

INDIAN OCEAN WORLD CINEMA: VIEWING THE HISTORY OF RACE, DIASPORA AND NATIONALISM IN URBAN TANZANIA

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Discussions about cinema halls in East Africa frequently invoke the box office dominance of international films, significantly those from India. Studies of diaspora often describe the establishment of cultural and religious sites like Hindi cinemas and Hindu temples as landmark (or even metonymic) urban spaces created by overseas Indian communities, and write about how these places helped South Asians abroad negotiate their relationships with 'home'. For example, Jyotika Virdi writes, '[Hindi cinema] resonates powerfully with the Indian diaspora, often becoming their only connection with the homeland... while located in places as far-flung as Australia, Africa...'. (Virdi 2003: 2). Scholars of Indian cinema note that, in addition to the medium of film, the special resonance of the atmospheric place of cinema halls triggers powerful diasporic memories; as Rajinder Dudrah observes about a popular theatre in Jackson Heights, New York,

What marks this cinema in the minds of its patrons as a specifically *desi* [Indian diasporic] space? First, there is a sense of a class memory that seems to live in the place, given off by the musty air of garam masala, paan juice, and cheap air freshener, the two tiers of the theatre, vaguely recalling the expensive dress circle (or balcony) and cheap stalls of Indian movie halls. It's a place where the staff work on very clear and well-established patterns of patronage, ethnic familiarity and solid business sense. (Dudrah 2006: 100)

As we shall see, African nationalist activists and ordinary residents alike criticized such urban diasporic places in Dar es Salaam as exclusionary, and over time pointed to them as evidence of a minority's refusal to assimilate to a singular cultural or national identity. In fact, in colonial Tanganyika, successful challenges to racial bars opened up movie attendance to both Indians and Africans at a very early stage. Rather than being the privileged domain of immigrant communities, local, national and Indian Ocean world influences converged as Europeans, Indians and Africans all attended cinema halls, although always mediated by the state.¹

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¹While these groups were internally far from monolithic, racial labels came to dominate as markers of political identity. In this article, I use 'Indians' (or, occasionally, 'South Asians') to refer to people who migrated to East Africa from colonial India or the nations of the post-colonial South Asian subcontinent. The colonial government most frequently used 'Asians' to refer to the Indians. For more on the making of these communities, see Bertz (2008a).

In another, more nationalist approach to film scholarship, many studies of African cinema write against the pernicious influence of Western films, and stress the need for Africans to develop cinematic traditions in line with their cultural values and developmental needs.² A sustainable industry of film production never emerged in East Africa, however, and movies imported from a varied range of countries instead dominated the region's theatres. Popular across racial, class and gender lines, many of Tanzania's most-watched films came from India's Bombay-based Hindi language film industry.³ One Indian Tanzanian described attending the cinema in the 1950s, and related how audiences have changed since that time:

My African friend loved Indian movies and he could sing songs in Hindi. He loved Indian music. I would go to the cinema with him. ... As the Asians moved out, the cinemas continued. Progressively, you would find that there were more and more Africans. Now predominantly there are Africans going to see Indian films. ... With the Indian films, even if you miss out a scene ... it doesn't matter. If you go out for a Coca-Cola or a coffee, when you come back the boy and girl are still running around a tree!⁴

There are many reasons why Africans preferred Indian movies. Familiar cultural elements in plot lines and themes, and the intentional accessibility of Bombay cinema – especially important because movies were rarely dubbed or subtitled in Swahili – contributed to the allure of Hindi films for Tanzanian audiences. In other words, Bombay cinema travelled exceedingly well, finding popularity amongst diverse audiences throughout the Indian Ocean region and beyond.⁵ Furthermore, consistently reliable Indian Ocean networks of circulation helped to secure Hindi films' longstanding success at Tanzanian box offices, and similarities in colonial and post-colonial historical trajectories between South Asia and Africa provided other reasons why Indian films appealed across time to Tanzanian audiences – African and Indian alike. Not only did Bombay cinema offer Tanzanians a tantalizing glimpse of the world outside, including an ambivalent view of the desirable but decadent West, but it also described a similar colonized experience at the hands of the British. Later, Hindi films subtly encoded nationalist messages up to 1947, when India gained its independence. After that year, South Asian films overtly portrayed nationalist themes as Tanganyikans marched toward their own *uhuru*. Hindi films continued to be popular as Tanzanians built an independent nation, and in recent decades the dominant *masala* genre of film – named for the Hindi word for a blend of spices – predominated while post-colonial India mediated a new relationship with the West. These films dealt with issues of globalization and liberalization, developments which coincided in South Asia and Africa.

²For an introduction to this body of work, see Bakari and Cham (1996) or Barlet (2000).

³Bollywood is the modern – and disputed – term to refer to this industry. 'Hindi films' or 'Bombay cinema' will be used here for the Bombay-based Hindi language film industry, the oldest and largest of several within India.

⁴Interview with Mr B. K. Tanna, 21 August 2001, Dar es Salaam.

⁵For wonderful comparisons illustrating why Africans watch Indian cinema, see Larkin (1997), Fair (2004) and the forthcoming work on Indian films in East Africa by Rachel Dwyer.

Such cosmopolitan cultural connections across the oceanic region via movies complicate simplistic but prevailing racialized labels like ‘African cinema’ or ‘Indian films’. Instead, we can consider a project of denationalizing cinema by examining films and movie theatres in Dar es Salaam through overlapping local, national and transnational lenses – something we could call Indian Ocean world cinema. Viewing movie halls as social spaces – around which considerable discursive fields were generated – adds to the literature on film in Zanzibar (Burgess 2002; Fair 2004; Reinwald 2006) and mainland Tanzania, where the academic focus typically has been on censorship and colonial policy (Brennan 2005; Smyth 1979) or cinema as an industry (Smyth 1989; Ssali 1988).⁶ Furthermore, the study of popular culture can contribute significantly toward our understandings of the encounter between the Indian diaspora and nationalism in East Africa, and toward the history of the Indian Ocean in the twentieth century. In order to escape the historiographical dialectic between nation and diaspora which splits scholarship on Hindi films overseas, everyday social histories of cinema halls in Dar es Salaam might be framed within the Indian Ocean world. To do so successfully, however, we have to challenge a literature which asserts the collapse of this world in the early modern or colonial period (at the latest), and extend an Indian Ocean scale to capture the vibrant twentieth-century movement of people and products as they continued to inflect transnational ideas about race. We can attempt this, after a brief background section, by turning toward a case study of the transnational urban space of cinema halls in Dar es Salaam, a very prominent place of public entertainment from the time of film’s glamorous inception there in the late 1920s.

