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Towards a National Cultural Policy for the Promotion of Art in Tanzania

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In recent years there has been a growing interest in the study of the relationship between culture and development. This is largely a result of UNESCO's efforts since 1973 to promote and sponsor studies in national cultural policies. In Africa, for example, the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural policies which aimed at carrying out studies on themes related to national cultural policies was held in Accra, Ghana in 1975. Tanzania was represented at the Accra conference by cultural planners and administrators.

However, the necessity for the formulation of cultural policies and a programme of the development of national culture had been high on the agenda in many African countries since independence. During the late 1969's, some African nations took positive steps towards changing some structures of their colonial experiences. Chad, for example, declared a *cultural revolution*, Gabon announced *renovation*, Ghana put forward *African personality*. Tanzania launched *operation vijana* (operation youth), Togo proclaimed *a new march* and Zaire declared a policy of *authenticity*.

There is no reason to suppose that these early efforts towards cultural autonomy were directed towards the organisation of artistic production. Zaire's policy of *authenticity*, for instance, went no further than exhorting the citizens to drop their foreign names. In like manner, Tanzania's *operation vijana* decree did nothing more than force the youths to dress "decently". These efforts, however, were not trivial. If anything, they revealed a determination towards cultural decolonisation in order to change western cultural hegemony in Africa. The main weakness of such sporadic efforts was that they assumed an ideological void within which a cultural revolution was to take place. The result has been that in most of the countries where such attempts were made cultural confusion still reigns.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse aspects of Tanzania's cultural policy relevant to the promotion of visual arts. Section I is devoted to a discussion on the need for cultural aims of development, their roles and scope in establishing national identity. The concept of cultural development will also be examined. Section II deals with the problem of art patronage within the ideological set up of Tanzania. In this context, the impact of the marketing of art objects upon production will be examined. Section III concludes the analysis, making recommendations on the urgent need for a rational cultural policy for the promotion of art in the nation.

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On The Cultural Aims Of Development

Concern has often been expressed over what constitutes development. The colonial view of development, according to *Swai*¹, was an attempt to bring the social and political life of colonial territories into a healthy relationship with the more advanced countries. This view does not need detailed elaboration; economic exploitation disguised in the form of *la mission civilatrice* was the chief motive behind all forms of colonial administration. Economic exploitation, however, still continues. The late professor Rweyemamu summed up this state of affairs very well when he wrote:

...the sun of imperialism, far from being eclipsed at the dawn of independence, still glares down on the most impoverished half of the planet, rather more fiercely, than before. This is revealed by the growing inequality of development, the constantly widening gap between the level of development of the advanced capitalist countries and that of the economically and politically dependent - the so-called developing countries. 2

We thus find that the prevailing view of development puts heavy emphasis on economic growth. This view, however, is not fully shared by all of the leaders among us. Malecela, for example, feels that the economic growth of a nation is only one facet of development. He argues:

The development of a country does not merely consist of the exploitation of its potential natural wealth. This is only one facet. It also includes the evolution and refinement of the cultural, psychological and spiritual aspects of a nation. These latter characteristics are, to a large extent, the ones which give a nation its distinguishing characteristics or personality. Nonetheless, they are the least understood by those whose task is to institute and direct the machinery for development.

In certain developing countries, therefore, people have concentrated their efforts on what they think is development but in actual fact is economic growth, although the two are totally different. 3

Malecela's position is fully shared by Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, the Secretary General of UNESCO, who conceptualises development as follows:

...it is chiefly in the so-called developing societies that the concept of development as nothing more than economic growth has shown its most intolerable defects. There it has taken the form not of an adventure experienced from within but of a change brought about from outside...

The problem then arises everywhere of giving development full meaning again, viz. as both a qualitative and quantitative improvement, indissolubly linked, for one and all. At this point I believe the essential complementarity between two concepts, cultural identity and integrated development, become evident. Restore to the economy purpose and coherence (which it can derive only from culture), and restore to culture its vital function as a socio-economic regulator. Thus development can regain its meaning, viz. the full development of man's potentialities. 4

The foregoing quotations from Malecela and M'Bow seem to suggest that cultural development and economic growth operate independently in developing societies. Culture being a socially learned behaviour cannot be understood only from its internal laws of

development. It can only be understood through an analysis of the social system as a whole. And here the economic factor is of paramount importance. There is abundant evidence in Tanzania and elsewhere which reveals that with the change of the economic foundations of society, the entire superstructure is rapidly transformed. This transformation goes hand in hand with cultural change in most aspects of human culture.

The refinement of the cultural, psychological and spiritual aspects of a nation which Malecela mentions occurs within the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which such aspects rise. We should, therefore, expect these aspects of culture to be directly interwoven with the material activity and material relations of men at any stage in the development of mankind.

