

# Julius Nyerere, Ujamaa, and Political Morality in Contemporary Tanzania

Marie-Aude Fouéré

**Abstract:** Since the 2000s, Tanzania has witnessed the return in the public sphere of a reconfigured version of Ujamaa as a set of moral principles embodied in the figure of the first president of Tanzania, Julius Kambarage Nyerere. The persisting traces of Nyerere and Ujamaa are not so evident in actual political practices or economic policies, but rather in collective debates about politics and morality—in short, in contemporary imaginaries of the nation. Contributing to a long-standing discussion of the moral stature of Tanzania’s “father of the nation,” the article explores how and why a shared historical memory of Nyerere is being built or contested to define, mediate, and construct Tanzanian conceptions of morality, belonging, and citizenship in the polis today.

**Résumé:** Depuis les années 2000, on observe le retour d’une version reconfigurée de l’Ujamaa dans la sphère publique en Tanzanie. Cette ensemble de principes moraux avait été incarnée par la personnalité du premier président de Tanzanie, Julius Kambarage Nyerere. Les traces persistantes de Nyerere et de l’Ujamaa ne sont pas tant évidentes dans les pratiques politiques réelles ou dans les politiques économiques, que dans les débats collectifs sur le politique et la moralité, bref, sur les imaginaires contemporains de la nation. Afin de contribuer à un débat de longue date sur la stature morale du “père de la nation” tanzanienne, l’article explore comment et pourquoi une mémoire historique commune de Nyerere est en train d’être construite ou contestée pour définir, négocier et construire les conceptions tanzaniennes de la moralité, du sentiment d’appartenance et de la citoyenneté dans l’espace citoyen d’aujourd’hui.

**Key Words:** Nyerere; Tanzania; Mwalimu; Ujamaa; memory; nationhood; political morality

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## Introduction

After two decades of popular and academic expectations since the transition from the Ujamaa national development path to a free-market economy and a multiparty political system, Tanzania has witnessed the return in the public sphere of a reconfigured version of Ujamaa as a set of moral principles.<sup>1</sup> In popular discourses, in the political arena, and in the media, this revisited philosophy is being used as a moral code in debates about social, political, and economic morality in a postsocialist situation characterized by increasing concerns about economic inequality, threats to national cohesion, and the high visibility of corruption in the political sphere. This new version of a national ethos, which constitutes a nebulous set of broad and flexible moral concepts from which individual and collective actors can draw to pursue different agendas and connect to other political repertoires of morality, has gained coherence through its embodiment in the figure of the tireless promoter of the 1960s–70s version of Ujamaa, the first president of Tanzania, Julius Kambarage Nyerere.

Indeed, after Nyerere's death on the October 14, 1999, the relative eviction of "Mwalimu" (the teacher) from the political landscape in the mid-1980s—when he became associated with the economic failure of Ujamaa—was suddenly reversed. The *baba wa taifa* (father of the nation) reappeared on the scene and was brandished as a symbol of humility, integrity, and incorruptibility in the face of today's corrupt economic and political elite. The state and the media have been instrumental in propagating a laudatory official memory of Nyerere for the purpose of nation-building and the maintenance of the political hegemony of the ruling party. Claiming to walk in Nyerere's footsteps has also become a common stand among politicians of both the ruling party and the opposition as they strive to build their personal legitimacy and attract votes. In a similar vein, popular discussions about present-day hardships, religious, ethnic, and political cleavages, and the absence of patriotism among political leaders tend to resort to a revisited positive image of Nyerere. Yet the prominent presence of the iconic figure of Nyerere in the public space does not mean that there is no critical perspective, if not alternative historical memories of Nyerere. Notably, negative figurations of Nyerere are promoted by opposition parties in the margins or in regions that resent being relegated to the periphery, with Zanzibar occupying first place.

Any analysis of either the laudatory or critical narratives of Nyerere needs to go beyond an assessment of their accuracy with regard to historical reality—that is, their veracity with regard to the facts of the past—to explore how such narratives are productive in the present in conceptualizing the political space and acting upon it through a dialogue between the past and the present. The persisting traces of Nyerere and Ujamaa in the postsocialist context, and their appropriation as instruments for constructing a claim to a collective moral and political project, are therefore, to borrow a phrase from Ricoeur (2000), the product of "a narrative configuration": a rereading,

refiguring, and reinterpreting of the past, entailing both remembering and forgetting.<sup>2</sup> The figure of Nyerere as a discursive *lieu de mémoire* (“place of memory”; see Nora 1989, 1997) is consequently revisited in the face of present socioeconomic and political conditions, especially the disillusionment, disenchantment, and “demoralization” of the political space (Ferguson 2006) that now have largely replaced optimistic expectations about the promises of neoliberal modernity. In this sense contemporary narratives of Nyerere constitute a “politicised historical memory” (Werbner 1998); they do not necessarily translate into actual political practices or economic measures enforced by the state, but rather constitute a shared political language employed in collective debates and controversies about politics, morality, and national consciousness—a language intended, in short, to shape contemporary imaginaries of the nation (Anderson 1983; Hobsbawm 1990). This article, therefore, explores how and why a shared historical memory of Nyerere in association with a reconfigured Ujamaa political language is being built and used by official and nonofficial actors to define, mediate, and construct Tanzanian conceptions of morality, belonging, and citizenship in the polis today. It also provides insight into the relation between the production and uses of alternative narratives—not eulogistic, but on the contrary, strongly pejorative—about Nyerere, and related alternative narratives of the nation in contemporary Tanzania.

