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Africanized Arabs and Arabized Africans in Zanzibar's Sultanate and Revolution:
Reflections on Three Narratives and Updated Bibliographic Essay

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Abstract

This essay analyzes the historiography of Zanzibar's political, social, and cultural aspects from 1832, when an Omani Sultan moved his capital from Muscat to Zanzibar, to 1964, when a bloody revolution overthrew the Zanzibar Sultanate, resulting in the massacre of thousands of Arabs and Arabized Africans one month after Zanzibar's independence. Building on my earlier study of the historiography of Zanzibar's Sultanate, this essay distinguishes between three narratives of that history found primarily in Western academic works, particularly in English publications: first, an Arabophobe narrative rooted in racialized, colonial, and British-centric perspectives primarily by British authors regarding the Sultanate; second, an Arabophile narrative that reflects the nostalgic or utopian views of Afro-Arab Zanzibaris about the Sultanate; and third, an Arabo-neutral narrative.

The examined sources cover various topics, including language, education, religion, race, elite life, and inter-communal relations within the Sultanate, particularly among the elite, local population, and immigrants. It explores the Sultanate's relationships with the East African Coast, the Indian Ocean region, and imperial powers, especially Britain. The essay also investigates sources that study the racial foundations and implications of the 1964 revolution. It concludes with a call for rewriting the history of the Sultanate to exclude the racial paradigm—a pre-constructed model—manufactured to serve imperial interests. Scholars must draw on the authentic knowledge and experiences of Zanzibaris to accurately reflect Zanzibar's distinct Swahili cultural identity, which encompasses both African and Arab elements.

Introduction

In my previous work on the historiography of the Sultanate of Zanzibar (Salem, 2009), I identified three narratives of the Sultanate's history: Arabophobe, Arabophile, and critical narratives. This essay aims to further this direction by analyzing recent developments in the historiography of the Sultanate. Unlike the previous essay, this one examines the racial

foundations and implications of the 1964 revolution and is distinguished by its topical arrangement of bibliographic materials.

Three Narratives of the Sultanate's History – A Summary

In my previous essay (Salem, 2009), I criticized old racist, colonialist, and British-centric perspectives for separating the histories and cultures of 'Arab' and 'Indian' Zanzibaris from those of 'African' Zanzibaris. In this Arabophobe narrative, Arabs are portrayed as invaders and exploiters of African peoples and their resources. Arabs are often depicted as naïve and greedy, driven by personal desires and interests, and only restrained by strict British policies favoring Africans. Afro-Arab resistance to British encroachment in Zanzibar and East Africa is either suppressed in this narrative or rendered as rebellious groups and troublemakers. The narrative of Arabophobia retreated in response to severe criticisms of elitist and racially-minded Western historiographers. Consequently, Western academics began to recognize the positive impacts of Omani rule in Zanzibar. Early Arab and Afro-Arab authors were motivated by the need to counter Arabophobic narratives and emphasize the civilizational achievements of Arabs in East Africa. Following the demise of the Sultanate, Arab professional historians also sought to refute Arabophobic narratives. While professional Arab historians initially relied heavily on Western documents, records, and academic writings, they gradually became critical of these sources, recognizing the need to incorporate Arabic and African sources as well.

The Historiography of the Sultanate's Domestic and Foreign Affairs

a) Arabophobe Narratives

Religion and Race in the Sultanate's Intercommunal Relations

Hashim (2006, p. 1) asserts that British colonizers and Arabs collaborated to further their common economic and social interests at the expense of Africans, thus increasing anti-Arab animosity among Africans. They urged Zanzibar scholars to move beyond discussions of racial differences and adopt a linguistic approach to study communal cleavages in East Africa (p.10). She notes that under the British protectorate, Arabic and English played essential economic and bureaucratic roles, elevating their status while relegating Swahili speakers to the lowest occupations (p.2). However, Hashim acknowledges that the British were the main beneficiaries of this policy. While they strategically co-opted Arabs as political representatives due to their earlier dominance, the British abandoned the former Omani social engineering approach, which had positioned Arabs as the ruling class and Indians as the dominant economic class, ultimately degrading both groups. Despite Britain's claim that Zanzibar was an Arab state governed solely by Arabs, tensions arose between the British and Arab rulers over certain policies, including education (p.12).

