In the century and a half since its founding in the 1860s, Dar es Salaam has evolved from a minor mainland haven of Zanzibar’s Sultan Majid to become a sprawling, socially diverse city of major regional importance. The past hundred and forty years have witnessed the initially fitful, though seemingly inexorable, growth of a Tanzanian metropolis. By the end of the second millennium AD, Dar es Salaam had expanded to become East Africa’s largest urban centre. It is currently enjoying a period of particular vibrancy. Large swathes of the city centre are being transformed in a construction boom unprecedented since independence. Residential estates, catering for all classes, are extending the built-up area to the north, south and west. Liberalization from the late 1980s has seen the reinvigoration of a previously moribund urban economy. While the distribution of profits may be as unequal as ever, the commercial face of the city has changed dramatically—from *machinga* hawking the latest electronic gadgets at roadside junctions, to the emporiums of Kariakoo crammed with imported goods, to the more sedate malls of Msasani catering for Dar es Salaam’s old and new rich. The past decade or so has also witnessed something of a creative renaissance. Local media have flourished: electronic media such as radio and television stations, and the press in the shape of the plethora of conventional daily and evening papers, and a diverse array of magazines and other publications catering to local demands. Meanwhile, although the city has long been renowned for its vibrant local music scene, it has recently been at the heart of a regional phenomenon in *bongo flava* (deriving its name from the colloquial term for the city itself), an adaptation of western ‘urban contemporary’ music that has been exported with great success to other urban centres throughout East Africa and beyond.

The socio-economic and cultural vibrancy of contemporary Dar es Salaam is also reflected by an upsurge in academic interest. While Dar es Salaam, considering its national and regional role, was for long curiously neglected, over the past decade or so it has been the subject of research in a variety of social science disciplines, and a published literature on the city is now gradually proliferating. As one of Africa’s fastest growing major cities in the second half of the twentieth century, it is an historical exemplar of socio-economic and cultural change associated with rapid urbanization. Moreover, both this historical context and dramatic political and (especially) economic liberalization
in the recent past makes the city equally representative of contemporary
trends in urban Africa, notably those associated with ‘globalization’ and the
indigenous response. The scholarly community that has been attracted by
these conditions (alongside the relatively benign context for research) now
focuses unprecedented attention on the city’s social, cultural and economic
evolution. This book seeks to take advantage of this academic conjuncture by
drawing together research, from scholars working in a number of social science
disciplines, on Dar es Salaam’s twentieth century history. By so doing we seek
to make a contribution not only to Tanzanian historiography, but also an
emerging historiography of urban Africa, and to African urban studies more
generally.

Dar es Salaam and African urban history

The study of urban Africa remains a rather disjointed field, despite efforts of
scholars to impose theoretical priorities and typological order upon the
subject. Looming over more recent studies has been the failure and
abandonment of modernization paradigms, which temporarily united the
expectations of scholars and African urban migrants alike concerning the
progressive improvements that city life would bring to young African nations
emerging from colonial rule—industrialization, higher living standards,
abandonment of ‘tribal’ identities for national ones, and steady salaried lives
centred on the nuclear family. By the turn of the twenty-first century, most of
these promises of modernization lay irrevocably broken, yet Africa’s urban
growth continues at a blistering pace. The shift in Africa’s population
distribution from rural areas to cities since 1940 has been the most dramatic
development of human geography in the continent’s modern history. In 1900,
it is estimated that less than 2 percent of Africans lived in urban areas; by the
eary 1960s that figure had risen to 20 percent, in 1980 it was 29 percent, and
by 1999 it stood at 37 percent. It is set to reach 50 percent by 2025. Such
exponential growth demands explanation, for which several rural ‘push’ and
urban ‘pull’ factors have been posited—better food security in cities than in
rural areas, greater urban educational and social services, as well as wage
labour and trading opportunities, just to name a few.