### The Past Ups and Downs of Nyerere and Ujamaa

In scholarly circles as well as among common people, in Tanzania as well as abroad, the figure of Julius Nyerere, the first president of newly independent Tanganyika in 1961 and the United Republic of Tanzania in 1964, is undeniably linked to what was referred to as the “Tanzanian experiment” and conflated with the ideas and values of Ujamaa. Ujamaa (“familyhood” in Swahili), the “basis of African socialism” (Nyerere 1967) which Nyerere and the single-party of TANU (Tanganyika African National Union) instituted as a government policy at the Arusha Declaration in 1967, consisted of a societal project that combined nation-building policies with a social and economic development strategy. Based on the idea that development could be achieved only in a condition of full autonomy (*kujitegemea*, “self-reliance”), rather than by relying upon foreign aid or investment, Ujamaa as a political thought articulated modernist socialist principles and a set of values and ways of living considered traditional and typically African.<sup>3</sup> Promoting a “moral economy” (Green 1995) based upon justice and equality for all, it was built upon concrete government policies such as the communitization of the work force, the collectivization of the means of production, the nationalization of private businesses and housing, and the provision of public services—notably in health care and education (Cliffe & Saul 1972; Coulson 1982). The implementation of this development strategy relied upon the installation of a powerful state controlled by the bureaucracy and a single party. A Leadership Code was adopted as a moral framework and

as a set of concrete prescriptions to control the activities of political leaders (ministers, MPs, TANU officials, and civil servants). Because Nyerere was, at the time of the socialist experiment, Tanzania's most prominent political figure—but also because he was “one of the most reflective and articulate African socialist leaders” (Mohiddin 1968:130), had developed his political thought in several influential essays, and was a gifted public speaker and outspoken advocate of Ujamaa principles—not only was Ujamaa equated with Nyerere and vice versa (as expressed by the term “nyerereism”; see Lwaitama 2002), but the development policies implemented by the government of Tanzania were also conflated with his powerful presence in the political life of the country.

Indeed, at the time of the Tanzanian experiment Ujamaa was more than strictly a development strategy: it provided a new political lexicon that the state used to articulate its national narrative.<sup>4</sup> Referring to Nyerere's oft-cited definition that “the foundation, and the objective, of African socialism is the extended family” (Nyerere 1967) as a point of departure, many academic works have analyzed Ujamaa's key concepts, showing how official conceptions of national belonging were expressed, as in other parts of Africa, through the discursive fields of family and community (e.g., *wananchi*, literally the “children of the country,” for “citizens”; *ndugu*, “extended family members,” for “comrades”) (see, e.g., Schatzberg 2001). But far from fostering only inclusion as a nation-building strategy, the socialist rhetoric also drew upon metaphors of exploitation and blood-sucking (*unyonyaji*) to define and exclude “enemies of the nation” (Brennan 2006), among them *mabeberu* (imperialists), *mabepari* (capitalists), and *kupe* (parasites). As it permeated the whole society, the Ujamaa official political lexicon was also transformed into a popular language used widely by common citizens to reflect upon the new political landscape. Emma Hunter (2008), for example, through her close reading of the local press in the Kilimanjaro area in the months after the Arusha Declaration, shows that the vocabulary related to Ujamaa and *kujitegemea* was appropriated by common citizens to think, argue, and debate about social, political, and economic morality, thus connecting local issues to the broader national framework of socialist-appropriate behaviors and attitudes. The popular appropriation of the state's official language was possible because the set of ideas, values, and principles developed in the context of Ujamaa was broad enough to allow a large range of concerns to fit in it, and flexible enough to resonate with strictly local or panethnic idioms of morality. But through this process of popular appropriation of the official language crafted by TANU cadres, government authorities, and academics, shifts in content and meaning occurred, and new categories emerged. As James Brennan (2006) underlines, a specific urban vocabulary developed to speak about a growing economic differentiation that the state tended to ignore, and consequently, that Ujamaa categories were unable to grasp: the personages of *kabwela* and *naizi* embodied, respectively, the ordinary poor yet cunning town dweller and the recently emerged wealthy “middle-class” as two products of an urban world whose existence and specific living

conditions, in the rural-oriented state ideology and policies, were not fully acknowledged, much less taken into account.

The retreat from socialism, which was in sight since the end of the 1970s when the economic shortcomings and failures of Ujamaa became manifest, took place in the 1980s with the adoption of a National Economic Survival Programme (1981–82) and successive structural adjustment plans (1982–86). At that time the Ujamaa lexicon was abandoned in favor of a vocabulary related to change and modern capitalism: *mageuzi* (trade liberalization), *kwenda na wakati* (going with the times), *utandawazi* (globalization), or *utajirisho* (increased wealth) (see Askew 2006; Crozon 1996). If the opposition took the lead in introducing this new political language, the state and politicians of the CCM ruling party (Chama Cha Mapinduzi, Party of the Revolution) adopted it, too. Meanwhile, the Ujamaa-bashing of this decade was prejudicial to the iconic image of the wise Mwalimu that had been propagated abroad in enthusiastic developmental intellectual spheres and diffused in the country by Tanzanian authorities, notably through the media.<sup>5</sup> It showed in full light the existence of fault lines in what had long been presented as a popular consensus on African socialism, and consequently on the head of the state who embodied it.<sup>6</sup> From the end of the 1970s, comical or pejorative nicknames started to be associated with Nyerere in popular discussions; examples include *Sungura* (the rabbit), which targeted his cunning and trickiness; *Mussa* (Moses), which pointed ironically to his pretense of guiding and saving the Tanzanian people; *Haambiliki* (the stubborn, literally, “the one who cannot be advised”), which hinted at his refusal to heed advice about the need for economic and political reforms; and *Mchongameno* (“the one who sharpens teeth”), which highlighted his cruelty. At the same time, Ujamaa and *kujitegemea* were lampooned as *Unyama* (bestiality) or *Utamaa* (lust/ambition) and *kujimegea* (to serve oneself first).

Although he voluntarily stepped down from the presidency in 1985, Nyerere continued to be a political force and a dominating figure on the national political scene. He remained the leader of CCM until 1990, for example, and influenced debates about political pluralism and the union between Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar. He was also an important figure on the African political scene, being strongly involved in the mediation process in Burundi and Rwanda (Southall 2006). But as he remained largely on the sidelines of the political turmoil of the 1990s, Nyerere slowly came to epitomize the figure of the wise old man concerned about national and international peace and aspiring mostly to rest, read, and write literary and philosophical works and meditate at home in Butiama-Mwitongo (Gakunzi & Obe Obe 1995), his natal village in northwestern Tanzania. After the decrease in his popularity from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, his commitment to furthering international peace-building and his manifest search in retirement for the wisdom and peace of age worked to maintain and ensure his elevated status at home and abroad. A rehabilitation process of Nyerere as a moral political figure therefore took place during

his “Afterwards” or “After-Life” (Kirk-Greene 1991:183; Southall & Melber 2006) period as former president, which also corresponded to the time when the newly introduced neoliberal reforms started to reveal their fault lines: growing economic differentiation, a fragile national cohesion, an increased competition for power and wealth, and an overall “demoralization” of the public space (Ferguson 2006) in a country marked by more than two decades of intense socialist “moralization.”<sup>7</sup> Nyerere’s public funerals in October 1999, following his death from leukemia in a London hospital, were characterized by the media as “perhaps the greatest outpouring of grief ever witnessed in sub-Saharan Africa” (Southall 2006:253) as his coffin was borne through the streets of Dar es Salaam, bearing witness to the renewed popular emotional investment in Nyerere at the end of the 1990s and the existence of a shared feeling of belonging among the Tanzanian citizenry (Maddox & Gibling 2005).

