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► **To cite this version:**

| Marie-Aude Fouéré. Commemorating Nyerere, celebrating Magufuli in Tanzania. 2019. hal-02510080

HAL Id: hal-02510080

<https://hal.science/hal-02510080>

Submitted on 26 May 2021

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MAMBO!

XVI (11), 2019

Commemorating Nyerere, Celebrating Magufuli in Tanzania

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Cite:

FOUÉRÉ, Marie-Aude. 2019. Commemorating Nyerere, Celebrating Magufuli in Tanzania. *Mambo!* vol. XVI, no. 11. URL: <https://mambo.hypotheses.org/2043>

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Translated by Gaspard Darbon and revised by Sylvie Dubord.

Published: November 4, 2019.

Nyerere Day, October 14th

In Tanzania, the 14th of October 2019 commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the death of Tanzania's first president, Julius Nyerere. Since 1999, every 14th of October – Nyerere Day's statutory holiday – celebrates the man who holds the status of Father of the Nation (baba wa taifa)¹. But 2019 has the distinctive characteristic of associating a round number, twenty years, with a re-election stake for Tanzania's current president, John Magufuli. Elected in October 2015, Magufuli will run for a second term in exactly one year. The present government is using the twentieth commemorations of Nyerere's passing as an early electoral campaign, to look back on the last four years of governing and to sketch promises for the next term. More broadly, the commemorations revive typical practices of celebrating a leader which have considerably increased since Magufuli's accession to power. The association between Nyerere and Magufuli is forthright: Magufuli claims he is accomplishing a set of projects initiated by Nyerere that had been until then largely put on hold. These projects mainly focus on the country's infrastructure, within the frame of a new developmentalist capitalism which characterises all the East African countries². They also emphasize on the efforts carried out to improve the moral standards of the political class:

1 Marie-Aude Fouéré (ed.), 2015, *Remembering Julius Nyerere: History, Memory, Legacy*, Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota.

2 Marie-Aude Fouéré & Hervé Maupeu, 2015, "Une nouvelle Afrique de l'Est? Introduction thématique", *Afrique contemporaine*, 253, pp.107-13. According to the IMF, Tanzania's growth was of 5.8% in 2018, and is estimated to 6% in 2019.

since Magufuli's rise to power, grand corruption has been under attack. The president began his term at full throttle with the dismissal of some ministers and state agents. Magufuli "the bulldozer" (*tinga tinga*) – a nickname he earned during the 2015 electoral campaign, not only because he was Minister of Works, Transports and Communications, but also because he was reputedly tenacious and unwavering – cleans up, builds, modernises develops. He presents himself both as the heir of Nyerere and of the stern and disciplined times of Ujamaa socialism, in a Tanzania of the early 21st century where he promises to impose action-related work ethics³. "Hapa kazi tu!" repeated Magufuli during his 2015 campaign, "Here, we work!" These words echo with the TANU party's slogan⁴ that led the country – then named Tanganyika – to independence as well as with the political language of the collective effort for development that was pervasive during the whole nyererist era up until 1985, the year Nyerere's withdrew from power.

Commemorative Media Package

The media seize the opportunity, singing the double praise of Nyerere and Magufuli during the whole commemoration period. They are named in various ways: the "Twenty years of Mwalimu⁵ J.K. Nyerere's memory", or "20 years without our Founding Father" (*Miaka 20 bila Nyerere; Miaka 20 bila Baba wa Taifa*) (Photo #2). Following a classical framework of political legitimation and voters seduction – that is to say of hegemonic research – the uses of the past by the Tanzanian media has tied the past up with current concerns. Old Nyerere speeches have been broadcast again, making it possible to hear the ex-president's voice and his oratory style, well renowned among Tanzanians. Archived images from some significant episodes of Tanzania's history have been shown. For example, it allowed Tanzanians to relive key moments of Tanganyika's accession to independence in 1961, or of the "Kagera" war between Uganda and Tanzania in the late 1970s, two crucial moments of the nation's history. Television shows such as "Kalamu ya Mwalimu" (Nyerere's Pen) consisted in reading selected parts of Nyerere's political writing. Indeed, the ex-president had published several distinguished political philosophy essays that explained the fundament of Ujamaa African socialism and its schemes of application.⁶

3 Marie-Aude Fouéré & Cyrielle Maingraud-Martinaud, 2015, "Une hégémonie compétitive contre vents et marées : les élections générales de 2015 en Tanzanie et à Zanzibar", *Politique africaine*, 140, 4, pp.145-63.

