

REVIEW ARTICLE

SYNTHESISING THE MODERN HISTORY OF TANGANYIKA

A Review of J. ILIFE: A Modern History of Tanganyika

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When, in the 1950's, the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press first began to explore the possibility of embarking on a Cambridge History of Africa, they were then advised that the 'the time was not yet ripe'. Instead, it was impressed upon the Syndics that the most urgent need of such a young, but also very rapidly advancing branch of historical studies' such as African history 'was a journal of international standing through which results of ongoing research might be disseminated'. Such a journal, *The Journal of African History*, was launched in 1960.^[1] The journal gradually demonstrated the amount of work being undertaken to establish the past of Africa as an intergrated whole rather than — as it had usually been viewed before — as the story of a series of incursions into the continent by peoples coming from outside, from the Mediterranean basin, the Near East or Western Europe.' However, the amount of work which was published in this journal, besides others also considered 'respectable', convinced the Syndics of Cambridge University Press just within a matter of six years that there was a need for a Cambridge History of Africa.^[2] Cambridge histories have since the beginning of the century been compiled on various aspects of 'respectable history'. The chapters are written by 'experts' on a particular topic 'and unified by the guiding hand of volume editors of senior standing'.³ *The Cambridge Modern History* was planned by Lord Acton, 'during an effective professoriate of six years' from 1894 when he accepted the Chair of Modern History at Cambridge, and appeared in sixteen volumes between 1902 and 1916.^[4]

Lord Acton believed that it was possible to write 'ultimate history'.^[5] Such history was intended to be a work of 'synthesis' which would be as objective as it was factual. 'What I want' said Mr. Gradgrind in *Hard Times*, 'is FactsFacts alone are wanted in life'. This enterprise was undertaken with the intent to produce 'ultimate history'.^[6] But works of synthesis presuppose 'original research': the concern with documents and other relics of the past with a view to establishing 'what happened in minute detail'.^[7] Here, then, as one of the leading initiators of empiricist historiography, Ranke, admonished his colleagues: 'My basic thought is not to accept either one theory or another, not even the one which lies in between them; but to recognize the facts, to master them and display them.'^[8] The ultimate aim in such a venture was to produce a 'learned monograph', or an 'erudite article', but these results in turn, somehow, contributed to the production of works of synthesis, ultimate history.^[9]

Such, it might be surmised, was the role assigned by the Syndics of Cambridge University Press to *The Journal of African History*. The various theses and other forms of 'original research' which were produced in the aftermath of the institutionalization of professional Africanist history were intended to perform a similar role. Many of these studies, as was said somewhat contemptuously about Walter Rodney's work on the Upper Guinea Coast by one professional Africanist historian of the nihilist streak, were published 'hot from the bench'.^[10] But such, nevertheless, are the kind of monographs and articles which made the undertaking of works of synthesis feasible.^[11]

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In their effort to facilitate the production of a synthesis of Africanist history, the Syndics of Cambridge University Press were preceded by the colonial governments of the two East African territories of Uganda and Tanganyika. The government of Kenya Colony, with a prominent settler population, had not yet come under the sway of the belief that the oppressed, a majority of whom happened to be blacks, could make their own history. Here, Africanist historiography was still backward just as it was South of the Zambesi; but not for long.¹² However, in 1952 the Governors of Uganda and Tanganyika proposed what was to become the three volumes of the Oxford *History of East Africa*, an enterprise which was to be funded by the British Treasury in conjunction with the two colonial governments already mentioned. 'Under the sustained practical support given by Dame Perham and the late Sir Andrew Cohen', the first volume of the Oxford *History of East Africa* series was published in 1963. The second volume followed two years later, in 1965; and the third appeared in 1976.¹³ At a public lecture delivered at Nairobi University College on 4 November 1965 just before the publication of the second volume of Oxford *History of East Africa*, Roland A. Oliver, incumbent of the first Chair of African History in the World which was established at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies way back in 1943,¹⁴ and co-editor of the first volume of the Oxford series, observed: 'what the two volumes give us is a cooperative work of some 1400 pages by some 20 different authors, each of whom has undertaken to pass in review at the very least every-thing that has been printed on the subject.' The Oxford history, Professor Oliver went on to say, 'is not a work of research: it is a work of synthesis. As such, it provides in its chapters and, above all, in its bibliographies a pretty complete conspectus of what has been done in the past, and that is of course the best starting point of any inquiry of what there is still to do.'¹⁵