Since his death, a posthumous historical memory of Nyerere is being built and tends to take the shape of myth-building and personality cult—what we may call “Nyerere-philia.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, as in other national contexts, the posthumous creation of Nyerere as a historical figure has entailed a simplifying of the intricacies of history and politics. The personality, life, and actions of Nyerere are reduced to striking images, familiar terms, and moral examples that are used as a reservoir of positive moral principles, metaphors, and beliefs—what may also be called a “moral toolbox” or “moral matrix”—from which individual and collective actors can draw for their particular agendas.<sup>9</sup> It is partly this selective and reconfigured image of Nyerere, especially as it is conflated with similarly adapted and reshaped Ujamaa tenets, that is articulated and debated in contemporary representations of the nation as an entity united by a shared set of values and political and cultural attributes (Anderson 1983). This article, far from asserting that today’s “making” or “invention” of Nyerere is an imposition of the hegemonic state upon popular imaginaries of the nation, seeks to demonstrate that it is the product of an ongoing dialogue between citizens and the state in which the use of a shared political language reflects an effort to remoralize the public space in the postliberalization context.<sup>10</sup>

### The Contemporary State-Built Imagery of Nyerere

As in other national contexts, keeping alive Nyerere’s memory by a saturation of the public space with his images and words definitely serves state nationalism (Anderson 1983; Hobsbawm 1990). The Tanzanian state is a major player in the current production of an official public memory of Nyerere as a “Titan” (Mazrui 2002). Various government measures and rhetorical strategies of memorialization have been implemented in the 2000s to create “places of memory” (Nora 1989,1997) of Nyerere in the form of tangible sites, images, performances, and narratives. Nyerere is increasingly referred to as *baba wa taifa*, a term that was less commonly in use during his life (Schatzberg 2001) though not absent in the public space (Smith 1973:14).



Every year on October 14th the country celebrates Nyerere Day, the public holiday marking the anniversary of his death, with official ceremonies of commemoration organized in the major cities during which local or national politicians deliver speeches that pay tribute to Nyerere. In Butiama-Mwitongo, Nyerere's birthplace and resting place, a special mass brings together Nyerere's family members, government or administrative officials, and common citizens, followed by a clergy-led procession to the Nyerere mausoleum on the family property. There, in the presence of Maria Nyerere, Nyerere's widow, as well as other family members and government officials, the clergymen conduct a prayer service at Nyerere's grave. The nearby Mwalimu Nyerere Museum, officially opened on July 2, 1999, as the custodian of Nyerere's heritage, presents the leader's personal and political biography, displays various portraits (sculptures, photos, printed fabric, paintings), and exhibits official presents that were bestowed upon him in Tanzania and abroad as well as personal objects such as his radio, his shoes, and his favorite tea set. Comments jotted down on the visitors' book by officials and other visitors express respect and deference for Nyerere, thus reflecting the museum's *raison d'être* of honoring Nyerere and revering the Tanzanian nation at the same time: "The contribution of Mwalimu to this nation is incommensurable, it's big and he really gave himself to the nation" (Sept. 2, 2009); "I've been very much touched by the patriotism of our father of the nation so much so that I wish he would still be alive" (Sept. 18, 2010); "He worked a lot for this nation and his people for the benefit of the nation (July 28, 2011). Displaying a narrative of nation-building in which Nyerere is the central figure, the museum acts as a mnemonic device that plays a crucial role in bringing Nyerere into the present and shaping contemporary feelings of Tanzania-ness.

Elsewhere, written texts, iconography, and statuary are also used to saturate the public space with the *baba wa taifa*. Short biographies of Nyerere have been produced in Swahili, directed to both children and adults.<sup>11</sup> Statues of Nyerere are being erected in major political sites of the country; in the capital city of Dodoma, for example, an impressive Stalin-like statue stands in front of the Parliament. Streets, squares, and official buildings have been renamed in his honor, such as Julius Kambarage Nyerere International Airport. Public offices as well as private businesses are required to hang a photograph of Nyerere next to that of the current president. The expenses incurred by the project of memory-making, though mainly included in the national budget, are also assumed by foreign countries. In 2009, for example, the Sino-Tanzania Friendship Association, in collaboration with the Dar es Salaam City Council, announced that it would build, at an estimated cost of U.S.\$1.5 million, a statue of Nyerere and a memorial hall at Mnazi Mmoja grounds in Dar es Salaam, an open space in the heart of the city used for official political occasions where Nyerere used to welcome foreign politicians on their official state visits (The *Guardian* 2009). Although financially and institutionally independent from the state, the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation, an organization created by Nyerere in 1996

that aims to preserve Nyerere's memory and pass down his legacy to future generations, also contributes to the visibility of his image: it has published several collections of his writings and speeches and is currently working on collecting and transcribing original manuscripts of speeches that have not been published. It is also planning a television series broadcasting interviews with members of his family, close friends, and fellow politicians and is preparing a video documentary of his life with the contribution of U.S. scholars.

