Chapter 6
Infrastructures of Book Publishing in East Africa

In 1967, the East African Institute of Social and Cultural Affairs (EAISCA) hosted a roundtable on East African book publishing, with a live audience in Nairobi.[1] Z. Okong'o, who worked in the recording studio of the EAISCA, chaired a discussion between three men who represented different parts of the regional publishing sector: John Nottingham, director of the East African Publishing House (EAPH), a subsidiary of the EAISCA itself; Noah Sempira, director of the East African Literature Bureau, the government-subsidised publisher of the nascent East African Community (albeit with a longer history); and Chris Strong, representing Longmans Kenya, a subsidiary of the British multinational firm.

All three had long experience in the world of East African publishing. Yet it is telling that their expectations of what the coming decade would look like differed substantially. Nottingham was optimistic: he anticipated that foreign, commercial publishers (like Longmans) would become redundant in the face of a growth in the number of East African publishers – he included EAPH in this category despite not being East African himself. There would be twenty such publishers in a decade's time, Nottingham imagined. In contrast, the Longmans' representative, Strong, saw no conflict: he claimed that foreign companies would find a sustainable niche alongside new publishers, in healthy competition with local publishers. Sempira, a Ugandan and the only Black panel member, was less optimistic: such was the monopoly of foreign companies in East African publishing, he argued, that only with heavy state subsidies would indigenous publishing even *exist* by the late 1970s.

This chapter seeks to make sense of the dynamics that made the future of East African publishing look so unpredictable in 1967, through a particular focus on the EAPH. We situate East African publishing against a colonial history of state, missionary and commercial initiatives, and within the landscape of Cold War competition and finance. We are interested not only in the relationship between foreign and indigenous, or external and internal, but especially in how East African regional initiatives met the national frameworks of independent Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania in the 1960s and 1970s. All three publishers represented at the roundtable operated on an explicitly regional basis, but it was perhaps no coincidence that the discussion took place in Nairobi. In this chapter as elsewhere, regionalism proved a way to address the challenges of ongoing colo-

1 "Copyright and All That: A Roundtable Discussion", *East Africa Journal* 4, no. 6 (1967), 25–30.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111620060-007

nial influence in the publishing sector. By focusing of the practical questions of production and distribution, however, we can see that it was far from a simple or sustainable solution.

Scholars of African literature during the Cold War have made visible some of the political and economic structures that dictated the forms that the publishing industry took. Much of the defining work in this field questioned the extent to which African writers, editors and publishers knew about and were moulded by the Cold War underpinnings of the funding they received.[2] It is increasingly apparent, however, that this was not simply a sliding scale from control to freedom. Which styles of writing reached publication, which authors were able to make a living, and which texts solidified their reputation as part of a literary canon were all contingent upon processes of gatekeeping, self-censorship and personal relationships.[3] Certainly Cold War competition was an important factor in these processes, but a broader range of historical approaches has demonstrated other factors at play, notably the continuing influence of (British) colonial institutions and commercial interests on the continent.[4] Meanwhile, the accounts of leading figures in different national publishing traditions reveal the regional specificities of this wider Cold War and post-colonial story, especially in terms of changes in government and political conflicts at the national and regional level, as well as the attempts of individuals to defy these constraining events and structures.

This chapter brings these various perspectives together by thinking through East Africa as a region and emphasising the specific, unequal relationships that regional projects had with their commercial and Cold War backers. Our subject of enquiry here, then, is not the body of texts written and published in East Africa but rather the ecologies that underpinned them: the actors, institutions and infrastructures of publishing.[5] In particular, we bring to light factors that limited efforts to remake the publishing industry for an independent East Africa.

2 Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta Books, 1999).

3 Caroline Davis, *African Literature and the CIA: Networks of Authorship and Publishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Francesca Orsini, Neelam Srivastava, and Laetitia Zecchini, *The Form of Ideology and the Ideology of Form: Cold War, Decolonization and Third World Print Cultures* (Open Book Publishers, 2022); Monica Popescu, *At Penpoint: African Literatures, Postcolonial Studies, and the Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020).

4 Caroline Ritter, *Imperial Encore: The Cultural Project of the Late British Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021).

5 On print ecologies, see Christopher E. W. Ouma and Madhu Krishnan, "Small Magazines in Africa: Ecologies and Genealogies," *Social Dynamics* 47, no. 2 (2021): 193–209.

The history of East African publishing, and that of EAPH in particular, is a revealing lens through which to examine the period because its chronology suggests a peak that extends beyond that of some of the other themes discussed in this book. EAPH was in ascendency in the second half of the 1960s and continued to thrive in the first half of the 1970s, after the University of East Africa ceased to be, for example. East African poet Taban Lo Liyong spoke of the region's "literary barrenness" in 1965, but this image would not have chimed with actors in the publishing industry five or even ten years later.[6] During the 1970s, East Africa was regarded as the leading region on the continent in terms of African-language publishing.[7] Publisher Henry Chakava remembered the 1970s in Kenya as the "fat years" of Kenyan publishing, while Walter Bgoya recalled that the print run for a good novel in Tanzania in 1977 – 10,000 – could not have been justified in the years before or after.[8] In the era of the bestseller, the proliferation of popular crime thrillers and romance magazines ensured financial security for some publishing houses. Charles Mangua's *Son of a Woman* (EAPH, 1971) – a thriller combing sex, urban scandal, crime and redemption – went through six reprints between 1972 and 1987.[9] Heinemann created the *Spear Series* of pacy urban crime thrillers to compete with the buoyant market for American pulp fiction in the 1970s.[10] The hugely popular *Sugar Daddy's Lover* (1975) by Rosemarie Owino "offered advice and solutions" to young urban Kenyans navigating issues of gender and romance in the late 1970s.[11]

Yet, by the end of the 1970s, the situation looked very different: the impact of worsening relations between the three governments of the region, and the responses of foreign donors, began to look more intractable for the publishing industry. The chronologies of the "golden era" of East African publishing thus sug-

6 Tabon [Taban] Lo Liyong "Can we correct literary barrenness in East Africa?" *East Africa Journal* 2, no. 8 (1965), 5–13.

7 S. I. A. Kotei, *The Book Today in Africa* (Paris: UNESCO, 1981), 132.

8 Henry Chakava, *Publishing in Africa: One Man's Perspective,* (Chestnut Hill, MA; Bellagio Publishing Network, 1996), 11; Walter Bgoya, *Books and Reading in Tanzania* (Paris: Unesco, 1986), 10; Maria Suriano, "Dreams and Constraints of an African Publisher: Walter Bgoya, Tanzania Publishing House and Mkuki Na Nyota, 1972–2020," *Africa* 91, no. 4 (2021): 581.

9 Kathleen Greenfield, "Self and Nation in Kenya: Charles Mangua's 'Son of Woman.'" *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 33, no. 4 (1995): 685–698.

10 Raoul Granqvist, "Storylines, Spellbinders and Heartbeats," in *Readings in African Popular Fiction*, ed. Stephanie Newell (Oxford: James Currey, 2002), 86.

11 Catherine Muhomah, "Romancing the Sugar Daddy in Rosemarie Owino's *Sugar Daddy's Lover*," *Social Dynamics* 30, no. 2 (2004): 154–164.

gest the extent to which the global economic crises of the 1970s played out only in combination with distinctly regional and local concerns.