Since breaking faith with modernization paradigms in the 1970s and 1980s,
scholars of Africa have generally become less interested in identifying the
causes of urbanization than they have in accounting for its shapes and effects.
Disciplinary priorities within African studies have tended to define the basic
terms of what constitutes a city—be it urban geographers’ definition of a city
as a site of human congregation, the political scientists’ definition as a centre
of power, or the sociologists’ definition as a social process of cultural
concentration and diffusion. More eclectic and ecumenical, historians of
urban Africa have been less concerned with adopting typologies or establishing
urban-focused theoretical points of departure than with using cities as sites to
identify and explain larger themes of social history, most notably the
development of capitalism and wage labour, the rise of specifically urban
social groups, the development of public health, policing, crime, and innovations in leisure and pastimes.\textsuperscript{7}

This book continues in this eclectic vein of African urban history. Its starting point for understanding the historical contours of Dar es Salaam is in detailed accounts of social, political, and cultural efforts made by people to create pathways of urban belonging without recourse to idealized categories of urbanism. Careful examination of the history of Dar es Salaam demonstrates that earlier African urban studies' typologies of the 'colonial' versus 'indigenous' city, and such intermediate incarnations as the 'dual' and 'hybrid' city, should be finally laid to rest.\textsuperscript{8} From a city-biographical perspective, the lineage of Dar es Salaam initially suggests that it is indeed a 'colonial' city. First founded by Sultan Majid in the 1860s, it was a planned projection of Zanzibari imperial power upon a relatively neglected part of the Mrima coast.\textsuperscript{9} Following a period of decline in the 1870s and 1880s, it was revived as the capital of the German colonial state in East Africa in the 1890s. Both Zanzibar and Germany built the town's major original structures, etched a largely perpendicular layout into the urban landscape, and directed lucrative long-distance trade towards its custom tolls. Germany also segregated the town on racial lines through land laws and zoning regulations. All of these elements could be termed generic expressions of 'colonial' power.

Yet such quests to meet typological criteria are rendered fruitless when one confronts the specific and diverse experiences of Dar es Salaam's peri-urban areas and their incorporation into the city. Such interaction between the urban centre and its outlying settlements is nearly impossible to typify—some were incorporated into the town as affluent suburbs (Upanga, Oyster Bay), others became densely-settled African neighbourhoods (Kariakoo, Gerezani, Ilala), others sisal plantations (Msasani peninsula), while others retained earlier functions as principally fishing (Msasani) or farming villages (Buguruni, Kijitonyama, Chan'gombe). Some urban and peri-urban neighbourhoods became remarkably representative of the larger territory. Serving as a territorial capital between 1891-1974, Dar es Salaam grew to become an authentically national city; in demography, social composition, culture and religion the most faithful representation of Tanzania as a whole. John Iliffe understood Dar es Salaam's development as a direct reflection of territorial-cum-national trends when he wrote: 'a[s] the rings of a tree reveal ecological change, so each phase of Tanganyika's modern history was embodied in the human geography of its capital.'\textsuperscript{10} Yet other peri-urban areas of the capital remained remarkably parochial throughout the twentieth century, and do not neatly reflect stages of national growth.

In order to understand the development of Dar es Salaam’s social structure and popular culture, one must bear in mind the historical coexistence and uneven distribution of local, national, and cosmopolitan forces. Twentieth-century Dar es Salaam was relentlessly cosmopolitan: a concentration of population of historically unprecedented socio-cultural heterogeneity, located at the forefront of international cultural trends affecting African societies. At the same time, it was the principal site where the political practice and ideology of the nation emerged; a society composed of peoples from the whole of
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Tanzania; and a city which remained politically, economically and culturally pre-eminent even after losing its status as territorial capital in 1974. Despite such powerful external influences, however, urban society was equally shaped by many distinctly local factors. The various chapters in this volume demonstrate the dynamic interplay between these contending forces.11

The historiography of Dar es Salaam

In the existing historiography of the town three themes are prominent. These themes are interconnected with each other and with issues arising from locality, territoriality and cosmopolitanism that lie at the heart of this collection. These are the organization of space and its socio-cultural, political and economic consequences; Dar es Salaam’s association with the formation of political consciousness and its position in the nationalist movement; and its role as a locus of social struggles.

