Introduction

> We have learnt through bitter experience that World public opinion mainly reacts when danger has reached a critical stage […] The number and importance of events which have taken place in the last ten years have no parallel in the history of mankind […] This is the new world being born before our eyes. We do not need to refer to books to see its development; its events are part of our daily life; we are its witnesses and many amongst ourselves are its praiseworthy actors […] we are the sons of this era
>
> John Kale, *Colonialism Is Incompatible with Peace* (1958)

At the climax of the story that this book tells, John Kale, a man in his mid-twenties from a town in south-western Uganda, sits down in his office on Ahmad Heshmat Street, Cairo, to author a pamphlet.[1] Doing so, in 1958, appeared urgent and obvious, not only to him, but to a small cohort of young, educated activists from East and Central Africa. It would not have five years previously, nor would it five years later. Of course, political pamphlets had a long history extending in time and space beyond 1950s Cairo. But this act of pamphlet writing was specific. It carried the hallmarks of a particular anticolonial culture, by which I mean a set of norms linking ideas and practices – a shifting, unwritten script. This anticolonial culture explains how activists like Kale came to participate in a rapidly changing landscape of global anticolonial activism in the 1950s and 1960s. In other words, it tells us why writing a pamphlet in Cairo, and the many other episodes of transnational activism

[1] John Kale, *Colonialism Is Incompatible with Peace* (Cairo: Foreign Mission of the Uganda National Congress, 1958), extract at 10–19.

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that this book documents, came to be seen as worthwhile – even while 'bitter experience' continuously suggested otherwise.

African Activists charts the life of the anticolonial culture captured in paper objects like Kale's pamphlet and explains why it is significant to our understanding of the connected processes of decolonisation in the post-war world – processes not just legal and political, but social and intellectual too. The activists who populate the following pages had, as Kale hinted, a slippery relationship to the moment of global-historical change they inhabited. They were at once actors, witnesses, sons (and indeed they were overwhelmingly male); a loose-knit cohort of secondary political figures, elite in terms of their education and international mobility. Their daily lives, as Kale claimed, certainly did collide with the events, places and personalities that marked the terrain of post-war global anticolonial activism. In a flurry of activity that peaked in the late 1950s, these activists travelled to hubs of anticolonial activity – Delhi, London, Cairo, Accra, Dar es Salaam. They navigated Cold War internationalisms as students, exiles and political representatives. They attended conferences in the age of Bandung; they met the anticolonial patrons of the day; they formed committees, manned offices, published pamphlets, launched newsletters and corresponded with international organisations.

And yet, often, and of particular interest to this book, their committees collapsed, they struggled with stationery shortages, their pamphlet manuscripts were rejected, their newsletters were prevented from reaching readers and they were let down by organisations.[2] In the end, many of their initiatives unfolded at such remove from the high diplomacy of decolonisation that they made barely a historical ripple. These were the bitter experiences with which Kale was familiar. Such frustrations were, to some extent, conditioned by the fact that Kale and his peers arrived in this internationalised anticolonial world from a particular region. This was the space now encompassing Malawi, Zambia, Uganda and mainland Tanzania, countries that gained flag independence in the first half of the 1960s (Map 0.1). In the UN headquarters and the Bandung conference hall alike, national liberation struggles in this region were assumed to be relatively insular and unexceptional, late to the post-war wave of Afro-Asian-Caribbean decolonisation, marginal to the thrust of global anticolonial thinking and fighting.

We must confront, then, some tensions. The names of activists that appear throughout this book are mainly familiar within the context of

[2] On the imperative to write about ordinary failures, see Emily Brownell, *Gone to Ground: A History of Environment and Infrastructure in Dar Es Salaam* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020), 182–186.

their respective national liberation struggles, but unfamiliar as a collective, and unfamiliar in accounts of coordinated activism beyond territorial borders. Their exceptional levels of mobility and education, relative to peers from East and Central Africa, were at odds with their limited leverage in cities like Cairo. Their own insistence in their global-historical significance as a cohort belied their experience of marginality in the world of anticolonial diplomacy. In one moment they were organising student associations; in the next they were representing political parties in the international field.

These tensions, when taken together as a historical problem, direct us to questions of scale. We might intuitively imagine that anticolonial activism happened at multiple scales: the pamphlet and the international conference, the national and the global. Instead, *African Activists* begins by unthinking scale as an analytical category and treating it instead as a social and historical construct – a subject of enquiry.[3] A microhistorian's reading of paper objects like Kale's pamphlet brings to the fore social practices and categories of understanding across multiple, connected contexts. The scales and spaces that emerge from such a reading are the ones that guide this book: the story unfolds on a map of the global that these activists drew and redrew in dialogue with *their* idea of an East and Central African region. It is somewhat disorienting to visit the founding conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in the same story as a congress that never happened, the Algerian War of Independence in the same story as a newsletter that ran for three issues. But for activists like Kale, for a relatively short period of time, this was daily life.

This book is an intellectual history of unrewarding transnational activism and a social history of the ephemera it produced. The connected nature of anticolonial activism across national contexts, researched in increasing depth, is one reason why historians are now inclined to refer to decolonisation as a process that was global in scope and even globalising in effect.[4] The protagonists in *African Activists* participated in precisely this sort of activism. They did so, collectively, in a more coherent way than histories of nationalism in East and Central Africa have yet accounted for.[5]

[3] Christian G. de Vito, 'History without Scale: The Micro-Spatial Perspective', *Past & Present*, 242:14 (2019), 348–372.