The EALB and The World of Publishing before EAPH

Of the three bodies represented at the 1967 roundtable, EAPH was the relative newcomer, formed two years previously in 1965. It was launched into a world shaped by the colonial history of the publishing sector, characterised by significant cooperation between colonial state, mission and business interests. British commercial publishers – competing among themselves in a scramble for East African consumers – had established a foothold in colonial Kenya over the previous decades. The Colonial Office in London acted as a gatekeeper for these publishers, who then supplied the colonial education system with teaching resources, especially English-language course books, which were stocked in missionary bookshops.[12] With Kenyan independence in 1963, companies including Longmans, Heinemann and Oxford University Press saw the growing potential of the East African market, notably in textbooks, and looked to launch sister companies or subsidiaries in the newly independent state in the mid-1960s (like Longmans Kenya), with the intention of exporting to, and sometimes printing in, Uganda and Tanzania too – thus profiting from regional customs agreements.[13] During the late 1960s, their output remained overwhelmingly English, less out of ideological conviction than because they deemed books in African languages to be unprofitable and because their mainly expatriate workforce lacked the skills to edit work in other languages.[14]

Like the commercial companies, Sempira's EALB had foundations in a colonial publishing system in which Christian missionaries and the state both played important roles. On the recommendations of Elspeth Huxley's report, which we discussed in Chapter two, the EALB was formed in 1948, under the auspices of the East Africa High Commission and largely financed from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund. Again, educational publishing was at its core. EALB was a product of the postwar international atmosphere that placed emphasis on education (especially mass literacy) as a means to justify the continuation of colonial rule by demonstrating to international bodies like the UN investment in the socio-economic development of colonial territories. Headquarters in Nairobi were to

12 Ritter, *Imperial Encore*, 62.

13 Henry Chakava, *Books and Reading in Kenya* (Paris: UNESCO, 1983), 8–9.

14 There were exceptions, like Nyerere's Swahili translation of Shakespeare's Julius Ceasar, published by OUP. See Ritter, *Imperial Encore*, 67–70.

work with branches in Kampala and Dar es Salaam, and each shared a broad remit under five sections: textbooks; libraries; periodicals; general literature and African authorship; publishing and distribution.[15] The man approached to act as director was Charles Granston Richards who we met in Chapter two when he was working as Literary Secretary of the Church Missionary Society and responsible for its publishing arm, Ndia Kuu, which published short ethnographic surveys in Kenya during the 1940s, with adult literacy programmes in mind.[16] In keeping with the importance attached by the late colonial state to bringing East African representation into key committees, the three territorial governments were instructed that of the three representatives which each government was permitted to nominate, one should be African. For Tanganyika, it was the poet Shaaban Robert who was appointed.[17]

As Morgan Robinson has argued, the EALB under the colonial state tended to prescribe needs as much as responding to demand.[18] It was explicitly not a commercial publisher. With money tight in the late 1950s, the Director's response to a suggestion that it produce more "profitable" titles was that this would be "against the terms of reference for the Bureau which were that it should never compete with the publishing and bookselling trades".[19] The EALB's production of periodicals for general readers, in African languages, distinguished it from the bulk of publishing ventures solely focused on educational and religious material.[20] This was part of the colonial push for vernacular reading material discussed earlier. Its Swahili-language magazine *Tazama* (which had a Luganda-language sister publication, *Tunuulira*) was initially intended to provide material for rural communities to maintain literacy skills after leaving school.

There was sometimes tension between this educational ideal and reader preferences, however. In 1953, EALB had to confront the fact that *Tazama* readers were more interested in reading material that was "frankly political in charac-

15 C.S. Sabiti, "The work of the East African Literature Bureau", *East African Library Association Bulletin* 13 (July 1972), 144–152; Ritter, *Imperial Encore*, 54–62.

16 Chakava, *Publishing in Africa,* 7; Ritter, *Imperial Encore*, 50–51; Morgan J. Robinson, *A Language for the World: The Standardization of Swahili* (Ohio University Press, 2022), 129. Shiraz Durrani notes that 'In 1946–47 Ndia Kuu Press produced a total of 350,000 books in eight different languages', see Shiraz Durrani, *Never Be Silent: Publishing & Imperialism in Kenya, 1884–1963* (London: Vita Books, 2006), 61.

17 Archives of the East African Community, Dodoma [hereafter EAC] Acc. 39/1002, f. 68A, C. B. A. Darling, 'The East African Literature Bureau Advisory Council: Notice of those appointed'.

18 Robinson, *A Language for the World,* Chapter five.

19 EAC Acc. 39/1006, f. 55. East African Literature Bureau, "Minutes of Meeting of the Advisory Council, 1 December 1958," 6.

20 Kotei, *The Book in Africa*, 132.

ter". The magazine quickly shifted its focus to a readership that EALB described as "the sophisticated urban African".[21] By 1955, much of its circulation of 6500 was concentrated in coastal towns and cities and it resembled a lifestyle magazine – a "home" magazine as its (all white) editorial board described it.[22] *Tazama* and *Tunuulira* featured beauty competitions, comic strips and serialised detective stories such as "Rita" (who was soon battling communists in the Indian Ocean, despite initial fears that the stories could "glamorise" crime).[23] Results of the rebranding were mixed: there was a large and interested readership, despite European employers and school headteachers cancelling their orders, and commercial newspapers resenting the new competition. But there were also challenges: *Tazama* and *Tunuulira* struggled to reach readers outside of urban centres, due in part to difficulties in building a network of distributors and agents. The East African Standard took over "financial responsibility for production and distribution" of *Tazama* on 1 January 1956, and of *Tunuulira* on 28 February 1958.[24]

The question of EALB's role under the newly elected East African governments of the 1960s was a matter of debate. In 1964, questions were raised about it in the Central Legislative Assembly of the East African Common Services Organisation. What role could a colonial institution which had supplied literature to Kenya's detention camps in the 1950s possibly have in an independent state? What steps would be needed to turn it into an organisation which could truly "provide an outlet for the writings of promising young African writers"?[25]

But change was underway. That same year, in 1964, Noah L. M. Sempira, previously employed by the Anglican Uganda Bookshop Press, took over from Richards as the first African director, maintaining the organisation's links with the Christian press. The EALB's activities expanded as it was transferred to the East African Common Services Organisation, and then to the East African Community in 1967.

The EALB was bolstered by the optimism of the early 1960s. Its 1961 novel competition received just 23 entries in English, 20 in Swahili and 5 in Luganda, the majority not considered suitable for publication. But soon after, in a twelve

21 East Africa High Commission, *East African Literature Bureau Annual Report 1953* (Nairobi, 1954), 17.

22 EAC Acc. 39/1304, f. 82. Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Editorial and Management Board of Tazama and Tunuulira, 2 March 1956.

23 EAC Acc. 39/1304, f. 83. Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Editorial and Management Board of Tazama and Tunuulira, 29 June 1956.

24 East Africa High Commission, *East African Literature Bureau Annual Report 1955–56* (Nairobi, 1956), 6; East Africa High Commission, *Annual Report* (1957–58), 9.

25 East African Common Services Organization, *Proceedings of the Central Legislative Assembly Debates* (1964), 370.

month period during 1962–63, EALB published a record ninety-one books. It continued to produce around fifty new titles annually in at least a dozen languages[26] The EALB saw its role as actively contributing to the wider intellectual life of the region. In the introduction to his historical biography of the nineteenth-century Nyamwezi leader Mirambo, John Kabeya gave a special thanks to Juma Ali of the East African Literature Bureau in Dar es Salaam for the encouragement and support which had brought the book to fruition. Juma Ali, Kabeya wrote, had told him that "the Government wanted its citizens to write about African heroes like Mirambo in order to preserve the traditions of our elders", and that his institute would be willing to "publish books of this sort".[27]

The EALB's growing emphasis on African authorship and vernacular publishing in the 1960s was accompanied by an emphasis on quality and scholarly appeal. Its 1968–69 report referred to the "Johari za Kiswahili Series", published in English and Swahili, which the EALB saw as "beginnings of criticisms in Swahili literature, a step towards a national literature."[28] The 1970 report noted a "decisive shift from small saddle-stitched literacy readers to hardcased volumes of scholarly materials that command international attention."[29] It also referred to the Bureau's expansion into the field of academic "journals and literary magazines for local and overseas markets", including *East African Research and Development Journal*, biannually; *The African Journal of Tropical Hydrobiology and Fisheries*, biannually; *Busara*, the literary magazine of Nairobi University, quarterly; and *Dhana*, the literary counterpart at Makerere University, biannually.[30] They would also be undertaking translations into Swahili of "internationally famous works such as 'False Start in Africa', 'The Wretched of the Earth', and Russian, French, English and American Classics", with the aim to "not only assist the development of Swahili", but also to "introduce local readers into the highly interesting and enlightening sphere of world literature."[31] The approach was one of "rapid expansion", with the aim of benefiting the "wananchi [citizens] the Bureau was established to serve".[32]

26 Kotei, *The Book Today*, 132.

27 John B. Kabeya, *Mtemi Mirambo: Mtawala shujaa ya Kinyamwezi* (Kampala: East African Literature Bureau, 1966), vi. An English translation was published a decade later.

