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Moshi District, Tanganyika

P.O. Marangu
Moshi, Tanganyika
East Africa
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Mr. Walter S. Rogers
Institute of Current World Affairs
522 Fifth Avenue
New York 36, New York

Dear Mr. Rogers:

I have been living in Moshi District of Tanganyika Territory for about one month. Moshi is a complex district lacking the primitive simplicity of the outlying one-man type of district. The British administrative and the native sides of government both are ramified; there is a larger and more thickly settled population and an involved economic situation. In line with your earlier suggestion I aim at obtaining a detailed familiarity with native and European life here.

More so than in the one-man districts, it is necessary to move cautiously and obtain information by conservative means, but through the help of one very good friend whom I have known since 1949, Donald Bowie, the No. 2 District Officer at the headquarters (Boma) in Moshi, I have not needed to apply this rule at the higher levels. In the past few weeks I have met and talked with a number of government and non-government Africans and Europeans - the junior District Officer, Mr. Richard Clifford (he and his wife being ardent hunters and target shots); Bowie's father-in-law, Brigadier in command of the regional King's African Rifles Headquarters; Mr. Iema, the Manager of the Chagga General Trading Company; Mr. A.L.B. Bennett, the European adviser of the Kilimanjaro Native Cooperative Union; Mr. Wallis, a European farmer - and last weekend we went on a shooting party with Rashid Sheikh, the owner of a sawmill and sisal holdings. Other guests were a West Indian lawyer, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Zaffer Ali, Advocate in Moshi, and an Indian agricultural produce trader, Mohammed Ali. I have also renewed my acquaintanceship with Thomas Marealle, the Paramount Chief of the Wachagga, whom I have known for several years. At the peasant and lower native chief levels the details of setting up a household on the mountain, and the use of a selected earlier contact with a Division Chief, Petro Marealle, have afforded the natural workaday contacts I want.

There is plenty of material within walking distance from our cottage. Strolling down the dirt road I pass within a few hundred yards a tiny native duka or country store, whose owner, Ruben (also the local plumber), and his carpenter-associate I now know fairly well; a native butcher shop which does its own slaughtering; a Lutheran Mission educational headquarters in charge of an American neighbor Dr. Hall; a small, diesel powered corn and millet grinding mill; and Petro Marealle's Division headquarters office.

Up the mountainside on the same road there is a Lutheran school and hospital and more dukas; the Kibo Hotel whose German-descent manageress, Mrs. Bruhl, outfitted me for last year's climbing of Kilimanjaro peak; a Catholic mission; and Petro Marealle's house and farm. The road is tree-lined, drained well enough to provide good footing, and this casual walk down or up provides the best of native gossip contacts: Wives carrying their head loads of bananas and corn, young ones grinning flirtatiously and old ones scolding: younger girls and boys bearing even heavier loads of grass and hay for stall-feeding their cattle - the cows who go blind, living out their lives in dark huts.

So much for the pleasantries of my mountain base, and the avenues of inquiry it provides. Let me get down to business and provide an outline description of Moshi District.

Roughly, the District includes the whole of Kilimanjaro mountain and its Tanganyika slopes down into the Masai steppes. It encompasses 1,943 square miles of territory, a large portion of which is under cultivation. The slopes are well-watered, by up to 70 inches of rainfall higher up and by means of irrigation troughs down beyond Moshi Town. This makes possible the support of a large and comparatively well fed native population numbering some 268,000 and has attracted European and Asiatic settlement.

The main tribe, the Wachagga (234,000 or 87 percent of the total African population) are one of the most advanced people in East Africa - partly because of their fortunate location, which may account for their greater vigor and energy, and partly because of more intense exposure to European influences. The production of Arabica coffee for export, now averaging 4,000 tons of clean coffee per year, has brought, by African standards, great wealth to these people. They have developed with the assistance of Mr. Bennett the Kilimanjaro Native Cooperative Union (KNCU), the well-known coffee marketing association. The KNCU has 29 affiliated societies and 32,000 coffee-growing members and markets the entire native crop. The Union has recently erected a building in Moshi - the largest and most modern in the town - with offices, shops, a library and hostel facilities for inter-racial use. The Wachagga have a monopoly of the trade on the mountain. There are some 1,300 Chagga traders and 300 butcher shop owners served by a Chagga wholesale trading company and a butchery cooperative. The Moshi District has been a center of extensive missionary activity by the Roman Catholic Holy Ghost Fathers and the Augustana Lutheran Mission, the former being slightly predominant, which operate about 85 schools in the District and a number of dispensaries. The Wachagga, under their influence, have become predominantly Christian, and the percentage of literacy - although no one I have talked to has ventured an estimate - is probably high by African standards. Mrs. Bryce, the assistant to the regional education officer of the Tanganyika Territory government, told me that this year some 84 percent of the school age children are attending school - a very high proportion in East Africa. The wastage, as in most areas, however, is high; 10 of every 45 pupils who enter Standard I are lost by Standard IV, and an extremely small number complete secondary school. (Also, as pointed out below, the tribe is politically conscious, and has a comparatively advanced form of native administration.)