[4] Martin Thomas and Andrew Thompson, 'Rethinking Decolonization: A New Research Agenda for the Twenty-First Century', in Martin Thomas and Andrew Thompson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1–22.

[5] The 'external' aspect of these four national struggles is well acknowledged, for example A. M. Kirunda Kivejinja, *Uganda: The Crisis of Confidence* (Kampala: Progressive Publishing House, 1995), 11–12. It has not received sustained historical enquiry comparable to other cases, such as Sebabatso Manoeli, *Sudan's 'Southern Problem': Race, Rhetoric and International Relations*, 1961–1991 (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

MAP 0.1 East and Central Africa, c. 1953.

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This alone may not make them significant for how we think about decolonisation. More critical is that, for a brief period of time, they believed in the usefulness of this activism. This was despite the minimal results it yielded in terms of concessions from the colonial state and despite reflecting critically on frequent obstacles. This is important, because any explanation of the role of transnational activism in the unfolding of decolonisation needs to account for why, in cases like those dealt with here, that role was small in terms of numbers of people involved, short-lived and of apparently minor consequence – *and* to account for the zeal with which certain individuals pursued these methods regardless. Transnational modes of activism were not the default when it came to twentieth-century struggles for political change: they must be not only described but explained.

THE HERE AND NOW

The first defining feature of this cohort's anticolonial culture was a sense of regional-generational responsibility. Like others in this book, John Kale frequently articulated his own position within a cohort defined along generational and regional lines. Kale had moved to Cairo following his expulsion from Makerere University College in Kampala, an explicitly regional institution and the only in Anglophone East and Central Africa awarding university degrees in the early 1950s. Kale's Makerere years overlapped with those of Abu Mayanja, another Ugandan student. Kanyama Chiume, a student from Nyasaland who had spent his school years in Tanganyika, protested (unsuccessfully) against the expulsion of six Makerere students, including Mayanja. One of those travelled to study in India, where he met Munu Sipalo, who had arrived from Northern Rhodesia to study law in Delhi. The trajectories of these four men – Kale, Mayanja, Chiume and Sipalo – situated within a larger cohort, weave through the following chapters.

Generational cohorts come together in the concurrence of particular historical circumstances and the narratives formed around them, allowing certain cohorts to set themselves apart in apparent moments of flux.[6] The post-war decades – when this cohort came of age – were

[6] This formulation, relating to post-war East Africa, is drawn from Thomas Burgess and Andrew Burton, 'Introduction', in Andrew Burton and Hélène Charton-Bigot (eds.), *Generations Past: Youth in East African History* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 7. My treatment of generation also draws on R. F. Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland, 1890–1923* (London: Allen Lane, 2014), 6–7.

one such moment, in East and Central Africa as elsewhere. This book's protagonists were all born in a small window of years around 1930. They were thus a generation removed from the internationalist connections that defined interwar anti-imperialism: the formation of the League Against Imperialism, communist internationalism across Asia and the Atlantic, a revival of pan-Islamic thought, the spread of Wilsonian self-determination, the gathering of radical intellectuals and artists in imperial metropoles.[7] Indeed, very few men or women from Uganda, Zambia, Malawi or mainland Tanzania physically participated in these internationalist endeavours: the post-war history told here does not have direct threads of continuity with this interwar world. Interwar East and Central Africa nevertheless witnessed lively debate about colonial society, belying characterisation as protonationalism, through councils and welfare associations, government or missionary newspapers, and scholarly links to the Islamic world on the Swahili coast and around Lake Victoria.[8] Tanganyika, previously part of German East Africa, became a British League of Nations mandate after the First World War, linking areas under British

[7] On turn of the century transnational anticolonialism, see Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (London: Verso, 2005). On interwar anticolonialism, see Michele Louro et al. (eds.), *The League Against Imperialism: Lives and Afterlives* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2020); Ali Raza, *Revolutionary Pasts: Communist Internationalism in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), chap. 5; Pankaj Mishra, *From the Ruins of Empire : The Revolt against the West and the Remaking of Asia* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), chap. 4; Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), chaps. 5–6; Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[8] For a foundational account of interwar protonationalism, see A. J. Temu, 'The Rise and Triumph of Nationalism', in I. N. Kimambo and A. J. Temu (eds.), *A History of Tanzania* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969), 189–213. In contrast, more recently: Patrick W. Otim, 'Local Intellectuals: Lacito Okech and the Production of Knowledge in Colonial Acholiland', *History in Africa*, 45 (2018), 275–305; Carol Summers, 'Young Buganda and Old Boys: Youth, Generational Transition, and Ideas of Leadership in Buganda, 1920–1949', *Africa Today*, 51:3 (2005), 109–128; Harri Englund, 'Anti Anti-Colonialism: Vernacular Press and Emergent Possibilities in Colonial Zambia', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 57:1 (2015), 221–247; Emma Hunter, '"Our Common Humanity": Print, Power, and the Colonial Press in Interwar Tanganyika and French Cameroun', *Journal of Global History*, 7:2 (2012), 279–301; Derek R. Peterson, 'The Politics of Transcendence in Colonial Uganda', *Past & Present*, 230:1 (2016), 197–225; Kai Kresse, *Swahili Muslim Publics and Postcolonial Experience* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2018), chap. 3.

influence to the north and south: the bordering countries of Uganda, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland had been British protectorates since the turn of the century. During the interwar period, with events like the Maji Maji Rebellion (1905 in Tanganyika) and the Chilembwe uprising (1915 in Nyasaland) in living memory, political demands focused on improved opportunities for education and secure livelihoods, but rarely on national independence.