The media—sometimes acting as simple sounding boards of political concerns, but more often as instruments of the state in a country where the control of the media remains strong—is another major channel of diffusion of an idealized image of Nyerere and the propagation of his official memory in the public space.<sup>12</sup> The press has been particularly active, for example, in celebrating the anniversary of Nyerere's death. Since the early 2000s, the headlines of most newspapers remind readers that October 14 is Nyerere Day, and the main national publications print extensive supplements.<sup>13</sup> Every October Nyerere's voice can be heard on the radio and television channels of the government (such as Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation, TBC) or media groups close to the regime (ITV, Radio One, or Radio Uhuru). In the morning of the October 14, 2010, three songs of lamentation by famous Tanzanian singers and music bands (Remmy Ongala, Tanzanian One Theatre, and African Star Band) were transmitted in a continuous loop on TBC television praising Nyerere's qualities and mourning his death. The same channel showed a recent documentary on his life and legacy, *Mwalimu: The Legacy of Julius Kambarage Nyerere* (2009), which presents Nyerere in a positive light. Images from the archives of major political events of the 1960s–70s and clips of his speeches, most of them now well known among Tanzanians, were shown on ITV. Academics and renowned journalists discussed the legacy of Nyerere on programs such as Star TV's *Tuongee Jamii*, which broadcast “Kumbukumbu ya Mwalimu Nyerere” (Memories of Nyerere). On TBC radio the “Wosia wa Baba” (The father's speeches), an assemblage of short recorded speeches of Nyerere, are broadcast all year long, several times a day, at peak audience hours. Nyerere's media visibility is particularly high during the run-ups to national elections, which are held every five years during the month of October, the same month as Nyerere Day. Most speeches broadcast during the time of elections emphasize the importance of national unity, the qualities expected of political leaders, the importance of political incorruptibility, and the need to respect the Union and the Constitution.

Most of the articles published on Nyerere Day focus more on the man than on history and politics. Many articles feature short hagiographic biographies. The titles are evocative: “Nyerere: A Human Star That Twinkles since Childhood” (*Nipashe*, Oct. 13, 2004); “Nyerere: A Glimmer of Hope That Left Us in Darkness” (*Majira*, Oct. 14, 2004); “Mwalimu Was a Universal Gift to the World” (*Daily News*, Oct. 14, 2011). Selected excerpts of speeches given by heads of state who attended his national funerals are reprinted,



emphasizing Nyerere's magnificence: he was a "hero," a "great man," an "example to follow." Articles praise his personal qualities of simplicity, absence of ostentation, honesty, and generosity and describe the food he liked (*ugali*), the way he dressed, the simplicity of his houses in Dar es Salaam and Butiama, and his slim body (Schatzberg 2001:170)—all examples of his "rejection of material luxury" (Ferguson 2006:76).<sup>14</sup> Readers are reminded that "Mwalimu," was not just a nickname: Nyerere had indeed been a teacher, but he deliberately chose this title to highlight his modesty and ability to explain things in a simple and clear manner (Smith 1973:25). Similarly, the moral values he promoted during his lifetime—freedom, justice, unity, and equality—are presented as a transposition of Nyerere's personal qualities into the social, political, and economic realm.

According to Memel-Fotê (1991), the production of idealized images of "fathers of the nation" in Africa typically follows a three-step process consisting of predestination, initiation, and symbolical rebirth. In the case of Nyerere, too, the laudatory details of his life are often presented implicitly within this larger symbolic framework. His childhood and youth are explored in order to highlight premonitory signs of his future career: the even temper that would serve him well when confronted with the stresses and responsibilities of politics; his hard-working attitude that would later become socialist discipline; the generosity that augured his future commitment to equality and justice. His education is presented as an initiation rite he successfully overcame to enter the age of wisdom, and his decision to leave the classroom and join the liberation movement is interpreted as a turning point in his life, a kind of symbolical "rebirth." Recurring analogies with the figure of Moses and Jesus conflate political power with the sacred, producing a shift from knowledge to imaginaries, history to myth, and the secular to the sacred: all of these translations fostering, finally, the contemporary "invention" of Nyerere.

In this context, the canonization of Nyerere that was launched in January 2006 by the Church of Tanzania (see Fouéré 2008b; Mesaki & Malipula 2011) is particularly significant. Cardinal Polycarp Pengo, who had celebrated the national mass for Nyerere's death at St. Joseph Church in Dar es Salaam on October 20, 1999, announced in 2006 that Nyerere had been declared a "Servant of God"—the first step toward sainthood—by the Vatican. He claimed that the Church's selection of Nyerere for canonization was based on two criteria: the life he had lived "as a Christian" and the influence of his faith on his entire career (*Young African* 2006). The initiative of the Church is puzzling, given that the separation of religion and politics was considered an important basis for national unity and religious tolerance in postindependence Tanzania.<sup>15</sup> In 1965 Nyerere himself stated in *The Nationalist* newspaper, the publication of TANU, that "History has shown how disastrous it is to mix politics and religion. . . . That is why it is imperative that religion must be isolated from the political life of our country" (quoted in Westerlund 1980:57). The cause for canonization reinforces the current process of extracting Nyerere from the secular realm and elevating

him to the sacred: a disconnection which, if it were finally to take place, would definitely erase the historical, political, and intellectual context of the 1950s–80s that gave birth to the man and the values he defended, producing instead an utterly decontextualized moral figure.

Also striking is the way in which most references to Ujamaa and Nyerere are built on a “national silence on socialism” (Askew 2006:32) as a development strategy. As Kelly Askew (2006) points out in her analysis of the songs of lamentation composed after Nyerere’s death, peace, unity, solidarity, and the elimination of tribalism and religious divisiveness are referred to in song after song, but the term “Ujamaa” rarely appears and little mention is made of the socialist orientation and economic policies of the Tanzanian experiment (see also Ibhawoh & Dibua 2003; Schneider 2004). Thus a set of abstract moral principles is disconnected from the specific historical context in Tanzania and reconnected to global repertoires of religion and human rights. At the national level, the disjunction between political morality and African socialism makes it possible for the political elite to capitalize on the past to build political legitimacy, renew national consciousness, and strive to impose the state’s hegemony on common citizens. The imaginary continuity thus drawn between socialism and postsocialism allows for the promotion of a national ethos, and the fostering of citizens’ adherence to an imagined national community sharing basic moral tenets. Such a disjunction also reassures international donors that socialism, as a political and economic system, will never come back to Tanzania (Fouéré 2011).