As in other African urban centres, the organization of space has been central to the city’s history. The legacy of colonial rule remains abundantly clear in contemporary Dar es Salaam. Although it has, through its demographic and physical expansion, undergone radical transformations in the forty years since independence, the city’s postcolonial development has occurred broadly along lines established in the years up to 1961. Nowhere is this more clear than in the allocation of residential space. Areas once known colloquially as Uzunguni and Uhindini, thanks to their predominantly European and Indian populations,12 would no doubt remain familiar places to a 1950s resident of these areas visiting the city today. In spite of the substantial development that has occurred to the north of the town centre, the former European area of ‘Uzunguni’ remains an area of well-spaced detached houses, which although not racially segregated is home to a disproportionate percentage of Dar es Salaam’s expatriate community. An influx of wealthier African and Indian residents since independence may be cited as evidence of change; however, the continuities are more apparent, with the informal colonial segregation that occurred along racial lines simply being superseded by a segregation effected by income after 1961. Continuity in ‘Uhindini’ is even more apparent, with the area remaining the principal business and residential quarter of Dar es Salaam’s substantial South Asian immigrant community—in spite of various moves after independence to curtail urban property ownership among this section of the population. The division of commercial space in Dar es Salaam forms another striking aspect of the colonial legacy. The old African settlement of Kariakoo, which in recent years has become increasingly high-rise in form, remains the principal area where commerce with and between Africans is conducted. Mjini (the city centre), meanwhile, provides the main location for the large non-African owned financial and trading institutions, and for Government departments. In the scholarship on the town these physical aspects of the legacy of colonial urban planning have frequently been noted.13 Moreover, the functional relationship established by Dar es Salaam during the colonial period as an entrepot (for both primary exports and manufactured imports) linking its Tanganyikan hinterland with the international economy,
has been observed as having played a fundamental role in its postcolonial development as Tanzania’s dominant urban centre, in spite of professed policies of ‘self-reliance’ and the reduction of urban primacy.14

The organization of space has also featured prominently in the historiography of colonial Dar es Salaam. Despite the absence of a substantial settler presence and Tanganyika’s status as a League of Nations mandate (and later United Nations Trusteeship) territory, racial segregation exerted a powerful influence not only on the human geography of the colonial town, but also on its socio-political development. As Mbilinyi and others have observed, one important aspect of colonial segregation was the town-country divide, in which the rural areas were designated the proper place for African men and (especially) women, while the towns were perceived as ‘non-native’ spaces.15 Although rights of residence in the town were recognised for certain African groups from the outset of colonial rule, and in the later colonial period official hostility to African urbanization eased somewhat, legal restrictions on African urban residence were retained through to independence.16 Within the town, the way in which European concern about the social and health consequences of racial mixing resulted in racial segregation has also been noted by various authors.17 Allocation of resources between the three zones occupied predominantly by African, Indian and European communities remained fundamentally skewed—with African areas receiving the least investment in infrastructure and amenities.18 Segregation, and more generally colonial discrimination in the treatment of different races, also had important repercussions for the growth of political consciousness. In his magisterial *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, John Iliffe observed how interaction between Indians and Africans in the urban arena, and state interventions which appeared to favour the former, led to the racialization of African politics. This insight has been pursued in recent work which charts the manner in which colonial urban thinking and African-Indian interactions in Dar es Salaam combined to produce anti-colonial (and subsequently postcolonial) ‘racial nationalism’.19