As we know, this would soon change. 'Four-fifths of mankind have entered on new independent status since the Second World War', Kale wrote in his 1958 pamphlet.[9] As the Second World War ended, he and his peers were competing for limited secondary school places; they might have heard the stories of colonial troops returning from Burma or Ceylon.[10] They came of age during a period when political claims-making across sub-Saharan Africa increasingly reiterated the organising concept of self-determination, while the colonial state came under international pressure to demonstrate a commitment to socio-economic and political development.[11] As newly independent countries like India and Indonesia joined the UN (a fate that appeared distant in East and Central Africa until the 1960s), this cohort, like political leaders across the decolonising world, drew on the language of the UN Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights – both featured in Kale's pamphlet. They, like others, joined and sometimes played prominent roles in avowedly nationalist political parties – although this happens only in the background of this book. We now know that there was nothing natural or uncontested about organising demands for citizenship or rights through national organisations, nor about notions of belonging that mapped onto territorial borders: anticolonialism was not always nationalist; nationalism was not always anticolonial; anticolonial nationalism was not always the *modus operandi* of liberation

[9] Kale, *Colonialism Is Incompatible with Peace*, 14.

[10] On East African troops returning from Burma and Ceylon, see James R. Brennan, *Taifa: Making Nation and Race in Urban Tanzania* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012), 136–145.

[11] This now widespread formulation of 'claims-making' with an emphasis on development owes much to the scholarship of Frederick Cooper, notably Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). See also Cheikh Anta Babou, 'Decolonization or National Liberation: Debating the End of British Colonial Rule in Africa', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 632:1 (2010), 41–54.

struggles in post-war Africa.[12] This is the historiographical starting point – rather than the argument – of *African Activists*.

It is the 'anticolonialism' part of this story that I pursue here, through a regional lens. As Tim Harper has recently shown for early twentieth-century Asia, following a regional cohort, on their own terms, as they move outside of the spaces they sought to liberate, allows nationalism to slide into the background and other anticolonial practices to emerge.[13] This book's East and Central African cohort of activists had no uniform relationship to the swerving trajectories of party politics at home. When we follow them abroad, contestations over the nation and party – so crucial both to foundational and revisionist histories of nationalism – appear less central. Equally, thinking through an anticolonial culture takes emphasis away from the legal-territorial goal that actors had in mind and places it on the social and intellectual processes that accompanied the pursuit of this goal.[14] Attending to the scales that this anticolonial culture constructed directs us away from questions of belonging and towards the *strategic* role of regional imaginaries.

It was not until the 1950s that this book's specific idea of an East and Central African cohort came together, as Chapters 1 and 2 explain. Describing, as

[12] Scholarship on the rise of (mass) nationalism and birth of nations in Africa is increasingly well historicised. See Miles Larmer and Baz Lecocq, 'Historicising Nationalism in Africa', *Nations and Nationalism*, 24:4 (2018), 8693–917; Oswald Masebo, 'New Thematic Directions in History at the University of Dar Es Salaam', *Tanzania Zamani*, 9:2 (2017), 1–67; Walima T. Kalusa and Bizeck J. Phiri, 'Introduction: Zambia's Postcolonial Historiography', *Zambia Social Science Journal*, 5:1 (2014), 1–11. Key recent work on citizenship and belonging in non-nationalist frameworks includes Annette K. Joseph-Gabriel, *Reimagining Liberation: How Black Women Transformed Citizenship in the French Empire* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2019); Kate Skinner, *The Fruits of Freedom in British Togoland: Literacy, Politics and Nationalism, 1914–2014* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Emma Hunter, *Political Thought and the Public Sphere in Tanzania: Freedom, Democracy and Citizenship in the Era of Decolonization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Julie MacArthur, *Cartography and the Political Imagination: Mapping Community in Colonial Kenya* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2016); Jan-Bart Gewald, Marja Hinfelaar, and Giacomo Macola (eds.), *Living the End of Empire: Politics and Society in Late Colonial Zambia* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

[13] Tim Harper, *Underground Asia: Global Revolutionaries and the Assault on Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), xxvii. Other relevant collective biographical work includes Joseph-Gabriel, *Reimagining Liberation*; Imaobong Denis Umoren, *Race Women Internationalists: Activist-Intellectuals and Global Freedom Struggles* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).

[14] On culture as a focus for understanding decolonisation beyond constitutional process, see Ruth Craggs and Claire Wintle (eds.), *Cultures of Decolonisation: Transnational Productions and Practices, 1945–70* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

this book does, a region that encompasses Malawi, Zambia, Uganda and mainland Tanzania (Map 0.1) means cutting across typical (British colonial) regional distinctions for this period: East Africa (present-day Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, including Zanzibar) and Central Africa (present-day Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe).[15] The separate trajectories of these two colonial-administrative regions appeared, to outsiders, to harden with the 1953 formation of the Central African Federation, a settler-governed semi-dominion, imposed in the name of racial 'partnership', against the will of the African majority. For this book's protagonists, however, the crisis of Federation occurred *alongside* that of the 1952 Mau Mau uprising in Kenya. Bringing both into dialogue, they began to delineate the particular version of East and Central Africa that this book works through. This region was sometimes committed to paper and acted out through meetings and committees, most concretely in the Pan-African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa (PAFMECA) discussed in Chapters 3 and 6. This did not happen consistently, nor always with the same borders, nor, in this case, as an alternative political unit to the nation-state.[16] That this definition of the region served a useful purpose in certain fora – particularly Anglophone ones – does not diminish the importance of other described or lived spaces of anticolonial activity, crossing borders into, for example, present-day Rwanda, Burundi, Mozambique or the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The particular version of East and Central Africa that I describe is thus one of those temporally delineated, constructed spaces of meaningful activity from which *African Activists* takes its parameters.

