

Introduction

On the morning of August 9, 1944, Saleh Juma set off for the Zanzibar harbor to begin an epic journey to help build the African nation. As he wound his way through the alleys, passing the plastered coral ragstone buildings and intricately carved doors of Stone Town, he eventually came to the waterfront in the shadow of the Sultan's palace. The beautiful three-story building with onion-shaped archways, large verandahs, and crested with white merlons and Mangalore red-clay roof tiles was inhabited by the Busaidi family, originally from Oman. Omani Arabs had expelled the Portuguese from the town on the western-most tip of the island of Unguja for the final time in 1729. After a regime change in Muscat in the 1740s, the new Busaidi Dynasty would eventually come to rule over the entire Swahili coast of East Africa, and Sultan Seyyid Said al-Busaidi even relocated the capital of his vast empire to Zanzibar Town in 1832. The economic fortunes of the sultans continued to rise in the second half of the 1800s, but the installation of a British Resident in Zanzibar in 1890 and the creation of a British Protectorate that same year clearly marked the erosion of the political power of the Busaidis that would continue to the point that by the morning of Juma's journey, the Sultan's power was limited to the domestic control of a group of islands just off the East African coast (Map 0.1).¹

¹ Technically, the British were leasing the ten-mile coastal strip of land of the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya from the Sultan, and the inhabitants there remained the Sultan's subjects, but this land was largely administered from Nairobi and not Zanzibar and the Sultan's local administrators were beholden to the British colonial government. On the complications and legacy of the relationship between the sultan and this coastal strip of Kenya, see James R. Brennan, "Lowering the Sultan's Flag: Sovereignty and Decolonization in Coastal Kenya," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50 (October 2008): 831–861; For recent histories of the Zanzibar isles in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Jeremy Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World: African Consumerism and the Genealogies of Globalization* (Berkeley: University of



Map 0.1 Political Map of East Africa, c. 1924

As Juma stepped onto the dhow that morning, luggage packed with clothes and personal papers, he began a two-month-long political mission that would take him over 1,500 miles with stops in six towns where he was scheduled to give speeches and hold meetings. The first leg was the shortest, though, as Bagamoyo lay just twenty-seven miles across the choppy waters of the Zanzibar Channel. However,

California Press, 2008); Thomas F. McDow, *Buying Time: Debt and Mobility in the Western Indian Ocean* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2018).

Bagamoyo was in a whole new country. Once a major terminus of the East African slave and ivory trade, Bagamoyo had also been the former capital of German East Africa that had been formally acquired from the Sultan in the Heligoland Treaty of 1890 (though the Sultan was not invited to the negotiations).² But after the First World War, the League of Nations acquired the territory and granted Great Britain administrative control of the territory to rule as trustees on behalf of the League. The British renamed the country Tanganyika Territory and installed a governor in 1920.³ From the boat Juma would have seen the twin half-timbered towers of the German-built Customs House rising from the sand as porters scrambled about readying to unload cargo. Upon disembarking from the government-operated ferry, Juma would have likely submitted his *cheti cha njia*, or travel permit, which would have allowed the Zanzibari subject legal entry into Tanganyika. After passing through customs, he was likely greeted by a welcoming committee of members of the African Association (AA), a politically minded group that promoted African unity. As the “Honorable General Secretary” of the Zanzibar Town chapter, Saleh Juma was a distinguished leader in the Association. At this point, the AA had multiple chapters in both Tanganyika Territory and the Zanzibar Protectorate, and one each in Kenya, Nyasaland, and the Uganda Protectorate. Over the preceding decade, the organization had established a wide political network that helped facilitate the mobility of its activists and enabled the movement of its ideas. After spending the night with either a member of the Association or in the government rest camp for traveling Africans built at the request of the AA, Juma left the next morning for the two-and-a-half-hour lorry ride down to Dar es Salaam, the burgeoning new capital of the territory.⁴

² Arne Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism 1856–1918: A Political Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 169.

³ It did not receive its formal mandate until 1922. The former German East African territory of Ruanda-Urundi became a Belgian Mandate. Michael D. Callahan, *Mandates and Empire: The League of Nations and Africa 1914–1931* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), 47–57, 84–89.

⁴ The *Vyeti vya Njia* were required of all African travelers in Tanganyika by the Identity Ordinance of 1935. However, enforcement was patchy. TNA 7/53/B “Officer in charge of Customs,” 7/22/1953; Steven Fabian, *Making Identity on the Swahili Coast: Urban Life, Community, and Belonging in Bagamoyo* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 285; Charlotte Lee Miller, “Who Are the ‘Permanent Inhabitants’ of the State?: Citizenship Policies and Border Controls in Tanzania, 1920–1980” PhD Thesis, University of Iowa, 2011,