The manner in which this racialization of politics was in part an unintended by-product of colonial interventions aimed at asserting control over the urban population parallels other features of Dar es Salaam’s historiography. As Tanganyika’s capital and principal urban centre, the town has emerged as an arena in which both the transforming and regulatory impulse of the colonial state was most in evidence (as were the inequities of colonialism),20 and at the same time an arena in which Africans developed mechanisms to evade and contest colonial assertions and eventually to pose a successful challenge to British rule.21 As Iliffe observes in his preamble to a chapter predominantly concerned with the history of Dar es Salaam, “[i]t was in the towns that Europeans first lost control of Africa.”22 He goes on to discuss how the experience of urban work, and resistance to the demands of colonial employers, formed a crucible for the emergence of African nationalism in Tanganyika.23 This political consciousness emerged not only as a result of the town being an arena of struggle between capital and the state and African labour, but equally significantly as a site of consumption. The allocation of
scarce resources in the urban context not only led to the racialization of politics and identity, but also—thanks to protectionist interventionism on the part of the colonial state designed to secure reasonable living conditions for urban Africans, as well as to forestall political protest by this group—to a consciousness of entitlements among urban Africans that could be demanded from the state, and to a determination to overturn existing political and economic inequalities. The colonial administration’s resulting failure to meet rising African expectations contributed to the growth of nationalism. For other writers too, the urban environment was a critical factor in the emergence of African political activism in Tanganyika. Geiger describes urban existence as being an important condition for the development of nationalist sympathies among African women. Dar es Salaam also holds centre-stage in Mohamed Said’s account of the Tanganyika African Association and its successor, TANU. Meanwhile, David Anthony ends his thesis documenting Dar es Salaam in the pre-nationalist period with a conclusion stressing the subsequent role played by the Tanganyikan capital itself in the struggle against colonialism. ‘It seems doubtful’, he writes, ‘that any other place… could have provided the means required for the movement to succeed’. These accounts highlight the manner in which colonial authority was undermined as a result of growing political consciousness arising within the distinctive urban environment of Dar es Salaam. However, other social, cultural and economic processes were at play in the town that served to undermine colonial authority in a less overt way than political nationalism. The manner in which Dar es Salaam was for African women a space of unprecedented autonomy, and often prosperity, contra the expectations and desires of both colonial administrators and African men has been described. The town also formed a location in which young Africans were able to evade the assertions of both elders and officials: where they adopted patterns of behaviour that subverted both the developmental hegemony of the late-colonial (and postcolonial) state and rural patriarchal authority. Meanwhile, the resilience of indigenous cultures and spontaneous creativity of urban Africans resulted in the adoption of patterns of leisure that contradicted colonial visions of a wholesome, westernized urban class. Nevertheless, while they might not conform to colonial ‘expectations of modernity’, sociocultural manifestations such as the early beni ngoma societies, dansi clubs, lelemama dance groups or urban waganga (medicine men) have all been identified as playing an important acculturative and socially integrative (even political) role in the urban environment.

Themes of political and social struggle have also been at the heart of more recent scholarship on Dar es Salaam since independence. In her account of the urban informal economy, Aili Marie Tripp attributes a pivotal change of Tanzanian governmental policy towards political and economic liberalization circa 1990 above all to socio-economic developments in Dar es Salaam. Increasing reliance of the city’s residents upon the informal economy for urban livelihoods played a fundamental part in this shift. It represented a concession by government in the long-running struggle to resist the informalization of urban space. However, more recent studies of Dar es Salaam
Salaam suggest this was in part merely a tactical retreat, as the city remains a contested arena in which struggles over the social occupation of space are ongoing. Attitudes (both official and non-official) towards processes of social and cultural change associated with urbanization that emerged during the colonial period have had a shaping influence on postcolonial policy: notably the perception of the town as a space in which rights of residence are delimited. Youth and gender remain at the heart of these unresolved struggles. Unemployed or informally employed youth continue to be treated as a social nuisance which the state feels obliged to address, invariably through coercive action; both for its own sake and that of Dar es Salaam’s ‘respectable’ citizenry. They represent not only a socio-economic but also a socio-cultural menace. Urban youth have for long been exposed to ‘modernity’ in a way which their elders, frequently concerned with the integrity of ‘traditional’ (and often self-consciously ‘African’) culture, have viewed as a serious threat. The most recent expression of the phenomenon is Swahili rap, which forms both an outlet for the frustrations of marginalised young urbanites and confirmation to more elderly or respectable townspeople of the unruliness of urban youth, and their contamination by foreign influences. Recent studies of gender in Dar es Salaam have likewise explored ‘cultural appropriations’ in the cosmopolitan urban arena and the threat these pose to social (and sexual) order. As in the colonial period, thanks to both its demographic size and its socio-cultural diversity, contemporary Dar es Salaam is frequently perceived as exerting a potent and negative influence on wider African society.