If the Oxford *History of East Africa* was a work of synthesis, it was not final. Rather it was a pointer and guide to new areas of research. Such was what was underlined in Professor Oliver's public lecture. However, this work of synthesis was very well received. This was so because, for one thing, undertakings of this kind were still very rare in Africanist historiography; and for another, it sought to establish a 'new orthodoxy' in Africanist history to act as a powerful solvent of the colonial historiographical mystagogy still extant.¹⁶ Works of synthesis are no longer rare in Africanist history.¹⁷ But there is a sense in which the recent publication of John Iliffe's *A Modern History of Tanganyika* is unique. The *Cambridge History of Africa* series, the Oxford *History of East Africa* series and so forth, are 'co-operative studies' which involved many authors. 'Although a work of synthesis, as the author admits, Iliffe's *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, is the work of a single author. Much of the research which went into this study was done while he was teaching at the University of Dar es Salaam in the 1960s: the writing was done at Cambridge University where John Iliffe is Fellow of St. Johns College and Assistant Director of Research in History.'¹⁸ In terms of sheer volume, Iliffe's work is more akin to Sir Reginald Coupland's *East Africa and its Invaders* (1938) and *The Exploitation of East Africa 1856-1890* (1939) than any other work published on East Africa by a single scholar ever since. The interpretation (not to be confused with the problematic), however, is different.¹⁹ The volume of Iliffe's work is formidable, the interpretation fascinating, if not tantalizing and mystifying. As a professional piece of work, the study is scholarly and erudite without being arid or muddled with recondite conundrums.²⁰ Whether this work of synthesis is also intended to be ultimate history of

Modern Tanganyika is a different matter. The title, however, seems rather cautious, 'A History of Modern Tanganyika'²¹

One point though is now clear in the study of professional Africanist history: postcolonial Africanist historiography is in a crisis.²² Empiricist historiography has been in this sort of crisis since the latter half of the nineteenth century.²³ As a new arrival to an historiographical tradition already in shambles, it did not take long before Africanist history was subjected to the same kind of tremors.²⁴ The crisis in Africanist Historiography is what Iliffe avoids, notwithstanding the intentions he adumbrates in his first chapter. In this way Iliffe succumbs to the nihilist tendency redolent in professional history, the belief in the study of history for its own sake with the resultant mental masturbation that it produces.²⁵ The last statement is deliberate, for much as professional historians have claimed that theirs is an objective enterprise, objectivism has been preferred to objectivity.²⁶ Consequently, professional history has not been able to penetrate the dominant World-views and so come to grips with social reality.²⁷ Thus everyone continues to write his own history, and hence relativism and relativity continue to be poles apart.²⁸ In such kinds of enterprise, studies which purport to be works of synthesis are in reality nothing more than the 'Tower of Babel!' The endeavour by empiricist historians to coneract parcellization of knowledge by producing works of synthesis which are something more than mere aggregations has so far failed because they have been unable to locate the basis of unity or integration of historical knowledge.²⁹ It was Marx who observed: 'A scientific analysis of competition is not possible, before we have a conception of the inner nature of capital, just as the apparent motions of heavenly bodies are not intelligible to any but him, who is acquainted with their real motions, motions which are not directly perceptible by the senses'.³⁰ If that is so, what about works of synthesis? What is to be the inner nature of such a synthesis? Is it merely to be the availability of a plethora of monographs and articles, products of original research? The Syndics of Cambridge University Press and many an empiricist and professional historian would answer: 'Yeah Yeah!' But if it is merely quantity which matters, how much of it will be enough? Where is the recipe?.

It has been said about the writing of history that it involves a constant dialogue between facts and theory, a dialogue which is dialectical and which is intended to capture the concrete reality in all its determinations.³¹ If this is so with scientific history which is original, what about a work of synthesis? Are we to allow everything to depend on chance? Such are the questions which shall be used in the course of atomizing the anatomy of Iliffe's *a Modern History of Tanganyika*.

