

Voluntarism, Virtuous Citizenship, and Nation-Building in Late Colonial and Early Postcolonial Tanzania

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Abstract: This article offers a historical perspective on the concept of voluntarism in modern Africa. It does so by exploring the ways in which postcolonial states grappled with the legacies of colonial-era concepts of voluntarism, using Tanzania as a case study. It argues that the postcolonial state sought to combine two strands of colonial thinking about voluntarism in a new conception of “virtuous citizenship.” But this was a fragile construction, and the language of voluntarism could bring to light divisions in society that many would have preferred to keep hidden.

Résumé: Cet article propose une perspective historique du concept de volontariat dans l’Afrique moderne. Cette démarche est effectuée en explorant la manière dont les États postcoloniaux se sont interrogés sur les héritages des concepts de volontariat issus de l’ère coloniale, en prenant la Tanzanie comme étude de cas. Il fait valoir que l’État postcolonial a cherché à combiner les deux tendances de la réflexion coloniale sur le bénévolat en une nouvelle conception de “citoyenneté vertueuse.” Mais il s’agissait d’une construction fragile, et le langage du volontariat pourrait éclairer des divisions dans la société que beaucoup auraient préféré garder cachées.

Keywords: Volunteers; nation-building; postcolonial states; citizenship; development

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In Africa, as in the West, the apparently sudden rise of volunteering in recent decades has attracted attention. In the case of Africa, an emerging social science literature has shown that the retreat of the state in the 1980s led to a new role for local and international NGOs and the appearance of the figure of both the African and the expatriate volunteer. This literature tends to focus on the novelty of the phenomenon, rarely venturing back into the past (e.g., Morris 2009). It also tends to assume that the figure of the volunteer belongs to a domain of civil society, understood as existing in opposition to the state and holding the state in check (Tripp 2000; Dunn 2001; Bayart 2007). Where the social science literature does refer to the past, it is often to a “golden age” of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century volunteering in Europe and America, before voluntary initiative was forced out by the rise of new mid-twentieth-century welfare states (Hilton & McKay 2011; Deakin 1995). While the space allowed for voluntary work within society might change, the *concept* of voluntary work is often discussed as though its meaning were unchanging over time (Taylor 2005).

Alongside this body of literature is another, in which the term “voluntary” appears surrounded by scare quotes. This is the literature that explores demands for unpaid labor made by chiefs in colonial states and later by postcolonial nation-builders, in Africa and elsewhere (Burgess 2002). In the case of Tanzania, the focus of this article, the term *kazi ya kujitolea* was used in the colonial era to mean “voluntary work,” but it was reconfigured by the postcolonial state, as Carol Scotton describes in her study of Swahili political words, to mean “voluntary work in nation building” (1965:530) and to refer specifically to unpaid labor provided to the state.¹ Within this literature, the state and other polities loom large as a coercive force, and the association between voluntarism and selfless altruism fades away.

At first glance, this domain of activity seems to have little to do with contemporary notions of volunteering. But it reminds us that the realm of the voluntary was in fact already a broad and contested one in colonial Tanganyika and that these legacies had implications for the concept of voluntary work in the postcolonial state. This article explores the relationship between the concept of the voluntary in late colonial Tanganyika and the use of the term *kazi ya kujitolea* in the period immediately after independence. As in the articles by Ruth Prince and by Hannah Brown and Maia Green (this volume), “voluntarism” is here defined broadly, to encompass a range of charitable and community work. This article looks at contemporary newspapers, government documents, and local government minutes and reports to trace the emergence of two distinctive strands of thinking about the realm of the voluntary in colonial Tanganyika, both tied to conceptions of duty to a wider community (whether a state, empire, or nation) but also in slight tension with each other. One strand celebrated the work of volunteers as inherently virtuous and an essential part of creating a good society. The other strand, which became increasingly powerful after 1940, saw volunteer work as a means of providing services that the state otherwise could not afford to provide. Both strands were part of a wider public

discourse of “duty” in the 1940s and 1950s, the importance of which has at times been neglected in favor of a focus on the discourse of “rights.” The postcolonial state of Tanzania inherited this twin legacy, and the nationalist party TANU sought to combine the two strands in a conception of citizenship that linked the virtuous aspects of colonial voluntarism to the late colonial conception of voluntary work as a means of providing social services. But it was a fragile construction, and while it could serve as a powerful mode of articulating postcolonial citizenship, it could also reveal cleavages in society that some would have preferred to keep hidden.

This case study provides a historical dimension to the history of voluntarism in Africa by making three interrelated arguments. First, this article reminds us that the domain of voluntary work in Africa is not new, but rather has a deep history. Second, this history is closely intertwined with the state and with changing understandings of political community. As a result, understandings of voluntarism have shifted along with changing perceptions of the state. Third, we should remember that the definition of “voluntary work” is always contested, both in terms of the line between labor that is demanded by a state or a chief and labor that is given freely, and in terms of the line between voluntary work that replaces a service that would otherwise be paid for through taxation and voluntary work that is a virtuous act performed altruistically.

