

# The Dynamics of Urbanization of Mbeya in Colonial Tanganyika, 1920s–1960

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## Abstract

Urban history in Tanzania has not been much developed, as the few studies have sparsely focused on Dar es Salaam and the coastal city-states where written sources are more readily available, leaving the interior areas largely neglected. This article analyzes how geographical location, the discovery of gold at Lupa, population growth, migration, agriculture, colonial infrastructure, urban planning, architecture, commerce and industry collectively shaped the urbanization of Mbeya. The study is a qualitative undertaking that follows interpretive approaches of research in describing data. It investigates the dynamics of urbanization of Mbeya during the colonial rule in Tanganyika. It used descriptive techniques in the data collection which included interviews, field observation and review of written documents which were researched in library, internet and archives. It also reveals that until the end of the German colonial rule, Mbeya was not an urban centre. The urbanization of Mbeya began in the early 1920s and evolved through five phases until 1960. In 1922, Mbeya became a servicing settlement for gold diggers at Lupa. In 1929, it grew into a minor settlement, while by 1935, Mbeya evolved into a township. Finally, in 1957, it attained the status of a township council. Lastly, the article enriches the historiography of urban history in Tanzania in particular and Africa in a broader context.

**Keywords:** Dynamics, Mbeya, Tanganyika, Urbanization, Urban Centre

## INTRODUCTION

This article examines the dynamics of urbanization in Mbeya during the period of colonial rule in Tanganyika. It asserts that until the end of German colonial rule, Mbeya had not yet developed into an urban centre. The process of urbanization began in the early 1920s and unfolded through five distinct phases up to 1960. In 1922, Mbeya emerged as a service settlement for gold miners in the Lupa area. By 1929, it had grown into a small settlement, and by 1935, it had evolved into a township. In 1957, Mbeya attained the status of a township council. These five phases illustrate the historical evolution of Mbeya from its origins as a mining service settlement to its later development into a municipality and, ultimately, its current status as a city. Before 1920, there were no concentrated settlements that could be called urban centres in Mbeya. There were only scattered clan centres of the Usafwa chiefdom. The population was still small and could not qualify to make Mbeya an urban centre. The Safwa had limited communication networks. The main transport routes among the Safwa were footpaths and most interactions occurred at village level between family and community members. Trading activities were simple, based on simple exchange of goods among people who were close and accessible. Mbeya urban centre is located in South-west part of Tanzania at between latitude 8° 50' - 8° 57' South

of Equator and Longitude 33° 30' - 35° 35' East of Greenwich.<sup>1</sup> It is surrounded by Mbeya rural in all parts except in the North-East part of which is boarded by Mbarali. Mbeya urban centre is found within Mbeya mountain ranges at an altitude of between 1600 and 2400 metres above sea level. Specifically it is within highland areas that have normal temperatures and enough rainfall.<sup>2</sup> The urban centre has long rain season influenced by its altitude between mid November and May with an average annual rainfall of about 1200 mm accompanied with annual mean temperature of 17°C. Mbeya urban centre is located on a rough terrain surrounded by Mbeya Peak and Loleza Mountain Ranges in the North West and Uporoto Mountains in the South East, at an altitude rising from 1600 to 2400 metres above sea level<sup>3</sup>. The terrain caused by erosion during the past 150 million years generally falls from over 2000 metres in a southward direction to Meta river valley from where it rises to 1780 metres and falls again to 1600 metres above sea level along Nzovwe river valley.<sup>4</sup> Other rivers passing across the urban centre include Loleza, Sisimba, Nsalaga, Ivumwe, Ilomba, Amaso, Ilunga, Salizi, Hanzya, Nonde and Mfiwizimo. Mbeya urban centre is within the East Africa Rift Valley endowed with volcanic soil suitable to support the growth of variety of crops.

The town is within area of Usafwa Chieftdom under the chieftainship of Lyoto. The Safwa are the original inhabitants of the Mbeya urban centre. In historical linguistics, they are classified within the Niger-Congo language family, under the Benue-Congo division as Bantu speakers belonging to the Southern Highlands Bantu subgroup of East Africa.<sup>5</sup> The Safwa are linguistically related to languages of Malila, Nyiha, Ndali, Lambya and Sangu.<sup>6</sup> Oral traditions of the Safwa recorded that, in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Safwa moved and settled in western part of Mbeya Range, Chunya and Southern Rungwe. In socio-economic formation the Safwa had their political systems which had the evolution of small chiefdoms as it was elsewhere in Africa. They evolved in complex communities with greater social and economic differentiation. Oral testimonies revealed that as centralized society, the Safwa initially had their political leaders with clear institutions under the chieftaincy of Mwanshinga. Later on the chieftaincy of Mwalyoto emerged under Mazubha Syoka who was a kinga and a hunter after migrating from Makete to Mbeya Peak. He ascended to a position chieftaincy after teaching the Safwa on how to make fire. British colonial rule made the chieftaincy of Mwalyoto paramount in the Usafwa Chieftdom. A popular generalized statement given by Kimambo et al (2017) that between 1000 and 18000 in the southern highlands the feature of social organization was the 'age-village' in which people of the same age or generation lived together as equal<sup>7</sup> has remained questionable and demands further investigation among the Safwa. The Safwa were mixed farmers who kept animals and cultivated crops such as cows, goats, donkeys, maize, irish potatoes, beans to list few of them. The Safwa were naturally warriors who had their traditional weapons which were for defence and security, their weapons included clubs (ndugu) different spears in terms of size and functions (mpalala), big sizable sticks (nguna), shields (ingulu) and

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<sup>1</sup> The United Republic of Tanzania (2016) Mbeya City Council Socioeconomic Profile (National Bureau of Statistics and City Executive Director, Mbeya City Council).p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> I. N. Kimambo et al (2017) *A New History of Tanzania* (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota) P.35. The linguistic classification of the Safwa of Mbeya is also presented by J. E. G. Sutton (1971) "The Settlement of East Africa" in Ogot B. A & Kieran J. A (eds.) *Zamani A Survey of East African History* (Dar-es-Salaam: Longman Tanzania Limited) P. 80.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> I. N. Kimambo et al (2017), Op. Cit. p. 72.

locally made simple muskets (gobole). They also used these weapons to play in their traditional and ceremonial dances (Mbetta).