BACKGROUND: DAR ES SALAAM AND THE INDIAN OCEAN WORLD

One of the world’s earliest ‘global’ regions, the Indian Ocean world was fused together by the seasonal rhythms of the monsoon. Long-distance trade rose and fell over time based on many variables, and European exploration and the spread of Islam also affected the development and enhanced the integration of the Indian Ocean world, which peaked in the period 1500–1800.⁷ The arrival of Europeans after 1500 did not necessarily disrupt existing Indian Ocean world practices. The scholarly consensus is that the impact of Europeans in the early modern period was limited, because the newcomers accommodated themselves to the continuing structures of the Indian Ocean world of which they had a shallow understanding (Pearson 2003). However, after 1800, when the overwhelming political and military power of colonialism was introduced, especially by the British, most scholars tell the story of the disintegration of the Indian Ocean as a highway of regional connection (McPherson 1993: 199). However, as our example of film will

⁶For a fuller review of the various historiographies considering cinema in Africa, see Bertz (2008a).

⁷For a historiographical review of this literature, see Bertz (2008b). For a sample of the scholarly literature on this time period, see Chaudhuri (1985; 1990); Das Gupta (1994); and Das Gupta and Pearson (1987).

show us, certain long-standing connections survived colonial rule, both in historical memory and often in reality. Instead of being destroyed by colonialism, indigenous residents of the Indian Ocean adapted to new political structures and continued to travel, trade and interact across the sea in altered relationships mediated – but not dominated – by Europeans. In fact, as some recent scholarship has shown, British colonialism and anti-colonial nationalism intensified certain existing transnational linkages across the Indian Ocean world, including those between East Africa and South Asia (Bose 2006; Metcalf 2007).

The major Swahili coast port city of Dar es Salaam hosts a cosmopolitan population that includes a prominent Indian diaspora and reflects the legacy of long relations with various locations across the Indian Ocean world.⁸ While there are scattered reports of Indians living in East Africa more than a thousand years ago, larger communities did not form in colonial Tanganyika until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Indian Muslims first began to gain greater influence in Zanzibar in particular, aided by privileges extended to them under Omani rule. Gujarati traders' prosperity continued after the British secured dominance in Zanzibar in the late nineteenth century. Very few Indians settled on the mainland until the Germans began to develop their colony in East Africa, building railways and encouraging commerce in the first decades of the twentieth century. After Tanganyika became a League of Nations mandated territory administered by the British following the end of the First World War, economic opportunities opened up in the region, and immigration boomed. Gujarati traders and other Indian migrants to East Africa later brought their wives and families, including extended kin. South Asians continued to flock to Tanganyika and Zanzibar throughout the first half of the twentieth century, numbering about 112,000 at independence in 1961 (Gregory 1993: 13).

In Dar es Salaam, the colonial administrative and commercial capital, the government created three racial zones across the city in 1924, drawing on patterns of segregation first devised by the Germans when they started to build up their new colonial capital (Burton 2005: 45–52). The colonial planners rooted the division of urban space in their understandings of biologically determined levels of civilizational capacity and achievement, as defined by three monolithic categories of race: European, Indian, and African. The Indian economic advantage created by colonial racial privileges caused friction with the African population, especially in the years immediately preceding and following independence, a time that witnessed an acrimonious debate over citizenship. African nationalism contained many shades, including some aspects which were permeated from their inception by popular if not official racialism. Politically, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) asserted its official policy of non-racial nationalism at key moments such as the Arusha Declaration of 1967, when President Julius Nyerere declared the goal of building a socialist Tanzania. Soon thereafter, the government implemented a policy of 'Africanization' in the civil service, and nationalized select industries and properties. By the middle of the 1980s, Tanzania, like many other African countries, was in an economic free fall, ending the socialist experiment and prompting the liberalization of its economy in exchange for desperately needed foreign loans.

⁸For the best history of the city of Dar es Salaam, see Brennan, Burton and Lawi (2007).

INDIAN OCEAN WORLD CINEMA IN COLONIAL TANGANYIKA

Transnational ideas about race surrounded the popular new medium of film and penetrated the urban public space of cinema halls in Tanganyika. In understanding how colonial power – connected through various sub-imperial nodes in addition to emanating from the metropole (Metcalf 2007) – interacted with local systems of social organization to shape city spaces, scholars often overlook places of leisure.⁹ Through public discussions about cinema policy, Africans, Indians and British colonial officials all sought to reorder urban daily life. The colonial government attempted to control cinema by acting on its racialized understanding of film's impact on the territory's diverse audiences. Government's early censorship policy aligned with colonial efforts to segregate urban areas on a racial basis, allowing race to permeate cinema halls from their inception.¹⁰ Indians and Africans effectively contested cinema regulations by engaging with British officials in discussions of race and film, but the successful challenges to government censorship practices did little to rearrange segregated urban space before the arrival of nationalism. Before assessing the impact of nationalism, this essay will detail how ideas about race shaped cinema as the interests of British colonialists, theatre entrepreneurs, various community groups and early Tanganyikan film aficionados all intersected at movie theatres in Dar es Salaam.

In December 1929, H. A. Jariwalla threw open the doors of the Empire Cinema in Dar es Salaam, raising the curtain on a form of public entertainment new in the city's history.¹¹ The theatre hall accommodated six hundred patrons in three tiers of seating. This was a grand improvement over the meagre beginnings of film in the territory, with early showings housed in temporary tents not even outfitted with chairs.¹² 'European' films (presumably from Hollywood or Britain) were the fare at the Empire every day from Wednesday to Friday, and the lucrative Saturday to Monday runs showcased Indian films.¹³ In 1931 the Empire Cinema sold seven hundred tickets per week to a 'mixed' audience of 'Europeans, Asiatics and occasionally natives, but the latter are not encouraged'.¹⁴ As we shall see, cinema operators, concerned about losing audience members from the non-African audience majority, at first discouraged African attendance.

The movie industry grew briskly in towns throughout Tanganyika Territory after the pioneering efforts of Jariwalla's Empire Cinema. Three more theatres sprang up in Dar es Salaam between 1929 and 1934.¹⁵ Informal efforts to screen films also flourished in Dar es Salaam. A 1939 social survey of the township reported that 'The building in which pombe [home brewed beer] was formerly

⁹A notable exception is Martin (1995). Leisure is a rare undertreated theme in Burton's (2005) very thorough analysis of urbanization and segregation in Dar es Salaam.

¹⁰For the definitive essay on cinema censorship in Tanzania, see Brennan (2005).

¹¹From the appendix of a report compiling 'Price of seats and provision made for Africans in cinemas in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi, 1930', in Tanzania National Archives (hereafter TNA), 'Scheme for establishment of cinematograph theatres in native areas', Secretariat File No. 20496, Vol. 1. For a splendid parallel look at the early development of cinema in Zanzibar, see Reinwald (2006).

¹²TNA, 'Cinematograph films censorship of display', Secretariat File No. 13038, Vol. 2, 504.

