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**CREOLE AND TRIBAL DESIGNS:  
DAR ES SALAAM AND KAMPALA AS ETHNIC CITIES  
IN COALESCING NATION STATES**

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**Creole and Tribal Designs:  
Dar es Salaam and Kampala as Ethnic Cities in Coalescing Nation States\***

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**Abstract**

*Have East African cities contributed to or hindered nation-state formation and political stability? This paper explores ethnic dynamics and the interface between urban ethnic and national identities in two capital cities, Dar es Salaam and Kampala, suggesting that the dampening of an ethnic factor in the politics and economy of the national capital can facilitate the stability of the nation-state as a political entity. In the East African region, the transplanting of rural tribal identities to the urban capitals has often sparked urban tension if not national dissension and violence, but Dar es Salaam's creole foundations and cosmopolitan outlook have helped to chart a more peaceful urbanisation path.*

**Introduction**

East Africa's capital cities, Nairobi, Kampala and Dar es Salaam, are barely a century old as metropolitan centres. They have grown significantly over the past four decades since national independence, absorbing people of a variety of ethnic identities and levels of national consciousness. Much has been written about the history of nation-building in East Africa (Tordoff 1967, Temu 1969, Beinen 1970, Mamdani 1976, Hansen and Twaddle 1988, Geiger 1997). A quite separate literature has focussed on East African urbanisation (O'Connor 1983, Anderson and Rathbone 2000, Burton 2000a, Bryceson and Potts 2006). Nonetheless, there has been scant attention accorded to how urbanisation and nationalism relate to one another. By contrast, the literature on European urbanisation has generated a wealth of insights into the interaction between urban population growth, economic change and the formation of nation-states. Although European towns are generally portrayed as political catalysts for the breakdown of the agrarian feudal order and the ascendance of nation-states and democratic processes, others cite cases of towns dominated by vested interests that resisted nationalist aspirations (Braudel 1973 and 1982, Jones 1981, Munck 1990, van Creveld 1999).

Have East African cities contributed to or hindered nation-state formation and political stability? This paper explores ethnic dynamics and the interface between urban ethnic and national identities in two capital cities, Dar es Salaam and Kampala, posing the questions: What is the nature of the ethnic identity of the indigenous population of the two cities? Are there differences between rural and urban-based ethnicities? Has ethnicity impeded or facilitated the formation of national identities? Under what circumstances might urban ethnicity spark social tension, political upheaval and violence?

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## **The Urban Milieu: Melding or Mêlée of National and Ethnic Identities**

Small groups with continual face-to-face encounters are widely believed to facilitate the development of trust, mutual support and cooperation amongst individuals and ultimately group solidarity (de Waal 2001, 2005). Urban areas defy such moral foundations. City populations grow to sizes far beyond the limits of interpersonal encounters, begging the question of how social distrust, economic envy, political friction and violent confrontation are avoided in urban contexts.

The issue of welfare collectivity surfaces at the tribal level as well. Tribal group identity also represents a scaling up of associational ties beyond the bounds of small bands of cooperating individuals, resting on the acceptance of a shared political allegiance and common cultural values and restraints. Urban areas, by contrast, represent the spatial concentration of people of often dissimilar and even discordant cultural values, who nonetheless encounter each other face-to-face both randomly and in various organised ways for purposes of economic and social interaction. Nationalism is in many senses even further removed from the security and trust of the small group, requiring people to identify abstractly with each other on the basis of a shared notion of collective welfare and progress.

In his insightful book, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson (1983) illustrates how the concept of nationalism is extremely remote from the daily experience of non-industrial, primarily rural societies where people are accustomed to personally knowing the people they interact with. Anderson argues that nationalist consciousness in the colonial world of the twentieth century entailed the philosophical repositioning of minds - a change in time and space perception of the nascent national population. A decline of religiosity, the spread of the printed word and literacy as well as the extension of certain languages beyond local boundaries to become major means of communication makes an 'imagined community' of people with a shared sense of welfare and temporality across bounded space possible. Nationalism denotes a scaling up of the collective welfare unit, an insistence on the sovereignty of the unit, and an awareness of the 'other' beyond one's spatial boundaries.

Gellner (1983), more from the historical experience of European nationalism, maintains that nation-states flourish where culture is homogenised under conditions of urban industrialisation. Urban areas and education provide the necessary development of skills and social mobility generating economic flexibility and harmony. A metropolitan 'high culture' congeals which attracts adherents. Hobsbawm (1991), on the other hand, argues from a Marxist perspective that nationalism is more exclusionist than inclusive in its effect. For Hobsbawm, those taking up the mantle of nationalism are for the most part highly instrumentalist in furthering their material interests relative to the population at large. Nonetheless, a common national identity emerges often fuelled by the otherness of surrounding nation-states.

Interestingly, Mamdani (1996 and 2000) writing primarily about Uganda, posits that colonial indirect rule policies rigidly restricted Africans' identity politically to that of the rural tribe, fettering nationalist aspirations. His position lends support to Gellner's thesis on the importance of mobility and the urban experience in fostering a vibrant nationalism. However, Mamdani combines his stress on the dichotomy between rural tribal subjects and urban citizens with class analysis similar to Hobsbawm's perspective. Iliffe's (1979) work on Tanzanian nationalism, on the other hand, stresses the individual agency of nationalists in nation-building amidst ethnic pluralism.

Comparing Kampala's and Dar es Salaam's ethnic foundations and their malleability with respect to nationalism, this paper explores how nationalist identities were negotiated vis-à-vis existing local ethnic identities. How willing were ethnic groups indigenous to the locality to 'share' the city, its land and amenities, with newcomer compatriots, given that the city was almost as new as the nation-state? How did their *modus operandi* affect nation-building? The following two sections examine Kampala and Dar es Salaam in turn. Dar es Salaam is considered in greater detail because it is exceptional in East Africa for remaining true to its name, the 'harbour of peace', with a record of relatively little ethnic tension. All East Africa's other major capitals have experienced ethnic flare-ups or even civil war sparked by ethnic divides.<sup>1</sup> In the conclusion, the interaction of ethnicity and nationalist identities in the two cities are juxtaposed.

## **Kampala: Tribal Kingdom and National Capital**

### ***Tribal Origins***

Kampala, located less than 10 kilometers from Lake Victoria, commands majestic views of the lake and the surrounding lush environs. The city's indigenous population is the Baganda, who at the time of British colonial conquest were the most powerful tribal kingdom in the lacustrine region, having subjugated neighbouring peoples within a considerable radius under the leadership of their king, the *kabaka* (Southall and Gutkind 1957, Reid 2002). The origin of the name Kampala belies the royal foundations from which Kampala emerged. Rather than having an agrarian or trading association, 'Kampala' refers to the *kabaka's* hunting ground. When the British encountered the area it was a hilly area<sup>2</sup> rich in impala antelope, the 'hill of the impala', translated into Luganda as '*kasozzi k'impala*', shortened to '*ka mpala*'.

### ***British Colonial Rule***

The British colonial government strategically established a commercial settlement proximate to the *kabaka's* palace and the Baganda's military fortifications, thereby gaining legitimacy and challenging the region's dominant power. Indeed the colonial protectorate of Uganda borrowed its name from Buganda. A love/hate relationship between the two powers ensued on the basis of mutual admiration and political rivalry. The British colonial government thought of the Baganda as the most highly organised kingdom in East Africa, with a cultured and politically sophisticated population enjoying a form of parliamentary government (*lukiiko*), not unlike their own constitutional monarchy and parliament.