Voluntarism and the Colonial State

In a recent study of the role of NGOs in contemporary Tanzania, the political scientist Tim Kelsall points out that when NGOs began to appear in Tanzania in large numbers from 1990 on, they were not an entirely new phenomenon, since they had colonial-era predecessors in the form of “professional and welfarist associations” as well as “marketing co-operatives, tribal citizens’ unions and age associations” (2001:135). The late colonial period did indeed see a remarkable flourishing of such self-help organizations and volunteer groups in Tanganyika, many of which had originated in towns as ethnic associations intended to provide welfare support for those far from home (Iiffe 1979).

This flourishing of associational life has generally been explained in terms of filling a gap in the context of the colonial state’s failure to provide the social welfare services needed both by urbanizing populations far from home and kin and by rural populations whose lives were disrupted by labor migration and new capitalist relations of production. According to Göran Hydén,

the limited scope of the colonial state left Africans with an increasing number of unmet needs, especially as modernization under colonial rule changed their habits and enhanced their expectations. Many African associations were therefore . . . formed to meet needs that the colonial state either explicitly ignored or to which it paid only scant attention. (1995:38)

At times, new welfare organizations also served as a means to engage with and to critique the colonial state in Tanganyika, though they tended to be more reticent compared to similar organizations in the more politically fraught environment of colonial Kenya to the north (Lewis 2001).

Nevertheless, if some Africans responded to the gaps in colonial welfare provision by creating new forms of association, particularly in towns, others continued to rely on existing networks of kin and family. As Michael Jennings has argued (2008:20), throughout the colonial period most people were supported through “informal rural networks.” When voluntarism and concepts of charity have been explored for colonial Tanganyika, then, it is generally from the perspectives of, on the one hand, voluntarism filling a gap left by the colonial state, and on the other, an understanding of rural networks of support constituting a realm untouched by the development of new civil society organizations in which precolonial modes of solidarity—or an “economy of affection,” in Göran Hydén’s words (1980:18)—persisted.

But understanding voluntarism either in terms of filling gaps in the town or of continuity untouched by colonial rule in the countryside risks understating the extent to which the colonial regime sought ideologically to remake the state and the role of the political subject within the state, and the important role that conceptions of voluntarism played in those efforts. It was not simply that the state did not have the funds to provide such services. Rather, the colonial state believed that even if funds had been available, such roles were best performed by voluntary associations rather than by the state.

Associational Culture and New Conceptions of Citizenship

The British colonial officials who governed Tanganyika after the First World War ruled over subjects whose existing ideas of service were in some cases in the process of being reinforced and reshaped by the expansion of Islam and Christianity. Studies of precolonial Tanganyika have drawn attention to the ways in which people came together to provide reciprocal labor in return for beer or food, as well as to more formal institutions such as the Sukuma societies through which young men provided labor service to others (Koponen 1988; Gunderson 2010). As Christianity and Islam spread rapidly into the interior of Tanganyika from the late nineteenth century, they offered reformulations of familiar ideas of charity and service. Felicitas Becker, writing about nonelite converts to Islam, points out that “charity” was considered as one aspect of “what made a Muslim” (2008:84). Across Africa, new Islamic institutions, such as the Mouride brotherhood in Senegal, placed a particular emphasis on charity as beneficial to both giver and receiver (Ilfie 1987). Christianity, too, spread most effectively when it built on existing conceptions of morality (Smythe 1999), although missionaries also brought new charitable institutions aimed both at helping the poor and providing new welfare services (Ilfie 1987).

British colonial officials brought a new dimension to this ideological mix and promoted a distinctive understanding of the place of voluntarism in society, one that drew both on the middle-class philanthropic model and the self-help model that characterized late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century British society. In the 1920s and 1930s voluntarism was a central part of British culture, and voluntary associations, as Helen McCarthy argues, were understood as “schools of citizenship” in “a Whiggish narrative of Britain’s political development and national character” (2011:55). For the Conservative leader Stanley Baldwin, “all the best movements and best things” in Britain had resulted from the “triumph of the voluntary effort” (2011:55). These understandings of the importance of associational culture and voluntarism, articulated in books like *Self-Help* by Samuel Smiles, published in London in 1859 and read from Japan to Malaya, were therefore an important part of British national identity, but they also traveled across the world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Echoes of this nexus of ideas were heard, too, in Tanganyika’s emerging public sphere.

