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Africanized Arabs, Arabized Africans: Narratives and Bibliographic Reflections on Zanzibar's Revolution

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Abstract

This paper explores the historiography of Zanzibar from 1832, when the Omani Sultan relocated his capital from Muscat, to 1964, when a revolution overthrew the Sultanate and massacred thousands of Arabs and Arabized Africans. It identifies three dominant narratives in English-language scholarship. The first, an Arabophobe narrative, produced largely by British colonial authors, portrays Zanzibar's history through racialized and imperialist frameworks that justify British intervention. The second, an Arabophile narrative, shaped by Afro-Arab Zanzibaris, presents nostalgic or idealized accounts of the Sultanate as harmonious and cosmopolitan. The third, an Arabo-neutral narrative, seeks balance but still reflects imperial influence. These works address themes such as language, education, religion, race, elite life, and relations among locals, immigrants, and ruling elites, while also situating Zanzibar within the East African coast, the Indian Ocean, and Britain's imperial orbit. The paper also considers how scholarship has interpreted the racial underpinnings of the 1964 revolution, often reinforcing simplistic binaries. It concludes by calling for a historiography freed from racial paradigms imposed by colonial powers, one that instead draws on Zanzibari voices and experiences, highlighting the island's distinct Swahili identity that is at once African and Arab.

Introduction

Arab traders reached Zanzibar Island hundreds of years before Omani rule began at the end of the seventeenth century. Consequently, almost all Zanzibaris now embrace Islam, with only very small Hindu and Christian minorities. The Arabic language was associated not only with Islam and religious education but also with trade and Omani governance. Its use significantly regressed with modernizing education, state ownership of the means of production, and the end of Omani rule, particularly after Zanzibar was declared a British protectorate in 1890 and officially after the bloody revolution that overthrew the Sultanate, resulting in the massacre of thousands of Arabs in January 1964, one month after Zanzibar's independence.

In my previous work on the historiography of the Sultanate of Zanzibar (Salem, 2009), I annotated 114 English and Arabic sources, including books, book chapters, journal articles, master's and doctoral dissertations, magazine and newspaper articles, annals, bulletins, and occasional papers published between 1840 and 2004. Additionally, 29 items were referenced without annotation. These 143 sources cover the Sultanate's political, social, and cultural history from 1832, when Oman's Sultan, Sayyid Said ibn Sultan, moved his capital from Muscat to Zanzibar, to the 1964 Revolution, which was not included in the initial analysis.

The bibliographic materials were arranged linguistically, chronologically, and by the authors' ethnic/national backgrounds. English sources by primarily British authors published before Zanzibar's independence were grouped in one section, English sources by Anglo-American authors published after independence in another, English sources by African and Arab authors published after independence in a third, and Arabic sources by Arab authors in a fourth. While this arrangement is imperfect, it aimed to highlight the different perspectives and potential biases of various linguistic and ethnic/national groups of authors. Consequently, I identified three main narratives of the Sultanate's history: first, an Arabophobe narrative evident in the racialized, colonialist, and British-centric perspectives of British authors contemporary to the Sultanate; second, an Arabophile narrative manifested in the nostalgic and utopian perspectives of Afro-Arab Zanzibaris contemporary to the Sultanate; and third, a critical narrative developed later by professional historians in Western, Arab, and African academia.

In that bibliographic essay, I called for rewriting the history of Africanized Arabs in Zanzibar from a deracialized perspective to bridge the divide between them and their Arabized African compatriots—a divide that began before but was exacerbated by Zanzibar's Revolution. After all, Zanzibar's Africanized Arabs and Arabized Africans were victims of a racialized interpretation of their common history. This paper aims to contribute to that effort by analyzing recent developments in the historiography of the Sultanate since my bibliographic essay was published in 2009. Specifically, I examine and annotate 28 English sources, including those referenced but not annotated in my previous work. Most of the sources in this paper were published after 2002, though a few, mostly PhD dissertations, were produced earlier. Like the previous essay, this paper focuses on the Sultanate's political, social, and cultural history between 1832 and 1964. However, unlike the previous essay, this paper investigates the racial foundations and implications of the 1964 revolution and organizes the bibliographic materials topically.