Nonetheless, tensions were strained early on. An insurrection against colonial rule erupted in 1897, prompting the colonial authorities to deport the kings of Buganda and Bunyoro to the Seychelles. Reconciliation between the two powers came in 1900 when the colonial government designated the Kingdom of Buganda to be a constitutional monarchy and granted it political autonomy. In return for this favoured status, the British relied on Bagandans as administrators and tax collectors in the country's outlying areas. This overt form of divide and rule was bound to have repercussions during the nationalist struggle for independence.

Delineation of power was fudged, with long-term implications for the spatial coherence of Kampala as an urban unit. Parts of Kampala (Nakasero, Old Kampala and a section of

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<sup>1</sup> In the post-independence period, Kampala, Bujumbura, Kigali, Asmara and Mogadishu experienced civil war while Nairobi and Addis Ababa witnessed violent demonstrations and the martyrdom of protestors at the hands of security forces. Only Dar es Salaam and Djibouti have remained comparatively tranquil in East Africa.

<sup>2</sup> Although Kampala now sprawls over more than twenty hills, there are seven legendary hills which are considered Kampala's core: Mengo, Lubaga, Namirembe, Old Kampala, Kibuli, Nakasero and Makerere.

Mulago) were physically located in Buganda's tribal capital, Kibuga, causing confusion regarding political jurisdiction. During the colonial period, the population of Kampala consisted primarily of Asians and Europeans who were served by the municipal government in contrast to the relatively small African population residing within Kampala who were subject to the *kabaka* (Gutkind 1963).

### ***Mailo Land Tenure***

In addition to the confusing overlap of municipal and tribal land as well as Kampala's urban areas outside of the Kibuga, a key issue was land tenure (Nuwagaba 2006). The 1900 Buganda Agreement between the colonial government and the *kabaka* initiated the titling of land in Uganda, creating a propertied landlord class of Bagandan notables who 'owned' the *mailo* land as opposed to landless commoners who became their tenants. Land in the Kibuga became a commodity but one that continued to embody many aspects of traditional usufruct land rights and patron-client ties between landlord and tenant. Bagandan landlords allowed increasing numbers of tenants and squatters onto their land which obviously boosted their rental income but also has to be seen within the traditional thinking of Baganda political economy in which authority over people rather than land was primarily at stake. Mair (1983: 155) cites a Baganda commoner's observation about a chief's territorial power: 'He doesn't rule land, he rules people.'

### ***Divided City***

The majority of the urban African population lived in the Kibuga where settlement was unregulated by the municipal authorities and primarily rural in character. The Kibuga, however, encompassed both rural and urban parishes and its population density was mounting. The urban services, notably roads, water supply, sanitation, drainage, mosquito control, street lighting and policing were far inferior in the Kibuga relative to those in municipal Kampala. Municipal authorities were particularly concerned with public health, seeing the overcrowded housing conditions of the urban parts of the Kibuga as a threat to Kampalan residents. Not surprisingly, the authorities became accessionist in their attitudes towards the Buganda kingdom, which they sought to control to ensure urban environmental standards.

Dualism extended beyond health and infrastructure to the employment sphere. Africans residing in Kampala municipality were generally in formal employment or working as domestic servants for Europeans and Asians whereas occupationally the Kibuga's residents constituted what could be considered East Africa's first sizeable informal sector. Patron-client relations couched in a discourse of the client's devotion to the patron and the patron's welfare concern for the client infused economic interaction (Hanson 2003). Residents of the Kibuga and Africans in Kampala survived without a coherent municipal government given the cultural embeddedness of economic and political relations because Bagandan social order prevailed. African access to land and employment was largely dependent on allegiance to the *kabaka*. There was a blurring of rural and urban livelihood pursuits while daily political and economic life meshed into a seeming harmonious tribal collectivity. Nonetheless, there were clear spatial delineations. The *kabaka* and his power bloc associated with the Baganda patrilineal clan structure were headquartered on the hilltops, his tribal subjects resided on the hillsides, and farmed in the fertile valley bottoms for their subsistence food needs (Amis 2005).

### ***National and Tribal Wrangles***

The nationalist struggle of the 1950s deepened the layered complexity of the city's politics. Nationalist aspirations were entwined with tribal loyalties. Worries over the possible merger of a post-colonial Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania engineered by the Colonial Office fired Bagandan political activism to try to preclude the elevation of the centre of power beyond their reach. *Kabaka* Freddie demanded that Buganda be separated from the rest of the Ugandan protectorate. The colonial government deported him to London creating a martyr around which the Bagandan people rallied forcefully. After two years of protest, the *kabaka* was reinstated under the condition that he would not oppose Ugandan independence. In return he was given the power to appoint and dismiss Bagandan government officials as a 'constitutional monarch'. This caused polarisation within Buganda between those for and against the *kabaka*. The *kabaka* was constitutionally a Protestant which drove a wedge between him and the half million Bagandans who were Catholics. So too non-Bagandans who constituted two-thirds, approximately 4 million people, of Uganda's population generally opposed the *kabaka's* preferential power.

As events unfolded, Bagandan separatists realised that they would have to become involved in nationalist politics or otherwise their influence would wane. They founded the Kabaka Yekka (KY -The King Only) party and proposed a federal government in which they would exercise a degree of internal autonomy. Meanwhile Milton Obote founded the Uganda People's Congress (UPC). It was impossible to separate the politics of the Bagandan tribe, Kampala municipality and the Ugandan nation-state. Bagandan autonomy was destined to undermine a strong nationalist post-colonial government.

In the twists and turns of pre-independence politics the UPC and KY formed a strategic alliance which eventually brought to power Milton Obote as President and the *kabaka* as ceremonial head of state at independence in 1962. Friction between the newly independent state and the traditional royal kingdom however blew up in 1966 when Obote raided the *kabaka's* palace and abolished the kingdom, causing the *kabaka* to flee into exile where he remained for almost 30 years (Doornbos and Mwezigye 1994). The civil unrest and eventual military destabilisation of Uganda, catalysed by this event, culminated in the overthrow of Obote by Idi Amin in 1971 (Mutibwa 1992).

### ***Idi Amin's Rule***

Amin devised his own form of divide and rule. While expelling the Asian merchant class and persecuting the northern Acholi and Langi who had supported Obote's rule, he gravitated to the Bagandans on the principle that 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend'. For much of the Amin period, Kampalan Bagandans and Amin co-existed despite the fact that tens of thousands of Ugandans were executed in Kampala and at times the Nile River was reported to have been red with the blood of those massacred.

In 1979, Kampala was seized by Tanzanian soldiers in retaliation for Idi Amin's troop incursion into northwest Tanzania, ending Amin's eight-year reign of terror (Avirgan and Honey 1982). A series of successive leaders including Obote tried to establish a national rule of law and economic recovery by seizing Kampala and attempting to quell rebellion in other parts of the country. Not until the guerilla leader Yoweri Museveni, gained power in 1986 did Kampala and the country at large find stability. Museveni, a shrewd military strategist, promised to re-instate the *kabaka* to gain the support of the Bagandan people. In 1994, the *Kabaka* Ronald Mutebi was brought back from exile abroad and ceremoniously crowned, but

Musuveni was careful to restrict his role to that of a cultural figurehead (Doornbos and Mwesigye 1994).

