ISLAM AND POLITICS IN TANZANIA

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INTRODUCTION

Islam has been in existence in East Africa since the eighth century. With Islam, emerged the lingua franca, Kiswahili, spoken throughout East and Central Africa and the Swahili culture which is mostly associated with Muslims. About two-thirds of East Africa’s Muslims reside in Tanzania which is the most populous of the East African countries i.e. Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. According to the 1957 population census, Muslims outnumbered Christians at a ratio of three to two. This means Tanzania is a leading Muslim nation in the region. But the 1967 census the total figures for Tanzania Mainland are 32% Christian, 30% Muslim and 37% local belief. This shows Pagans as a leading majority. The 1967 census has not been able to show the reasons for the sudden decrease of Muslim population nor the growth of Paganism. This was the last population census showing religious distribution. It is widely believed that the figures for the 1967 census were doctored for political reasons to show Muslims were trailing behind Christians in numerical strength. This paper "Insha Allah", will try to show the reasons behind such a move and many others.

Christianity is a relatively new religion in Tanzania having introduced into the country during the 18th Century by professional missionaries. Christianity was resisted by Muslims right from the beginning. In any uprising against the colonial state Muslims took that opportunity to attack missionaries and Christian establishments.2 Muslims perceived both missionaries and the colonial state as fellow collaborators and therefore enemies to Islam. Islamic radicalism has therefore a long history in the struggle against colonial rule and Christianity. Christianity meanwhile became a reactionary force siding with the colonial state. In the Maji Maji War of 1905 some Christians fought alongside the German army against the people to safeguard Christianity.3 In this war some Muslims were hanged particularly for killing missionaries and for waging a war against German rule.

The British took over Tanganyika (as Tanzania was then known) from the Germans after the First World War, by then the Germans had done more than their fair share in opening up Tanganyika for Christian influence through various Christian establishments. Tanganyika was divided among different Christian organizations originating from various European countries. The White Fathers were in Tabora, Karem, Kigoma, Mbeya, Mwanza and Bukoba; Holy Ghost Fathers - Morogoro and Kilimanjaro; Benedictine Fathers Peramiho and Ndanda; Capuchin Fathers - Dar es Salaam; Consolata Fathers - Iringa and Meru; Passionists Fathers - Dodoma; Pallotine Fathers - Mbulu; Maryknoll Fathers Musoma; and Rosmillian Fathers -Iringa4.
When the People started to organize themselves in political entities during the British rule through various associations, Muslims in Dar es Salaam formed the African Association in 1929 and Jamiatul Islamiyya fi Tanganyika in 1933. Missionaries sensing these African organisations as organised African resistance against the colonial state warned Christians not to get themselves involved in any movements that were challenging the government. The church and state provided education to African Christians and denied it to majority Muslims. The two worked hand in hand to mould loyal subjects out of the educated Christians alienating them from the main stream of the struggle against British rule. Resistance against British colonialism was therefore left to Muslims and the struggle for independence and nationalist politics in Tanganyika assumed strong Muslim characteristics.

MUSLIMS AND COLONIAL POLITICS:
THE POLITICS OF CONFORMITY

The church gradually managed to create a special relationship between the colonial state and the educated African Christians as beneficiaries of the colonial system. Muslim suffered as a people whose faith was antagonistic to the state religion the Church of England. Muslims suffered also as a colonised subject singled out for discrimination by being denied education curtailing any chances for self-advancement. The survival of Muslims as a people and Islam as a religion therefore lay in the total overthrow of the colonial state.

The first uprising against the British occurred in predominant Muslim areas of Tanga and Dar es Salaam in 1939. Strikes occurred in the ports of Tanga and Dar es Salaam followed by a violent general strike a few years later in Dar es Salaam port in 1947. Muslim predominance in port employment to a large extent helped to create the solidarity which ignited the working class movement responsible for the strikes. In the 1947 general strike Muslim symbols were used effectively showing for the first time the influence and extent of Islamic radicalism in resisting colonial oppression. The strike was very successful as it spread through Tanganyika lasting for almost a month and paralysing the colonial economic machinery. This strike created the necessary conditions to force the colonial state to pass appropriate legislation allowing the formation and eventual registration of the Dock Workers Union. It is interesting to note that the leader of this movement Abdulwahid Sykes was the first ever general secretary of a trade union in Tanganyika in 1948. Abdulwahid was later to be elected secretary of Jamiatul Islamiyya fi Tanganyika and went on to found the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) - the first open political party in colonial Tanganyika.

The British, in their tactics of divide and rule, isolated Muslims for oppression and elevated Christians to a higher status by giving them educational opportunities. In this way religion was used as a colonial weapon to stratify the people, creating out of African Christian a special class of colonised subjects. The church meanwhile maintained the doctrine: "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s." (Matthew xxii:21). Muslims, however, were able to distinguish between
British Christian colonialism which was the immediate enemy and the African Christians an appendage of the colonial system.

When TANU was formed out of the African Association in 1954 as a nationalist party to prepare the people of Tanganyika towards achieving independence, the strategy adopted for the struggle right from the start, was to form a united front of all Tanganyikans irrespective of religious identity or ethnic affiliations. Most scholars who have written on Tanzania’s political history have focused on Julius Nyerere as a founding leader of TANU. This is a fallacy yet to be rectified. This approach obscures a very important part of Islamic radicalism and Muslim personalities who had, before Nyerere, been working for the formation of the Party. Consequently a most important part of colonial history which laid the formation for resistance against colonial history which laid the formation for resistance against the British is eroded. It is beyond the scope of this paper to trace the origins of party system in Tanzania, but for the purpose of setting the record straight it should be noted that the desire to initiate a political movement can be traced from the African Association, but it was the Political Sub-Committee formed in 1905 within the Tanganyika African Association which actually formed TANU. Members of the TAA Political Sub-Committee were: Sheikh Hassan bin Amir, Abdulwahid Sykes, Hamza Kibwana Mwapachu, Said Charemo, Vedast Kyaruzi, John Rupia and Stephen Mhando. It is also interesting to note that a group of Muslim TAA members in Tabora had passed a resolution in 1953 to transform the association into an open political party. Suffice to state that two members of the Political Sub-Committee, Sheikh Hassan bin Amir and Abdulwahid Sykes were executive members of Da'wat Al-Islamia and Jamiatul Islamiyya respectively providing the link between the new party and Islam.