As has already been mentioned, Iliffe's study is a work of synthesis which was undertaken in the hope that it 'may help to focus thought and stimulate research'. The study was also conducted with the belief that the 'essence of history is complexity', and thus the need for organizing themes'. Iliffe chose five themes whose combination is indicative of the manner in which he has grown out of the previous swaths used in his earlier works. Many of these had been crude, some simplistic, and others utterly confused. This is particularly so with his work on agricultural change in Tanganyika whereby the theory of development of underdevelopment is muddled with the Schumpeterian notion of entrepreneurship.³² However, these ideas and studies have

been criticized elsewhere.^[33]

Iliffe considers the use of themes in historical studies of considerable importance because they are like beams of 'light penetrating the obscurity of the past. Sometimes the beams merge and a larger area becomes visible! The first theme Iliffe utilizes is that of enlargement of scale: the increasing awareness which comes to societies and individuals as they are exposed to the wider world. With enlargement of scale went the phenomenon of social differentiation.^[34] Much has been written on the two notions. Suffice it to note that the 'notion of enlargement of scale' itself presents ambiguities and is, as a potential toll of analysis, to be viewed with some circumspection! Whether it is used in the sphere of the political or the economic, it presupposes development from tradition to modernity, notions which are themselves extremely ideological.^[35]

Iliffe concentrates on the colonial era of the modern history of Tanganyika. He thus aptly notes that enlargement of scale in Tanganyika took place within the context of the capitalist world economy. Capitalism, he says, has been alleged to have bred underdevelopment with its attendant features of unequal exchange, immiseration and so forth. But this, he argues, is not all that occurred: 'capitalism did not impoverish Tanganyika as a whole, but impoverished some of it all of the time and all of it some of the time. Capitalism did not only transfer surplus to Europe, but also generated surplus which remained in Tanganyika'. This is what he terms a dialectical process. As with the enlargement of scale 'modernization and deprivation were two sides of the same process'. It is an argument he has also mentioned with regard to the notion of improvement. Improvement, Iliffe has said, went side by side with differentiation.^[36] Such assertions appear plausible, but sworn of the social relations of production within which the process occurred they sound more like the accountant's balance-sheet than a work of dialectics. More of this shall be discussed at the appropriate juncture later. Suffice it now to underline the fact that statements of this kind reek of the idea of the sovereignty of the market, of bourgeois economics, of loss and gain, and so forth.

Yet enlargement of scale and capitalism, Iliffe warns, were impositions from without. They were notions more in line with 'imperial management' than with the 'African voice'.^[37] Thus Iliffe finds it imperative to consider the two notions in conjunction with the idea of African initiative and so establish and interplay between Euro-African forces in the making of African history, and more particularly that of Tanganyika. In a review of *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa*, C.C. Wrigley says the following about its author:

Dr. Brett tells us, he experienced Marxian enlightenment, and came to see these lesser conflicts in the larger perspective to which his title bears witness. So the book is introduced with a chapter on 'Development and dependency in Africa', in which the optimistic 'modernization' theorists are assailed, and the differences between Kenya and Uganda are made to seem of little account. The argument is forceful and admirably organized, yet, as with much neo-Marxist writing, the question presents itself: how is it that a passion for human freedom and dignity can create a lunar landscape from which all signs of human life have vanished, leaving only 'strata' and 'structures' and 'social formations'.^[38]

Such is the awkward question which Iliffe sought to avoid and so impose the idea of indigenous initiative, if not entrepreneurship, within the context of imperial

management. It had been demonstrated that 'traditional ideas', Iliffe quotes G.C.K. Gwassa, 'can be a progressive force'.^[40] So have other authors like Alpers tried to argue likewise.^[41] Whether by this is meant the form or substance of progressiveness, however, is a different matter. What is clear, though, is that even the notions of tradition and progress are in question.

Imperial management and African initiative precipitated an historical process which was coercive and, allegedly, dialectical: the coexistence of the new and the old. Such coexistence was particularly noticeable in the years 1929 to 1945, a period which Iliffe argues constitutes the pivot of his book. This is the period when imperial authority in all its various facets obtained. It is also the period which witnessed the initial stages of the dissolution of imperial control. Yet the Tanganyika economy, as it was to be inherited by the Tanzanian postcolonial social formation, was also very much in the making. Such, it seems, are the contradictions. Whether the author manages to grapple with them successfully, however, is a different issue.

But this kind of narrative merely constitutes 'the story of the interaction between man and man'. To this, therefore, Iliffe adds a fifth theme. This he calls the interaction of society and ecology. The theme is still in its infancy, but it is the more important given the alarming threat of an ecological crisis in the modern world.^[42] Such then are the five themes which Iliffe utilizes in analyzing the various facets of the history of colonial Tanganyika: the imposition of colonial rule together with its political and ideological apparatus, the disarticulation of the precapitalist social formations and their articulation under imperialist hegemony, ecological crises, religious and cultural changes, working class movements, the nationalist struggles and their victories, etc.