### ***Urban Demographic Change and Land Tenure Reform***

Meanwhile the city of Kampala had encroached on the kingdom. Throughout its years of political destabilisation Kampala had become more ethnically diverse through in-migration. Non-Bagandan residents were keen to keep Bagandan power at bay. Furthermore, municipal authorities and city residents were exasperated with the sprawling slums on the *mailo* land of the Kibuga (Obbo 1980, Nuwagaba 2006). The Bagandan landlords, some of whom were absentee, retained their land monopoly. Many had little capital to develop their land and tried to maximise their rental income by allowing an influx of tenants who lived in ramshackle dwellings devoid of basic road, water and sanitation infrastructure. They were joined by other occupants who were squatters on the land or had informal borrowing arrangements with landowners. Overcrowding was acute to the extent that slum dwellings were increasingly being built in the valley bottoms formerly used for urban agriculture (Amis 2006). These low-lying houses were liable to malarial infestation and flooding during the rainy season. The complexity of land tenure arrangements made it impossible for the urban authorities to enforce existing legislation to control building design specifications, land use and urban infrastructure provisioning (Nuwagaba 2006).

In an attempt to give some clarity to land rights,<sup>3</sup> a new Constitution was enacted in 1995 that made all land freehold, vesting holding and user rights in private citizens. The hope was that this would encourage Bagandan landlords to sell to tenants the land parcels that they occupied, thereby ending the traditional patron-client relations underpinning Bagandan power in Kampala. However, such deeply entrenched social relations could not disappear simply with legal enactment. Poor tenants had low purchasing and bargaining power to procure their residential land from their Bagandan landlord. In 2003, a demonstration was staged in Kampala by Baganda separatists involving an estimated 200,000 people chanting 'Federo'. Their demand was for a new federal constitution that would guarantee their tribal kingdom as a semi-autonomous state incorporating Kampala city (Englebert 2002).<sup>4</sup>

This re-assertion of Bagandan political power has to be seen against the demographic reality that Bagandans no longer constitute a majority in the city and while some rely on rental income from their *mailo* land, for the most part their economic standing derives from being a relatively more educated and economically successful ethnic group employed in all spheres of the Ugandan national economy. In effect the Bagandan people need Uganda and its capital, Kampala, just as Uganda and Kampala need the Baganda.

## **Dar es Salaam: Harbour of Multi-Ethnic Peace and Creole Culture**

### ***The Creolised East African Coast***

In sharp contrast to the Baganda of Kampala, the Zaramo, who are considered the original African inhabitants of what came to be known as Dar es Salaam, have culturally accommodated themselves to the influx of successive waves of migrants of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. The matrilineal Zaramo are themselves relatively recent migrants to

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<sup>3</sup> The confusion about *mailo* land was compounded by President Idi Amin's 1975 Land Reform decree which stipulated that all land in Uganda was public, a law which was flagrantly ignored in the case of the on-going *mailo* landlord-tenant relations in Kampala (Nuwagaba 2006).

<sup>4</sup> See 'Give us Freedom, and Kampala: The Baganda on the March', *The Economist*, 6 February, 2003.

the East African coast, arriving in the 19<sup>th</sup> century at the request of Shomvi coastal traders who enlisted their support to ward off attack by the Kamba (L.W. Swantz 1970). Thereafter the Zaramo were closely identified with the Shomvi. Zaramo women often married and bore the children of the Shomvi traders. Furthermore, many up-country Africans, who came to the coast as slaves, remained and were absorbed by the Zaramo first by working in their plantations and later through inter-marriage (Burton 1860, Iliffe 1979). Hence the Zaramo are not a cohesive tribal group with a clear identity.<sup>5</sup>

The intimate political and cultural ties between the Zaramo and Shomvi often make it difficult to distinguish them as two separate ethnic identities. The Shomvi, claiming descent from Persian traders who had frequented the East African littoral several centuries before, and subsequent waves of Arab traders, were perceived as cosmopolitan town-dwelling traders and owners of coastal slave plantations (Nicholls 1971, Allen 1993). The Zaramo, on the other hand, were considered, by virtue of being African, to be the 'original' inhabitants who farmed the land.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, the Zaramo were lodged between the extremes of slave and slave master in a polarised social hierarchy. Seeking to distinguish themselves from the African slave population, many aspired to Swahili metropolitan culture associated with Arab influence and Islam (*ustaarabu*), preferring to identify as Shomvi. The Zaramo's dual identity afforded them claims to tribal clan ties and usufruct rural land rights on the one hand, and participation in Swahili town culture on the other (M-L Swantz 1970, Glassman 1995).

British colonial authorities intent on delineating tribal boundaries and authorities were perplexed by the Zaramo's lack of a clear tribal identity. They failed to acknowledge that coastal Swahili society with its own common historical experience, culture, mercantile economy and language made it futile to try to disaggregate the Zaramo and Shomvi into separate ethnic categories and defied the ethnic definitional rigidities of indirect rule (Allen 1993). Furthermore, neighbouring coastal ethnic groups, the Kutu, Matumbi, Rufiji and Ndengereko, who shared the Swahili cultural identity and dance styles with the Zaramo, were part of this creole society (Tsuruta 2003).

In Dar es Salaam, the Swahili – representing Afro-Arab cultural fusion – were the local manifestation of a creole culture, which stretched the length of the East African littoral in what is now Tanzania and Kenya. Creolisation of Arabs and Africans had coalesced over several centuries upon the economic foundations of foreign trade and domestic slave

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<sup>5</sup> Beidelman's (1967: 15) ethnographic survey notes with undisguised exasperation that the Zaramo are 'one of the most important and longest-known tribal groups in East Africa, yet almost nothing is known of them...The ethnographic material available at the District Offices at Bagamoyo and at Kisarawe is so confusing and poorly organized that it could only be interpreted by a person with a deep knowledge of the area and people.'

<sup>6</sup> There is a debate about which ethnic group was the first to settle in the Dar es Salaam area. Mzizima, a coastal settlement whose name possibly derives from the term *mji mzima* (thriving town), already existed at the time of Dar es Salaam's founding in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was considered to be a Shomvi settlement (Sutton 1970), whereas the Zaramo resided in small fortified settlements dotted in and around the area that became Dar es Salaam and its hinterland. The early British explorer, Burton (1860 vol I: 72, 107, 112) observed in the 1850s that the Zaramo were warriors of substantial force but their prowess was expended on extracting tribute from passing caravans rather than military expansion. Known to have large slave plantations, which supplied the caravans, each *pazi* leader's authority was restricted to his individual stockade settlement. Significantly, the Shomvi paid tribute to the Zaramo, a practice dating back to when the Shomvi enlisted the support of the Zaramo to repel the Kamba. The tribute was paid in salt (*chumvi*). This is believed to be the origin of the appellation Shomvi, a locationally specific name for the Afro-Arab trading people more generally known as the Shirazi along the East African littoral.



plantation production.<sup>7</sup> Historically, the Arab traders had established their main settlements on the coastline or on islands such as Kilwa and Mombasa. Kiswahili, which evolved as their *lingua franca* for trade with the African hinterland, was also spoken within their enclave settlements. The language had a Bantu grammatical structure, which incorporated Arab, Portuguese and other foreign vocabulary traceable to trading contacts.

Similar to other mercantile-based creole cultures, Swahili society's status-conscious hierarchical nature was softened by various avenues of social fluidity through polygamous marriage, slave concubinage, Islamic conversion and participation in status-raising rituals (Glassman 1995, Mazrui and Shariff 1994).<sup>8</sup> Supported by domestic slave labour, the affluent elite's luxurious lifestyle encompassed a unique cuisine, intricate architectural features and conspicuous dress styles that the broader lower-ranked Swahili population identified with or even aspired to achieve.<sup>9</sup>

Dar es Salaam was established as a planned settlement in the mid-1860s when Sultan Majid of Zanzibar shrewdly relocated some of the export-bound caravan trade from Bagamoyo to Dar es Salaam's more sheltered harbour. One of Majid's reasons for establishing Dar es Salaam was to deflect power from a truculent Shomvi leader (*diwan*) at Bagamoyo, which served as the primary mainland entrepot for the Omani ivory and slave trade (Brown 1970). Dar es Salaam, as a new settlement, was considered to be more controllable with fewer vested interests and antagonisms against the sultanate. The local Zaramo, long accustomed to the presence of the Shomvi trading class, witnessed the new wave of Arab plantation owners and increasing numbers of Asian and Arab traders.