28 Kenya National Archives, Nairobi (hereafter KNA), RW/5/2, f. 29. East African Community Annual Report 1968/69, 1.

29 East African Community Annual Report 1970, 1.

30 East African Community Annual Report 1970, 2.

31 East African Community Annual Report 1970, 3–4.

32 East African Community Annual Report 1970, 3.

The EALB's position was recognised internationally. Speaking at a conference on Publishing and Book Development held at the University of Ife in 1973, S. I. A. Kotei, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Library Studies at the University of Ghana, described the EALB as "the most successful vernacular literature publishing house in Africa, in both the economic and literary sense". This, Kotei suggested, was a consequence of Swahili having "become the lingua franca of East, and certain parts of Central Africa".[33] The low uptake for the 1961 novel competition was unimaginable by the late 1960s, when writing workshops, advanced royalties and outreach into the three campuses of the University of East Africa saw "Manuscripts keep pouring in".[34]

The EALB's emphasis on distribution also grew during the 1960s. Richards had described the organisation's work in 1962 as "half a very busy publishing concern[,] half a lending library service", noting the lack of a bookselling trade as an obstacle to the bureau's work.[35] EALB's library services, which built on local initiatives and included a successful postage system, were transferred to national library services after independence.[36] In their place, EALB launched a Mobile Book Distribution Scheme for lending and selling books to rural areas. Three vans, in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, each visited over twenty towns and villages on regular tours.[37] The vans, provided by the Swedish government, through UNESCO, stocked a range of publications, not limited to those of the EALB itself, as the Bureau's Senior Book Production Officer emphasised.[38] Apparently unique on the African continent, these bookshop vans catered to readers outside of major urban centres.[39] The vans were aimed in particular at new adult readers, who thus had access to a shared corpus of reading material, either in translation into particular vernaculars or in a lingua franca such as Swahili, Luganda or English.

33 S. I. A. Kotei, "Some Cultural and Social Factors of Book Reading and Publishing in Africa," in *Publishing in Africa in the Seventies: Proceedings of an Internat. Conference on Publishing and Book Development, Held at the Univ. of Ife, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, 16–20 Dec. 1973,* ed. Edwina Oluwasanmi (Ile-Ife: Univ. of Ife Press, 1975), 196.

34 Sabiti, "The work of the East African Literature Bureau"; KNA RW 5/2, f. 29. East African Community Annual Report 1968/69, 1.

35 SOAS, C. G. Richard Papers. Richards, "Lecture for Makerere College Faculty of Education," 29 November 1962.

36 On EALB library services before independence, see Robinson, *A Language for the World*, chapter 6.

37 "Library Books by Post Gain Popularity in Uganda", *Uganda Argus*, 9 January 1956, 3.

38 Sabiti, "The Work of the East African Literature Bureau," 151.

39 Kotei, *The Book Today in Africa*, 191.

Between 1965 and 1967, around 35 000 books were sold through this scheme. Among the most popular books (by sales) in Kenya and Uganda, most were in English, including various English dictionaries and course books, an EALB publication *Know yourself: A guide for adolescent girls* (popular in both countries), *About marriage* and *Venereal diseases*, as well as the Luganda novel *Zinunula omunaku* by E. K. N. Kawere and a Runyankore translation of the bible. The most popular books in Tanzania were all in Swahili, including *Demokrasi katika Africa (Democracy in Africa), Ndoa na talaka (Marriage and divorce)* and Shaaban Robert's novel *Kusadikika.*[40] The significance of the book vans for literate adults can be imagined by way of the thousands who paid for these books from slim salaries – the scheme reported better sales at the beginning of the month, when more cash was available. While the project relied on the three-year funding from UNESCO, efforts to replace the vans with small bookshops in each of the towns it visited saw some success.[41]

The flourishing of the EALB in the 1960s benefitted from the long-standing readerships sustained by countless other smaller ventures in vernacular publishing, many of which did not received comparable official authorisation. In 1952, for example, a group in north-central Uganda formed the Lango Literature Bureau and sought recognition from the colonial governor.[42] The group envisaged a multilingual project centred around the Lango language (part of the Luo group of languages) with the intention to "encourage the printings and publications of books in Lango district [. . .] translate and publish books from other languages to Lango [and] write and publish books in Lango language". They had support from missionaries in the district but anticipated resistance from "the enemies of our language or even the enemies of the Lango people themselves". To bolster the case for government recognition, the group cited British linguists who were advocating literacy skills in the mother tongue prior to learning to read and write in English.[43] Lango Literature Bureau was characteristic of the publishing scene in the late colonial period, driven by the demand for educational materials in lan-

40 UNESCO, "A report on the mobile distribution scheme, October 1966 – June 1967", Catalog Number 0000160065, accessed 12 February 2021, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000160065?posInSet=179&queryId=820d0da7-d55d-4ad3-83a2-5d51767ed8ad.

41 Ibid. See also Kotei, *The Book Today in Africa*; Sabiti, "The work of the East African Literature Bureau".

42 Uganda National Records Centre and Archives (hereafter UNRCA), CSO 13461, no folio. Letter from Lango Literature Bureau to Governor, 14 January 1953.

43 Ibid.

guages other than English. This was not only a missionary-led enterprise: at Makerere, students organised a Vernacular Literature Society in the same period.[44]

Religious publishing, meanwhile, branching from its missionary roots, took on new forms after independence. In the mid-1960s, the Kenya-based Christian periodical *Target* and its Swahili equivalent *Lengo*, which circulated across the region, advertised the Church Missionary Society (CMS) bookshop in Nairobi alongside publications of the newly formed All Africa Council of Churches. From the late 1960s, the ecumenical movement in the Eastern Africa region (extending to Zambia and Malawi in particular) emphasised that a coherent communication and publication strategy was vital to its survival.[45] Charles Granston Richards, who had left his role as Director of EALB to build up the East Africa operations of Oxford University Press, moved again in 1965 to become Director of a new Christian Literature Fund, established by the World Council of Churches to support the development of "a thriving, well-co-ordinated indigenous Christian literature activity of high quality, largely self-sustaining, and capable of spontaneous growth".[46]

The EAPH was thus formed in a moment when the publishing field was expanding rapidly. The multiplicity of publishing and distribution ventures was, in the late 1960s and first years of the 1970s, characteristic of this vibrant publishing scene, and not always a threat to it. Books were often written, published, printed and distributed by a combination of the EALB, EAPH, commercial publishers and government departments.[47] An overlapping group of writers, editors and publishers worked across these organisations: Y. N. Okal, for example, worked as a salesman for Longmans before setting up his own Equatorial Publishers in 1965; Abdillahi Nassir from Mombasa was the Swahili editor for the Oxford University Press branch in Nairobi during the 1960s and then left to start an independent publishing company.[48]

At times, the extent of cooperation between commercial and state operations seemed to favour the expansion of foreign business interests, however: Chakava

44 Latifa S. Chiraghdin, *Life Journey of a Swahili Scholar* (Nairobi: Asian African Heritage Trust, 2018), 48.

45 E. C. Makunike, *Christian Press in Africa: Voice of Human Concern* (Lusaka: Multimedia Publications, 1973).

46 SOAS, C.G. Richards collection, Box 3. Extract from Ecumenical Press Service release cited in Letter from Elizabeth and Charles Richards to friends, Christmas Day 1964.

47 Sabiti, "The Work of the East African Literature Bureau," 147.

48 On Okal, John Ndegwa, "History and Development of Printing and Publishing in Kenya", *East African Library Association Bulletin* 14, (Sept 1974): 41–52; Nassir obituary online, accessed 26 February 2025, https://en.abna24.com/news//sheikh-abdillahi-has-left-behind-thriving-shia-community-in-kenya-abdul-qadir-nasir_1220633.html.

contended that the EALB, under Richards' directorship, undermined its own work by commissioning foreign publishers like Oxford University Press to publish (and profit from) teaching material that the EALB had developed in cooperation with government education departments.[49] This was a result of EALB's explicitly non-commercial principles: it took on projects it deemed worthwhile for reasons other than profit, and passed these by prior arrangement to commercial publishers who otherwise may never have considered publication viable.[50] The policy ensured that EALB's operations functioned, but it looked increasingly problematic when foreign commercial publishers began to be seen as the source of the publishing sector's challenges.[51]

Nevertheless, rivalry between publishers sometimes appeared to boost the sector. In early 1970s Dar es Salaam, for example, publishers were competing for the manuscripts of academics at the university: EALB staff reported that Oxford University Press had a monopoly on texts coming out of the Geography department, while EAPH had a monopoly in History and Social Science.[52] In short, the effects of the relationship between private (foreign) firms, state (national and regional) subsidies, and the central role of religious institutions were not obvious: it was no wonder that Nottingham, Sempira and Strong imagined different trajectories for the sector.