When approached together, as a regional cohort, these activists and their anticolonial culture come into focus – come to appear noteworthy – in ways that they do not when partitioned along national lines. The reasons why Kenya, Zimbabwe and Zanzibar were frequently pushed out of this cohort's idea of the region overlap with the reasons why these countries have attracted sustained scholarly attention: each witnessed episodes of physical violence stemming from the contested relationship between settlers, race and land.[17] These were questions that certainly mattered to

[15] Geert Castryck, Achim von Oppen, and Katharina Zöller, 'Introduction: Bridging Histories of East and Central Africa', *History in Africa*, 46 (2019), 217–229. See also the contributions to this special issue.

[16] Recent historiography on federations and federal thinking is discussed in Merve Fejzula, 'The Cosmopolitan Historiography of Twentieth-Century Federalism', *The Historical Journal*, 64:2 (2021), 477–500.

[17] For an impression of the prominence of these themes in each case, see E. S. Atieno Odhiambo and John Lonsdale (eds.), *Mau Mau and Nationhood : Arms, Authority and Narration* (Oxford: James Currey, 2003); Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Pedzisai Ruhanya

the activists in this book too – activists from the space 'between' these 'trouble spots'. They thought at length about what the problems of powerful white settler populations in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia meant to *them*. These problems would soon emerge more violently still in Algeria, all against the backdrop of apartheid South Africa. In this cohort's anti-colonial culture, each of these places took on symbolic capital that relied on the international press coverage they attracted.

In the construction of a historic role for this East and Central African cohort, institutions of education – and ideas *about* education – were crucial. 'The eyes of East and Central Africa are looking to us for leadership', asserted the president of the Makerere Political Society, to an audience that included several of this book's protagonists.[18] Being highly educated and young in 1950s East and Central Africa came with an elevated sense of self-importance and, in this, these men were part of a larger phenomenon.[19] Across the early Cold War world, the social and cultural spheres were coming to bear on high politics in new ways: a generation of students, born out of post-war demographic and educational booms and rallied through a shared 'language of dissent', would soon shape international diplomacy through domestic social protest.[20] During the 1950s, despite fierce constraints on access to education, this cohort worked through educational networks of the sort that formed the foundations for the upheavals of the 1960s. It was often through self-styled youth and student organisations that Chiume, Kale, Mayanja and Sipalo crossed paths with some of the other protagonists of this book: Tanzanian youth and union leader Sam Kajunjumele, Nyasa-Tanzanian student Dennis Phombeah, Ugandan student Chango Machyo and the Zambian Wina brothers who graduated from Makerere and Fort Hare. Sometimes these networks were of activists' own making, like the Committee of African

(eds.), *The History and Political Transition of Zimbabwe: From Mugabe to Mnangagwa* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); Abdul Sheriff and Ed Ferguson (eds.), *Zanzibar under Colonial Rule* (London: James Currey, 1991).

[18] E. D. Sawe, 'Presidential Address to the Makerere College Political Society' (1953), in *Politica*, 1:1 (May 1953), 4–5, Makerere University, Kampala (hereafter Makerere), Archives of Makerere University (AR/MAK) AR/MAK/57/5.

[19] On the elevated sense of self-importance among Zanzibari youth of the same generation, see Thomas Burgess, 'An Imagined Generation: Umma Youth in Nationalist Zanzibar', in Gregory Maddox and James Leonard Giblin (eds.), *In Search of a Nation: Histories of Authority & Dissidence in Tanzania* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 227–230.

[20] Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Detente* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 88–130.

Organisations (CAO) which Mayanja formed in 1950s London; at other times, they were part of a burgeoning international youth and student movement, like that witnessed by Kajunjumele at the 1959 Vienna World Youth Festival (Chapters 3 and 5, respectively).

This cohort's anticolonial culture was not always radical in the ways we might expect of a mid-century, self-fashioned, student generation. The types of Cold War engagement they pursued did not fall within the revolutionary geography of armed struggle that later linked Lusophone Africa, for example, to Algiers, Havana and Peking. Rather, the practices and scalar imaginaries of their anticolonial culture were characterised by a specifically *anti-communist* socialist internationalism that linked the Western European (New) Left to socialist opposition parties in Asia, through the Socialist International, the Asian Socialist Conference (ASC) and the International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY), as Chapters 2 and 5 examine. This Cold War positionality did not preclude a different sort of radicalism, especially in the late 1950s. This manifested in the absence of any expectation that gradual, constitutional concessions could yield fundamental change in East and Central Africa, and the presence of an openness to alternative strategies, which nevertheless tended to stop short of a call to arms. Sub-Saharan Africa would see its own May '68, but this book's activists would no longer be students – or young.[21] The overlap of their anticolonial culture with student politics during the 1950s was remarkable, but was partial and unstable. They sometimes distanced themselves from, as well as made use of, the shifting meanings attached to the category of youth, and by the 1960s, as Chapter 5 suggests, they grew suspicious of the generation of students who followed them.

