absence of substantial incentive and active help from the Government they have come to fear that these talks about the uselessness of African ways of agriculture and the delay in devising effective means to improve them are nothing but a policy to get African land usurped by white farmers and to turn African masses into a vast community of labourers working for the white people on mining areas and shambas.

The Association had some grounds for its fears, for a number of European administrators and experts did feel that direct European control was the only way of transforming African agriculture. The Groundnut Scheme of 1946, originating from a suggestion made by the Director of Agriculture in Tanganyika, was based explicitly on the conviction that African peasants could not supply Britain with the vast increase in the production of oils and fats which was urgently demanded. But the failure of the scheme—at a cost of £35,870,000—discredited massive capital investment and redirected attention to the problems of African peasant farming.

There were two main phases in British agricultural policy between 1945 and 1961. The first, which lasted until the mid-1950s, mainly emphasised the principle of soil conservation. One motive behind this policy was an awareness that agricultural change in the earlier years of colonial rule had in many areas disturbed the balance between men, animals, and the land. Concern with problems of soil erosion first entered official policy in about 1930 and became an urgent priority towards the end of the Second World War. "Once the necessity for full war-time production becomes no longer a first priority," wrote the Director of Agriculture in 1944, "the rehabilitation of all native lands must be our watchword." Rehabilitation, it was believed, was possible only when backed by legal compulsion and enforced by the agricultural field staff and the local government authorities. As an influential agricultural officer wrote, "The African will have to be compelled to help himself."

The policy of compulsory rehabilitation and balanced land usage led to development schemes in various parts of the country between 1945 and 1955. The Mlalo Rehabilitation Scheme to
redeem the area which Baumann had once found so prosperous was one of the earliest programmes, obliging cultivators to graze their cattle only on flat land and to ridge or terrace all cultivated slopes. The Uluguru Land Usage Scheme which began in 1949 eventually required many households to spend three days of each week terracing their land. The Mbulu Development Plan of the same year proposed to reduce the cattle herds of the Iraqw by a third while simultaneously opening 600 square miles of new land for settlement. The most elaborate programme was the Sukumaland Development Scheme, which was planned before and during the war but implemented after 1947 at an overall cost of some £2,000,000. It aimed to redistribute human and animal population from crowded areas of northern and central Sukumaland—Mwanza and Kwimba—to the less densely populated areas of Geita, Maswa, and Shinyanga, in order to check soil deterioration and permit an expansion of cotton production. Each household was required to plant one acre of cotton, to tie-ridge one acre of cultivated land, and to remove or sell all stock above the optimum carrying capacity calculated by the Agriculture Department.

Some of these schemes, which absorbed enormous quantities of administrative energy, achieved considerable success. The Sukumaland Scheme temporarily stabilised the population of central Sukumaland, enabled 30,000 people to move into Geita District in five years, and permitted a five-fold increase in cotton output between 1947 and 1961 without disaster. The Mbulu Development Plan achieved both its main objectives. But by the later 1950s most schemes had run into serious opposition and had in effect been abandoned. The reasons for their failure are not yet fully understood and probably varied from area to area. Save in Mbulu, attempts to restrict cattle ownership were generally unsuccessful, partly, perhaps, because cattle represented potential capital which was most unwillingly dispersed, and partly because destocking benefited the larger cattle owners by raising the value of stock relative to that of grain. "Destocking has taught every African that it is Government's purpose to make the Africans beggars," Sukuma politicians protested in 1954.41
Sometimes the improvement regulations simply did not work, as in Uluguru where yields were frequently higher on unterraced land. Always the regulations required arduous labour which the cultivators believed they could more profitably devote to other purposes. “One of the objects of the Association,” declared the African Association, Usambara, in 1947, “is to break terracing rules.”42 People seem frequently to have feared that rehabilitation might eventually lead to the loss of the land to European settlers. The regulations could seldom be adequately explained and were designed to bear fruit over a period longer than the peasant normally considered relevant. But further study may reveal that there was another and more fundamental reason for the failure of the agricultural policy of the early 1950s. It was an attempt to solve a number of problems which had emerged in the agricultural systems concerned: the growing shortage of land owing to population growth and cash-cropping without major technological change, as in Sukumaland, or the tendency towards involution, as in Uluguru and Usambara. But the policy attempted to solve these problems without altering the basic forces which had brought them into existence. There was, for example, an obvious contradiction in attempting simultaneously to intensify agriculture and open new land in Sukumaland, since only the pressure of land shortage could make intensive agriculture worthwhile. The cultivation practices enforced in Usambara were abandoned as soon as compulsion ceased, save for the purpose of growing valuable cash crops, for where no cash crop was available the advantages of improved cultivation could not be made sufficiently attractive to be acceptable. A policy which cut across the lines of economic change and was backed by compulsion without offering rapid benefits was simply not practicable in the rapidly changing political mood of Tanganyika in the 1950s.