Juma next made his way to the Central Railway Station, another German-built edifice with a red-tiled roof and large hipped dormer that looked out over Railway Street, to board the overnight train for his twenty-one-hour, 300-mile journey to the Tanganyikan interior.⁵ Juma would have likely awoken to the conical and verdant Uluguru Mountains passing outside his window before eventually making his way to the dusty city of Dodoma, the provincial capital of Central Province and his home base for the next five weeks. As Juma pulled into the station, he must have been struck by the difference between his destination and his hometown. The red soil, open expanses, and occasional rock outcroppings of the area around Dodoma are reminiscent of the American Southwest and would have contrasted sharply with cosmopolitan Zanzibar's tropical beaches, swaying palm trees, and ornate stone architecture. But Dodoma was home to one of the fastest growing chapters in the organization and Juma was there to shore up the momentum of the AA's leaders, and to help establish new branches in the region. During Juma's time in Central Province, he traveled to Bahi, Kondoa-Irangi, and Mpwapwa where he met with chiefs, AA leaders, and British administrators. He even watched a soccer match and shared the Ramadan predawn *daku* meal with Shaaban Robert, the most famous Kiswahili poet of the twentieth century and a member of the African Association.⁶ In his final week in Dodoma, he would also give a speech at a general meeting of the AA to a crowd of over 200 men and women when he oversaw the installation of four new women officers in the chapter.⁷ Upon his return to Zanzibar, he would write to one of them, Martha Chunga, the Women's Secretary,

35–39, 63–64, 70; thanks to Steve Fabian for supplying me with much of this information on Bagamoyo.

⁵ Itinerary of the first four legs of his journey found in TNA 571/53/39 “*Jaratibu ya safari*,” 9/9/1944.

⁶ TNA 571/6/AA/38/51 “*Safari ya Bahi*”; TNA 571/9/AA/52/52-54 “*Safari ya Mpwapwa*”; TNA 571/39/107-109 “*Kondoa-Irangi*,” 8/24/1944; On Robert see, Elena Bertocini Zúbková, “Robert, Shaaban” in Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Emmanuel Akyeampong, eds., *Dictionary of African Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5:206–208; Clement Ndulute, *The Poetry of Shaaban Robert: Selected and Translated* (Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press, 1994); M. M. Mulokozi, “Revolution and Reaction in Swahili Poetry,” *Umma* 4 (1974): 132–133; Ann Biersteker, *Kujibizana: Questions of Language and Power in Nineteenth-and Twentieth-Century Poetry in Kiswahili* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1996).

⁷ TNA 571/53/44 “General Meeting,” 9/9/1944.

congratulating the women for being “the Guardians of our Nation” and wishing them luck as they helped bring unity to Africans and nurtured the Association.⁸

But only a day after his arrival, he would be off again with Hassan Suleiman, Chief Adviser of the Dodoma chapter and his guide and companion for all his political stops. The destination was Iringa, a district capital in the neighboring Southern Highlands Province, and Juma and Suleiman left early on the morning of August 12 to make the 162-mile journey on the newly opened road service operated by the British government.⁹ That evening Juma would make two speeches, the first was at the formal opening of the new AA chapter in Iringa, which was attended by the British District Officer, S. A. Walden, and Chief Adam Sapi Mkwawa, the paramount chief of the Hehe and future ally of the African Association.¹⁰ Juma had words of praise for both Chief Adam Sapi and King George VI and he prayed that “God would continue to bless” the British monarch, and “grant him good health, strength, so that his flag to continue to fly everywhere.” He recognized that the Africans of the district were the trustees of the British and he hoped the British would continue to work with Africans to create justice and peace.¹¹ These messages of loyalty to the British and a desire of partnership were quite common in the first two decades of the organization’s existence.

Later that evening, possibly after some of the dignitaries had left, Juma delivered a more consequential speech that more fully laid out the purpose and aims of the African Association. Speaking to a crowd of potential members and curious onlookers, Juma’s appearance undoubtedly made an impression that night. This speaker from a foreign country wearing Zanzibari finery with a billowing white *kanzu*

⁸ “*Walezi wa Taifa letu.*” TNA 571/46/AA/101/91 Juma to Lady Secretary, AA Dodoma, 10/29/1944.

⁹ M. F. Hill, *Permanent Way: Volume II The Story of the Tanganyika Railways* (Nairobi: East African Railways and Harbours, 1957), 260.

¹⁰ Adam Sapi was also the grandson of Chief Mkwakwa, renowned for his resistance to German rule in the 1890s, and in the postcolonial period Sapi would become the first Speaker of the newly created National Assembly in Tanzania in 1964; Dean E. McHenry Jr., “A Study of the Rise of TANU and the Demise of British Rule in Kigoma Region, Western Tanzania,” *The African Review* 3 (1973): 412; PJI G. G. Hajivayanis, “The Life of Mzee Hassan Toufiq Suleiman” (unpublished mss, n.d. c. 1968), 11.