Who Pays for Books?

In 1966, shortly after its founding, Bethwell Ogot described EAPH as "the first truly indigenous publishing company in East Africa".[53] Looking back, however, he would later describe the tug of war over decision-making, much of which stemmed from a lack of clarity about the role of the various groups, individuals and funds involved in its founding.[54] Behind Ogot's descriptor of "indigenous", which followed UNESCO in distinguishing between "foreign" and "indigenous"

49 Chakava, *Books and Reading*, 11. Chakava also cites J. W. Chege on this position.

50 Robinson, *A Language for the World*, 131.

51 Ritter, *Imperial Encore*, 54–62, 67.

52 KNA RW/1/1, f. 1 and 3, N.G. Ngulukulu (EALB), Report on visit to Dar es Salaam branch, 27 January – 1 February 1970.

53 Hoover Institute Archives (hereafter HIA), RG/TM, Newspaper cutting quoting Ogot, from *Daily Nation*, 23 February 1966.

54 Bethwell Ogot, *My Footprints on the Sands of Time: An Autobiography* (Victoria: Trafford, 2003) 212–25. See also the debate, citing Ogot, in Hilary Ouma, "Indigenous Publishers Need Government Aid," *Weekly Review*, 18 August 1975, 25.

publishing, was a host of complex relationships with individuals and organisations beyond East Africa.[55] Cold War flows of finances played a prominent role.

EAPH opened in 1965 as a joint venture with British publisher André Deutsch, who had attended the 1962 Makerere Writers Conference in search of commercial opportunities, and the Lagos-based African Universities Press.[56] EAISCA soon bought out its foreign partners, who wanted more control over publication choices than the EAISCA wanted to give.[57] It was thus locally owned by 1966, which is not to say that either its staff or funding at the time came solely from East Africa.[58] Nottingham's own definition of an "indigenous" publisher was "a firm the majority of whose ownership, production, personnel and profits are African".[59] Ogot, alongside his duties at the EAISCA, the *East Africa Journal* and his full-time university post, was made chairman of the EAPH. He, in turn, appointed as his publishing director John Nottingham, an ex-colonial official who had made his life in independent Kenya as a teacher, and who Ogot described as a "radical".[60] Nottingham was highly critical of the role of commercial publishers in the region and saw EAPH as a challenge to their monopoly, as his roundtable contribution suggested. Writing shortly after the formation of EAPH in 1966, he objected to the claims that British multinationals could serve East African needs:

> You do not create a local industry merely by a wave of the expatriate wand appointing one or two Africans to a 'board' that hardly ever meets or as junior sales representatives, or by tacking on the country's name in brackets to the title of your firm – these are mere business men's gimmicks and should no longer deceive us.[61]

These opinions saw British publishers in Nairobi view him as a "black sheep" who was "letting the side down".[62]

The initial injection of capital for EAPH came primarily from the West German Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and the US foundation Peace with Freedom

55 See e.g. UNESCO, *Book Development in Africa: Problems and Perspectives* (UNESCO: Paris,1969), online at https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000059548?posInSet=272&queryId=820d0da7-d55d-4ad3-83a2-5d51767ed8ad [accessed 22 January 2020]; Oluwasanmi, *Publishing in Africa in the Seventies*.

56 HIA RG/TM, Agreement signed on 26 February by Deutsch, Nottingham, Ogot and Garver.

57 John Nottingham, "Establishing an African Publishing Industry: A Study in Decolonization," *African Affairs* 68, no. 271 (1969): 140.

58 HIA RG/TM, Gabor, "East African Publishing House," February 1966.

59 Nottingham, "Establishing an African Publishing Industry," 143.

60 Ogot, *My Footprints,* 213.

61 John Nottingham, "The Book Trade in East Africa," *East Africa Journal* 2, no. 9 (1966), 25–29; quote at 27.

62 Nottingham, in "Copyright and All That".

(PWF). As we saw in Chapter two, funding for a publishing house was part of the larger agreement for the formation of EAISCA, first set out when George Githii (close assistant to Jomo Kenyatta and soon to become Editor in Chief at *The Nation*) met representatives of FES and PWF during a 1963 trip to Germany.[63] Both FES and PWF were associated with a social-democratic camp within the Cold War West, broadly supportive of state intervention and economic redistribution, but equally as concerned about communism as their more right-wing compatriots. Founded in 1925, FES was Germany's first "party-affiliated foundation", associated with, but independent from, the German Social Democratic Party, which itself was an active member of the Socialist International, an alliance of social-democratic parties in the "free world", including the British Labour Party and Israeli Mapai. PWF's history was more closely tied to the Cold War: it was the successor of the anti-communist International Features Service, run by Robert Gabor, exiled from his native Hungary, where he had opposed Soviet occupation, just as he had Nazi occupation before it.

CIA money flowed into Peace with Freedom through various proxies.[64] This was the subject of rumour in Kenya long before it was established in the US press in 1969, but there were mixed feelings about whether and why the origin of the funding mattered. East Africans running the EAISCA were alert to the risks of accepting foreign funding but equally convinced that it need not define their activities, as long as decision-making power remained with the group of East African board members whose visions were at the core of EAISCA's foundation.

The idea that EAPH could be an "indigenous" publisher at the same time as receiving indirect CIA funding must be understood in the context of a publishing sector where Cold War power play was openly acknowledged. For example, between 1964 and 1979, the Foreign Languages Press in Peking published over a hundred books and pamphlets in Swahili.[65] A significant proportion were the speeches and writings of Mao Zedong, or celebratory accounts of the Chinese Communist Party and its global significance, such as *Vipi China imefaulu kujitosheleza kwa nafaka? [How did China achieve self-sufficiency in grain?]* (1977) and *Watu wa Vietnam watefanikiwa! [The people of Vietnam will succeed!*] (1966). Many of the earliest publications, however, were fiction aimed at children and new literates. These included an extract from Gao Yubao's famous account of life

63 HIA TM/51/6, Githii & Hughes, "Memorandum for the Hon T.J. Mboya on the Proposed East African Institute of Social and Cultural Affairs," no date but July/August 1963.

64 Dan Schechter, Michael Ansara, and David Kolodney, "The CIA as an Equal Opportunity Employer", *Ramparts* (1969): 29.

65 The (possibly incomplete) range of titles can be found by searching "Uchapaji wa lugha za kigeni" on Worldcat.org.

under Japanese occupation, published as *Nilitaka kwenda schule [I wanted to go to school]* in 1964, *Kilitokea katika shamba la minazi [It happened on a coconut farm]* in 1965, and a 1964 prize-winning story by Kuo Hsu about Chinese and Korean orphans who resisted Japanese occupation, *Watoto wakurugenzi wa askari Mkuu Yang [Commander Yang's young pioneers].* Although the circulation of these books and their unnamed translators is difficult to trace, Walter Bgoya recalls that there was ready demand for them, because few other publishers were producing children's books in Swahili.[66] Likely they were available to browse at the Tanganyika Bookshop in Dar es Salaam, run by a Chinese agent Ho Lin.[67] That these publications were concentrated in the late 1960s and 1970s is not simply a story of Cold War propaganda. It also supports the picture of a growing and thriving Swahili-language book culture – the existence of the lively market for novels that Bgoya described in the 1970s.

While newly opened foreign embassies in East Africa's capitals increasingly looked to gift books to schools and libraries, East African governments faced a dilemma. Rapid, affordable acquisition of books, especially in languages other than English, was necessary to support literacy and education targets, but allowing embassies to supply schools directly opened up the education system to considerable outside influence at a time when emphasis was being placed on curricula relevant to East African realities. Governments arrived at different systems of vetting educational books: in Kenya in 1966, the Ministry of Education insisted that this system could be further tightened, regardless of the "huge stocks of books [. . .] piling up at the American Embassy". As one minister reflected: "Though many headmasters will accept these books with the best intentions, it would not be safe nor educationally sound for a local school to rely on a library where stock is mainly foreign and possibly from one generous donor".[68]

The Ministry was given the responsibility of deciding which books were suitable, but sometimes schools and individuals requested books directly from embassies and thus expected to receive them – or would discover that they had been withheld by the government. In 1967, for example, the Soviet embassy sent 24 boxes of books that had apparently been requested by schools to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who deemed them unsuitable for use but nevertheless passed

66 Bgoya, *Books and reading*, 44; Yu Xiang, "Socialist Dreams in Print: Chinese Swahili-Language Publications in the Time of the Cultural Revolution," in *Print, Press and Publishing in Tanzania*, eds. Zamda R. Geuza, George Roberts and Emma Hunter, forthcoming.