Within Tanganyika’s public sphere, one place in which we find discourses in praise of associational culture and voluntarism is the Tanganyikan Education Department’s Swahili-language monthly periodical, *Mambo Leo*.² The pages of *Mambo Leo*, particularly from its birth in 1923 to the late 1940s, are testament to the development of a shared discourse in praise of associational culture between colonial officials and the educated elite from across Tanganyika, who contributed letters, articles, and reports, notably in the section *Habari za Miji*, or “News from the Towns.” The editorial tone of *Mambo Leo* reflected these ideas. Editors of *Mambo Leo* were quick to print news of associations formed around the territory, both in the section devoted to local news and in the letters pages, and they intervened in those pages to praise those founding new associations.³ Forming an association was understood not simply as a means of filling a gap left by the colonial state; it was itself a virtuous act and a sign of a positive moral character, regardless of the type of service the association proposed to offer. Descriptions of new associations in the Swahili press combined a language of economic development with one praising the virtue of creating unity out of disunity.⁴ In the case of the Kigoma Friendly Society, established in 1945, the founders stated their aims in the familiar terms of mutual help and affection, while a note from the editor printed below their announcement in *Mambo Leo* praised them for their pursuit of “cooperation.”⁵ Articles by both colonial officials and African readers echoed this praise of unity. In 1946 the social welfare officer E. C. Baker praised “unity” as the basis of modern progress and cited what he termed “the old proverb,” that “the Lord helps those who help themselves.”⁶

Despite the emphasis on economic development and unity, however, it was also important that material ends did not appear to trump the pursuit of virtue. In Tanganyika’s northern neighbor, Kenya, the settler leaders of the Boy Scout Association, which attracted large numbers of African youths in the 1940s and 1950s, complained about letters they received from African

youth seeking salaried opportunities. Their correspondents, they argued, failed to appreciate the voluntary nature of the organization. One local scoutmaster, Peter Leo Omurunga, apparently promised potential recruits that they would gain personally from the money they raised, saying “the more you bring in, the more you receive. So you see how self-supporting you can be in this movement” (quoted in Parsons 2005:72). But the official line from the Boy Scout Association was clear—youths should not join the Boy Scouts in pursuit of material advancement. Similar complaints that the pursuit of material advancement was squeezing out virtuous action were heard in the 1950s from the churches. American Lutheran missionaries in Northern Tanganyika criticized those who were unwilling to put themselves forward for church work, preferring instead to use their education as a route to material reward, whether a salary in the church or some form of secular work.⁷ They hoped that their converts would instead use their education for the good of the church and offer their time without expectation of material reward.

One strand of thinking about voluntary work in the late colonial period was therefore based on a concept of “virtuous citizenship” promoted by the colonial state, which chimed with an existing nexus of ideas around an ethic of service. For the colonial state, promoting new conceptions of citizenship was part of an attempt to create a new form of political society, and this discourse was increasingly co-opted by those arguing that Tanganyika was ready for independence and self-government. But an alternative strand of thinking about voluntarism, particularly after 1940, saw it in terms of providing services that states felt they ought to provide but did not have the resources to pay for. The roots of this alternative model lay in new thinking about the state and welfare that developed after 1940.

The Voluntary Sector and the State after World War II

If the depression of the 1930s suggested that coordinated action on welfare was increasingly necessary, in Britain as in Africa, it was the outbreak of World War II that gave states the impetus to act (Cooper 1996). Twentieth-century wars saw states make unprecedented demands on their populations, and led to further and deeper state involvement in civilian life than ever before. In Britain, Sir William Beveridge was commissioned by the government in 1941 to undertake an enquiry into the system of social insurance. The resulting *Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services*, more commonly known as the Beveridge Report, was published in 1942 and received enthusiastically by the public. All three major parties entered the 1945 election promising a much expanded role for the state in the welfare of its citizens, a vision that included a National Health Service, social security, and full employment (Harris 1990). Yet if the postwar era in Britain was marked by state intervention in the economy and in society on a new scale, the voluntary sector persisted, though in a new form.

By 1950 voluntary work had come to be understood, as José Harris argues, “much less [as] an end in itself, much more [as] a means to an end—the end of manipulation or controlling or participating in the sphere of public provision” (1990:114). In other words, voluntary action was increasingly harnessed to the welfare goals of the state. In East Africa too, war, welfare, and state-building were closely intertwined and helped define a new set of ideas about voluntary work. The arguments of the Beveridge Report, which envisaged a new blend of state intervention and voluntary action in Britain, were echoed by the Colonial Office Social Welfare Advisory Committee, which had been set up in 1942 on the initiative of the anthropologist Audrey Richards (Lewis 2001). As in Britain, there was an expectation that voluntary work would play an important role in creating new welfare services. Thus a new set of ideas about voluntarism developed, in which voluntary work and community self-help served as a means of providing new social services that insufficient tax revenues could not fund.

The Colonial Office may have anticipated standardized solutions to shared colonial problems, but new colonial policies were incorporated into local settings in different ways. While in Kenya the solutions failed to take account of that country’s tense racial politics and the lack of a shared moral community (Lewis 2001), in Tanganyika new ideas about voluntary work as nation-building intersected with and built on the associational culture that had been developing since the 1920s. The “Ten-Year Development and Welfare Plan for Tanganyika,” published in 1946 by Tanganyika’s recently established Development Commission, combined an argument that Tanganyika’s state of economic development meant that “the time has not yet arrived when it would be possible to apply modern principles of social security to the vast majority of the population of the Territory” with an argument that social welfare should in any case be carried out by those who would benefit from it rather than by state intervention. As the report stated, the Development Commission also wished “to emphasize that social welfare is essentially a community effort and that it cannot be imposed from the outside but must be developed by the people themselves” (Government of Tanganyika 1946:3).