ELSEWHERE

Evocations of elsewhere came to be a defining feature of this cohort's anticolonial culture, even before they left East and Central Africa. Their trajectories abroad often began with the premise that leaving the region was a prerequisite for effective anticolonial activism, a belief not always shared by

[21] Omar Gueye, *Mai 1968 au Sénégal: Senghor face aux étudiants et au mouvement syndical* (Paris: Karthala, 2017); Andrew Ivaska, *Cultured States: Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar Es Salaam* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), chap. 3; George Roberts, *Revolutionary State-Making in Dar Es Salaam: African Liberation and the Global Cold War, 1961–1974* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), chap. 5; Chen Jian et al. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties: Between Protest and Nation-Building* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2018), chapters by Dan Hodgkinson, Omar Gueye, Bahru Zewde and Priya Lal.

their classmates or parents. Expansive allusions to the 'world' soon assumed shape (Map 0.2). The spaces they looked to – and then sometimes travelled to – were part of another, shifting, constructed scale that ran through this cohort's anticolonial culture. This was the world of transnational and international anticolonial activity, with its own hubs, patrons and solidarity projects – a world in which the colonial metropole was anything but central.[22] The protagonists of this book were, as Kale described, witnesses: they witnessed growing connections of anticolonial diplomacy between decolonising countries. These connections are increasingly well understood today, as the historiography of anticolonialism spills over national and colonial frameworks; they ultimately shaped the course of formal decolonisation, the Cold War and the international order that emerged.[23]

East and Central African activists would have recognised much of what historians have recently described – as Kale insisted, 'We do not need to refer to books'.[24] When Mayanja moved to Britain following his expulsion from Makerere, for example, he observed a colonial metropole shaped by the history of Atlantic pan-Africanism.[25] Sipalo's sojourn in India (Chapter 2) and Kale's in Egypt (Chapter 3) happened in a framework of anticolonial state patronage that both men recognised, and which we can now see was characteristic of early postcolonial foreign policy.[26]

[22] Joseph-Gabriel, *Reimagining Liberation*, 17.

[23] The significance of such connections is powerfully argued in Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019). See also the specific examples that follow. Histories of nationalism have acknowledged but little problematised external connections, for example Kivejinja, *Uganda*, 11–12.

[24] Kale, *Colonialism Is Incompatible with Peace*, 15.

[25] On the Atlantic sphere and decolonisation, see Leslie James, *George Padmore and Decolonization from Below: Pan-Africanism, the Cold War, and the End of Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Joseph-Gabriel, *Reimagining Liberation*; John Munro, *The Anticolonial Front: The African American Freedom Struggle and Global Decolonisation, 1945–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *Pan-African History: Political Figures from Africa and the Diaspora Since 1787* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003). On colonial metropoles, see Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); Marc Matera, *Black London: The Imperial Metropolis and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015); Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis*; Jennifer Anne Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis: The Urban Grounds of Anti-Imperialism and Feminism in Interwar Paris* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010).

[26] Gerard McCann, 'From Diaspora to Third Worldism and the United Nations: India and the Politics of Decolonizing Africa', *Past & Present*, 218 (2013), 258–280; Reem Abou-El-Fadl, 'Neutralism Made Positive: Egyptian Anti-Colonialism on the Road to Bandung', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 42:2 (2015), 219–240.

MAP 0.2 Select journeys of Abu Mayanja, John Kale, Kanyama Chiume and Munu Sipalo, 1950s–1960s.

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A rumour of Sipalo's attendance at Bandung was birthed in awareness of the conference's myth-making capacity.[27] When Chiume travelled to newly independent Ghana for the first All-African Peoples Conference (AAPC), he knew it was a landmark event that brought the organisational thrust of pan-Africanism to the continent.[28] When these activists wrote about the violence of the Congo Crisis, the Algerian War or South African apartheid, they, like historians, saw that these episodes set precedents for UN lobbying and for international involvement in liberation struggles.[29] All these episodes came together as a shared set of meaningful reference points in this cohort's anticolonial culture.

As witnesses to these high-profile, international episodes, and simultaneously as actors in an overlapping set of initiatives, this East and Central African cohort shows us a broader picture of connections and infrastructures forged across the decolonising world in pursuit of the transformation or the end of colonial rule. Many of the initiatives that this book documents become visible only when we follow these sorts of secondary political actors: these initiatives ran parallel to and sometimes intersected with the state-sponsored solidarity projects around Bandung and the AAPC. *African Activists* thus takes up the call of the Afro-Asian Networks Research Collective to trace connections that overflowed the state-centric apparatus of early postcolonial diplomacy and the UN – many of which we still know little about.[30] Doing so helps to demystify histories of anticolonial solidarity projects, which are still in the process of throwing off

[27] Robert Vitalis, 'The Midnight Ride of Kwame Nkrumah and Other Fables of Bandung (Ban-Doong)', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, 4:2 (2013), 261–288.

[28] Matteo Grilli, *Nkrumaism and African Nationalism: Ghana's Pan-African Foreign Policy in the Age of Decolonization* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 103–108; Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism: A History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 145–146; Amzat Boukari-Yabara, *Africa Unite: Une Histoire Du Panafricanisme* (Paris: Découverte, 2014), 139.

[29] Alanna O'Malley, *The Diplomacy of Decolonisation: America, Britain and the United Nations during the Congo Crisis 1960–1964* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 2; Matthew James Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 5; Jeffrey James Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 9; Ryan M. Irwin, *Gordian Knot: Apartheid and the Unmaking of the Liberal World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 10.