There were few notable urban settlements in pre-colonial Tanganyika, as it was much of Africa with a clear peculiarity of West Africa which has a well elaborated history of ancient urbanization. The emergence of such urban settlements mainly started in the nineteenth century, with some of them being influenced in their planning by foreign powers as commercial and administrative settlements. Early urban settlements in Africa formerly developed as urban spaces of trade and commerce before turning into urban settlements of colonial governments. Many settlements developed into either rural or urban structures. Rural settlements morphologically comprised of isolated homesteads, hamlets, and villages, whereas urban settlements consisted of towns, cities, conurbations, and even megalopolises. Urban centres possess diverse structural, economic, and socio-political features that distinguished them from rural areas. In rural settlements local communities were predominantly engaged in primary activities like cultivating, livestock keeping, forestry and fishing. Hove et al (2013), showed that urban centres have existed and evolved for many centuries across the world. However, the accelerated growth of urbanization has been a relatively recent phenomenon.<sup>8</sup> The development of urban centres involves different forces and processes which shape the trends and patterns of urbanization. Kolawole. (2009) emphasized that contrary to the opinions of early scholars in West Africa, urban centres existed in the region long before contact with Arabs and Europeans. International trade did not initiate the rise of urban centres in West Africa, but rather a combination of factors culminated in the rise of such centres. Such factors include the ability of the local populations to perceive and exploit the resources within their environment, international trade, geography, economy, and the impacts of Islam, all played active roles in the expansion and development of urban centres in West Africa.<sup>9</sup> Pre-colonial African urban centres were not impressive in size, activity or layout. However, it does not mean that they were not towns. They had distinguishing features such as a higher degree of social complexity than their surrounding settlements.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, in Africa as elsewhere, urban centres reflect the global social and economic context. For each epoch, for each mode of production and exchange, for each type of power and ideology, there exist corresponding models of urban settlements and urbanism.<sup>11</sup>

Urban history in Tanzania is still in its infancy, as there have been few studies on urbanization, urban development, urban governance, and related problems. The limited studies that exist have mainly focused on the capital city of Dar es Salaam, the ancient urban centres along the coast, as well as Tabora and Ujiji. Few scholars had engaged in historical analysis of urbanisation, urban policies and urban experiences of the interior. The situation recalls an observation made by Isaria N. Kimambo, who illuminated that much of historiography of Tanzania concentrated on the coastal city-states because of the greater availability of written sources compared to the interior.<sup>12</sup> Yet, although the establishment of settled villages and the later growth of urban centres were two of the most significant developments in human history, it is in West Africa particularly Nigeria that detailed studies on urban spaces are more available. Scholars have also highlighted contradictions in urban studies that there is little

<sup>8</sup> M. Hove et al (2013) The Urban Crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Stability*. p. 1

<sup>9</sup> A. Kolawole (2009) "Early Urban Centres in West Africa," *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter*. P.

<sup>10</sup> A. S. Getahun (2012) Urbanization and the Urban Space in Africa: The Case of Gondar, Ethiopia. *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*. P. 118

<sup>11</sup> C. Coquery-Vidrovitch(1991) The Process of Urbanization in Africa (From the Origins to the Beginning of Independence) *African Studies Review*. P. 16.

<sup>12</sup> B. B. B. Mapunda (2005) A Critical Examination of Isaria Kimambo's Ideas through Time. *History in Africa*, p.277.

comprehensive perusal of individual urban centres, and little comparative works have been covered.<sup>13</sup> This paper seeks to contribute to the enrichment of urban history of Tanzania by tracing the dynamics of urbanization in Mbeya during the colonial period of Tanganyika.

In her elaboration of fundamentals of urban life in East and Southern Africa in relation to fragile cities, Bryceson (2006) reminded that much of the studies on the pre-colonial history of African towns have defined “urban areas” in terms of settings and scales that would elsewhere be considered rural.<sup>14</sup> Urban areas, however, display essential characteristics, particularly in relation to population: concentrated population density, settlement size marked by spatial heterogeneity, and social diversity. In terms of location, they offer spatial coherence of settlements and are typically favoured by external transport and communication linkages to both urban and rural areas. Economically, they embody the convergence of productive economies of scale with the proximity of large numbers of consumers, as well as economic diversity reflected in a relatively wide range of occupations, commodities, and services.<sup>15</sup> Unlike West Africa and the Sahel, where the major urban centres evolved from strategic ports and the caravan-trading centres of old, East and Southern Africa’s urban centre were mostly colonial in origin and physical layout. The sitting of capital towns was critical to the colonial economy. While there was little in their policies to encourage urban diversity and dynamism, urban areas were accorded significant entrepot and administrative functions in the raw material export activities of national economies based on agricultural and mineral production.<sup>16</sup> Although small in number, indigenous urban settlements were of substantial social, cultural and political significance in pre-colonial Africa. However, many studies of urbanization on the continent begin with colonization. As a result, scholars have tended to overemphasize the influence of the colonizers, precluding an analysis of the ability of indigenous populations to resist, reimagine and remake colonial visions of urban life.<sup>17</sup>

It is well known that there is no single definition of urbanization accepted by all urban researchers and, or theorists. Definitions are for illustrations. Urbanization as a concept means different, though related things to different scholars.<sup>18</sup> There is clearly little consensus. Several scholars have attempted the definitions of the term “urbanization” based on their respective research.<sup>19</sup> Definitions cannot be generally applicable to the world because the formation and growth of societies in most parts of the world depends on the ecological condition of the region.<sup>20</sup> The definitions for what constitutes an "urban area" vary considerably in different parts of the world. Urbanization to sociologists may also imply change of behaviours and values in individuals, as a result of urban residence. Here the term is taken to mean commitment to or involvement in an urban way of life.<sup>21</sup> The sociologists emphasize social change of traditional societies to modern societies; economists, structural change of primary industry to secondary or tertiary activities, while demographers and geographers assert the significance of

<sup>13</sup> Coquery-Vidrovitch C. (2005) Introduction: African Urban Spaces: History and Culture. In Salm S. J. and Falola T. (eds.) *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective*. (Rochester: University of Rochester press), p. ix.

<sup>14</sup> D. F. Bryceson (2006) “Fragile Cities: Fundamentals of Urban Life in East and Southern Africa” in Bryceson, D.F.andD.Potts(eds) *African Urban Economies: Viability, Vitality or Vitiation* (Basingstoke UK: Palgrave Macmillan.) p.. 2

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. P. 3

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. P. 11

<sup>17</sup> W. Monteith (2017) Markets and monarchs: indigenous urbanism in postcolonial Kampala. *Settler Colonial Studies*.P. 1

<sup>18</sup> G. Bjerer (1971) Some Theoretical and Methodological Aspects of the Study of African Urbanization. Uppsala: Research Report Number 9, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> A. A. Abdulrahman et al (2021) Early Urbanization in West Africa: An Archaeological Evidence from Birnin-Kudu Settlement *African Scholar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (JHSS)*, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p.2

<sup>21</sup> G. Bjerer (1971) Op. Cit.

population movement and concentration, and spatial changes respectively. However, “by whatever definition, urbanization is a phenomenon describing a process of change in the situs of populations due to changing conditions in society at large”.<sup>22</sup> The major institution that documents both population and urban growth is the United Nations. In preparing estimates of the urban population, the United Nations relies on data produced by national statistical offices in all countries in the world. In the United Nation of Tanzania (2018) “The term urbanization refers to the changes in the proportion of the population living in urban areas in reference to the total population of a particular locality or country over a specified period of time and it is caused by natural increase of population, migration and reclassification of neighbouring rural areas into urban areas”.<sup>23</sup> It may also be the result of physical growth of urban areas which may be horizontal or vertical as it is the case in more urbanized countries.<sup>24</sup> However, each country uses different criteria in order to distinguish urban from rural areas, and thus a standardized definition does not exist despite international efforts.<sup>25</sup> Apart from the issues associated with definitional diversity, another major obstacle to developing an accurate picture of urban population dynamics in sub-Saharan Africa is the absence of reliable, comparable time-series data on vital rates disaggregated by rural and urban residence.<sup>26</sup>