Roman Catholic Julius Nyerere was elected TANU president. A faction within the Party against Christian leadership emerged. Because of their superior education the few Christians who dared to venture into TANU were immediately offered leadership positions. The main reason advanced for this opposition was the history of the Church as a guardian of the African Christians. Some Muslims in the Party had no confidence in the mission-educated Christians. Christians were perceived as too close to the colonial state to take up a leading role in the struggle against the colonial state. This Islamic ideology did not get support of Muslims although Muslims enjoyed preponderance over Christians in the Party. Muslims wanted to build in TANU a party of national unity overrode immediate Muslim interests.

In 1955 TANU still in the formative stage called a meeting to clarify the status of Christianity in the Party and to establish a nationalist-secularist ideology as a way of preserving national unity. Where as the colonial state, had over the years of its rule used religion to stratify the people and create divisions among them, the Muslims leadership in TANU through the Elders Council suppressed the long standing Islamic radicalism to forge unity between the people. Christians however, for seasons already stated, did not play any significant role in the early years of TANU until 1958 when TANU contested its first election. This period is important in the political history of colonial Tanganyika because the outcome of TANU's decision to contest the election on those conditions came to adversely affect the future role of Islamic radicalism in the post independence politics.
This was the first election in which TANU took part since its formation in 1954. The colonial government of Governor Edward Twining had put very discriminatory conditions to the African electorate which required each constituency to vote for a European, an Asian and an African. Other conditions of eligibility for voting required the prospective voter to have an annual income of £200, Standard XII education and be employed in a specific post. These were stiff conditions for TANU to accept. Muslims who were active in politics could not meet those conditions and could not therefore vote nor could they stand as candidates. The British, in alliance with missionaries, had denied Muslims education - the very condition which it put to deny them participation in shaping the future of the country. TANU had, therefore, to look outside its own rank and file for qualified Christian candidates to contest the election. This was to be the beginning of a Christians hegemony over the Party leadership.

Some Muslims within the Party rose to challenge this new development. Sheikh Suleiman Takadir, Chairman of TANU Elders Council, and all Muslim body wanted the Party to discuss this problem. There were fears that the emerging Christian leadership in TANU which would obviously go into the Legislative Council would also go on to form the first independence government. It was feared that these would use Church influence to suppress Islam as a political force. This conflict threatened to split the Party. 1958 was very crucial time for TANU. For over thirty years Africans had been working towards having democratic principles established in Tanganyika. TANU in 1958 was on the verge of knocking the doors of the Legislative Council but for the problem of Christianity which was again cropping up for the second time in the Party. The majority of Muslims in TANU did not see the African Christians as posing any threat to Islam in free Tanganyika. Many saw the Christian influx into the Party’s leadership positions as a catalyst for accelerating the thrust of the struggle - a consolidation of its own strength vis-a-vis the conspiracies of the colonial state. No one saw this rapid changing pattern of Party leadership as a neutralising agent against Muslim influence in TANU. The Takadir faction which was calling for equal representation between Muslims and Christians in the party leadership and in the independence government was seen as a divisive element. Sheikh Takadir was relieved of his post in TANU, suspended and later expelled from the Party for raising the sensitive issue, which it was feared, would divide the party along religious lines and consequently slow down the tempo of the struggle. 10 TANU, therefore, selected the following to contest the 1958 election: Julius Nyerere, John Keto, Nesmo Eliufoo, John Mwakangale and Chief Abdallah Said Fundikira.11

Failing to pursue Islam as a mobilizational ideology in TAN U, a group of Muslims crossed over from the Party and formed the All Muslim National Union of Tanganyika (AMNUT). AMNUT could not also get support from the Muslim majority in Tanganyika. No political party had emerged in Tanganyika on the basis of religious or ethnic rivalry. Having dominated the political Muslims were already de-tribalised by Islam. This diminished the chances of ethnicity over-ling religious identity while at the same time consolidating Islam as an ideology of resistance and a unifying force of all Tanganyikans. The TANU Elders Council initiated a campaign against AMNUT. 43 prominent Muslim scholars in Dar es Salaam together with 80 of their counterparts in Tanga signed a
declaration opposing AMNUT and what it stood for and reaffirming their loyalty and support to TANU. Many believed AMNUT was a reactionary party which had to be fought and eliminated for the sake of national unity. It was believed that after independence there would be appropriate forums to discuss such issues of national importance.

UP MUSLIMS AND POST-COLONIAL POLITICS: THE POLITICS OF ANTAGONISM

After independence had been achieved in 1961 Muslims looked forward to the future with confidence. In 1962 a pan-territorial congress of all Muslim organisations was called in Dar es Salaam to discuss the future role of Islam in then free Tanganyika. The following organizations attended the East African Muslims Welfare Society, Da'wat Al Islamia Jamiatul Islamiyya fi Tanganyika, Jamiatul Islamiyya fi Tanganyika "A" and the Muslim Education Union. The congress agreed among other things of importance to establish a department of education under the auspices of the EAMWS. Muslims did not wait for the independence government to start fulfilling its pre-independence promise of redressing educational disparity between them and Christians. Muslims initiated their own plans to compliment government efforts. Plans were put on drawing board to build schools throughout Tanganyika and eventually build the first Islamic University in East Africa. The congress elected Tewa Said Tewa a Cabinet Minister, a veteran politician of the TAA and TANU founder member as Chairman of Territorial Council of the EAMWS. This was to be the beginning of antagonism between Muslims and the Christian dominated central government. Politics of conformity practiced during the struggle for independence now started to give way to politics of antagonism as Muslims started to initiate plans to change the colonial status quo.