The colonial history of Tanganyika which comprises the bulk of Iliffe's book is preceded by a quick discussion of the societies of the territory in 1800, especially their culture, technology, modes of livelihood, trade, religions, and so on. Into these societies was imposed the so-called long distance trade which initially was articulated with the Indian Ocean and Red Sea commercial complex, and subsequently the world capitalist system.^[43] The long distance trade was based on such commodities as iron, gold, copper, and more significantly ivory and slaves. Many ideas have been ascribed to the trade thesis, the most important being state formation. Here, ignorance of the concepts of production and exploitation, and even more so the notion of merchants and merchant capital, has been displayed most vividly. With such ignorance which is not accidental, though, capital has been 'humanized' and in that way considered the source of wealth.^[44]

The era of long distance trade was at its zenith during the period of free trade imperialism when 'Victoria ruled the waves'.^[45] This period was superseded by the epoch of monopoly capitalism whose onset witnessed the partition of Africa.^[46] The Germans arrogated what was, amongst other colonies, to be called Tanganyika. Transformation of the precolonial political systems with a view to creating a territorial colonial order under the Germans touched off a number of resistances in German East Africa.^[47] Disarticulation of the erstwhile social formations and their articulation under the German imperial economy precipitated the era of secondary resistances, the most important of which was the Maji Maji rebellion of 1905-07. The rebellion engulfed most

of southern Tanganyika. As with other so-called 'typical colonial rebellions'⁴⁷ there has been a good deal of controversy as to what constitutes the Maji Maji. Some scholars have emphasized its mode organization, especially the ideological aspects coupled with methods of warfare displayed in the struggle, others have stressed the manner of participation particularly the involvement of agrarian classes which, it has been alleged, was a pointer to the phenomena of enlargement of scale, continuity and so forth.⁴⁸ Yet it has also been indicated that resistances were not the dominant feature of colonial history, and if this was so, 'what of the period when there were none such?'⁴⁹ Either way, scholars have resorted to one set of facts or another to prove their case. Consequently the manner of intellection has tended to be banal and schizophrenic. Neither the dialectic of the categories used nor the material conditions which caused such movements have been located. The wrangle has been arrested at the level of appearance of contradictions rather than their substance. Such a preoccupation may bring about lively debates, but they are barely serious.⁵⁰

The articulation of precolonial social formation of Tanganyika under German imperial hegemony was a violent one. The resistance movements and the colonial rebellions staged by the colonized people of Tanganyika and their ruthless suppression are a case in point. But that was not all, for as the Director of the newly created German Colonial Office observed on his visit to Tanganyika in 1907:

In Dar es Salaam nearly every whiteman walks around with a whip; I saw one on the table on the main revenue office; in the station office of the Usambara railway there was one right next to the inkpot — and thus almost every white indulges in thrashing any blackman he wants. The legal basis of this is found in the law relating to punishment of servants which is supposed to permit an employer moderate corporal punishment of his servants. Those white employers to whom this is repugnant send their black servants with notes to court in order to have them disciplined for disobedience, negligence, latecoming, disrespectful conduct, etc.⁵¹

Nevertheless, as has been stressed time and again, notwithstanding the colonial violence, colonial resistances forced the Germans to reform their administration in Tanganyika. The primary resistances forced the German Imperial Government to assume the administration of Tanganyika which had hitherto been under the German East Africa Company. The Maji Maji put a stop to the wholesale endeavour to make Tanganyika a settler colony, and so ensured that peasant agriculture would be of importance in the colonial economy.⁵² Thus conditions in Tanganyika metamorphosed until the First World War during which Imperial Germany was defeated, and the territory transferred to the British.