In statistical terms, urbanization is an increasing proportion of a population living in settlements defined as urban centres.<sup>27</sup> Urbanization, is the shift from a rural to an urban society, it plays big role of human settlements as a force for development. It is the outcome of the social, economic and political development. Urbanization is a complex socio-economic process that transforms the built environment, converting formerly rural into urban settlements, while also shifting the spatial distribution of a population from rural to urban areas.<sup>28</sup> It includes changes in dominant occupations, lifestyle, culture and behaviour, and thus alters the demographic and social structure of both urban and rural areas. A major consequence of urbanization is a rise in the number, land area and population size of urban settlements and in the number and share of urban residents compared to rural dwellers.<sup>29</sup> In practice, urbanization refers both to the increase in the percentage of population residing in urban areas and to the associated growth in the number of urban dwellers, in the size of cities and in the total area occupied by urban settlements.<sup>30</sup> Urbanization refers to the transition of population from rural to urban areas. One of the challenges for the urbanization researchers is a concrete definition and global standard for urban environment.<sup>31</sup> The immediate cause of most urbanization is the net movement of people from rural to urban areas. Urbanization takes place when there are extensive rural to urban migration flows than to

<sup>22</sup> T. Muronda (2008) Evolution of Harare as Zimbabwe’s Capital City and a major Central Place in Southern Africa in the context of by Byland’s model of settlement evolution. *Journal of Geography and Regional Planning*. P. 38

<sup>23</sup> United Republic of Tanzania (2018) *Mbeya Region Socio-Economic Profile, 2015* (Dar es Salaam: National Bureau of Statistics) p.22.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> F. Meier and Z. Selhausen(2023) Growing Cities: Urbanization in Africa in *The History of African Development a Textbook for a New Generation of African Students and Teachers* (African Economic History Network: Web: [www.aehnetwork.org](http://www.aehnetwork.org) Accessed on 12/09/2025), p.185.

<sup>26</sup> S. R, Fox (2013) “The Political Economy of Urbanization and Development in Sub-Saharan Africa”. Ph. Thesis, London School of Economics, p. 35.

<sup>27</sup> S. David (2005) The scale of urban change worldwide 1950-2000 and its underpinnings, *International Institute for Environment and Development*, p.2.

<sup>28</sup>United Nations (2019) *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision*. (New York: Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division. p.10

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> S. Obanan (2021). Urbanization Trends with Philippine Context. *Academia Letter*. 1.

rural migration.<sup>32</sup> The term urbanization refers to the process whereby an increasing percentage of a country's population comes to live in urban areas. Urbanization occurs when the urban population grows at a faster rate than the rural population. In other words, if the rural population and the urban population grow at the same pace, the rate of urbanization will not change. The principal source of this process of urbanization is people migrating out of rural areas to come to live and work in urban areas

## DEVELOPMENT OF COLONIALISM IN MBEYA

Colonialism was an economic, political, social, religious policy where the European nations explored, conquered, settled and exploited large world resources. Colonialists had many inhuman activities and injustices. The colonization was driven by European egoism and superiority complex. It was a belief in their superiority and numerous scientific discoveries.<sup>33</sup> Colonialism was selective in its investment with no interest to propel its effective occupation on every part of the acquired colonies. It optionally concentrated on strategic productive areas. A scarce infrastructure was constructed, fostered by small number ('thin white men line') of colonial officials and armies, but the colonial powers were not ready to fulfill their 'civilization mission'. It was always colonialism on the cheap with no serious planned development for the colonies. The real colonial intervention ability mainly remained not effective.<sup>34</sup> Colonialism in Mbeya was initially associated with establishment and maintenance for extended time of German colonial rule from the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. German colonial conquest and penetration in Usafwa chiefdom of Mbeya revealed colonialism as part of global capitalism with its intention of primitive accumulation of capital. Oral testimonies show that the German colonialists found the Usafwa chiefdom under the chieftaincy of Mwalyoto with its capital that was located at Ilomba-Isysye. The Safwa did not stage any strong resistance against German colonialism in their chiefdom. The Safwa failed to oppose colonialism because they were affected by the previous frequent wars against the Hehe from Iringa.<sup>35</sup>

German colonial rule in Mbeya was championed by the German explorer Major Von Wissmann who founded a government station along Lake Nyasa at a place known as Lumbila in Ludewa. It was from there that the Germans ruled areas of Mbeya, Makete, some parts of Ubena and Ufipa.<sup>36</sup> In 1900, the District Administrative Office was transferred from Lumbila to Tukuyu.<sup>37</sup> German colonialists placed Mbeya Southern Highlands District under their direct rule by setting down a civilian administration. They appointed the District Commissioner who was responsible to the maintenance of law and order in the district as well as for tax collection.<sup>38</sup> They partitioned Mbeya district into groups of villages which were administered by appointed officials known as akidas. Many akidas were Arabs and examples of akidas included Ali Saidi of Sokomatola and Juma Rashid of Nzovwe. The villages were under control of village headmen who bore the title of Jumbe and many of them were appointed Africans who were among leading figures in Safwa clans.<sup>39</sup> It was the German colonialists who shifted the administrative centre from Tukuyu to Igali in Mbeya in the 1890s.

<sup>32</sup> S. David (2005) Op. Cit.

<sup>33</sup> A. Mukaria,(2021). Western colonialism: the genesis of the degradation of nature. *Academia Letters* p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> A. Thomson (2010), (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.) *An Introduction to African Politics* (New York: Routledge) p.16.

<sup>35</sup>Tanzania National Archive, Mbeya District Book 1.

<sup>36</sup>R. Mwakilambo (2017) A History of Rungwe District in Tanzania from Pre-colonial to Colonial Period. *International Journal of Science Arts and Commerce*, p. 35. As cited from Rungwe District Book 1.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Tanzania National Archive, Mbeya District Book 1.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

The Germans saw local people and their natural environment as resources, which were to be developed for easy exploitation. However, Koponen (1994) observed that the Germans had no chance to carry through their commitment for long-term development and exploitation of the areas. Their rule ended when it was barely established. The Germans spent most of their time in conquest, internal conflicts and economic experimentations.<sup>40</sup> Under German colonisation, commerce and agriculture were high priorities. It was realised early that economic development would depend on reliable transportation, and the colonial government embarked upon an expansive roads and railway building program to open up land for coffee, sisal and other cash crop production in Tanzania.<sup>41</sup> This led to the establishment of a pattern of rural towns and settlements across the country. However, German colonialism was not a success.<sup>42</sup> Their colonial rule came to an end with their defeat in the First World War and in 1919, German East Africa was placed under the mandate of the League of Nations by Article 119 of the Treaty of Versailles.<sup>43</sup>

The British took the mandate for part of German East Africa which, they referred to as Tanganyika Territory, a name that was officially given to the British area in January 1920.<sup>44</sup> In the 1920s, Usafwa Chieftdom was under Chief Gilbert Ntundu Lyoto. The British colonial government set the Native Authority Ordinance of 1926 as part and parcel of their indirect rule. The Ordinance listed duties and obligations undertaken by the Native Authorities in their colonies. Section 4 of the Ordinance stipulated general duties of chiefs which were to maintain order and supervise the government in their extended areas of authority.<sup>45</sup> Section 6 of the Ordinance dealt with prevention of crime and Section 15 empowered Native Authority to make rules, which had to be enforced in local native courts.<sup>46</sup> The structure of native authority governments was made up of chiefdoms, sub-chiefdoms and village headmen.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the Native Authority Ordinance of 1926 gave power to local authorities to perform administrative, judicial and financial duties in areas of their jurisdiction.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There are so many theories and models on urbanization explaining causes and effects of the development of towns and cities. They show how urban centres emerged within social, political and economic settings. Many theories are formulated on urbanization throughout the history. Different perspectives and approaches are involved to interpret cities and urban spaces with the adoption of rational methods. Urban spaces can be investigated from various perspectives by using urban theories.<sup>48</sup> Urbanization is not a natural result of development but it is usually fostered by certain dynamics. Theories provide explanations regarding why and how urbanization occurs. In so doing, they provide a theoretical basis that can help to indicate the dynamics that took place in urbanization. The urban studies that now exist span several social science disciplines with no one discipline offering a compelling

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<sup>40</sup> J. Koponen (1994) *Development for Exploitation, German Colonial Policies in Mainland Tanzania, 1884-1914*, (Finland: Raamattutalo), p. 543.