### Nyerere and Ujamaa through the Lens of Party Competition

Politicians of the CCM ruling party, and most notably President Jakaya Kikwete, have taken the lead in capitalizing on the *baba wa taifa* myth (Schatzberg 2001). During the run-up to the 2005 presidential elections, Kikwete, then the CCM presidential candidate, did not even wait for the official launch of the electoral campaign to publicize and promote his candidacy by means of a May meeting with Maria Nyerere in Butiama. Even though the actual content of their discussion was not released, the present of a Bible that Kikwete received from Nyerere’s widow was abundantly recounted and analyzed in the media—both the implicit anointing of Kikwete as Nyerere’s descendant and also the specific suggestion that Kikwete, a Muslim, stood for both the underlying principles of Nyerere’s Christianity and also the values of religious tolerance. The meeting with Maria Nyerere also had a special significance for a man who, in 1995, had been overlooked as a presidential candidate by Nyerere, who instead had supported Benjamin Mkapa. As Kristin Phillips (2010:120) asserts in her analysis of political rallies and idioms in the 2005 campaign, this episode showed that Kikwete derived his authority to govern “through a myth of maturity and of lineal descent from the national father—Nyerere.”

But in the competition for power, controversies between political parties over who can claim to be the legitimate heir of the moral legacy of Nyerere

are heated. In the mid-1990s opposition parties appropriated the rhetoric of economic liberalization and free competition to attract people disillusioned by socialism and the ruling party. Yet shifts occurred in the mid-2000s when the opposition started to advocate for social equality and economic justice with manifest references to the political principles that Nyerere had stood for. The controversy that emerged toward the end of the third multiparty election campaign (October–December 2005) between CCM and the Chadema opposition party (Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo, or Party of Democracy and Development) over the public use of the name and memory of Nyerere is a good example of the return of the figure of Nyerere to the political arena. During campaign rallies, the presidential aspirant on the ticket of Chadema, Freeman Mbowe, did not only insist on his close friendship with the former president, but he also repeated many times that CCM “had died with Nyerere.” According to this claim, what remained was a party of politicians whose only goal was “to exploit the wealth of their country to get rich while the rest of the population was stuck in abject poverty” (*Taiifa Letu* 2005).

Such an assertion—whether true or false—might have been designed as just another strategy for political legitimacy comparable to that of many other presidential candidates, except that it irritated CCM members intensely and became a matter for public debate. The then chief CCM campaign strategist and chief political advisor to President Benjamin Mkapa, Kingunge Ngombale-Mwiru, declared that, like many ex-CCM politicians in Tanzania, Mbowe had indeed known Nyerere but had never been a close acquaintance (*Majira* 2005a). Ngombale-Mwiru went on to say that the opposition candidates, Mbowe included, were using Nyerere’s name as a means of endearing themselves to the electorate, “although their calibre and integrity [were] nowhere near Mwalimu’s” and that Kikwete, the CCM candidate, had “never used Mwalimu Nyerere’s name to earn cheap publicity” (*The Guardian* 2005). The Chadema spokesman, Mwisiga Baregu, replied in turn that Nyerere was neither a personal property nor the property of any political party (*Majira* 2005b), and President Mkapa (of the CCM) asserted that “no one can claim to respect Nyerere more than Chama Cha Mapinduzi” (*Mtanzania* 2005). Undeniably, this party competition over Nyerere’s legacy was a proxy for the struggle for votes and, more broadly, for political legitimacy.

During the last general elections of October 2010, the figure of Nyerere was used again by politicians for similar purposes. Chadema’s presidential candidate, Wilbroad Slaa, repeatedly associated his accusations of corruption within the CCM with invocation of Nyerere’s memory. He promised that, when in power, he would “consider the position of Julius Nyerere, that is to say to ensure that public services in health and education are provided at the expenses of the state” and “follow in Nyerere’s footsteps of a meaningful leadership so as to bring the country to a better place” (*Raia Mwema* 2010). On October 26, 2010, the newspaper *Tanzania Daima* printed a picture of Chadema’s supporters waving a banner bearing the words “Kutoka

Nyerere hadi Slaa” (From Nyerere to Slaa)—representing an effort to replace Kikwete with Slaa in the symbolic filial descent from Nyerere (see Philips 2010). Interestingly, the controversy over which party had the right to claim the legacy of Nyerere, which had become central in the 2005 campaign, seemed to have lost its salience in 2010. Nevertheless, the 2010 campaign reinforced the degree to which Nyerere, over the past five years, had become an icon of morality against which politicians are judged. Especially since the end of 2007, when successive scandals of grand corruption, or *ufisadi*, made front page news and resulted in the resignation of Prime Minister Edward Lowassa (Fouéré 2008a), opposition parties have resorted massively to the rhetoric of political and economic morality. This war of words did not end with the 2010 elections, as Chadema has remained strongly vocal, organizing postelectoral rallies to denounce electoral manipulation and rampant corruption, blaming the state for the use of violence after Chadema’s supporters were killed by the police in Arusha and Mbeya in January 2011, publicizing corruption scandals while pointing the finger at corrupt CCM leaders, and finally reaffirming its commitment to walk in Nyerere’s footsteps by paying tribute at his gravesite in May 2011. On this occasion CCM reacted to Chadema’s pilgrimage to Butiama, complaining that Chadema politicians were hypocritically going to “cry on Nyerere’s grave” while they were a party of “capitalists” and reminding the country of Nyerere’s words, uttered when he stepped down in 1985, that “without a solid CCM, the country will become unstable” (“bila CCM imara nchi itayumba”) (*Jambo Leo* 2011).

Once again, however, there is an obvious silence on Ujamaa and the socialist experiment in these attempts to build individual or party legitimacy by claiming Nyerere’s legacy. On the rare occasions when Ujamaa is mentioned, it is widely dismissed as an old-fashioned ideology in the new liberal global economy. The need to revise the Constitution and erase references to Ujamaa and *kujitegemea* are frequently asserted not only by politicians but also in the academic sphere. The disjunction between Ujamaa as a development path and Ujamaa as a moral reservoir embodied in the figure of Nyerere has thus been reaffirmed in the political competition, which now both reflects and directs how Nyerere and the time of Ujamaa are remembered among common citizens.