¹³TNA Secretariat File No. 20496, Vol. 1.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵TNA Accession No. 540, File 6/1, Vol. 2, 'Trade and Industry – General'.

consumed is now used as a cinema where a native can see old films at a cost of ten cents.¹⁶ Furthermore, it was not the colonial capital alone which benefited from expanded circulation of films. By the early 1950s, the colonial government counted 31 cinemas within the territory, although Dar es Salaam continued to be the cinema capital with about half a dozen big screens.¹⁷

The mushrooming of cinema halls in privately owned spaces and the rise in film spectatorship throughout Tanganyika Territory led the colonial government to consider regulation of the new industry. Of particular concern to imperial minds was the unknown influence film would have on 'primitive races', a worry that lay behind the creation of a racialized colonial film policy. Metropolitan anxieties on this count initiated the 1929 formation of a Colonial Films Committee (CFC) in London which studied the possible effect of film on peoples in tropical African colonies. The CFC released its final report in 1930, and, reflecting caution against metropolitan centralization of film policy, recommended that individual colonies and territories establish their own film censorship systems. The report also advised to avoid discrimination in film policy, no doubt to minimize potential opposition to colonial rule. Regardless of its practical stance against racialism, the members of the CFC still thought it necessary to assess the differing 'civilizational levels' of various races in their discussion of film's possible impact on Africans. The committee's final report indicated that locations like Tanganyika and Kenya, with a mixed presence of Indians, Europeans and 'natives', presented certain unique problems.¹⁸

At the same time that separate school systems arose for Europeans, Indians and Africans in the territory, Tanganyikan officials pondered how to control urban space through the regulation of cinema access, drawing theatres into the racialization of Dar es Salaam. The 1929 Cinematograph Ordinance first set down rules for the making and exhibiting of movies and shifted the authority for censoring films from the police to newly established censorship boards.¹⁹ The Cinematograph Rules of 1931, passed to regulate the censorship boards,²⁰ flouted the recommendation of the Colonial Films Committee by institutionalizing a discriminatory racial bar to cinema attendance: 'The approval by the [censorship] board may be absolute, or may be given subject to a condition that the picture shall be exhibited to non-natives ... only.'²¹

As the British attempted to control the unruly growth of film through censorship rules that revealed their racialized understandings of everyday life in

¹⁶TNA, 'Memorandum on the social conditions of Dar es Salaam township', 1939, Secretariat File No. 18950, Vol. 2, 'Sociological Survey of African Population in Dar-es-Salaam Township', 7.

¹⁷TNA Secretariat File No. 35999, Vol. 3, 'Film Production by Colonial Film Unit'. From Commissioner for Social Development, on 16 October 1954, to Member for Local Government, Secretariat, Dar es Salaam, re: 'Films: provision and use of "British News"'.
¹⁸See the minority report by Sir Hesketh Bell to the Report of the Colonial Films Committee, held in 'Report of the Colonial Films Committee', July 1930, TNA Secretariat File No. 19244, 23.

¹⁹The full 1929 ordinance is located in TNA Secretariat File No. 13864, 'Cinematograph Ordinance'.

²⁰The full rules, technically included under the Cinematograph Ordinance of 1930, are located in TNA Secretariat File No. 18931, 'Cinematograph Ordinance 1930 Rules'.

²¹*Ibid.*

Tanganyikan cities, Indian and African organizations and individuals responded with entreaties to expand their own stake in the increasingly important social institution of the cinema, although rarely in unified ways. Indian elites petitioned to gain places on the censorship boards by invoking privileges dependent on colonial structures rooted in hierarchies of racial groups. The Indian Association wrote to the government in 1930 arguing that since ‘most of the films [are] of Indian make – picturing Indian life, it is essential that the board should have Indian members on its personnel in deciding about the advisability of the exhibition of films to natives’.²² Despite the racialization of urban leisure space in Dar es Salaam, religious commonalities could on occasion blur this divide. For example, the Anjuman Islamia, a pan-Islamic movement with roots in the Punjab, sent a letter (signed by ‘Various Mahommeden Communities’) to the police in 1930 with the following plea:

[A f]ilm named *Yusuf Zulikha* is to be shortly screened in one of the local cinema halls which is a most sacred and religious one and its show if permitted will injure feelings specially of the Indian Mahommedans and of the African Muslim Population in general to great extent. . . . We therefore beg to request that you will kindly intervene in the matter and see that the film in question is not screened. . . .²³

The reality was that colonial categories of race could not contain the cosmopolitan complexity of Dar es Salaam’s communities, and the ensuing debates over state film censorship policies often revealed deep fissures in supposedly monolithic racial communities under colonial rule. At the same time, these public discussions also reinforced the language of race in political discourse and, on occasion, validated certain practices of segregation. In sum, the colonial government succeeded, at least for a time, in creating racialized categories with which to rule, ironically all the while failing to understand how the territory’s residents considered – or ignored – racial difference.

The African sense of grievance deriving from cinema exclusion built throughout the early rise of film in the 1930s. The new Provincial Commissioner wrote in late 1931 that the existing cinema policy ‘gives rise to a feeling of resentment among the educated Africans at a regulation which they consider suggests they are inferior persons in comparison with others’.²⁴ When the African Association first took up the issue, rather than challenge the censorship rules, its leaders merely pressed for exceptions to be made for fellow members of their elite social class. Similar to the class divisions in the Indian community, educated Africans ‘appreciated the [District Officer’s] position and fully realised that it might be most undesirable for certain natives to view certain films’.²⁵

²²TNA Secretariat File No. 18843, Vol. 1, ‘Cinematograph Licensing Board – Appointment of Members’, 82.

²³Secretariat File No. 13038, Vol. 1, 83. Various Mahommeden Communities, Dar es Salaam, c/o Anjuman Islamia, to Commissioner of Police and Prisons, Dar es Salaam, 24 February 1930.

²⁴Provincial Commissioner to Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam, 19 November 1931, in TNA File No. 13038, Vol. 1, 227.

²⁵TNA File No. 13038, Vol. 1, 126–7. Letter from District Officer, Dar es Salaam, to Provincial Commissioner, Eastern Province, 8 December 1930.

When the African Association, with growing confidence, renewed its attack on the racially exclusionary colonial censorship policies in 1935, it was opposed from many sides. In addition to recalcitrant European residents of Tanganyika, the Indian businessmen in control of cinema halls also exhibited reservations about changing the official policy of racial exclusion – at least in the early years, before they realized the business potential in expanding African cinema spectatorship. One government circular noted: ‘Africans are not admitted to the two cinemas in Dar es Salaam at present when the films are passed for all sections. It is the proprietors who object to admitting Africans, I think they are afraid to lose non-native customers.’²⁶ Surprisingly, more conservative Africans also lobbied the government to maintain its strict censorship practices. When government debated censorship of ‘films likely to encourage crimes and acts of violence especially among juveniles and primitive peoples’, it noted that ‘complaints have been received from upcountry by some of the older natives of the harmful effects of such films on the youths’.²⁷

British officials, increasingly aware of African complaints over cinema access and wary of fuelling the development of nationalism, realized that a change in policy was necessary to respond to increasing pressure from educated Africans. The issue presented a dilemma in official circles: either to affirm homogeneous racial categories as determinant in censorship policy, or to acknowledge that the growth of an educated African class challenged colonial conceptions linking race and civilizational achievement. One official wrote: ‘I really do not understand the distinction between an educated African adult and an Indian ... I really do feel that discrimination made in such matters discourage[s] Africans from taking interest in cinemas.’²⁸ Thus, early in 1936, government directed the censorship board to abolish the category of ‘passed for non-natives only’.²⁹ Cinema halls were now theoretically open to all. A few years later, when the censor board made a tepid appeal to roll back the new censorship rules, the government rejected the initiative based on political expediency: ‘Africans felt a good deal of discontent at the racial slur. ... A change in policy now would revive political controversies that have been dead for 5 years at a time when such controversy is particularly undesirable.’³⁰

Despite the 1936 rule changes, individual actors and institutions still patrolled segregated urban boundaries using the language of race, and group racial identities sharpened on the encounters between individual persons across a racially demarcated city. For example, in the first weeks of the freer censorship policy, one disgruntled African cinemagoer, Sulemani Bajuma, described a frustrating trip to the theatre in a letter to a Swahili newspaper.³¹ In framing his

²⁶TNA Secretariat File No. 13038, Vol. 2, 277, 23 September 1935.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 300.