Rhodes, Breen, and Forsythe (2015, p.353) characterize the Omani Sultans as a colonizing force over the Swahilis in Zanzibar and the mainland coast, regardless of their

shared Islamic faith. They support this perspective by referencing archaeological remains of elite palace sites, which reveal the development and gradual decline of Omani political control. They view elite buildings as institutions employing various strategies to recruit members, integrating kinship, economics, religion, and politics into everyday practices (p.336). Unable to challenge European interests, the Sultans withdrew from palace life to urban centers. As rising powers, Britain and Germany redesigned harbors and towns in ways that reflected their usurpation of authority and subjugation of the local population (p.354).

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

Vincent (1965, pp.1-4) labels Arabs and Muslims as 'colonialists' who migrated to Zanzibar over twelve centuries. She argues that Zanzibar has never been considered an integral part of East Africa due to its Arab sultanate, ethnically diverse population, and Islamic culture. In contrast to the African mainland, Zanzibar had historical national sovereignty, a sense of unity beyond ethnicities, and a distinct civilization. During the period known as *Wakati wa Siasa* (time of politics) between 1956 and 1963, a conflict emerged between Zanzibari nationalism and Black African nationalism (p.5). Nevertheless, she acknowledges that Zanzibari nationalism was upheld by indigenous Africans who redefined themselves as the original owners of the islands, distinguishing themselves from the increasing number of immigrants from the African mainland. They claimed Shirazi (i.e., Persian) origins to emphasize their connection to Arabs, who held the highest status in Zanzibar (p.18).

Constantin (1989, pp.145-146) argues that Arab domination over the coastal peoples of East Africa did not signify any ideological or social hegemony; thus, it failed to integrate various ethnic, racial, or national groups into a cohesive community. He makes the contradictory claim that Arab domination was stable, both physically and ideologically, providing a basis for social order and hierarchical classification along cultural and racial lines (p.148). Constantin acknowledges that this hierarchy was complicated by intermarriage, opportunism, and close ties to Arab masters, resulting in a gradation of status, social deference, and self-esteem between 'pure,' wealthy, and militarily powerful Arab Muslims and a 'despised' category of mainlanders. Hierarchical practices also arose from the unequal distribution of symbolic and material resources. Croucher (2006, p.39) describes the Omani rule of Zanzibar as 'colonial' in the 19th century. She argues that Zanzibar developed due to its participation in global economic activities, despite the governance of Said bin Sultan. However, she disagrees with early British historians who viewed the personal role of Said bin Sultan as key to Zanzibar's success, aligning instead with Zanzibari economic historian Abdul Sheriff, who contends that Zanzibar became the center of a vast merchant capitalist empire due to major changes in world history and the development of long-distance caravan routes across the East African mainland, which occurred under only nominal Zanzibari control (pp.53-54).

Cheriau (2021, pp.4-5) implicitly defends imperialism by linking it to humanitarianism. He views British colonialism in Zanzibar as a humanitarian intervention crucial for the struggle against the slave trade, an issue that shaped international relations in the late 19th century and laid the groundwork for international law in the 20th century. Abolitionists in Europe became increasingly interested in Zanzibar in the latter half of the 19th century, as it emerged as the largest slave market in East Africa and the Indian Ocean, if not the entire world, following the American Civil War (p.6). Cheriau traces the concept of humanitarian imperialism, which he finds useful for analyzing European anti-slave trade operations around Zanzibar. Coined after the abolition movement transformed the meaning of colonization (pp.6-7), this concept waned in the 1960s as colonization became synonymous with oppression and slavery.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Marxist historians, including Zanzibar's Abdul Sheriff, denounced British humanitarianism as a façade for imperialism and a convenient means for "the penetration of British influence and power into East Africa under a humanitarian guise" (pp.7-8). Nevertheless, Cheriau notes that many historians now prefer to neither condemn nor justify imperialism or humanitarianism when examining abolitionism (pp.8-9). Although his research primarily draws on European archives, he claims to avoid a Eurocentric approach. He argues that a perpetual power struggle existed between abolitionists on one side and officials and politicians of imperialist governments on the other (p.12), and that the relationship between humanitarianism and imperialism played a crucial role in shaping European colonial expansion (p.14).

b) Arabophile Narratives

Religion and Race in the Sultanate's Intercommunal Relations

Welliver (1990, pp. 13-15) contributes to the debate on how Arab planters acquired land in Zanzibar. He refutes the assumption that the Omanis forced the indigenous population to vacate the area, noting that the current villages of the indigenous population are both ancient and situated on the poorest land of the islands. He argues that slave labor likely enabled early planters to clear the predominantly forested land and plant their trees, thus establishing an effective claim to that land. Additionally, he views Sayyid Said ibn Sultan's policy of cultivating cloves as a rational response to British actions against the slave trade (p. 11). This policy marked the transition of Zanzibar into a transit-trade, cash-crop, export-oriented economy, ultimately making it the world's largest clove producer (p. 8). To support this policy, Omani provincial officials gradually replaced the islands' local intermediaries and indigenous administrative systems (p. 10).