¹¹ TNA 571/39/105-106 “*Hotuba ya Ufunguzi,*” 8/12/1944.

gown and a finely embroidered *kofia* hat would have cut quite the image for the audience in Iringa that day, many of whom would have been dressed in a mix of Western and traditional attire. But it was the content of the message that was probably most remarkable for his listeners. Speaking in Kiswahili, long the lingua franca of the region, Juma used the theme of a rope to tie his message together by explaining that the:

African Association is the rope which rolls together all the Africans, it does not matter if they are Hehe, Nyakyusa, or Gogo etc. . . . Nowadays, anyone who can see knows that his tribe is African. Look at me, I am a real citizen of Unguja who does not have any relative in this country. . . . I could not be here for the rest of my life, but because of the rope of the African Association, I have been here and I will go up to the west and you also [can] come to Zanzibar as well if you like because there your relatives are.¹²

Indeed, throughout his time in Tanganyika, this Zanzibari repurposed the Swahili concept of indigeneity (*uvenyeji*) to convince black Africans that they belonged to an African nation of people no matter where they went. For instance, in Kondoa-Irangi where the chapter's Vice-President, Khalfan Mayagilo, had resigned because he felt "the indigenous (*wenyeji*) of this city" did not want him and other "foreigners (*wageni*)" leading the chapter. Juma rebuked all the members by retorting that he was "surprised to hear that the locals here in Kondoa say that you, Mwalimu Khalfan, are a foreigner in this Africa. I came from Unguja today, [and] I say that I am an indigenous person (*muvenyeji*) here and anywhere else in this Africa (*Afrika hii*)."¹³ In fact, he began his speech in Iringa by stating emphatically that the African Association was "the Fellowship of the indigenous of Africa."¹⁴

To the gathered Africans in Iringa, he promoted the continental and global vision of the organization – to bring together all people of African origin – by bragging that a leader of the AA had gone to the West Indies "where there are millions of Africans" to spread the Association there and that they also hoped to start chapters in Asia where members were stationed during the war. On the continent, he

¹² TNA 571/39/110-111 "Hotuba ya Kuvunjia Mkutano," 8/12/1944.

¹³ TNA 571/39/107-109 "Kondoa-Irangi," 8/24/1944.

¹⁴ "Ushirika wenyeji wa Afrika." TNA 571/39/110-111 "Hotuba ya Kuvunjia Mkutano," 8/12/1944.

said the Association would bring back together all Africans “from North to South, from East to West of Africa.”¹⁵ The purpose of uniting Africans across the continent was to reclaim a shared past and to claim, and build, a shared civilization as a great people; but that was not possible unless they first unified under the direction of the AA. Even though a grand future was envisioned where Africans would play a more prominent role on the global stage, Juma made clear that the first steps were intimately local as the members of the Association were to help out other Africans with their practical everyday needs.¹⁶

Towards the end of the Iringa speech, Juma returned to and reemphasized the importance of promoting an African identity above all others and the concept of belonging to an African nation. “The African Association stands because of the building of the African nation (*kuli-jenga ya taifa la wa Africa*) which has been divided into different pieces.” He went on to try and subvert ethnic thinking by claiming that “the African Association is not looking for any one tribe, or the best tribe, but it teaches people that their tribe is African.” He pleaded with his audience to respect and love the people of Africa and to be proud of the color of their skin, and closed by exhorting them, “people of Iringa take the rope to Malangali, Mahenge, Songea, Mbeya, Chunya, Tukuyu, Nyasaland, and Northern Rhodesia with all your strength.”¹⁷

The most noteworthy aspect of Juma’s Iringa speech, and his trans-territorial political journey more generally, was the way in which he intentionally tried to inculcate and spread an *African* identity, an identity that was to be given greater loyalty above and beyond any other identity – ethnic, territorial, or religious. Not only does this challenge the way histories of the African Association have been written but it also complicates the historical narrative of the rise of African identity in East Africa, which has tended to see the African identity as a reaction to colonial administrators’ racial categories and the negative ramifications of being “African” in colonial East Africa.¹⁸ Instead, the

¹⁵ Ibid. ¹⁶ TNA 571/39/107-109 “*Kondoa-Irangi*,” 8/24/1944.

¹⁷ TNA 571/39/110-111 “*Hotuba ya Kuvunja Mkutano*,” 8/12/1944.

¹⁸ Numerous scholars have made instrumentalist arguments for the role of colonial structures in the construction of racial or ethnic identities. Some are more convincing than others. See, Alamin M. Mazrui and Ibrahim Noor Shariff, *The Swahili: Idiom and Identity of an African People* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1994), 32-33; Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*:

story of the African Association demonstrates how a group of Africans, which was connected to global circuits of pan-African thinking, proactively endeavored to create an African identity by touting the benefits of racial association and by inspiring would-be Africans of a promising future together as a great civilization of people. The African Association aimed to invite all black people (*watu weusi*), or the indigenous people of Africa, to use Juma's phrase, to help them build the African nation.

One of the central questions driving *Building the African Nation* is how did an African identity come to have personal or political purchase in East Africa? As a study at the crossroads of intellectual, political, and social history, I trace how these East African activists, political thinkers, and entrepreneurs encountered racial ideas, grappled with them, embraced them, reconfigured them, and then promoted them in their particular contexts – the cities, towns, and rural areas where the organization worked. In the end, the appeal of joining the African Association and embracing an African identity to one degree or another was either due to a desire to obtain the practical benefits of belonging in order to navigate life in colonial East Africa or by being inspired by the redemptive message of an African nation. Oftentimes it was a combination of the two.