[30] Afro-Asian Networks Research Collective, 'Manifesto: Networks of Decolonization in Asia and Africa', *Radical History Review*, 2018:131 (2018), 176–182. On our limited knowledge of these, see Meredith Terretta, 'Cameroonian Nationalists Go Global: From Forest Maquis to a Pan-African Accra', *The Journal of African History*, 51:02 (2010), 212.

self-styled, celebratory narratives.[31] Because these activists moved between more and less visible, more and less consequential infrastructures, they lead us to tensions (and not just feuds between statesmen) that pervaded anticolonial, pan-African, Afro-Asian, socialist and non-aligned solidarity projects.[32] They show us how activists sought to make use of the pre-existing anticolonial infrastructures they encountered. Most importantly, the story of an East and Central African anticolonial culture explains why not *all* physically mobile anticolonial activists looked to, or benefitted from, the internationalised apparatus that many contemporaneous anticolonial campaigns, from Algeria to South Africa, worked through. As we shall see, this was not for lack of outward-looking, forward-thinking vision.

My endeavour to tie together global reference points and day-to-day frustrations through the story of an anticolonial culture owes much to what Christian de Vito and Anne Gerritsen have termed a micro-spatial perspective.[33] In the vein of Italian *microstoria*, a micro-spatial perspective prioritises a close reading of sources produced by human action across multiple, connected contexts.[34] The micro, here, it is not about places or lives that were in any sense small or ordinary: a micro-spatial approach refuses to associate micro (a type of analysis) necessarily with local (the spatial scope of analysis), or with an emphasis on individual agency and short-term change (or, meanwhile, to associate the macro with the global, the structural and the long-term). Scale becomes not an analytical tool nor a descriptor of how lives were lived, but a social and historical construction. The question, then, is through what discourses and social practices historical actors constructed an *idea* of the global and, for my purposes, of the region and of the shifting external centres of anticolonial activism – and how these formed a basis for their work. These constructed scales have a temporality: they are imbued with not only the real and imagined pasts of, say, the colonial metropole or ancient Egypt, but with the perceived

[31] On the imperative to demystify, see Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution*, 7. See also Christopher J. Lee, *Making a World after Empire : The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), Preface to the 2019 edition; Antoinette Burton, Augusto Espiritu, and Fanon Che Wilkins, 'Introduction: The Fate of Nationalisms in the Age of Bandung', *Radical History Review*, 95 (2006), 145–148.

[32] Another demonstration of how peripheral activists bring out these tensions and limits is Manoeli, *Sudan's 'Southern Problem'*, 5.

[33] Vito, 'History without Scale'; Christian G. de Vito and Anne Gerritsen (eds.), *Micro-Spatial Histories of Global Labour* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

[34] John-Paul Ghobrial, 'Introduction: Seeing the World like a Microhistorian', *Past & Present*, 242:14 (2019), 13–16. One relevant recent example (among many) is Lara Putnam, *Radical Moves Caribbean Migrants and the Politics of Race in the Jazz Age* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

immediacy and acceleration of global decolonisation. As a speaker at a 1955 pan-African student conference professed, the imperative was to 'stop dilly-dallying and take time by the forelock'.[35] The micro-spatial approach thus lends itself to studying anticolonialism, as Christopher Lee proposes, as a historical formation and social process.[36]

PAPER OBJECTS

The social practices that interest me in this book mostly involve paper. In a folder of correspondence, filed by the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) and preserved by its successor, is a handwritten page of quotations on party notepaper that seem to have been copied for use in a newsletter or publication, probably around 1957. They include quotations from Rousseau, Machiavelli, Hegel and Luther. 'By Marx' is crossed out without a quote written; so is 'By Goebbels'.[37] The piece of paper is not strictly representative of the main body of sources I employ throughout the book (on which more below) but it does evoke the central methodological concerns of this source base.

Regardless of the quotations chosen, there is little we can conclude about how TANU (or this particular activist) appropriated or translated a body of apparently Western philosophy. Indeed, historians of African political thought have found ways to move beyond metaphors of transfer to understand the ideas at the foundation of political engagement with colonialism, emphasising the instability of concepts whose definition has been taken for granted (often along Eurocentric lines). Ostensibly global concepts – self-determination, freedom, race, nation, democracy – were, as Emma Hunter has shown of Tanzania, situational, imbued with local depth.[38] A history of concepts approach, however, does not fully capture the offhand ephemerality of the TANU notepaper. Similarly, when

[35] Speech of Benedict C. Njoku, Report of the third annual conference of the All-African Student Union of the Americas (Howard University, Washington DC, 1955), Malawi National Archives, Zomba (hereafter MNA), Public Archives SMP 29098, f. 1B.

[36] Christopher J. Lee, 'Anti-Colonialism: Origins, Practices, and Historical Legacies', in Martin Thomas and Andrew S. Thompson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 436. Relatedly, on the interaction between ideology and praxis, see Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution*, chap. 2.

[37] Undated notes on TANU notepaper [c. 1957, based on other file content], Archives of the Chama Cha Mapinduzi, Dodoma (hereafter CCM), Box 123 File TANU general correspondence DP/RC/8.

[38] Hunter, *Political Thought*, 232–233. On self-determination, Bradley R. Simpson, 'Self-Determination, Human Rights, and the End of Empire in the 1970s', *Humanity*, 4:2

brought together, the material produced by the cohort of activists I follow in this book does not deliver a coherent picture of political thought. This is not only a question of the piecemeal nature of the archive of decolonising Africa, but of a certain eclecticism.[39] The analytical tools of cultural transfer and translation, developed within global intellectual history, come up against repeated hurdles.