²⁸TNA Secretariat File No. 13038, Vol. 2, circular notes, 23 September 1935.

²⁹Memorandum of the Chairman of the Cinematograph Licensing Board, TNA Secretariat File No. 13038, Vol. 2.

³⁰TNA Secretariat File No. 13038, Vol. 6, 5. Colonial minute, Acting Director of Education, 10 January 1941.

³¹TNA Secretariat File No. 13038, Vol. 2, 503–6. Sulemani Bajuma, Dar es Salaam, to the Editor of *Mambo Leo*, presumably in January or early February 1936. Bajuma titled his letter ‘A native not allowed’.

grievance, the author recounted his long-time dedication to watching movies in Dar es Salaam, and how he tried to purchase expensive seats when going to the most fashionable theatre in the town, the Empire. He contended that the cinema's Indian employees harassed him when he tried to buy a ticket for himself and his wife, mocking their clothes and poor English. He highlighted the couple's humiliation at eventually being turned away because they were African. He wrote, quoting the Indian who translated for him the 'Natives are not allowed' sign from English into broken Kiswahili (a language facility which Bajuma amusingly reproduced in parody), "'Senzi [*mshenzi*; an uncivilized person, referring to an African] doesn't have permission, Zungu [European] yes, Gova [Goan] yes, Hindi [Indian] yes, Bonyani [*banyani*; Hindu shopkeeper] yes even Arab,'" but the African 'is forced to return home'.³² The language called upon to eject Sulemani Bajuma and his wife from the Empire invoked the government's racial segregation of city space, pervasive across Dar es Salaam, forming a target for nationalists seeking a new vision of independent Tanganyika.

Despite this ugly encounter at the Empire, the prevailing trend was toward rapidly increasing cinema spectatorship amongst all sectors of the population, with little integration in the cinema halls themselves. Changing film censorship policies had less effect on the size and composition of cinema audiences and the types of movies screened than did the market potential of growing African attendance. Colonial government officials regarded African interest in cinema in the early 1930s as minimal for economic and cultural reasons, a position which proved incorrect on both counts.³³ The British assumed that Africans were not interested in viewing international films that reached Tanganyika mostly from India and America because of their cultural distance from African life. However, repeated colonial experiments to produce 'Films of Africans, Made in Africa, for Africans' from the mid-1930s and during the 1940s flopped miserably.³⁴ One director involved in the film production projects summed up what he learned from the failures:

It does not follow that a film about Africans, and in which Africans take part, is an African film. It may be little more than Hollywood... with a change of cast. It is interesting to note... that it is the Indian film which makes its appeal in the urban centres where the African pays to see his films.³⁵

Furthermore, censorship did not restrict Africans from seeing most films, especially after 1936 when government scrubbed the 'non-native only' category. For the twelve months prior to July 1931, the Dar es Salaam censors viewed an impressive total of 220 films, rejecting only two and excising sections from five. Most tellingly, 74 per cent of the films passed earned a rating allowing entrance to

³²*Ibid.*, 505.

³³TNA Secretariat File No. 13038, Vol. 2, colonial minute dated 17 June 1933.

³⁴Slogan from the Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment, TNA Secretariat File 22858, 'Bantu Education Kinema Experiment', Vol. 1. In addition to BEKE, which ran in the mid-1930s, the Colonial Film Unit made films in the 1940s.

³⁵TNA Secretariat File No. 41428, 'Scenarios for Production of Films', 9, Norman F. Spurr, Colonial Film Unit, regarding Tanganyika Film Unit, to the Honourable Member for Social Service, 2 August 1950.

all, with only 26 per cent cleared for non-natives only.³⁶ Not only did Tanganyika's cinemagoers enjoy a surprisingly large range of films in the early 1930s, but the majority of them, at least by law, were open to all.

However, the segregated nature of Dar es Salaam combined with racial discrimination at the cinema halls to ensure that most theatre audiences were largely Indian and secondarily European in the early 1930s. The Empire and other early elite cinemas were located in the Indian business district, a short distance from European offices and homes, and an area into which it was precarious for Africans to venture, especially at night (Burton 2005). While segregation by cinema hall was a feature of the industry in the 1930s, as Sulemani Bajuma learned, it did not prevent Africans from seeing more and more films over time, as Indian theatre proprietors eyed lucrative investment opportunities in a growing market. For example, by 1948 the colonial government was getting increasingly nervous about film's potential role in the growth of nationalism in the territory due to the rapid rise in African cinema spectatorship; as one official noted warily, 'With our growing non-Native population and our growing number of cinema addicts among the natives, cinema censorship is likely to increase in importance very rapidly.'³⁷

The first films in the territory were American, European and Indian. Most government officials believed that Western films were 'trashy', and the Indian ones innocuous.³⁸ In the early 1940s there was a substantial increase in the popularity of Hindi films. They ran not just at the Empire but also at both stylishly elite and affordable theatres, enhancing opportunities to attend the cinema for all sections of the population.³⁹ For example, the Alexandra Cinema in 1948 screened 'indifferent films, largely Indian thrillers to an African audience composed mainly of boys and young men from the poorer classes'.⁴⁰ Despite official cynicism about the quality of offerings at Dar es Salaam's expanding number of cinema halls, the glorious coming attractions printed in newspapers announced exciting movies to a new generation of cinemagoers. At least four of India's biggest hits of 1953 appeared that same year in Dar es Salaam, creating a buzz that surpassed that of the slightly older American films which came on a later run to Tanganyika.⁴¹

While it is unlikely that Europeans attended Hindi language films, the growing number of African and Indian cinemagoers certainly did. Statistics from 1949 show that the box office take from Indian films 'outstripped' that of American films, despite the edge to Hollywood in the number of films appearing that year in Tanganyika, with the tally as follows: ninety-two American films, forty-seven

³⁶TNA Secretariat File No. 13038, Vol. 2, Donne, Secretary of Education, Tanganyika, in response to a query from Undersecretary of State, London, 30 June 1931.

³⁷TNA File No. 540/27/37, 'Cinema and Films, 1952–58', colonial minute, 3 June 1948.

³⁸TNA Secretariat File No. 13038, Vol. 1, 46–7. S. F. Male, Superintendent of Education, Dar es Salaam, to Superintendent of Police, Dar es Salaam, 5 October 1929.

³⁹TNA Secretariat File No. 26633, 'Cinematograph Censorship Board for Dar-es-Salaam Township', Vol. 2.