Meanwhile European rivalry between Britain, France and Germany threatened the Sultan's dominance (Sheriff 1987). In 1886, the Sultan conceded to an Anglo-German agreement limiting his mainland claims to a 10-mile coastal strip and allowing the Germans to collect custom duties at Dar es Salaam. The following year the Germans occupied Dar es Salaam and demanded the right to customs collection along the entire coastline. The Bushiri rebellion erupted quickly thereafter. Otherwise known as the Arab revolt, the uprising of a coastal coalition, led by Abushiri and Bwana Heri who represented the Swahili landed-property elite, was reflective of layer upon layer of internal tension in Swahili society.<sup>10</sup>

### ***German Colonialism***

Dar es Salaam, where the intensity of the rebellion was subdued compared to the other Swahili towns, became the headquarters of the German East Africa Company in 1891 (Glassman 1995). The next 30 years of German rule were decisive in setting the parameters

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<sup>7</sup> Middleton (1993), Allen (1993), Fair (2001) and most recently Caplan and Farouk (2004) have written extensively about the Swahili sense of identity, shared history and coherence as a mercantile culture. Nonetheless, the Swahili are generally not identified as a creole population in the East African literature. They however evidence all the major distinguishing features of a creole society (see Hannerz 1987 and Cohen 2007 forthcoming).

<sup>8</sup> First marriages of the Shirazi (Shomvi) coastal elite were carefully arranged to ensure matching status between the husband and wife, but divorce was very common and subsequent marriages based on the couple's personal preference allowed for far more social mixing. Nonetheless marriage to a slave was frowned upon and precautions were taken to prevent it happening (Glassman 1995).

<sup>9</sup> Intricately carved exterior wooden doors and intricate interior plasterwork characterised Swahili houses (Sheriff 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Glassman (1995: 199-200) lists some of the main pressure points: 'the indebtedness of the [Shirazi] patricians and their political marginalization at the hands of the Omani Sultanate: conflicts over the status of slaves; [and] the insistent demands of villagers and upcountry fold for more active roles within the urban communities.'

for governance and resource access in Dar es Salaam. Within the town, the Germans opted for an *akida* governance system based on the appointment of school-educated, Swahili-speaking agents rather than one based on tribal authority (Iliffe 1979). After the Zaramo's participation in the Maji Maji rebellion<sup>11</sup> of 1905, the *akida* system was further extended to all of the Zaramo's tribal territory, undermining the authority of Zaramo *pazi* headmen and limiting the Zaramo's scope for political expression (Beidelman 1967).

The economic and social fluidity of creolised urban Swahili society was thoroughly at odds with German colonialism. Dar es Salaam was racially zoned into 'native' and 'non-native' areas in 1912. Administratively, the Zaramo became one of numerous 'native' groups. Alongside their political marginalisation, the Zaramo were declining as a proportion of the total town population. The Germans held the view that slavery had made the coastal population 'indolent' and encouraged more 'industrious' up-country migrants to work in the town. A labour survey of Dar es Salaam in 1894 revealed a cosmopolitan unskilled labour force in which those identifying themselves as Zaramo fell just short of constituting a majority.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, the Zaramo commonly engaged in farming of rice in the valley bottoms and coconut and cashew trees planted on the less fertile soils on small plots in the surrounding hilly areas around Dar es Salaam where they held usufruct rights (Bryceson 1987). The Shomvi owned plantations in Upanga immediately bordering the town, holdings that they claimed entitlement to from the time of the Omani sultanate (Baker 1931). A band of freehold land in the perimeter around Dar es Salaam, much of it owned by Germans, arose as a result of Zaramo-Shomvi land sales to Germans.<sup>13</sup>

Overall, the asset base of the creolised Zaramo-Shomvi people seriously declined during German colonial rule. The gradual abolishment of slavery and dwindling caravan trade erased the material conditions under which their creole culture had thrived. The Shomvi had been reliant on domestic and farm slave labourers who were no longer being supplied to the local economy. Indian traders were more responsive to the town's changing political economy than the more localised Shomvi entrepreneurs. In the urban labour market, Zaramo labour was devalued relative to that of upcountry migrants. Last and certainly not least, the cultural compass of town life was being radically reoriented from that of *ustaarabu* to racial rigidity and exclusivity of 'non-natives'. This severely constrained African urban aspirations residentially and occupationally and pre-empted multi-racial relations between the sexes. Lacking politically assertiveness and facing a contracting resource base, the Swahili's ambiguous cultural identity inclined them towards negotiating their access to other town

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<sup>11</sup> Becker (2004) argues that the Maji Maji rebellion was not only a reaction to colonial rule but also an attack on the indigenous coastal elites by acephalous tribal people in the southeast Tanzania, where the rebellion had its epicentre. The participation of the Zaramo in the rebellion could be interpreted as belying their dual character as a tribal group with acephalous matrilineal origins. See also Deutsch (2006).

<sup>12</sup> Out of 100 unskilled workers, 47 were Zaramo, 23 Swahili, and 30 from an assortment of tribes (Iliffe 1979: 161).

<sup>13</sup> In an official report, McCleery (1939: 13), revealing nationalist and ethnic biases, was highly critical of the Zaramo and the Germans for allowing what he felt was a transgression of tribal custom: 'The Mzaramo, who in those days was presumably no less idle than he is today, began selling land. It did not matter that he had no title to sell. The Germans were willing to pay, and there was plenty of land elsewhere to which the native could move.'

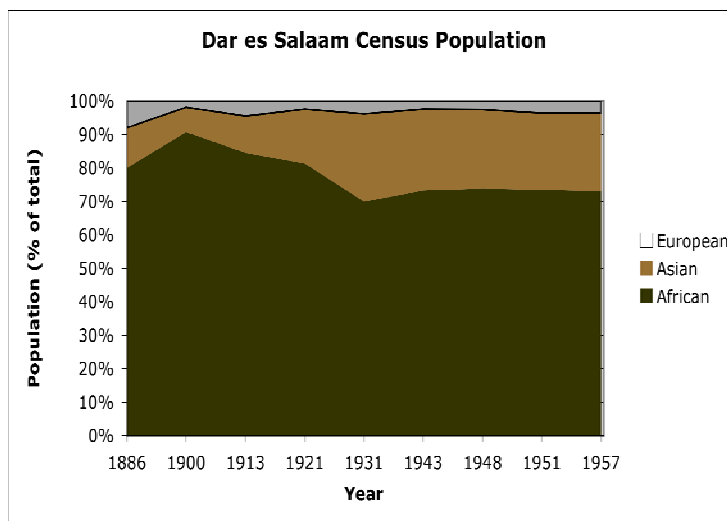
resources on an *ad hoc* and often individualised basis rather than unifying to collectively confront other groups or political enemies.<sup>14</sup>

### **British Colonialism**

The German colonialism was a transitory interlude of three decades. German East Africa was transferred to Britain as a League of Nations mandated territory following World War I. The mandate put checks on the degree to which European settlers could manoeuvre to procure land and labour at the expense of the welfare of Africans, with the intent of preventing the creation of a landless peasantry. This foundational principle of British colonial policy in Tanganyika rebounded in a curious way on African interests in urban areas. As Mamdani (1996) argues, Africans were designated as rural subjects rather than urban citizens. Their presence in town was strictly delimited in terms of employment and housing. The urban division of labour was monolithically racial: Europeans were government administrators; Asians were merchants and clerical staff and Africans were almost exclusively manual labourers.