This present volume emphasizes the culturally heterogeneous nature of Dar es Salaam, its role as the site where political practice and ideology of the nation meet, and finally the legacy of political, socio-cultural, and economic compromises between local, national, and cosmopolitan factors that structure this urban society. Among the chapters which focus on questions of urban and peri-urban policy in Part One, the colonial state appears less as a powerful and singular entity that created Dar es Salaam just as it liked, and more as a collection of (occasionally contradictory) policies and offices beholden to various group interests and ideological commitments. Just as published plans drawn up for Dar es Salaam by visiting urban planners tell us little about the city’s actual history, these studies of the practice of urban governance reveal the utter lack of policy coherence and repeated reliance upon ad hoc measures. It became increasingly clear by the 1950s that the colonial state could no longer demand policies for greater representation as it tried to maintain a precarious urban order. Following independence, the state in Dar es Salaam had indeed become more representative, but in a peculiarly male way, supporting party and other vigilante activities against ‘indecent’ women. Although primarily concerned with the nature and consequences of state policy, chapters in Part One demonstrate how, by reading official sources against the grain, it is possible to obtain insights into the popular experience of urban life.

Chapters in Part Two reveal the richness and depth of Dar es Salaam’s cultural history in the twentieth century. The interplay between regional and cosmopolitan musical trends on the one hand, and quite local traditions on
the other, connects the history of city’s music genres. Urban newcomers have found belonging and camaraderie within the cultural institutions of Dar es Salaam, be they football clubs or ngoma societies, but the rapid flux in Dar es Salaam’s population growth over the twentieth century has meant that these institutions have had to regularly re-fashion themselves in order to remain relevant to new generations of migrants and (increasingly) those who come of age within the city. It is this constant renewal from both without and within that has made Dar es Salaam such a captivating city for residents, visitors and scholars alike.

Any book exploring the history of such a large and multi-faceted social organism as the city of Dar es Salaam will inevitably contain imbalances and omissions. As historians of the city we are especially aware of not only the limitations of this volume, but also of significant gaps in the existing historiography. Most prominently, discussion of the role of religion in Dar es Salaam society, notably Islam, is missing. This is perhaps the most pressing topic for future research.39 Similarly, class does not figure prominently in most of the contributions herein, though shifting relations between socio-economic groups from the late-colonial years have been a distinctive feature of urban society; most notably in the recent post-liberalization period.40 Readers may find that other themes such as urban politics, the economy or the built environment are also under-represented. In the opening chapter we seek to address such gaps, where possible, by drawing on existing scholarship on the town. This chapter offers a sustained historical overview of Dar es Salaam from its founding up to the present.41 It traces the growth of the city from the perspectives of political power, demographic and geographical expansion, urban policy, cultural innovations, class formation, gender relations, and changing modes of identity. As a reflection of existing historical scholarship on Dar es Salaam it represents a work in progress: we would like this chapter, and those that follow, to inspire fresh scholarship on the town. In the meantime, it is hoped that this book will provide not only an essential reference for those with a specific interest in Dar es Salaam, but also useful material for those with comparative interests in urban history and culture throughout Africa and the Indian Ocean world.

Notes

1 Population statistics are notoriously imprecise. However, rapid postcolonial growth appears to have resulted in Dar es Salaam (2,347,000) overtaking Nairobi (2,310,000) in the 1990s. UN, Cities in a Globalizing World: Global report on human settlements 2001 (London, 2001), p.300. It is likely that these figures underestimate the true size of both cities.