By the middle of the decade, the British Government was beginning to change its agricultural policy. The basic principle of the late 1940s had been to preserve the peasant cultivator and stabilise his farming system, insisting, for example, on communal land tenure. By the mid-1950s, the peasant cultivator was losing
favour. The reason for this was probably mainly political: the emergence of a class of wealthy African farmers in the place of a peasantry, it was believed, would increase political stability in the rural areas. As a senior official wrote:

I want to see the emergence from our hitherto undifferentiated African society of a substantial number of rich men. The "wealthy coffee growers" [of Mbinga], if they have reached the same level as those of Kilimanjaro, will be getting a cash income of about £25 per year. That is not what I mean by riches; I would like to see men in a sufficiently strong financial position to be able to send their sons overseas for education, to afford motor-cars, good houses and the like, and I believe that the emergence of such relatively wealthy individuals in the community will provide a stabilising factor of immense importance to the future of this country.48

Much the same thinking coloured the most influential policy document of this period, the Report of the Royal Commission on Land and Population in East Africa, published in 1955. Working in the shadow of Mau Mau and growing political discontent, the commission saw the problem of development as one of hastening the transition from subsistence to commercial agriculture in order to meet the demands created by rising population and higher income expectations. To achieve this aim, it concluded, "economic and social policies must be based on the realisation that the development of East Africa basically depends on the extent to which the indigenous population can, with the help of necessarily small numbers of immigrant peoples, be integrated into the world economy". Government policy should therefore support the demands of the most progressive farmers, especially by encouraging the replacement of customary land tenure by individual freehold. "Policy concerning the tenure and disposition of land should aim at the individualisation of land ownership and mobility in the transfer of land which, without ignoring existing property rights, will enable access to land for economic use."44 Accepting this policy, the Government of Tanganyika explained that communal land tenure no longer facilitated development because cash-cropping and population growth were reducing soil fertility, since individuals would not adequately
safeguard land unless they personally owned it. The policy to be adopted, therefore, was “the encouragement of the transition from native customary tenure into ‘freehold’ in appropriate areas.” The government accepted that this might produce a landless class; the authorities would not “impose restrictions over land transactions between Africans” unless a particular community demanded them.45

When this policy was announced, it was immediately condemned by the Annual Conference of the Tanganyika African National Union. As President Nyerere wrote:

I am . . . opposed to the proposed Government solution to this problem of shifting cultivation . . . If we allow land to be sold like a robe, within a short period there would only be a few Africans possessing land in Tanganyika and all the others would be tenants . . . we would be faced with a problem which has created antagonism among peoples and led to bloodshed in many countries of the world.46

Such were indeed the implications of the new policy. What had happened was that the government, finding itself unable to stabilise the old African agricultural systems in the face of economic change, had decided to throw them wide open to the forces of the market, so that they could be “integrated into the world economy” to the fullest extent. Individual landownership and widespread landlessness were consequences which would have to be accepted. The pattern of underdevelopment—of dependence and internal inequality—would be intensified. The new approach was exemplified in a new agricultural policy. Instead of attempting to regulate agriculture by legal sanctions, the new “focal point” approach adopted in 1956 concentrated the work of the Agriculture Department on the most responsive parts of each district and the most progressive farmers, in the hope that their example would gradually spread to less responsive people and areas.