Section one provides an overview of the three narratives of the Sultanate's history discussed in my previous essay. In section two, I discuss the Arabophobe, Arabophile, and Arabo-neutral narratives of the Sultanate's domestic and foreign affairs based on the new sources analyzed in this paper. I organize the sources in

each narrative into two subsections. One subsection addresses the intermingling of domestic factors such as religion, race, language, education systems, and intercommunal relations, including relations between the elite, local population, and immigrants. The other subsection explores the Sultanate's relations with the East African Coast, the Indian Ocean regions, and imperial powers, especially Britain. In section three, I discuss the Arabophobe, Arabophile, and Arabo-neutral narratives of the Sultanate's bloody demise and living legacy. Specifically, I analyze professional historical accounts of the Zanzibar Revolution in 1964, focusing on its racial foundations and implications. In each subsection, sources are arranged chronologically and then alphabetically. In conclusion, I summarize the trends in the recent historiography of the Sultanate and Revolution concerning the three narratives and reflect on the necessity of employing authentic knowledge and experiences of Zanzibaris to rewrite the Sultanate's history and the Revolution away from the racial paradigm—a model manufactured to serve the interests of imperial powers.

Three Narratives of the Sultanate's History – A Summary

In my previous essay (Salem, 2009), I criticized the old racialist, colonialist, and British-centric perspective for separating the histories and cultures of 'Arab' and 'Indian' Zanzibaris from those of 'African' Zanzibaris. In this Arabophobe narrative, the image of Arabs as skillful traders and introducers of Islam and civilization, which had prevailed in local oral traditions, was replaced by stereotypical portrayals of Arabs as invaders and exploiters of African peoples and resources.

Arabs were typically depicted as naïve, greedy, motivated solely by their own desires, and controlled only by strict British policies favoring the oppressed Africans. It was the Europeans, particularly the British, who were portrayed as the exalted figures introducing Christianity and civilization while conquering, developing, and modernizing the country, all while saving Africans from merciless Arab slave traders. They were also hailed as champions of progress and freedom, sacrificing their lives for the cause of slaves and bringing *Pax Britannica* to East Africa. Afro-Arab resistance against British encroachment in Zanzibar and East Africa was either suppressed in this narrative or depicted as rebellion and troublemaking.

Although this Arabophobic narrative was evident in the early writings of some Western professional historians, it has receded (though never fully disappeared) alongside acute criticisms of elitist and racialized historiography in Western academia. Consequently, Western academics have begun to appreciate the positive impacts of Omani rule in Zanzibar, including the development of a literate Islamic culture that fostered scholarship and attracted teachers and students from other parts of East Africa and the Indian Ocean region. In this context, Arab and African students and researchers in Western academia have introduced new perspectives on

the Sultanate's history that are generally more equitable toward Arabs and more critical of the British, who are criticized for effectively ruling Zanzibar as a colony while repeatedly claiming that Zanzibar was an Arab state under British protection. Cultural exchanges, such as those involving the Sultan and other religious celebrations, were observed and respected by various communities (p. 306). This cultural exchange fostered a more harmonious coexistence among different religious groups in Zanzibar. Vaughan (2018, pp. 92–93) emphasizes the importance of understanding the relationships between Arabs and Africans in Zanzibar, arguing that these connections were shaped by economic and social factors rather than solely by racial or religious identities. He highlights how intermarriage and trade created bonds that transcended ethnic divisions, contributing to a unique Zanzibari identity that incorporated both Arab and African elements. By recognizing these complex relationships, Vaughan challenges the notion of a monolithic Arab influence in Zanzibar and underscores the significance of local agency in shaping the island's history.

Overall, these narratives illustrate diverse perspectives on Arab involvement in Zanzibar's history, emphasizing the need for a nuanced understanding of intercommunal relations and the multifaceted nature of identity in the region. The Great Buddha and Hindu Diwali were also celebrated in Zanzibar. He remarked that "the Ibadis and the Sunnis pray together in the same mosques, intermarry, and intermingle in every respect, without any feeling of estrangement." Even Sultan Barghash ibn Sayyid Said ibn Sultan, who was an Ibadi conservative in his youth, adopted a much more pragmatic political stance after assuming power.