The predominantly Christian government and the Christian establishment felt threatened by these nationwide Muslim mobilisation efforts for development. The EAMWS leadership and its executive committee was now in the hands of Muslim party bureaucrats. The government saw this mobilisation as Muslims bracing up for a second struggle to take over the country from Christian leadership. Without warning the state found itself in direct confrontation with a strong Muslim organisation in which every Muslim of Tanganyika was virtually a member and within its ranks were opponents of TANU as well as committed party members. At the same time the all-Muslim TANU Elders Council in its advisory role to the Party started to exert pressure to the government which the government perceived as smacking of Islamism. The Elders Council had overtime transformed itself from a vanguard committee to a Muslims pressure group within the Party.

Events started to move in rapid succession. In January 1963 some trade unionists were detained along with prominent Muslim Sheikhs. Rumours making the rounds in Dar es Salaam was that the Sheikhs were planning a coup against the government. Soon after, a prominent Muslim scholar Sherif Hussein Badawiy and his young brother Mwinyibaba who had established in Dar es Salaam a well patronised madras were declared prohibited immigrants and had to leave the country. In March, the TANU National Executive voted
to dissolve the eleven-men working committee of Dar es Salaam Elders Council now under the Chairmanship of Mzee Iddi Tulio. The reason given by the Party for this action was that the Elders Council was mixing politics with religion. This was to be the beginning of a campaign of de-Islamisation of TANU and its history and the end of Muslim predominance in the post colonial party politics. Since achieving independence the Muslim card which was played against the British was seen by the government in power as a card which had outlived its usefulness. The dissolution of the Elders Council was the last hold of Muslim influence in the Party. The Church which had kept its distance during the struggle now surfaced to challenge Muslims leadership in TANU. In an unprecedented move by the Church, the Roman Catholic Church in Bukoba supported its own Christian candidates against Muslim candidates put forward by TANU in the local government elections. The church argued that it preferred its own candidates to TANU’s because the Party’s candidates were of very limited educational background. A similar campaign by the Church against Muslim candidates was also effected in Kigoma. There are no records existing which show that the government or the Party took any action against the Church for mixing religion with politics.

When the Second Muslim Congress was convened in Dar es Salaam later that year these serious issues were put forward for discussion. The Congress established beyond any reasonable doubt that there was a silent purge going on in the Party against Muslims and that there was nationwide anti Muslims campaign against leaders of the EAMWS. President Nyerere was invited to the closing ceremony and the congress registered its regrets to him. Nyerere talked at length on the problem and somehow managed to cool the situation. But there was no doubt in the minds of the EAMWS leadership that there was organised Church resistance against Islam and Muslims using the Christian leadership in the Party and government to effect its influence and decisions. The Christian leadership in state institutions was now using state power against Islam to have the Church control the government in independent Tanganyika.

In January 1964 an army mutiny occurred in the Tanganyika Rifles. The government took this opportunity to detain trade unionists and some Muslims who were prominent in the post independence Muslims politics agitating against the government. When the case went on trial at the High Court there was no evidence tendered which showed that the mutiny was Muslims inspired or had any connection whatsoever with any Muslim organisation. In April a strong delegation of the EAMWS comprising of Sheikh Hassan bin Amir, Sheikh Said Omar Abdallah, Tewa Said Tewa, EAMWS Secretary Aziz Khaki and a TANU elder Sheikh Mwinjuma Mwinyikambi, left for a tour of Islamic countries to solicit financial support for the proposed Islamic University and to establish relations with the Muslim world. The government of the United Arab Republic of Egypt responded positively to the proposed Islamic University. An agreement was signed in Cairo between Tewa Said on behalf of the EAMWS and Vice President Sharbasy on behalf of the Egyptian government. The government of Egypt promised to build and Islamic University for the Muslims of Tanganyika to be owned and managed by the EAMWS. Capital expenditure of the project was estimated at 55 million sterling pounds to be contributed by the United Arab Republic of Egypt. From Egypt the delegation visited Jordan, Kuwait, Iraq and Lebanon. This was a significant step in the history of Islam in
Tanganyika. Tanganyika has been open only to European countries and their various missionary organisations. For the first time in 1964 the country was being opened up for contact with other Islamic countries.

Soon after the delegation had returned from the Islamic countries, President Nyerere made a cabinet reshuffle. Tewa Said Tewa, Chairman of Territorial Council of the EAMWS was dropped from the government and appointed ambassador to the People’s Republic of China. This it was believed was not unconnected with Tewa’s efforts of mobilising Muslims and his efforts to unite them under one organization.

Bibi Titi Mohammed was elected Vice President to run the Organisation in the absence of the President Mr. Tewa Said Tewa. This was in January, 1965.

It is from this point that we can now start tracing and analysing how the government finally moved to subvert Muslim unity through a campaign of intrigue, sabotage, bribery and misinformation against the EAMWS leadership which it perceived as a threat to its own political domination over Muslim majority. The government was now literally in Christian hands. Apart from Zanzibaris in the union government: A.M. Maalim Minister of Commerce and Industry, Aboud Jumbe Minister of State, A.M. Babu Minister of Lands, Settlement and Water development and Hasnu Makame Minister of Information and Tourism, the only Muslim minister from the Mainland in the 15 men cabinet was Said Ali Maswanya, Minister of Home Affairs.