### Popular Reimaginings of Nyerere and Ujamaa

The language of Ujamaa is still a shared popular lexicon in everyday interactions in Tanzania. Nostalgic narratives about education and health care reforms are commonly heard among the generations that grew up under socialism and compare former imaginaries and concrete measures of social justice and equity with today’s harsh conditions. As Vinay Kamat (2008) argues in his work on popular perceptions of change in the health system in Tanzania, in situations in which nostalgia for socialist times arises, Nyerere is associated with the “good old days” when the government

provided free health care, subsidized food, and social security. The socialist ethos built in the 1960s and 1970s, rooted in expectations of change for the better and a shared imaginary of Tanzanian-ness, still permeates how the past is remembered in the present. However, the older generations with personal memories of socialism are gradually disappearing, leaving new generations with no first-hand experiences of Nyerere's Tanzania. Those who are negatively affected by neoliberal reforms tend to long for a past that has been remembered by others and reconstructed as a golden age, while those who benefit economically from the opportunities opened up by the market economy tend to be dismissive of the legacy of Ujamaa and of those who regret it or call for its return. Especially in regions where neoliberal measures have brought the greatest opportunities of increased wealth, forging new models and figures of success, Tanzania's socialist past has virtually sunk into oblivion.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to observe the ways in which the critique that accompanies social struggles since the postliberalization period has continued to appropriate the formerly shared language of Ujamaa to mobilize citizens and articulate popular discontent. The case of the Tanzania Zambia Railway (TAZARA), built with the financial and technical help of Communist China at the beginning of the 1970s in order to link the port of Dar es Salaam to the heart of the Zambian Copperbelt, is a good example of the reappropriation of Ujamaa and early postindependence expectations of modernity as a repertoire of morality (see Bailey 1976; Monson 2006, 2013). When, in 1994, the management of Tazara planned to privatize the railway, Tazara's workers and the leaders of villages situated along the railway sent letters of protest to the Tazara directors and the national authorities invoking the "language of exhortation that had been used by the socialist state" (Monson 2006:113–14). In 2002 songs of praise to Julius Nyerere were sung by workers of Tanzania Electric Supply Company (TANESCO) who opposed the privatization of the national enterprise and its sale to a South African firm (see Kelsall 2003). Since the end of 2007, successive scandals of corruption have also triggered imaginaries of political and economic morality related to the socialist period.<sup>16</sup> Considering that the free-market economy has facilitated the development of practices of straddling, by which the national elite occupy both the political arena and the economic sphere, strong calls to reestablish the Leadership Code (abolished in 2001 at the Zanzibar Declaration) have emerged in civil society and received strong visibility in the media. Once again, the criteria of political and economic morality upon which such appeals are based are drawn from the idealized figure of Nyerere and the return to leadership principles, if not concrete measures, associated with the Ujamaa period.

In other words, Ujamaa and Nyerere are contemporary popular "tool-boxes" used to give intelligibility to the present and to produce alternative representations of good leadership and good governance in a demoralized political space. It shows that one cannot simply attribute the reappropriation of the Nyererist rhetoric in social struggles to the existence of a deep-seated

socialist ethos or *habitus* as a set of incorporated “durable, transposable dispositions” (Bourdieu 1977:72) built by a hegemonic state. Indeed, a number of scholars shown that, even in Nyerere’s own time, popular adherence to socialism was variable and malleable (Jennings & Mercer 2011), and citizens remained partly “uncaptured” by the state (Hyden 1980). Ujamaa and Nyerere should consequently be conceptualized not so much within the theoretical framework of *habitus* than as a political language shared at all levels of Tanzanian society, providing notions, ideas, images, and metaphors of power to speak and act in the present. Such language is selected, rearranged, and invested with different meanings to construct a claim to moral and public morality, and it can be combined with other moral reservoirs such as the language of religion or the international language of democracy and good governance (Fouéré 2011).

It is noticeable that, from 2004 to 2010, a shift slowly occurred in the use of the moral toolbox represented by the figure of Nyerere: although laudatory comments about Nyerere are still very much present in the media, they have increasingly given way to the figuration of the first president as a standard of morality in the political arena. During the last 2010 general elections, Nyerere Day was again the occasion to revere Nyerere and to wonder which presidential candidate he would have supported if he were still alive. On October 14 the headline of *The Citizen*, a critical newspaper publishing the opinions of political analysts and renowned intellectuals, suggested “Why Nyerere wouldn’t have okayed many candidates” and presented “Mwalimu’s probable stance in the elections” on the following page.

### Contesting Mwalimu, Contesting the Nation

The prominent presence of the idealized figure of Nyerere in the public space does not mean that there is no alternative perspective. For instance, in the mid-2000s, the leader of the populist opposition Democratic Party (DP), Christopher Mtikila, suggested that the failures of Ujamaa were deliberately organized by Nyerere and that Nyerere had been possessed by the devil. In the weeks that followed the death of Nyerere, Mtikila was accused of disseminating recorded tapes vilifying and insulting the deceased, calling him a “devil,” and referring irreverently to him as a “corpse.” An unpublished essay from 2006 by Mtikila, entitled “The Information of the Democratic Party on the Sins of Julius Kambarage Nyerere” (“Taarifa ya Democratic Party juu ya madhambi ya Julius Kambarage Nyerere”), accuses Nyerere of having stolen citizens’ money and stirring religious divisiveness.

Mtikila has been the only politician who has tried to dismantle the iconic imagery of Nyerere in such a radical way, although other publications exist that purport to reveal the dark, hidden facets of Tanzania’s former president. In *The Life and Times of Abdurahid Sykes* (1998), Mohamed Said retells the history of the building of the nationalist movement before independence, highlighting the decisive role of numerous urban political activists who eventually were erased from the official history. He not only challenges



the official historical narrative that presents Nyerere as the sole nationalist leader, but he also reintroduces the religious factor in the nationalist movement, showing how the national educated elite committed to the fight for independence were, for the most part, Muslims (among them, the Sykes family). The book is now well known among the educated Muslim elite who are determined to reveal the Christian bias of CCM and the government, and selected excerpts have been printed in the mainland Muslim newspaper *An-Nuur*. In a historical account entitled *The Dark Side of Nyerere* (1994), Ludovick Mwijage tells the story of his years of persecution and imprisonment, which he attributes to Nyerere's despotic rule. Aiming to unveil the murky facets of the Nyerere regime, depicted as a reign of arbitrary rule and personal power, the book points to the fate of many political companions turned opponents who were imprisoned or forced to exile, such as the second most prominent figure of the early postindependence government, Oscar Kambona, or the most active female figure in the political mobilization of women in the preindependence movement, Bibi Titi Mohamed (see Geiger 1997). Written in an accusatory tone or from the point of view of victimization, these books uncover painful life histories and troubling historical episodes in which the actual role of Nyerere is revisited, and the official idealized image of Nyerere is contested.