Pierce (2018, p. i) addresses a common misconception of Africa as merely a destination for philanthropy rather than a source of it. He argues that the pre-colonial language and spatial orientation of cities indicate that charity was central to Swahili society and was deeply embedded within it. Consequently, the Wakf institution (Islamic charitable endowment) was embraced as a new practice rather than a rupture in coastal East Africa. During the 1800s, Wakf practices expanded rapidly across the Indian Ocean regions, fostering the development of supportive communities. It was utilized by both Omani and African elites and encouraged by the Sultans to enhance the urban infrastructure of Zanzibar's Stone Town. Subsequently, the British colonizers leveraged these longstanding notions of altruism and benevolence to bolster the colonial state.

The Sultanate's Relations with the African Coast, Indian Ocean Region, and Imperial Powers

Gilbert (1997, pp. 21-22) critiques African Studies and Africanists for their tendency to consider non-black Africans only in relation to "real," black-skinned Africans. He

describes this approach as perniciously racist, leading Africanists to question the Africanity of East African coastal communities and obscuring the significant contributions of non-black Africans to African history. Gilbert argues that the model of categorizing historical experiences by skin color is ill-suited for studying Zanzibar and the Swahili coast. Instead, Zanzibar and the coast should be viewed as economically and socially integrated within the Indian Ocean world, reflecting Zanzibar's ethnic diversity (pp. 22-23). He asserts that the Swahili identity, having incorporated many elements from the broader Indian Ocean world, is not defined by ethnicity or race. This regional identity is, in fact, more crucial than the African identity for understanding Zanzibar (pp. 26-27). In this context, Zanzibar's emergence as the primary entrepot of the East African coast should be examined as a consequence of both geography and the Sultan's legal restrictions, which limited American and European trade along the Swahili coast to his subjects (p. 51).

Turki (2010, pp. 52-53) recounts the story of Sayyid Khalid, who challenged imperial Britain at the height of its power. In 1896, the British government, which was the actual ruling authority in Zanzibar, regarded the throne inheritance issue as a purely British concern and viewed Sayyid Khalid as a liberated prince who would not comply with its orders and requests. The British military easily defeated Prince Khalid's Arab, Swahili, Comorian, and other supporters outside his palace, demonstrating Britain's steadfast determination to maintain its imperial dominance. Turki describes Sayyid Khalid as a courageous prince who fought for his and his people's rights against colonialism.

Rockel's (2012, p. 126) review of Marek Pawelczak's *The State and the Stateless: The Sultanate of Zanzibar and the East African Mainland: Politics, Economy and Society 1837-1888* highlights the increasing efforts of Zanzibar's Sultans to establish an economic, political, and legal framework on the mainland, not through direct rule but by managing relationships with African authorities and mediating their disputes. Multi-ethnic chiefdoms were nurtured as forces of order along trade routes in the narrow hinterland. Although Swahili titleholders in the central and southern mainland resisted being replaced by individuals loyal to the Sultan, Pawelczak finds that the alleged discrimination against non-Muslim traders at ports is not always substantiated (p. 127).

Arabo-Neutral Narratives: Religion and Race in the Sultanate's Intercommunal Relations

Biesen (2009, p. 314) focuses on the Omani court, suggesting that the upper social class reacts against lower social strata. He notes that the status and origin of male court members were reflected in their clothing, while all female court members, including the Sultan's wives—who were primarily of foreign origins—dressed in the

same Arab, particularly Omani, manner. According to Sayyeda Salma, daughter of Said ibn Sultan, "when a Circassian woman arrived in her ample garments, or an Abyssinian woman in her extravagant attire, within three days she had to lay aside everything and wear the Arab clothes assigned to her." This practice is explained as necessary to maintain uniformity among the Sultan's daughters and wives, reflecting the social status and aspirations of the highest social class and its international orientation (p. 328). It resulted in differentiating the female court members from the "negros" who dressed in the Swahili fashion (p. 317). Loimeier (2009, p. 11) argues that Zanzibar's political evolution from a sultanate to a protectorate and eventually to a revolutionary republic has influenced the fates of Muslim scholars, religious institutions, and Islamic education there.