Figure 1 shows that Europeans a minute proportion of the total population; Asian immigration was on the increase, boosted by their ‘non-native’ status under the mandate, and Africans, despite their urban settlement being officially discouraged, they constituted roughly 70 percent of the population throughout most of the British colonial period.

**Figure 1**



Source: Census data collated by Sutton (1970: 19).

Under British indirect rule, the Zaramo-Shomvi population indigenous to Dar es Salaam posed further conceptual improbabilities because they were not a ‘proper tribe’ in terms of clan structure, leadership and customary land tenure. ‘Detribalisation’ was seen as the road to moral degeneration and crime. The Zaramo were the prime suspects, failing to present themselves as tribally coherent in terms of leadership.

<sup>14</sup> This response was also more in keeping with their traditional matrilineal clans and acephalous political structure. However, through marriage and long historical association with the Arabised Swahili culture of the coastal Shomvi who constituted a landed property class, many patrilineal practices were appearing, that could be considered part of their Swahili creolisation.

Piecing together a picture of African ethnicity in Dar es Salaam during the British colonial period is hampered by lack of primary source material. Colonial reports of Baker (1931) on social conditions and McCleery (1939) on land tenure provide slivers of insight for the inter-war period. The most notable colonial study is Leslie's (1963) survey of Dar es Salaam, conducted in 1956, which is remarkable for its sociological detail. A number of PhD studies (Westcott 1982, Anthony 1983, Kironde 1995, Burton 2000b, Moyer 2002, Sherrington 2006) have touched on various aspects of ethnicity. Brennan (2002) provides the most focussed and penetrating analysis of ethnicity during the British colonial period, highlighting Zaramo-Shomvi-Arab ethnic issues relative to Dar es Salaam's African migrant population.

Indigenous tribal authority was invariably problematic given the diverse tribal composition of the African population (Burton 2002). Zaramo village headmen in the settlements surrounding the town disregarded the authority of the government-appointed town *jumbe*. In turn the non-Zaramo migrants who settled in these settlements were loath to accept the authority of the Zaramo village headmen. Nonetheless, the colonial attempt to construct a Zaramo Native Authority served to revitalise Zaramo collective awareness and might explain the enigmatic census figures showing the Zaramo as only 32 per cent in 1928 rising to 51 per cent in 1948.<sup>15</sup> It is likely that many Swahili people felt it was advantageous to be seen as an indigenous Zaramo during the 1940s.<sup>16</sup>

**Table 1: Ethnic Composition of Dar es Salaam, 1928 – 1967\***

Ethnic Group	1895	1905	1928	1948	1957	1967
Zaramo	47	27	32	51	36	27
Swahili	23					
Rufiji			5	8	7	7
Luguru				4	6	6
Nyamwezi	7	26		3	5	5
Others	23	47	63	34	46	55

Sources:

1895 & 1905 – Brennan (2002: 98) citing colonial estimates from a malarial survey (quoted in Anthony 1983). The noticeable decline of the Zaramo in 1905 may have related to their participation in the Maji Maji rebellion, when their physical withdrawal from the city, or at least an unwillingness to identify as a Zaramo, could have influenced the tribal tallies.

1928 – Brennan (2002: 100) citing Dar es Salaam Township Census 1928 List III, TNA 61/167/A/6 & Native census Dar-es-Salaam District, TNA 61/167/A/7.

1948-67 - Mwamfupe (1994: 56) compilation of national census data.

\* The Tanzanian government did not record ethnic affiliations in the 1978, 1988 and 2002 censuses.

### ***Colonial Land Tenure Tangles***

Land tenure in and around Dar es Salaam had evolved as a complex layering of traditional, German and British conventions that resulted in a patchwork of Zaramo smallholder plots premised on customary usufruct rights interspersed with statutory freehold and leasehold land

<sup>15</sup> Migration to Dar es Salaam from up-country was believed to have risen during and in the aftermath of World War II.

<sup>16</sup> In 1942 Dar es Salaam urban district and Temeke rural district were combined to form the Uzaramo district, which may have prodded people to identify as Zaramo. Dar es Salaam town had a separate governance structure of three appointed *wakili* with responsibility for 24 *majumbe* headmen who were most involved in daily administrative matters at the neighbourhood level. Furthermore, a *liwali* was appointed to adjudicate Islamic law. In 1957, fifty percent of the *majumbe* were Zaramo (Burton 2002).

owned mostly by non-natives. People identifying themselves along the spectrum of Zaramo-Shomvi-Arab ethnicity had wide scope for manoeuvre in land matters. The Zaramo had usufruct rights, which they used in the first instance for cultivating their subsistence needs. They could also, in an individual capacity, temporarily loan land to non-Zaramo cultivators on a sharecropping basis, given the demand for land from Dar es Salaam's African migrant population who experienced high rates of unemployment.

Land loans were generally negotiated on an informal and mostly amicable basis in which the Zaramo land custodian received a portion of the harvest. Furthermore, making use of inconsistencies and loopholes in the land law, people, claiming Zaramo-Shomvi-Arab ethnicity, were able to buy and sell land. In an official memorandum, McCleery (1939) expressed concern that some 'Swahili' Africans redefined themselves as Arabs to gain freehold land and would eventually sell the land.<sup>17</sup> In the meantime, considerable land was leased to non-Zaramo at relatively high rents.

### ***Incongruity of Swahili Coastal Identity and Tribal Political Assertion***

Despite their favoured access to land, the Zaramo were not generally inclined to excel as farmers. They grew subsistence crops but were less attuned to cashcropping on any notable scale. Slavery had been closely associated with toiling in the fields as plantation labour. The Zaramo preferred to project themselves as cultured townspeople with leisure time for conversation and board games (*bao*). Their command of the Kiswahili language, urbane outlook and awareness of markets and the wider world of trade gave them an air of insular sophistication vis-à-vis *wabara* (upcountry migrants).

Nonetheless, the *wabara* tended to hold the *waswahili* in low esteem. In Dar es Salaam's expanding economy, the Swahili constituted the lowest rung of the labour force, working as casual wage labourers in the port and construction sites as well as domestic servants. Leslie (1963) and Tsuruta (2003) refer to the cultural stereotyping of the Zaramo by colonial officialdom as well as the city's migrant population. The *waswahili* were seen as indolent (*wavivu*) reluctant farmers who were cunning (*mwenye akili*) but unreliable (*wajanja*).<sup>18</sup> As the *wabara* of Dar es Salaam expanded in number and raised their formal education levels relative to the *waswahili*, this characterisation was further embroidered. Amongst themselves, *wabara* might jokingly call each other *mshwili* inferring that they were 'going native', becoming unreliable, work-shy and fatalistic.

In spite of the prejudice they faced, the Swahili began publicly asserting themselves during the 1940s as Dar es Salaam's population and commerce swelled under wartime conditions. Brennan (2002) documents how both the Shomvi and Zaramo came politically to the fore. The Shomvi's initiative took the form of demanding freehold tenure over land in Upanga that they had occupied since the German period. Previously they had endeavoured to secure freehold title as individuals. When Upanga was slated for a major post-war housing development, they collectively began demanding freehold rights to their land. A Shomvi

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<sup>17</sup> McCleery (1939: 16) stated: 'Many persons who are in fact Swahilis (literally people of the coast), persist out of false pride in calling themselves Arabs. The laws relating to these people are conflicting, and the resultant chaos is only natural... Under the Land Tenure Ordinance (Cap 68) anyone with Arab Blood, (and this could include at least 20% of the coastal Wazaramo) is a non-native and persons of mixed descent are allowed to opt... The Native Authority never knows where or over whom it has jurisdiction, since these 'African Arabs' continually change their status to evade the Law.'

