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Author: Veracini, L.  
Title: Book review: War of words, war of stones: racial thought and violence in colonial Zanzibar, by Jonathon Glassman  
Year: 2012  
Journal: Ethnic and Racial Studies  
Volume: 35  
Issue: 10  
Pages: 1828-1830  
URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2012.688996>

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**Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar*, Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 2011.**

*War of Words, War of Stones* presents a genealogy of ethnoracial violence in colonial and immediately postcolonial Zanzibar. The violence peaked in the early 1960s: shortly after independence, forces claiming to represent the African majority overthrew the constitutionally elected government. Anti-‘Arab’ pogroms followed, but the Revolutionary Government, which in practice had seized power by fomenting ethnic animosity, soon outlawed all ethnically based political movements (the rationale was that it was the imperialists that had created ethnic divisions to better control the colony and that it was the duty of a genuinely anticolonial revolutionary regime to repress them). The defeated faction had been the expression of a stratified ethnic order that had rhetorically insisted on a distinctive Arab-centred tradition of multiracial inclusion that distinguished Zanzibar from the putative ‘barbarism’ of the mainland. Both parties could attain from a repertoire of rhetorical traditions that emphasised inclusion. How, then, did an extremely violent conflict arise?

For the details about what was said, when, by whom and with what consequences during the ‘Time of Politics’ (1957-1963), refer to Chapters 3 to 8, which provide a thorough account. However, as well as reflecting on the specificities of Zanzibari history and political makeup, Glassman’s book contributes to the general analysis of ethnonationalist violence in postcolonial Africa. His main argument is that even if the scholarly literature insists on the specifically colonial origins of racism, we should look elsewhere. Racism was a product of the African mind as much as a product of Western colonisers and their activities, he argues. If Mahmood Mamdani, for example, has repeatedly called attention to the racialisation processes that resulted from the administrative needs of European colonisers, and if others have interpreted African acceptance of colonially induced ethnic categories as a consequence of the need to secure access to resources controlled by the colonial state, Glassman aims to recover African ‘initiatives’ in the shaping of “ranked” ethnic thought’ (16). ‘Relatively few of the intellectual currents that contributed to raciology were peculiar to the West’, he notes: ‘drawing boundaries between peoples or ethnicities and even ranking them according to universalizing registers of inferiority and superiority have been far from unusual in world-historical terms’ (10). Besides, he adds, colonial administrators and educators were ‘significant interlocutors’, but only ‘one set among a variety of influences on East African intellectuals, and latecomers at that’ (18). In the specific context of Zanzibar, scholars have emphasised how ethnoracist notions were supposedly introduced by mainland immigrants, who were more exposed than others to European influences, including missionary ones, or, alternatively, by ‘Arabs’, who were consistently supported by British policies that had identified them as the legitimate racial elite and as the natural indirect rulers of the country (17). Glassman, on the other hand, calls for looking beyond the putatively exogenous origins of ethnoracial violence. Violence, and the potential for violence, a circumstance in which ‘normally nonviolent people are made to sense that a preemptive strike is vital for their own safety’, should be seen as much an endogenous as an exogenous phenomenon, and as much a product of indigenous ‘ethnonational intellectuals’ as of ‘popular discourse’, he concludes (18).

To support this argument, Glassman begins with an overview of Zanzibar's historical evolution (see Chapter 2: 'The Creation of a Racial State'). Zanzibari elites had always claimed to be originating from elsewhere (specifically, from the Persian town of Shiraz, hence 'Shirazi' eventually became one of the defining ethnic labels in Zanzibar). The 'custom of basing authority in claims of exotic origins predates even the long history of coastal Islam', he notes (26). However, the Omani invasion and the establishment of a sultanate in Zanzibar, together with the development of a plantation economy centred on clove production, had established an exogenous ruling class that saw itself as a landed gentry espousing a 'culture of racial paternalism' (30). Indigenous elites became marginalised or were co-opted, and it was the consolidation of the Busaid sultanate in the nineteenth century that produced the original ethnic categories that characterise Zanzibar's demographic makeup: 'Arabs', 'Indians', slaves from the mainland, and indigenous islanders (the meaning of 'Hadimu' as an ethnic label shifted, becoming synonymous with indigenous person that is neither an Arab nor a slave; that is, *not* an exogenous ruler and *not* an exogenous subaltern). There were variations. Omani domination in the two main islands comprising the archipelago, for example, was markedly different: in Unguja Arabs maintained their exclusivist ascendancy and control over clove production, while in Pemba islanders and Omani settlers interacted more intimately, a fact that had long lasting consequences. Either way, the British colonial project, and Glassman emphasises this point, *inherited* these categories; it did not produce them.