Using the lens of intellectual history to tell the story of the African Association enables a prioritization of the thoughts and ideas of the historical actors themselves and not what later politicians and scholars assumed were their motivations.¹⁹ In doing so, it becomes clear that

Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 13–16; Ronald Aminzade, *Race, Nation, and Citizenship in Post-Colonial Africa: The Case of Tanzania* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 46–47; Ned Bertz, *Diaspora and Nation in the Indian Ocean: Transnational Histories of Race and Urban Space in Tanzania* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 82–83; for critiques of elements of instrumentalist arguments, see James R. Brennan, "Realizing Civilization through Patrilineal Descent: The Intellectual Making of an African Racial Nationalism in Tanzania, 1920–50," *Social Identities* 12 (July 2006): 405–409; Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), x, 4–8; Derek R. Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival: A History of Dissent, c.1935–1972* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 26.

¹⁹ Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 3–4.

the political imaginations of these East Africans were both larger and smaller than the colonial territories in which they lived.²⁰ In fact, for over two decades these activists consistently eschewed territorial thinking. Their vision was both continental, as they sought to create a great civilization of African people, and local, as they believed a central outcome of African unity was to help individuals and local communities in their everyday affairs. But the leaders of the AA also sought to work with allies, including the British, in order to help build the African nation. Thus, the tale of these pan-Africanists challenges and complicates the political histories of twentieth-century East Africa, which have assumed that the only political stories were ones of anti-colonial territorial nationalism and anti-imperialist pan-Africanism.

The African Association and Nationalist Histories of Tanganyika and Zanzibar

For generations the political histories of Africa have been dominated by the narratives of resistance, the stories of rebellion, and the tales of black power movements defeating, or attempting to defeat, the colonial and postcolonial imperial threats to Africans. The overarching story that tied these histories together was explaining the triumph of nation building. The need was to tell national and international histories of how anti-colonial territorial nationalist movements, armed with the ideology of Pan-Africanism and aided by the solidarity of partners willing to fight in the name of African unity, defeated imperial regimes and created new nation-states that were sovereign and independent. These histories stood in sharp contrast to earlier histories of Africa that focused on European agency in the continent, and these scholars' contributions have been immense as many of their insights remain remarkably valuable today.

Nonetheless, in the last two decades several scholars have demonstrated that those histories were not the only movements and struggles that inspired the political imaginations of Africans during the age of empire and the postcolonial period. Philip Zachernuk, looking at West African intellectuals, lamented that virtually all African intellectual thought was treated as part of the inevitable growth of nationalist

²⁰ Frederick Cooper, "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History," *American Historical Review* 99 (December 1994): 1519.

consciousness and was judged according to the nationalist paradigm. Any ideas that did not fit that mold were ignored or cut from the record.²¹ By carefully combing through vernacular sources, a number of East African scholars such as Derek Peterson, Emma Hunter, Jonathon Earle, James Brennan, and Jonathon Glassman have more recently demonstrated how Africans cared about and worked within different political registers than territorially focused anti-colonial politics. Whether it was East African revivalists elaborating ethnic moral patriotism, Kichagga newspaper consumers grappling with local and global discourses about progress and citizenship, dissenting intellectuals reworking histories to contest the ideational kingdom of Buganda, or coastal elites arguing over the inclusionary limits of race and civilization in the Indian Ocean, they all revealed that political interests were not always focused on defeating imperialists and establishing sovereign states over the territories the Europeans had largely drawn up.²²

Building and expanding on this body of literature, I use the story of the African Association and its complex relationship to nationalism to promote a more nuanced way to understand the phenomenon of nationalism in Africa. Embedded into my narrative are several subtle critiques of aspects of the nationalist historiography of African history. Instead of judging the success of the organization by the yardstick of contributions to a future anti-colonialist nationalist cause, I investigate the accomplishments and failures of the various actors based on their own intentions and aims.²³ With this, I avoid the tendency to assume

²¹ Philip S. Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects: An African Intelligentsia and Atlantic Ideas* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 3–5.

²² Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism*; Emma Hunter, *Political Thought and the Public Sphere in Tanzania: Freedom, Democracy and Citizenship in the Era of Decolonization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Jonathan L. Earle, *Colonial Buganda and the End of Empire: Political Thought and Historical Imagination in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); James R. Brennan, *Taifa: Making Nation and Race in Urban Tanzania* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012); Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones*.

²³ For a similar argument, see Cooper, “Conflict and Connection,” 1537–1539; Scholars of India were the first to critique stagist theories of the history of nationalism, most notably, Ranajit Guha. For a discussion, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 12–14; in African history, Derek Peterson too has urged the need to do away with single chronologies and focus instead on the lumpy, nonlinear, overlapping chronologies that African

that all early twentieth-century political history was anti-colonial nationalist history. This assumption has elsewhere resulted in the practice of shoehorning all political actors and movements into nationalist stories and teleologies, and labeling them as pre- or proto-nationalists. But the figures of the AA do not comfortably fit into this mold. Similarly, I avoid the common binaries found in much of the literature between metropole and colony, and resisters and collaborators. The labels of resistor or collaborator discount African conceptualizations of social reality as well as flatten the complexities of African political enterprises.²⁴ Again, the figures of the AA do not fit comfortably into these molds. Meanwhile, a focus on the vertical relationship between metropole and colony has the tendency to reduce African political thought to mere reactions to colonial policies and initiative. Alternatively, I investigate the more creative aspects of African political thinking and its multiple sources from both inside and outside of the colonial borders.²⁵ Indeed, scholars of African political history have traditionally limited themselves to the periodization of colonialism or post-colonialism and restricted their analysis to incidents and explanations found within the territorial borders set up by colonial authorities. This study, therefore, intentionally seeks to put the African Association into their regional and global contexts, while simultaneously looking for deep antecedents in the precolonial period, and then tracing the effects of their ideas into the postcolonial period.