<sup>18</sup> Tsuruta (2003: 64) cites a well-known adage in Dar es Salaam: 'Zaramo *kuiba*, Ndengereko *ficha* (Zaramo steal and Ndengereko conceal) believed to have originated amongst Dar es Salaam's Indian population who employed them as domestic servants.'

representative seized the opportunity of the visit to Dar es Salaam of the Colonial Secretary, Arthur Creech-Jones, in 1946 to petition him:

...we Shomvi are the only real natives of this particular District for many generations...Though there are many who join in claiming the right to own land in these coastal regions but that does not give a true fact' (Mahadi bin Mwinjuma to Arthur Creech-Jones, TAN 10849/1206/1 cited in Brennan 2002: 219).

This collective land claim was based on drawing boundaries marked by traditional Shomvi cemeteries. Rather than relying simply on German land title claims, the Shomvi were demanding the right to land on a tribal basis but incongruously with the aim of obtaining freehold rather than usufruct rights. Although they met with initial success in the courts, the logical inconsistency of their tribal claim for non-native freehold was unacceptable in the eyes of the colonial state. The case dragged on for five years. Finally in 1953, their claim was dismissed. Trees and crops on tribal land in question could be bought and sold but not the land *per se*.

Brennan (2002: 229) argues that the collapse of the Shomvi land claim marked the 'ending [of] the economic and political prospects of either Shomvi or Swahili identity.' This is debatable. It may have been the end of a Shomvi *tribal* identity, which had been contrived for purposes of securing freehold land titles. Tribal identity rested on collective territorial claims to inalienable ancestral land whereas the Shomvi readily if not eagerly entertained land sale.

Swahili identity was far broader, and was not the sole prerogative of the Shomvi. The Shomvi's creolism was premised on cosmopolitan culture and a relic political economy of Islamic mercantilism. The political and economic foundations of the Zaramo-Shomvi-Arab Swahili identity had been in decline for decades, yet culturally the Swahili had staying power by virtue of their tolerant 'live and let live' philosophy. The internal contradictions within Swahili creolism are illustrated in the following Shomvi plea to choose their own *wakili* leadership.

The idea of the government is fully understood by the Swahilis of this town that is to say: Dar es Salaam is a town of all peoples of the Territory as the Capital of the Government and that every man has the right to be chosen. That probably might be true but the it [sic] should be known that the majority of the coastal people are Muslims and nothing that Muslims do may annoy any Christian or pagan. Besides that it is the custom of all up country people to come down to the Coast for studying habits and customary of the coastal Swahilis and Muslims, now if we are not asked to chose the man whom we think is able to lead us in the right way in both Swahili and political affairs, it is clearly that we shall have to loose [sic] every year little by little until at last we lose our culture and litrature [sic] and remain with nothing to follow (Delegation of Shomvi notables to Tanganyika Territory, Chief Secretary, 25 February 1948, TNA 10849/1394/1A cited in Brennan 2002: 222).

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, while the Shomvi sought to secure freehold land, the Zaramo were actively building tribal associational ties (Brennan 2002). The Wazaramo Union was formed in 1938, gaining momentum as an agency furthering the Zaramo's political and economic interests during the following decade. Living proximate to Tanganyika's largest

Indian population concentration, the Zaramo were one of the first tribal groups to voice resentment against Indian traders' profiteering – a resentment that would reverberate throughout the country in the 1950s. The union's bold demands captured the imagination of the coastal population and it began recruiting members from beyond the boundaries of Uzaramo, which met with suspicion from the Zaramo Native Authority. Its membership ballooned to 8000, bridging urban occupational and class divisions. Riding on a crest of popular support, the union's ambitions extended to nothing short of a separatist state along the lines of the Sultanate of Zanzibar but with an elected government, which would elevate the prestige and power of its leaders (Brennan 2002).

But in setting its political ambitions so high, the Wazaramo Union sowed the seeds of its demise. Without the support of the Zaramo Native Authority and African town leadership, the colonial government became increasingly wary of it. In the early 1950s the union started imploding with chronic financial mismanagement and corruption on the part of leadership (Brennan 2002). By the late 1950s, eclipsed by the nationalist struggle, the Wazaramo Union's main effort was directed at operating a bus from Dar es Salaam to the Zaramo heartland of Kisarawe (Vincent 1970).

The Wazaramo Union and Shomvi land case both represented the disaggregation of the Zaramo-Shomvi-Arab continuum into a 'tribal' identity discourse aimed at securing resource access and power that ultimately translated into individual material advancement. Both rested on a broader backward-looking vision of Swahili creole society in its heyday prior to colonial rule. It could be argued that the timing and political content of these two initiatives amounted to the brief emergence of Swahili creolism as an ersatz nationalism in a period of burgeoning creative thinking about political alternatives to the colonial order. Inevitably Swahili creolism was shoved aside by the nationalist imperative of that era.

### ***Nationalist Activity in Dar es Salaam***

Dar es Salaam was a hotspot for nationalist awareness due to the pioneering efforts of a growing group of African intellectuals resident in and around the town during the 1950s. The Wazaramo Union's failed tribal-cum-nationalist initiative would have undoubtedly been observed first-hand by Julius Nyerere, then a young man teaching at Pugu Secondary School in the traditional heartland of Uzaramo. Nyerere was surfacing as an articulate spokesman of nationalist goals and a clever political strategist for the movement.

Tanzanian nationalism is generally depicted as a process of widening people's frame of reference and transposing the African social identity from that of tribe to nation-state. Paradoxically, within the early stages of nationalist activity, those identifying themselves along the Zaramo-Shomvi-Arab continuum of Swahili creolism temporarily narrowed their social identity by adopting a tribal label. In so doing, they put themselves on a par with tribal groups in Tanzania, clearing the way for a pan-territorial nationalist identity beyond that of the coastal Swahili society. The glue of Tanganyikan nationalism in the first instance was common African descent. Interestingly, the Arab segment of the Zaramo-Shomvi-Arab continuum associated themselves with the African nationalist identity in stark contrast to the separatist tendency Arabs displayed in Zanzibar. It is possible that the process of justifying Shomvi land claims on an *African tribal* basis may have helped to pave the way for this outcome on the mainland.

Throughout the 1950s, sensitive to popular sentiment, TANU remained restrictively a political party for Africans, strategically using regional and tribal associational ties to further

its struggle for independence. While the inclinations of Nyerere were non-racial and non-tribal, TANU was cast as a party encompassing a wide spectrum of people with various views. The TANU leadership was heavily Dar es Salaam-based, but primarily of migrant rather than coastal origin. Bibi Titi Mohamed, a Dar es Salaam-born Swahili<sup>19</sup> woman, was extremely successful in mobilising the Swahili town-based vote for TANU. Her fame as an outspoken woman and singer made her second only to Nyerere in terms of national recognition. However, in general, Tanganyikan national politics remained primarily a complex mosaic of local, mostly tribally based political affiliations led by leaders with regional constituencies.

Within sight of the nationalist goal, Nyerere moved swiftly to remove the tribal element of national politics. In 1960, TANU announced that chiefs' political power was to be removed at local as well as national level. Ethnic and voluntary associations dissolved extremely rapidly to be replaced primarily by TANU-led local level political mobilisation (Vincent 1970). It is pertinent to ask how ethnicity was so quickly erased from TANU's nation-building strategy given that tribal identity had been the main means to secure mass support for the nationalist movement. Iliffe perceptively observes:

TANU escaped it [regional and tribal fragmentation], partly because no ethnic group was large enough to contemplate a separate future, partly because Swahili bridged ethnic differences, and partly because the party machine was already strong before most people obtained the vote (Iliffe 1979: 569).