⁴⁰From TNA Secretariat File No. 38616, 1a, Nickol, September 1948 Social Welfare Report, as quoted in Brennan (2005: 494–5, fn).

⁴¹TNA 540/27/37, 34, from 'Avalon Speaks'.

Indian, twenty-seven British, and seven 'Arabic'.⁴² The difficulty the British had in circulating newsreels in the early 1950s also revealed the box office power of Hindi films. In 1951 London suggested initiating a charge scheme to earn revenue from British newsreels, attached for many years to feature films in Tanganyikan cinemas. The Commissioner for Social Development in Dar es Salaam responded to the proposal in blunt fashion:

[M]ost cinemas here in Tanganyika only make their money by Indian films shown. These are always long and drawn out, and it has only been by gentle persuasion in the past, that I was able to get the cinemas concerned to screen the News (sometimes it has had to be shown during the interval period!).⁴³

NATIONALISM AND INDIAN OCEAN WORLD CINEMA

The rise of different forms of nationalism had a transformative impact on the cinema hall as an urban social space in Tanganyika. Nationalism physically and conceptually changed the racialized urban space of cinemas from elite social and commercial places to nationally significant public locations where communities gathered in times of deliberation or celebration. When transnational Indian nationalism confronted British colonialism in South Asia in the 1930s and 1940s, cinemagoers in East Africa felt the collision through local changes to colonial censorship policy. Mass African nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s more substantially altered public debates about film by attacking racial inequities over access to cinema halls. Both South Asian and African nationalism met with a colonial response, but British strategic efforts mostly repeated earlier failed projects involving cinema production and censorship. Independence in Tanganyika in 1961 – and the 1964 union with Zanzibar to create Tanzania – had less impact on cinema than the shift to self-reliant socialism after the Arusha Declaration of 1967.

The first waves of nationalism in East Africa erupted in response to political developments occurring across the Indian Ocean. In 1930, Mahatma Gandhi and other notable Indian National Congress party leaders like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru announced a campaign aimed at achieving total independence from Britain. When the resulting civil disobedience threatened to spread out of control, the British reacted with mass arrests; those taken into custody included Patel, Nehru and Gandhi. These events were followed closely by Indians in Tanganyika, especially Gujaratis, who claimed an ethnic and linguistic affinity with Gandhi and Patel. In many cases, demonstrations in response to the nationalist movement in India took place in and around Dar es Salaam's theatres, turning Tanganyikan public cinema halls into bases for Indian political organizing. When news of Gandhi's 1930 arrest arrived in Tanganyika, a huge crowd of more than two thousand people packed the

⁴²Smyth's source for the box office earnings is the 'Digest of International Developments Motion Pictures', *World Trade in Commodities*, Vol. 8, Part 4, No. 7, 20 February 1950.

⁴³Memo of the Commissioner for Social Development, Dar es Salaam, in TNA Secretariat File No. 35999, Vol. 2, 395.

New Cinema Hall.⁴⁴ As the struggle for an independent India escalated, so did nationalist support in Tanganyika. In 1942, when the Indian National Congress launched the Quit India movement, some cinema proprietors in Tanganyika supported the August rising by displaying a slide of Mahatma Gandhi before every Hindi film screening. The colonial government, cognizant of both the meeting place and medium of cinema as potentially subversive of colonial rule, described the problem posed by Indian nationalism in East Africa as follows:

[The]... photograph of Mr. Gandhi... [is] undesirable in view of the acclamations with which the slide is greeted by certain sections of the Indian audience.... The [Censor] Board as a whole is of the opinion that no slide of political personages should be shown.... This suggestion does not of course refer to the photograph of His Majesty The King normally exhibited at the end of cinema performances.⁴⁵

The Tanganyikan government also resorted to film censorship to control the growth of Indian nationalism in the territory. However, the decision taken in the 1930s to allocate responsibility for approving Indian language films to South Asian censors severely limited the government's efforts. In fact, instead of heightened Indian nationalism, it was the advent of mass African nationalism in the early 1950s that ended the rather lax colonial oversight of Hindi films in Tanganyika. In the years after 1947, South Asian film makers possessed new space to make patriotic entertainment in a free India. The colonial government in Tanganyika responded to more overt nationalist themes in Hindi movies with censorship. The Dar es Salaam censor board prohibited two Indian films in 1952.⁴⁶ This occurred shortly after the Tanganyika African Association's campaign advocating responsible self-government and possible eventual independence, which looked explicitly toward India as an example of a successful nationalist movement (Iliffe 1979: 507–13).

The first Indian film to be banned was a cinematic enactment of Bankimchandra Chatterjee's best-known work, *Anandmath*. The novel narrates a revolt by a band of Hindu holy men who fought both local Muslim rule and the soldiers of the British East India Company in late eighteenth-century Bengal. Produced in 1952, when sedition laws in South Asia were no longer a threat, the film version of *Anandmath* was much more 'stridently nationalist' in a broader anti-colonial sense than Bankim's novel (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen 1994: 304). In Tanganyika, the British banned *Anandmath* from playing at the Odeon Cinema and later in 1952 prohibited a second film, *Maharani Jhansi* – about the

⁴⁴A record of the mass meeting is held in the National Archives of India, Nos. 123–124, Education, Health & Lands (Overseas B), December 1930, 'Memo of the Indian Association Dar es Salaam, to Permanent Mandate Commission on position of Indians in Tanganyika', including a clipping from the *Tanganyika Opinion*, 9 May 1930, titled 'Record gathering pays homage: about Shgs. 6,000 subscribed for Congress: Dar es Salaam prays for success of Gandhi movement'.

⁴⁵TNA Secretariat File No. 13038, Vol. 6, 20, letter from Secretary, Cinematograph Censorship Board, Dar es Salaam, to the Provincial Commissioner, Tanga, and the Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam, 9 December 1942.

⁴⁶TNA 540/27/37, 47. This page is a list of films rejected by government censors from the start of 1949 to the early part of 1954.

role of a legendary *maharani* in the massive 1857 uprising against the ruling British East India Company – from appearing at the Avalon Cinema.⁴⁷ Following these moves, the managing director of Indo-African Theatres issued a letter complaining about tight censorship in advance of a highly anticipated forthcoming 1953 release – about the same rebellious *maharani* – called *Jhansi Ki Rani*.⁴⁸ The story of this film would have been unsettling to the British government in Tanganyika, and it went on to earn a significant place in Bombay cinema history. The film contained a ‘spectacular account’ of the life of Rani Laxmibai, the nineteenth-century queen of Jhansi who gloriously led her troops into battle during the 1857 revolt (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen 1994: 310). In the early 1950s, with the confluence of triumphant South Asian nationalism and the first stirrings of mass African nationalism in Tanganyika, British officials took a harder look at cinema fare. The colonial government now carefully restricted Hindi films, once ignored as indifferent and innocuous, shielding their nationalist manifestations from African and Indian members of Dar es Salaam’s cinemagoing public. One Tanganyikan filmgoer recollected the audience response to nationalist films in Dar es Salaam in the 1950s: ‘The ones about the freedom movement, I particularly liked. The Indian community reacted quite vehemently. ... So I see a film about some freedom fighter being put in jail by the British, and our blood would be boiling!’⁴⁹