The British, it is alleged, assumed the administration of Tanganyika to ensure that it did not fall into the hands of other imperialist powers. This was so, supposedly, because Britain had many other colonial possessions it had so far been unable to 'develop'. Yet, it should be remembered that Britain emerged from the war terribly weakened. This made it the more necessary to have extra colonies which, in the words of Lenin, could be subjected to Super-exploitation either extensively or intensively.⁵³

The ecological disaster which occurred in the initial stages of the German administration of Tanganyika was intensified towards the end of that rule.⁵⁴ Such is

what the British inherited from the Germans. Moreover, the commercial sector of Tanganyika was utterly shattered during the First World War. Added to this, the British witch-hunt against German settlers snuffed off whatever remained of this sector.⁵⁵ This alloyed with the complicated system under which settlers were to be admitted to Tanganyika Trusteeship Territory, ensured that the area was to remain a pre-eminently peasant economy under the command of metropolitan capital.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, under the British, Tanganyika recovered rapidly. With the era of 'development fever' and the need to apply science to colonial agriculture in the offing, the Great Depression which destroyed most of what had been achieved came as a great shock to economic watchers not only in the colony but also in the British empire and elsewhere in the imperialist world.⁵⁷ Thus was started the 'grow more crops campaign'.⁵⁸ Side by side with this was the fear of soil degradation, and the need to enhance productivity through methods of soil conservation and manuring coupled with inter-cropping.⁵⁹

Tanganyika regained economic buoyancy in the latter half of the 1930s, but World War Two destabilized this. Hence started other 'grow more crops campaigns' which outlived the war and dominated most of the 1950s. Britain's victory against the Axis during the Second World War was a pyrrhic one. Moreover she soon lost what was considered the most important colony in the British Empire, India. The 'universal equivalent' of the British Empire, the pound sterling, was in trouble, and so it has remained. The colonies were deluged with frantic propaganda to save Britain from economic ruin.⁶⁰ While Britain was trying to seal itself off from the rest of the imperialist World like a plague bacillus with the aid of all kinds of tariffs with a view to saving the pound from utter ruin, she coerced the colonial empire to open its belly to imperial products with the same end in mind. The grow more crops campaigns, the soil conservation measures, the Groundnut Schemes of Nachingwea, Kondoa and Mpwapwa, the rehabilitation schemes of Usambara, Uluguru, Mbulu, Usukuma and so forth, all were intended to ensure the survival of the imperial economy.⁶¹ It has been said of imperialism that it is its notorious characteristic that 'it is able to push the neo-colonial countries to adopt economic policies which bring disaster not only to the working people but even to the national bourgeoisie in the underdeveloped countries.'⁶² This was also the case during the colonial era for as has been observed by A.M.M. Hoogvelt and A.M. Tinker with regard to iron mining in Sierra Leone:

Colonial exploitation was not interested in spreading or perpetuating reproductive capitalist relations in the colonies themselves — it was not, therefore, just exploitative, but super-exploitative. It was rapacious rather than reproductive, bent on quick returns rather than long-term exchange. It was destructive of the soil and resources, yet failing to provide for alternative forms of livelihood. It was content to work in makeshift technological and capitalist enclaves, allowing itself to be supported by the surrounding social formation, rather than attempting to change or improve it. For the character of super-exploitation included a failure to fully reproduce the factors of production within the enclave itself: the abysmally low wages were insufficient to reproduce that labour.⁶³

Such colonial rapacity was displayed by the manner in which not only 'native labour' was subsumed under capital, but also the carelessness which attended the exploitation of nature. The two led to frequent famines and ecological crises of an unprecedented

kind.⁶⁴

The aftermath of the Second World War witnessed what has been termed the 'second colonial occupation'.⁶⁵ It also saw the augmentation of colonial authoritarianism. The latter was associated with the endeavour to extract more agricultural surplus. The oppressed classes together with some intermediary social strata were alienated by such coalescence which eventually brought about notionalist victory, one of the initial steps in the struggle for national liberation. The process was evident in the 1920s and intensified in the 1930s for the same reasons.

This, in outline, is the terrain traversed in Iliffe's *A modern History of Tanganyika*. The explanations given for the various episodes covered, however, are somewhat strange. The imposition of indirect rule in Tanganyika is seen in terms of Governor Byatt's idiosyncrasy, and Sir Donald Cameron's paternalism which he had imbibed in Nigeria and such other places where the doctrine of social Darwinism was in vogue. No particular reasons are given for the intensification of tribalism in the 1930s other than the possibility that it was inherent among Africans.⁶⁶ Iliffe argues that the period 1929 to 1945 were critical years, years of crisis which witnessed the law of diminishing returns. One would have expected that the 1950s would have been worse. But he argues that 1950s Sukumaland was then just on the verge of its most prosperous years. It should not be forgotten, however, that this was also the period when there were a great deal of concern about soil degradation in Sukumaland. The Sukumaland Settlement Scheme was formulated with the need to conserve soil fertility in mind. Whether such measures augured well for the future of Sukumaland is a different matter. What is clear is that the President of Tanzania, Mwalimu Nyerere, recently repeated what the Director of Veterinary Services had warned the Standing Committee on Soil Erosion in 1931: if care was not taken Sukumaland would become a desert in twenty years.⁶⁷