The main objective of the EAMWS was according to its 1957 constitution was "to propagate Islam in East Africa". The society was multi-racial in membership and leadership composition. During its 21 years of existence it abstained from partisan politics. The society strictly confined itself to protecting and promoting Islam in East Africa. Since the mass detention of Muslims in 1964 after the army mutiny the EAMWS seemed to have lost its zeal and purpose. Some of its offices in the regions were closed out of fear of silent government hostility and for lack of strong leadership. Many Muslims hesitated to man those offices as they were of the opinion that such offices would be taken as centres of Muslim opposition against the government. For more than three years since the congress of 1963, the EAMWS did not meet. When at last it held its annual conference at Arusha in 1966 a separatist group emerged from Tanzania calling for the split of the society into three different autonomous entities. The separatist element from Tanzania also called for the "indigenization" of the constitution of the EAMWS. This meant constitutional changes had to be effected by the leadership to enable Tanzania become an independent body within the EAMWS. Independent minded delegates from Tanzania and the entire conference delegation from Kenya and Uganda were against such changes arguing that, such a move would isolate Tanzanian Muslims from the rest of the East African "umma". This, it was observed, would weaken not only Tanzania Muslims, but the Muslim community in East Africa. Kenya and Uganda delegates were aware of the fact that there was pressure from the Tanzanian government to split the society, and that the Tanzania delegation was working under heavy political pressure. It was an open secret that some Muslim leadership of EAMWS in Tanzania was facing silent intimidation from the government. But the conference did not address itself to these
issues because such issues were taken as internal matters of the country concerned. However, in the spirit of Islam, delegates showed their sympathy privately to the situation which Tanzanian Muslims were facing. As delegates left for their respective countries, it was clear enough that the state was encroaching into the affairs of the EAMWS making it extremely difficult to organise Muslims and to pass important decisions. To make matters worse and to drive the point home, Tanzanian State intelligence officers were very much in evidence during the whole period of the conference in Arusha.

It soon became clear that the government was working towards disbanding the EAMWS using few hand-picked Muslims, the end result which was to form a new body which the state could have some control over its activities. This was to be done in order to contain Muslims as a political force. It is now from this point that we can start analysing the so-called ‘crisis’ of the EAMWS which characterised the last three months of 1968. In order to understand the whole episode it is important to trace out the nature of the ‘crisis’ and the integrity of the characters who played major roles in that ‘crisis’. Lastly, it is important to analyse the role of the government, the party and state institutions in the ‘crisis’ in order to see if it is true that there was an actual ‘crisis’ in the EAMWS, or if the ‘crisis’ was fomented by some interested parties within the party and government and within the very Muslim fabric in order to weaken Muslims as a potential political force.

In 1967 Mwalimu Julius Nyerere announced the Arusha Declaration embarking Tanzania on a socialist path. The new economic policy was met with mass enthusiasm. An unknown Muslim school teacher by the name of Adam Nasibu who was the EAMWS Regional Secretary in Bukoba seized the occasion and participated in a mass demonstration to TANU Regional headquarters in support of Mwalimu Nyerere’s new economic policy. Adam Nasibu was also quoted to have said that socialism was compatible to the teachings of the Holy Quran. Adam Nasibu went further and issued “guidelines to all Islamic religious leaders in Bukoba providing for a basic explanation on the Arusha Declaration”. Non-Muslims saw Adam Nasibu as very progressive Muslim, and he being an executive of the EAMWS his support to the new political development was perceived as an official recognition by the society to the Arusha Declaration. But before this incident, no one knew the schoolteacher as a politician, let alone being an intellectual. Under normal political climates, the EAMWS leadership at the headquarters in Dar es Salaam would have frowned at such an open demonstration of partisanship. But there are no records which show that the EAMWS leadership at the headquarters did warn its Bukoba Secretary of such seemingly unbecoming behaviour. Probably the headquarters thought to do that would have been unpatriotic taking into consideration the enthusiasm shown by the people in the Arusha Declaration. After all Muslims have always provided the lead in the politics of the country. The headquarters of the EAMWS thought better of it and let the incident pass.

Adam Nasibu received some publicity in the news media because of that behaviour, particularly on his statement that socialism was compatible to the teachings of the Holy Quran. Some Muslims by observing the contemporary political climate as it affected Muslims which was at that moment not conducive to any Islamic influence to the politics for the country, saw in Adam Nasibu a person seeking cheap publicity by courting the
government. All this notwithstanding the action by the Bukoba Secretary had very adverse effect on the entire society and its leadership. Adam Nasibu was seen as the champion of the people and a progressive Muslim leader who the government could depend upon. The leadership at the headquarters was seen as probably standing aloof, not being in touch with sufferings of the people and out of touch with the government policy. But still EAMWS as a religious organisation could not have come forward and support the Arusha Declaration because to do so would have been incompatible with the government policy. But still EAMWS as a religious organisation could not have come forward and support the Arusha Declaration because to do so would have been incompatible with the government hitherto unwritten law of not mixing religion and politics. Remaining uncommitted to the Arusha Declaration also was perceived as unpatriotic giving an indication that the society was unconcerned with the welfare and development of the people of Tanzania. To complicate the issue further the president of EAMWS, Tewa Saidi and his vice-president Bibi Titi Mohamed were former cabinet ministers who had lost power in previous general elections. It was therefore perceived by the government and party that being at the top hierarchy of the EAMWS the two were trying to build a new political base out of Muslims. Adam Nasibu had managed a coup against the president of the EAMWS, he had by his open overzealous patriotism proved to the government that he could be a better servant to the state than the seemingly decadent leadership at the Dare Salaam headquarters.