Denman (2012) contends that the dominant British colonialists initiated or expanded a government school system to disseminate Western-style education, with English either as a subject of study or as the medium of instruction. Missionary groups established rescued slave schools to provide this education while serving political and strategic goals rather than purely charitable ones. These schools aimed to challenge the influence of Qur'anic institutions that dominated the educational landscape in Oman and Zanzibar. Denman focuses on two schools, including St. Andrew's College in Zanzibar, established by the Universities' Mission to Central Africa. This rescued slave school aimed to convert the tribes of Central Africa to Christianity but never attempted to convert the predominantly Muslim Zanzibaris due to the threat of imprisonment for converting from Islam to Christianity. The medium of instruction at the College switched from English to Swahili in 1873 to attract converts by offering a Western-style education in the local language. However, using Swahili as the language of instruction failed to bridge the gap between the College and local Muslim families, leading to its closure. Nevertheless, its racially African, Swahili-speaking graduates contributed to extending British rule in mainland Africa.

The Sultanate's Relations with the African Coast, Indian Ocean Region, and Imperial Powers

Frankl (2006, p. 175) narrates the story of Sayyid Khalid ibn Barghash, who sought to rule as an independent leader rather than a puppet of Britain. The Sultanate was the actual ruling power in Zanzibar. In his quest for support from Germany, he provoked opposition from the British, who ended his rebellion with violence in just three days (p. 161). Frankl suggests that Sayyid Khalid must have regretted his entanglement with the formidable British Empire.

Nicolini (2009, p. 240) argues that the perception of the Omani Sultans of Zanzibar in the 19th century as controllers of a grand and powerful mercantile empire in East

Africa and the Indian Ocean is a myth. This view is supported by the Sultans' systematic recruitment of non-Muslims, specifically Arabs and Baluch soldiers from Makran in the Gulf region, who primarily acted as mercenaries. Nicolini asserts that the Sultans heavily relied on the financial support of Asian merchants who monopolized the Gulf's pearl trade and employed slave divers in this demanding occupation (pp. 243-244). According to Nicolini, it was the British authorities who constructed the myth of a powerful Omani dynasty in the Indian Ocean. He concludes cautiously that Zanzibar was not as wealthy as often portrayed, and the Sultans did not "control" the East African coast in the modern European sense (p. 263).

Waters' (2013, p. 132) review of Beatrice Nicolini's *The First Sultan of Zanzibar: Scrambling for Trade in the Nineteenth-Century Indian Ocean* innovatively centers Oman rather than European colonial powers in the narrative of Zanzibar's foreign relations, thereby highlighting the connections between Zanzibar, Oman, and Makran in Baluchistan. Nonetheless, the narrative is still framed through the perspectives of British colonial servants. In this account, Sayyid Sa'id ibn Sultan is depicted as the orchestrator of a complex web of relationships rather than a sovereign maintaining a monopoly over military force in a specific territory. Nicolini contends that European concepts of sovereignty do not align well with the Oman-centric worldview (p. 133).

Becker (2014, p. 112) characterizes the Sultanate of Zanzibar as a Muslim power, asserting that its elites justified their rule by invoking their Islamic allegiance. He argues that Zanzibar's influence beyond the coastal towns was informal and relied on coercion, patronage, and its capacity to pay for slaves and ivory with goods. Zanzibar's impact, whether detrimental or beneficial, was felt by all (p. 115) until its retreat in the face of growing British power, which "persuaded" the Sultan to close the island's slave market and outlaw slave trading in 1873 (p. 116).