The “Ten-Year Development and Welfare Plan” combined a language inherited from earlier forms of associational culture—notably the argument that it was better for communities to build their own social services than to wait for assistance from outside—with a new awareness that tight budgets and a pent-up demand for social services demanded innovative strategies for encouraging unpaid contributions. Colonial officials knew that they were operating within a long tradition of calling upon forced, or *corvée*, labor. In precolonial Tanzania powerful individuals could mobilize the labor of their clients and wives for production, offering protection and security in return (Sunseri 2002). This practice continued into the colonial period. Describing conditions in Moshi in northeastern Tanganyika in the early German colonial period, the missionary Bruno Gutmann reported that men had to work for between ten and twenty days for the chief, while

women were expected to work for about half that time—though he also reported that these requirements were heavier than those that had existed in precolonial times (Koponen 1988). Forced labor was a feature of colonial regimes across Africa, often justified on the basis of the public good and often mobilized by chiefs who were able to exert both direct and indirect pressure on their subjects. Indeed, the ability of chiefs to mobilize labor was an important part of their importance for colonial regimes.

As the state sought to expand its activities after 1945, it called on such notions of communal labor service provided to a chief. In 1959, for example, the Pare Council in northeast Tanganyika discussed the growing pressure on local services. Education costs were constantly rising and there were pressing long-term concerns, such as developing the water supply. A decision had been taken to increase the local revenue rate, but the cost of education was such that most of the increased income would immediately disappear into the education budget. How then might services be provided more cheaply? One solution was to integrate older forms of community work in the village into the structures of the local state. According to the minutes of the meeting, the chairman of the council suggested that the council should consider “giving those who direct work done in the district by *Msaragambo* [communal work systems] a present or some sort of payment” in the hope that “this will encourage the people to engage in voluntary work [*kazi ya kujitolea*].”⁸

This strategy, of reconceptualizing older forms of communal labor as voluntary work, was replicated across Tanganyika by colonial officials as well as by African elected representatives. In his comments on the 1959 Annual Report for Moshi District, the local social development officer made the link explicit, noting that a tradition of community self-help called “Monday work” (*kazi ya juma tatu*) already existed. He continued: “This regular community effort originated as an individual’s tribute to his Chief. Today, leadership and initiative rest with the Chiefs and their Area Councils and excellent demonstrations of what can be achieved have taken place during the year.”⁹ In one chiefdom, Machame, three thousand people had worked for seven days to create a new road, and in doing so saved the overstretched treasury of the Chagga Council a total of £9000. Self-help schemes, conducted by the people without payment, were thus increasingly becoming a way of funding social and economic development projects in the late colonial state, while the legacy of conceptions of association as a moral good ensured that there was a vocabulary for thinking about this labor that went beyond exploitation (Eckert 2007). As a 1954 report on communal work activities in the chiefdom of Vunjo in Moshi District stated clearly, a “good citizen” was one who put himself forward to help his country without thinking of his own private interests.¹⁰

One of the Pare Council chairman’s suggestions of ways to save money was to mobilize women’s labor in particular. This was an era, as Helen Callaway has explained, of the “feminization” of colonial service, a time when “European women came into their own, as single women and wives,

in both professional and voluntary work” (1987:244). The wives of colonial officials had engaged in voluntary work since they began to arrive in Africa in large numbers in the interwar period, but this activity was now yoked to state policy (Lewis 2000:219). Wives who in the interwar years had sought to play a greater role in setting up welfare programs but were held back by the strict hierarchies of colonial service now found that the new importance attached to community development by the postwar colonial state offered the potential for greater activity (Gartrell 1984; Wipper 1975).

The wives of chiefs followed colonial wives into voluntary service. On her return from Queen Elizabeth II’s coronation in London in 1954, the wife of the Paramount Chief of the Chagga gave a speech in Moshi district in northeastern Tanganyika in which she spelled out what she had learned from her visit to Europe. She described the ways in which people in Europe engaged in work, some paid and some voluntary, to “help the poor or the sick or children who need to be helped.” This was a duty particularly incumbent on those who were better off. She called on women in Tanganyika to do the same, framing her injunction in terms of development and progress and setting out the role that women could play in bringing development to the district. Yet she also recognized existing contributions, offering “thanks and congratulations to those women amongst us who volunteer to sell tickets for associations like the Red Cross in order to raise money to help the sick. This is a good start.”¹¹

Concepts of Duty in the Mid-Twentieth Century

By the late colonial period, then, there were two strands of thinking about voluntarism and voluntary work—as altruistic good citizenship, and as a way of providing services that the state could not fund on its own. What they had in common was the concept of duty, which we move now to explore. One way of exploring this theme is to look more closely at the political and social thought of William Beveridge.