<sup>41</sup> R. H. Brian and A. O. Godfrey (eds) (2022) *The Dynamics of Systems of Secondary Cities in Africa: Urbanization, Migration and Development* (Brussels, Belgium: Cities Alliance) P. 121

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> J.C. Taylor (1963) *Political Development of Tanganyika* (London: Oxford University Press), p. 24

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Tanzania National Archive, Southern Highlands Provincial Book.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ç. Resuloğlu (2020) An Overview of the History of Studies on Urban Theories. *Online Journal of Art and Design*. p.56.

analytical framework for understanding the dynamics of urban societies and economies. Inter-disciplinary, as opposed to multi-disciplinary efforts would be best placed to fill this void.<sup>49</sup> In the following part four theories are discussed to demonstrate the relevance of using theoretical perspectives in explaining causes and effects of urbanization.

Demographic Transition Theory explains the transformation of a country's population structure. Demographic Transition Theory analyzes how population structures transform in relation to changes in fertility, mortality, and economic development.<sup>50</sup> Assists evaluating whether Mbeya's urbanization emerged from natural population increase. Even if much applicable, still has been criticized for considering a similar chain of phases and neglecting the various factors of fertility rates decline over different nations.<sup>51</sup> It was initially proposed by Warren Thompson in 1929 and later improved by scholars like Notestein and Blacker, the theory has been revised for many times but still persists to forecast demographic trends, processes and pattern in current third world countries.<sup>52</sup> In spite of those criticisms, it has proceeded to be a broader useful perspective in comprehending population dynamics. It is the most acceptable theory of population growth.

Endogenous Urbanization Theory is also referred to as self-generated theory or agricultural surplus theory is one of the theories that attempt to explain how urbanization occurs generally and in terms of the dynamics that cause changes in towns. It focuses on rural migration to urban areas by referring to industrialization as the basic catalyst for population growth.<sup>53</sup> The theory is applicable in explaining the relationship between general development and urbanization even in contemporary developing economies.<sup>54</sup> The theory is criticized for focusing narrowly on the rural-urban shift within countries as the key to urbanization. Another theory is modernization theory sometimes is known as "developmentalist approach" emerged in 1950 and late 1970,<sup>55</sup> explains the process of countries' systematic transformation from traditional subsistence economies to modern industrialized economies.<sup>56</sup> The theory posits that existing state of urbanization in any given society is predated on modernization. Modernity theorists believe that nations advance to modernity at different paces depending on their adaptability and versatility.<sup>57</sup> Some scholars even claim that its rationale does not apply to developing countries due to their levels of economic growth. Moreover, it is criticized for failing to prescribe governance values and norms which should be followed in order to bring about desired development.

Dependency theory or world-system theory originated in Latin American countries and became

<sup>49</sup> D. Bryceson (2006) "Fragile Cities: Fundamentals of Urban Life in East and Southern Africa" in Bryceson, D.F. and D. Potts (eds) *African Urban Economies: Viability, Vitality or Vitiating* (Basingstoke UK: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 8.

<sup>50</sup> C. Caldwell (1976) Toward A Restatement of Demographic Transition Theory. *Population and Development Review*. Pp. 323 – 325.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> L. T. Cochran and J. M. O'Kane (1977) Urbanization-Industrialization and the Theory of Demographic Transition. *The Pacific Sociological Review*. P. 114.

<sup>53</sup> B. V. Jakupec (2015) Economic Edifice, Urbanization and Rural Education in Developing Countries. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management* p. 4

<sup>54</sup> E. J. Akubia (2016). Coastal Urbanization and Urban Land-Use Change in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area, Ghana. WaterPower Working Paper, No. 10. Governance and Sustainability Lab. Trier University. Trier. p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> T. Bodo (2019) Rapid Urbanization: Theories, Causes, Consequences and Coping Strategies. *Annals of Geographical Studies*. p. 35.

<sup>56</sup> M. Alwosabi (1997) Economic Development and Urbanization Theories. Readings in Economic Development and Urbanization Theories. *Journal of Social Sciences*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>57</sup> J. Matunhu (2016) A Critique of Modernization and Dependency Theories in Africa: Critical Assessment. *African Journal of History and Culture* p. 66.

applicable after the failure of modernization theory to explain economic stagnation in those countries.<sup>58</sup> The theory highlights changes in the economies of developing countries in relation to the growth and extension of capitalism in the capitalist global system. From this world-systemic perspective, urbanization is regarded as an internal response to global economy dynamics.<sup>59</sup> Africa was and continues to be dominated by capitalist powers. The dependence is also noticeable between rural areas and urban areas.<sup>60</sup> Fox. S. R. (2013) cemented that colonialism did not establish a strong foundation for urban development in Africa for it had political economy that caused urban underdevelopment.<sup>61</sup> Dependency theory has been useful in associating urbanization and capitalism rather than showing factors for the relationship between urbanization and capitalist development.

Apart from theories and models explaining urbanization, there are considerable amount of literature empirically dealing with dynamics or forces, trends, patterns and other processes of urbanization. Coquery-Vidrovitch (1991) traced the beginning of urbanization in pre-colonial Africa by revealing that it concentrated on trade centres and political organizations. She emphasized that colonial authority transformed the urban spaces by changing economic activities and setting alien administrative headquarters that fostered unequal urban development. The study demonstrated how colonial urban policies and strategies set the root causes for future post-independence urban problems.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, Coquery-Vidrovitch (2005) offered her contribution by writing about “African Urban Spaces: History and Culture” at the introduction in a book titled “African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective.” The book presented new and interdisciplinary approaches to the study of African urban history and culture. Coquery-Vidrovitch much fitted to her position as among the distinguished pioneers in urban studies. She provided an overview of the current state of urban scholarship and depicted the major themes and arguments contained in the book. She also compared the different perspectives that scholars took regarding Francophone and Anglophone urban spaces and suggested areas of deficiency that required to be filled by future urban studies.<sup>63</sup> In a discussion on demographic dynamics in Urbanization, Dyson (2011) demonstrated on how the demographic transition forced by falling mortality rate accompanied by increase in fertility rate has been creating conditions for urbanization. As population growth slows in rural areas and economic development takes place in urban areas fostered by rural-urban migration make urbanization a significant consequence of demographic transformation<sup>64</sup>.