Iliffe shows that the colonial governments, German and British, showed an inordinate amount of concern for agriculture in Tanganyika, not to mention other areas of economic interest like mineral exploration.⁶⁸ Yet he also asserts that persistence of poverty in colonial Tanganyika was due to the failure of the British to develop the territory fully. Tanganyika, Iliffe alleges was 'the runt of the litter', and perhaps for this reason native interests could be protected more adequately than in Kenya or South Africa! Such is a reproduction of imperialist paternalist ideology per excellence. In a similar vein, Iliffe asserts that 'colonial development' was as altruistic as it was propelled by self-interest. Perhaps these are the kind of dialectics which he wants to display, as promised in his chapter on 'intentions'.

Commenting on Hegel's philosophy the dramatist Bertold Brecht 'has one of his characters say ... that "he had the stuff to be one of the greatest humorists among philosophers, like Socrates, who had a similar method. But he had the bad luck it seems to become a civil servant in Prussia and so he sold himself to the state"'. That is to say Hegel's philosophy was at once dialectical, subversive as was Socrates', and idealist, mystical like a priest's'.⁶⁹ Iliffe has been in the forefront of showing the simplicity rampant in the works of his fellow professional Africanists. Thus when there was much emphasis on pure and simple African initiative, it was Iliffe who observed that this

varied from 'high colonialism' where it was thin, to the local level where it was dense.⁷⁰ When Africanist historians asserted that the era of resistances in African history was succeeded by the age of improvement, it was Iliffe who cautioned that this was a period of 'improvement and differentiation'.⁷¹ In doing so Iliffe managed to alert Africanists about some of the contradictions dominant in African history.

But a significant aspect of modern African history which confuses Iliffe is whether imperialism was altruistic, as is advocated by imperial historians like Robinson and Gallagher,⁷² and to a more subtle degree by Stokes and Low,⁷³ or guided by self-interest as has been stressed by radical historians.⁷⁴ In most cases, professional historians have emphasized either self-interest or altruism. They have thus faced 'the world in doctrinaire fashion with a new principle, declaring, Here is truth, kneel here!'⁷⁵ Where the facts have been the betrayer, they have just declared, 'too bad for the facts'. Such is the empiricist ideology which purports to respect facts. For such scholars 'things and their mental reflexes ideas, are isolated, are to be considered one after the other and apart from each other, are objects of investigation, fixed, rigid, given once and for all'.⁷⁶

Following this kind of procedure, abstracted empiricism, Robinson and Gallagher find it hard to understand why Africa was partitioned in the 1880s other than for reasons of 'scraping the bottom of the barrel'.

...the statesmen who drew the new frontier lines did not do so because they wanted to rule and develop these countries. Bismarck and Ferry, Gladstone and Salisbury, had no solid belief in African empire; indeed they sneered at the movement as something of a farce. A gamble in jungles and bush might interest a poor King such as Leopold II ... but the chief partitioners of the 1880s glimpsed no grand imperial idea behind what they were doing ... The partition of Africa is a remarkable freak.⁷⁷

A remarkable freak or otherwise, this is what should be explained. Yet that is the kind of imperialist ideology Iliffe reproduces in his work of synthesis, that Tanganyika was occupied by the British to prevent it from falling into the hands of other imperialist powers. It was very altruistic of the British to have done so at a time when they were being pushed into the background as an imperialist power!

Perhaps this is the kind of stuff Iliffe believes to have been the truth. Not that his beliefs are to be doubted; but a clear distinction should be drawn between scholarship which emanates from beliefs, and scholarship which is a product of investigation. Altruism and self-interest were dialectical processes and should not be viewed in isolation; the former was intended to legitimize the latter. Short of realizing this, colonial history will continue to be viewed as a series of isolated phenomena which do not fit into any particular mould. An alleged work of synthesis therefore is bound to become nothing more than a collection of descriptions of various events, and in that way confusing the appearance of contradictions with the real contradictions which are determinant in a given historical process.