Hoffman (2015, p. 304) provides ample examples of religious tolerance among both Zanzibaris and Omani rulers. For instance, Sayyid Said ibn Sultan, himself an Ibadi, never propagated Ibadism; instead, he invited Sunni scholars to Zanzibar and appointed judges for each Islamic legal school. A scholar from that era wrote in his memoirs that the Prophet's Birthday, Christmas, the Birthday of the Great Buddha, and the Hindu Diwali were all celebrated in Zanzibar. He also 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, an Ibadi conservative in his youth, adopted a more pragmatic political attitude after coming to power. Pierce (2018, p. i) dispels the common misconception that Africa is primarily a destination for philanthropy, rather than a source. He argues that the pre-colonial language and spatial orientation of cities show that charity was centered within Swahili society, with practices embedded in its culture. Thus, the Wakf institution (Muslim charitable endowment) was welcomed as a new practice, not a rupture, in coastal East Africa. During the 1800s, Wakf practices expanded rapidly across the Indian Ocean regions, fostering sympathetic communities. It was utilized by both Omani and African elites and encouraged by the Sultans to build the urban infrastructure of Zanzibar’s Stone Town. Subsequently, British colonizers appropriated these notions of altruism and benevolence to support the colonial state.

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

Gilbert (1997, pp. 21-22) criticizes African Studies and Africanists for their tendency to address non-black Africans only in relation to ‘real,’ black-skinned Africans. He describes this approach as perniciously racist, casting doubt on the Africanity of East African coastal communities and obscuring the significant contributions of non-black Africans to African history. Gilbert contends that using skin color to categorize historical experience is ill-suited for studying Zanzibar and the Swahili coast. Instead, he emphasizes that Zanzibar and the coast should be understood as economically and socially integrated within the Indian Ocean world, highlighting Zanzibar’s ethnic diversity (pp. 22-23). As the Swahili identity incorporated elements from the broader Indian Ocean world, the argument posits that it is not merely a function of ethnicity or race. This regional identity, he asserts, is far more significant than African identity in understanding Zanzibar’s essence (pp. 26-27). In this context, Zanzibar’s emergence as the primary entrepot of the East African coast should be examined as a result of both geography and the Sultan’s legal compulsion, which restricted American and European trade on the Swahili coast to his subjects (p. 51).

Turki (2010, pp. 52-53) recounts the story of Sayyid Khalid, who defied the might of imperial Britain at the height of its power. In 1896, the British government, the actual ruler of Zanzibar, viewed the throne inheritance issue as a purely British concern and regarded Sayyid Khalid as a liberated prince who would not comply with their orders. The British military easily defeated Prince Khalid’s Arab, Swahili, Comorian, and other supporters outside his palace, demonstrating Britain’s firm determination to maintain its imperial hegemony. Turki describes Sayyid Khalid as a brave prince who fought against colonialism for his and his people’s rights. 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 Sultans to develop 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 fostered as forces of order along trade routes in the narrow hinterland. Although Swahili titleholders in the central and southern mainland resisted replacement by men loyal to the Sultan, Pawelczak finds that allegations of discrimination against non-Muslim traders at ports are not always substantiated (p. 127).

c) Arabo-Neutral Narratives

Religion and Race in the Sultanate's Intercommunal Relations

Biesen (2009, p. 314), focusing on the Omani court, notes that the upper social class reacts against socially lower layers. He observes 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 mainly of foreign origin, dressed in a uniform Arab, particularly Omani, style. According to Sayyeda Salma, daughter of Said ibn Sultan, "when a Circassian woman arrived in her ample attire or an Abyssinian woman in her fantastic clothes, within three days she had to lay aside everything and wear the Arab clothes assigned to her." This practice was deemed necessary for maintaining uniformity among the Sultan's daughters and wives and reflects the social aspirations of the highest social tier and its international orientation (p. 328). It resulted in a distinction between the female court members and 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 a revolutionary republic—has significantly impacted the destinies of Muslim scholars, religious institutions, and Islamic education in the region.