In adopting this new policy, the government was undoubtedly following the direction which economic change had taken since the Second World War and which the most progressive farmers were also anxious to pursue. The dominant feature of agricultural change in the last years of colonial rule was a
rapid expansion of export production owing to an enormous rise in the world prices of primary products, itself the result of economic recovery in the industrial nations and political crises like the Korean War. Between 1948 and 1954 the price of Kilimanjaro coffee rose from £130 to £591 per ton. Sisal prices rose between 1948 and 1951 from £76 to £166 per ton. The price to the Sukuma cotton grower increased from 25 cents per pound of seed cotton in 1950 to 60 cents in 1954. Output naturally rose in proportion. Between 1945 and 1961, the production of coffee on Kilimanjaro multiplied three times, sisal output doubled, and the Sukuma cotton crop multiplied five times.47

To some extent the cash crop boom of the 1950s—after the low prices which had ruled since 1929—operated to moderate the pattern of inequality which had developed within Tanganyika. Previously marginal cash crops like Bugufi coffee temporarily became profitable for the first time. New commercial farmers emerged, like the maize growers of Ismani and the wheat growers of Mbulu, the pyrethrum growers of the Southern Highlands and the cashewnut growers of the south. But many of the peripheral areas still remained outside the new prosperity. No cash crop was found for most of Usambara, where in the late 1940s half the households in the Mlalo Basin were cultivating less than two acres each.48 No cash crop was found for Buha either, and it continued to supply many sisal workers as well as much labour for African farmers in Kigoma, Ujiji, Sukumaland, Buhaya, and Uganda. Moreover, even where cash crops expanded rapidly in this period they could often do so only at the expense of the landlessness of growing sections of the population or a deterioration of other aspects of the agricultural system. In Rungwe, Professor Gulliver found in 1955 that in the most densely populated villages on the lake shore as few as 17 per cent of the younger men might own land on which rice, the main cash crop, could be grown.49 A survey of the Machame chiefdom of Kilimanjaro in 1961 suggested that one-third of all families were obliged to earn part of their income outside their own farms. The expansion of cotton-growing in densely-popula-
Agricultural change in modern Tanganyika

ted Ukerewe Island was achieved only by substituting cassava for maize as the staple crop. And in Bukoba, despite the high world prices, no significant increase of coffee production could be achieved because the suitable land was already exhausted.

Another feature of the boom years of the 1950s was the emergence of a distinct group of “progressive farmers”—sometimes called “master farmers”—in several parts of the country. The Mbulu wheat growers are perhaps the best example, but similar groups appeared elsewhere. By 1959, some 270 Africans in the Northern Province were farming more than 50 acres each. At the old Groundnut Scheme area at Urambo, a group of smallholders were established by the East African Tobacco Company to grow tobacco under close supervision and with the use of hired labour. By 1965 their average holding under mechanical cultivation was 21 acres at any time, and established farmers earned an average of Shs. 12,790 a year (less the costs of cultivation), perhaps ten times as much as the average cotton grower in Sukumaland. Plots of 25 acres were noted in the densely-populated lake plains of Rungwe in the mid-1950s, where the average holding was 1½–2 acres per family. “It must be understood,” the rules of the Nguu Coffee Growers’ Society stated bluntly, “that the aim of this Society is to enable members to own farms without working on them themselves.”