67 George Roberts, *Revolutionary State-Making in Dar Es Salaam: African Liberation and the Global Cold War, 1961–1974* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 54, 178.

68 KNA, AHC/9/1, C.G. Maina (Education) to Permanent Secretaries, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 7 November 1966.

them onto the Ministry of Education as agreed, noting the potential embarrassment if schools realised that gifts made directly to them were being vetted by government.[69] The list comprised educational books in Swahili and English, including *Utotoni na Ujanani mwa Lenin* [*Lenin's childhood and youth*] and *Struggle for Socialism in the World*.[70] Needless to say, the criteria for vetting books differed across the 1960s and 70s, and from state to state. *The Origins and Development of World Socialism*, which British intelligence suspected to have been funded by East Germany, was distributed to all secondary schools by the Tanzanian National Ministry of Education in 1971.[71] In early 1972, the Ugandan Ministry of Education publicly thanked the Soviet Ambassador for a donation of 582 books and 1499 magazines, mainly of an educational character.[72]

Books were provided to other institutions too. The United Kingdom's anti-communist Information Research Department (IRD) put considerable effort into getting books into circulation – often covertly – which offered a different perspective to that contained in books supplied by China or the USSR. In 1970, for example, books were sent to the Tanzanian National Assembly, TANU Headquarters, Kivukoni College and NUTA, the National Union of Tanganyika Workers, among other institutions. Many of those requested, from a carefully curated list, focused on parliaments, democracy and democratic socialism.[73] In other cases, books were sent directly to libraries with compliments from the publishers.[74] In contrast to books supplied from the Eastern bloc, the IRD only supplied books in English.[75]

Within a year of its founding, the EAPH had made a significant impact on the local publishing scene, publishing a diverse range of books, from academic his-

69 KNA, AHC/9/1, L.N. Mwangi (Foreign Affairs) to Ministry of Education, 10 May 1967.

70 KNA, AHC/9/1, List of books from Soviet Embassy, attached to L.N. Mwangi (Foreign Affairs) to Ministry of Education, 10 May 1967.

71 National Archives of the United Kingdon (hereafter UKNA), FCO 168/4516, f. 3, 1 July 1971, Minute by D. N. Biggin.

72 "Books gift from Russia", *Uganda Argus*, 29 January 1972, 5.

73 See correspondence in UKNA FCO 95/806.

74 UKNA FCO 168/3752, e.g. note from D. E. Tack to Miss Virtue, "Books for the Tanzania University Library," 3 March 1969, requesting books to be sent "by open letter post, as if from the London publishers *The Bodley Head*, i.e. using the attached compliments slips to The Librarian, The University of Tanzania, Dar es Salaam".

75 For a discussion of this and recognition of the consequence being a significant amount of material circulating in Swahili from communist countries, see e.g. UKNA FCO 168/4094, no f. "Report on a visit to Tanzania by Mr. D.M. Biggin of IRD, 22–25 June 1970."

tory and political science texts through to tourist guides.[76] Through the 1960s and into the early 1970s, the EAPH's existence was an essential part of the dynamic and creative spurt in intellectual activity that accompanied the opening and rapid expansion of universities across East Africa. The cooperation between different parts of the EAISCA defined how the EAPH functioned, with a close-knit group of East African intellectuals involved in multiple projects under the same umbrella – the roundtable cited at the beginning of this chapter, chaired by an EAISCA technician, inviting an EAPH representative, and published in the *East Africa Journal*, is one such example. From September 1966, the *East Africa Journal* produced a biyearly special literary issue of short stories and poems, titled from 1968 as *Ghala* (granary, reservoir, repository). Many of those contributing content to *Ghala,* such as Sam Mbure and B. Onyango-Ogutu, also worked for the EAPH sales and publicity departments.[77] The distinction between writers and publishers blurred.

Despite EAPH's breadth of activities and the successes that characterised its first decade, there was concern about its long-term financial viability. There was no lack of a market for books written and published in East Africa, but this market was numerically weighted towards school textbooks, rather than academic texts with a specialist readership, or novels for adults. Textbook publishing made up 85 per cent of the book market and British publishers dominated: Longmans and Oxford University Press enjoyed a third of the market each.[78] At the EAISCA roundtable, Nottingham and Sempira both criticised the monopoly of British publishing companies in publishing material developed by governments, pointing out that Britain would hardly allow a foreign publisher to start publishing books for British schools.[79] Strong denied this, insisting that Longmans was working in the interests of a healthy, competitive publishing sector, which could not exist if state monopolies were in place. This debate mapped onto broader discussions at the nexus between the Cold War and postcolonial state-making. As many of the intellectuals involved in EAISCA argued, a "free" and competition-driven market could not spontaneously emerge in contexts where foreign companies (notably those of the ex-colonial power) had controlled the flow of capital for several generations.

76 "Adventurous Start for East African Book Enterprise," *East African Standard*, 18 February 1966, cutting in HIA RG/TM.

77 "Notes on contributors," *East Africa Journal* 8, no. 1 (1971), 2.

78 Ayo Ojeniyi, "The Dominance of the Textbook in African Publishing," in *Coming of Age: Strides in African Publishing, Essays in Honour of Dr Henry Chakava at 70*, eds. Kiarie Kamau and Kirimi Mitambo (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 2016), 73–6; HIA TM/36/5, Jomo Kenyatta Foundation, "First Annual Report by the Secretariat to the Board of Governors," 1967, 2; Ruth L. Makotsi and Lily Nyariki, *Publishing and Book Trade in Kenya* (East African Publishers, 1997), 26.

79 "Copyright and all that," 29.

Nor could such a market respond to the needs and desires of the population. It was on the basis of these arguments that the intervention (financial or otherwise) of the state could be justified, in the publishing sector as in many others, precisely what Sempira advocated in the roundtable.

These difficulties of overcoming the structural aspects of the global publishing industry were not only about money: they came into further focus with the question of legal structures like copyright. In explaining the limits on East African publishing, Bgoya and Chakava both emphasised the obstacle of copyright legislation.[80] As Chakava saw it, this was a global problem of existing international agreements which worked to the detriment of newly independent countries. Copyright was also a key discussion point at the 1967 roundtable. The conversation between Sempira, Nottingham and Strong followed a recent amendment to the Berne Convention on copyright law, a move pushed by UNESCO and passed at an Intellectual Property Conference in Stockholm. The amendment stipulated that "developing countries" could republish books for education purposes without paying copyright fees. Sempira was broadly in favour of any measure that reduced the costs of textbooks, but Nottingham considered the move short-sighted, arguing that these countries would end up with irrelevant and outdated textbooks, instead of encouraging East African writers to author these.[81]

Moreover, Nottingham was critical of delegates from countries such as India who had advocated the move. The Indian publishing sector had expanded dramatically following the country's own independence, and Indian publishers were asking what role they could play in the East African market. By 1980, the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade believed that the expansion of Indian publishing was "reaching a stage when it can challenge the primacy of Anglo-American publishing in several Afro-Asian countries and match their efforts in these areas".[82] The alliance among decolonising countries in UNESCO did not always reflect common challenges in these countries nor lend itself to supporting local writers and publishers. During the 1970s, this became more apparent: at the 1972 UNESCO general conference, Ugandan delegate J.D. Turyagenda joined other African delegates in opposing a proposal to allow educational sound recordings for radio to be traded

80 Bgoya, *Books and Reading in Tanzania*; Chakava and UNESCO, *Books and Reading in Kenya*. For a more detailed analysis of the copyright question, see John Waruingi Chege, *Copyright Law and Publishing in Kenya* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1978).

81 "Copyright and all that".

