

**MANAGING PRESERVATION IN PRACTICE:
TANZANIA APPROACH TO PRESERVATION OF
ARCHIVAL MATERIALS**

BACKGROUND:

The Tanzania Records and National Archives operates under the President's Office, Public Service Management. Its mandate is stipulated under the Records and Archives Management Act No 3 of 2002. Historically, TRNA was established in 1963, when the President issued a circular No. 7 of 1963 which emphasized on the proper care and disposal of public records.

Preservation of archival material was one of the first priorities that were given high weight by the 1st President, the Late Mwalim Julius Kambarage Nyerere. In the same circular, it was emphasized that archival material has a broader cultural and historical value, without proper understanding of our past, we are at the mercy of impulse and prejudice, lacking in balance and continuity.

COLLECTIONS AT TRNA

Most of the early collections of Archival materials at TRNA were records of former German and British Colonial Administrations. These records exemplify – sometimes, incidentally – much of the indigenous customs and traditions of the people of Tanzania.

Since these records were part of the cultural heritage of Tanzania, it was a moral duty of the government to preserve. It is from them that the history of Tanzania will continue to be written and taught in schools and universities.

GERMAN AND BRITISH COLONIAL GOVERNMENT

As we all aware that Tanzania (by then Tanganyika) was ruled by German and British Colonial Government Consecutively.

In 1914 when World War I erupted, the Germans were heavily involved in this war. When Germans realized that there were about to lose the Tanganyika Colony in the First World War, they decided to bury their records at their headquarters in Tabora and in other different offices in the country.

This order was given by the Governor to avoid their Colonial Government records not get accessed by the enemies – the British. The Germans thought that at the end of the war these records would serve as evidence of the legal rights of German settlers. These records, mostly rat and rant eaten were discovered by the British in their first early years in Tanganyika.

The discovery led to negotiations with the German government to dig up other documents wherever there were hidden in the country. These records forms the nucleus of documents preserved at the National Archives of Tanzania.

BRITISH COLONIAL GOVERNMENT

Soon after the establishment of the British administration, the officers incharge of Provincial Administration felt that there was an urgent need for a system whereby administrative officers posted to Provinces and Districts be provided with background information on the historical, social, political and economic make up of their District to facilitate quick understanding of the problems and their spheres of jurisdiction. The order was therefore given, each District to have this useful book. Besides the District Books other many more records were created in support of the operation of Colonial Government.

PRESERVATION PRACTICE OF ARCHIVAL MATERIAL IN TANZANIA

Section 13 of the Records and Archives Management Act No. 13 of 2002 assigns to the Director of the National Archives the responsibility for preservation of all public records of enduring value. In order to execute this vital responsibility the following conditions have been established.

Environmental Control

Tanzania is situated in the tropical area, just at the heart of Equator, so the temperature ranges from 24°C to 34°C. The National Archives is also situated along the coast of Indian Ocean where humidity is very high. Due to this condition The National Repositories therefore are air conditioned and humidified.

Pest control

Tropical areas have a lot of pests such as insects, termites, silverfish rodents, wood boring beetles, cockroach and the like. In order to ensure that archival materials are not vulnerable to these threat, the National Archives have pest management controls mechanism. This include systematic cleaning, fumigation, removal of garbage and environmental controlling.

Conservation of old materials

Preservation priorities are set to archival materials that are in a high risk of damage. The National Archives has a conservation room (Laboratory) where all records that are torn or damaged can be repaired. The room also binds books, journals and other publications being held at the National Archives.

Search room rules

In order to ensure that archival materials are preserved for longer period of time, the National Archives have introduced search room rules in order to minimize damages of archival material by the users.

MICROFILMING PROJECTS IN TANZANIA

Since Tanzania attained its independence in 1961, two microfilming projects has taken place. The projects included microfilming of provincial and district books and the second project is microfilming of German Records.

Microfilming of Provincial and District Books

The Microfilming project started in October 1965 by collecting Districts Books all Districts. The Project was financed by contributions from three academic institutions: Rhodes House Library, Syracuse University, and the Centre for Research Libraries in Indiana. These Institutions agreed to purchase positive copies at a price which covered the cost of producing the primary negatives.

The Technical Unit of the University Library, Dar es Salaam did the actual microfilming since the National Archives of Tanzania at that time did not have a camera of its own.

The microfilms of provincial and District books are available at a number of universities who contributed to this project. Also a Guide to these records is available at the National Archives of Tanzania.

Microfilming of German Records

The microfilming project of the German records that are held in the National Archives started with an agreement between the Government of Tanzania and GTZ on behalf of the Germany government. The total cost for this project was around 500,000 Euros.

The following equipments were purchased:
One microfilm camera, 2 microfilm printer, 2
microfilm cabinets, 1 microfilming table 1
aluminum drying track and one microfilm
reader.



Latest digital microfilm reader used by researchers in the search room at Tanzania National Archives

Duplication of microfilms

- The Reich colonial office in Germany and the Germany National Archives holds a number of archival materials that are relating to Tanzania. The National Archives of Tanzania also have copies of these materials.

Repair work

- Since the German records are over 125 years old and were buried for over 5 years before being discovered by the British, they required major repair before embarking on the microfilming exercise. The repair work included; removing all tags, pins, metallic materials and repairing torn papers.

Capacity Building

- The National Archives of Tanzania in collaboration with the German Technical Corporation managed to train its 2 staff in care and conservation of books, manuscripts and old records for 12 weeks at the National Archives of India, School of Archival Studies in New Delhi.
- The National Archives of Tanzania also attached 2 staff at the National Archives of Kenya to learn more on microfilm and paper conservation.

- Other TNA staff received on job training in conservation and microfilming processes



*Records officer examine films after processing - Tanzania
National Archives*

Challenges of Preservation of Archival Materials in TNA

- (i) There are still many old documents at the TNA especially those of the former German and British colonial administration that need to be microfilmed.
- (ii) The National Archives repository is full and it can no longer accommodate more collections, this causes records with enduring value to continue remaining in Ministries.





- (iii) Access to the hard copy materials endangers and expose them at high risk of damage. These are unique documents that need to preserved by all means and at any cost.

- (iv) Due to budgetary constraints, the National Archives receives very little funds in this area.

(v) Unreliable electricity. There is no constant supply of power, which led the archival material to be subjected to high humidity and extreme temperature. The National Archives managed to procure a standby generator, but the cost of running is a burden.

STRATEGIES FOR PRESERVATION OF ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

Since most of the collections are too old that can hardly be readable, and the German records, been recognized as document of the World by UNESCO, It is the duty of the National Archives of Tanzania to preserve these records at any cost. The following strategies are being implemented by the National Archives.

- 1 Access to the actual files has been suspended in order to avoid further damages. All researchers use the microfilms to access the information they want.
- 2 All archival boxes that are used to house the archival materials are acid free.
- 3 Monitoring of environmental condition in the storage areas is of paramount

FUTURE PLAN

- The National Archives of Tanzania will continue to preserve and make safe keeping of all records with enduring value. Vast amount of information relating to social, statistical, technical, legal and administrative is the upmost value of Researchers and historians. it is the moral duty of the National Archives to continue to preserve

- The National Archives will continue to stretch hands to all development partners to assist in preservation of the national heritage. The National Archives would like to thank the following institutions and individuals who have made a vital contributions to us: DFID, World Bank, IMRT, CIDA Canada, GTZ, National Archives of India, National Archives of Kenya, Dr. Anne Thurston, and Dr. Trudy Huskamp Peterson just to mention a few.