In tracing the dynamics of systems of secondary cities in Africa in relation to urbanization, migration and development, Brian and Godfrey (eds.) (2022) revealed that Africa’s early urbanization occurred along coastlines and rivers, but other inland urban areas were regional market centres. Trading cities developed during the pre-colonial phases of urbanization across Africa’s northern and eastern coasts.<sup>65</sup> Influence of colonialism on African urbanization was explained by showing that in the sixteenth

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p. 13.

<sup>59</sup> E. J. Akubia (2016) p. 8.

<sup>60</sup> J. Matunhu (2016) Op. Cit. p.68

<sup>61</sup> S. R. Fox (2013) Op. Cit. p. 112.

<sup>62</sup> C. Coquery-Vidrovitch (1991) the Process of Urbanization in Africa (From the Origins to the Beginning of Independence). *African Studies Review*. P. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Coquery-Vidrovitch C. (2005), Op. Cit. p. x.

<sup>64</sup> T. Dyson (2011) The Role of the Demographic Transition in the Process of Urbanization. *Population and Development Review*. 34.

<sup>65</sup> R. H. Brian and A. O. Godfrey (eds) (2022) *The Dynamics of Systems of Secondary Cities in Africa: Urbanization, Migration and Development*, (Brussels, Belgium: Cities Alliance) p.119.

century, colonialism brought changes to urban settlement patterns in Africa.<sup>66</sup> Okwuashi and Ofem (2012) Presented historical perspectives of urban development, planning legislations dynamics of urbanization of Lagos in Nigeria.<sup>67</sup> There so many literature relating urbanization and colonialism in Africa: Nchimbi (2009) also asserted that during the colonial period the early urban centres were expanded into larger centres, while others were created in areas such as railway stations and major road junctions. Major functions of urban centres were for administrative and commercial activities.<sup>68</sup> Umeagudosi and Obidiaju (2020) in their study observed that colonialism in Onitsha only effected changes on the pattern of urbanization in the area. The changes were caused by the colonial economic policies which forced to use the inland waterways as effective transport products extracted from the various centres around the Niger River.<sup>69</sup>

In his discussion on townsmen and workers, Illife (1979) analyzed urbanization diversity and social categories by showing the locations of pre-colonial towns, racial segregation and ethnicity in Tanganyika. <sup>70</sup> As the book covered larger area of Tanganyika, he paid little attention concerning the Safwa as original inhabitants of Mbeya urban centre, for he sparsely discussed concerning the Safwa on indigenous religions and use of indirect rule in the Usafwa Chiefdom.<sup>71</sup> He explained the war between the Hehe and Sangu which made chief Merere II to abandon his capital in 1874 and retreat westwards to Usafwa in Mbeya.<sup>72</sup> Illife mainly elaborated the Safwa in relation to chief Merere of the Sangu in Utengule Chiefdom. In tracing Ujiji as a commercial hub, 1831 – 1890, Fene (2023) examined the historical dynamics of urbanization of Ujiji town before the influences of the Arabs and Europeans, with a particular emphasis on how they shaped its emergence as a commercial hub in the 19th century.<sup>73</sup> He realized that the coming of Arabs, Indian merchants, and Swahili traders into Ujiji contributed to its emergence as a commercial centre. Moreover, geographical location, favorable climatic conditions and effective political systems attracted foreign interests, finally, facilitated the development of Ujiji to become a commercial hub.<sup>74</sup> Bikam and Chakwizira (2020) discussed the influence of traditional settlement patterns on planning new parts of towns using the case study of the Zaria in Nigeria. They argued that some elements of old settlement patterns were incorporated into Zaria's new town. Their study revealed that some traditional settlement patterns influenced urban design because old vernacular architecture was gradually integrated into new town plans. They concluded that architects, planners, and developers could learn from that case study of Zaria.<sup>75</sup> Therefore many scholars traced the dynamics of urbanization in Africa by using different approaches, methods, theories and perspectives.

A vast body of literature of urban historical studies has been largely concerned with the racial

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p.120.

<sup>67</sup> O. Okwuashi and B. Ofem (2012) Historical Perspective of Urbanization and Urban Planning of Lagos, Nigeria. *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)* p. 1994.

<sup>68</sup> J. R. Nchimbi (2009) From 'Unyago' to Kitchen Party': Changing Forms and Patterns of Women's Social Adjustment Education in Cosmopolitan Tanzania. *Tanzania Zamani A Journal of Historical Research & Writing* p. 13.

<sup>69</sup> M. N. Umeagudosi and A. C. Obidiaju (2020) Colonialism, Urbanisation and the Growth of Onitsha, 1857-1960. *Kenneth Dike Journal of African Studies* pp.245 – 246.

<sup>70</sup> Illife J. (1979) *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Newyork: Cambridge University Press), pp.381- 404

<sup>71</sup> Ibid .pp. 206 - 207

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. pp.56 – 67.

<sup>73</sup> M. Fene (2023) Ujiji the Commercial Hub, 1831 - 1890. *International Journal of Research and Innovations in Social Sciences* p. 1234.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> P. Bikam and J. Chakwizira (2020) Influence of Traditional Sttlement Patterns on Urban Design and Planning. *Urbani Izziv*. P. 66.

dimensions of colonial rule in Africa. In Tanganyika particularly at Dar es Salaam, Todd et al (2019) pointed that master plan started during the Arab in 1866, German planning scheme was drawn in 1891. In 1891 the Germans introduced a Building Ordinance, with different rules and standards applying to segregated residential zones for Europeans, Indians and Africans.<sup>76</sup> Section 4 of the 1891 Ordinance for Dar es Salaam defined areas to be used exclusively for European settlement, and areas where native buildings were not allowed. Racial segregation as a product of colonial domination manifests itself in Dar es Salaam with the creation of the Government area, which was essentially European; the commercial area which was partly European, but mainly Indian; and the Native Village which was mainly African.<sup>77</sup> Segregation was also demonstrated in social services infrastructure. Thus, there were in early Dar es Salaam: a European Hospital, a European School and even a European Cemetery.<sup>78</sup> Brennan and Burton, (2007) asserted that a number of key legislative acts formed the framework for German era urbanization. The 1891 Building Ordinance arranged structures for future investment.<sup>79</sup> The 1914 Building Ordinance outlined a future of closer administration based on racial segregation, and augured greater state investment in urban infrastructure.<sup>80</sup> In a Study in the effects of Land Policy of the evolution of the land Use structure of Dar es salaam , Kironde (1994) showed that the Town and Country Planning Ordinance of 1956 created a national Town and Country Planning Board to maintain control of all future urban development.<sup>81</sup> Reflecting the pre-existed social geography of Dar es Salaam, the town planning had a profound effect on its future development; resulted in a town of racially and socially segregation that in some cases have existed up to the present.

## METHODOLOGY

The qualitative and descriptive techniques involved in the data collection included interviews, field observation and review of written documents. Interviews were conducted on informants who were familiar to Mbeya urban centre by using a snowball method of selecting interviewees. Oral interviews were conducted on chief of the Usafwa Chiefdom, former employees of the native colonial authority, some elders and Ward Officers. The study also involved researching archival sources kept at the Tanzania National Archives (TNA) at Dar-es-Salaam and Mbeya Southern Highlands Zonal Archives (MSHZA). At TNA, the colonial government had a lot of reports documented in Mbeya District Books. Other written documents were researched in internet, books, and journals with information related to the dynamics of urbanization of Mbeya during colonial Tanganyika.