Although Iliffe attempts to show the appearance of contradictions within Tanganyika, he fails to explain them in terms of the real contradictions within the

imperialist world. Thus confusion about the real nature of colonialism, the characteristics of modern Tanganyika, and the manner of the nationalist struggle coupled with the way it was truncated by imperialist forces abound. Marx commented about political economists of his time that many of them concentrated upon sagaciously 'observing the clouds of dust on the surface and presumptuously declaring this dust to be something mysterious and important'.⁷² So too is it with Iliffe's work. The political economists of Marx's time, in confusing the 'dust for the real thing', sold their souls to the ruling classes of the time, the bourgeoisies. Iliffe has sold his to the imperialist ruling classes.

Iliffe asserts that the British were reluctant imperialists in Tanganyika, and so the territory remained poor, and in poverty 'native interests' had the chance of being preserved. Such is indicative of the author's utter confusion of the historical process dominant in modern times. Marx remarked 'World history has not always existed; history as World history is a result', that is a result of the triumph of capitalism.⁷³ There had been economic systems before, but the capitalist economy was the first to display a World-wide phenomenon.⁸⁰ The dominance of the world by the capitalist system was essential for the development of the system. 'The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape', said Marx and Engels, 'opened up fresh ground for the rising bourgeoisie. The East-Indian and Chinese markets, the colonization of America, trade with the colonies, the increase in the means of exchange and in commodities generally, gave to commerce, to navigation, to industry, an impulse never before known, and thereby, to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society, a rapid development'.⁸¹

Exceptional regions such as Africa were designed as external arenas and subjected to outright plunder prior to the era of free trade imperialism and subsequently monopoly capitalism.⁸² Simultaneously with the penetration of capital in a given region began a dialectical process whereby this individual region became the universal and vice versa. Amplifying the concept of dialectics Lenin writes:

...the *individual* is the *universal* ... Consequently the opposites (the universal is opposed to the universal) are identical: the individual exists only in the connection that leads to the universal. The universal exists only in the individual and through the individual. Every individual is (in one way or another) a universal. Every universal is (a fragment, or an aspect, or the essence of) an individual. Every universal only approximately embraces all individual objects. Every individual enters incompletely into the universal, etc. etc.⁸³

So is it with countries articulated with the capitalist system. Prima facie they seem to be isolated units, but this is merely at the level of appearance. Appearance is a pointer to substance, but that the former takes the nature it does has to be explained. Hence it, too, is part of reality. Nevertheless it should not be confused for the whole.⁸⁴

The penetration of capital or the subsumption of labour under capital initially takes the relations of production as they are found extant and so concentrates on the extraction of absolute value by extending the working day. Such is what is termed formal subsumption or subjugation to capital whereby 'the mode of production is not yet determined by capital, but rather found on hand by it'.⁸⁵ Formal subsumption of

labour under capital leads to the preservation of 'all kinds of precapitalist relations of exploitation and uses them in the service of capital'.⁸¹ Where capital enters the process of production, as was the case with Western Europe in the course of the industrial revolution, formal subsumption of labour gives way to real control by capital. Here, methods of absolute surplus value extraction are superseded by those of relative surplus value.

In most areas of the colonial empire, however, such a transition did not take place. Formal subjugation with the attendant 'extra-economic relations of coercion, forced labour, political oppression and violence' persevered unabated. Minimal capital investment with maximum profit, and stagnation of productive forces in a preindustrial stage was on the ascendance.⁸² The tendency for capital to acquire a national character coupled with its simultaneous process of global domination and regional concentration in selected poles engendered the perpetuation of formal subjugation in some areas, and real subsumption in others.⁸³ The former areas were subjected to what Lenin termed 'super-exploitation'. In these areas imperialism was parasitic in that what those who toil were paid in exchange for their labour power was not enough for their maintenance let alone reconstitution and reproduction.⁸⁴ Yet whenever there was a capitalist economy the same people were coerced into producing more. It is not, therefore, that Tanganyika was poor because it was neglected by the British but that the nature that capital assumed dictated that things should be so. And in any case had the subsumption of labour been real, this would not have eliminated poverty. Only the hired coolies of imperialism who think that the salvation of the world lies in the capitalist system continue to assert that the Third World is poor because it has not been exploited enough.

