COLONIALISM AND CLASS FORMATION IN ZANZIBAR

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ZANZIBAR is situated roughly twenty miles from the shores of the African continent. It is the Africa's second largest island, after Malagasy, in the Indian Ocean. It consists of the two main islands, Unguja, with an area of 640 sq. miles, and Pemba with one of 380. There are other islets, Uzi, Kojani, Fundo, Panza and Tumbatu; the latter (area 3600 acres) is the only one which is inhabited and of any significance, lying not far from the north-west coast of Unguja. The country's population density is very high, with average of 258 people per sq. mile in the case of Unguja and 352 in the case of Pemba.

Nowhere have people accepted the imposition of colonial rule with open arms. In South Africa and Guinea, in Algeria and Tanganyika, the people resisted colonisation. The establishment of colonial rule required the use of deceit and force, the latter backing up the former whenever challenged. In order to understand then the British colonisation of Zanzibar, one has to understand Zanzibar's relationship with Oman and the latter's relationship with Britain. Britain in fact, had entered Zanzibar through the ruling class of Oman, the Al-Busaidis.

Seyyid Said became the Sultan of Oman in 1806. These were the years of internal rivalry between Britain and France for the control of India and the Indian Ocean. Muscat, the capital of Oman, was a port of strategic importance. It was situated where the trade route from Bombay was divided on its way to the Gulf and the Red Sea. The Busaidy dynasty had made its alliance with Britain by the treaty of 1798, and was thus anxiously awaiting the outcome of the struggle between the two capitalist powers. The issue of who was to be the supreme power in the Indian Ocean was resolved at the battle of Waterloo. By defeating France, Britain emerged as the master in the Indian Ocean.

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London assigned the task of defeating minor challenges to its supremacy in the area to its colonial state in India. One of these challenges was from patriotic people of Oman led by the Al-Qawasim. Between 1805 - 1820, they waged resistance struggle against British military campaigns in their area and on each occasion the Busaidis cooperated with the British against the people of Oman. With the defeat of Oman resistance, the Busaidis emerged internally as the main power, but under the wings of the British. With the defeat of Al-Qawasims, Britain and their Busaidy allies acquired complete control over trade and shipping in the area. However, since Britain was by far the more powerful of the two allies, it was clear to even the Busaidis that the trade and shipping in the area was bound to pass into complete British control. It could not be otherwise.

Having consolidated his position in Oman, Seyyid Said, the merchant prince moved his attention to the east coast of Africa. With his navy stationed off the shores of Zanzibar, he entered into "negotiations" with the Mwinyi Mkuu, the feudal lord of the Wahadimus of Zanzibar, for the establishment of a Busaidy colonial state in Zanzibar. If the Mwinyi Mkuu had any lingering doubts as to the intentions of Seyyid Said, the show of force certainly dispelled them. The emerging feudal formation of Zanzibar was incapable of resisting the superior might of the Busaidis, and thus Zanzibar succumbed to the rule of the Omani commercial class. However, the Busaidy colonisation of Zanzibar was not entirely an independent act. It had been sanctioned by a far more advanced capitalist power, namely Britain.

Britain did not assist the Busaidis for charitable reasons. It needed to secure its trade routes to India. The alliance that it forged with the Omani's Sultan for the purpose of securing the routes, however, was not one between equals. Britain, by then, was the leading capitalist power, was colonising India and establishing its hegemony in the Indian Ocean. The Busaidis were merchants involved principally in trading commodities and not in production. The alliance between the Busaidy merchants and the most advanced capitalist class could never be on an equal footing. The alliance that Seyyid Said had forged with the British was of a subservient nature. The British ruling class was the senior partner, and the Omani dynasty, the junior one.