82 *Market Survey of Books and Publications in Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania* (New Delhi: Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, 1980).

tax-free because one factor working in favour of local production (with all its wider cultural benefits that Turyagenda perceived) was precisely the potential to save costs.[83]

All under One Roof: Regional Readers and National Distribution

By the time EAPH branches opened in Kampala and Dar es Salaam (the latter under Zanzibari manager and journalist Ali M. Ali) in 1969, all three EAC member states had founded national publishing houses – with many of the same personalities and funders behind them.[84] These national projects did not directly compete with, or prove detrimental to, the EAPH. Instead, emerging in the same context of an expanding regional publishing sector, national and regional publishing ventures appeared initially mutually supportive. In Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, there were significant differences in the relationship between publishing and the state, but all shared a point of emphasis. Like EAPH, national publishing houses were preoccupied with building infrastructures of publishing that supported relationships between the education system, writers, publishers, printers and distributors. This concern saw an increasingly complex entanglement of organisations and actors develop by the early 1970s.

Distribution was a topic of discussion at the 1967 roundtable. Sempira highlighted the inability of the existing publishing market to distribute its books where there was demand, notably outside of urban centres. The system, he insisted, needed a "complete overhaul", to address the "bottlenecks" currently limiting it. This question was not a merely technical one: it had implications for how to imagine independence from foreign commercial publishers – in other words, how to imagine a more fundamentally East African publishing sector. There was no use publishing books that could not effectively reach their readers, and a "free", competitive market economy could not guarantee this. At the same time, the ability of regional organisations (the EAC and EAISCA alike) to coordinate the various branches of their publishing enterprises was strained by their inherently multi-sited projects. National publishing initiatives, meanwhile, came with the real possibility of coordinating every stage of the book production process, from writing to distribution, all physically under one roof.

83 Archives of the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (hereafter UBC) (uncatalogued), Box "1966–70 Ministry of Information", File "Seminars and Special training conferences", J.D. Turyagenda, summary of Communication commission at UNESCO general conference October 1972, February 1973.

84 On Ali M. Ali, see "Appointed Manager," *The Nationalist*, 13 January 1970.

In Kenya and Uganda, national publishing houses operated under non-profit Foundations, the Jomo Kenyatta Foundation and Milton Obote Foundation. The driving concern behind these was the local development and production of teaching materials, meaning they shared an agenda with the government-subsidised EALB. These two foundations were thus formed to supplement government efforts, but with legal independence from government – comparable to the FES and PWF who, as in the case of the EAISCA, provided funding and sat on advisory boards.[85] Both Heinz Putzrath of the FES and Robert Gabor of PWF were on the list of Obote Foundation "members", along with Makerere historian Kenneth Ingham and Per Aasen of the International Union of Socialist Youth.[86] These foundations had government approval, but they were devised with some amount of distance from the state: recalling the Kenyatta Foundation opening in 1965, Ogot noted the dismissive attitude of government, who doubted that the new set up had the skills and equipment to compete with commercial publishers like Oxford University Press or Longmans.[87]

The Obote Foundation typifies the interest in late 1960s East Africa in the coordination of the entire publishing process, precisely as a way to challenge the monopolies of foreign firms. The Obote Foundation took physical shape with the construction of a building in 1967, intended to house several subsidiary companies, a printing press and a chalk factory, with the idea that the entire book production process could happen under one roof. Among these subsidiaries were Uganda Publishing House, launched in 1966 with the primary aim of textbook self-sufficiency, Ugationers stationery company, Uganda Press Trust, Uganda School Supply Limited (distributors), and *The People* newspaper – which shared the foundation's tagline, "[f]or and by Ugandans", but quickly came to be seen as a mouthpiece for the governing UPC. Germany, Norway and the USA donated "machinery, capital and technical staff" to the Obote Foundation in the late 1960s.[88] Both the funding landscape and the appointment of one John Archer as general manager might explain some scepticism about the foundation's ability to live up to its tagline. According to its own newspaper, "[m]any people were at first opposed to the publishing house because they feared it would be used as a propaganda medium".[89]

85 On the Milton Obote Foundation, see UBC (uncatalogued), Box "Old documents," F.X.B. Mugeni (MOF) to Emelio Rossetti (Ministry of Information), 14 July 1988.

86 Ibid.

87 Ogot, *My Footprints*, 223.

88 "Obote Foundation Stone Laid 'For and by Ugandans'," *The People*, 12 August 1967, 20

89 "Assistance to Authors", *The People*, 18 November 1967.

The Foundation also invested in generating publishable work. Soon after the headquarters had been erected, the Uganda Publishing House announced that it would offer office space, secretarial services and a reference library to Ugandan writers.[90] The logic was that a shortage of resources and institutions supporting authors was a hindrance to the expansion of book production. But this assumption was not universally shared. One reader of *The People* newspaper felt that the scheme had been "bred by people without the slightest notion of what a book is or how authors go about writing books".[91] In a letter titled "How NOT to encourage authors", they continued:

> writing a book, with all due respect to Uganda Publishing House, is not like making a *busuti* or growing *matoke*, both of which can be simplified with machines and helpers. No one can help the writer . . . The Marquis de Sade wrote nearly all his books while he was in prison, some books have been written by blind men.

For this letter-writer (identified only by the initials "P. T."), the writer's struggle was universal, noble, aloof from worldly conditions. The Uganda Publishing House had completely the opposite idea: "machines and helpers" were crucial to a sustainable publishing sector that could eventually work independently of foreign finance and that could work in the interest of society rather than being dictated by the market.

Despite the focus on school textbooks, Uganda Publishing House also published books with a more specialist readership and novels for an adult readership – meaning its remit began to overlap with that of EAPH as well as EALB. By 1972, it had published seven general interest books in Luganda and ten in English. The Milton Obote Foundation had, by this time, been renamed, following the coup that brought Idi Amin to power in 1971, but there was continuity for some time afterwards in the activities of its subsidiaries. In 1973, for example, Uganda Publishing House published two important academic works, Assefa Mehretu's *Regional Integration for Economic Development of Greater East Africa* and Grace Ibingira's *Forging of an African nation: The political and constitutional evolution of Uganda from colonial rule to independence, 1894–1962*.

There was no equivalent foundation in Tanzania, not only because Nyerere was famously reluctant to have foundations named after him, but because his government favoured parastatals as a route towards economic self-sufficiency, es-

90 Ibid.

91 "How NOT to encourage authors," *The People*, 25 November 1967, 3.

pecially following the 1967 Arusha declaration.[92] The Tanzania Publishing House was formed as a parastatal in 1966.[93] Ownership was under the government National Development Corporation (60%) and the private multinational Macmillan Educational Publishers (40%), the latter withdrawing by the early 1970s.[94] Similar to the foundations in Kenya and Uganda, though, the National Development Corporation also oversaw printing, through the National Printing Company (*Kiwanda cha Uchapaji cha Taifa*) and distribution, through Tanzania Elimu Supplies, charged with supplying the nation's schools with government-sanctioned books and touted at its 1967 formation (under a British manager) as "one of the landmarks on the road to cultural independence".[95]

These different approaches to the state's involvement in national publishing came to the fore when the possibility emerged for locally-owned, regional, commercial distribution to challenge the monopoly of foreign publishers and their pre-existing distribution networks. In 1964, two Kenyan citizens, M.J. Rughani and S.V. Shah, founded the Text Book Centre, as a school supplier and publisher's distributor, "all under one roof".[96] Bethwell Ogot was invited to sit on yet another governing board, along with others in the publishing sector like J. Mwangi. When EAPH was founded a year later, the Text Book Centre made an arrangement to distribute its books.[97]

In 1969, the Text Book Centre approached the EALB to form a similar agreement – this was two years after its director, Sempira, had raised the problems of distribution at the roundtable. EALB accepted based on an assessment of the Text Book Centre's agenda and the credentials of its board members: they were "people who have education deep in their hearts" and moreover, "[a]ll are Kenyans and in TBC it is Kenyans who make the decisions".[98] This marked a partial break with the EALB's missionary foundations: until this point its books had been largely distributed in Kenya by a Christian bookshop that was the successor of the Church Missionary Society bookshop in Nairobi, and by its rural book vans.[99]

92 On Nyerere, see Issa G. Shivji, Saida Yahya-Othman, and Ng'wanza Kamata, *Development as Rebellion: A Biography of Julius Nyerere, 3 Vols* (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota, 2020), preface. On parastatals, see Roberts, *Revolutionary State-Making in Dar Es Salaam*, 239.