For the Wachagga tribe Arabica coffee is the export crop, bananas the staple food. Finger millet is used for making beer, and wheat, corn, potatoes and rice are second choice starch sources. Cane sugar, beans, peas, onions, and cotton are also grown. By African standards cultivation is very intensive, with fertilization widely used. Irrigation was practiced long before the first German administrators arrived, with simple sluice and furrow devices constructed a hundred years ago. Cattle are kept in huts and are stall-fed, their grass being carried on native heads for spectacular distances up or down the mountainside. This is partly for protection from disease and leopards, partly to increase milk yield, partly because the manure for the bananas is more easily collected, but mainly because the belt of fertile land is too crowded for grazing. On the lower slopes some Wachagga, forced downward by population pressure, are just learning to graze their cattle. Cattle for slaughter (the Wachagga eat as much or more meat than any other Tanganyika tribe) are most often purchased from outside tribes and walked up the mountain to be distributed to the dukas and slaughtered piecemeal.

The Wachagga have two types of land tenure: kihambaland, a qualified freehold for homestead, cattle, coffee and bananas, fruits and other trees, and ghambaland held on a year to year grant from the sub-chief where only annual crops are grown. The size of agricultural plots is generally small, averaging, I'm told, 3 to 5 acres. There are probably some very large holdings and consequently considerable economic stratification among the Wachagga, but there is no registration of native lands, and therefore no statistics to indicate the extent of this stratification.

The natives retain a good deal of their primitive self-sufficiency, the family providing much of its own food and shelter, but specialization of labor is utilized more than in most tribes. Wooden bowls are made by special fundis, or craftsmen, and there is, indigenously, specialization in hut-working and irrigation digging. Luxury items, such as kerosene lamps and brightly printed cloth, seen here in greater quantity than with most tribes, are purchased or bartered from the local African owned dukas. The desire for these luxuries is a principal spur to earning money, which is otherwise unnecessary except for taxes. There is some elaboration of this need for money through the fondness of Chagga women for changing styles of printed fine cottons and even silks, which they wear draped, like a short sari. But the basic wants still are filled through family cooperation, and the Chagga is only beginning to lose his happy freedom from the necessity of having cash on hand.

The Europeans in Moshi District, colonial officials, missionaries, and farmers - mainly Greeks and British - with property generally on the lower ground, amount to some 800. European farming here is large scale, but due to the fertility of the land the mountain slope acreage tends to be smaller than other East African white holdings. Sisal fields down on the dry steppes are of course huge. European crops are coffee (production 1,200 tons annually), sisal, and maize, grown for export or for large scale local selling. Labor for the farms must be imported from distant tribes, since the Wachagga refuse such employment, and is in very short supply. Indians, who monopolize in

other East African areas the store and trading businesses, have here been ejected by native political pressure from the mountain native areas. But they still number some 2,450, and their predominance in the trading businesses in Moshi Town continues. From headquarters in Moshi Indians operate sawmills and trading activities, but only on property not under native control.

The territorial government setup - as distinct from the native authority - has its headquarters in Moshi Town, southwest of Old Moshi where the German Boma stood before the first World War. The buildings of the Boma are on top of a small hill, just up from the local European commercial center, a road circle with a grass plot and a small tower clock in the middle. A branch of the East African cooperative is there, selling groceries and general goods, as are two large hardware stores, a hotel, and the post office. The inevitable nickname of this roundabout is Piccadilly Circus.

A visitor from up-country is impressed with the size of the Boma, and the number of specialist offices - the District Commissioner, an Assistant District Commissioner, and three District Officers, one educational officer, a revenue officer, and a town planning officer and assistant. The District Commissioner is a senior administrative officer, probably about due to be reassigned as a Provincial Commissioner. The Assistant D.C. and Nos. 2 and 3 assistants are of intermediate seniority, and in smaller districts would be district commissioners in their own right. At this large station they can specialize, so that one acts as chief of staff, one deals particularly with native treasury affairs, one with education, and to the junior falls the tasks of supervising medical installations. This breakdown holds primarily for paper work at the boma desks.

