

Callaci, Emily: *Street Archives and City Life. Popular Intellectuals in Postcolonial Tanzania*. Durham: Duke University Press 2017. ISBN: 978-0-8223-6991-2; 296 S.

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For the last three decades, especially since the important work of Subaltern Studies Collective¹, historians have become dutiful in acknowledging the silences and power of colonial knowledge production. But far too often, attempts to include colonized voices and excavate their various agencies come up short. They either acknowledge this problematic of colonial archives (e.g. pointing out the limitations of their work, lamenting perspectives of the state and from above, etc.), or they have little choice but read colonial texts „against“ or „across the grain“.² In the fields of colonial and postcolonial urban studies and urban planning, scholars have a hard time offering empirical evidence to show how various subalterns or former colonial subjects constructed and mapped their places of home.

In this respect, Emily Callaci provides new avenues in a brilliant book. She shows how ordinary people contributed to the making of the city through the production of texts. To be sure, this book is about popular intellectuals within a postcolonial context. But for those interested in colonial urbanism and history, Callaci offers a practical yet ambitious concept for venturing out of the archives of official documentation and for resurrecting the popular cultural artifacts from their places of origin: in the streets. Her field research brings together the ostensible ephemera of popular cultural production, that is, everything from advice literature, newspaper commentary, self-published novellas, songs texts, and even social surveys and ethnographic research notes from the 1970s. Callaci considers these collections of texts as individual „Street Archives“. This novel concept, however, is more than just a new way of categorizing unofficial voices. In bringing these texts together Callaci reads them as the constitutive „textuality“ of urban life (p. 12–13). For a book focused on Dar es Salaam, Callaci's original ap-

proach enables readers to better understand the making of urban life beyond colonial and postcolonial cities.

The core chapters of the book are presented as case studies to show how the many voices and converging visions of the self and the city produced its postcolonial ethos and urbanism. Callaci argues that by the 1980s this new understanding of Dar es Salaam as „Bongo“, literally meaning „brains“, was not simply a product of colonial heritage or top-down government programs. Instead, Bongo was a product of a new urban reality that was largely autonomous of the anti-urban purview of Tanzania's ruling party, TANU, and its pro-rural project of Ujamaa or „villagization“. For those familiar with the modern history of Tanzania, the book's first chapter on the politics of Ujamaa and its last chapter on the emergence of Dar es Salaam as Bongo should be familiar terrain. In this light, Callaci is correct by referring to these chapters as „chronological bookends“ to her study (p. 15). But the path from Ujamaa in the late 1960s to the emergence of Bongo by the 1980s is a novel story. And Callaci makes it accessible in her case studies of Tanzania's popular authors.

Chapter 2, the book's first case study, „examines the intellectual and cultural work of middle-class Christian African women reformers who sought to model a modern urban African womanhood by composing advice literature for unmarried 'girls' in the city“ (p. 15). Callaci ascends face value interpretations of Christian advice and self-help literature with analytical originality. For example, the project of urban „reformers and advice writers“ (p. 61) was not just depicted as an obvious prescription to reinforce Christian values, domesticity and respectability. Callaci's contextualization of these sources reveals the many ways in which competing reformers sought to understand their personal lives and become modern workers within a postcolonial African socialist city. Callaci also resurrects social surveys and research notes con-

¹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Can the Subaltern Speak? in: C. Nelson / L. Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Basingstoke 1988, p. 271–313.

² Michelle Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries. African Soldiers Conquest and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa*, Athens 2014, p. 24.

ducted by a team of female graduate students from the University of Dar es Salaam in 1973 and 1974. At first, this body of ethnographic data seems misplaced, especially in a chapter that is largely about African intellectuals hailing from various Christian institutions and literary organizations. But when Callaci follows up and examines texts on sex education and family planning, she is able to illuminate competing visions and approaches to working women and their roles in forging city life.

Chapter 3 shifts attention to social and cultural rituals (e.g. dancehalls and nightclubs) of Dar es Salaam's nightlife during the socialist-era. In this new case study, Callaci „explores networks of musicians, waitresses, bouncers, stage dancers, taxi drivers, and consumers“ (p. 16) to show how they generated city life within, and at times, against the restrictions of the TANU ruling party's anti-urban agenda. Here, Callaci's gender analysis is exceptionally rich and balanced, especially illuminating the ways in which young men are the victims of entrenched values and state-sanctioned definitions of masculinity. In her many interviews and analysis of song texts, Callaci interweaves issues of national culture and racial visions of Ujamaa and President Julius Nyerere. She bounces off these instances in her analysis as party officials critiqued changing gender roles not only as a threat to African socialism and unity, but also as a broader threat of neo-colonial entanglements with wealthy foreigners such as Europeans and South Asians. Callaci shows how musicians and participants in Dar's club culture were often able to gain state recognition and financial support by repackaging „foreign“ fashions to conform to the state's nationalist visions of authentic African culture.

Chapter 4 focuses on a small yet significant movement of popular fiction writers known as „briefcase publishers“. This case study „draws on about two hundred of the[ir] novellas“ (p. 144) as another street archive from the mid-1970s onward. In the context of urban neglect, economic stagnation, and floundering promises by the TANU for wage labor and government employment, young men and women continued to flock to the city of Dar es Salaam. Callaci shows how these urban migrants and pulp-fiction writers

participated in, critiqued, and at times, glorified their alternative mobilities, rural-urban connectivity, and sought ways to promote themselves and legitimize what Callaci calls a „new urban masculinity“ (p. 16). As outsiders to the exclusive education of the University of Dar es Salaam and urban spaces for government elites, these writers belonged to a large demographic that aspired toward urban inclusion. In her reading of crime thrillers and romantic novellas, Callaci succeeds in showing how they reimagined their tenuous existences and exclusion from the high-profile life of „nightclubs“ and „Benzes“ (p. 192). Like the authors themselves, their novellas circulated through the shifting networks of a burgeoning city that were largely off the official map.

In framing TANU's national policy as indelibly racist, Callaci has produced an effective foil in underscoring her argument and approach to identity politics. Towards the end of the book, however, the centrality of gender begins to lose some of its original force. In the case of the „briefcase publishers“, one could argue that these strangers to the city also understood their foreignness and male shortcomings in terms of their ethnic or racialized position within long-standing hierarchies. There are numerous instances in which these authors portrayed Swahili and Asian urban elites as obstacles to their potentiality. In navigating Dar's historic cosmopolitanism, they often chose African accomplices in struggling against, for example, egregious Swahili confidants, dependence on „untrustworthy“ Asian printing companies (p. 155), or in shooting up Ismaili institutions with unsavory colonial pasts (p. 167). Perhaps this is an unintended consequence of Callaci's integration of Ujamaa and Nyerere as more than a backdrop. Such incidences, nonetheless, raise the question whether TANU's racialized nationalism was merely an invention of the state.

But such quibbles should not detract from Emily Callaci's immense intellectual contribution. Callaci has written a book that is thoroughly engaging and relevant to broad and specialized audiences. Callaci's mixture of biographies and real concrete places in the everyday city interweaves important sec-

ondary literature in urban studies and post-colonial perspectives (AbdouMaliq Simone, Antoinette Burton, Saskia Sassen, to name a few). She does this in such a way that the reader is engrossed by novelty and guided by a sense of theoretical clarity. Callaci also succeeds in reconstructing the silences and fragmented artifacts of the postcolonial city from the middle and below. And she keeps the reader engaged by revisiting previous actors in later chapters and on unexpected stages of the city. *Street Archives* is a welcome collection of Tanzanian voices that speak to the colonial, the postcolonial and beyond.

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