93 For more detail on TPH, see Suriano, "Dreams and Constraints".

94 Bgoya, *Books and Reading*, 28.

95 On Elimu Supplies, see Che Ng'ombo "Venture in books distribution," *The Nationalist*, 17 May 1967.

96 KNA RW/1/3, M.J. Rughani to EALB, 1 December 1969.

97 Ibid.

98 KNA RW/1/3, Notes for Mr. N.L.M. Sempira on importance of distribution and Text Book Centre, 13 December 1969.

99 This was called ESA bookshop.

The Text Book Centre was already selling books published by companies like Macmillan, and now added sixty-eight of EALB's titles to its list, ranging from Mohammed Saleh Farsy's *Kurwa na doto* [Kurwa and Doto] to J.J. Oloya's *Some aspects of economic development*.[100]

The agreement was deemed cause for celebration: an event was organised with a drinks reception and a speech by EAC Secretary General Joseph Muchemi.[101] There were elements of political performance in the celebration, and some reflection about precisely what was being celebrated. Muchemi's drafted and edited speech is preserved in the archives of the EALB, although it is not clear who did the drafting and editing – perhaps Sempira was involved. A point about the Text Book Centre being owned by "Africans" was replaced with "Kenyans", perhaps conscious of the South Asian heritage of Rughani and Shah. Criticism of "cruel" foreign publishers was toned down in the edits too. There was a hint of tension about who had the upper hand in the agreement between EALB and the Text Book Centre: a reference to the latter becoming the "bride" of the former was changed to "bridegroom". In its final version, the speech praised the agreement between "two wholly indigenous Organizations" that "signifie[d] the spirit of Harambee". Muchemi added that the agreement would allow the EALB to "survive in the face of fierce competition from foreign companies".[102]

Nevertheless, the agreement was so far limited to Kenya – and indeed there was little evidence of the EALB's regional character in Muchemi's speech. To some extent, this reflected Kenya's prominent position in the organisation: the EALB had seventy staff in its Nairobi office, compared to only around eight each in Dar es Salaam and Kampala, who sometimes faced problems communicating with – and receiving salaries from – Nairobi.[103] With a view to smoothing out the regional operation, Sempira travelled to Tanzania and Uganda in March 1970 to seek agreements with the distributing branches of the two national publishing houses. This, of course, meant further overlap with the infrastructures of the EAPH, especially in the case of the Uganda Publishing House. Sempira's intention was to gain more control for EALB over the distribution process by purchasing equity in the distribution wings of the two national publishers, just as it hoped to in the Text Book Centre – it was an EAC principle to pursue such agreements in parallel. In Kampala, Sempira talked with Erisa Kironde, Milton Obote Foundation board

100 KNA RW/1/3, EALB book list.

101 KNA RW/1/3, M.J. Rughani to EALB, 1 December 1969. See also clippings from *Standard* and *Nation* in same folder.

102 KNA RW/1/3, Draft speech for the Secretary General, 16 December 1969.

103 KNA RW/1/3, Sempira to Berger, 24 April 1970; KNA RW/1/1, f. 1+3, N.G. Ngulukulu (EALB), Report on visit to Dar es Salaam branch, 27 January – 1 February 1970.

member and Makerere lecturer who, after discussion with the board, agreed to sell EALB 300,000 shillings worth of shares in Uganda School Supply Limited.[104]

In Dar es Salaam, however, Sempira found that it would be impossible to buy equity in Elimu Supplies (the distributing subsidiary of Tanzania Publishing House), because it was, by 1970, 100% owned by the Tanzanian State.[105] Instead, the idea was raised that the EALB would buy out Macmillan in the ownership of TPH as a whole (which was 40% at its founding). Discussions began with the National Development Corporation, who wanted to know how EALB imagined the future relationship with TPH, how its finances worked, what its aims were, whether it was externally financed, and whether TPH could benefit from the free paper that the Canadian state supplied to EALB.[106] Sempira assured them that the EALB, as an EAC department, was not profit-making, had no shareholders, and had no agreement with overseas publishers.[107] The eventual outcome of the question on shares is unclear in the EALB archives, but agreements on distribution were made, paving the way for closer cooperation between EALB and the distribution apparatus in the three EAC member states.[108]

The shifting entanglements between states, private firms, parastatals, subsidiaries, and the overlapping set of actors who acted as board members and negotiated purchase of shares, presents no straightforward conclusion. But an overarching narrative is clear: publishers were thinking creatively about how to make the industry both financially viable and societally useful. The question of distribution was more critical than it might first appear, and those making decisions in EALB and EAPH recognised this: control over distribution was as much a part of making publishing East African as was authorship. Foreign companies continued to exert power, especially as shareholders, but there was room for new agreements with locally-owned firms – agreements with symbolic and political value as well as practical value. The existence of national publishing houses was not an indication of a failed regional project. Nevertheless, the different relationships that each had to the state did make regional standardisation of distribution more complicated. As the 1970s progressed, these national arrangements, with the whole process under one roof, proved more resilient than regional organisations to some of the challenges that appeared, but arguably more vulnerable to others.

104 KNA RW/1/3, f. 40, Kironde to Sempira, 18 May 1970

105 KNA RW/1/3, J.S. Malecela, EAC Committee of Ministers secret memo on purchasing shares in Text Book Centre, Tanzania Publishing House and Uganda Publishing House, 30 March 1970.

106 KNA RW/1/3, J.D. Hough (NDC) to Mr Sheraly (EALB) 3 April 1970; M.S. Berger to Sempira, 26 March 1970.

107 KNA RW/1/3, Sempira to Berger, 24 April 1970.

108 KNA RW/1/3, f. 89, N.G. Ngulukulu to Text Book Centre, 26 March 1974.

Global Supply Chains and The End of the Golden Era

In 1975, EAPH celebrated its tenth anniversary. John Michuki, chairman of the board, commended that fact that the publisher was now entirely under African control, both on the directorial board and at a managerial level. Its international reputation was secured and it had published over ten million books – one for every three East African citizens at the time.[109] It was apparently receiving around twenty unsolicited manuscripts a week.[110] Reports on the anniversary were optimistic: sales and profits were stronger than ever and the strategy for the coming years was to guarantee long term financial stability by moving into textbook production, rather than the academic specialist books that EAPH had become known for.[111] Less apparent at the anniversary event was the fact that EAPH in the 1970s was a regional organisation largely in name only. In 1969, its board of six directors was made up of three Kenyans, one Uganda, one Tanzanian, and one Zambian, but later that year the EAPH was moved to the Kenyan Ministry of Education.[112] This followed the collapse of the EAISCA the previous year and the transfer of shares to the East African Cultural Trust, the expulsion of Gabor and Putzrath (and, with them, funding from FES and PWF), and the assassination of Tom Mboya, who had been critical to the relationship between the organisation's East African board and its foreign funders.[113]

The story of a mid-1970s high point for East African publishing is therefore one that demands some qualification. Nottingham's vision for the multiplication of East African publishers partly came to bear fruit at a national scale, but EAPH no longer existed in its original form – and Nottingham himself had moved on to set up his own private firm, Transafrica Press, which continued to publish the academic and political works that EAPH had, but did not have the same group of regional scholarly personalities behind it. He viewed the greatest impediment to the growth of the East African publishing industry to be capital, noting that publishing required larger initial investments and longer to see returns, when com-

109 John Michuki, "Chairman's Address," *Daily Nation*, supplement on East African Publishing House, 17 October 1975, cutting in HIA, Gabor papers.

110 "Key Exercise Towards Decolonising the Mind", Book supplement (paid EAPH advertisement) in *Kiongozi*, November 1973.

111 "A Search for Quality and Relevance," *Daily Nation*, 17 October 1975, cutting in HIA, Gabor papers.