Such autobiographical works and narratives of revisionist history reflect practices of "negative commemoration" (Posel 2008:122) that are evident in other works produced on the African continent since the demise of single-party systems in the mid-1990s.<sup>17</sup> Similar writings propagating a pejorative view of Nyerere in particular have been produced in Zanzibar. Drawing upon the collective memories of the Revolution of 1964 and the presidency of Abeid Amani Karume, the first postrevolutionary president of Zanzibar (1964–75), members of populations targeted by the revolutionary regime and mostly in exile in Europe and on the Arabic Peninsula (opponents of the then-Zanzibar Nationalist Party and people of foreign origin, the more vocal among them being people of Arab origin), have published biographies and histories challenging the official image of Nyerere.<sup>18</sup> A nationalist-oriented newspaper called *Dira* was particularly active in articulating and diffusing this narrative more widely (Fouéré 2012). The feuilleton article published in several issues in 2002 by the editor-in-chief, Ali Mohamed Nabwa, entitled "Nyerere si Malaika" (Nyerere is not an angel), contained personal memories of the author plus rereadings of the words and actions of Nyerere. The article depicts Nyerere as a condescending, disloyal, and self-interested man who resorted to backroom deals, intrigues, and machinations to acquire and retain power, maneuvered to get rid of popular politicians who got in his way, and stabbed even faithful companions in the back. It also reveals the role purportedly played by Nyerere, in great secrecy, in the revolution that overthrew the postindependent constitutional monarchy of Zanzibar during the night of the January 11–12, 1964 (see Lofchie 1965; Clayton 1981), and in bringing about the union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar three months later.

Nyerere, according to this article, is said to have abetted these two events on the basis of Zanzibar's history as the center of the slave trade in East Africa. He also, according to the article, considered Zanzibar as a place where cosmopolitan Arab and Islamic Swahili culture flourished over the centuries, creating collective attitudes of distinction from the African continent and discrimination against black Africans. Similarly, a recent book titled *Kwaheri Uhuru, Kwaheri Ukoloni!* (Goodbye Independence, Goodbye Colonialism!) (Ghassany 2010) asserts, based on personal testimonies of people who were involved in or witnessed the 1964 Revolution, that Nyerere, along with his right-hand man at the time, Oscar Kambona, masterminded the coup d'état that overthrew the government.<sup>19</sup> Concerning the Union of April 1964 between Tanganyika and Zanzibar, it claims that under pressure from the United States, which feared that Zanzibar might become the "Cuba of Africa" (Wilson 1989), Nyerere worked to undermine the Marxist influence of the Umma Party and its popular leader, Abdulrahman Mohamed Babu, and impose a black African regime. The *Dira* article even asserts that the Union was not just meant to control the political destiny of Zanzibar, but also had the underlying objective of destroying the economy and the culture of a place that, not so long before, as the author reminds the reader, Nyerere had wanted to "tow out into the middle of the Indian Ocean."<sup>20</sup> Thus both the article and the book portray Nyerere as an *adui wa taifa* ("enemy of the nation," with "nation" referring to Zanzibar) who dismissed the central role of Islam in the Swahili coastal culture and did his utmost to limit the diffusion of Islam and control its thriving social and political influence on the mainland (Fouéré 2014).

*Dira* was banned by the government of Zanzibar only one year after it was launched. The aim of the newspaper had clearly been the construction of a historical narrative that would compete with the national official history and ideology and, in doing so, destabilize the political elite who, to this day, have based their political legitimacy on their lineal descent, both imaginary and real, from the revolutionaries. Articulating a historical memory of Nyerere that challenges the compelling imagery in circulation today served this purpose well and underpinned the production of alternative conceptions of identity and sovereignty in Zanzibar based on hybridity, creolization, interconnectedness, and transnationalism throughout the Indian Ocean. In the politically and economically peripheral society of Zanzibar, Nyerere is thus the center of a national narrative of resentment. Perhaps ironically, however, the legacy of Nyerere, whether it is used positively or negatively, is the basis of a shared political language employed in the present to articulate conceptions of morality, belonging, and citizenship.

## Conclusion

Unlike many African countries whose so-called fathers of the nation have been challenged or debunked—like Léopold Ségar Senghor in Senegal (Havard 2009), Moussa Traoré in Mali (De Jorio 2003), or Sékou Touré in

Guinea (McGovern 2004), to cite but a few—Tanzania still holds Julius Nyerere, the first president of the country, in high esteem. Along with very few other national figures—most notably, Nelson Mandela—he belongs in the popular imagination to the category of “exceptional leaders” who genuinely aimed “to move the political system beyond its present rationality” and continued to pursue a constructive role in their retirement (Southall & Melber 2006). The widely shared memory of Nyerere in Tanzania, therefore, as well as his association with the Tanzanian national project, is based in Nyerere’s personality and leadership: his vision for the nation and fostering of economic development, his well-articulated principles of Ujamaa, and the constructive roles he played both nationally and internationally in his retirement. However, memory-making does not belong to the past only, but also to the present. The contemporary narrative of Nyerere in Tanzania is also due undeniably to the present socioeconomic woes, growing inequality, concerns about religious and national fragmentation, the high visibility of corruption, and the overall context of disillusionment after two decades in which the promises of neoliberal modernity have not materialized.