Building the African Nation also endeavors to use clarity and consistency in the use of terminology, which has been frustratingly

thinkers embraced. Derek R. Peterson, "Culture and Chronology in African History," *The Historical Journal* 50 (2007): 486.

²⁴ Cooper, "Conflict and Connection," 1534; for similar points, see Brennan, *Taifa*; Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones*, x, 6–7; John Lonsdale, "The Moral Economy of Mau Mau: Wealth, Poverty and Civic Virtue in Kikuyu Political Thought," in *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa*, Book Two: *Violence and Ethnicity*, eds. Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale (Oxford: James Currey, 1992), 316.

²⁵ For similar critiques, see Carol Summers, "Grandfathers, Grandsons, Morality, and Radical Politics in Late Colonial Buganda," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 38 (2005): 429; Meredith Terretta, "Cameroonian Nationalists Go Global: From Forest *Maquis* to a Pan-African Accra," *Journal of African History* 51 (2010): 190–191; Glassman, *War of Words*, 6–7; Thomas Spear, "Introduction: African Histories and Historiographies," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of African Historiography: Methods and Sources*, ed. Thomas Spear (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 1204–1205; and below.

inconsistent in much nationalist historiography. The terms “nation,” “nation-state,” and “nationalism” often get conflated and confused by scholars. A nation most simply is a grouping of people, an imagined community with a perceived shared past and future, and deserving of loyalty and commitment, while nationalism comes in many stripes – political, territorial, cultural, economic, and religious, among others. The aim of *political* nationalism is to create a politically sovereign state ruled by the people (the nation), while *territorial* nationalism more narrowly describes the desire for that state to control the demarcated homeland of the nation. *Cultural* nationalism, however, is not necessarily interested in institutions of statehood, but emphasizes cultural achievements and aspirations in hopes of encouraging national pride and loyalty and a sense of belonging to a great nation.²⁶ What most scholars of nationalism in twentieth-century Africa have been interested in then is what should properly be labeled as anti-colonial territorial nationalism, as they highlighted the desires of colonial subjects to liberate themselves from colonial rule and create nation-states within demarcated territorial boundaries, most of which aligned with the colonial political boundaries. However, not all nationalists in Africa were anti-colonial nor did they promote the territorial identities or geographic spaces largely created by imperial governments.²⁷

When looking at the histories written about the AA since the end of empire, it is clear that they have been consistently swept up into the nationalist narratives of nation building. In the literature on Tanganyika, they have been seen as the forefathers of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), the anti-colonial territorial nationalist group that came to power in 1961, while scholars of Zanzibari nationalism have seen the AA as the foundation of the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) that came to power in Zanzibar after the Revolution of 1964. Indeed, the African Association has often been paraded as the proto-nationalist group *par excellence* in the historical

²⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition (London: Verso, 2006); Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Second Edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006).

²⁷ Ismay Milford makes a similar point that anti-colonialism was not always nationalist and nationalism was not always anticolonial. Ismay Milford, *African Activists in a Decolonising World: The Making of an Anticolonial Culture, 1952–1966* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 7–8.

literature.²⁸ And yet, for many years the members of the AA were interested in a different kind of nation building. Their founders and leaders were not interested in building up a Tanganyikan nation, or Zanzibari nation, or Kenyan or Ugandan; indeed like Saleh Juma, they implored East Africans to ignore, and in some cases reject, those identities. For over two decades the nation they wished to build was an *African* nation. At the same time, they lacked any discussion of desires for statehood or political sovereignty. Instead, theirs was a racial and continental vision that was moral and civilizational, but also intimately useful. Thus, even though “African nationalism” has been shorthand for political and territorial nationalism in colonial Africa, the African Association constitutes a group for which “African nationalism” had a very different meaning. Strictly speaking, they were *African* nationalists, even though this is not a story of anti-colonial territorial nationalism.

For too long scholars looking at the political histories of either Tanganyika or Zanzibar have overlooked the fact that the organization had chapters in another territory, and in some cases have explicitly ignored this reality in an attempt to show the unique contribution of the nationalist party they were studying. Further complicating the story was that the two independent states of Tanganyika and Zanzibar merged in 1964 to create the United Republic of Tanzania. Despite the creation of a single new nation-state and the fact that the two nationalist political parties – TANU and the ASP – merged to become the *Chama cha Mapinduzi* (CCM), which still rules today, most of the scholarship was written as if an imaginary wall was erected down the Zanzibar Channel and authors were only concerned with the development of politics within either the mainland or the islands. The problem is that one cannot fully understand the intentions of a trans-territorial organization without examining the cross-fertilization of thought that goes on between members in various locales, and how the movement of ideas affected the outlook and aims of its constituents’ various agendas.

