

any awareness of the potency and persistence of constructs and ascriptions born from vested interests.

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COLONIAL MESSINESS IN A RACIALIZED CITYSCAPE

TAIFA: Making Nation and Race in Urban Tanzania.

By James R. Brennan.

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TAIFA is James Brennan's compelling meditation on Tanganyikan nationalism seen through the lens of relations between diasporic Indians and indigenous Africans in colonial and early postcolonial Dar es Salaam. Brennan is regarded as one of the most careful researchers of his generation of Tanzania scholars and his book has been long anticipated. It does not disappoint. As important as it is to the rapidly growing field of scholarship on South Asian diasporas in Africa, *TAIFA* also achieves a substantial revision of the standard account of nationalism in Tanganyika.

Casting the book as 'a historical study of nation and race', Brennan productively insists on approaching both terms (combined in the Kiswahili word *taifa*) as 'modes of thought rather than as elements of social structure'. This analytic move is not a new one in broader colonial and postcolonial scholarship, but the way Brennan carries it out here is exemplary. *TAIFA* combines methodologies drawn from social, political, and intellectual history in a manner that is as enriching as it is rare. This holistic approach is highlighted in the book's organization, which charts back and forth between government policy battles, everyday strategies for survival in a rapidly expanding city, and the shifting vocabularies through which political community was imagined by Dar es Salaam's diverse population, of which Indians made up as much as a fifth during much of the colonial period.

The first two chapters, set largely in the interwar period of British colonial rule, grapple with a question familiar to recent studies of colonial Africa: to what degree did colonial categories of identity, imposed through state policy, reshape older ideas and practices of community? As elsewhere, British colonial officials in Tanganyika attempted to make sense of a diverse population through the binary pair 'native/non-native' – a diptych that was rapidly beset by internal contradictions, competing priorities, and juridical-administrative confusion. As Brennan puts it, these were 'improvised categories for improvised projects'. Rather than simply illustrating the *ad hoc* nature of colonial policy as a prelude to dismissing its importance, Brennan's narrative turns colonial messiness into an agent in its own right. One of the most compelling parts of Chapter One charts the way colonial ideas about the need to 'protect' Africans from economic predations of 'non-native' Indians

prevented would-be African entrepreneurs in Dar es Salaam from gaining critical access to credit. ‘Whatever else “native” protections may have brought’, argues Brennan, ‘they surely helped to secure Indian commercial dominance’. But if colonial policy early on helped lay the groundwork of racialized economic inequality in Dar es Salaam, official identity categories did not take root among residents of the capital. Indeed, as Chapter Two demonstrates, the categories that carried weight were different: among Africans, coastal claims to ‘firstcomer’ status pitted long-time *wenye mji* against arrivals from up-country and among Indians, appeals to ‘Greater India’ were as often panimperial as anticolonial, competing with communal divisions along religious lines.

Chapters Three and Four address shifts during and after the Second World War in both colonial policy and nationalist thought, and make original contributions to our understanding of each. Engaging the canonical account of postwar colonial developmentalism, Brennan argues that wartime policy in Dar es Salaam (including measures focused on labor) was first and foremost an attempt to manage consumption. In an era of ration cards, the outcome of the ‘urban question’ for colonial officials was the creation and management of a field of ‘urban entitlement’, a step that had far-reaching implications for nationalism. Addressing the racialization of African nationalist discourse through the 1940s and 1950s, Chapter Four pushes back against the frequently invoked idea that Indian nationalism had a tutelary effect upon African soldiers serving in the Second World War. Wartime service in Burma was eye-opening for Tanganyikan soldiers, Brennan argues, because it produced a sense of outrage at the ‘comparative squalor’ of Indians in the subcontinent in relation to the South Asian diaspora in East Africa. Illustrating how this anger was routed through discourses of honor and shame and turned toward an understanding of nationalism as freedom from the economic predations of those deemed racial outsiders, this chapter is the book’s most gripping.

While not as ground-breaking or thickly realized as the previous two chapters, Chapter Five nonetheless provides vivid scenes of the way that racial-nationalist discourse played out on Dar es Salaam’s still profoundly racialized cityscape in the early years after independence. The focus here is on political vocabulary and the articulation of official ‘purge categories’ cast as obstacles to a future free of exploitation. As the book’s final chapter, save for a brief afterword, its narrative ends a bit abruptly following the 1971 nationalization of housing aimed at the capital’s Indian landlord class. An opportunity seems lost here to trace the resonances of this nationalization – or its impact on the character of racial-nationalist discourse – in more detail or further in time. But whatever shortcomings a book of this scope and ambition inevitably contains (the lack of greater attention to Islam, for instance, must be noted), they are far outweighed by its power as a deeply thoughtful and well-argued account of the complex ways in which race and nation were articulated one of the continent’s frequently-cited cases. *TAIFA*’s appeal will not be confined to Tanzania specialists, for it makes original, substantial, and accessible contributions to scholarship on colonial urban policy, South Asian diasporas across the Indian Ocean, nationalist articulations of race, and African political culture.

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