## GROWTH OF MBEYA URBAN CENTRE, 1920S-1960

In order to enrich scholarly discussions, Fourchard (2011) argued that, there has been a need to move beyond the limitations of local urban history, historians should trace urban dynamics within global

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<sup>76</sup> G. Todd et al (2019) City Profile: Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. *Environment and Urbanization ASIA*. p. 201.

<sup>77</sup> Dar es Salaam City Council. History of Dar es Salaam accessed on 29/09/2025 at <http://dcc.go.tz/en/our-dar-es-salaam>. pp. 125 - 126.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> J. Brennan & A. Burton (2007) The Emerging Metropolis: A Short History of Dar es Salaam, Circa 1862. In J Brennan et al (Eds.), *Dar es Salaam: Histories from an Emerging African Metropolis (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota)* p.24

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>L. Kironde. (1994) "The Evolution of the Land Use Structure of Dar es salaam 1890-1990: a Study in the Effects of Land Policy". PhD Thesis University of Nairobi. P 236.

history and the history of the state.<sup>82</sup> Moreover he noted that the categorization of African cities as Islamic, colonial and postcolonial has contributed little to understanding the actual urban transformations that have occurred on the continent. Such categories overlook localized and regional historical contexts and ignore the reality that processes of urbanization were globally similar.<sup>83</sup> Kiondo and Mosha (2016), however, emphasized the importance of preserving the history of cities as part of historical heritage.<sup>84</sup> They argued that African towns such as Mbeya were shaped by features resembling those of medieval towns in terms of functions and structures. These characteristics included compact, labyrinthine dwellings; densely populated neighbourhoods, defensive structures, relative uniformity in building heights and the prominence of large civic building, including mosques, churches, and palaces compared to local domestic architecture.<sup>85</sup> Traditional towns in Africa, though not formally planned, still exhibited settlement patterns and physical structures shaped by customary land tenure systems, kinship networks, and religious beliefs. While some areas developed as unplanned settlements, they often followed a meaningful internal order that respected traditional arrangements and ways of life.<sup>86</sup> Urban activities had designated spaces: markets and market squares, places of worship, farms, communal assembly grounds, playgrounds, as well as access roads and footpaths, all integrated into coherent settlement patterns without functional conflicts.

Over the generations, the Safwa developed a way of life suited to their environment. Their societies permitted for communal use of their natural resources with self reliance among their clans operating in a framework of mutual assistance. Groups of the Safwa were scattered and their areas were sparsely populated. As the Safwa were still small societies in number, many of their isolated dwellings, for instance, at Shongo, Ngogwe, Shogwa, Ilomba, Uyole, Dembwe, etc did not develop to account as urban centres. The headquarters of Usafwa Chiefdom was at Ilomba-Isyesye which had concentration of people to the extent being able to register as urban centre.<sup>87</sup> The major factors for the urbanization of Mbeya included population increase, agriculture, gold mining at Lupa, colonial communication infrastructure, commercial activities and industrial activities. The British colonial government introduced urban planning, architectural designs, and building standards that highlighted the evolving urban landscape of Mbeya town.

The growing importance of Mbeya as the servicing station made the British colonial government to shift the district headquarters from Igali to Mbeya urban centre in 1927. Comoro J.B (1988) realized that Igale was the main German colonial centre of interest after Neu-Langenburg (Now Tukuyu). Igale is south- east of Mbeya and is located along the mountain route which formed a shorter cut route between Tukuyu and Mbeya, It is between these two towns. It was at that remote peasant village that the dynamic Mbeya owed its historical origin.<sup>88</sup> In 1936 the British colonial administration shifted the Provincial Headquarters from Iringa to Mbeya. On January, 1<sup>st</sup> it 1942 created a new independent district of Chunya which was initially part of Mbeya District by Proclamation Notice Number 16 of

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<sup>82</sup> L. Fourchard (2011). Between World History and State Formation: New Perspectives on Africa's Cities. *The Journal of African History*, p.223.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p. 240.

<sup>84</sup>M. I. Kiondo and L. H. Mosha (2016) Analysing the Dynamics of City Morphology with an Overview of Mbeya City in Tanzania. *Journal of Social Sciences Research*, p.5.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid. p.1

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Mbeya District Book.

<sup>88</sup>Comoro J.B Christopher (1988) "Urbanization in Tanzania – The Dynamics of Market Forces: The Case Study of Mbeya" A Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy: Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario Canada, p. 119.

1941.<sup>89</sup> In the struggle of searching areas for resettlement at Itete, the boundary between Chunya District and Mbeya District was also amended in 1955.<sup>90</sup> When the boundary was adjusted at Itete resettlement areas, the area of Mbeya District was increased and this resulted in the increase of population. The change of boundaries had been one of important aspects that transformed the geographic landscape of Mbeya and thus expanded its urbanization potentials.

During the early 1920s, Mbeya became a servicing settlement for the gold mine diggers at Lupa. Gold mining, founded at Lupa area in 1922, accelerated urbanization of Mbeya, for many gold mine diggers gathered at Mbeya servicing settlement before being taken to Lupa. In 1931 the Lupa diggings attracted some 200 White newcomers from the Belgian Congo (now Congo Brazzaville) and Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) as well as from other colonies of East Africa. Hundreds more followed in the next years.<sup>91</sup> Archival sources reported that by the late 1920s the Lupa goldfield was already producing 85% of the colony's gold output. The number of claim-holders on the field rose by 20% in the second half of 1931.<sup>92</sup> Between 1931 and 1936 the number of diggers increased from 300 to 1000 and their labourers increased from 5000 to 20,000.<sup>93</sup> That was a period of the Great Depression. Farmers, Planters and traders in Tanganyika and the neighbouring colonies which were also affected by the Depression rushed to Lupa. Many of them were 'the poor whites' indigent Boers from rural South Africa. About half of the field's workers came from colonies of Malawi and Zambia. They walked hundreds of kilometres through tough journey to reach the Lupa goldfield.<sup>94</sup> Mining at Saza came into production in 1939 and also attracted many migrant labourers who struggled for job opportunities. The head office of Lupa gold mine operations was stationed in Mbeya town. Therefore, mining of gold at Lupa made Mbeya to start experiencing a process of 'mineralized urbanization' as per Bryceson et al (2022), a situation of becoming urban through mining extraction.<sup>95</sup> Therefore, the concept of 'mineralized urbanization' shows the relationship between mining and urbanization as it was in the case of mining at Lupa and the urbanization of Mbeya.