Nyeck (2017, pp.394-395) describes the Zanzibar Sultanate as an African political entity but broadens the term 'African' to include both black groups in the hinterland and Arabs who settled mainly along the Swahili coast. Consequently, only Europeans are considered foreigners. The Sultanate's extensive exchanges with the mainland and hinterland positioned it as a significant negotiator with colonial powers. Nyeck highlights the critical role of the Indian Ocean slave trade in shaping Zanzibar's economy and explains the failure of various attempts to curb the slave trade in East Africa due to the substantial revenues the Sultan generated from taxes on slave ships (pp.396-397). The Sultan's dealings with the slave trade and pirates prompted some colonial administrators to reconsider collaboration with the Mazrui family and seek new partnerships with other groups in the hinterland (p.398).

Prestholdt (2017, p.136) argues that Sayyid Said ibn Sultan secured the allegiance of most Swahili city-states through conquest or other means after relocating the

capital of his sultanate to Zanzibar in 1840. He cites a notable Zanzibari describing the Sultanate during Sultan Barghash's reign as ‘the fountain of money.’ Imported household goods and exported Muscati cloth provide clear evidence of the Sultanate’s engagement with a transoceanic symbolic system beyond East Africa (p.137). Its economic vitality attracted both seasonal and permanent migrants from across the Indian Ocean (p.138). Its cultural, linguistic, and religious influence remained significant long after its economic status declined (p.149).

The Historiography of the Sultanate’s Bloody Demise and Legacy

An Arabo-Neutral Narrative

Burgess (2001, p.6) notes that the hierarchical yet reciprocal patron-client economic relations that mitigated race and class animosities between Arabs and Africans before WWII weakened after the War. Most Africans believed that if Arabs assumed power after the British withdrawal, they would not reform Zanzibar's historic race and class inequalities. However, he contends that the Revolution was not a racial conflict; it involved a collaboration of African and Arab youth (p.v). Influenced by nationalist, Muslim, or socialist discourses, youth from all races, classes, and neighborhoods organized politically to address race and class inequalities (pp.7-8). Breaking from a strong tradition of racial solidarity among Arabs, younger Arabs in the capital formed their own political party and supported leaders of the Youth League of the Afro-Shirazi Party in their plans to instigate the Revolution (p.14). Many Arab youth sought autonomy from the political interests of their elders and identified more with African economic grievances than with their community’s strong race-class solidarity (pp.103-4). Their socialist Umma Party was neither African nor Arab, rich nor poor, educated nor illiterate; rather, it was a small, genuinely multiracial party identified by generation as a movement of vanguard youth (p.157). Thus, the Revolution was based on networks of youth crossing racial, political, and neighborhood boundaries (p.158). Sheriff (2001, p.301) refutes the prevailing interpretation of the 1964 revolution as a result of coinciding race and class on the isles, arguing that the African majority overthrew an Arab landowning minority. Observing the persistent political unrest and deep political divisions in post-revolution Zanzibar, he finds that the Revolution did not adequately resolve social and political contradictions; in some ways, they have been exacerbated. Sheriff traces these social and political fault lines back to Zanzibar’s history, particularly the colonial period, arguing that colonial powers stifled the resolution of social and political contradictions.

Before colonialism, Zanzibar was the capital of a commerce-based empire with a plantation economy. The racial paradigm developed during the colonial period categorized the merchant class mainly as Indians and the landowner class as Arabs,

while Africans served as slaves or urban workers. However, this paradigm overlooks the significant economic and social transformations each ethnic group underwent due to colonial rule and ignores the differentiation within these ethnic categories. Even before colonialism, the racial-cum-class social structure was not clear-cut; many Omanis and other Arabs migrated to Zanzibar to work as porters or run small shops, while many Indians became small shopkeepers or clerks with larger Indian firms or remained impoverished as washermen. Among Africans, free indigenous people were clearly distinguished from slaves imported for clove plantations (pp.301-2). An indigenous peasant class emerged alongside the decline of heavily indebted Arab landowners, and these groups developed common interests and political outlooks across ethnic lines (p.303).

Sheriff defines ethnicity sociologically, as a group consciousness based on perceived common cultural characteristics. In Zanzibar's cosmopolitan population, ethnicities were fluid, allowing for constant assimilation and reidentification through frequent intermarriages. Thus, an ethnic perspective is misleading (p.310) and fails to explain the complex combination of race and class in Zanzibar on the eve of independence, where rising Zanzibari nationalism did not bridge the deep social divide, leading to the civil war known as the 1964 Revolution (p.313). In Pemba Island, those killed were not the large Arab landowners, most of whom lived in Zanzibar town, but entire families of poor Arab shopkeepers in rural areas (p.314). While the Revolution aimed to dismantle the landowning and merchant classes, Abdul Sheriff concludes that it exacerbated the imbalance between town and country (p.315).

