

with prejudice and self-doubt. One striking juxtaposition gets us thinking about the role of faith in that project. For Julius Kaggwa, faith in the Christian message of love and tolerance was central to his self-acceptance. To Audrey Mbugua, by contrast, 'religion is a threat', and her essay is enlivened by anger at the selective literal-mindedness of homophobes who justify their hate by reference to the Bible or Qu'ran.

Delights abound throughout the book, including Tamale's and Bennett's inclusive and radically anti-essentialist definitions of Africa and Africans. There is a remarkable memoir by an HIV-positive female Kenyan sex worker who enjoys her work. There are poems, short stories and, memorably for me, a fictional debate between a feminist professional woman and a sexist male taxi driver on the issue of abortion. A small number of images adds to the sense of urgency for us to abandon expectations of what sex is, and how, why, and with whom Africans are doing it.

The overall thrust of the book is to accept diversity of desire as a fact in Africa to be recognized if not embraced and celebrated. Not all authors, however, appear to agree. This is worrisome in one case – Nkiru Nzegwu's rather romantic ruminations on a supposedly matrifocal, sex-positive, pan-African sexual culture that existed before Christianity and Islam. Nzegwu lumps homosexuality together with bestiality, sadomasochism and paedophilia as a 'counter-natural quality' eroticized in the West and then exported to the detriment of that pan-African idyll. In other cases, however, silence on homosexuality is simply frustrating. Sa'diyya Shaikh's chapter on the potential of Islam for sex positivity makes a strong case on topics like abortion, birth control and male chauvinism. Failure to consider how 'moderate' forms of Islam historically dealt with same-sex desire is thus an important missed opportunity.

There are some other notable gaps – an otherwise rousing manifesto on LGBT rights, for example, is weakened by failure to identify the authors. There is virtually nothing on the Horn of Africa, and nothing on the plague of rape and mutilation of women in the Congo. The section on masculinity seems underdeveloped in the light of the latter omission: what is making young men express such profound hatred of women? A chapter on this topic might also have balanced the gloomy portrayal of sexism among obstetricians and gynaecologists gathered from middle-class women. Reconstructive surgery is surely one of the heroisms of our day from the point of view of women who have suffered vaginal tearing.

Of course no book could possibly cover all the issues and be even-handed on each, even when the volume is over 600 pages long. *African Sexualities* is nonetheless a tremendous achievement, and a welcome show of confidence in the ability of Africans to build societies that from their core reject gender-based violence and sex negativity.

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WILLIAM CUNNINGHAM BISSELL, *Urban Design, Chaos, and Colonial Power in Zanzibar*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press (hb \$70 – 978 0 25335 543 0; pb \$26 – 978 0 25322 255 8). 2011, 394 pp.

JONATHON GLASSMAN, *War of Words, War of Stones: racial thought and violence in colonial Zanzibar*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press (pb \$30 – 978 0 25322 280 0). 2011, 414 pp.

Put together, these two books establish an original historiography of the Zanzibar islands and their capital city. Both are set within the period of British colonial

rule (1890–1963) and both are preoccupied with race and racial politics, although each in a different fashion. While Bissell focuses on the British and whether their notions of race and class left a clear impression on the organization of cultural, social and geographical space, Glassman investigates how race, as a Zanzibari category, has penetrated and shaped local politics. Bissell focuses on the earlier years of colonialism (1890–1940), Glassman concentrates on the later years and, in particular, on the ‘Times of Politics’ (1957–63). The authors privilege written sources and have carried out thorough and time-consuming archival work. Glassman even makes a methodological statement regarding historical research, claiming that while oral sources only communicate understandings of the past, written sources constitute ‘records’. Similarly, both books convey male-oriented discourses. Given the fact that they analyse significant political, social and cultural processes in a society where each of the various milieus – British, European, African, Arab or Indian – is in its own way sex-segregated and gendered, this might have given rise to further problematization. The authors seem to ignore the methodological limitations their use of source materials represents, considering that their arguments do not involve particular communities only, but ambition to access society and its values at large. The two analyses thus remain somewhat incomplete, acutely in need of complementary material that could only be provided through oral traditions and an ethnographic approach.

Urban Design, Chaos, and Colonial Power in Zanzibar explores the various British attempts to create a perfect city through what they perceived as scientific techniques and practices of urban planning. Bissell approaches planning as a social and cultural process and contextualizes this within the characteristic racial and moral notions of British colonial politics. By focusing on the socio-cultural production of space in Zanzibar city, Bissell argues that colonial spatial arrangements were shaped by fundamental and enduring contradictions and not, as often assumed, by coherence and consistency. The book consists of an introduction, seven chapters and a conclusion. The sequential chapters appear to follow a single argument: that the promise of colonialism to deliver progress and development across Africa resulted, in urban spaces like Zanzibar, in a continuous making and remaking of plans never implemented. The chapters are organized so as to show the development of different issues within the realm of urban planning that became more or less significant in successive historical periods.