Part of the limitations of previous histories of the African Association stems from the territorial nature in which historians

²⁸ For discussion of examples of this in the scholarship from the 1960s through the 2010s, see Ethan R. Sanders, “The African Association and the Growth and Movement of Political Thought in Mid-Twentieth Century East Africa” (PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 2012), 3–12.

approached their archival work and the translation of their sources. Even the best histories on the AA have only looked at material housed in either the mainland or the islands and did not read the sources from both locales comparatively together, perpetuating the shortcomings of understanding a trans-territorial organization through territorial lenses.²⁹ One problem this manifested was the tendency to assume that words like “nation” in English were referring to a single colonial territory. However, statements made by AA leaders that they did not want “to bring shame to the nation,” or that the Association promoted advancement for “the whole nation,” need to be read in light of the fact that they were uttered by both Tanganyikans and Zanzibaris simultaneously and in the presence of one another, and thus the authors may not have been referring to a particular colony or nation-state.³⁰ Indeed, by looking carefully at the context and the uses of the Kiswahili term “*taifa*” (which is often translated into English as nation), *Building the African Nation* will show that most often during the 1930s and 1940s, the Association’s leaders used the term in reference to an imagined African racial nation, and not the particular territories of Tanganyika or Zanzibar.³¹ Moreover, by not reading the materials from across the Zanzibar Channel in tandem, one is more likely to see the intellectual growth of these African intellectuals as mere reactions to other groups’ ideas or territorial issues, missing out on the opportunity to understand the rich history of the cross-fertilization of thought across the region, and indeed the globe, that this book explores.³²

²⁹ John Iliffe’s magisterial *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) did not use the materials on the AA in the Zanzibar National Archives, while Jonathan Glassman’s Martin Klein Prize-winning *War of Words, War of Stones* did not consult the AA materials in the Tanzanian National Archives on the mainland.

³⁰ These particular quotes are used by Iliffe on pages 424 and 428 of *A Modern History*.

³¹ Especially when describing their own *taifa*, the *taifa wa Afrika*, or other racial groups. The history behind the formation of this usage and how it was used by Association leaders will be discussed at length in Chapter 1 and throughout. The racial overtones of the term *taifa* is also at the heart of Brennan’s, *Taifa*.

³² Glassman says the AA’s “intellectual development is best understood as an outgrowth of the ideas introduced by the political pioneers of the Arab Association.” Jonathon Glassman, “Sorting out the Tribes: The Creation of Racial Identities in Colonial Zanzibar’s Newspaper Wars,” *The Journal of African History* 41 (2000): 399; see also, Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones*, chapter 3.

Africa: Identity, Race, and Nation

Building the African Nation also contributes new insights and points of discussion for historical debates surrounding African identity, the idea of Africa, and the African nation. Here too, the scholarship on these topics share a lack of clarity of terms, emphasize structuralist and reactionist arguments, and are conceptually limited by territorial focuses. The idea of “Africa” originated in the Greco-Roman world when the Romans called one of their provinces by that name, but at some point began referring to any person coming from south of the Mediterranean, regardless of skin color, *Afer* or *African*.³³ However, according to Congolese philosopher V. Y. Mudimbe, as the idea of Africa developed over the centuries in the West it came to be understood more and more through the paradigm of difference and otherness, as the civilizational foil to Europe and encompassing the entire continent. By the Renaissance and into the Enlightenment period, the “dark continent” of Africa came to be seen as barbaric and backward and its inhabitants placed at the bottom of new racial hierarchies.³⁴ It was at this time in the late 1700s and 1800s, however, that an African identity came to be embraced by people whose descendants came from the continent. Most of the scholarship that has looked at this construction of an African identity has focused primarily on how it developed in reaction to the negative shared experiences among Africans of the diaspora who were drawn together by the violent encounter of slavery, oppression, bondage, and suffering. For Achille Mbembe, the desire for a racial community and identity among people of African descent was born from a memory of loss and a feeling of separation.³⁵ Studies looking at the formation of an African identity

³³ V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 26–27.

³⁴ For discussions of Mudimbe’s work on this topic, see Justin Williams, *Pan-Africanism in Ghana: African Socialism, Neoliberalism and Globalization* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2016), 4–5; Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, *Something Torn and New: An African Renaissance* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2009), 72.

³⁵ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 124, 126; Kadiatu Kanneh, *African Identities: Race, Nation and Culture in Ethnography, Pan-Africanism and Black Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1998), 40; James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7, 27; Teshale Tibebe, *Edward Wilmont Blyden*

within the continent in the twentieth century have similarly focused on it as reactionist or oppositional, either as an outgrowth of colonial racial structures, the struggle against the colonial system, or in comparing one's group to other racial or continentally defined groups.³⁶ Kadiatu Kanneh's survey of the twentieth-century literary works on the topic posits that "African-ness" only achieves "coherence in opposition to the (White) West."³⁷ Many of these arguments are compelling as undoubtedly these horrible circumstances served to create bonds and connections among those who saw themselves connected to Africa.