The Moresby Treaty which the Sultan signed with the British in 1822 made the nature of the relationship abundantly clear. By the terms of the treaty, Britain acquired the right to stop the trade in slaves between East Africa and the European countries, mainly France and Portugal. Most of this trade was conducted by Busaidis. Secondly, Britain granted recognition to the Sultan's authority over his dominions in East Africa. The main purpose of granting this recognition was to make British intentions clear to the Europeans, particularly the French who had occupied Madagascar, Reunion and the Comoro Islands. The treaty meant that the Busaidis had embarked on the irreversible process of becoming a junior partner. Of course, they could flout the treaty, but the master could always discipline them, and when necessary, the British did just that. The granting of recognition of their "right" to rule in the dominions in East Africa also meant that when convenient that recognition could equally easily be withdrawn. What were being recognised thus were not the rights of the Busaidis. Britain was letting the other European powers know the areas which she considered to be her sphere of influence. From then on who was to be the effective power in that area was not going to be decided by the Omanis in either Muscat or Zanzibar but by what agreements were being made between the competing and the contending ruling classes in London, Paris, Brussels and Berlin. The inter-imperialist rivalries on a global scale were for now to be the decisive factor.

The Busaidis understood the implications of British victory, that is, the trade between India and the Red Sea would increasingly be monopolised by Britain. For them to continue to flourish, they had to find an alternative.

For the Busaidis, East Africa offered several advantages. One of these was the slave trade. The French needed slave labour to expand their sugar plantations in Reunion, the Portuguese needed it in Brazil, and the Americans needed it for their plantations in the South. Later with the expansion of the clove plantations, Zanzibar itself was to use slave labour on a large scale. The slave trade on the west coast of Africa had been contained by the British. The other source in Africa was the east coast. The second economic advantage was the trade in ivory. The two were interlinked. The slaves brought ivory to the coast,

and like the ivory, they too were sold as commodities. Seyyid Said wanted to control this trade by setting up a trading centre close to the source. Initially, Seyyid Said had chosen Mombasa, but due to his inability to crush the resistance of the Mazruis, the Busaidy Sultan settled for Zanzibar and made it his capital in 1832.

Zanzibar had a deep harbour and parts of it and the island of Pemba were well suited for the cultivation of cloves. There was a ready market for cloves. Seyyid Said knew that once he set up his court in Zanzibar, his large merchant and naval fleet would ensure that Zanzibar became the economic, political and cultural centre for the area. So despite the fact that Seyyid Said could not militarily defeat the Mazruis of Mombasa, it was clear that once the trade was removed to Zanzibar, Mombasa could not survive. The Mazruis were, in essence, little different in their world outlook from the Busaidis. When faced with attacks from Seyyid Said, they asked the British to protect them. However, since Britain had already chosen the junior partner in Seyyid Said, they had little interest in the even more junior, the Mazruis. Mombasa was eventually captured by Seyyid Said in 1837. The Sultan now exercised control all along the coast and even threatened the Portuguese who controlled Mozambique. On one occasion, he informed the Governor-General of Mozambique that "if he found him interfering, in any way, with the trade established between Angoche and Zanzibar, or molesting any dhow or vessels with his flag flying on her, he would come with his ships and blow the city of Mozambique into the water, before England or France could come to its assistance" (Brady, 1950). Quite a commentary on the decline of Portugal!

By late 1830s, the Busaidis had consolidated their power both in Zanzibar and all along the coast. Rather than completely destroying the authority of the Mwinyi Mkuu among the Wahadimus in Zanzibar, they chose to work through him in much the same way as Lugard was to advocate later. Under the agreements between the two, the Mwinyi Mkuu was to provide labour to clear land and to pick cloves during the harvest season. The right to conduct external economic affairs which included trading relations and the levying and collecting of duties were of course retained by them. The Mwinyi Mkuu was given some financial compensation for the loss of his authority and for his cooperation.

The Arab trading families who had settled in Zanzibar very early on did not particularly welcome the arrival of the Omanis. However, since there were contradictions among these families, they could not unite to challenge the Busaidis. The Seyyid exploited these contradictions and also imported more Omanis to bolster his own position. The 1840 revolt of the slaves finally consolidated the Busaidy position; for then the trading families recognised the protection they could receive from the centralised armed forces at the command of the Omani colonial state.