Instead, the TANU notepaper directs us to the social practices of anticolonial work: the organisational labour of collecting the relevant reading material from libraries and correspondents, writing down quotations, deciding which might be suitable for a certain audience, passing them around a make-shift publicity office. This sort of analysis, which centres everyday experience (as in, the practical, the seemingly mundane) in order to understand intellectual production, is key to my framing of an anticolonial culture. Experience is not, here, raw 'evidence' or the end product of historical enquiry.[40] Instead, the notion of experience serves to reground (materially and spatially) the relationship between the individual and the collective, asking under what sociocultural rules individual experience is trusted and thus assumes the status of knowledge.[41] To talk of an anticolonial culture is to grapple with a process in which the quotidian experience of carrying out anticolonial work *itself* informed the assumptions, convictions and principles that *also* guided this work – a process at once self-reinforcing and inherently unstable.

The substance of this cohort's anticolonial culture was made up of practices and ideas relating to paper objects – objects like Kale's pamphlet

(2013), 239–260; Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire*. On freedom, Phyllis Taoua, *African Freedom: How Africa Responded to Independence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 5, 25; Priyamvada Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonialism and the Making of British Dissent* (London: Verso Books, 2019), 7, 447. On race and nation, Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones : Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 9–13; Brennan, *Taifa*, chap. 4.

[39] On the archive, see Luise White, 'Introduction: Suitcases, Roads, and Archives: Writing the History of Africa after 1960', *History in Africa*, 42:1 (2015), 265–267; Farina Mir, 'Introduction to the Roundtable on the Archives of Decolonization', *The American Historical Review*, 120:3 (2015), 844–851.

[40] As famously outlined in Joan W. Scott, 'The Evidence of Experience', *Critical Inquiry*, 17:4 (1991), 773–797. Foucault, nevertheless, qualified that his interest was in how 'individual or collective experiences arise from singular forms of thought – that is, from what constitutes the subject in its relations to the true, to rules, to itself?', Preface to *The History of Sexuality Vol. II*, in Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984* (New York: New Press, 1997), 202.

[41] Discussions at the History of Experiences Conference, Tampere, March 2020, especially comments of Raisa Toivo. On using the 'everyday' to ground intellectual histories, see Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis*, 3–5.

or the TANU notepaper. Once these activists were abroad, whether in London or Accra, the act of seeking a publisher for a cheaply printed pamphlet was part of a repertoire of practices that also included launching periodicals, writing letters to newspapers, collating 'information' and securing broadcasting slots.[42] These practices formed a dialogue with the administrative and somewhat bureaucratic questions that dominated political debate 'at home' in this region's legislative councils and other representative bodies: franchise qualifications, electoral rolls, lists of proscribed literature, permits for publishing and meeting, school enrolment figures. The technical nature of these questions mattered in particular ways to transnational activism, as Chapter 4 explores.

These paper practices, in themselves, were not unique to this set of activists. But the potential they were imagined to have was understood through a specific regional-generational lens and with reference to the global anticolonial connections that activists witnessed and described. As we shall see, this imagined potential shifted dramatically over the course of the 1950s and 1960s. It not only depended on the pre-existing structures in each organisation with which Mayanja worked or each city in which Sipalo arrived. It also depended on evolving ideas about the role of imagined publics, and especially their ignorance, apathy or incapacity.[43] Paperwork – pamphlets, newsletters, invitations, agendas, minutes, correspondence – is a refractive medium: knowledge and power 'change their speed and shape when they enter it', but in unpredictable ways.[44] The anticolonial culture of this cohort was marked by its preoccupation with the circulation of information through the possibilities of paper, but, as Kale noted, 'World public opinion' did not always respond as expected.

Reading paper objects from a micro-spatial perspective, thus bringing out social practices and scalar imaginaries, makes legible the swathe of

[42] On anticolonial literary genres, especially periodical writing, see Joseph-Gabriel, *Reimagining Liberation*, 6, 188–189.

[43] For two recent and relevant conceptual discussions on publics and the public sphere, see Valeska Huber and Jürgen Osterhammel (eds.), *Global Publics: Their Power and Their Limits, 1870–1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), Introduction; Emma Hunter and Leslie James, 'Introduction: Colonial Public Spheres and the Worlds of Print', *Itinerario*, 44:2 (2020), 227–242.

[44] Ben Kafka, *The Demon of Writing: Powers and Failures of Paperwork* (New York: Zone Books, 2012), 117. My approach to paper objects also owes much to scholarship on African print cultures, notably Karin Barber, *Print Culture and the First Yoruba Novel: I. B. Thomas's 'Life Story of Me, Segilola' and Other Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Stephanie Newell, *The Power to Name: A History of Anonymity in Colonial West Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013); Derek R. Peterson, Emma Hunter, and Stephanie Newell (eds.), *African Print Cultures: Newspapers and Their Publics in the Twentieth Century*

material that constitutes this book's main source base: the intellectual output and organisational ephemera produced through the transnational work of this cohort, mostly in English.[45] This material, published and unpublished, is eclectic, and often resistant – like the TANU notepaper – to a contained history of political thought. Much of it is preserved in archives of non-governmental organisations, lobbying groups and solidarity projects, little-used repositories for thinking about the social and intellectual processes that accompanied struggles for flag independence. Many of these organisations were explicitly transnational or international and considered the collection, production and preservation of paper objects to be one of their primary functions.