However, not all African identities were born out of a negative shared past, as some were forged by uplifting visions of its future and potential. In James Sidbury's book, *Becoming African in America*, he sets out to understand how writers, preachers, and poets in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reclaimed an "African" identity from whites who usually used the term in a derogatory way. In looking at the earliest proponents of this identity in late-colonial America, he similarly argued that the identity took much of its meaning from the Middle Passage and the common experience of slavery. However, he moves on to show how in choosing an African identity (and not the more widely used "negroes" or "blacks") that it could be fashioned as a badge of pride and unity, and entailed a positive vision of the role for the people of Africa in the future of the world. Phillis Wheatley and Ignatius Sancho, along with abolitionists like Olaudah Equiano, as well as leaders of the African Church Movement helped to construct a filiative identity for African people around the world by drawing on biblical history and promises. Not only had African peoples achieved great things in the biblical narrative but verses such as Psalm 68:31b, "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God," also inspired them that God promised to use the people of Ethiopia (which they equated with all Africa) to once again do great things as soon as they

and the Racial Nationalist Imagination (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2012), 3–4, 17–18; Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, trans. Laurent Dubois (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 34, 129.

³⁶ Mazrui and Shariff, *The Swahili*, 32–33; Aminzade, *Race, Nation, and Citizenship*, 46–47; Bertz, *Diaspora and Nation*, 3–4, 82–83; see critiques of this in Brennan, *Taifa*, 68–69, 87, 117; Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones*, and above.

³⁷ Kanneh, *African Identities*, 40.

unified and sought God's guidance.³⁸ St. Claire Drake referred to this mode of thought as Ethiopianism, which produced an intense desire for the redemption of Africa through African unity and the creation of a new Africa. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, the Ethiopianist tradition would gain adherents in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as well, and those attracted to this message came from both within and outside the Christian Church. These thinkers, writers, and activists expanded on the greatness of Africa's past or future to bind people to an African identity and the cause of regeneration and redemption of its people.³⁹

Building the African Nation takes this scholarship in two new directions. First, I show how the construction of an African identity, and calls for African unity, were sometimes built on inspiring and positive views of Africa's past and future, and were not just in reaction to negative circumstances. Second, I demonstrate how the specific ideas of Ethiopianism, and especially its vision of redemption, influenced the political thought of twentieth-century East Africans. While it is tempting to see the idea of Africa as solely a European creation, it has been pointed out that *African* intellectuals also "invented" Africa.⁴⁰ By coming to very different conclusions about history, these Africans envisioned a positive position for their place in the world and a novel imagining of Africa's future. Prominent East African author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o has similarly talked about how Africans appropriated the idea of Africa for their own ends. Even though Africa was originally the product of the West's system of self-representation, he writes, "I prefer to think of the idea of Africa – or, more appropriately, the 'African idea,' as African self-representation. To distinguish it from the Mudimbeist formula according to which Europe is finding itself through its invention of Africa, I see the African idea as that which was forged in the diaspora and traveled back to the continent."⁴¹

But once the African idea was brought to Africa, often through black intellectuals, one still has to answer George Shepperson's question of how did the indigenous people of Africa adopt this concept and make

³⁸ Sidbury, *Becoming African in America*, 6–7, 10, 18–19, 27–29, 39–47, 55–65, 132–133, quote on 6.

³⁹ St. Clair Drake, *The Redemption of Africa and Black Religion* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1970), 48–53.

⁴⁰ Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, 6.

⁴¹ wa Thiong'o, *Something Torn and New*, 72.

it their own?⁴² Even though the meaning of Africa as a concept and a place may have been shaped more by diasporic Africans,⁴³ we also need to recognize that much of this reimagining happened within the continent by continental Africans themselves who intentionally tried to shape and reshape spaces and identities. In this vein, we have to understand the local debates about theories of race and nation if we want to understand how African identities were contested and became meaningful.⁴⁴ Ultimately, I am interested in the ways in which the transformative power of an African identity in East Africa led to new ideas and action, as it did elsewhere in the continent and the diaspora.⁴⁵

It needs to be pointed out that the construction of an African identity in East Africa is very much a twentieth-century tale. Simply put, before this time there were no “Africans” in the region, at least none that identified as such. Works that touched on identity in precolonial nineteenth-century East Africa, such as Thomas McDow’s, have displayed a whole range of terms used to identify some of those who would later see themselves as Africans. The Arab traders and landed elite would sometimes refer to indigenous up-country Africans as *Nyamwezi* (a catchall phrase for non-Arabs near the central trading town of Kazehe), *washenzi* (barbarians), *wanyika* (from the up-country scrubland), or *makhádím* (serviles); in turn many of these people rejected these terms and preferred to identify as *waungwana* (gentlemen), *waSwahili*, or *watu wa mrima* (the people of the coast), whether they actually came from the more urbane and cosmopolitan coast or not. During this period, many of the indigenous Kiswahili speakers of the coast preferred to identify with their town or clan names such as

⁴² George Shepperson, “Pan-Africanism and ‘Pan-Africanism’: Some Historical Notes,” *Phylon* 23 (1962): 349.

⁴³ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 108.

⁴⁴ Kanneh, *African Identities*, 48; see also, Brennan, *Taifa*, 13.