With the establishment of the Omani colonial state, Zanzibar became the centre of trade for East Africa. Seyyid Said signed commercial treaties with the United States in 1833, with Britain in 1839 and with France in 1844. Under the terms of these treaties the three nations had the liberty to sell commodities without interference as to price and were required to pay duty of five per cent on cargoes landed, excluding the goods unsold or re-exported. Significantly, one of the terms of the treaties was that Zanzibar could not arrest or try the citizens of these countries in its courts.

The entreport trade of Zanzibar was effectively in the hands of the Indian commercial bourgeoisie resident in Zanzibar. The Indians had long historical links with the east coast. This link expanded considerably after the establishment of the Omani colonial state. The Indians were specifically brought in by the Busaidy dynasty to play the middle class role in the islands. Unlike their counterparts on the mainland who were brought in to provide labour hands in the construction of the railway between Kenya and Uganda, in Zanzibar they were to occupy important positions in the country's economy. One of the usual practices among succeeding sultan in the period between the establishment of the Omani colonial state and the formal takeover of Zanzibar by the British in 1890 was to appoint an Indian merchant to the office of the Customs Master. The Customs Master collected the import duty and paid the sultan a lumpsum calculated on an estimate of the annual customs revenue. Most of the wholesale and retail trade was in the hands of the Indian merchants and some was in the hands of the Arab and Swahili merchants on the coast and further inland. Among these were Tippu Tip, Bushiri and Bwana Kheri. The latter two were to lead a

rebellion on the coast against the Germans towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Since the entreport trade was in the hands of the Indian commercial bourgeoisie, it meant the concentration within this class of the enormous power over the economic life of Zanzibar. The capital which this class accumulated through trade made it possible for them to become money lenders, givers of credit. It was their role as money lenders which eventually proved to be quite revealing.

In the beginning, the bulk of trade was with the United States of America. According to Ruschenbur, "between 16th September, 1832, until 26th of May 1834, 41 foreign vessels visited Zanzibar, of which 32 were American" (Said-Ruete, 1929). Most of the American trade was with the merchants of Salem. The American merchants brought cotton sheeting (marekani), guns and gun powder, and bought cloves, ivory, copal and hides. When the Humburg firm of O'Swold opened a branch in Zanzibar in 1849, the German trade expanded very quickly.

As we noted earlier, the expansion of the clove plantations in Zanzibar and the sugar plantations in the French island of La Reunion required slave labour. The massive expansion of the slave trade in East Africa was a direct result of this need and it was facilitated by the Indian commercial bourgeoisie. They financed the slaving expeditions. African collaborators usually brought the slaves to the inland slave markets for purchase by Arab slavers who in turn brought them to the coast for transhipment to Zanzibar. Since the trade was financed by the Indian commercial bourgeoisie, it, together with the Busaidis who protected it, reaped enormous profits.

Through the Moresby Treaty of 1822, the British had arrogated to themselves the right to search Omani shipping trafficking in slaves with European nations. This meant that Omani shipping could not carry slaves to La Reunion. However, Omani ships under the French Flag could, and so the bulk of the Arab dhows sailed under the French flag and the French, in the process, found themselves with ready-made allies. The French made no secret of their need for slaves. They also made it quite clear that they were prepared to go to any lengths to acquire slave labour. By the 1845 treaty with Britain, Seyyid Said agreed to forbid the export of slaves from his African dominions but the

treaty permitted him to transport slaves along the east coast, from one part of his East African dominions to another. The Busaidis, even if they were willing to, could not possibly enforce the treaty. Its enforcement would have precipitated the most serious rebellion against the Omani colonial state. The British themselves did not appear to be serious either. The squadron they had sent out to patrol the waters was "the laughing stock of the Americans, French and Germans". The squadron included "the Sidon, an old tub that any dhow on the coast could beat, the Gorgon that took forty days to do eight hundred miles" (Russell, 1935). Both Moresby Treaty and the Hamerton Treaty were obviously imposed for the purpose of asserting British authority over the Busaidis, and the sections dealing with the slave trade were included to satisfy the anti-slave trade lobby in Britain.