The official memory propagated and reproduced by the state and employed as a device to maintain national cohesion, revive political legitimacy, and control popular protest is univocally eulogistic. Places of memory in the form of tangible sites, images, and performances saturate the public space with the figure of Nyerere. Political parties and politicians participate in the dissemination of this homogeneous narrative of Nyerere as they try to gain or reassert political legitimacy by claiming to walk in Nyerere’s footsteps and represent his moral legacy. The coincidence of the commemoration of Nyerere’s death and election campaigns in the month of October helps explain why both the ruling party and the opposition capitalize on the memory of Nyerere. The significant electoral success of the Chadema opposition party during the last general election of 2010, while not translating into a change of power, can be attributed partly to the capacity of its presidential candidate, Wilbroad Slaa, to shift the notion of filial descent from the incumbent President, Jakaya Kikwete, to himself. Among common citizens, the popular memories of Nyerere and of the development path of Ujamaa are more diverse and malleable. Nostalgia for the old regime varies along generational and socioeconomic lines, as the generations who experienced socialist times slowly disappear and the new liberal order makes its way in society, forging new models and figures of success. This may explain why a depersonalized Nyerere and a revisited Ujamaa have become the basis for a common political language for thinking, arguing, and debating questions of social, political, and economic morality. A striking feature of the varied memories of Nyerere that circulate in Tanzanian society today is that they converge in a vision of Nyerere as a benchmark against which political leadership is being measured, producing imaginaries of morality rooted in standards associated with the past. In a country marked by an abandoned moral contract between the state and citizens, Nyerere and Ujamaa are employed as a language and repertoire of ideas, values, images,

and metaphors to define, mediate, and construct conceptions of morality today and the meaning of Tanzanian-ness.

At the same time, the trend of negative commemoration of Nyerere that has gathered momentum since the democratization and liberalization of the public space points to the existence of alternative memories of Nyerere. Based upon autobiographic narratives and the rewriting of history that draw from personal and community remembrances of the past, they attempt to unveil the dark side of Nyerere's regime and of the man, highlighting the fact that the making of a national icon is built upon the forgetting of ambiguous, if not reprehensible, political actions. If such memorial narratives challenge nation-building by producing alternative conceptions of nationhood, notably within the framework of the contested Union between Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar, they nevertheless show that, whether used positively or negatively, Nyerere constitutes a shared political language employed to articulate morality, belonging, and citizenship in the present. The symbolic association between Nyerere and the nation is a striking feature of the national imagination at all levels of Tanzanian society.

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## Notes

1. Officially, the United Republic of Tanzania (1998) still follows the policy of Ujamaa. The Constitution of Tanzania states that the building of the nation is to be accomplished through the pursuit of the policies of socialism and self-reliance.
2. This article acknowledges the shift from history to memory that has characterized recent approaches in historiography, anthropology, and political science on topics concerning the discursive construction of identities (including national identity or nationhood) and the past. Works that inaugurated such a shift include Halbwachs (1994[1925]; 1997[1950]) and White (1973). On nationhood, narration, and memory, see Renan (1992[1869]); Anderson (1983); Hobsbawm (1990). For broad inaugural reflections on the relation between forgetting and nation-building, see Renan (1992[1869]).
3. On the romanticizing of the past and tradition in Ujamaa, see Stöger-Eising (2000), Martin (1988).

4. As several academic works have shown, state nationalism had no monopoly on the production of nationalist thought and actions in Tanzania. Other nationalist narratives not only existed alongside Ujamaa, but also engaged in dialogues with it. See Brennan (2006); Geiger (1997); Maddox and Giblin (2005).
5. With the Newspaper Ordinance Bill of 1968, the President of Tanzania could ban any material from the press that was considered subversive. Konde (1984:56) quotes Nyerere declaring that the *Standard* newspaper published by the Tanganyika Standard Ltd. parastatal “will be a socialist paper. It will support the socialist ideology of Tanzania as defined in the Arusha Declaration, Part One and Two.”
6. Mazrui’s neologism “tanzaphilia” (1967) is an ironic expression of the way most Western intellectuals in the 1960s–70s uncritically supported Ujamaa and an idealized Nyerere. For a detailed overview of the academic reception of Nyerere’s political thought, see Havnevik (2010).
7. On alarming assessments about national cohesion and identity cleavages in Tanzania, see Jennings and Mercer (2011).
8. Books contributing to this Nyerere-philia include Legum and Mmari (1995); Chachage and Cassam (2010). For a recent depiction of Nyerere-philia and political criticism against Nyerere, see also Becker (2013).
9. In Schatzberg’s work (2001), the concept of “moral matrix” designates a set of metaphors upon which actors draw in order to think and speak about power and state–citizen relations.
10. The term “invention” is used with reference to Mudimbe’s (1988) use of the word to highlight how the reiteration of Nyerere’s attributes entails interpretations and reconstruction processes through which the contemporary figure of Nyerere is being composed.
11. Books for children include TEMA Publishers (2002); Maillu (2010). Books for adults include Mwakilasa (2010); Thomas (2009); Nikata (n.d.).
12. Since the passing of the Newspaper Act of 1976, directors of the main newspapers have been appointed by the President of Tanzania; their activities are supervised by a subcommittee linked to the leading party. The press, often accused of calumny or of jeopardizing social peace and national unity, is regularly suspended or banned (see Sturmer 1998).
13. Government newspapers include the *Daily News* and *Habari Leo* of the parastatal Tanzania Standard Newspapers and newspapers of media groups close to the regime, most notably The *Guardian* (owned by Reginald Mengi’s IPP Media), The *Sunday Observer*, *Nipasha*, and *Taifu Letu*.
14. *Ugali* is a thick porridge made of maize flour. Nkrumah’s khaki suits, communist-inspired “Chou-En-Lai” vests, and safari costumes all shared the common features of simplicity and absence of ostentation. In Dar es Salaam, Nyerere lived with his family in a modest house in the area of Masaki.
15. John Hatch, Nyerere’s biographer, attests that Nyerere “always practised his religion and participated in its observances” (1976:78). Nyerere is also said, in this text, to have told his friend Cardinal Laurian Rugambwa that without a daily mass, it would have been impossible for him to do his work.
16. On the “EPA” and “Richmond” scandals that rocked the country in 2007, see, e.g., Fouéré (2008a).
17. Such practices are common in all former single-party regimes in the world. On postcommunist Europe see, e.g., Berry (1995); Smith (1996).
18. See Fairouz (1995); Muhsin (2002); Al-Barwani (2003).

19. The veracity and reliability of the personal testimonies presented in Harith Ghassany's book (2010) is questioned by foreign scholars and strongly debated by members of the Zanzibari educated (personal communications, May 25–26, 2011).
20. The sentence pronounced by Nyerere, "If I could tow that island out into the middle of the Indian Ocean, I'll do it," is reported in Smith (1973:90) and has been quoted repeatedly by most nationalist informants since then.