The discovery of gold at Lupa in 1922 in a remote part of southwestern Tanganyika triggered the territory's first gold rush. Lupa was an arid, uninhabited and inaccessible plain in the mid-1920s, when the gold rush began. From a mere trickle of non-native diggers and their African labour, the Lupa gold field grew to a population of more than 20,000 by the mid-1930s.<sup>96</sup> Mines and gold discovery led to the reconfiguration of local production to supply food in the capitalist economy.<sup>97</sup> According to Roberts A. D. (1986) by the 1930s new opportunities opened by gold mining at Lupa stimulated some 600 farmers from the hills and many other areas of Mbeya to take up new land in Mbeya District near Lupa gold fields. Another 2400 followed over the next decade. Some who grew paddy were prompted to expand

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<sup>89</sup> Mbeya Southern Highlands Zonal Archive, Report on the History of Creation of Mbeya Range Forest Reserve. File No. 30/4.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> A. D. Roberts, (1986) "The Gold Boom of the 1930s in Eastern Africa," *African Affairs*, p.556

<sup>92</sup> Department of Mines Annual Reports ( Dar es Salaam, 1929, 1931, 1936) TNA 25075, Report by Lieutenant Colonel Gore-Brown and Mr. Bush on the Lupa Gold Field (November, 1936)

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> D. F. Bryceson, et al (2022) 'Mineralized urbanization in Africa in the Twenty-First Century: Becoming Urban through Mining Extraction', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, p.342

<sup>96</sup> D. F. Bryceson et al (2012) Unearthing treasure and trouble: Mining as an impetus to urbanisation in Tanzania. Special Issue of the *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, p. 2.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

production in order to meet the growing demand for food at the Lupa gold fields and Mbeya town.<sup>98</sup> In his dissertation, Khamsin (1977) argued that the presence of gold mining at Lupa was responsible for a major political decision to create Mbeya District by splitting it from the former Rungwe District as well as the transfer of Southern Highlands Provincial headquarters from Iringa to Mbeya in the 1940s.<sup>99</sup> These changes increased administrative personnel and infrastructure that shaped Mbeya town and transformed its urban dynamics. The dynamics of urbanization like migration, population and others operated in association to each other.

The development of agriculture also assisted urbanization of Mbeya. By 1927, more than 200 European farmers went to Mbeya Southern Highlands Province to plant tobacco, wheat, maize as well as coffee and to raise livestock.<sup>100</sup> Expansion of agriculture and introduction of cash crops like coffee and tea as well as food crops like maize and wheat speeded up the urbanization process by expanding commercial activities. From the 1930s, coffee estates were established at Lunji, Eplot, Mpoloto, Songwe and Mshewe. In addition, throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the colonial government made special emphasis on maize production. Maize became a central part of British discourse on food production. In the 1930s, hybrid maize seeds from Kenya were distributed in Mbeya Southern Highlands Province under the colonial government's promotion of maize production. The British colonialists in Mbeya with the "Buy Empire Goods" propaganda encouraged maize production and expanded its markets.<sup>101</sup> The natural endowments geographical location and demographic factors helped to integrate Mbeya urban with its hinterlands. Given its geographical location, Mbeya also became integrated into capitalist relations with the landlocked neighbouring territories of Malawi and Zambia. Towns and countrysides are inseparably interconnected in many dimensions of reality, much like the two sides of a coin. The character of a town is determined, among other factors, by the nature of its hinterland, from which it draws labour and for which it serves as an emporium.<sup>102</sup> The development of agriculture from other areas promoted urbanization of Mbeya which was a commercial centre where a lot crops were sold. The areas were interdependent from an economic, environmental and social point of view. The interaction, economic flows, the flow of resources and socio cultural relations were basic to realize Mbeya urban development dynamics.

Population as a dynamic of urbanization integrated other forces in fostering the evolution of Mbeya urban centre by interlinking with other demographic processes like migration, fertility and others. Population increase also made Mbeya to evolve into an urban centre and assisted it to attain a status of being a minor settlement in 1929. According to 1928 census, Mbeya urban centre had 8561 people.<sup>103</sup> With its physical growth, Mbeya achieved a status which made the British colonial government in 1929 to gazette it as a minor settlement. During the period from the 1930s to the Second World War, Mbeya moved forward steadily, because in 1931, Mbeya as a minor settlement with an area of about 59,200 kilometre squares had 84600 inhabitants and population density of 1.8 per square kilometre and by 1934

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> O.R. Khamsin, (1977) "The Gold Miners and Mine Workers on the Lupa Golfield 1922-1963." (M.A Dissertation, University of Dar es Salaam, p.122.

<sup>100</sup> Southern Highlands provincial Book.

<sup>101</sup> C, C, Fourshey, (2008) "The Remedy for Hunger is Bending the Back: Maize and British Agricultural policy in Southwestern Tanzania, 1920-1960," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, p.244.

<sup>102</sup> D. F. McCall (1955) Dynamics of Urbanization in Africa. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, p. 153.

<sup>103</sup> Tanzania National Archive, Mbeya District Book 1.

the population had increased to 106,400.<sup>104</sup> Dynamics that accounted for urbanization changed from time to time in relation to the prevailed socioeconomic activities. Population growth, the discovery of gold at Lupa and migration were dynamics which enforced agricultural production to meet the increased demand of food in Mbeya.

Development of transport and communication infrastructures also contributed to the development of Mbeya urban centre. Tambila (2002) noted that the British were forced to lay necessary infrastructure like roads, airports and railways as a precondition for investment of their capital.<sup>105</sup> In the 1920s roads started to be constructed to link Mbeya with other regions. The road system continued to be expanded and improved in the town by increasing earth roads and morram tracks. According to the Mbeya District Book records, construction of the Iringa-Mbeya Road was completed in 1928. In 1931/1932, the Tukuyu-Mbeya Road connected Rungwe district with Mbeya urban centre and Iringa-Mwenzu Road (Ufipa) was also constructed. In 1932/1933, Iringa\_Mbeya Road was improved beyond Mbozi to Tunduma. In the same year, the road to Chunya was constructed up to the Saza Mine, while during 1933-1934 Mbeya-Lupa Road was built and reached Shoga in 1936.<sup>106</sup> Such a road network assisted the British colonial government's effective occupation ambition and development of commercial activities together with labour migration to the Lupa gold mine, South Africa and Copper belt in Zambia. Air transport to and from Mbeya was also developed. In the 1930s, for instance, the airports of Mbeya and Chunya were built, and they connected the area to Dar-es-Salaam, Shinyanga, and Mwanza. Such air routes were eventually connected to South Africa and were used to transport migrant labourers together with commodities such as minerals, tobacco, coffee and fish to South Africa and Europe.<sup>107</sup>

The administrative dynamics determined the effectiveness of all other dynamics because they were the ones responsible for the implementation of all enacted acts (ordinances or proclamations) and technically designed urban programmes and policies. Serious works started to determine a sensible plan for the growth of Mbeya as a town, which provided open spaces and prevention of slumming. On 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1936, Mbeya minor settlement became a township under the Township Ordinance Number 16 of 1935 through Government Notice Number 127.<sup>108</sup> During and after the Second World War the British colonial government encouraged production of cash crops and developed small-scale industries as a means for diversifying the colonial economies in Mbeya. Mass migration to Mbeya urban centre increased, squatters developed especially from the late 1930s to the mid 1940s particularly at Mabatini, Nonde, Itigi, Simike, Nzovwe, Iyunga and Isanga. The physical development of Mbeya town included building of cattle markets and an abattoir at Itigi-Machinjioni. They all contributed to the growth of Mbeya urban centre. In the census of 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1948 Mbeya urban centre had a population of 18406 people, the Safwa occupied 21%, Nyiha 21%, Nyakyusa 11%, Nyamwanga 10%, Malila 10% and Sangu 8% and all other 18%. The racial distribution of civil population comprised 722 Indians, 421 Europeans, 36 Goans, 19 Coloured, 14 Arabs and 7 others.<sup>109</sup> The data of population provided above support the argument by Obudho (2002) who asserts that one of the most important indicators of the extent of urbanization among residents of a region is the degree to which various racial and ethnic groups have

<sup>104</sup> C, Gilmann,(1936) "A Population Map of Tanganyika Territory," *Geographical Review*, p.371.