4 The Tanganyikan African National Union, qua political party, was born on the 7th of July 1954, following on from the Tanganyikan African Association (TAA), the large mobilisation movement for the anticolonial struggle.

5 Julius Kambarage Nyerere's nickname was "Mwalimu", the teacher. Indeed, Nyerere was a teacher before having to choose between teaching and politics during the fight for independence. But he also earned this nickname because of his great didacticism when he publicly addressed the Tanzanians to explain the directions chosen for the country. It is both a respectful and affectionate nickname.

6 On Nyerere's political philosophy, see for example Viktoria Stöger-Eising, "'Ujamaa' Revisited: Indigenous and European Influences in Nyerere's Social and Political Thought", *Africa*, 70, 1, 2000, pp. 118-43.



Photo #1: Logo and slogan of the twenty-year anniversary of Nyerere's passing on TBC One.



Photo #2: Logo and slogan of the twenty-year anniversary of Nyerere's passing on Channel 10

This short essay will specifically address the case of the praises sung in the media, analysing a music video glorifying both Nyerere and Magufuli, repeatedly shown on television during the week preceding the 14th of October commemorations. This music video will be decrypted as a discourse articulating images and words to produce legible significations for its viewers. It will then be seen in the commemorative context of this month of October 2019 to understand how it participates to an efficient media package to build some resemblance between Nyerere and Magufuli and produce unequivocal representations of today's regime. The praise sung also will be understood in the relation it maintains with a wider context of authoritarian tightening since Magufuli's arrival to power and of obstruction of the criticism canals directed at him.

Singing Praise and Criticism

Tanzania has a long history of political use of vocal music. It is used, in a veiled or in a more direct manner, either to celebrate the powers in place, or to protest against them and remind them of their responsibilities. Under colonisation, colonial powers have been criticised by the peasants and the workers like has shown Frank Gunderson with the sukuma plantations workers⁷. Susan Geiger has brought to light how Tanzanian women have contributed to popular mobilisation for the anticolonial struggle in the 1950s. They have particularly fought in TANU's favour, through the ngoma traditional dances and other musical and dancing performances. Kelly Askew has analysed the use of Swahili taarab music (sung poetry), typical of the East African coast, to broadcast but also criticise Ujamaa socialism⁸. The Tanzanian jazz (*dansi*) genre, a mixture of rumba and jazz which is exemplified by the famous Morogoro Jazz Band and its singer Mbaraka Mwinshehe, have also sung praises of the ruling power until the end of the 1970s. Arts, generally, have played an important role in political mobilisation through the fight for independence, but also in the construction of the nation during the socialism period and after – including drama, parades, comical sketches, acrobatic feats⁹. The analyses of political uses of music in Tanzania have more recently dealt with the rap and hip-hop genres, gathered in the generic category of *bongo flava*. While the latter was born in a politically consensual bourgeois environment inclined towards singing love or upward mobility, it has progressively taken a critical stance towards the ruling power. This genre still continues to produce griots supporting the current regime, as is illustrated by the last example to date, namely the singer Harmonize. His song “Magufuli”, celebrating the current president, begins with these lyrics: “I wish ningemwona Magufuli nipige magoti nimpongeze hadharani” (“If only I met Magufuli I would fall to my knees to publicly congratulate him”). It continues emphatically with a praise of the president, congratulated for the modern infrastructure he is building in the country¹⁰.

From Nyerere to Magufuli

If until now the chants using Nyerere as a theme have never been gathered and subjected to a systematic analysis, Kelly Askew's study has brought to light on the appearance of wailing chants since the year of Nyerere's passing. Called *nyimbo za maombolezo*, they

7 Frank Gunderson, 2010, *Sukuma Labor Songs from Western Tanzania*, Leiden, Boston: Brill; see especially Chapter 11, “Songs of Nationalist Praise for TANU, Julius Nyerere, and Uhuru”.

8 Kelly Askew, 2002, *Performing the Nation: Swahili Music and Cultural Politics in Tanzania*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Susan Geiger, 1997, *TANU Women: Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism, 1955-65*, Portsmouth (NH): Heinemann, 1997.