It must, however, be stressed here that the arts (architecture, art, music, poetry, literature and theatre) do not lose their significance when the economic foundations of society are transformed. This is because they have a lasting communicative function. They are basically reflections of particular social conditions and relationships. The feudal Ife in Nigeria, for example, produced great sculpture that shook the art world when it was "discovered" between 1914 and 1948. The Ife bronze heads in question had been produced in the 14th century A.D. Ife art tells us a lot about the character of social relations peculiar to that period since, as would be expected, the sculptures portrayed the Ife royalty. This is a typical characteristic of feudal art, as is the case in all class societies where culture is seen from the perspective of the dominant class in society. It can thus be seen that the concept of development refers to the material well-being of society and that the mode of material production conditions cultural life.

It is not out of place to cite the late Amilcar Cabral on the interaction of culture and economic development. In his memorial lecture for Eduardo Mondlane he observed that:

...culture has as its physical base the forces of production and means of production.

It plunges its roots into the material reality of the soil of the environment in which it grows and reflects the organic nature of society but all the same capable of being influenced by exterior factors. 5

Cabral was looking at culture as one of the strongest weapons in the struggle for national liberation in Guinea-Bissau. Yet he was quite aware that culture draws its sustenance from the material activity of men.

From the foregoing discussion, it is apparent that economic development is inextricably linked with cultural development. In fact, some western cultural anthropologists often look at culture as being the same thing as economic development. Sahlins and Service, for example, state:

Culture is the superorganic means available to the human species for utilizing the earth's resources in the service of survival...

Culture, continuing the life process, appropriates free energy, and builds it into an organisation for survival, and like life, culture moves to maximize the amount of energy exploitation.6

The problem with this definition of culture is that Sahlins and Service did not consider the social relations of production when human species decide to utilize the earth's resources in order to survive.

In an attempt to examine the nature and scope of development, therefore, the main arguments can be summarized as follows:

1. Culture evolves from the economic structure of society.

2. Cultural change follows the economic transformation of society.
3. Peak periods of artistic production do not automatically coincide with economic development.

From this three points we may now proceed with an examination of the need for cultural policy in Tanzania to promote art.

Cultural Policy and the Visual Arts in Tanzania

Development presents certain common features in all types of countries, but the situation of the visual arts, which is the subject of our discussion, assumes special characteristics in socialist nations. An essential feature of cultural revolutions in these nations has been the stress laid on the relationship between class and culture. The revolutions are characterised by the extinction of the cultural monopoly of the former ruling classes, thereby uplifting the cultural levels of the peasants and workers, support from the state for the development and promotion of the arts and conscious activity by the ruling party and the state, with the aim of achieving these objectives.

Socialist policy implies the existence of an art which appeals to the broad masses and which is democratically disseminated. This means that the visual artist is obliged to take a stand on matters of current interest, such as politics, scientific development and economic affairs. He is expected to identify with the cause of workers and peasants through the creative activities that distinguish him as a visual artist.

Socialist cultural policy on art is, therefore, a reaction to the capitalist lack of concrete programmes for artistic production. The Western European artist, unlike his counterpart in the socialist countries, frequently lives on the fringe of society however "committed" he is to the capitalist cause. It was probably this fact which enraged Barzun to charge:

We clamour for an American literature, native music, and circumstantial landscapes. We put the artist on the spot and expect him to stay there. The products of art must smell of the soil, or at least of the asphalt of a particular city... We demand, but how do we provide?

Indeed, one of the most important distinguishing features of socialist cultural policy has been for the state to subsidize artists' funds to enable them to deal with the problems of social security and even housing, something that would be impossible under capitalist relations of production.

The first attempt at consolidating national culture in Tanzania was marked by the establishment of the Ministry of Culture and Youth in December 1962. The reasons given for its establishment by President Julius K. Nyerere were as follows:

I have set up this new Ministry to help us regain our pride in our own culture. I want it to seek out the best of the traditions and customs of all tribes and make them part of our national culture.⁸

The cultural task of Tanzanian nationalism has thus been to determine and propagate any serviceable existing features that could be found, or else to create such features. This task culminated in 1965 in the identification of cultural organs which the Ministry could administer. Cabinet Paper No. 39 of May 1965 grouped such organs as follows: Department of Museums, Department of Antiquities, Department of National Archives, National Swahili Council, National Sports Council, National Festivals and State Celebrations Office, Film Censorship Board and Department of Art and Crafts.