Having laid the foundation for a non-sectarian, multi-racial<sup>20</sup> nation-state, Nyerere expounded a national ethos of *ujamaa*, posited on his interpretation of commonly held social values of agrarian tribal communities scaled up to apply to the collective welfare of the national population. The proclaimed national aim at independence was to eliminate ignorance, poverty and disease. This necessarily entailed addressing divisions between haves and have-nots. The Arusha Declaration of 1967 marked the official beginning of socialist policies in the country. A number of political leaders including Bibi Titi openly expressed their disapproval of the Leadership Code, which required them to divulge their financial assets and property and banned ownership of more than one residential property (Geiger 1997). Property ownership, especially land, was to become a major political issue.

### ***Swahili Housing and Land***

Many aspects of the market economy were disavowed in socialist Tanzania. The urban housing market posed several dilemmas for a socialist government vigilant against land speculators and private property developers. Housing was a basic need but the government could not afford to become a massive provider of low cost housing, nor did it want to encourage urban migration with a cheap housing policy. In the post-independence period, Dar es Salaam grew very rapidly and the shortage of housing became acute (Stren 1975). For low-income earners and the unemployed, there were generally three options: renting a room in a

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<sup>19</sup> Geiger (1997) notes that in her interviews with Bibi Titi, she identified herself as generically Swahili or tribally Rufiji, Ndegereko or Matumbi, depending on the context. She claims to have coached Nyerere in the use of Kiswahili idioms in public speaking.

<sup>20</sup> At independence in 1961, TANU was still an 'Africans-only' party. The following year Amir Jamal, an Asian, and Derek Bryceson, a European, were accepted into the cabinet, signposting the multi-racial character of Nyerere's vision of the Tanzanian economy and politics.



private owned 'Swahili house', renting a room in 'quarters' that were government built, or 'squattling' by illegally building a make-shift dwelling on unauthorised city land.

The 'Swahili houses' consisted of a large building with a central corridor and three rooms on each side of the corridor with a shared courtyard at the back of the house where a kitchen, toilet/bath facilities and storeroom were also found. House building was a form of individual capital investment and creole Swahili, notably Arabs and to a lesser extent the Shomvi, had historically built such houses to provide rental income. The multi-tribal, multi-occupational nature of the tenants renting rooms in the Swahili houses, and their frequent turnover, ethnically mixed the city's population. Landlords were reasonably tolerant of late payment because a high level of indebtedness was the norm, given the low earnings of most Africans (Leslie 1963).

In nearby peri-urban areas, where the Zaramo had their coconut and rice farms, squatters were becoming ever more prevalent. The Zaramo negotiated understandings with the newcomers, which in the short-run were likely to be advantageous to the Zaramo. In the late 1950s, Leslie (1963) had observed that coconut plantations and rice fields were slipping out of Zaramo control, often as a way of resolving their heavy indebtedness.

The pressing accommodation needs of Dar es Salaam's expanding population after independence enhanced the value of Swahili property interests in housing and land regardless of the socialist policies of the government. In 1971, the government's response to the housing shortage was to nationalise all residential buildings over TShs 100,000 that were not the main residences of their owners. Many Asian apartment blocks became state property whereas the less expensive Swahili houses providing private rental accommodation were largely exempt, allowing Swahili landlords to maintain their town-based rental income.

Meanwhile the Zaramo's rural land assets were being squeezed. Within Dar es Salaam, the post-independence development of factory production exposed parts of the Zaramo's low-lying rice lands to toxic effluents. In 1973-74, serious food shortages coincided with the first international oil price rise. Contracting foreign exchange reserves made it difficult for the country to rely on staple food importation. The government instigated the *Kilimo cha Kufa na Kuponu* (Agriculture for Life or Death) campaign, rallying the formally employed to farm on large plots temporarily allocated to their places of work. Exceptionally poorly organised, the campaign is unlikely to have contributed much to the city's food supplies (Bryceson 1990). It did however open the floodgates for Dar es Salaam residents eager to secure access to farmland in and around the city and ultimately may have provided an inroad into residential land acquisition on the part of Dar es Salaam's middle and high income earners, the vast majority being migrants to the city (Mwamfupe 1994).

During the late 1960s and 1970s roughly 12 per cent of the city's land was residential. By 1996, it had climbed to 26 per cent. An extensive clandestine land market operated in the 1980s that surfaced openly during the 1990s and has continued into the millennium as the city expands. Dar es Salaam has grown radially outwards along the four main roads leading upcountry, propelled by a process of social and spatial differentiation as middle-class households settled along the Morogoro and Bagamoyo roads in the northern reaches of the city while the Zaramo and other poorer households tended to concentrate away from the road or in the southern peri-urban areas in the direction of the Zaramo's heartland (Mwamfupe 1994, Briggs and Mwamfupe 2000).

Commonly prospective land purchasers approached Zaramo village leaders with the request for a plot to cultivate crops. Zaramo leaders charged the outsiders 'fees' for the use of the land or outright sale (Sherrington 2006). In other cases or in addition, the outsider would also have to reckon with a Zaramo farmer who laid claim to the usufruct rights of a particular parcel of land. The farmer was receptive to striking up deals that gave them cash in exchange for the land<sup>21</sup> and frequently provided them with a small income working as a casual labourer on the farm plot. However in doing so, a 'land-poor' group of farmers became more salient. Cultivation patterns of the peri-urban landscape altered from the characteristic cassava, rice and coconut and cashew tree plantings of the Zaramo to maize and banana production of the non-coastal migrant population (Mwamfupe 1994).

During the colonial period Zaramo land sales had been frowned upon as a transgression of tribal land rights. After independence they were a transgression of socialist principles as well. Tanzania's post-colonial land law was designed to be 'anti-capitalist', against the interests of landlords and property owners, which in theory would place the landholding Zaramo in a poor bargaining position. On the other hand, this disadvantage was mitigated in their favour by legal and administrative confusion, affording the Zaramo ample opportunities to engage in the land transactions that had become part of their peri-urban way of life.<sup>22</sup> Although the Tanzanian state would have been loathe to acknowledge it, these insidious transactions not only gave Dar es Salaam physical room to expand, but provided a pressure valve for African households who may have otherwise become highly critical of the socialist government's failure to meet the urban housing demand.

Currently, the Swahili population of Dar es Salaam, specifically the indigenous Swahili encompassing people of Zaramo, Shomvi and Arab descent, are submerged in a metropolitan area in which they are a relatively small percentage of the total population. Ethnically they are not a salient political or economic force within the city or nation. Yet, by virtue of being the city's 'original inhabitants', they have played a central role in supplying land and labour in the city's urbanisation process historically to the present.

The to and fro process of the Zaramo's migration to the city from the surrounding rural areas of Uzaramo and the city's encroachment on these areas has in the main not been an economically rewarding process for them.<sup>23</sup> Their heyday came during the 19<sup>th</sup> century Omani trading empire. But as the descendants of the mercantile population, which generated Kiswahili as a versatile *lingua franca* and an *in situ* urban cosmopolitanism, their cultural legacy has made an inestimable contribution to Dar es Salaam's urban society and the political stability of the Tanzanian nation-state.

### **Conclusion: Ethnicity, Urbanisation and Nationalism in East Africa**

Prior to colonialism, urban settlements on the East African mainland were in evidence, but their population size expanded and contracted as trade and the need for protection from attack fluctuated. Despite British colonial policies designed to prevent African urbanisation, the

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<sup>21</sup> Usually the purchase of usufruct land was made under the guise of buying the crops and trees on the land, which was an entirely legal practice. Who 'owned' the land thereafter was of course legally disputable.