Denman (2012) contends that the dominant British colonialists initiated or expanded a government school system to spread Western-style education, where English served either as a subject or a medium of instruction. Missionary groups established rescued slave schools to provide such education while serving political and strategic, rather than purely charitable, goals. 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 changed 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 the College's 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) recounts the story of Sayyid Khalid ibn Barghash, who sought to rule the sultanate as an independent leader rather than as a puppet of Britain, the actual ruling power in Zanzibar. In seeking support from Germany, he provoked opposition and retaliation from the British, who quashed his attempt violently within three days (p. 161). Sayyid Khalid was exiled, and according to Frankl, he must have regretted confronting the formidable British Empire. Nicolini (2009, p. 240) asserts that the perception of the Omani Sultans of Zanzibar in the 19th century as controllers of a 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, particularly Baluch soldiers from Makran in the Gulf region, who mainly served as mercenaries, along with the Sultans' heavy reliance 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). Nicolini argues that it was the British authorities who constructed the myth of a powerful Omani dynasty in the Indian Ocean. He cautiously concludes that Zanzibar was not as rich as commonly perceived and that 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 on Oman rather than the European colonial powers in the narrative of Zanzibar's foreign relations, highlighting the relationships between Zanzibar, Oman, and Makran in Baluchistan. However, the narrative is still told through the perspectives of British colonial servants. In this context, Sayyid Sa'id ibn Sultan is portrayed as the master of a web of far-flung relationships, rather than a sovereign maintaining a monopoly over military force in a specific territory. Nicolini argues that European concepts of sovereignty are a poor fit for the Oman-centric world relationship (p.133). Becker (2014, p.112) describes the sultanate of Zanzibar as a Muslim power, noting that its elites justified their rule by invoking their Islamic allegiance. He contends that Zanzibar's hegemony beyond the coastal towns was informal and relied on coercion, patronage, and its ability to pay for slaves and ivory with goods. Zanzibar's influence, whether harmful or beneficial, was felt by all (p.115) until it retreated with the increased power of the British, who 'persuaded' the sultan to close the island's slave market and outlaw slave trading in 1873 (p.116).

Nyeck (2017, pp.394-395) characterizes the Zanzibar Sultanate as an African political entity, but he deracializes the term 'African,' using it to refer to both black groups in the hinterland and Arabs who settled mainly along the Swahili coast. Consequently, only Europeans are treated as foreigners. The Sultanate's network of exchanges with the mainland and hinterland allowed it to emerge as a significant negotiator that colonial powers had to address. Nyeck emphasizes the influential role of the Indian Ocean slave trade in shaping Zanzibar's economy and explains the failure of several attempts to curb the slave trade in East Africa due to the substantial revenues the Sultan derived from taxes

levied on slave ships (pp.396-397). The Sultan's double dealings with the slave trade and pirates led some colonial administrators to reconsider the Mazrui family's offer of collaboration and to seek new partnerships with other groups in the hinterland (p.398). Prestholdt (2017, p.136) argues that Sayyid Said ibn Sultan gained the allegiance of most Swahili city-states through conquest or other means after moving the capital of his sultanate to Zanzibar in 1840. He quotes a notable Zanzibari who described the Sultanate during the reign of Sultan Barghash as 'the fountain of money.' Evidence of the Sultanate's engagement with a transoceanic symbolic system beyond East Africa can be seen in imported household goods and exported Muscati cloth (p.137). Its economic vitality attracted seasonal and permanent migrants from all Indian Ocean regions (p.138). The cultural, linguistic, and religious impact of the Sultanate remained significant long after its economic status diminished (p.149).