The cinema industry boomed during the early age of African nationalism, making modern movie halls into prominent public social spaces in growing urban areas. By the mid-1950s, several new theatres had arrived on the Dar es Salaam popular entertainment scene.⁵⁰ As climbing profits raised the stakes in Tanganyika, cinema halls engaged in an arms race of glamour to attract more customers. Many movie theatre proprietors attached bars or restaurants to increase their cinema’s stature as a social gathering space, and to increase income.⁵¹ In 1954, the Empress Cinema, located on a fashionable corner of Acacia Avenue, added advertising boards and a neon sign with two-foot-high lettering blazing into the night.⁵² The grand old Empire Cinema, still owned by Jariwalla Theatres Ltd, requested permission to extend its building in the 1950s.⁵³ In 1955, the Odeon Cinema added seats, and the Avalon constructed two large neon ‘Avalon’ signs on the roof and out front.⁵⁴ The newest cinema also competed for customers: the New Chox attached a neon sign to its canopy and, for the *coup de grâce*, erected a display that read ‘Chox Air Condition’.⁵⁵ One

⁴⁷For the censorship board’s listing of banned films in 1952, see TNA 540/27/37, 47.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 18, letter from Managing Director, Indo-African Theatres Limited, Dar es Salaam, to the Chairman, Dar es Salaam Cinematograph Censorship Board, c.c. to Tanganyika Police, Dar es Salaam, 18 June 1953.

⁴⁹Interview with Mr B. K. Tanna, 21 August 2001, Dar es Salaam.

⁵⁰For references to the other cinemas in the 1950s, see TNA 540/27/38/A, ‘Township and Minor Settlements – Town Planning Committee, 1954’, and TNA 540/27/55, Vol. 1, ‘Municipal Council of Dar es Salaam – Town Planning Committee, 1955–58’.

⁵¹TNA 540/6/45, ‘Trade and Industry – Correspondence: Clubs, Hotels, Bars etc., 1943–53’.

⁵²TNA 540/27/38/A, 57 and 65.

⁵³TNA 540/27/55, Vol. 1, 1.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 9 for the Odeon, 3 for the Avalon.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, Vol. 2, 4 and 10. The New Chox’s air conditioning sign went up in September 1959.

resident of Dar es Salaam recalled the anticipation of going to the Amana Cinema or another hall once a month with his boarding school classmates:

We used to look forward to watching the film. Even if the quality was not very good, but to us there was nothing else. But we had to come back and show the ticket stub to the teacher to make sure that we went to the right film. A lot of Indian films were shown, but some were very saucy, and some were semi-religious, but we were only allowed to see the religious kind of films. I was the good boy. Some of the other boys would want to go to see the saucy films, with girls and so on. So I would pick up extra stubs for them! Empress Cinema was considered the most comfortable . . . carpeting, and a beautiful screen and all that. But they were all popular. You had to buy your tickets days in advance, sometimes on the black market. It was all chock-a-block, and mostly on Sundays, almost every Asian would go to the cinema. There was no television in those days, and cinema was the most accepted escapism.⁵⁶

As film earned a starring role in the leisure industry of Dar es Salaam, majestic cinema halls became popular urban spaces that drew in increasing numbers of Tanganyikans. However, as we have seen, racial segregation and discrimination in the city largely prevented different racial groups from attending movies together. By the 1950s, grassroots African nationalism seized on the racialization of movie halls to alter the role of film in the region, reacting to racialized injustices by pushing to integrate urban cinema halls and to influence content on screen. The predominant nationalist organization TANU, at its foundation conference in 1954, debated what to do about pejorative stereotypes that were prominent in films about Africa (Brennan 2005: 502). As independence neared, nationalists worked to transform theatres from places of exclusion to sites of open congregation. Movie halls, largely segregated since their appearance in the territory, became inclusive public places of entertainment and of celebration, mourning, and meetings in the national interest. TANU leader Julius Nyerere made frequent campaign stops in cinemas to deliver speeches to urban communities.⁵⁷ And on 11 October 1960 – when Nyerere formed an internal ‘responsible government’ to express and facilitate the transition to independence in 1961 – the Empress and Odeon cinemas celebrated by featuring special film shows in Dar es Salaam.⁵⁸

African nationalism challenged racialized inequities in its calls to open up urban cinema halls. If Indians treated theatres as their own stomping grounds, such racist behaviour offended nationalists and associated South Asians with the injustice of colonial segregation. In 1960, the Swahili newspaper *Ngurumo* announced an exciting upcoming event in Dar es Salaam: ‘Louis Armstrong, the “Chachacha” expert . . . will soon “knock down the cockroaches and chase away the rats from the roof of the Avalon Cinema”’.⁵⁹ However, the event did not go as

⁵⁶Interview with Mr. B. K. Tanna, 21 August 2001, Dar es Salaam.

⁵⁷For example, in 1960 he spoke before a ‘crowded gathering’ in Tanga’s Majestic Cinema about the incoming government’s vow not to tolerate racial discrimination. TNA, ‘Summary of the Vernacular Press, 1960–61’, 540/DC1/68, from *Mwafrika*, 16 August 1960.

⁵⁸TNA 540/DC1/68, from *Mwafrika* of 6 October 1960.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, from *Ngurumo* of 25 October 1960.

planned, and an editorial columnist castigated the Indians of Dar es Salaam as to blame:

[We condemn] persons of other races for buying up all the tickets at the Avalon Cinema on the first day and later selling them at a profit of several hundred per cent. This ... is sheer greed. [W]ithout doubt the Avalon tickets were made so expensive in order to [deny Africans] the opportunity of hearing the music of Satchmo. ...⁶⁰

Another racially charged event occurred in late 1960 when a crowd of Indian youths took to the streets outside the Odeon Cinema in Dar es Salaam to celebrate the Hindu festival of Diwali. Traditional holiday firecrackers thrown inside a car left it burning in front of the Odeon, and the police sealed off the area of public disturbance and summoned Nyerere to chastise the crowd.⁶¹ In the following week, the press condemned the youths' anti-national actions at the Odeon, including the following: 'Usually ... the police expects close cooperation from those races which boast that they are more civilised, but it is a matter of regret that they got none at all. The manner in which the police were ignored has heaped shame on the whole tribe.'⁶² On the eve of independence, and with African nationalism in ascendance, the ugly events at the Avalon and Odeon turned around old arguments about cinema halls and race: Indians were now the uncivilized tribe, and nationalists had clearly marked cinema halls as racially integrated spaces, although not necessarily ones free from racial conflict.