It was very commonly these larger and more commercial farmers who led the co-operative movement whose development was such a feature of this period. The Ismani African Maize Growers’ Co-operative Society, for example, grew out of an informal association among the bigger growers whose shares had cost a hundred shillings each. The chairman of the enlarged co-operative was the entrepreneur, already mentioned, who had cultivated 190 acres of maize in 1949, while its treasurer had 126 acres under cultivation in 1957. The Mweli Farmers’ Union in Geita, similarly, grew out of group of “master farmers” in Buchosa chiefdom, led by a former agricultural instructor, an ex-military signaller, a former sisal estate clerk, a one-time police constable, and a fisherman, all of them also cotton growers. By 1952 they had some 1,700 members and Shs. 40,000
in the bank, had built a road and a club house, and were hoping to buy a tractor and build a school, a soap factory, and a hospital. Their chairman became the first president of the Victoria Federation of Co-operative Unions when it was founded in 1955. In many parts of the country, moreover, similar but more subtle forms of differentiation were evolving. It was estimated in 1949 that 10 per cent of Iraqw households owned 75 per cent of the tribe’s cattle. A study of a small area of Bulambia in Rungwe District in the late 1960s showed that 10 per cent of the households owned 45 per cent of the most desirable riverine land, and 34 per cent of the households owned none, while the wealthiest 20 per cent of peasant families held 67 per cent of the government and party offices in the area.

The main effect of the boom years of the 1950s, therefore, was the further development of structural underdevelopment in Tanganyika. The great expansion of cash crops had made the country’s prosperity increasingly dependent on the industrial nations which consumed primary products. In the export-producing areas, the expansion of acreage had rarely been attended by an increase in yields—cotton yields in Sukumaland scarcely changed during the decade—and had sometimes taken place at the expense either of food production, as in Ukerewe, or of the less fortunate members of society, as in Unyakyusa. Certain previously peripheral areas had managed to break out of their subordinate position, but others, like Usambara, had experienced further involution, while the wasteful pattern of migrant labour still drew many young men from their home areas. There had been a considerable expansion of communications, social services, and wealth. Some of this wealth had been channelled into improvements in agricultural technology. Ploughs had become common in the Southern Highlands and in certain parts of the Lake, Western, and Arusha Regions. A few hundred tractors were also in private African hands, mainly in the same areas and in the Eastern Region. It had been a good time for the progressive farmers. But the gaps of inequality had widened and the chain of dependence had become more intricate.
Agricultural change in modern Tanganyika

The government had responded to these trends first by attempting to stabilise the situation and then, when this had proved impossible, by encouraging Tanganyika to become “integrated into the world economy” as fully as possible and evolve the structures determined for it by market forces. That the latter policy meant short-term growth is certain. Its effects in terms of long-term structural change were not fully appreciated until after Independence.

Conclusion

Since 1967, Tanzania has begun a major struggle against its own past, an attempt to break away from the pattern of change which has been taking place in the country for at least a century. The object of this paper has been to try to identify this pattern of change. The paper has argued that the main trend of change has indeed been towards social differentiation and inequality, and it has stressed the complexity of the forces which have caused this: the pre-colonial background; the impact of capitalism, producing both a plantation sector and the growth of African commercial farming; the emergence of a pattern of structural underdevelopment, evidenced by dependence on external economic forces and the growth within the country of regional inequalities; the intensification and modification of this pattern by population growth; and finally the special circumstances of the 1950s which consolidated the whole structure. The colonial governments of Tanganyika made numerous attempts to modify this pattern of change and to correct its abuses, but in the final analysis they could not alter the general trend, for it was their own most fundamental policy that had caused it.

There is a saying current in Kigoma that “a rich man in Buha is a servant in the town”.52 It sums up very neatly the experience of Tanganyikan agriculture over the last century. The country as a whole had increased in wealth, and certain areas and individuals had prospered markedly. But even a rich man in Tanganyika was a poor man in the context of the world economy, while within Tanganyika itself the inequality between
regions and individuals had widened greatly. That, at its simplest, was the dilemma defined for independent Tanzania by the previous century of agricultural change.
Suggestions for research

Agricultural history is one of the main fields in which schools and amateur historians can carry out historical research in Tanzania. It is also one of the most important fields, if we are to understand the problems which rural development must face and overcome. A great many problems can be studied, but three are especially suitable for this sort of research:

(1) Settlement. For a long time the population of Tanzania has been growing and cultivators have been spreading out over the country to occupy new land. Many parts of the country have been settled only quite recently. It is possible, therefore, to take a small area and ask the people when they or their ancestors moved into it, and why. Another question to ask is whether the people had to change their agriculture when they came to the new area, perhaps adopting new crops or new methods of cultivation.