On 17th October 1968 Adam Nasibu was again on the limelight but this time he was no longer a stranger to the people. People now knew him as the partisan Bukoba EAMWS Secretary who had supported the Arusha Declaration and issued directives to other Muslim leaders explaining the salient features of the document. Adam Nasibu made an announcement through the state radio and the party press that his region was splitting from the EAMWS. Overnight Adam Nasibu became a household name as the mass-media of the party and government started to build up his image and publicized what came to be known as the Muslim’ crisis’. The Party dailies had a field day:

"The state radio and the Party press gave very wide publicity to the defection. News headlines and front page photographs depicting Mr. Nasibu busy with Pressmen donned the Party dailies". 20

It was after this announcement and the publicity by the mass-media that Muslims in Tanzania came to realise for the first time that they had a Muslim national "crisis" in their hands. Five days later on 22nd October, Sheikh Juma Jambia member of the Central Committee of the EAMWS Tanga Region made a similar announcement of withdrawing from the society.21 Soon after, Iringa also announced its withdrawal from the EAMWS leadership at the headquarters in Dar es Salaam. The leadership of the EAMWS at the headquarters reacted immediately to these withdrawals by calling a meeting of the executive to discuss the new development in the society. The mass-media facilities which were at the disposal of the separatist group i.e., the Party newspapers and the state-controlled radio were denied to the EAMWS leadership. It was therefore clear from outset that the government was taking sides on the "crisis" and the state radio and Party newspapers were being used by the government to subvert Muslims and the EAMWS.
Having known what opposition was against them the EAMWS leadership at the headquarters became engulfed with the atmosphere of insecurity and uncertainty, the EAMWS executive turned to Muslims for support.

The dissident group gave many reasons necessitating the split from the EAMWS but the main ones were as follows:

(i) The constitution of the society snot fit compared with the country’s leadership
(ii) The constitution should be Tanzanian
(iii) The Aga Khan should not be a patron
(iv) The Secretary General of the society should be an African Muslim
(v) No one knows the money given as aid from outside countries for the advancement of Muslims, not even the sources.22

Islam has own basic principles and laws which guides Muslims in their every day life. The grievances given by the dissident group could never constitute a crisis of that magnitude, because some of those grievances could be solved through sheer common sense and goodwill. Others were undeniable because the basic teachings of Islam had provided guidelines. The issue of the constitution and aid were issues which could be discussed and resolved in the appropriate meetings. But questioning the multi-racial composition of Muslim organisation was to deny the universal message of Islam which cut across nationalities. This is against the teachings of the Holy Quran.

It was clear that the splinter group being learned Muslims were all aware of these teachings, and since they were persisting on splitting from the society it was obvious the over-zealous patriotism had a special mission with the backing of the government to fragment the unity of Muslims and hence weaken them politically. However on 14th November 1968 the Tanzania Council of the EAMWS called a conference in Dar es Salaam to discuss the "crisis". The conference formed a seven-men commission of inquiry to probe into the "crisis"

and come out with a report. Musa Kwikima, a lawyer by profession, was elected secretary to the commission. By then nine regions had withdrawn from the EAMWS and the Party dailies had elevated the "crisis" into a nation-wide public debate. The Party dailies were diverging and publishing information of the society with impunity inflaming an already volatile situation.

In order for the commission to work without prejudice it was necessary to ask the government to stop immediately the state controlled radio and the Party dailies from being used by the dissident group as its propaganda forum. The commission met the Minister of Information and Broadcasting to discuss the issue in his office on 20th November, 1968.23 This did not help matters. The propaganda machinery against the EAMWS leadership reverberated. The dissident group with Adam Nasibu as the main spokesman continued on ironically, transcending the political ideals, of the the government and the party by exerting political demands at times banking on racism
insisting on breaking the EAMWS. Adam Nasibu was quoted by the Party daily "The Nationalist" to have said that:

"Muslims must know why the East African Muslims Welfare Society should have a constitution which was in line with the country’s policy. We do not know the role of the Aga Khan in our society and that is why we reject him."24

But most surprising was the government unprecedented silence on statements by the splinter group that it wanted Muslims to align themselves with politics of the country since it was clear and open to every Tanzanian that politics should be divorced from religion. All this notwithstanding what was unique and unprecedented was the introduction of racism into Tanzanian’s polity. It was strange that the Party dailies were quoting and giving publicity to a group of Muslim dissidents blaming Ismailis for not being Africans. A decade ago the people of Tanganyika, the very Muslims who formed the core of TANU had fought tooth and nail against racist policies of African National Congress of Zuberi Mtemvu. Mtemvu was defeated and the end result was that the independence government of Tanganyika was a multi-racial government governing over a multi-racial society free from any racial tension. These new developments were not consistent with the government policy.

At this juncture the President of the EAMWS Tewa Saidi Tewa and his Vice President Titi Mohamed decided to put the problem before Mwalimu Julius Nyerere the President of Tanzania and the Chairman of the ruling party. Kiwanuka has described this meeting very well:

"...the two Islamic leaders told Mwalimu how unhappy they were about the manner in which the state radio and the Party Press had publicised the Islamic crisis. They argued that TANU was mixing politics with religion. Alerting him to this so-called press were no people other than Mr. Tewa and Bibi Titi, old and reliable comrades. Reliable in the sense that were it not Bibi Titi, and who stood for Mwalimu during the early TANU days, when Suleiman Takadir - one of the first TANU days, elders insinuated that TANU was Christians as Mwalimu and Rupia, President and Vice-President respectively then were Christians. Herself, a devout Muslim, successfully won the day by proving that Tanzania, or Tanganyika as it then was, came first and Islam later. And now, there she was - talking about the fuss she had ably thwarted in the 195s."