INDIAN OCEAN WORLD CINEMA IN POST-COLONIAL TANZANIA

Despite the rise of African nationalists to power, the 1960s were a time of continuity in the history of race, film and urban space in Tanganyika (and Tanzania after the union with Zanzibar). The Tanzanian state never controlled the commercial and social space of cinema halls, and therefore could not shape them for nationalist purposes like the Africanization of content or employees. This does not mean that nationalists did not advocate these projects. For example, Nyerere's Minister in the Directorate of Planning, Amir Jamal, pleaded for racial integration in a 1964 radio broadcast, saying, 'I experience within myself a most discomforting feeling when I see ... cinema houses full of mostly non-Africans ...'⁶³ However, in the absence of citizen cooperation or a successful state film industry, government could only rely on censorship policies to confront cinema during the national cultural project that followed independence. Ideas about race remained central to the cultural politics of film reception, and thus to Tanzania's cinema censorship policy, which aligned with the project to build a national culture informed by African socialism.

This tension was especially apparent in Zanzibar after the 1964 revolution, which made the islands an important urban Tanzanian site of nation building

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, from *Mwafrika*, 19 November 1960.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, from *Ngurumo*, 25 October 1960. For another account, see Jhaveri (1999: 1–3).

⁶² *Ngurumo*, 22 October 1960, in TNA 540/DC1/68.

⁶³ 'Jamal spurs Asians: integrate', *Tanganyika Standard*, 30 June 1964.

where cinema and race intersected. Two months after the revolution the new regime nationalized all the theatres (Burgess 2002: 294). The government quickly learned what cinema meant to the everyday lives of its citizens, however, as the American vice-consul to Zanzibar at the time reported: 'Closed for a while after the [January] revolution, Zanzibar Town's three cinemas were open for business again in April. A decision by the government to nationalize them drew an immediate and furious protest from ordinary Zanzibaris, who loved going to the movies, and the decision was revoked' (Pettersen 2002: 217). Although the Zanzibar government would not attempt nationalization again, the issue never fully went away. The Afro-Shirazi Party youth conference in December 1964 passed a resolution to fight racial discrimination through, in addition to other measures, instituting state control over cinemas and banning all American films 'that have a demoralizing effect'.⁶⁴

Resistance to Tanzania's censorship policies, initiated by both cinema proprietors and patrons, also occurred on the mainland. In late 1963, the Dar es Salaam police charged the manager of a cinema hall, his assistant, and the projector operator with screening parts of a film marked for deletion by the censor board.⁶⁵ The trial ran for over ten months with the accused pleading not guilty, claiming their error was an innocent mistake. When the National Censor Board (NCB) banned several films 'in the national interest' in April of 1967, cinema fans deluged the newspapers with howls of protest.⁶⁶ One letter writer sarcastically quipped that only *Lassie* would pass the board's moral test.⁶⁷ Another argued, 'Who is this Censor that he has the right to guard our morals? Is he endowed with more virtue, is he more inured against the temptations of the flesh, is he less corruptible than the rest of us?'⁶⁸ James Kakoye scathingly wrote, 'I would suggest... that the present NCB, apparently full of over-enthusiastic politicians, be dissolved by the Government.'⁶⁹ An editorial in the daily *Tanganyika Standard*, encapsulating earlier public discontent over censorship in 1964, opined, 'The cinema provides one of the most popular forms of entertainment available to the people of Tanzania, and, as such, every effort should be made to maintain the highest standards and allow the widest popular choice for all ages.'⁷⁰

The preponderance of transnational movies presented frequent opportunities for officials advocating self-reliance to fulminate against the deleterious effects of foreign imports, surrounding cinema halls in Tanzania with such nationalist discourse. For example, the government wanted greater control over the circulation of 'foreign feature films regarded as "irrelevant to the national development aspirations, because they glorify affluent foreign life styles"'.⁷¹ Cold

⁶⁴ Afro-Shirazi youths urge cinemas take-over', *Tanganyika Standard*, 14 December 1964.

⁶⁵ For press coverage of the case, see 'Dar cinema staff plead not guilty', *Tanganyika Standard*, 3 June 1964; 'Censor tells court film "cuts" were shown to public', *Tanganyika Standard*, 24 July 1964; and 'Cinema ruling today', *Tanganyika Standard*, 1 September 1964.

⁶⁶ Quote from the letter of Richard Peter, *Tanganyika Standard*, 12 April 1967.

⁶⁷ P. B. Noble, *Tanganyika Standard*, 7 April 1967.

⁶⁸ 'Outraged', *Tanganyika Standard*, 12 April 1967.

⁶⁹ James Kakoye, *Tanganyika Standard*, 12 April 1967.

⁷⁰ 'Two-way traffic', *Tanganyika Standard*, 6 December 1964.

⁷¹ Smyth (1989: 392), quoting Lever (1983: viii).

War ideological differences led to the banning of James Bond films, a movie featuring a negative portrayal of Mao Zedong, and *The Godfather* in 1971 (for exalting the unsocialist and illegal accumulation of wealth).⁷² TANU in 1969 further claimed that 'roguish' elements of foreign films were ruining African culture (Brennan 2005: 508).

The proliferation of nationalist rhetoric notwithstanding, the Tanzanian cinema hall remained an important place for the circulation of international images throughout the 1960s and 1970s. However, more vitriol was directed toward American than Indian foreign films, as independent India practised favourable non-alignment politics and, historically, East Africa and India had long been connected within the wider Indian Ocean world. Tanzanian cultural norms, especially those revolving around dress, sex, marriage, and family, were far more similar to India's than America's. Hindi films' unthreatening transnationalism flew under the radar of nationalist governments in Zanzibar and Tanzania to remain popular with audiences, as they were throughout the colonial period. Bombay cinema's themes assisted this phenomenon, framing images of the decadent West in the 1960s and featuring ordinary heroes fighting a corrupt system for justice in the 1970s. In the end, local cinemagoers rejected a simple opposition pitting 'national' culture against destructive external influences, reflecting longer-term historical precedents in the Indian Ocean region toward transnationality over bounded territoriality. One Tanzanian commentator in 1981 called South 'Asian films, perhaps the most indigenous, not...spoilt by Western imitations...[A]lmost all the films, leaving out a few of the [South] Asian ones, are [culturally] foreign' (Ng'wanakilala 1981: 69–70).

The cultural legacy of cosmopolitan Indian Ocean world commonalities also had economic implications in post-colonial East Africa. Cinema halls continued to draw sizeable public crowds, especially in Dar es Salaam.⁷³ Film going remained a popular urban leisure event: a late 1970s report estimated that four million people per year saw entertainment films in Tanzanian towns.⁷⁴ As cities grew in the 1970s, cinema halls remained prime urban spaces, attracting large audiences as well as the attention of political leaders in government who were intent on building a new nation. In spite of the persistent connection between race and film during the nationalist era, Tanzanian cinemas continued to be filled by popular international fare led by films from Bombay. Throughout the 1970s Hindi films remained the most profitable genre, drawing better at the box office than Hollywood's offerings. For example, in a single day 9,796 people (grossing Shs 82,037) watched *Kal Aaj Aur Kal*, a popular 1971 Hindi film. By contrast, *Buck and the Preacher*, a 1972 Harry Belafonte and Sidney Poitier feature, sold 5,841 tickets (grossing Shs 42,842) after a run of six full days (Kaungamno 1973: 9). According to the head of the Tanzania Film Company in 1973, only one

⁷²'Censors catch another spy', *Tanganyika Standard*, 6 April 1967, and 'From – with love', *Tanganyika Standard*, 29 January 1967. See also Petterson (2002: 218) and Ssali (1988: 138–41).