To perpetuate super-exploitation of the labouring masses of Tanganyika, the precapitalist relations of production within which labour had to be reconstituted and reproduced had to be preserved by the colonial state. Such a policy took the form of the doctrine of Social Darwinism which had it that 'natives' had to be introduced slowly but surely to modernity. 'I paused to think when I first saw these primitive people', observed Sir Donald Cameron when on a country tour of Ugogo in the 1920s, 'probably then not further advanced in scale of civilization than the ancient Britons, brought suddenly and sharply into contact with Western civilization in the market square of the Dodoma township, where they came to sell their cattle and ghee. What could we make of them?'⁸⁵ Imperial proconsuls had asked likewise in other areas of the colonial empire. The most popular of such questions, it has been alleged, was: 'what shall we do with the colony for its own good and ours?'⁸⁶ For Cameron the answer was obvious: exploit the natives in their own habitat and enforce this with the doctrine of indirect rule. Thus indirect rule was enforced in Tanzania. It was not for the mere reason that Cameron liked it. Rather there were material conditions which justified the imposition of 'native administration' in the territory.

The Great Depression offered the occasion to see indirect rule practice. The Native Authorities Ordinance to make Orders (Section 9), and Rules (Section 16) was involved. Chiefs and their headmen were armed with extra powers to coerce the 'natives' to produce more with the intent to save Britain from economic collapse. Where 'natives' could not be absorbed into the commercial economy and so produce the so-called cash

crops, they were ordered to sell their labour power to plantation owners or to grow food crops.⁹² Yet to force people to produce more is one thing; to ensure that the produce reaches the appropriate market, another. Thus were passed draconian measures in the name of paternalism to centralize the marketing of agricultural produce in Tanganyika. Such were the Trades Licensing Ordinance, Itinerant Traders Ordinance, Market Ordinance, the Coffee Ordinance, and the Cooperative Societies Ordinance.⁹³ In Kilimanjaro, the Kilimanjaro Native Planters Association was destroyed, and the Kilimanjaro Native Cooperative Union instituted under the pretext that the former had become too political, and *fitina* too rampant in the area, to allow free play of the laws of the market.⁹⁴ With the coming of the Second World War, marketing boards were imposed on the cooperative societies. The real reason, however, was the same: to ensure free flow of colonial surplus to the imperialist coffers.⁹⁵

It should be noted that things did not merely happen, as is implied in Iliffe's work. What occurs has to be explained in relation to other events, and such phenomena have in turn to be explained in relation to capital. But this will only be possible if the 'nature of capital itself' is clearly understood. This applies to the interwar years as well as to the post war period.

Iliffe argues that what he calls the pivot of the modern history of Tanganyika witnessed a crisis of diminishing returns. Such a phenomenon revealed itself in various kinds of ecological crisis such as soil erosion. Soil erosion had been noticed during the German era. The British became aware of it in the 1920s, and by the 1930s this crisis was becoming a hot issue not only in Tanganyika but also in the whole of the British empire and beyond.⁹⁶ Stockdale, adviser on agriculture to the British Colonial Office who visited East Africa in 1937 found soil erosion a serious issue. The Royal African Society monthly dinner of December 1937 discussed this matter and made a number of recommendations to the Colonial Office.⁹⁷ 'Natives' were blamed for the occurrence of soil erosion. A number of soil conservation measures were introduced. But such measures were not intended to improve the lot of the native; rather they were intended to facilitate his exploitation in the interest of metropolitan capital. Such is the manner in which events in modern Tanganyika have to be viewed, if a real synthesis is to be achieved, and abstracted empiricism avoided.

This review article has attempted to place Iliffe's *A Modern History of Tanganyika* within the general context of the trend to synthesize African history, a tendency which has been made possible by the publication of studies based on the so-called original research. Yet it has been argued that however overwhelming such plethora of original research could be, this cannot be the only justification for embarking on a work of synthesis. Not that such original pieces of work are not essential; but that the theoretical basis for the undertaking to synthesize historical knowledge has to be located. Abstracted empiricism is not to be reproduced in a miniaturized and caricatured form. The endeavour to integrate historical knowledge entails an awareness of the dominant material processes of our time.⁹⁸ Short of this, historical knowledge will continue to be as fascinating as it is confusing, and true integration of knowledge will remain as persistently mesmerizing as a mirage. That said, though, Iliffe is to be congratulated for, notwithstanding the frustrations of working within the empiricist problematic, he

has managed to assemble as much of what has been written about the modern history of Tanganyika as can fit into the two covers of a book. Where he found published works and manuscripts lacking, he resorted to archival work. Few empiricist historians, save Leopold von Ranke obviously, have been able to demonstrate such skills, particularly in such a 'young and integrated discipline' as Africanist history. His, then, is an historiographical achievement of its own kind.

FOOTNOTES

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