Zanzibar was not a 'colony'; it was a 'protected Arab state' (40). The British saw the Arabs as the legitimate 'native' rulers, and Zanzibar's 'dual colonialism' or 'Arab's sub-imperialism' resulted from this perception (see 40). In practice, the British would establish a kind of settler rule, where Omani aristocrats would administer the state, and where most Zanzibaris experienced colonial rule 'as a routinized form of Arab supremacy' (42). This was very much unlike what happened in Indirect Rule, Mandated Tanganyika, which had to be ruled 'while paying strict attention to "the paramountcy of native interests"' (40). This fundamental difference would also have long lasting consequences, but in the meantime, while 'Indians' and 'Europeans' were considered 'alien' in the mainland, 'Arabs' were not in Zanzibar (Indians were, and the British consistently opposed this community's interests in both locales). After WWI, as immigration from the mainland increased, mainlanders settled in the plantations and became a permanent presence. But while a stubborn and resilient tradition of ethnic integration had previously produced porous, fluid and situational ethnic borders, and circumstances that would allow slaves and former slaves to routinely redefine themselves as 'natives', things gradually changed. Glassman emphasises this crucial turning point: 'this was a genuinely new departure in Zanzibar's cultural history'; for the first time 'many residents of mainland background persisted in identifying themselves as such', and even the proportion of 'those who, *though born in the islands*, nevertheless identified themselves as mainlanders' increased between 1924 and 1948 (emphasis in the original, 54).

A triangular system of relations eventually took shape, comprised of Africans 'native to Zanzibar', African mainlanders, and 'Arabs' (the 'others' in this context were the 'Indians' and the 'Comorians'; see 51). It was 'during the colonial period' that 'islanders' perceptions of the differences between them and the two main categories of "others" from which they distinguished themselves, Arabs and mainlanders, became

increasingly polarized', Glassman concludes (55). Nonetheless, he insists: it is not colonialism that produced the crystallisation of ethnoracial categories. The authorities would have liked to freeze these categories, but repeatedly failed to counter a stubborn determination to hold 'multiple and shifting ethnic identities' (49). Moreover, it was the very *discontinuation* of the 'colonial policies of communal representation' that actually precipitated the violence (60). In the end, he remarks, 'although the colonial state may have created the conditions to which Zanzibaris responded by crafting exclusionary ethnic politics, the particular content of those politics was created by islanders themselves' (54). All factions eventually began claiming rights in nativist terms (while, paradoxically, claiming ancestral origins elsewhere). The Shirazi Association was expressing a nativist rhetoric directed against exogenous presences, 'Arab' intellectuals were upholding a local tradition of Arabocentric inclusion against exogenous barbarism, while mainlander activism was proposing a pan-Africanist version of nativism opposed to 'internal aliens of Middle Eastern descent' (61). The competition was ultimately between the claims of an intelligentsia that urged Arabs and islanders to unite against 'benighted peoples of the African interior' and the leadership of the Afro-Shirazi Party who urged islanders to unite with mainlanders on the basis of race (see 62-63). (Islanders were divided: in Pemba they favoured the first option, while in Unguja they predominantly favoured the latter). But it was conflicting notions of nativism that in the end produced 'an acute degree of dehumanization, including widespread racial violence' [59]).

Of course, all of this is not only about the 'first' Time of Politics; current political dispensations in Zanzibar, following the return to democracy, show a marked degree of continuity with the conflictual past that *War of Words, War of Stones* deals with (for an analysis of the current relevance of these events, see the book's conclusion and epilogue: 'Remaking Race'). There is 'a widespread perception among both researchers and ordinary citizens that current tensions are undergirded by ethnicity' (285), Glassman notes. 'In other words', as race 'endures not by persisting but by being constantly made anew', he concludes (287); 'four decades of single-party rule in the name of African racial nationalism have reinforced nativist hostility toward mainlanders' (291). But whilst Glassman originally set out to criticise Mamdani's understanding of the indigenousettler divide (Mamdani defines a 'settler' as someone who has an ancestral homeland elsewhere), their conclusions are surprisingly similar. It may be endogenous to Zanzibar, rather than an exogenous import, and it may have only consolidated rather than being created during the colonial period, but it is a form of exclusionary nativist ethnoracism that nonetheless ends up precipitating and perpetuating violence. Zanzibar's current politics remain potentially explosive especially because while 'Zanzibar's rulers have justified themselves with the language of racial nativism, claiming that their authority stemmed from having overthrown an alien regime', their opponents 'all too often respond with a limited negation, not by challenging the terms of nativist discourse, but by merely transmuting them, redefining who the aliens are' (299). Thus, Zanzibar may be unique in the context of African ethnonationalist politics because, as the political borders between the islands and the mainland became relaxed after WWI and then erased after 1964, and as two incompatible traditions of Indirect Rule became juxtaposed, there were/are *two* conflicting nativist/nationalist discourses, rather than merely one that is mobilised against the more universalising claims of nonnatives. In both models, however, and

independently of its ultimate origins, it is racialising exclusionary ethnoracism along the indigenous-settler divide that remains the culprit.