The French position was clearly stated by the Governor of La Reunion in a letter dated 29th June, 1858 to Seyyid Majid:

> "His Majesty the Emperor of the French... asks you to authorise that labourers engaged for La Reunion shall freely leave your dominions. The Land of La Reunion is rich and fruitful, but the heat of the sun forbids white men from working there. That is why we turn to the black man God made for these climates. The soil of La Reunion, like all French soil, is a soil of liberty, every labourer who sets foot on it becomes free. If we ask of him his labour, it is on condition that we board him, dress him, lodge him, nurse him if he is sick, and finally pay him. Is it permissable to say that the man one places in such circumstances is a slave? It is only for a short time, and but for a few years that we ask the labour of men from your dominions. After they will be authorised to return to your country they will have learnt cultivation of sugar, they will have learnt our customs..." (Russell, 1935).

Seyyid Majid, who had succeeded Seyyid Said, had no desire to interfere with vessels under the French flag "as on the smallest, or without any, provocation the consul of that nation threatens to haul down his flag and menace him (the Sultan) with the wrath of the Emperor!" (Russell, 1935). And so Seyyid Majid in reply to the demands of the British for the stopping of the trade stated: "It is my wish to comply with the desires of the British Government, but these countries cannot do without slaves... and if I put a stop to the traffic in slaves, it will ruin these countries and it will ruin my subjects" (Russell, 1935).

Reunion took at least 100,000 slaves to work on the sugar plantations; annually importing at least twenty thousand. The French firm of Regis at Merseilles, among others, made a large fortune out of this trade.

The slave trade was carried on for an additional purpose too. It was not just that the clove plantations of Zanzibar, the sugar plantations of Reunion, the Portuguese colonies, particularly Brazil, and to a very limited extent Arabia, needed slaves. Slaves were also brought to the coast and to Zanzibar so that they could become porters for the imperialist penetration into East Africa, Rev. Horace Waller wrote:

> "We are hand and glove with slave dealers themselves... I confidently affirm that the ferocious Arab half-caste who haunts Central Africa is perfectly justified in stating to all who will listen to him that the English are only too glad to use slaves when they can; and, I repeat, that it is but necessary for him to bid his hearers examine the next European caravan that passes through the country to establish the truth of his accusation" (Russell, 1935).

Stanley, the servant of European imperialism in East and Central Africa, estimated that twenty thousand porters per month left the coast for the interior, employed by "the British, German and Congo States Administrations, the Roman Catholic Mission, the Church, the London and other religious missions, the Arabs with their caravans, the European traders, Government Agents, agriculturalists, tea and coffee planters, hunters and tourists..." (Russell, 1935).

At this time, then, the British could hardly engage in actively discouraging and stamping out slave trade because European penetration into the east and central Africa required porters and, as The Times correspondent wrote as late as 12 December 1892, "It is not possible to abolish this system owing to the fact of nearly all the porters being slaves" (Russell, 1935).

The impact of the slave trade on the mainland was devastating, particularly in those areas which became the raiding grounds for slaves. In these areas slave trading rather than increasing or maintaining the normal level of production, became the main activity. The slave trade required the 'services' of Africans. The Arab slavers by themselves could not possibly collect the slaves in numbers that were required by the plantation economies, and for porterage. These Africans were the collaborators and they were the transmission line in the slave trade.

In the role that they played, they, like their Omani counterparts, were comprador too. The slave trade had consequently given rise to a stratum in African society whose main activity became slaveing and the slave trade. They were, in a genuine sense, the predecessors of the strata and classes which were to serve German, British and Belgian colonialism, and, in the present period, with very limited relative independence, imperialism. For what is the difference between facilitating, as part of transmission line, the export of human beings as commodities and that of copper or coffee, when both activities are carried out in the service of capitalism?