Shivji (2008, p.41) critiques claims that the 1964 Revolution leader, Okello, conceived, planned, and executed the revolution influenced by a biblical figure, Gideon. The revolutionary leadership was not guided by any political theory or military strategy; rather, it was driven by racial hatred against 'Arab' oppression (p.45). Consequently, it massacred many Arabs in peripheral and rural areas, detaining and deporting them to Muscat (p.52). While Pemba did not participate in the insurrection, revolutionaries arrested or humiliated Arabs and Asians (p.53). Julius Nyerere, the president of the ensuing union between Zanzibar and Tanganyika, blamed Britain for the Revolution and viewed the ousted Sultan as a descendant of invading rulers supported by a feudal aristocracy. He framed the Revolution as a struggle for independence by an African majority against an Arab minority, overlooking the fact that the majority was divided between Africans of mainland origin and indigenous Shirazis (pp.66-67). Loyalists of his ruling party, CCM, continue to accuse the main opposition party, CUF, of planning to restore hated Arab rule upon gaining power (p.62).

Glassman (2011, pp.289-290) criticizes textbooks and popular Swahili novels that portray Zanzibar's history as one where classes and races coincided, depicting

the 1964 Revolution as a classic revolt of the landless peasantry and working classes against the landed aristocracy. He argues this Marxist narrative has enabled Tanzania's ruling party, CCM, to shift its long-standing racial rhetoric into class discourse, vilifying Arabs and Indians as feudalists and merchant capitalists, respectively, and as collaborators with Omani-British colonialism. CCM has repeatedly accused the opposition of supporting pan-Arabism and attempting to restore Arab rule and Omani feudalism. Political debates over Zanzibar's diplomatic orientation and joining the Organization of Islamic Cooperation have furthered the perception of CCM and the union of Tanzania itself as part of a plot against Islam (pp.294-295). Glassman contends that using the revolution as a reference point in partisan rhetoric fuels political tensions around imagined incompatibilities of self and other. For over a generation, Zanzibar's rulers and their opposition have justified their positions with the language of racial nativism, with each party accusing the other of being alien (pp.297-299). This debate, Glassman notes, originated early in the colonial period as scholars defined Swahili culture as neither African nor Arab, nor as both, yet their understanding was framed by the racial binary of African versus Arab (p.300).

Fouéré (2012) analyzes opinion articles in Zanzibar's *Dira* newspaper that reinterpret the Revolution and link it to contemporary politics. One article criticizes Tanzania's first president, Nyerere, for characterizing Zanzibar's past as defined by an all-Arab inhumane slave trade and domination over black Africans. He insisted that Zanzibar's Arab-Islamic cosmopolitan Swahili cultural identity, which dissociated Zanzibaris from the African continent, must yield to a black Mainland-centered culture. In state rhetoric, a true Zanzibari refers specifically to a black Zanzibari, while the term 'African' encompasses both the indigenous Shirazi population and the later-arrived black Mainlanders—hence the name of the ruling Afro-Shirazi Party. Conversely, opposition rhetoric minimizes the role of Arab and Swahili merchants in the slave trade, emphasizing instead the impact of intermarriages and the social integration of slaves within Zanzibar society. This rhetoric equates the 19th-century Omani Sultanate with an era of true independence characterized by social harmony, economic prosperity, and political prestige, portraying the Revolution as an illegitimate 'invasion' by Mainland foreigners. Some Arab refugees in Oman and Dubai highlight the selective nature of the massacres, framing the Revolution as ethnic cleansing or genocide.