From the outset Bissell states that urban Zanzibar has long been a cosmopolitan space, with a heterogeneous population drawn from widely diverse African, Arab and Indian backgrounds. Bissell, like Garth Myers before him, argues that heterogeneity in terms of what is here denoted as race and class characterized the city. We follow various plans through which the city was to be transformed and, according to a Eurocentric perception, modernized. The British conflation of race and space meant splitting the city in two: that is, segregation and separation. In ‘struggling to make sense of urban space’ the British sought to refashion the cultural and social landscape through geography. In their eagerness to engage in ‘clearing out and cleaning up the colonial city’, health policies understood as tropical medicine became a source of inspiration. An ‘interdisciplinary’ combination of sanitary practices and scientific administration became the motivation for urban planning. Notions of ‘development and the dilemmas of expertise’ thus found a common issue in human welfare – in particular, that of ‘the others’. The planning of urban space became almost an end in itself, resulting in a ‘legal confusion and bureaucratic chaos in colonial planning’.

Rather than remaking space, the plans, although appearing solid on paper, seem to have melted into air. The bureaucratic malfunctioning is convincingly illustrated, together with the increasing complexity of the regime's spatial designs. Concluding his discussion, Bissell assesses planning as an unfolding process shaped by culturally biased visions about the past and the future as it is imagined from a certain political and social position at a particular moment in time. Focusing on the earlier years of colonialism (1890–1940), the 1964 revolution and its aftermath is not included in the analysis. This era could, however, have provided a valuable reflection of the ways in which society became refashioned during the colonial period, and how this may have been experienced locally. The revolution created, as Bissell correctly writes, a break in the social memory of the city and its materialization. As importantly, the revolution also changed the meaning and practice of urban space, as well as some of the stories told about the city and its inhabitants. Of particular interest is the discussion on race and racial politics in the Zanzibar protectorate as seen through a focus on urban planning.

Still, given that social and cultural spaces for Zanzibaris as well as the British were also organized with reference to gender, it would have been interesting to see in what sense such notions inspired planning, and the gendered consequences of the various outcomes. How would such social and cultural dimensions link up with ideas of health, cleanliness and morally appropriate social relationships within and across what were seen as different categories of inhabitants? Historical anthropology as a methodology of fieldwork means that the case study is built mainly on archive material. Bissell manages to get inside the interpersonal dynamics of the colonial project and is thus able to explore further to what extent a Eurocentric perspective, then as now, shapes thinking about the relationship between Western rationality, colonial power and urban modernity. In concluding, he assesses whether the 'chaos' created by the British colonial regime may have planted the roots of urban disarray today. It remains unclear, however, for whose eyes precisely and in what ways the current urban space presents itself. Although some interviews emerge in the concluding chapter, the book is deprived of the oral data that would have refined the socio-cultural dimensions it addresses.

War of Words, War of Stones investigates the racialization of ethnic thought and why a number of Zanzibaris came to believe in and fear racial distinctions – as well as acting according to the constructed racial images, even when these were negated by their personal experiences. How could the 1964 revolution happen? According to Glassman, it is the riots in June 1961, and the historical processes of racialization until that point in time, that must be the focus of analysis. The book consists of three parts, eight chapters in all, followed by a combined conclusion and epilogue. Part I, the introduction, contextualizes the main argument and discusses to what degree colonialism actually framed the politics following independence, and in what ways states may become grounded on racial ideologies. Glassman argues that the construction of a racial state began not with the British conquest in 1890 but during the preceding century with the Arab conquest, itself resting on the earlier effects of an ideology of Arabocentrism. Interestingly, it seems as if Glassman, who otherwise insists on a processual understanding of what he denotes as 'racial nationalism', still needs to anchor the origin of this ideology in a specific period and culture.

Nevertheless, the introduction also discusses conceptualizations and approaches to problems understood and enacted in terms of political racialization and racial thought. But, while arguing that diverse forms of ethnic and national thought can become invested with racial meaning, the author still performs his

analysis of politics and political positioning in the Zanzibari society up till 1963 mainly by applying race as an analytic term. How this analytical grip corresponds with vernacular terms meant to mark distinctions between categories of the population remains blurred, however. Referring to written sources, supporting his position that racial nationalism was constructed through a dialectical process between intellectuals and 'ordinary people', written text and oral discourse, Glassman keeps referring rather elaborately to ethnic labels, probably in the way they appear in the available written sources. Yet one cannot but wonder if such labelling, conveyed through these sources, is representative—and how it is experienced by 'ordinary people' in everyday life.