Africans were captured, enslaved and traded not because the Europeans or the Omanis considered them racially inferior. As Eric Williams correctly pointed out: "The reason was economic, not racial; it had to do not with colour of the labourer but the cheapness of labour. As compared with Indian and white labour, Negro slavery was eminently superior... The money which procured a white man's services for ten years could buy a Negro for life" (Williams, 1964). The use of racialism to rationalise slavery followed the slave trade and certainly did not precede it. The Irish, the Highland Scots, the "vagrants" in the towns of England, all of them whites, were sent off to work on the plantations in the 'New World' before African slave labour arrived. "The institution of white servitude, however, had grave disadvantages. Postlethwayte, a rigid mercantilist, argued that white labourers in the colonies would create rivalry with the mother country in manufacturing. Better black slaves on plantations than white servants in industry, which would encourage aspirations to independence" (Williams, 1964). The history of the United States of America bears testimony to Postlethwayte's fears.

A concerted effort to end the slave trade in East Africa was made also for economic reasons. Once Livingstone had demarcated the Shire Valley, in what is today Malawi, for the planting of cotton, and similarly, others had demarcated areas for tea, coffee and so on, the British (and the Germans) set about the task of eliminating the slave trade. Their past experience in West Africa must have been invaluable. There they had done it for palm oil and steady markets for their manufactured commodities; in east and central Africa it was to be,

for among other things, cotton, and for the encouragement of what Livingstone called "legitimate trade".

The problem of supplying labour to the French planters was solved by providing them with labour from India. As we stated earlier, what the French wanted was labour, cheap labour. It did not matter whether it was black or brown, or for that matter yellow or white. The very country from which the Indian commercial bourgeoisie of Zanzibar had originated was also made into a supplier of indentured labour to the French planters and to the South African sugar plantations.

The facade of the independence of Oman and of the Omani colonial state in Zanzibar was destroyed when Seyyid Said died. His two sons could not come to an agreement as to who was going to rule what. The issue was decided by Britain, and not even from London. Lord Canning, the British Governor-General of India, split the Omani throne into two - Muscat and Zanzibar. Seyyid Majid, one of the contenders, acceded to the throne in Zanzibar to look after "his East African dominions". Such was the independence of the Omani colonial state in Zanzibar. The Omanis were filling in time until Britain was ready to take over completely.

In about 1876, the King of the Belgians invited the leading nations of Europe to a conference at Brussels at the end of which the International African Association was founded for coordinating the 'exploration' of Africa. Africa was the only continent left on which the various European bourgeoisie had not clearly staked out their respective claims. The Berlin Conference in 1884-85 sorted out which imperialist power was to get what. Though the various bourgeoisies of Europe had sent out their agents to 'explore' Africa on their behalf, one can say categorically that they did not have any clear picture, in mid 1880's of what they were carving up in Berlin. The immediate concern of the European bourgeoisies as they scrambled for Africa was to acquire territories and to thus create spheres of influence, no matter whether they were in the belly of Senegal or in the middle of the Sahara.

Naturally, the Sultan of Zanzibar, though he was supposed to have "his East African dominions", was not consulted when Africa was being carved up. Seyyid Barghash, who was now heading the Busaidy dynasty

in the isles, may not have known anything about Berlin, but he and his chief partner on the mainland, Tippu Tip, could see from the practice of the European powers - Germany, Belgium, France and Italy - that their days were numbered.

Following Stanley's 'exploration' of the Congo basin, the Belgian King took over the area and he christened it the Congo Free State. This was part of the area in which Tippu Tip traded. The threat that this presented to his interests is here made rather romantically clear:

> "When Tippu Tip accompanied his European guests down to their steamers he was very curious as to the operation of the engines and inspected them with care... He remained pensive on the riverbank... There was ample cause for pensiveness. Here were the Belgians encroaching on his market - his preserves - from the west, while the Germans were threatening Tanganyika from the east, as he learnt on another journey to Zanzibar in 1886" (Brady, 1950).