William Beveridge is best known for the 1942 report that became one of the founding documents of the British welfare state. But he went on to write two other major reports, neither of which was commissioned by the government. In October 1944 he published a report called *Full Employment in a Free Society*. This was followed in 1948 by a third report, called *Voluntary Action: A Report on the Methods of Social Advance*. As Beveridge explained in *Voluntary Action*, he understood the three reports to be complementary. The first report established the foundations for a good society, and did so by “putting first things first” so that there “was to be bread and health for all at all times before cake and circuses for anybody at any time” (1948:319). The second report built on the first one by arguing that even where the necessities of life were provided for, this was not sufficient, for “idleness even with bread demoralizes.” The government should therefore ensure the availability of work for all, but it should do so by “socializing demand rather than socializing production” (1948:319). The third report argued

that the aim of “putting first things first” required more than money. There were, Beveridge wrote, “some things—not goods but services—which often cannot be bought with money, but may be rendered from sense of duty” (1948:320). In this final report Beveridge made the case for voluntary action as a lynchpin of the good society. For, he wrote, “the making of a good society depends not on the State but on the citizens, acting individually or in free association with one another” (1948:320). Money alone was not enough, he insisted. “We must continue to use to the full the spirit that made our great organizations for full Mutual Aid and that fired the philanthropists of the past” (1948:322).

The concept of duty underpinned Beveridge’s thinking. As he wrote in the preface to *Voluntary Action*, “Emphasis on duty rather than the assertion of rights presents itself to-day as the condition on which alone humanity can resume the progress in civilization which has been interrupted by two world wars and remains halted by their consequences” (1948:14). As José Harris (1990) has suggested, this language of duty was employed loosely, and there was no developed analysis of the concept. Yet it was perhaps the very wooliness of the concept of duty that made it attractive to mid-twentieth-century social reformers, in Britain as around the world. In a very different context, Vinay Lal has described the importance of the concept of duty to the Indian nationalist leader Mohandas Gandhi, who in a speech in 1939 said that true *swaraj* (self-rule) “comes only from performance by individuals of their duty as citizens. In it no one thinks of his rights” (2008:11). This concept of duty was a theme on which Gandhi elaborated in a letter he wrote to Julian Huxley in response to Huxley’s request to philosophers and intellectuals around the world, on behalf of UNESCO, for their perspectives on the concept of universal human rights.

I learnt from my illiterate but wise mother that all rights to be deserved and preserved came from duty well done. Thus the very right to live accrues to us only when we do the duty of citizenship of the world. From this one fundamental statement, perhaps it is easy enough to define the duties of Man and Woman and correlate every right to some corresponding duty to be first performed. Every other right can be shown to be a usurpation hardly worth fighting for. (Quoted in Maritain 1949:18)

Putting concepts of duty back into our analysis of the global history of the mid-twentieth century offers an intriguing perspective on the ways in which the meaning of membership of a political community was understood in the late colonial period, and the framework within which nationalist leaders were operating. Duty was important to late colonial conceptions of political society, but recognizing its wider importance is suggestive of why it was relatively straightforward for nationalists to translate ideas of voluntary associational life into newer understandings of duty toward the postcolonial nation.

Thus at independence we find two legacies, to some degree in tension with each other: one in which offering oneself, volunteering, making an

active contribution to the life of the community for the sake of a broader public good was valued for its noneconomic content, and another in which it served as a means of achieving clear social and economic goals, which might otherwise be paid for by taxation. This legacy helps us to understand the starting point for postcolonial understandings of voluntarism and the volunteer. What we see in early postcolonial Tanzania is an attempt to bring together a conception of citizenship founded on public duty with the second aspect that developed after 1945, that of self-help and voluntary work to drive economic growth and the provision of social services in the absence of financial resources.

Voluntarism and the Postcolonial State

On December 9, 1961, the independent state of Tanganyika was born, and power passed to the nationalist party TANU and its leader, Julius Nyerere. As Tanganyika moved toward independence, Nyerere took ownership of the language of self-help and “unity is strength” and made it his own. He framed his ambition to rid Tanzania of poverty, ignorance, and disease in terms of a war in which all citizens had a duty to participate (Jennings 2007). A new language of nation-building stressed the bonds of solidarity that had been weakened by colonialism but would now be recaptured and employed to build the nation.

This new solidarity was founded on a principle of equality. In his 1969 novel *Village in Uhuru*, Gabriel Ruhumbika captures the break with the past that this represented. In one episode two TANU dignitaries visiting a rural area on Saba Saba Day, the anniversary of the founding of TANU on July 7, 1954, tell the assembled audience that “their nation was a democratic nation. A nation in which all people were equal. They themselves, Nyerere himself, were by no means superior to any of them” (1969:93). Old hierarchies, they explain, had been swept aside and all postcolonial citizens were now equal.