(2) Innovation. As this pamphlet shows, agriculture in Tanzania has constantly been changing as new crops or methods of cultivation have been introduced. These innovations can be studied. One way is to find out which people first began to cultivate a new crop, and why. Another is to ask a number of farmers when they began to grow a certain crop, in order to find out how an innovation spreads until most people have adopted it. Some studies of innovation of this type will be published soon in a book entitled Modern Tanzanians, edited by John Iliffe. These studies have been written by students of the University of Dar es Salaam.

(3) Village histories. In those parts of Tanzania where the people live together in villages, it is possible to discover the history of each village: how the village was founded, and by whom; why it was founded in that particular place; how new members of the village have come to live there; how the members of the village have earned their living over the years; and so on. One example of a village history of this type is contained in a pamphlet by T. O. Ranger, Agricultural History in Zambia, which is soon to be published by the Historical Association of Zambia. To learn how to collect the information needed to write histories of this type, read a pamphlet by A. D. Roberts, Recording East Africa's Past, which can be obtained from the headquarters of the Historical Association of Tanzania for Shs. 2.50 per copy.
Footnotes

1. This paper was first presented to the Universities of East Africa Social Science Conference in Dar es Salaam in December 1970. The paper owes much to the writings of Dr. Giovanni Arrighi, the lectures of Mr. Roger Woods, and the comments of Dr. Elizabeth Isichei and Dr. Archie Mafeje. I am also grateful to the Director of the Tanzania National Archives (TNA) for permission to quote from public records.


3. Ibid. p. 4.

4. Ibid. p. 6.


13. W. D. E. Alcock to Secretary of Native Affairs, minute, 25 April 1933, TNA Secretariat Minute Paper (SMP) 11557/2/334.

14. F. H. Brett (Agricultural Assistant, Ngara) to Senior Agricultural Officer, Mwanza, 1 June 1937, TNA 197/5/3/333.


18. A. E. Haarer (District Agricultural Officer, Moshi) to Provincial Commissioner, Northern, 10 July 1928, TNA SMP 11160/66.


Iliffe, Modern Tanzanians (Nairobi, forthcoming).

22. G. S. Haule, "The Entrepreneur: Yohan Chrisostomus Makita". in *ibid*.


24. A. L. Pennington (Assistant District Officer, Moshi) to Provincial Commissioner, Northern, 23 September 1930, TNA SMP 13060/100.


27. F. W. Brett (Senior Commissioner, Bukoba) to G. St. J. Orde Browne, 23 February 1926, TNA 215/121/7.

28. Agricultural Assistant, Tukuyu, to District Commissioner, Mbeya, 3 February 1944, TNA 33/A/3/13/615.

29. KNCU Annual Report 1960-61; Bukoba District Book.


31. A. A. Oldaker (District Officer, Kondoa), Kondoa-Irangi Annual Report 1931, TNA Library.


33. E. Mitchell to D. Cameron, minute, 23 November 1930, TNA SMP 13060/133.


38. "Minutes of the African Association Third Conference held at Dodoma, Tanganyika Territory, on 29th March to 3rd April, 1945", TNA SMP 19325/2/18A.


41. Isaac Bhoke Munanka to Governor, 1 February 1954, TNA 215/1332/ XIII/188.


43. D. W. Malcolm (Principal Assistant Secretary, Agriculture and Natural Resources), minute, 29 July 1952, TNA SMP 41822.


48. J. B. Clegg (Agricultural Officer, Malindi) to Executive Officer, Development Commission, 29 October 1949, TNA 4/269/6/145.

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