The reply the two got from Mwalimu was thrilling. My informant told me that it was straightforward. "You decided to wage a war against me, so be prepared". 25

Here was Mwalimu Nyerere himself telling Tewa Saidi and Bibi Titi straight on their face to be prepared for what was obvious, a crusade against Muslim unity. Sheikh Suleiman Takadir had contemplated such a situation and had proposed to TANU way back in 1958 to have assurance that the Christian leadership that was being brought into power at the expense of Muslims would not act as a deterrent force against Muslims in their efforts to share power with Christians in post-independence Tanganyika. Tewa Saidi, a former executive member of TANU, a founding member of TANU, a minister in
the first independence cabinet, a former member of parliament, a former ambassador to the People’s Republic of China and the President of the Muslim Council of Tanzania EAMWS, together with Bibi Titi Mohammed, the woman who mobilized all women of Tanganyika behind Mwalimu Nyerere and TANU, were being scolded by him like naughty school children simply because they had come to ask the President of a serious breach of principle which required his urgent attention and immediate decision.

In October, the crisis took a dramatic turn when the Vice-President of Tanzania Aeid Amani Karume attacked the EAMWS as an organisation of exploitation.26 From here Karume made a series of attacks and allegations on the society, at time attempting to analyse the relationship between the EAMWS and Muslim community from a Marxian philosophy arguing that the society "was an instrument of the big bourgeoisie which was being controlled by the capitalists who are exploiting he common people.27 As the "crisis" escalated the attacks shifted from the EAMWS to the basic teachings of the Holy Quran. In a public rally in Zanzibar Karume challenged any Muslim to come out openly and fearlessly to oppose his two statements that:

"There is no difference between Islam and Christianity", and "Fasting in Islam is not obligatory."28 1968 was a very trying period for Muslims.

By the first week of December with 9 out of 17 regions out of the EAMWS, the splinter group formed a committee and in collaboration with the Maulid Committee of Dar es Salaam which was under the chairmanship of Sheikh Abdallah Chaurembo, convened a meeting of all Muslims at the Arnautoglo Hall on 3rd December 1968. Sheikh Abdallah Chaurembo was once a student of Sheikh Hassan bin Amir and was under his tutorial until 1961 when there arose a conflict between the Sheikh and Sheikh Chaurembo on issues of politics of Tanganyika. Because of that conflict Sheikh Abdallah Chaurembo cut short his studies under Sheikh Hassan bin Amir and became very much involved in TANU politics to the extent that he was consequently elected to the TANU National Executive Committee. As long as Sheikh Hassan bin Amir was in Dar es Salaam it was not possible for anyone to assume national Muslim leadership in Tanzania less so Sheikh Chaurembo. Sheikh Hassan bin Amir was therefore arrested and deported to Zanzibar to pave way for pro-government Muslim leadership. The splinter group committee was a fusion of the government backed Adam Nasibu (who was the secretary of the committee) and party bureaucrats like Sheikh Abdallah Chaurembo and Juma Suedi from Bukoba TANU Branch and others who although not in the committee were highly influenced by the anti Muslim politics of the state. This committee announced a conference which was to be known as Islamic National Conference. The conference was o be held in Iringa from 12th-13th December 1968. The main agenda of the conference was to discuss a constitution for a new Muslim organisation.

Meanwhile Muslim bureaucrats in the government completely refused to assist the Kwikima Commission in any way arguing that to do so was mixing religion and politics. The splinter group also refused to meet with Commission. Muslim scholars who could have intervened in the crisis could not do so because most of them were convinced that the splinter group had a backing of the government and were under instructions to wreck
the EAMWS. The splinter group, it turned out, was not interested in any compromise short of forming another pro-government organisation. More over there were rumours also that "anyone who would take part in the activities of society would be detained". Members of the Commission and other Muslims could not easily ignore such threats.

The Commission of Inquiry knew that the dissident group on its own did not have the power nor the mandate to break the EAMWS. Following the announcement by the splinter committee of the Iringa conference, the Commission made public its report on 11th December - a day before the Iringa Conference was scheduled to begin. The report addressed to all Muslims of Tanzania called for a general conference of the EAMWS in February the following year to discuss and make a final ruling on the "crisis". The meeting was later re-scheduled for January due to the urgency of the "crisis" at hand. The Party English daily "The Nationalist" after studying the report of the commission decided to pick on the financial report of the EAMWS and label it as "incorrect". This was a calculated move meant to portray the Muslim leadership of the society as dishonesty. That very same week the Aga Khan who had been a point of attack by the splinter group resigned his post in Paris as patron of the society.

While the Commission was waiting for the response of its report from the Muslim community the dissident group now with open backing of the government and party assembled in Iringa for the Islamic National Conference on 13th December, 1968. The government working behind the scene went out of its way to make the conference a success. It financed the conference, gave it publicity and provided security for the delegates. The conference was attended by Muslim Party and government bureaucrats, Muslim Area and Regional Commissioners and Muslim Areas and Party Chairmen. All Muslim notables were invited including Party Chairmen. All Muslim notables were invited including Party National Executive Committee members and some delegates from Zanzibar. It was literally a conference of Muslim politicians. The most significant thing about the conference was that first it was dominated by very controversial Muslim personalities. Under normal circumstances such an important congregation of Muslims from Zanzibar and Mainland would have seen in its midst renowned Muslims scholars who have a history of commitment, sincerity and devotion to Islam. None of these personalities was there with the exception of Sheikh Mohamed Ramiya of Bagamoyo. The conference was opened and closed by the First Vice-President Karume and Second Vice President Kawawa respectively. The conference passed a new constitution which was a replica of the constitution of the ruling party TANU, and a new Muslim organisation - the National Muslim Council of Tanzania (BAKWATA) was formed.