The Historiography of the Sultanate's Bloody Demise and Legacy

a) An Arabo-Neutral Narrative

Burgess (2001, p.6) notes that the system of hierarchical but reciprocal patron-client economic relations that mitigated race and class animosities between Arabs and Africans before WWII was weakened after the war. Most Africans believed that if Arabs assumed power following 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 was executed through a collaboration of African and Arab youth (p.v). Influenced by nationalist, Muslim, or socialist discourses, youth of all races, classes, and neighborhoods organized politically to overthrow 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 assisted 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 racial and class solidarity (pp.103-4). Their socialist Umma Party was neither strictly African nor Arab, rich nor poor, educated nor illiterate; rather, it was a small, genuinely multiracial party recognized by generations 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 racial and class conflicts on the islands. He argues that the African majority overthrew an Arab landowning minority. Observing the recurring political unrest and the persistence of deep political divisions in post-revolution Zanzibar, he finds that the Revolution did not adequately address social and political contradictions; instead, these contradictions have been exacerbated in some ways. Sheriff traces the social and political fault lines in society back to Zanzibar's history, particularly the period of colonial rule, arguing that the colonial power did not allow these contradictions to be fully expressed.

Before colonialism, Zanzibar was the capital of an empire based on commerce and a plantation economy. According to the racial paradigm developed during the colonial period, the merchant and landowner classes were predominantly composed of Indians and Arabs, respectively, while Africans served as slaves or urban workers. However, this paradigm overlooks the fundamental economic and social transformations each ethnic group underwent due to colonial rule. It also ignores the differentiation within each of these ethnic categories. For instance, many

Omanis and other Arabs migrated to Zanzibar to work as porters or open small shops, while many Indians established themselves as small shopkeepers or clerks in larger Indian firms or remained poor washermen. Among Africans, free indigenous people were clearly distinguished from the slaves imported to work on the clove plantations (pp.301-2). An indigenous peasant class emerged with the decline of heavily indebted Arab landowners, and these two groups developed common interests and political outlooks that crossed ethnic lines (p.303). Sheriff defines ethnicity sociologically, not biologically, as a group consciousness based on perceived common cultural characteristics. In Zanzibar's cosmopolitan population, ethnicities were not fixed, and their boundaries allowed for constant assimilation and reidentification through frequent intermarriages or other means. Thus, an ethnic view is misleading (p.310) and incapable of explaining the fundamental contradiction in Zanzibar on the eve of independence—namely, the complex interplay of race and class in a cosmopolitan society. The rising Zanzibari nationalism was insufficient to overcome the deep social divide, leading to the civil war known as the 1964 Revolution (p.313). In Pemba Island, in particular, those killed were not the large Arab landowners, most of whom were absentees living in Zanzibar town, but entire families of poor Arab shopkeepers in rural areas (p.314). While the Revolution destroyed the landowning and merchant classes, Abdul Sheriff concludes that it exacerbated the imbalance between town and country (p.315).

Shivji (2008, p.41) ridicules claims that the 1964 Revolution leader, Okello, conceived, planned, and executed the revolution based on guidance from a biblical character named Gideon. The revolutionary leadership was not driven by any political theory or military strategy; rather, it was fueled by anger against perceived 'Arab' oppression (p.45). Consequently, many Arabs were massacred in peripheral and rural areas, and some were detained and shipped 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 resulting union between Zanzibar and Tanganyika, blamed Britain for the Revolution, viewing the ousted Sultan as a descendant of invading rulers supported by a feudal aristocracy. He characterized the Revolution as a fight 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 the despised Arab rule if they come to power (p.62).

Glassman (2011, pp. 289-290) criticizes textbooks on politics and popular Swahili novels that portray Zanzibar's history as one in which class and race intersected, depicting the 1964 Revolution as a classic revolt of the landless peasantry and working classes against the landed aristocracy. He notes that this Marxist propaganda only assisted Tanzania's ruling party, CCM, in transforming its long-standing racial rhetoric into class discourse. Consequently, it vilified Arabs and Indians as feudalists and merchant capitalists, respectively, and as complicit in Omani-British colonialism. CCM has consistently accused the opposition of supporting pan-Arabism and seeking to restore Arab rule and Omani feudalism. Debates over Zanzibar's diplomatic orientation and joining the Organization of Islamic Cooperation have further extended the view of CCM and the union of Tanzania as part of a conspiracy against Islam (pp. 294-295). Glassman argues that using the revolution as a reference point in partisan rhetoric has led to political tensions regarding perceived inherent incompatibilities of self and other. Thus, for over a generation, both Zanzibar's rulers and their opposition have justified their positions using the language of racial nativism, with each side accusing the other of being alien (pp. 297-299). This debate, he notes, originated early in the colonial period when scholars defined Swahili culture as neither African nor Arab, nor as both; their understanding of it was shaped 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 framing Zanzibar's past as characterized by an all-Arab inhumane slave trade and domination over black Africans. It argues 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 is defined as a black Zanzibari, with the term 'African' referring to both the indigenous Shirazi population and the later-arrived black Mainlanders—hence the name of the ruling Afro-Shirazi Party. In contrast, opposition rhetoric downplays the responsibility of Arab and Swahili merchants in the slave trade, emphasizing the impact of intermarriages and the social integration of slaves into Zanzibar society. This narrative equates the 19th-century Omani Sultanate with an era of true independence marked by social harmony, economic prosperity, and political prestige. Thus, the Revolution is portrayed as an illegitimate 'invasion' of Mainland foreigners in opposition rhetoric. Some Arab refugees in Oman and Dubai continue to highlight the deliberate and selective nature of the massacres, describing the Revolution as ethnic cleansing or genocide.