Like the Belgians, the Germans had been active in East Africa. Following the 'treaties' signed by Carl Peters, the German government announced the annexation of some 60,000 sq. miles of the Sultan's mainland territories on 28 April 1885. The Sultan refused to acknowledge the German occupation and even dispatched troops to Usagara, desperately hoping to prevent the physical takeover. But his resistance melted away when a formidable German squadron appeared off Zanzibar on 7 August 1885 and delivered an ultimatum to him.

In November 1886, Britain, France and Germany mutually agreed as to the extent of the dominions of the Sultan of Zanzibar in East Africa. These were to consist of a ten mile coastal strip from the Ruvuma River to the Tana river and the islands of Zanzibar, Pemba, Mafia and Lamu. When Tippu Tip arrived in Zanzibar in December and criticised the Sultan for not defending his rights, the Sultan explained: "Hamed, be not angry with me. I want to have no more to do with the mainland. The Europeans are trying to take Zanzibar from me - how should I be able to keep the mainland?" (Brady, 1950).

In 1888 the Germans leased on the coastal strip from the Sultan which now meant that the Germans had free access to the coast and control over all the great caravan routes inland. The German takeover meant that the German commercial bourgeoisie could monopolise the trade. To resist this, the Swahili merchants attempted an uprising

which the Germans totally defeated. The supremacy of German was now established and the Swahili merchants could only serve the interests of the Germans in the capacity which they chose to assign them. Tippu Tip wound up becoming the liwali of Stanley Falls on behalf of King Leopold.

Earlier, the British had been unable to intervene in Tanganyika to stave off German annexation because it was pre-occupied with South Africa and Egypt. In 1890, however, Britain, in exchange for handing over Heligoland to Germany, declared its protectorate over Zanzibar.

With the British in Kenya (and Uganda) and the Germans in Tanganyika, the importance of Zanzibar as an entreport declined. The real masters had arrived and they set up their centres - Mombasa in Kenya and Dar es Salaam in Tanganyika. The ivory market was moved to Mombasa. The days of the Jerams of Zanzibar were over. It was now time for the Visrams of Mombasa.

There used to be a popular saying among the merchants that "when the flute plays in Zanzibar, the people on the shores of the great lakes dance". For the Al-Busaidis in Zanzibar and their friends on the mainland, the days of the flute and the dance were over. Tippu Tip told a British Official: "Do not let us talk about justice; people are only just when it pays. The white man is stronger than I am; they will eat my possessions as I ate those of the pagans and someone will eat yours" (Brady, 1950).

With the decline of Zanzibar's entreport position, the clove plantations became crucial for the health of Zanzibar's economy. The clove plantations of Zanzibar were a product of the labour provided by the Mwinyi Mkuu in respect of the agreement between him and Seyyid Said, and slave labour imported from the mainland. It is this labour which cleared the forest land and planted the clove trees. As a result of this process of creating and expanding the clove plantation economy in Zanzibar much of the land was alienated from the Wahadimus by the Omanis. It would have been most remarkable if the Omanis, who had demanded labour to be supplied by the Mwinyi Mkuu of the Wahadimu, had not done so. It would have been very unlikely for the Sultan to declare the forest lands suitable for cloves and ignore the already-cleared lands of the Wahadimu.

From the outset, the Indian commercial bourgeoisie was involved in the clove plantations. They acted as financiers and suppliers of credit to the Omani launching himself into the plantation economy. Thus from the beginning, the Omani clove plantation owners were indebted to them. The large fluctuations in the prices of cloves in the international capitalist market forced the plantation owners to become even more indebted to the Indian commercial bourgeoisie. The extent of their indebtedness was made worse by their habit of conspicuous consumption that was a reflection of their semi-feudal past. Indebtedness tied the plantation owner to his creditor. The plantation owner sold his cloves to his creditor at prices fixed by the latter and got credit at an interest also fixed by him. In other words, the plantation owner sold cheaper and bought dearly. The main aim of the Indian commercial bourgeoisie was to tie up the plantation owner, thus guaranteeing the supply of cloves, and secondly, to speculate as to make quick and handsome profits. Their interest lay in the circulation of capital, buying and selling, and not in production in terms of improving the yield of cloves or expanding the acreage under cloves. As the plantation owners continued to get into deeper and deeper debt, the effective control over plantations progressively slipped into the hands of the Indian commercial bourgeoisie. Now they not only controlled marketing but were also establishing their dominance at the point of production. However, as we noted earlier, the Indian commercial bourgeoisie had not shown a keen interest in production and thus their control at the point of production could have created serious problems for the mono-crop economy of Zanzibar.