The new Muslim organisation elected Salehe Masasi as the National Chairman, Sheikh Abdallah Chaurembo - Deputy National Chairman and Adam Nasibu - Secretary General. All the top executive of the National Muslim Council expected came from the dissident group. This leadership asked the government, TANU and Afro Shiraz Party "to keep a keen eye and make serious investigation on all territorial leaders of EAMWS especially the President, his Vice President, their Secretary and some Regional and District leaders who bore ill will to the new body". The leadership of the new Muslims organisation at their hour of triumph did not extend a hand of conciliation to fellow Muslims in the
EAMWS according to Islamic spirit, instead it asked the Party and the government to persecute them, particularly the top leadership. After the formation of the National Muslim Council, in order to clear the air and instill confidence to the Muslim community the secretary of the commission Mussa Kwikima issued a statement saying: "no one could threaten the existence of the EAMWS except its members, the law and the government, but not individuals even if all 17 regions would not automatically mean that the society was legally dead since its existence was not determined by the number of regions affiliated to it but by the number of its members, the Muslims." At this point the new organisation was not yet registered by the Registrar of Societies, and on a legal point there was no way that the dissident group could form a new organization when it had objectives similar to those of another society in existence. For about three days the two Muslim organisations existed together side by side. For a time it seemed as if the EAMWS was going to wither the storm. Then on 19th December, 1968 the government as if jolted by Kwikima’s statement issued a Certificate of Exemption to the new organisation and banned the EAMWS. The government issued a short statement:

"The Minister for Home Affairs has by command of the President declared the Tanzania Branch of the East African Muslim Welfare Society and Tanzania Council of the East African Muslim Welfare Society to be unlawful societies under the provisions of section 6(1) of the Societies Ordinance ".

Muslims were by that declaration of the President of Tanzania denied the chance to discuss and make a final ruling on the crisis which so to speak was a conflict among Muslims. To ensure that Muslims complied with the ban order the government put armed policemen outside the offices of the society. It was in that manner that the curtain of the EAMWS saga was lowered. A saga which began with a simple school teacher marching in a mass demonstration in the streets of Bukoba in support of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere's Arusha Declaration and ended with him holding a responsible post in a weak and controversial Muslim organisation. The school teacher now General Secretary of the newly formed National Council of Tanzania started his new job in style. In a statement he made to the press on 19th December, 1968 he said his organisation was similar to the Christian Council of Tanzania. Since Muslims did not hold their meeting to deliberate on the "crisis" we can only speculate the outcome of that meeting had it been allowed to convene. The Muslims of Bukoba who were reported to have demonstrated behind the school teacher in support of Arusha Declaration did not voice support nor did they organise a mass demonstration in support of the new organization. In Dar es Salaam and in many places in Tanzania, the National Muslim Council widely know by its Swahili acronym Bakwata (Baraza Kuu la Wa'islamu Tanzania) is a word of insult. To refer to a Muslim as a Bakwata member is like calling a Christian - a disciple of Judas Iscariot who sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.

Of the Commission of Inquiry one member of that Commission deserve special mention - Mussa Kwikima. Mussa was a young judge appointed by the President. He was to very large extent because of his expertise the force behind the commission. When he offered his services to the EAMWS he was warned of the risk exposing to himself and his career. Mussa Kwikima replied that the threat facing Muslim unity was above his personal
interest. After the formation of Bakwata and hence the end of the "crisis" Kwikima was transferred from Dar es Salaam to Mwanza as a Senior Resident Magistrate and his name was dropped from the list of Judges appointed by the President.39

What remained after the demise of the EAMWS was to try to establish Bakwata in the regions as an organisation representative of all Muslims of Tanzania Mainland. The most part of 1969 Adam Nasibu and his four-men committee toured the regions campaigning for Bakwata’s acceptance by Muslims. The committee offered personal financial assistance to any Regional Secretary of the now defunct EAMWS who would cooperate with the Bakwata headquarters in establishing the new organisation in his region. Muslim did not show any enthusiasm towards Bakwata. In Tabora a region which did not withdraw from the EAMWS, the committee was permitted by the government to hold a public meeting. But before Adam Nasibu could speak Maulidi Kivuruga - a veteran of the African Association, a founder member of TANU in Tabora and now a respectable elder politician took the floor and on behalf of the Muslims of Tabora put up a condition that Muslims were not ready to listen to the dissident group unless Waikela, one of the members of the Commission of Inquiry from Tabora was also allowed to address the meeting. This was unacceptable condition to the committee.

Few days later Waikela was summoned by the Director of Criminal Investigation for interrogation about his political activities and about his opposition to Bakwata. In a room at Tabora Hotel, Sawaya, the Director of C.I.D. interrogated Waikela as to why he was not ready to cooperate with the government in establishing Bakwata in Tabora, at times threatening him. Waikela was drilled for four hours and asked to sign some papers which he did. Waikela was never to hear from the government again. Despite the silent resistance Bakwata has been established in Tabora and in all regions of Tanzania.

Kiwanuka’s thesis since published in 1987 has stood as a conclusive authority to the Muslim "crisis". Kiwanuka is of the opinion that the government was right to do what it did to protect national unity. Kiwanuka supports the government stand that religion and politics should not be mixed. The two should be separated. Like many works on political history of Tanganyika the thesis fails to link the role of Muslims in forging national unity in the struggle for independence and hence fail to show the pre-independence aspirations of Muslims of Tanganyika. The work does not analyse how the present Christian leadership rose to power and from what background did it build its political base. Kiwanuka simply introduces Muslims in confrontation with the government and does not clearly show the role of the state on the whole confrontation. If he had researched on the political history of Tanganyika he would have found the reasons for the confrontation between Muslims and the Christian dominated government of independent Tanganyika. Further still he would have known the reasons why the government wanted in earnest to have a Muslim organisation which it could control just as it was controlling other mass organisations like the trade unions. If Muslims did not desire the unity of the country they would have supported Sheikh Takadir in 1958 and AMNUT in 1959. What Muslims had asked after independence was equal representation in government coupled with equal educational opportunities, this is not mixing religion and politics.
Christian teachers supported by the Roman Catholic Church challenged TANU Muslim candidates in local government election in Bukoba in 1963 and the Muslim candidates were defeated. No records exist which show that the government took any action against the Church as an institution or against individual Christian candidates. But Muslims were detained obviously for resisting Christian hegemony over the Party. The Party National Executive Committee purged the Muslim dominated Dar es Salaam Elders Council from TANU for mixing religion with politics.