An Arabophobic Narrative

Fouéré (2014) examines the vitriolic rhetoric against the mainland and Tanzania's first president, Nyerere, in contemporary Zanzibar. She describes anti-Nyererism as chauvinism rooted in local racial ideologies, reflecting a cultural-religious paradigm that distinguishes the civilized Muslim nobility of the coast from the barbarian

unbelievers of the mainland. Nyerere is accused of destroying Zanzibar's economy, which relied on transnational trading networks, and of undermining Zanzibari culture, perceived as excessively Arabized and Islamized. Additionally, he is portrayed as an ignorant Christian Mainlander, in stark contrast to the idealized educated Muslim Zanzibari. Fouéré argues that contemporary grievances stem from unfulfilled promises of self-rule and economic development within the union, contrasting a bitter present with a glorified past of the Omani Sultanate. Anti-Nyererism is publicly suppressed, as the state has blocked all avenues for memory transmission and imposed its own historical narrative, merging African nationalism with racialism. Accordingly, the Revolution is framed as a popular uprising that overthrew an illegitimate monarchy that perpetuated Omani oppression and denied Africans their sovereignty for centuries. In contrast, today's separatist groups regard Zanzibar's independence in 1963 as the culmination of a century-long maturation process and a local nationalism they associate with real or imagined Arabness.

Mathews (2016, p. 3) asserts that his dissertation is the first comprehensive historical analysis of the Zinjibari diaspora, defined as a group of Arabs, primarily Omani citizens, who speak Swahili, maintain deep ties to Zanzibar, and envision themselves as subjects of a once-great empire stretching from Zanzibar to the Congo. Mathews describes the Zinjibaris as colonizers, settlers, and exploiters of East Africa, whose elite retains a consciousness of themselves as descendants of sovereign rulers of African coastal domains (pp. 75-76). The Zinjibari returnees from Africa perceive themselves as carriers of an "interrupted modernity," referencing a heroic two-hundred-year struggle to establish an Omani, Arab, and Muslim empire that unified all of East Africa from eastern Congo to the Indian Ocean (p. 77).

Conclusions

This paper demonstrates that both Arabophobe and Arabophile accounts of Zanzibar's Sultanate remain influential, each comprising over a quarter of reviewed works, though more critical and methodologically rigorous than earlier pre-independence writings. The Arabophobe narrative persists in works such as Vincent's (1965) portrayal of Arabs as long-standing colonial elites, Constantin's (1989) emphasis on African subjugation, Croucher's (2006) depiction of Omani rulers as colonialists, and Hashim's (2006) allegation of Arab collaboration with Britain. More recent examples, such as Rhodes, Breen, and Forsythe (2015) and Cheriau (2021), continue to frame the Sultans as colonizers or defend humanitarian imperialism through exaggerated claims about Zanzibar's role in the global slave trade. By contrast, the Arabophile narrative highlights positive contributions of the Sultanate, such as Welliver's (1990) defense of clove cultivation policies, Gilbert's (1997) affirmation of Afro-Arab identity, Turki's (2010) praise of Khalid ibn Barghash's anti-colonial struggle, and Pierce's (2018) acknowledgment of the elites'

role in endowments and infrastructure. Arabo-neutral accounts adopt a more balanced lens, addressing themes of class, gender, religion, and economic exchange, as seen in Biesen (2009), Denman (2012), Nicolini (2009), Becker (2014), Prestholdt (2017), and Nyeck (2017).

Most scholars examining the 1964 Revolution reject purely racial interpretations, instead incorporating class, generation, ideology, and colonial transformations (Sheriff 2001; Burgess 2001; Shivji 2008). Yet the racial paradigm continues to resurface in both scholarship and politics, from Fouéré's (2014) linking of anti-Nyererism to cultural chauvinism, to Mathews' (2016) depiction of Omanis as colonizers. Politicians, too, instrumentalize race, either emphasizing Zanzibar's Arab-Islamic cosmopolitanism against a mainland-centered African identity or framing the Revolution as an illegitimate invasion (Glassman 2011; Fouéré 2012). While race remains politically charged, historians increasingly argue for moving beyond colonial binaries of "African" versus "Arab." Instead, Zanzibar's history should be rewritten through the authentic experiences of Zanzibaris themselves, reflecting a Swahili cultural identity that is both African and Arab

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