At all costs, the British colonial state had to protect the economic base of Zanzibar, which meant the clove plantations. In the process it also meant saving the economic base of the Omani plantation owners. One of the functionaries of the colonial state explained:

> "The real case for taking measures for the preservation of the Arab against himself rests on grounds which are not economic.... The State of Zanzibar is Arab in origin and constitution. The British Government destroyed the whole basis of their social organisation... (and must now) take the necessary steps to adapt them for meeting the new conditions".

Another functionary, the Attorney General, declared: "This is an Arab state. It is the duty of the protecting government to assist the

protected people. It is impossible for us to stand by and take the risk of the expropriation of His Highness' people" (Lofchie, 1965).

The state of Zanzibar which the British dismantled so as to impose their own colonial state was the Omani colonial state. By 1930's it was arguable whether any traits of this state remained. By then it could be stated that the state in Zanzibar was a British colonial state and not an Arab (Omani) one. Britain was neither romantic about Seyyid Said and his descendants nor sentimental about the plight of the Omani plantation owners. By directly intervening on the side of the plantation owners, the British colonial state was in effect making the plantation owners dependent on it for their continued survival as a class.

The British colonial state declared a moratorium on debts and forbade the alienation of land from the indebted plantation owners to the Indian merchant class. The representatives of the latter asked the British whether "... such a piece of legislation (a moratorium on debt payments) would have been undertaken if the money and rights involved had been of the British instead of the Indian community". The Indian commercial bourgeoisie played the only card it could to save its interests. The main buyer of Zanzibar's cloves was India. The Indian National Association, the organisation standing for the Indian commercial bourgeoisie in Zanzibar, appealed to the Indian National Congress, the party of the Indian national bourgeoisie which was leading the 'fight' for India's independence, to assist in organising a boycott of Zanzibar's cloves until the British authorities in Zanzibar yielded to their demands. The Indian National Congress obliged, and the British colonial state had to enter into negotiations with the Indian National Association. Eventually a compromise was reached between the British colonial state, the Indian National Association and the Arab Association. The latter represented the interests of the plantation owners.

Though the Indian commercial bourgeoisie had succeeded in pressurising the British colonial state to grant concessions, the struggle between the two had made one issue perfectly clear. The British had chosen the class which it was going to nurture and protect, and that was the landowning class. This was not the first time that they had defended the landowning classes. The British had their experiences in Latin America behind them. In their efforts to continue their control

in Latin America in the nineteenth and part of the twentieth centuries, they had ensured that the dominant class internally in the Latin American countries was the landowning class. Whenever the national bourgeoisie emerged in any of the Latin American countries, the British (and later the Americans) destroyed it by establishing national industry, the national bourgeoisie would challenge the markets of the metropolitan bourgeoisie. Therefore the destruction of the national bourgeoisie in the periphery was necessary for the interest of the British capitalist class. On the other hand, the land owning class could only produce commodities for export, be it bananas, cotton, coffee, cocoa, sisal or cloves. This class for its survival depends upon exports to the imperialist metropoles. Secondly, since it does not engage in manufacturing, it imports commodities for consumption from the imperialist countries. This class usually engages in lavish conspicuous consumption and the imperialists can hardly be expected to be opposed to that, for it provides them with markets. Thus because of the position they occupy, the landowning classes are usually the most pliant and reliable allies of the imperialists.

In the case of Zanzibar, the situation was similar. The bourgeoisie which was in conflict with the landowning classes was only involved in trade and moneylending, not in industry. Consequently, the British were choosing between two sections of the bourgeoisie, neither of which was challenging the overall interests of colonialism.