What, then, would be the correspondence between 'race' as an analytical concept and 'race' as a vernacular marker of distinctions? In order to comprehend why Zanzibaris came to believe in the constructed images of 'the other', Part II, *War of Words*, provides a discussion of how the intelligentsia shaped ethnic nationalism through their written debates. Subaltern intellectuals, we learn here, further propelled ethnic nationalism into a racial nationalism. Eventually such views entered civil society through, exactly, discourse and oral elaborations. Emphasizing the impact of the dialectics between oral and written communication, Part III, *War of Stones*, focuses on the power of rumour, on the oral discourse, and what is here represented as the force of the spoken word. Through various cases reported and documented from newspapers, court material or other forms of written documentation, Glassman shows that rumours about violence intended or even enacted by 'the other' led, not only to harassment, but to murder and pogrom. Rumours about moral transgressions, crime and criminal violence, as well as images of criminals and criminal behaviour, became central motifs in racial thought. Glassman's dismissal of findings from oral data is at best surprising, especially, regarding the importance he puts on oral exchange, construction of meaning in context and the power of rumour in his own analysis of the historical development of a particular form of political discourse and practice in Zanzibar. Moreover, one may wonder that while discarding oral sources, the author nevertheless supports his analysis with printed transcripts from old interviews with British colonial officials. What makes these oral voices reliable, and why would the contextual dimensions informing these interviews be convincing?

Thematically, the book's aim is to penetrate the significance of ethnic identities in the Zanzibari society over time and show why politics and political discourse, particularly during the 'Times of Politics', resulted in racial polarization and the 'racialization of ethnic thought'. In his combined conclusion and epilogue, Glassman rightfully argues that racial nationalism and a pre-occupation with race continues to inhabit political discourse today. Yet, strangely enough, the last lines of the book appear to contradict the main argument. Having at length discussed and analysed a particular political history in terms of race, Glassman then questions whether one should rather 'strive to abandon race altogether as a category of analysis and limit it instead to a topic of study—born, perhaps, of a universal propensity to categorize, but a propensity that is realized everywhere in patterns that are contingent and historically unique' (p. 302). Some would indeed welcome such an approach, as it would open up an analysis in ways facilitating comparative research between life-worlds and cultures.

These two books, combined, achieve a valuable contribution to the study of political discourse, violence, and the organization of space and social relationships in Zanzibar. More generally, they provide interesting discussions of colonialism, power, identity politics and the ideology of modernization. Thoroughly

documented, they make genuine archive material accessible to other scholars and student of Zanzibar and the wider Swahili region.

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SANDRA EVERS, CATRIEN NOTERMANS and ERIK VAN OMMERING (eds),
Not Just a Victim: the child as catalyst and witness of contemporary Africa.
Leiden and Boston MA: Brill (pb €42 – 978 9 00420 400 3). 2011, 276 pp.

Not Just a Victim is an edited collection of ten qualitative studies that focus on the lives and perspectives of children in different settings across Africa. The editors inform us that the book's aim is to redress the historic marginalization of African children in social and anthropological studies by conceptualizing children as 'agents who creatively deal with the possibilities and constraints of social life'. Yet it has already been argued elsewhere that 'the study of African children and young people in difficult circumstances has moved away from a "victimized" understanding to a much more "agentive" understanding'.¹ Such a paradigm shift seems evidenced in the impressive library that has amassed over the last decade of mainly anthropological studies that explicitly make the agency of young people in Africa their *problématique*. Indeed, the introduction to *Not Just a Victim* will be familiar content to researchers already interested in children's lives, as the key points have been delineated in other publications, and often more thoroughly. Curiously, however, the introduction and its limited bibliography omit mention of many recent works that have engaged empirically and theoretically with the agency of children and young people in Africa. This weakens the usefulness of the introduction for the relatively uninitiated reader of child-focused research, as well as the credibility of the book's justification among more conversant readers. A stronger element of the introductory essay is the discussion of several methodological concerns that are pertinent to anyone interested in the design and practice of child-focused research.

The individual chapters are based on separate, small-scale, qualitative studies that investigate very different experiences across, and beyond, Africa. Different issues explored include: the experiences of orphaned children and young people in South Africa (van Dijk), Namibia (van der Brug) and Kenya (Skovdal); children's transitions between homes and streets in Cape Verde (Bordonaro); perceptions of kinship and family history among Chagossian children in Mauritius (Evers); Ethiopian children's experiences of work and schooling (Abebe), and perspectives of well-being and lifecourse transitions (Tafere); child protection interventions in Democratic Republic of Congo (Seymour); children's return migration from the Netherlands to Morocco (de Bree, Storms and Bartels); and pre- and post-migration learning experiences of refugee children in England (Smith).

The two interests that cut across this collection are the conceptualization of children's agency and the consideration of child-oriented research methods. In several contributions, the question of agency is examined critically in the

¹Peters, K. (2009) Review of C. Christiansen, M. Utas and H. Vigh, *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood: social becoming in an African context*, in *African Affairs* 108 (430): 137–9.

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