b) An Arabophobe Narrative

Fouéré (2014) examines the angry rhetoric directed against the mainland and Tanzania's first president, Nyerere, in contemporary Zanzibar. She describes anti-Nyererism as a form of chauvinism steeped in local, deep-rooted racial thought, reflecting a cultural-religious paradigm that distinguishes the civilized Muslim nobility of the coast from the barbaric unbelievers of the mainland. Nyerere is accused of devastating Zanzibar's economy of

transnational trading networks and the Zanzibari culture, which is deemed too Arabized and Islamized for his tastes. He is further portrayed as an ignorant Christian Mainlander—the antithesis of the idealized educated Muslim Zanzibari. Fouéré asserts that today's grievances stem from unfulfilled promises of self-rule and economic development in the union, contrasting a bitter present with a romanticized past of the Omani Sultanate. Anti-Nyererism is publicly suppressed, as the state has blocked all public channels of memory transmission and imposed a historical narrative that combines African nationalism and racialism. Accordingly, the Revolution is depicted as a popular uprising that ousted an illegitimate monarchy that perpetuated Omani oppression and denied Africans their right to sovereignty for centuries. In contrast, today's separatist groups view 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) claims 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 characterizes the Zinjibaris as colonizers, settlers, and exploiters of East Africa, whose elite retain a consciousness of being descendants of sovereign rulers of African coastal domains (pp. 75-76). Zinjibari returnees from Africa perceive themselves as carriers of an “interrupted modernity,” referring to 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).

Conclusion

This essay demonstrates that the Arabophobe and Arabophile narratives regarding the history of Zanzibar's Sultanate are far from fading, with each representing over one-quarter of the reviewed materials, while the remaining half is Arab-neutral. However, these narratives have become more critical, and their research methods more professional than those of the earlier Arabophobe and Arabophile materials produced before Zanzibar's independence—issues explored in my previous bibliographic essay. Most historians who have studied the overthrow of Zanzibar's Sultanate in 1964 find the racial interpretation of the Revolution insufficient. They deconstruct racial narratives and construct alternative interpretations by incorporating other factors such as generation, class, ideology, and domestic politics. Despite the shortcomings of the racial approach, its Arabophobic narrative has resurfaced recently. Therefore, it is not surprising that Zanzibari politicians continue to emphasize its racial dimension to serve their own interests.

According to Glassman (2011), Zanzibar's rulers and their opposition have justified their positions for over a generation using the language of racial nativism, with each side accusing the other of being alien. On one hand, official rhetoric insists that Zanzibar's cultural identity—described as Arab-Islamic, cosmopolitan, and Swahili—dissociates

Zanzibaris from the African continent and must give way to a black Mainland-centered culture. On the other hand, diasporic and opposition rhetoric views the Revolution as an illegitimate ‘invasion’ of Mainland foreigners (Fouéré, 2012). While contemporary politicians in Zanzibar are unlikely to downplay the influence of race in its history, historians of Zanzibar’s Sultanate have recently begun exploring new avenues for studying its history by emphasizing other factors. Historians are therefore encouraged to approach the Sultanate’s history in nonracial terms, moving away from the binary of African versus Arab that colonial scholars employed to characterize the inhabitants of coastal towns (Glassman, 2011, p. 300). Writings about Zanzibar’s history must be grounded in the authentic knowledge and experiences of Zanzibaris, rather than being forced into a racial paradigm designed to serve imperial interests. Instead, they should reflect Zanzibar’s unique Swahili cultural identity, which encompasses both African and Arab elements.

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