The Roman Catholic Church in Bukoba lacked tactics and exposed itself. The new forces against Islam used subtle means and were able to subvert the EAMWS and imposed its own organisation on Muslims. How can one explain the fact that a government which had always been against racial discrimination and worked for national unity allow a group of not more than five people to use the state mass media to propagate disunity and racism. How can one explain the fact that such an important body like the National Muslims Council could be formed by and its top leadership be in the hands of people considered controversial in the Muslim Community. How possible can Muslims initiate a body to propagate Islam without having the support of Muslims themselves or without having a single respectable Muslim scholar on its entire leadership. Bakwata was not formed with the interest of Muslims in mind. Bakwata was imposed upon Muslims to subdue them as a political force. The new leadership in the party and government feared to face the future with Muslims organising themselves independent of the central authority.

As the independence government showed no intention of giving equal opportunity to Muslims on education persisting to maintain the colonial status quo, it was obvious that a second struggle would be launched against the Christian dominated government as Muslims did against the British Christian administration. And there were indications that Muslims were bracing themselves for the second struggle and that struggle was not through TANU because already a purge against them was underway. The second struggle was to be through the unity of all Muslims. This created a state of fear and the government kept itself on perpetual guard against such eventuality. Out of fear the government pounced on any Muslim which it felt was a threat to its authority. It is out of fear that even the history of the country Is being erased. This is one of the ways the government thinks it could stop evoking past Muslim sentiments.

At the time when the splinter group with state backing was rejecting the Aga Khan from the EAMWS for being an Ismaili Muslim no one pointed a finger to the Christian establishments and administration in Tanzania which are dominated and financed by different foreign powers. No one pointed an accusing finger to the Roman Catholic Church which has diplomatic accreditation of the Pope in the country. If the Aga Khan was a threat to the security of the state then there was no serious threat than the threat posed by all the Christian establishments in the country. The Catholic Church demands total allegiance from all its adherents, the Church moving its members in important positions in the Cabinet, the Party and in the Civil Service, could have posed and caused government instability. By weakening Muslims through the divide and rule tactics Christians were being made stronger.
By 1970 the furore of the Muslim "crisis" had died down. In that year Mwalimu Nyerere attended a seminar for religions and organised political leaders in Tabora conveniently organised by the Tanzania Episcopal Conference. In that seminar for the first time Mwalimu publicly addressed himself to the issue of TANU’s religious identity. Mwalimu said: "Our Party, the TANU, has no religion. It is just a political party and there are no arrangements or agreements with a particular religion". This statement can only mean one thing that is, TANU had over the years lost its Muslim identity; because TANU since 1954 had an identity and the political history of the Party testifies to this. If in 1970 the party had lost its Muslim identity it means that the Muslim influence and identity has been successfully wiped out. This fact is confirmed by Mwalimu’s own statement when he said:

"I have established in TANU a department of political education and I have put a Lutheran Minister in charge. He was not a great politician, but I selected him because of his balance, his gentleness and his strong solid faith..." Mwalimu has proved that it is one’s faith which determines politics in Tanzania and TANU could not be a party with no religion. Religious sentiments and convictions are important since they determine thoughts and actions which go a long way in the administration of a country. Muslims have to wake up to these realities and recapture their lost political power.

THE AFTERMATH

The Party is weak, it no longer commands respect, dignity and enthusiasm it did in the days of yore. The Party has alienated itself from its founders. The de-Islamisation of the Party has gone full circle and its Muslim history has been erased. Bakwata has sided with the government thus failing to uphold Muslim values and principles. As a reaction to this Muslims have started to organise themselves independent of the central authority. Tanzania Mainland has more than 100 Muslim youth organisations scattered throughout the country. Few of these are registered with the Registrar of Societies as required by law, a majority operate without registration. Few of them operate underground for effectiveness. The government is reluctant to register Muslims organisations because to do so is to erode the power of Bakwata.

We cannot talk of any Muslim development because the colonial status quo still persists. The ratio of Muslim joining higher institutions of learning trails behind Christians 1:10. In desperation Muslims have opened up their own schools but all of them are poorly organised and equipped. The state look at these school as centres of Muslim militancy and agitation against the established system and are therefore frustrated in many ways to discourage their opening. Muslim organisations from outside the country who want to help Muslims in Tanzania are met with all kinds of hostility from other state institutions to drive home to them that their presence in the country is undesirable. These anti Muslim campaigns have of late become so pronounced to the extent that even the most liberal among Muslims have become radicalised, so to speak and are joining the movements. Muslim issues which few years were unheard are now being discussed in camera in the Party and state institutions. These are fruits of underground movements which have conscientised the few Muslims in positions of power and authority. National salvation
lies in justice to be done to all. What has happened in other countries can easily happen in Tanzania. There is still time to avoid such a situation. All is well that ends well.

REFERENCE


4. See "Kiongozi’ No. 6, June 1950. For more information on missionary penetration in East Africa see M. Langley & T. Kiggins:


Christians being the most, educated were employed in the civil service. This prevented them from active politics.


12. "Mwafrika" 3rd October, 195g.


17. See Kiwanuka op. cit., p. 75.

18. Ibid.

19. "Taarifa ya Kamati ya Utendaji EAMWS Mkoa wa Tanga"


22. See Kwikima Report.


26. Ibid., p. 81.


29. See Kwikima Report.

30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.


33. "Baraza' (Nairobi) 12th December, 1968.


37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Kiwanuka p. 86. Other information from Bilali Rehani Waikela

40. See Bergen, p. 238.

41. Ibid., p.335.