<sup>105</sup> K. Tambila (2002), "The Theory of Imperialism in the Context of African History," In Mishambi G.T. et al, *Africa from Nineteenth Century to 1990*, (Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Institute of Education, ), p.7.

<sup>106</sup> Tanzania National Archive, Mbeya District Book 1.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

mixed as a result of urbanization process.<sup>110</sup> In the 1940s, Mbeya Township was multiracial or heterogeneously populated with African ethnic communities of the Safwa, Nyakyusa, Nyiha, Nyamwanga, Malila, Sangu, and non-African communities of Europeans, Indians, Goans and Arabs. Racial and ethnic segregation became common during the colonial era. There was a tendency to deploy racial segregation to control free movement of Africans that also defined the feature of urban development.<sup>111</sup> It was suggested that, from the 1930s to 1950s Mbeya town emerged on the basis of, racism and segregation. It was revealed that the area of Sokomatola was reserved for the settlement of Arabs; areas of Sisimba, Azimio and Jakalanda were reserved for Indian residences and were popularly known as Uhindini and the area of Lupa Road, which extended along river Sisimba near the Roman Catholic Church up to the boundary of Meta River near Isanga, was reserved for European settlement and was popularly known as European centre or Uzunguni. In terms of education, segregation was highly practised as there were separate schools for Europeans, Indians and Africans. Africans had limited chances of getting education. Only some sons of chiefs got the opportunity. Loreza and Mbeya secondary schools were special for Europeans and Indians, Azimio was for Arabs and Ilomba for Africans.<sup>112</sup> Race was applicable to justify the operation of colonialism, for the division of people in that category was unavoidable during colonialism to ensure dominance on Africans.<sup>113</sup> Race and colonialism drew a division between ‘civilized’ and ‘primitive/backward’. Although racism was not officially invented by imperialism, but later it became one of the tools of imperialism, because the European notion of superiority that led to the adaptation of racism as an idea well fitted to civilization mission and dominance.<sup>114</sup> The term colonialism has been significant in explaining the cultural exploitation that emerged with the expansion of Europe over the last many decades. By the mid 1950s, the pace of development in Mbeya called for new methods of managing the town. Since 1936 the day-to-day administration of the town had been in the hands of the township authority, composed of district officials, like R. B. Brayne who was the District Officer with other nominated local residents. With the growing pace of urbanization Mbeya township became a Town Council in 1957. British colonialists firmly consolidated their rule by maintaining Mbeya town as their administrative centre.<sup>115</sup> The growth of Mbeya town went hand in hand with the development of trading activities. As pointed out above, the development of commercial activities in Mbeya town took place at a low rate before the 1920s. Trade mainly used the barter system of exchange. Mbeya minor settlement in the 1920s had no special marketing places, but there were some temporary trading posts (Nado in Safwa language) which were used occasionally in some days of the weeks. Slowly, from the 1930s, there was development of trading centres or ‘buying posts’ especially for cattle and food crops.<sup>116</sup> From the 1920s to 1930s, Mbeya started to be populated by Indians who lived by trading, and trade in cattle thrived. By the 1940s, official marketing under native authorities was established under Government Notice Number 94 of 1936.

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<sup>110</sup>R. Obudho,(2000) “Urbanization and Industrialization,” in William, R. Ochieng’ (ed.) *Historical Studies and Social Changes in the Western Kenya. Essays in Memory of Professor Gideon, S, Were*, (Nairobi: East Africa Education Publishers), p.217.

<sup>111</sup> S. J. Salm and T. Falola (eds.) (2005) *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective*. (USA: University of Rochester press), pp. 71 - 72.

<sup>112</sup>Tanzania National Archive, Mbeya District Book 1.

<sup>113</sup> B. Ashcroft et al, (2000) (2ed) *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge), pp. 180 – 181.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Township Layout – Mbeya: Tanzania National Archive: Access Number 174, 1931 - 1939

<sup>116</sup> Ibid..

Markets were built in simple structures by using poles and were sometimes thatched by grass at Uhindini, Mabatini and Sokomatola.<sup>117</sup> Simple industries for food processing, carpentry and domestic utensils also developed.

Urbanization had a significant impact on various dimensions of Mbeya, including land use, the environment, the economy, politics, and infrastructure. It transformed Mbeya from a minor service settlement for the Lupa goldfields into the city as it is today. The development occurred at the expense of other settlements that declined as Mbeya expanded. For instance, Lumbila and Igale, once German colonial administrative centres reverted to rural status. Likewise, Usoha-Njiapanda in rural Mbeya, a once evolving commercial centre (Nado) with a heterogeneous population of Indians and Africans, lost its urban trend and pattern after the construction of a new road from Tukuyu to Mbeya that bypassed its junction.

Population growth, a defining feature of Mbeya's urbanization, had severe environmental impacts. The influx of migrants led to overcrowding, the proliferation of informal settlements, cultivation on steep slopes, deforestation, and soil erosion.<sup>118</sup> In response to the problems, from the 1930s onward, the British colonial administration implemented conservation measures to mitigate this degradation.<sup>119</sup> They included anti-erosion regulations, the establishment of forest reserves such as those at Mbeya Range and Sidungwa, and the regulation of sand quarrying and fires. However, the enforcement of these measures often involved coercive tactics, including forced displacement, which local communities perceived as a form of colonial violence.<sup>120</sup> The approach disregarded local ecological knowledge, long-established land-use practices, and customary laws. Conflicts between colonial officials and local communities over conservation were therefore more than technical disputes; they became catalysts for political consciousness. They fostered political awareness and contributed to the rise of local nationalism in Mbeya. This illustrates how the urban history of Mbeya was inseparably linked to its political history, with ecological challenges served as a springboard for political movements.

## CONCLUSION

The historical evolution of Mbeya as an urban centre was shaped by an interplay of dynamics that influenced the trends, patterns, and processes of urbanization. This article analyzed the dynamics of urbanization in Mbeya during colonial rule, including the establishment of a British colonial administrative centre in Mbeya with the application of colonial urban legislation, the natural advantages of its geographical location, the discovery of gold at Lupa, the development of agriculture, population growth, transport and communication infrastructure, commercial and industrial activities, and migration. The British colonial government also introduced urban planning, architectural designs, and building standards that defined the evolving urban landscape of Mbeya town. The trends of urbanization in Mbeya passed through five phases, from its beginnings as a minor service settlement for gold diggers at Lupa in 1922 to its elevation to township council status in 1957. The discussion is supported by a review of urban theories, including demographic transition theory, modernization theory, dependency theory, and endogenous theory. Urbanization driven by gold mining at Lupa positioned Mbeya as one of the key 'mineralized' urban centres in Tanganyika. Various other historical factors have also been examined to

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Mbeya Southern Highland Zonal Archive (MSHZA): Agricultural Notes – 1948 – 1956, File Number, AGR. 1/571

<sup>119</sup> Ibid

<sup>120</sup> MSHZA, R. B. Brayne, (1954) Report on the Proposed Mbeya Range Forest Reserve

demonstrate that urbanization is interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary endeavour.

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