The Swahili term *kujitolea* (to volunteer) took on an important role in this context of postcolonial nation-building. The term carries a sense of offering oneself and putting oneself forward, and speaks to ideas of generosity, self-sacrifice, and taking initiative, as well as volunteering. In local council minutes and letters in the early 1960s, the word was used in these broad senses, often linked to the building of a newly independent nation.¹²

But the word was also used more specifically to describe community initiatives to fulfill a particular development goal without government funding. Shortly after independence, District Officer Anastasios Christodoulou explained to the Lindi District Council that while some projects developed at the village level would be selected for funding, “government will ask citizens to volunteer [*kujitolea*] in certain tasks,” for “relying on the government for everything is not the way to be successful.”¹³ This was of more than local significance, for the cumulative effect of many small-scale local projects was

a major contribution to the new state's development activities, particularly for a state that lacked capital. Speaking at a United Nations meeting in Leopoldville in May 1963, Tanganyika's Finance Minister Paul Bomani said that the value of the *kazi ya kujitolea* performed in Tanganyika in the previous year, which ranged from work on roads to work on hospitals, airfields, schools, and wells, was 10 million shillings.¹⁴

It was this second, more specific sense of community self-help that led Carol Scotton in her 1965 study to translate *kazi ya kujitolea* as "voluntary work in nation building" (1965:530). The language of *kazi ya kujitolea* can be understood as part of a wider attempt to reconceptualize the duties of citizenship by the postcolonial state. The language of good citizenship, and the figure of the *raia mwema*, or good citizen, had been central to colonial efforts to construct a new conception of imperial citizenship (Hunter 2013) that included altruistic service without expectation of material reward. But as Scotton shows, in postcolonial Tanzania, as the lines between the nationalist party and the state became increasingly blurred, the figure of the "good citizen" was joined by a new figure, that of the "patriotic citizen," the *mwananchi*, or "child of the country."¹⁵ As Scotton argues, the term *mwananchi* came to characterize patriotic citizenship in contrast to simple political membership, and unpaid nation-building work became a requirement of full citizenship.

In this way the spirit of voluntarism that was embedded in TANU as an association, and in society more widely, was co-opted by the state and turned into a tool of governmental power. Across Tanzania, members of TANU's Youth League styled themselves as "volunteers" and in turn demanded "voluntary" efforts from others. Youth Leaguers were often accused of rounding up reluctant citizens and insisting they appear for communal work (see Brennan 2006a), but such discipline was also enacted in more subtle ways. As Felicitas Becker (2008) has shown in regard to southern Tanzania, TANU's exhortations in the 1960s for villagers to undertake voluntary work projects as a form of grassroots participation in nation-building came with the implication that a lack of progress was to some degree villagers' own fault.¹⁶ A contrast therefore began to appear between the meaning of *kazi ya kujitolea* in the colonial context and the disciplinary connotations of the term as it was used in the postcolonial state.

But the contrasting legacies of late colonial thinking meant that the concept of the "voluntary" in postcolonial Tanzania had more traction than this narrative might suggest, and that it should not be understood purely as a tool of the party and of the state. The wider sense of giving of oneself, which built on the foundations of colonial-era thinking about the concept of the voluntary as explored in the previous section, ensured that both the figure of the volunteer and the idea of "voluntary work in nation building" could serve the ends of postcolonial state and nation-building, as well as a means of reflecting on and arguing the meaning and practice of postcolonial citizenship.

Debating Kazi ya Kujitolea in the Local Press

To see how this operated in practice, we turn now to a series of discussions in the local newspaper *Kusare*, and its predecessor, *Komkya*, in the early 1960s. Both *Komkya* and then *Kusare* were published by the local council in Moshi, northeastern Tanzania.¹⁷ They were thus tied to the state and served as a vehicle for explaining and promoting the rhetoric of the newly independent state, but they also had a full page devoted to letters from readers. These offer particular insights into the ways in which the discourse of volunteerism was drawn into new and existing social conflicts.

An article about a hospital shows how a global concept of the international volunteer intersected with the concept of *kazi ya kujitolea*. In the issue of August 18, 1962, an article about a mission hospital in the chiefdom of Kibosho celebrated the arrival of a volunteer doctor and further explained that the residents of Kibosho would now perform voluntary work to help the mission expand the hospital.¹⁸ The hospital was run by Dr. Katherine Gordon, who had been working in a government hospital in London when she decided to come to Tanzania and work for a year without pay. The article described the generosity of this doctor and praised the willingness of local citizens to volunteer as well. This article drew on an existing discursive trope in which volunteering was a sign of virtue, though it was now firmly tied to nation-building ends. Juxtaposing the volunteer doctor, who had made an individual decision to travel and work without pay, with the people of Kibosho, who were enjoined to offer their labor by local political authorities, served to downplay the extent to which this labor was demanded by the postcolonial state as something that citizens were required to perform and instead inserted it into a narrative of virtue.