The Cabinet Paper argued that Tanzania's political and economic independence would not be a reality if Tanzania remained dominated by outside forces.⁹ Indeed, cultural policies

become meaningful and effective only when they correspond to the state's political, economic and social life. But in an age in which the economic structures of African nations are an integral part of the world capitalist system, what type of cultural policies can we expect? If the function of Tanzania's cultural policy is the control of outside political and economic influence, then we would expect a policy which is characterised by the following:

1. mass awareness of the place of culture in socio-economic life;
2. mass involvement and participation in community cultural events as the vanguard of progressive thought;
3. party involvement in directing viable cultural events in the nation.

It is probably in the visual arts that the above characteristics show their greatest deficiency in Tanzania. Yet it is in the visual arts that exploitation by "outside influences" has been the greatest. By about 1500, for example, Portuguese sailors had a free hand in collecting art objects along the East and West African coasts. By 1899, Duerden noted that there were 20,300 art objects whose origin could be traced to Africa in European museums. Furthermore, he observed that "the intellectual mania which led to the creation of museums also led to the wholesale pillaging of so-called primitive societies for specimens".¹⁰ Lacking a clear policy to contain the menace of the exportation of art objects, the Ministry of Culture and Youth in 1975 created the National Arts Council. One of the functions of the new Council was to undertake or assist any institution or persons in the undertaking of production, importation, exportation and sale of artistic works for any matter appertaining to artistic works.¹¹

In a nation which has no national art gallery to preserve its artistic heritage, it may seem easy to surrender this responsibility to collectors from outside. And this is indeed what is happening at the moment, with the consequence that art objects from Tanzania can only be seen in European galleries. The inevitability of this is apparent since the Party's involvement in directing artistic activities has not yet been spelt out.

In formal education art is tolerated and the same tolerance is shown in adult education programmes. But whether these institutions take art as a body of knowledge necessary for the development of human potential, or as a form of consciousness to defend the interest of the masses cannot be firmly asserted. What is certain is that neither in formal nor in non-formal education does art constitute the core of the curriculum. And yet schools always develop the dominant thoughts and aspirations of society. If society looks at art as a means of knowledge which can help to educate the masses and thus raise their cultural level, schools will be called upon to promote art in order to fulfil the needs and aspirations of society. With the introduction of Ujamaa and Tanzania's commitment to the liberation of Africa, for example, the visual arts cannot remain neutral or indifferent. Indeed it has been observed that:

...the most striking omission in the art of East Africa is the art of social comment.
Where does an artist express feelings about African unity, African freedom fighters,
African socialism or protest or social comment of any sort?¹²

Miller was reacting to the neutrality and indifference of the visual arts to the current political and social climate of East Africa of which Tanzania is a part.

Patronage Of Visual Arts

Lacking a rational policy on the promotion of the visual arts, Tanzania's patronage is haphazard and unco-ordinated with a number of consequences.

Firstly, the great demand for products of folk art on the part of urban customers and foreign visitors to Tanzania threatens to result in a mass-production souvenir industry. No informal mass education on the part of folk artists by the National Arts Council or the Ministry of Information and Culture seems to have been conceived in order to rectify this problem.

Secondly, there is a confusion among cultural administrators as to what constitutes African art; hence, Tanzanian art. As a result of this, wood sculpture is often looked upon as the authentic art of Tanzania. This, of course, is a European misconception since the days of Leonardo da Vinci who thought that cultures with no painting tradition were uncivilised. With the discovery in Africa of cave paintings, da Vinci's view was dropped. The view resurfaced, however, with the early acquisition of wood and bronze sculpture from Africa. Western collectors, excited by what they saw, wrongly took it for granted that sculpture is the only significant art form of Africa. Several cases can be cited to disprove this. Among the Wanyamwezi, for example, wall painting is the most significant art.

Economic transformation has brought with it many art forms in Tanzania. The Tingatinga school of painting is as significant as a piece of Makonde sculpture; they are both art forms arising from the contemporary economic structure of Tanzania.

Amid the lack of a rational socialist cultural policy for promoting visual arts, however, art patronage has been practised for historical and purely functional reasons. The most important patron of the visual arts at the national level is the ruling party. From the days of TANU to CCM, the Party has been active in commissioning national visual artists to design and execute art works on national monuments as shown in Table I below.

TABLE 1: ART COMMISSIONS GRANTED BY TANU AND CCM FROM 1971 TO 1981

10th Independence Anniversary Monument	Arusha	1971
10th Independence Anniversary Monument	Tabora	1971
10th Independence Anniversary Monument	Dar es Salaam	1971
10th Anniversary of the Arusha Declaration: Monument	Dar es Salaam	1977
10th Anniversary of the Arusha Declaration: Monument	Mwanza	1977
Kagera War Monument	Arusha	1980*
Kagera War Monument	Moshi	1980
Kagera War Monument	Songea	1980
Uhuru Struggle Murals	CCM Regional Headquarters, Kilimanjaro	1981..