⁷³Cinemas seated 200–500 on average even in the smaller urban centres, with higher capacities in towns. The Drive-In Cinema accommodated 700 cars and 200 sitting customers; the Empress had 793 seats; the Avalon, 746; and Cine Afrique, in Zanzibar, 605. For Cine Afrique, interview with Mitu Jr, 29 July 1997. For the Drive-In, see 'First Drive-In Cinema for Dar', *Tanganyika Standard*, 18 August 1964. For all the other mainland theatres' capacities, see Ssali (1988): 126–7.

⁷⁴Ssali (1988: 108), citing Sicoloff and Lever (1978: 10).

cinema showed an English film on the lucrative viewing day of Sunday, as Indian films earned more than twice as much.⁷⁵ Ideologically appealing movies flopped even more miserably. Socialist fare from the USSR and other allied countries, despite occasional public demands for 'proper' national entertainment, never played well with Tanzanian cinemagoers used to Indian or American entertainment.⁷⁶

The reliance on foreign films from capitalist countries to generate revenue was an ideological compromise for the socialist state, but one official noted that Tanzania needed the tax collections from lucrative Hindi films 'for the Government to provide more social services' (Kaungamno 1973: 9). Films had to be popular – as opposed to philosophically consistent with *ujamaa* – for profits to accumulate to all stakeholders, including the state. Accordingly, 75 per cent of all films brought into Tanzania between 1977 and 1983 were 'Indian musicals' (Ssali 1988: 147). Working on a consistently tight budget, the Tanzania Film Company further refused to outlay funds to dub or subtitle any foreign films into Swahili, whether from socialist allies, America or India. The language issue did not deter Africans from watching Hindi films, however, familiar as they were from decades of prominence as the most popular form of Indian Ocean world cinema.

CONCLUSION

Since the arrival of film early in the British colonial period, debates over race and cinema have shaped Tanganyikan movie theatres. The legacy of the colonial-era racialization of cinema halls ensured that campaigns concerning film policy or content would be discussed in terms of race even in independent Tanzania. While President Nyerere explicitly tried to build a non-racial nation, the language of race continued to permeate discussions of film. Nonetheless, cinema – still dominated by movies from overseas – grew in popularity despite new conceptions of proper entertainment urged by the nationalist cultural project. Throughout the long history of cinema in Tanzania, two aspects remained constant: the enduring popularity of Bombay films reliably provided by Indian Ocean world networks, and the close relationship between nationalism, race and the important urban space of the cinema hall. After the privation of the 1980s forced Tanzania's acquiescence to global policies of liberalization, public leisure spaces like cinema halls slowly eroded in prominence, and Dar es Salaam's film fans eventually suffered the end of the long era of grand movie theatres. Until that time, the history of colonialism, nationalism and race played out with Tanzanian cinemagoers and the state meeting for seventy-five years at the important transnational urban public space of the cinema hall.

To conclude, if we examine the history of Hindi movies in Tanzania from a denationalized angle – looking at interracial interaction instead of diasporic or

⁷⁵From a letter written by Clement Nsherenguzi, Managing Director of the Tanzania Film Company, printed in *The Standard* on 21 January 1972, cited in Brennan (2005: 508).

⁷⁶For example, a Russian film called *Tales of Rustam* attracted only 142 people (grossing Shs 600) in the early 1970s. See Kaungamno (1973: 9).

nationalist segregation – then the Bombay films that have traditionally predominated cannot be seen simply as escapist fare for African cinemagoers or as expressions of nostalgic longing for the Indian diaspora. In other words, a closer study of the history of popular culture can help us break the nation/diaspora dialectic prominent in the historiography of Indians in East Africa. In addition, an Indian Ocean world frame enables a viewing of the transregional production of culture, and the ways that cross-cultural flows are part of the construction of important categories like race and nationalism in East Africa.

Finally, an examination of popular culture can also give us new chronologies of Indian Ocean world history, a field dominated by the themes of trade, politics and religion. The foundational scholarship asserted that colonial domination of the Indian Ocean eroded transoceanic connections, something which has been challenged recently by prominent scholars like Sugata Bose (2006) and Thomas Metcalf (2007). But even their work points toward either inward-looking nationalism after the First World War, the effects of the worldwide depression, or the end of the global British Empire as factors leading to the dismemberment of Indian Ocean world networks. However, this case study on cinema halls tells us that despite the removal of imperial connections, despite the reduction in diasporic ties between East Africa and South Asia due to the establishment of national borders, and despite the dominance of African political and cultural nationalism, the 1950s to 1980s were a time of growth for Indian films in Tanzania. Attention to cinema as a prominent form of popular culture reveals new histories to be written of the Indian Ocean world across the length of the twentieth century, and the critical place of East Africa in this story should not be neglected.

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ABSTRACT

This essay considers the role of Hindi films in urban Tanzania in writing new chronologies of Indian Ocean world history. Examining films and movie theatres through overlapping local, national and transnational lenses, the article contributes to our understandings of the encounter between the Indian diaspora and nationalism in East Africa, and extends the history of Indian Ocean world connections into the second half of the twentieth century. In order to escape the historiographical dialectic between nation and diaspora which splits scholarship on Hindi films overseas, cinema needs to be denationalized, and everyday social histories of urban cinema halls can then be framed within the Indian Ocean world. To do so successfully, however, we must challenge scholarship which asserts the collapse of this world in the early modern or colonial period (at the latest), in order to extend an Indian Ocean scale to capture the vibrant twentieth-century creation of a regional popular culture. The history of Bombay films in urban Tanzania thus enables a viewing of the transnational production of culture, and the ways in which cross-cultural flows are part of the construction of important categories like race and nationalism across the history of East Africa.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet essai traite du rôle des films hindis, en Tanzanie urbaine, dans la rédaction de nouvelles chronologies de l'histoire du monde de l'océan Indien. À travers l'examen de films et de salles de cinéma sous des angles locaux, nationaux et transnationaux parfois mêlés, l'article nous aide à mieux comprendre la rencontre entre la diaspora indienne et le nationalisme en Afrique orientale, et retrace l'histoire des liens dans l'océan Indien jusqu'à la seconde moitié du vingtième siècle. Pour échapper à la dialectique historiographique entre nation et diaspora qui divise les spécialistes sur la question des films hindis à l'étranger, il faut dénationaliser le cinéma avant de pouvoir définir dans le monde de l'océan Indien les histoires sociales quotidiennes des salles de cinéma urbaines. Pour y arriver, il faut cependant remettre en question les études qui revendiquent l'effondrement de ce monde au début de la période moderne ou coloniale (au plus tard), afin de saisir la création vibrante d'une culture populaire régionale au vingtième siècle en étendant l'échelle de l'océan Indien. L'histoire des films de Bombay en Tanzanie urbaine offre par conséquent une vue de la production culturelle transnationale, et de la manière dont les flux transculturels s'intègrent dans la construction de catégories importantes comme la race et le nationalisme dans l'histoire de l'Afrique orientale.