112 Nottingham, "Establishing an African Publishing Industry," 142.

113 Daniel Branch, *A Man of the World: Tom Mboya, the Cold War and Decolonization in Kenya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), chapter six.

pared to other industries that attracted capital with more ease in the later 1960s. It is no surprise, then, that the global economic fallout of the 1974 oil shock affected the publishing industry.[114] Most obviously, book publishing relied on imported paper and machinery, and distribution relied on imported fuel; foreign currency was scarce.[115] In Uganda, the constrained economic landscape predated the oil shock: Ugandan industry had stalled following Idi Amin's expulsion of South Asian Ugandans in 1972 (including many factory managers) and consumers had faced worsening shortages of basic commodities ever since. All three states suffered from the rising costs and severe shortage of raw materials in the late 1970s, especially after the collapse of the East African Community in 1977. The closure of the border with Kenya was particularly harmful for Tanzania, and the economic situation deteriorated with the imposition (initially resisted by Nyerere) of IMF recovery plans.

These factors will be familiar to those who have read other chapters of this book, or other accounts of East Africa's 1970s. They certainly mattered for East African publishers. The more difficult question to answer is how far these factors determined the trajectories of individual publishing initiatives. Part of this assessment needs to take account of the shaky foundations of arrangements like the EAPH. As early as 1968, those involved in the initiative were privately remarking on poor management, especially financial management: Wilbert Chagula wrote to Ogot that the publisher was "run on exactly the same 'ad-hoc' manner as the [EAISCA] having only a 'façade' of Directors who never see its Audited Accounts and Balance Sheets."[116] Difficulties thus predated the 1970s.

Equally, some parts of the publishing sector proved resilient in the face of political and economic upheaval. Being subsidised by the EAC, the EALB was better protected from economic uncertainty of the mid-1970s than commercial private firms. The publishing wing had taken on the role of the EAC's central printing services in the late 1960s, meaning it had an important place in the EAC for publishing reports.[117] It was publishing on average one new book a week in the mid-1970s, and the titles were more diverse than ever, from technical handbooks to poetry, now that national institutes for adult education had assumed some of

114 Emily Brownell, "Reterritorializing the Future: Writing Environmental Histories of the Oil Crisis from Tanzania," *Environmental History* 27, no. 4 (2022): 747–71.

115 Walter Bgoya and Mary Jay, "Publishing in Africa from Independence to the Present Day," *Research in African Literatures* 44, no. 2 (2013): 11.

116 HIA TM/40/2, Chagula to Ogot, 26 March 1968.

117 KNA RW/5/1, Annual report of the EALB for 1968.

the work of publishing adult literacy primers: its best sellers were Wilson's *Simplified Swahili* and Faraji Katalambulla's crime thriller *Simu ya Kifo* (Death Call).[118] Through agreements with national library boards, these were distributed to public libraries in towns across the region – Kabarole public library in Western Uganda issued around 140 books daily in 1970, including EALB material, mainly to school pupils.[119] Library services had followed different directions in the three EAC member states, however, and in 1972 members voted to disband the East African Libraries Association, whose colonial origins as a social club for expats had, according to some members, never been shaken off.[120]

The break-up of the EAC in 1977 was unsurprisingly a critical blow for the EALB. In Kenyan plans for assuming responsibility for EAC institutions following disintegration (either on the basis of a majority of Kenyan personnel or on the basis of them being physically located in Kenya), the EALB is presented as an unproblematic case of transfer to Kenya, with preference for retaining it as an institution under the Kenyan government, rather than merging it with the Kenyatta Foundation.[121] It officially became the Kenya Literature Bureau in 1979.[122]

Meanwhile, the Text Book Centre, the Kenyan distribution firm, proved able to pose a legitimate competition to foreign rivals, despite the structural advantages the latter possessed. Under Ogot's chairmanship, it organised a 1976 event, Bookfare, working with the Kenya Library Association and Kenya Writers Association with the intention of "taking books to the people". It was deemed a success, but one aspect of feedback received was that it should have been more regional. The impression that Kenya benefitted from the changes in regional publishing must take into consideration the perceived loss of a regional remit. Eventually,

118 KNA RW/5/1, Annual report of EALB sent to EAC, dated 19 March 1975, referring to either 1973 or 1974.

119 Kabarole District Archives (KDA), Box 226, File 2, Kabarole Public Library Annual report for 1970–71. See also Ismay Milford, "Information for Development: Lantern-Bearers and Self-Reliance At Kabarole Public Library Since Ugandan Independence", in *Past Futures, Present Realities: New Perspectives on Development as 'Future-Making' in Africa*, eds. Jonathan M. Jackson and Mads Yding (Brill, forthcoming).

120 Gertrude Kayaga Mulindwa, "Management of National Libraries in Africa: A Case of Uganda," *Library Management* 31, no. 6 (2010): 427–39; Bgoya, *Books and Reading in Tanzania*, 38–43; Ezekiel E. Kaungamno and C. S. Ilomo, *Books Build Nations. 1, Library Services in West And East Africa* (London, Dar es Salaam: Transafrica, 1979), chapter four.

121 KNA AHC/10/5, Office of the President, Secret report WP (1) 77, "Future structure and functions of EAC institutions", 1 February 1977.

122 Chakava and Unesco, *Books and Reading in Kenya*. Grace Ogot was one of its directors, see Grace Ogot, *Days of My Life: An Autobiography* (Kisumu: Anyange Press Ltd., 2012), 149.

the sort of Africanisation of foreign firms that Nottingham had advocated in 1969 did take place. In the mid-1980s, a scheme of loan guarantees from the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation allowed Kenyan publishers to establish new businesses and buy out their foreign-owned rivals.[123]

Conclusion

The audience members who listened to the 1967 roundtable on East African Publishing in Nairobi would not have left with a sense that the challenges facing the sector were insurmountable. The more optimistic among them might reasonably have imagined that a regional, multilingual publishing ecology would not only sustainably meet the needs of the education sector, but that it would thrive in a way that individual national agreements with foreign commercial publishers would not allow, given those agreements rested on unequal economic and legal foundations. In many ways, the following decade proved this conviction to be correct. But these intellectual achievements happened hand in hand with the achievement of managing production and distribution in a region shaped by colonial underinvestment in education and transport. This took place in global economic circumstances that obliged publishing entrepreneurs to accept funding from organisations whose interests were not their own – and who were soon struggling for cash themselves.

Publishing infrastructures mattered, and those involved in organisations like EAPH and EALB knew this. These organisations never operated under any illusion that it was enough to simply have quality manuscripts by East African writers and a growing, interested readership. The process that connected these readers and writers was complex, expensive, and dominated by foreign firms. But East African publishers approached these challenges creatively. Some of the solutions described in this chapter include the model of non-profit foundations, adjacent to but independent from the state, able to attract foreign capital at the same time as operating under a board of local directors and laying out plans to transfer finance and management entirely into local firms. Another innovation was the idea of coordinating distribution, printing and schools supplies with the activities of a publishing house: these initiatives had the potential to prove that bringing all operations under one roof, under one board of directors, and closer to the reader-

123 Ruth Makotsi and Lily Nyariki, *Publishing and Book Trade in Kenya* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1997), 101–3.

ship, was more efficient and more viable than relying on foreign supply chains and free market distribution.

Perhaps more than any of other cases discussed in this book, publishing reveals the possibilities and constraints, to use Frederick Cooper's phrase, of East African regionalism in this period. As we have seen in this chapter, local and global economic trends threatened the commercial viability of the region's publishers, and the prevailing political climate was no more conducive to their success. These conditions exacerbated the challenging context in which the publishers operated. Structural dependence on external funding of often dubious origin conflicted with the publishers' stated public missions to support the decolonization of the region's knowledge production. In hindsight, the surprise is not that publishing came to struggle in the 1970s but rather that it thrived for as long as it did. Much of the credit for that success is due to the publishers themselves. They devised skilful strategies that, for a time, successfully squared the circle of their dependence on foreign funding whilst maintaining a credible Africanisation agenda. They artfully developed cross-subsidisation business models connecting the publishing of literature to that of textbooks and school supplies and made innovative use of foundations to provide some protection from state interference.

Undoubtedly, the publishers were further assisted by the quality of the material that rolled off the presses. The fiction and non-fiction writing produced by often young authors simultaneously inspired by the conditions of freedom and concerned by the challenges facing the newly independent states and societies of East Africa caught the imagination of audiences at home and abroad. Even as the formal institutional East African regional integration project stalled and then reversed in the 1970s, the region came alive on the pages of the books and journals produced by its publishing houses. Despite the EAC's collapse, East African publishing constituted a single market of ideas and creativity with far greater longevity and societal impact than its associated political institutional projects.