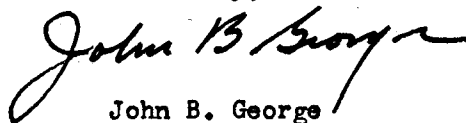
In the area itself there is a geographical division, and the older concept of one-man-over-one-area is retained. Each of the District Officers is responsible for one of the three geographical areas of native administration. To the people of that area, whom he visits on safari and speaks with at their meetings or barazas, the particular officer continues to hold the informal title "Bwana D.C.," supplying the element of paternalism which obtains in even this advanced area. Within these areas the D.O. functions in the general practitioner sense I described in my letter on the Biharamulo District Commissioner, but with his purview of duties considerably eclipsed. The specialist-breakdown at the Boma, the greater foothold here of missionaries, the self-management of the KNCU, and the more responsible role of the Chagga native authorities have caused the change. The officers concerned are generally happy with not suddenly having to clear light plane strips for a surprise visit of the Governor, or to personally supervise house and road building, or herd truant native children to school. But some of the reminders of their lessened powers are irksome. Donald Bowie tells of his feeling that the country had really gone to the dogs when one day, whilst he was delivering an impassioned harangue on the need for soil erosion and birth control, his large native audience suddenly became silent, faced about, and knelt, showing their backs to Bwana D.C. in response to the Angelus bell of a distant mission.

The native authority (or the administration of natives by natives) here is much more active than in any other district I have visited. It thinks for

itself and welcomes ideas from the outside. Its development has been carefully studied and influenced by Government, but its present form and composition were arrived at after long debate and compromise with (not by decree of) the British administrators. The most current interest is in the reorganization this past year of the native administration as set up in 1946. In 1946 the formerly independent Wachagga chiefdoms (mangiates) each under a chief (mangi) were grouped into three divisions, Hai, Vunjo, and Rombo, and a new divisional chief or Mwitori was elected for each of these divisions. Councils were formed in each of the divisions and mangiates. The Chagga Council was also reformed to include the division chiefs and representatives from their councils. The three new divisions and chiefs were not readily accepted by the Wachagga, and the Kilimanjaro Union, a political organization of considerable influence on the mountain, opposed the reorganization because it tended to divide rather than unite the Wachagga. The reorganization this past year has brought three major changes in the 1946 setup, some of which may partially assuage the opposition. A Mangi Mkuu or Paramount Chief of the Wachagga, Thomas Marealle, elected last year, was installed at the beginning of 1952 and now sits as chairman of the Chagga Council. Secondly, the composition of the Chagga Council and the division and mangiate councils has been changed; the total membership and the proportion of elected members, as distinguished from chiefs, has been increased (whether this constitutes a clear majority for elected members is debatable; and an important political issue), and more direct and fuller representation has been granted to the chiefdoms on the Chagga Council. Thirdly, a step has been taken towards the separation of the executive and judicial functions of the various echelons of the native administration. A Judicial Committee of the Chagga Council has been formed and a permanent magistrate has been appointed by the Chagga Council for each of the three divisions, and for three of the mangiates, where the people have petitioned for it.

The above is only a sketch of native authority structure, which I will be able to describe in detail later on. Other interesting targets for newsletters present themselves nearly every day. One project in the foreground now is to "inventory" the contents of my neighbor Ruben's small duka. The little improvised tin kerosene lamps - the bits of cloth, hoe blades, hardware, glasses, cigarettes, beads, cooking pots, rope, bottles - give the little raw-board built store an atmosphere very similar to the general stores I knew 25 years ago in Missouri, and I want to learn from where these items came and to whom they are sold. The idea is to see if the exchanges of these little cash-purchased items, bought with farm pennies by the local people, provide as much of an insight into local farm life as did the nails, soda crackers and shotgun shells where I lived as a child ...

Sincerely,



John B. George

1. A Jamaican, Mr. Thompson, of international background and knowledgeable particularly in regard to racial affairs (acquainted with most of the Nigerian and Gold Coast personages in London, Oxford and Cambridge) is practicing law here with apparent success. I first met Mr. Thompson in company with the Paramount Chief, Thomas Marealle. Later we spent some time together on a shooting weekend with Rashid Sheekh, owner of the Sanya sawmills. With his social and professional interracial contacts, he can be regarded I think as a well-audienced conveyor of outside ideas to untravelled East African chiefs and officials.