The paper reported on speeches by local officials praising the “spirit of cooperation” and patriotism demonstrated by participation in self-help projects.¹⁹ In this context, for postcolonial citizens, speaking out in favor of *kazi ya kujitolea* was a means of declaring oneself in support of the new state. In a letter to *Kusare*, one reader, Ewaldi Mareye, wrote that “to volunteer by doing nation-building work is important and fulfils our duties of citizenship. A good citizen is a citizen who fulfils his or her duties as is required in his country. Therefore if we volunteer to dig roads and water channels, this is a good thing because it is for our benefit.”²⁰ Mareye made no concessions to those who refused to volunteer on the grounds that they were too old, pointing out that many clearly were not too old to spend their days drinking. The editor agreed, stating that “building the nation is everyone’s responsibility” and that in this “there is no difference between rich or poor.”²¹

Integrating *kazi ya kujitolea* into concepts of citizenship therefore offered an understanding of citizenship that had the potential to dissolve class distinctions and mask generational tensions, since the young could contribute as much as the old. But these attempts were only partially successful, and the question of who volunteered to build the nation and in what ways both

revealed the persistence of hierarchies and also gave rise to criticism that the burden was shared unequally.

“Building the Nation Is Everyone’s Responsibility”

In December 1963 *Kusare* reported on a meeting of the Village Development Committee of the chiefdom of Mamba where committee members discussed what it was that prevented some individuals from embracing the spirit of *kazi ya kujitolea*. They blamed the continuation of colonial-era mentalities. In colonial times, elites had often sent others to perform their duties on their behalf. They claimed exemption on the grounds that they were wealthy or connected to the Chief. Yet, the committee emphasized, times had changed and now no one had the right to opt out of nation-building activities. The committee agreed that those who did not turn out for nation-building work should be punished, regardless of who they were. This should particularly apply to the wealthy, who were not deterred by the threat of fines.²²

Yet if in theory nation-building work was a duty equally incumbent on all, and a means by which all members of society could perform their duties of citizenship, in practice arguments over who participated drew attention to the persistence of race and class cleavages. As James Brennan (2006b) has shown, criticism of nonparticipation in nation-building work was often targeted at Europeans and Asians. Speeches by TANU officials reported in *Kusare* called on the European and Asian communities to “understand their duties” in matters of nation-building.²³ These exhortations were echoed in letters in which those who did not participate were singled out for criticism. One letter expressed surprise at those “white people who do not want to join with us so that we can build our new Republic.”²⁴ The racial dimension attached to discussions of communal work participation was important, but criticism of European and Asian nonparticipation was often a criticism of those who used wealth as an excuse not to pick up a hoe.²⁵ As such, salaried Africans were also the target of criticism.

A meeting of Kilimanjaro District Council in May 1963 focused on complaints that had been received from a number of Village Development Committees that particular groups were being excused from self-help work.²⁶ According to the minutes of the meeting, it was agreed that teachers and doctors could be excused because they were contributing to building the nation through their professional work and perhaps through financial assistance, though they should still turn out when possible. This message was echoed in the pages of *Kusare*, where the editor’s response to a letter published in October 1962 complaining that those who did not perform “Monday work” because they were employed should pay instead emphasized that financial contributions were sufficient and that it would make no sense for teachers and other public servants to leave work to perform such activities.²⁷

After independence, then, the nationalist government sought to portray voluntary work as a key attribute of virtuous citizenship in a way that challenged other social hierarchies. But while some embraced the concept of voluntary work to build the nation, others resented the fact that the rich and the salaried seemed to be avoiding voluntary work by paying cash contributions instead and that *kazi ya kujitolea* appeared to have too much in common with obligated labor for a chief or forced labor for a colonial state. Debates over volunteering thus became a space that revealed the limits of the nationalist party's claim to have abolished colonial and precolonial hierarchies and to have created a new nation of equal citizens.

Conclusion

As this case study has shown, understandings of voluntary work and voluntary associations changed in interaction with changing ideas about the state. The late colonial state in Tanganyika bequeathed two legacies of thinking about voluntarism: on the one hand, a conception of voluntarism as an aspect of associational culture and self-help in which forming voluntary associations or engaging in voluntary work was a sign of adhering to a particular liberal conception of progress; on the other, the idea that voluntary work was a means of providing services that the state wanted to deliver but could not afford to pay for out of general taxation.

After independence, these twin concepts were joined in a new conception of citizenship. Yet this was a fragile construction, and while the heritage of colonial arguments that giving of oneself was inherently virtuous could be redirected fairly easily toward the goal of nation-building, the element of voluntary work that made it a form of taxation required of the young, poor, or otherwise disenfranchised had the potential to undermine its work as a narrative of nation-building. Thus, while the rhetoric of voluntarism spoke to an idea of pulling together for the greater good, arguments around volunteering also revealed tensions and divisions.