Neat folders in the archives of groups like the London-based Africa Bureau or the Vienna-based IUSY might easily distort the messy, frustrating nature of transnational anticolonial work that *African Activists* hopes to convey. But this is tempered by groups with only a fleeting archival trace, like Sipalo's Africa Bureau in Delhi, or CAO, whose only catalogued meeting minutes read 'owing to a lighting failure, the list of those present was mislaid'.[46] Organisations based in Europe filed not only correspondence from East and Central African activists, but also various anticolonial newsletters, manuscripts for publication as pamphlets, and ephemera including invitations and handwritten notes.[47] Far from telling a Eurocentric story of anticolonialism, these archives can bolster Priyamvada Gopal's argument that colonial subjects shaped the anticolonialism of foreign sympathisers, thus *challenging* narratives of appropriation.[48]

(Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016); Emily Callaci, *Street Archives and City Life: Popular Intellectuals in Postcolonial Tanzania* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

[45] I also use material in Kiswahili and French and refer to small amounts of material in Luganda, Chinyanja and Chibemba. While a more multilingual source base would undoubtedly provide different perspectives, English, and in some cases Swahili, were the languages shared among this regional cohort and with their contacts further afield. My decisions about prefix use are guided by examples of recent texts written in English by native speakers of the relevant languages. On this principle, Christopher Muhoozi, 'Africans and Africanists and the making of narratives about Africa', paper presented to the Makerere University Department of History, Archaeology and Heritage Studies Workshop, 25-26 November 2021.

[46] Minutes of CAO executive meeting, 6 May 1960, Bodleian libraries, Oxford (hereafter Bodleian), Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement (hereafter MSS. AAM), file 1, f. 144.

[47] This belies the assertion that relationships between British sympathisers and anticolonial activists are 'almost impossible to recover', in Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918–1964* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 25.

[48] Gopal, *Insurgent Empire*, 6–13. See also, in the case of Francophone networks, Christoph Kalter, *The Discovery of the Third World: Decolonisation and the Rise of the New Left in France, c. 1950–1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 25.

I place these collections in dialogue with party archives, like that of TANU in Dodoma and the digitised archives of the Northern Rhodesia African National Congress (NRANC) and United National Independence Party (UNIP), which assess these solidarity groups alongside one another and show how external representatives facilitated (mis)communication between foreign organisations and distant party headquarters.

Organisations, of course, tell their own histories through their archives: institutional, state and personal archives keep them in check. The archives of Makerere University give a sense of emerging political engagement outside of party frameworks, for example. Papers of the colonial and postcolonial state, in East and Central Africa and the UK, describe organisations and individuals in terms of security risk; police and intelligence bodies fixate on precisely those that did not leave an extensive paper trail (CAO may have had good reason to 'mislay' its list of meeting attendees), betraying anxieties and providing copies of 'subversive' articles or tapped phone calls. The individuals that this book focuses on do not have official or public personal archives, but those of surrounding figures are invaluable: those of Joseph Murumbi in Nairobi, Simon Zukas in Lusaka, Audrey Jupp in Hull, Basil Davidson in his family's home, and the microfilmed collection of Ruth Schachter Morgenthau. Finally, I draw on exchanges with family members, memoirs, autobiographies and interviews, mainly carried out in East and Central Africa in 2017. In *these* sources, lobbying groups and their acronyms are easily forgotten or conflated, a reminder that organisations and their paperwork could never entirely structure the lives of activists.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The chapters that follow move through three chronological periods; each chapter travels between cities and countries together with the actors it follows. Chapters 1 and 2 describe the emergence of this cohort's anticolonial culture in the context of growing international interest in East and Central Africa during the crises of the early 1950s. The point of departure is a strike at Makerere University College. Chapter 1 outlines the regional context in which this cohort began to look elsewhere, a context where education institutions and party politics came into unprecedented dialogue. Chapter 2 charts the growing importance of information circulation to this cohort's anticolonial culture. It follows Mayanja to Cambridge and an Alpine town, and Sipalo to Delhi and a conference that never happened. They had not anticipated the constraints that would be

placed on their capacity to publish and network – but these constraints would prove formative.

Chapters 3 and 4 explain how this cohort's anticolonial culture solidified against the backdrop of the post-Suez, post-Bandung terrain of late-1950s anticolonialism, increasingly internationalised with the independence of Sudan and Ghana. In Chapter 3, Mayanja, Sipalo, Kale and Chiume pursue strategies to hold newly independent states accountable to promises of anticolonial patronage. From London and Bombay to Cairo and Mwanza, they looked to, but did not to rely on, the performative solidarity of the AAPC. Chapter 4 shows how activists used mounting repression in East and Central Africa, peaking with the 1959 Nyasaland Emergency, as fuel for their increasingly institutionalised publicity practices. With the energies of the UN and global media directed at the Algerian War, this cohort questioned the relationship between publishing, violence and colonial totalitarianism.

Chapters 5 and 6 move into the 1960s to see how the convictions that cohered in this cohort's anticolonial culture fell away as Tanganyika, Uganda, Malawi and Zambia won flag independence – and even before this outcome appeared likely. In Chapter 5, a conspiracy pamphlet circulated by Sipalo at the founding conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961 allows for an assessment of the challenges posed by the Cold War, captured through the Congo Crisis and navigated through youth and student internationals. In this setting, this cohort began to think in terms of knowledge production. In Chapter 6, the role of external representatives and the importance of being elsewhere fall away as activists grow disillusioned with Cairo and Accra and look towards Dar es Salaam; information across borders appears increasingly immaterial as we venture into radio broadcasting. The chronologies of statehood see this cohort of actors themselves disperse – some into government, others once again into exile.

The significance of this cohort's anticolonial culture for our understanding of decolonisation does not rely on the uniqueness of any one of its components. Thinking through this book's conceptual framework assumes the existence of many, overlapping cultures of anticolonialism, each linking thought and practice in ways particular to their time and place, each existing at the scales of meaning they evoke. The book's conclusion thinks through this overlap, suggesting how the daily frustrations of transnational work can find a place in histories both of international transformation and of powerful ideas.