9 Kelly Askew, 2005, “*Jack-of-all-Arts or Ustadhi ? The Poetics of Cultural Production in Tanzania*”, in Gregory Maddox and James Giblin, *In Search of a Nation: Histories of Authority and Dissidence in Tanzania*, Oxford: James Currey; Laura Edmondson, 2007, *Performance and Politics in Tanzania. The Nation on Stage*. Bloomington-Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

10 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrAZ5Lzf5AU>

“mourn his demise and look back on its contribution to the nation”¹¹. The famous music group TOT (Tanzania One Theatre), close to the ruling power, has thereby released three songs dedicated to Nyerere in 1999. According to Felicitas Becker, these compositions had been prepared before his death and were available for sale few hours after the announcement of his passing¹². Likewise, one song of Remmy Ongala¹³, a famous Tanzanian musician, was played on a loop during the whole period of national mourning. These songs would be heard on radio or watched on television in the form of music videos. The latter could also be broadcast during the October commemorations in Nyerere’s sites of remembrance that were set up by the state, as in the Nyerere Museum, erected in his natal village of Butiama. When I visited the museum in 2011, a screen of a video recorder placed in the hall was broadcasting the chants alluded to by Felicitas for the year 1999. Among them were “Buriani Mwalimu” (Rest in peace, Mwalimu) from TOT, or the music video of Remmy Ongala, with close-ups showing him in tears, sitting directly on the floor and wincing in sorrow. Qua mourning chants, they uniquely focused on Nyerere’s figure, celebrating his personal qualities and accomplishments for the Tanzanian nation, and crying over his loss for the Tanzanian people. These cries echo with numerous scenes filmed during Nyerere’s funeral and with oral testimonies gathered in the following years. A surveyed woman, interviewed on the 14th of October 2011, illustrated that well by asserting that “Even at the funeral of my own father, I would not have cried that much.” During the 2019 commemorations of Nyerere’s passing, we nevertheless observe a novelty in the content of these chants. Indeed, while several music videos which are broadcast on national channels admittedly commemorated classically the ex-president as the nation’s father and founder, they celebrated at the same time the current president, John Magufuli.

Patriots of the Nation

“Mzalendo wa kweli” (“A true patriot”) of the CCP Police Jazz Band Super Kwata¹⁴, which is categorised in the *dansi* genre, is selected for the study because it was played in a loop several days before the 14th of October 2019 celebrations. It was broadcast on several

11 Kelly M. Askew, 2006. “Sung and Unsung: Musical Reflections on Tanzania Postsocialisms”, *Africa*, 76, 1: 15-43. The author has gathered 103 chants that she studied according to a discourse analysis which extracts the most frequent themes, on the basis of the words of the vocabulary (see especially her chart, page 33, displaying the frequency percentages of words such as God (70%), peace (45%), unity (38%), etc.).

12 See F. Becker, “Remembering Nyerere: Political Rhetoric and Dissent in Contemporary Tanzania”, *African Affairs*, vol. 112, n°447, 2013, pp. 238-261. The author transcribes and translates in her work the lyrics of “Buriani Mwalimu” (Rest in Peace, Mwalimu) by TOT (p. 244).

13 In 1996, three years before Nyerere’s passing, Ongala had nevertheless released the titre “Nyerere”, criticising Nyerere for some bad political decisions. See Aaron Louis Rosenberg, 2019, “Zairo-Congolese Musicians and the Sound of Assimilation in East Africa”, in Uche T. Onyebadi, *Music and Messaging in the African Political Arena*, Hershey (PA): IGI Global: 201-220; on Ongala, see as well Sean Hillhorst, 2009 “Remmy Ongala: Capitalist transition and popular music in Tanzania 1979-2002”, *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 21, 2: 105-126; Graebner, Werner, 1997, “Whose Music? The Songs of Remmy Ongala and the Orchestra Super Matimila”, in Karin Barber (ed.), *Readings in African Popular Culture*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 110-117.

14 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnF7fmBG8U0>

channels: TBC one, public television and ITV (a private channel linked with the governmental position). The aim is here to decrypt the lyrics sung and the visual options selected to emphasise the comparison – or even the resemblance – between the figure of Nyerere and the one of Magufuli.