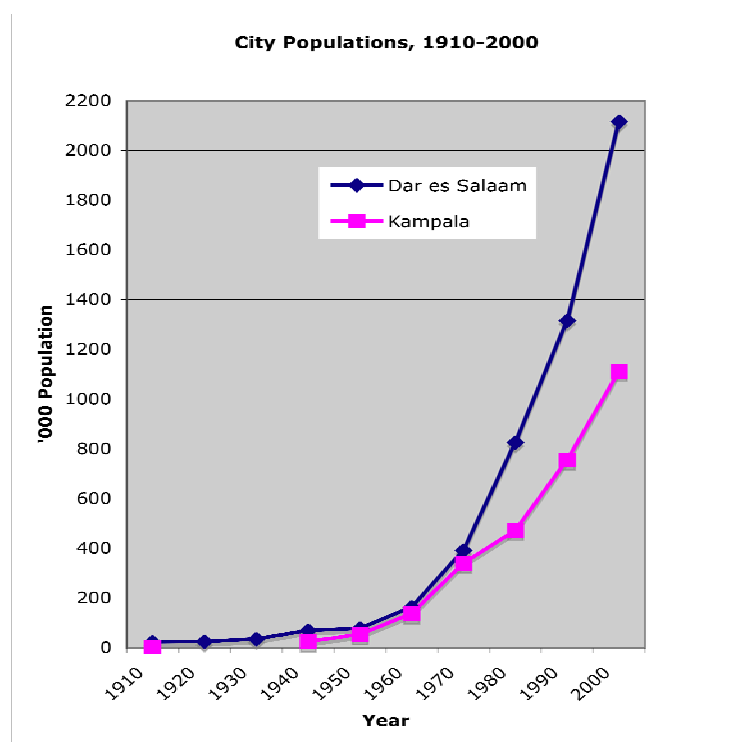
<sup>22</sup> Middleton (1992) documented a similar process of loss of tribal land in rural Zanzibar as commercialisation expanded during the 1950s.

<sup>23</sup> Dar es Salaam's expanding size was estimated to be: approximately 25 km<sup>2</sup> in 1945 (Caldas de Castro 2003), 70 km<sup>2</sup> in 1967, 170 km<sup>2</sup> in 1978 and 570 km<sup>2</sup> in 1992 (Mwamfupe 1994: 113 citing Dar es Salaam municipality statistics which exclude forest reserve land).

twentieth century witnessed Kampala's and Dar es Salaam's continual growth to become the most economically and culturally diverse settlements within their respective national borders.

Non-agrarian divisions of labour pivoting on trade and, to a limited extent, industry developed. Both cities attracted migrants from extremely wide ethnic spectrums. Evidence presented in this paper suggests that Dar es Salaam provided migrants with 'easier access' to land and labour opportunities, affording them a more secure foothold relative to Kampala's migrants who contended with the Bagandan monopoly on land in the Kibuga and advantageous position in the urban labour market. National political destabilisation and violence followed Idi Amin's seizure of state power in 1971, followed by a marked deceleration of urban growth in Kampala during that decade (Figure 2). In the 1980s, urban growth recovered, but by then Kampala was dwarfed by the size of Dar es Salaam, which was on course to become East Africa's largest city, surpassing Nairobi in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Figure 2:**



Sources: UN Population Division 2005, early Tanzanian census figures cited in Bryceson 1985, early Ugandan census figures cited in Lwasa 2004.

The rise of nationalism coincided with a strong urbanisation surge. The 1950s was a period of vocal tribalism, much of it emanating from the capital city where articulate people of various tribes rubbed shoulders and formed patterns of ethnic cooperation and competition that became engrained in the national ethos. Nationalist leaders had to create the 'imagined community' of the nation-state, but to gain political independence, they often took the shortcut of mobilising on tribal lines, fanning the bogey of tribal difference.

The capital city was an ethnic microcosm of the nation-state. Living in a rapidly expanding urban space made one acutely aware of 'the other'. The majority of the urban population were migrants who had been born and raised in rural areas amongst their tribal kith and kin. By contrast in the city, neighbours and workmates were likely to be ethnic 'strangers' who could be hostile or friendly. Tranquillity of ethnic relations in the capital boded well for stability of

the nation-state and it was in nation-builders' long-term interests to encourage a shared identity and mutual support amongst the citizenry regardless of ethnicity. However, beyond the political rhetoric, housing and land allocation patterns, which highlighted ethnic differences in access to economic resources and cultural preferences, enhanced the likelihood of turmoil.

The Baganda mediated this tension with a discourse on care and concern between patron landlords and client tenants, which may have helped to mitigate resentment on the ground. Similarly the Swahili were landlords but, given their more precarious economic standing and lack of an agrarian tribal identity, they were prone to selling land on an individual basis. This approach was completely unlike the Baganda who retained their tribal hold on land in the Kibuga of Kampala.

The Baganda were Kampala's politically and economically dominant tribe whereas the Swahili had very low visibility. There has been scant attention to the role of Swahili creolism in Dar es Salaam's urbanisation process. The Swahili creole culture's chameleon ethnic character, their association with the faded past history of the Omani mercantilist empire, their low levels of education and ostensive lack of success in the new economic order, largely precluded them from being perceived as threatening or a source of resentment. Unlike the Baganda, they generally avoided involvement in politics except for a short interlude during the 1950s. Their sense of self-esteem derived primarily from their Swahili creole identity, Islamic faith and nostalgia for a bygone era.

Uganda remains a more rural country with far more ethnic consciousness. Parts of northern and western Uganda continue to be sites of military insurgency. In this wider national context, Kampala is a peaceful refuge, but one in which there is a tribal sub-text. Kampala's residents daily contend with language and tribal cultural differences, which have the potential to impede commerce and social understanding.

Tanzania, as a more urbanised country, has a far larger and more cosmopolitan economic capital. As an ethnic city, Dar es Salaam poses a paradox. The Swahili are the bunt of many jokes and disparaging comments about their alleged fecklessness. Nonetheless, their creole cultural legacy and its urbane tolerance of ethnic diversity and Kiswahili as a general communication medium may well be a key reason why Tanzania is now seen as one of Sub-Saharan Africa's most stable nation-states. Dar es Salaam's creolism, regardless of its earlier association with slavery, has imparted valuable philosophical and material underpinnings for nationalism to take root as a modern political and moral hegemony in Tanzania. In the pre-colonial period, creolism bridged racial and tribal barriers between African rural subjects and non-African urban citizens for a select few through racial inter-marriage. Adherence to cultural and Islamic values, rather than skin colour *per se*, were the outward markings of the Swahili identity.

In both countries nationalism has succeeded in bringing down the political barriers to urbanisation, but the economic constraints that individuals face as urban migrants remain considerable. The contrasting case studies of Kampala and Dar es Salaam suggest that the dampening of an ethnic factor in the politics and economy of the national capital facilitates the stability of the nation-state as a political entity. Since 1966 when Obote raided the Bagandan palace, the territorial unity of the Ugandan state has yet to be secured. Uganda's proliferation of tribal languages and identities compounded by Bagandan political demands and separatist tendencies has hindered the nationalist project. The Swahili population's creole

identity founded on ethnic diversity has been far more conducive to the growth of an urban metropolis. Dar es Salaam's ethnic plurality tends to be more a source of good-natured humour and social tolerance than hierarchical political and economic control. In the East African region as a whole, the transplanting of rural tribal identities to the urban capitals has more often than not sparked urban tension if not national dissension and violence. Uniquely, Dar es Salaam's creole foundations and cosmopolitan outlook have helped to chart a more peaceful urbanisation path.

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