As the articles by Felicitas Becker and Ruth Prince (this issue) make clear, the figure of the volunteer in contemporary Africa is heir to a long history of arguments about voluntarism and its meaning. Volunteers seem to be both everywhere and nowhere, and the meaning of what constitutes a volunteer is contested and challenged. This is as true of the Islamic teachers described by Felicitas Becker as of the volunteers in Kisumu seeking to build a professional identity and a career path as discussed by Ruth Prince. This should not surprise us. The definition of voluntarism and the moral and ethical identity of the figure of the volunteer are contested because the concept of voluntary work is closely tied to concepts of the state, the nature of political authority, and the boundaries of economic life, all of which are historical and subject to change over time. At the same time, if the concept of voluntary work implies work that is altruistic, and that offers a moral or spiritual benefit to the volunteer rather than material reward, this ideal does not always reflect the meanings that people put upon it (see Taylor 2005).

The lines between altruism and material reward, and between labor that is given freely and that is demanded by those in political authority, are very often blurred. This means that, in the past as in the present, definitions have become a sphere of argument and debate. Exploring these concepts historically, in the context of an era when they were in flux, serves to offer an illuminating perspective on contemporary debates about the nature and the limits of voluntarism.

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Notes

1. According to Pat Caplan (2007), the meaning of *kujitolea* is closer to "self-help" or "doing things for oneself."
2. The literal meaning of *Mambo Leo* is "Affairs of Today." On the history of *Mambo Leo* and other colonial and postcolonial newspapers, see Sturmer (1998). Issues of *Mambo Leo* are available in a number of libraries, including Cambridge University Library and the East Africana Collection, University of Dar es Salaam.
3. The identity of the editor was not revealed in *Mambo Leo*, and editors changed regularly over the period.
4. See A. Y. Kobo and P. Z. Nhangwa, "Umoja wa Vijana," *Mambo Leo*, May 1944, p. 54.

5. See H. M. Mwamba, "Chama cha vijana wa Kigoma," *Mambo Leo*, April 1945, p. 40.
6. E. C. Baker, "Umoja wa Kale," *Mambo Leo*, February 1946, p. 16.
7. See E. R. Danielson, "Ripoti ya Kanisa," Kanisa la Kilutheri la Tanganyika ya Kaskazini: Mkutano Mkuu wa Kanisa 1950, KKKT Northern Diocese Archives, Moshi.
8. Minutes za Mkutano wa Baraza Kuu la Upare, "Hotuba ya Bwana Chairman Pare Council," Tanzania National Archives [TNA], 562/A2/14, f. 276 Appendix A, October 7, 1959.
9. Social Development Officer, Moshi, "Annual Report," TNA 5/1959, f. 12.
10. Report ya Kazi ya Utawala wa Wenyeji Vunjo, January 1, 1954, to June 30, 1954, p. 19, TNA 548/L5/1/2, f. 13.
11. "Mabibi na Maendeleo," *Komkya*, May 1, 1954, p. 7.
12. Letter from J. W. Hembera, TANU Divisional Secretary to all Headmen in Kiseru and Girango Division, North Mara District, "Uhusiano kati ya viongozi wa TANU na Wanangwa," TNA 544/A6/30, f. 450.
13. Minutes of Lindi District Council, March 30, 1962, p. 6, TNA 252/L5/29/3, f. 19.
14. "Kujitolea kuna faida—Bomani." *Mwafrika*, March 5, 1963, p. 1.
15. Though Gérard Philippon (1970:537) glosses the term as used in Julius Nyerere's writings more straightforwardly as simply meaning "citizen of the country."
16. Also see Marsland (2006) on the legacies of this understanding of "participation" in contemporary Tanzania.
17. Issues of both *Kusare* and its predecessor, *Komkya*, are available in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., and in the East Africana Collection, University of Dar es Salaam.
18. "Wamepata daktari wa kujitolea: wakajitolea kupanua hospitali," *Kusare*, August 18, 1962, p. 1.
19. E.g., "Pongezi kwa V.D.C.," *Kusare*, May 14, 1966, p. 1.
20. Letter from Ewaldi Mareye, "Kazi za Kujenga Taifa," *Kusare*, April 20, 1963, p. 3.
21. Editor's response to letter from Ewaldi Mareye, "Kazi za Kujenga Taifa," *Kusare*, April 20, 1963, p. 3.
22. "V. D. C Mamba Kokirie Yafanya Maendeleo," *Kusare*, December 28, 1963, p. 5
23. "Kisumo awashauri Waasia wasjitenge," *Kusare*, April 24, 1965, p. 1; "Waasia acheni kujibagua," *Kusare*, November 13, 1965, p. 1.
24. Letter from E. Uchai, "Mataifa Yote Tujenge Taifa," *Kusare*, April 4, 1964, p. 3.
25. Letter from E. Uchai, p. 3.
26. Minutes of Kilimanjaro District Council, May 17, 1963, p. 5, TNA 518/C50/5, f. 2
27. Editor's response to letter from Alex Mathey Matembelela, "Kazi za Utawala za Jumatatu," *Kusare*, October 13, 1962, p. 3.