The British colonial state went a step further. Not only was it going to protect the plantation owners but it also chose to train their progenies in the art of serving the colonial rule. The Report of the Education Commission in 1916 is quite enlightening. It stated: "Given education the Arab is undoubtedly capable of higher vocations. There is strong evidence in favour of his employment in the Police: the respect which he commands from the native is a strong point in his favour ...(H)e might be employed more extensively in the District Administration".

For the oppressed African masses, the Report recommended: The African will be able eventually to take his full share with the Arab and the Indian in the social and economic life of the Protectorate if only his capacities are wisely trained and developed". The fact that

there were only a handful of African petty-bourgeois intellectuals by the mid-fifties is the direct result of colonial education policy.

The recommendations of the Commission, however, did not go unchallenged. The minority report submitted by the representative of the Indian National Association in the Commission showed a tremendous degree of enlightenment: "The aim of the state should always be ... to produce something higher than mere automations such as clerks... who will ever be a dependent class". But then that is precisely what the British colonial state wanted to create.

The only class historically capable of challenging colonialism (and now neo-colonialism) is the working class. The working class in Zanzibar in the period under discussion (1913-53) comprised mainly of the plantation and transport workers, with an extremely small section in industry.

Following the abolition of slavery in Zanzibar at the end of the nineteenth century, the plantation owners had to rely entirely on wage labour. Even before slavery was abolished, wage labour had been used during the harvest. The abolition of slavery meant that now only wage labour could be used. Labour on the clove plantations was required to clear weeds and for the harvest seasons. The harvest seasons lasted only part of a year and thus the labour needed was of a seasonal character. The export of labour, as porters, from Zanzibar during the latter part of the nineteenth century had created an acute shortage of labour. The abolition of slavery only slightly accentuated the problem. To solve the problem of labour shortage, the British colonialists had originally considered importing labour from India, the 'Indian coolie labour'. However, since labour could be obtained from the mainland, the problem was resolved by importing the Wanyamwezi from central Tanganyika, the Wamakonde from the borders of Tanganyika and Mozambique, and elements of other ethnic groups from the mainland. As squatters they were allowed to build houses and to plant crops. These belonged to them. They were permitted these 'rights' so long as they did not make 'trouble'. The latter was never clearly defined. The plantation owner permitted squatting for two main reasons. The cultivation of crops meant that the land around the clove trees was weeded and, secondly, though they were not required to by law, the squatters would provide ready, hirea-

ble labour when the harvest season arrived. In Zanzibar, the squatters were the most oppressed and exploited - they had neither land nor year-round employment. During the struggle for independence and thereafter, the squatters and the workers were the most militant in their opposition to colonialism and the plantation owners.

The nationalist movement emerged in the mid-fifties. The two dominant parties, namely the Afro-Shirazi Party and the Zanzibar Nationalist Party, superficially appeared to be divided along racial lines. However, in reality the division was along class lines. The ZNP basically represented the interests of the plantation owners; and its later alliance with the Zanzibar and Pemba People's Party, which represented the Shirazi African plantation owners in Pemba, showed that at the height of the independence movement, the plantation owners, be they Arab or African, united to defend their class interests.

The ASP was able to express the sentiments of the landless masses as far as the land question was concerned, but from a petty-bourgeois perspective. Later on, because of the pressures of its left-wing elements and the trade union movement affiliated to it, the party did call for the nationalisation of land but did not put forward a comprehensive program for land reform. Since the land question was the burning issue for the squatters, they responded enthusiastically to the ASP program, limited as it was.

At the height of the independence struggle, some radical politicians and youth formed the Umma Party. This party clearly articulated the question of land reform and the national question as a whole. It formed an alliance with the ASP, and it was this broad alliance of these two parties and the Zanzibar and Pemba Federation of Labour, Federation of Progressive Trade Unions, the All-Zanzibar Journalist Organisation, and other progressive elements which overthrew the regime of the plantation owners on 12 January 1964, only a month after the British flag was taken down.

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