2 For a useful overview of this literature, see Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, ‘The process of urbanization in Africa (from the origins to the beginning of independence)’, African Studies Review 34:1 (1991), pp. 1-98.

3 For a useful overview of this literature, see Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, ‘The process of urbanization in Africa (from the origins to the beginning of independence)’, African Studies Review 34:1 (1991), pp. 1-98.

4 See especially James Ferguson, Expectations of Modernity: Myths and meanings of urban life on the Zambian Copperbelt (Berkeley, 1999).


8 These typologies come from Anthony O’Connor’s otherwise useful *The African City*, pp. 28-41.

9 The Mrima is the northern part of the Tanzanian coast, roughly from the Rufiji Delta to the Kenyan border.


12 Uzunguni forms the northern suburbs from Sea View up to Masasani, and Uhindini the Indian ‘bazaar’ in the heart of the town. These terms were perhaps most commonly used in the colonial period, when racial segregation was especially noticeable. However, they are still occasionally employed to describe different quarters of the town, alongside Uswahilini (which refers to those – more geographically diffuse – areas of town occupied by the ‘common man’) and Mjini (which refers to the commercial and governmental quarter south of Uhindini and along the Azania Front).


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10 The fact that the strongest opposition to colonialism emerged in those places where its imprint was most marked has of course been well documented. The contradictory social forces of colonial society were particularly evident in the urban arena, and throughout Africa it was here that "nationalist parties found their first and greatest support". Quotes from Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa (London, 1992), p. 141; and John Iliffe, Africans: The history of a continent (Cambridge, 1995), p. 249.

11 Iliffe, Modern History, p. 381.


13 See esp., Brennan, 'Nation'.


16 Anthony, 'Culture', Conclusion.


19 Burton, ‘Townsmen in the making’.


21 Aili Mari Tripp, Changing the Rules: The politics of liberalization and the urban informal economy in Tanzania (Berkeley, 1997).


23 After independence, the urban presence of ‘idle’ youth and ‘depraved’ unmarried women in particular was identified as undesirable – indeed, as anti-developmental. See ibid. and idem., African Underclass; James R. Brennan, Blood Enemies: exploitation and urban citizenship in the nationalist political thought of Tanzania, 1958-75’, Journal of African History (JAH) 47:3 (2006), pp. 389-413; and Ivaska, ‘Negotiating “culture”’.  


25 See Alex Penalo, ‘“The life that I live”: Popular music, agency, and urban society in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania’, Ph.D. thesis, Indiana University (2003); and his chapter below. Although it should be noted that some Swahili rap propagates locally generated middle class ideology and culture.


27 Such ‘anti-urbanism’ is not unique to Tanzania, for similar phenomena in Kenya and Zimbabwe, see Lonsdale, ‘Town life in colonial Kenya’, and Tsuneo Yoshikuni, ‘Linking
urban history with precolonial/rural history: From the Zimbabwean experience', both in Burton, *Urban Experience*.

39 Though see Anthony, 'Culture and society', chapter 6; and Lawrence E. Y. Mbogoni, *The Cross versus the Crescent: Religion and politics in Tanzania from the 1880s to the 1990s* (Dar es Salaam, 2004).


41 This chapter follows two other chapter-length attempts to tell the history of Dar es Salaam from its beginnings to contemporary times—Clement Gillman’s 1945 article ‘Dar es Salaam, 1860 to 1940: a story of growth and change’, *Tanganyika Notes & Records* 50, pp. 1-23, and John Sutton’s 1971 article ‘Dar es Salaam: a sketch of a hundred years’, *Tanzania Notes & Records* 71, p. 1-19. In the thirty-five years since Sutton’s article, the academic literature relating in one way or another to Dar es Salaam’s history has expanded exponentially, and the present authors are enormously indebted to this work, in particular John Iliffe’s *A Modern History of Tanganyika*. 