Cement relief characterises the art work on the Tabora monument, while the Arusha Independence monument's art work features stone chipping mosaic like the Dar es Salaam monument symbolising the 10th Anniversary of the Arusha Declaration. The Kagera War monuments are cement sculptures of a single soldier symbolising victory. The murals at the CCM regional office of Kilimanjaro have been executed using coloured stone chipping mosaic.

Next in importance as patrons of the visual arts come the parastatal organisations. Table 2 shows a record of art patronage by these public bodies.

Table 2: Art Commissions Granted by Parastatal Organisations From 1971 to 1981

Name of Parastatal Organisation	Commission	Location	Year
Bank of Tanzania	Mural	Dar es Salaam	1971
Kariakoo Markets Corporation	Mural	Dar es Salaam	1971
Board of Internal Trade	Mural	Dar es Salaam	1976
Institute of Adult Education	Mural	Dar es Salaam	1978
Correspondence Department	Mural	Dar es Salaam	1978
Tanzania Posts and Telecommunications Headquarters	Mural	Dar es Salaam	1979
Bank of Tanzania	Mural	Mwanza	1979
University of Dar es Salaam	Mural	Dar es Salaam	1980

The scene is distinctly brightening here, but caution is needed. It is always the architects who advise their clients to include murals on the buildings. The parastatal heads themselves seldom take any interest in art works. This is to be expected because aesthetic education has had a shaky foundation since colonial days. Colonial rule everywhere showed little or no tolerance for other peoples' expressive aspects of culture such as the visual arts. This legacy seems to have been carried on by national educational planners and curriculum developers because the nation lacks a clear socialist policy on the arts.

Conclusion And Recommendations

It is often assumed that the future of the non-Western countries lies along the path of Westernization. Some non-Western nations, therefore, especially those building socialism, respond to this assumption by attempting to achieve a synthesis of East and West. Indeed, Tanzania seems to illustrate this duality in cultural matters. In the process of building socialism along this synthesis, the Party has not been able to devise a definite socialist cultural policy for the promotion of the visual arts or any other arts. As a result of this, it is impossible today to evaluate the role of the Regional Cultural Officers, let alone the National Arts Council, in the promotion of art. The functions of the Arts Council place heavy emphasis on the production of works of art without mentioning the welfare of the artists. As a result, most urban artists produce art works which bear no correspondence to the socialist ideals of the nation. Among its functions the Council undertakes:

- (a) to promote the development and production of artistic works in Tanzania;
- (b) to assume responsibility for the revival, production and preservation of indigenous and traditional artistic works within the United Republic;
- (c) to plan and co-ordinate the activities of persons engaged in the production of artistic works in Tanzania;
- (d) to carry out research in the development and production of artistic works and marketing of such works, including the standard and quality of artistic works produced in Tanzania;
- (e) to provide advisory services and technical assistance necessary for, or incidental to, the proper development of enterprises for the production of artistic works to parastatal organisations and other persons engaged in such enterprises;
- (f) to advise the government on all matters relating to the development and production of artistic works in Tanzania;
- (g) to provide and promote training facilities for persons engaged in or employed in enterprises for the production of artistic works;
- (h) to undertake or assist any institution or persons in the undertaking of production, importation, exportation and sale of artistic works for any matter appertaining to artistic works;
- (i) to provide by-laws published in the Gazette and in other such manner as the Council may approve, for a system of registration of persons engaged in the production of artistic works for commercial purposes.¹³

With the Council situated in Dar es Salaam, it is unlikely that such functions can be performed in a nation with more than 8,000 registered villages (*Ujamaa* villages). In this fundamental respect, the Council will mainly cater for urban elites. No rational socialist cultural policy can accommodate this state of affairs, even if all the Regional Cultural Officers were to become members of the Arts Council.

It is therefore recommended that:

1. There should be a dialogue between the Party and the Ministry responsible for national culture on the place of the visual arts as a means of progressive education.
2. The National Arts Council should be decentralised and villages should be required to set up cultural committees responsible for art promotion. The existing *ad hoc* committees which are called during national festivals should form the nucleus of the permanent cultural committees.
3. The Ministry of Education should have the responsibility for creating Secondary Schools with an arts bias and should provide competent teachers to teach the Arts.
4. Factories should initiate art clubs, as they do with traditional dance (*ngoma*) groups. Only one factory, Tasini Textiles, had an art club when it was privately owned. The club has since died away for lack of management guidance, after Tasini became a public corporation.
5. A radio programme on the arts and the socialist revolution should be started by the Ministry or the Arts Council in order to educate the masses on the place of art in the building of socialism.

Notes and References

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