This composition starts with lyrics of praises addressed at Nyerere that are very traditional to the type of lamentations or songs of praise for Nyerere:

*Mhasisi wa Taifa letu, Nyerere
Baba wa Taifa, mwanamapinduzi
Shujaa aliyeleta uhuru wa nchi
Nyerere, Tanzania inakukumbuka*

Our Nation's founder, Nyerere
Father of the Nation, revolutionary
Hero who led the country's independence
Nyerere, Tanzania remembers you

After some other verses which praise Nyerere's virtues, the composition turns towards the figure of the current president, and this only after 2'23", on a song of 9'25".

Ingewezekana ningemwomba Mwenyezi Mungu ayafungue macho yako, Mwalimu, japo kwa sekunde chache, uone Tanzania mpya ya John Pombe Magufuli inavyozidi na kutekeleza, Mwalimu, fikra zako

If it was possible, I would ask God All-Mighty to open your eyes, Mwalimu, if only for a few seconds, for you to see the new Tanzania of John Pombe Magufuli and how he develops and realizes your ideas, Mwalimu.

The parallel between Nyerere and Magufuli tightens while the song continues; it becomes clear in the chorus, which directly insists on the patriotism of the two presidents, a central theme in the Tanzanian national story.

Singer: *Mzalendo, mzalendo, mzalendo Nyerere*

Mzalendo we, mzalendo wa kweli

Choir: *Mzalendo, mzalendo, mzalendo Nyerere*

Mzalendo we, mzalendo wa kweli

Singer: *Mzalendo, mzalendo rais Magufuli*

Mzee¹⁵ wa kazi, mzalendo wa kweli

Choir: *Mzalendo, mzalendo rais Magufuli*

Mzalendo we, mzalendo wa kweli

Singer: Patriot, patriot, patriot Nyerere

You the patriot, the true patriot

Choir: Patriot, patriot, patriot Nyerere

You the patriot, the true patriot

Singer: Patriot, patriot president Magufuli

The honourable worker, the true patriot

Choir: Patriot, patriot president Magufuli

You the patriot, the true patriot

The second half of CCP Police Jazz Band Super Kwata's song lists a number of measures taken by the regime since 2015 which realise three main objectives that Nyerere had set himself to build the new Tanzanian nation. They consisted in fighting against ignorance

¹⁵ *Mzee* is a respectful address used in the Swahili-speaking world, literally translated by "the old man", which contains the idea of the possession of wisdom accumulated thanks to the number of years.

(*ujinga*), disease (*maradhi*) and poverty (*umaskini*), a watchword that is well-known by the Tanzanians today. The song highlights the development, under Magufuli, of free education, of the care system's improvement and of poverty reduction, thanks to a dynamic economy. The recent completion of the transfer of the ministries and other institutions in Dodoma (the town was chosen as the capital by Nyerere instead of the coastal colonial capital Dar es Salaam, without fully completing the transfer), located at the centre of the country, is also praised: "*Ulitaka makao makuu ya nchi yawe Dodoma, awamu ya tano*¹⁶ *inatekeleza*" (You wanted the country's headquarters to be in Dodoma, the current presidency has done it).¹⁷

In visual terms, this music video mainly shows shots of the group's singers, chanting in unison or alone, sometimes dressed with police uniforms, sometimes with performance wear. The chorus comes with some scenes employing a well-known portrait of Nyerere, in the form of a framed photo in black and white that shows him smiling. In the video, the singer makes a respectful gesture towards the portrait, or even takes affectionately into his arms (Photo #3). The references to Magufuli's achievement of the fight against ignorance, disease and poverty are illustrated by specific images: joyous pupils in a school yard, MRI scan devices in modern hospitals (Photo #4), cranes on construction sites for new roads, and the new high-speed train service. Magufuli, in person, is seen seven times in the music video, either in scenes of political life (for example in the middle of a meeting), or in more informal moments (such as his visit to the ex-president widow, Maria Nyerere, who once was very publicised).



Photo #3: CCP Police Jazz Band Super Kwata with Nyerere's portrait in "Mzalendo wa kweli."

16 *Awamu wa tano* means "the fifth (presidential) period". The Tanzanian presidencies are numbered in their succession order: the first is Nyerere's (1961-1985), followed by Hassan Mwinyi's (1985-1995), Benjamin Mkapa's (1995-2005), Jakaya Kikwete (2005-2015), and finally by John Magufuli's (since 2015). Since Hassan Mwinyi, each president stayed ten years in power, corresponding to two presidential terms of five years.

17 The translation into chants of the theme of the capital's transfer from Dar es Salaam to Dodoma is not new, as is for example illustrated by the title "Makao Makuu Dodoma" (The capital in Dodoma) by Mbaraka Mwinshehe: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bW3KtdRA68>



Photo #4: Image of a MRI scan device in CCP Police Jazz Band Super Kwata's "Mzalendo wa kweli."

The Architect and the Builder

The case of CCP Police Jazz Band Super Kwata's "Mzalendo wa kweli" is a good example of the parallel that is drawn between Nyerere and Magufuli. And this was observed since the very start of his presidency by some analysts, and in a very pronounced manner on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Nyerere's passing, as was noticed in this month of October. This title is only an element taking place in a much wider glorification mechanism of the current president, a usual process of political legitimation and power personification¹⁸. It includes the musical sphere, other bands having also released songs of praise to Nyerere in 2019, associating him to Magufuli. Thereby, a music video was also broadcast on TBC One and ITV, "Kumbukumbu ya Mwalimu" (Remembrance of Nyerere), played by the bongo flava singer Pongwa Star¹⁹.

This song does not explicitly name Magufuli, nor the recent accomplishments in terms of infrastructures – therefore falling more classically into the songs of praise's genre –, but plainly associates Nyerere and Magufuli through the use images. Thus, it begins with a close-up on a painted portrait of Nyerere. A few seconds later, this same portrait appears in the foreground and shows, in the background, a painted portrait of Magufuli, while the singer is sitting between the two portraits (Photo #5). The visual association between the two presidents is almost immediate. A third shot shows more distinctly the two portraits and, in the middle, the one of ex-president Jakaya Kiwete, while the singer recalls that he had relied on Nyerere's figure to gain legitimacy during his two terms in power (Photo #6). Finally, another music video example is the one of the Kwaya ya Chuo Utumishi wa Umma Tanzania (the choir of Tanzanian civil servants), in which several photomontages appear:

18 Marie-Aude Fouéré and Hélène Charton, 2013, "Héros nationaux et pères de la nation en Afrique", *Vingtième Siècle, special issue*, 118, 2 – see the introduction.

19 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gA9FeVxzfcE>

they represent the singers in front of cranes and excavators, or in the new terminal of the international airport Dar es Salaam (Photo #6).



Photo #5: Nyerere's portrait in the foreground and the one of Magufuli in the background, with the singer Pongwe Star, in "Kumbukumbu ya Mwalimu"



Photo #6: The painted portraits of Nyerere, Kikwete and Magufuli, left to right, in "Kumbukumbu ya Mwalimu" of Pongwe Star.



Photo #7: Music video of the Kwaya ya Chuo Utumishi wa Umma Tanzania choir showing the photomontage of a singer placed in the foreground of a picture taken on a road construction site.

What is interesting about these music videos is that the political story they develop fits perfectly with the one used by other media channels during this commemoration period. We find among them the evening news broadcasts' reports which, during several days, began by praising Nyerere before congratulating Magufuli for the country's transformations. Then, they would focus their report on one or several achievements in progress: schools, hospitals, roads, a new airport terminal at Dar es Salaam, the revival of the national company Air Tanzania, the electrification of some region of the country, a new hydroelectric dam on the Rufiki River (named the Nyerere Hydropower Dam – recalling that caricature of the cartoonist Nathan Mpangala 14 years ago, published on October 14, 2005, mocking the recurrence of the use of Nyerere's name to rename streets, shops, buildings²⁰...), or also the power transfer to Dodoma. Street interviews underlined how ordinary citizens associate Nyerere and Magufuli. Finally, some government's trailers were also broadcast during these days of commemoration, placed in-between two shows on TBC One, but also on private channels such as Channel 10. The trailers showed appreciation for the current policy of large construction sites and emphasised on how the president Magufuli is a president of action (Photo #8). The songs of praise studied above therefore use plainly the state's slogans.

The press was really proficient in this double praise to Nyerere and Magufuli. Some articles reported the voices of citizens asserting: "When we stare inside Magufuli's eyes, we see Nyerere" (Tuamuona Nyerere kwenye macho ya Magufui" - Wazee Katavi, *Jamvi la Habari*, October 14, 2019). The editorial published on October 14, 2019 in *The Guardian*, a newspaper close to the power, applauded Magufuli for transferring the country's capital to Dodoma ("Nyerere Day: President Magufuli's moving to Dodoma is a fitting commemoration"). The ruling party's newspaper, *Uhuru ya kijani*, in a special issue printed on glazed paper, ran as a headline on the 14th of October 2019: "How JPM²¹ is achieving

20 Marie-Aude Fouéré, 2011, "La nation tanzanienne à l'épreuve du postsocialisme", *Politique africaine*, 121, pp. 69-85, with the cartoon reproduced page 70.

21 JPM are the initials of the president John Pombe Magufuli.

Nyerere’s dreams” (“JPM anavyotimiza ndoto za Nyerere”). And the next day, after the official commemorations of the 14th of October that were set in the coastal city of Lindi, the newspapers ran headlines on the promises made this day by the president Magufuli. *The Daily News* uses the president’s words regarding the fight against poverty, disease and ignorance (“We’ll foster Nyerere’s ideals... JPM reiterates and praises successive governments for addressing poverty, diseases and ignorance”, October 15-21, 2019), while *Mtanzania* – a pro-government newspaper – underlines that Magufuli is going to fulfill Nyerere’s dreams (“JPM: Ninatimiza ndoto za Nyerere”, *Mtanzania*, October 15, 2019). Every information media outlines, with the repetition of a same framework, a commemorative configuration of the double praise in which Nyerere is represented as the architect of the Tanzanian nation and Magufuli as the builder, loyal to the blueprint the former left behind.



Photo #9: Headline of the ruling party’s newspaper, *Uhuru ya kijani*, on October 14, 2019: “How JPM accomplishes Nyerere’s dreams”. It features Nyerere on the left and Magufuli on the right.

Conclusion

This overview of a media process is far from making it possible to answer the complex question of the use of culture and symbols to underlying hegemonic ideology. It is especially difficult when it is a question of interrogating ourselves on their actual effects, as much

these effects vary according to the dispositions of those who are exposed to them, as well as the situation of local exposure, and its wider context. Thus, Abdullah, a sarcastic 50-odd years old man always ready to pillory the CCM party, exclaims (while listening John Magufuli's speech on October 14th which recalls Nyerere's three watchwords, that is, the fight against ignorance, disease and poverty): "But the CCM's politicians are the ones who are ignorant, sick and poor!" This essay can only be useful to outline the first approximations and assumptions on the existence of mindful and calculated strategies, but also regarding thought habits. Indeed, the latter are incorporated dispositions that are revived in the people whose positions (the positions they hold, the ones that are maintained or acquired) benefit of this reactivation. This reactivation happens in a social space that is constrained by an authoritarian tightening which negatively sanctions the ones that do not play the game – as much for the actors of the political field than for those of the media field. The media has largely suffered of this stiffening of the regime for many months: several critical press headlines have been forbidden, and some news editors and journalists were imprisoned and forced to answer exaggerated accusations or likely completely made-up²². To the musicians that choose to sing the power's praises, the retribution work on the mode of political co-optation. The very famous bongo flava singer, Professor Jay, had obtained this way a seat of MP for the Mikumi district. It is Harmonize's turn – invited to present the commemoration days of Nyerere's passing twentieth anniversary in Lindi, where he sang acapella his "Magufuli" song in front of the president and his guests – to take profit of the power in place's largesse. The press announces, a few days later, that his songs have "struck president Magufuli's heart"²³, who has given him his authorisation to run for MP under the CCM party for the next elections in October 2020.

22 See for example on the blog *African Arguments* the analysis "Tanzania: Everyone is Scared" (March 2, 2018) (<https://africanarguments.org/2018/03/02/tanzania-everyone-is-scared> [archive]). Read as well Nick Westcott's note on the regime's authoritarian drift: "Tanzania: Has President Magufuli forgotten Nyerere's Lesson?" (August 22, 2019) (<https://africanarguments.org/2019/08/22/tanzania-magufuli-nyerere-forgotten-lessons/> [archive])

23 News Moto, 21st of October: <https://www.newsmoto.co.ke/harmonize-endorsed-by-magufuli-to-run-for-mp/> [archive].