⁴⁵ On the intellectual quest of African identity and unity leading to concrete action, see Michael A. Gomez, *Reversing Sail: A History of the African Diaspora*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 200–201; For the transformative power of the idea of Africa encouraging diasporic Africans to move to postcolonial Tanzania, see Monique A. Bedasse, *Jah Kingdom: Rastafarians, Tanzania, and Pan-Africanism in the Age of Decolonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

WaAmu or *WaPate*.⁴⁶ There were certainly many ethnic, tribal, or clan identities used before the arrival of the Europeans, but the self-identification of *waAfrika* (Africans) or *watu wa Afrika* (people of Africa) does not appear in the record until the twentieth century,⁴⁷ and thus when groups like the African Association began to use these terms along with *watu weusi*, it was quite new.⁴⁸

The use of an African identity is also related to the concepts of race and an African nation. James Brennan's work has been foundational for understanding the relationship between the concepts. Brennan demonstrates how in colonial Dar es Salaam the use of the term "*taifa*" captured and conflated the notions of an African race and nation and he therefore translates it as "racio-nation." The flourishing of this discursive term and mode of thought was historically contingent, and Brennan sees its rise as a mix of local intellectual production and instrumental response to the colonial administrative system, which had a clear racial hierarchical order. While the preferred term "African" eventually replaced "native," and it paid to speak the language of government, Brennan emphasized the relational ties created by shifting debates about natives and newcomers as well as socio-economic experiences in colonial Dar, which had implications for access to property, employment, and respect. Brennan has acknowledged the importance of the Gold Coast educator, James Aggrey, in promoting the commonsensical view that anyone who had black skin or originated from the African continent belonged to the African nation of people, which was interchangeable with the idea of the African race. Aggrey's contribution in the 1920s was key as his ideas could be traced to later debates in the Swahiliphone press. Brennan has also pointed to two leaders of the Dar es Salaam Chapter of the African

⁴⁶ McDow, *Buying Time*, 50–53, 92–95; Jonathon Glassman, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856–1888* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995), 58–64; John Middleton, *The World of the Swahili: An African Mercantile Civilization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 90–100; Justin Willis, *Mombasa, the Swahili and the Making of the Mijikenda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 27–33.

⁴⁷ The word *waAfrika* does not even appear in Johann Krapf's 1882 Swahili dictionary. L. Krapf, *A Dictionary of the Suahili Language* (London: Trübner and Co., 1882).

⁴⁸ I make no claims about who was the first to use the term or when, but the Afro-Asian Association of Mombasa also used it in c. 1927. See Carol M. Eastman and F. J. Berg, "An Early Swahili Political Manifesto," *Afrika und Übersee* 51 (August 1967): 224–37.

Association whom he believed also contributed to conversations about the civilizational aspirations of the African people in the capital in the 1930s.⁴⁹

While I agree with many of Brennan's conclusions and his overall interpretation, (especially the importance of Aggrey), *Building the African Nation* employs a different lens to understand the growth of African identity in the region and emphasizes different aspects of the story of "*kujenga taifa*," or building the nation. First and foremost Brennan is primarily concerned with "the story of how a particular African racial identity formed and came to provide the guiding assumptions of nationalism in Tanzania." Indeed, these debates later shaped the racial recruitment of TANU and he correctly credits these ideas for helping Tanzania to create one of the most durable and successful national identities in the continent.⁵⁰ At the end of the day, though, his focus is on "how intellectual convictions to realize the African *taifa* (race/nation) shaped the political history of Tanganyikan nationalism, both within the urban space of Dar es Salaam and the legal space of the country's national citizenship laws."⁵¹ Thus, Brennan is still very much working within the same framework of previous nationalist historians, and though his work is novel for integrating Indians into the story, he is still primarily working within the colonial boundaries of Tanganyika, and even more narrowly Dar es Salaam.⁵²

Like Brennan, *Building the African Nation* is interested in intellectual production at the local level but it is also interested in how local ideas interfaced with global intellectual production by focusing on the intellectual history of a globally minded, trans-territorial organization. Even though this lens has its own limitations, it can simultaneously show how there was an organizational intention to systematically spread ideas about race and African identity, and expand the field of vision more widely to understand the currents of these concepts more deeply. By more comprehensively exploring the role that the AA played in expanding racial thinking in East Africa, it also reinforces the importance of looking beyond mere structuralist approaches that see

⁴⁹ Brennan, "Realizing Civilization," 406–410; Brennan, *Taifa*, 1–4, 12–13, 24–25, 46–49, 118–120, 123–125.

⁵⁰ Brennan, *Taifa*, 2. ⁵¹ Ibid., 119.

⁵² Brennan, "Realizing Civilization," 406–410; Brennan, *Taifa*, 159–161. See critique of colonial boundaries below.

racial identity as solely a reaction to the colonial system, and understanding how Africans constructed their ideas on race and why it mattered to them.⁵³ More than mere reactions to colonial administrators or economic experiences, leaders of the African Association were influenced by global black thought and were proactively trying to build a sense of unity based on a novel “African” identity that they found inspiring. Certainly, civilizational notions about the future of an African nation of people held more meaning for AA leaders than European conceptions of race. Like other East Africans, they were less interested in genetic traits or the biological aspects of race Europeans seemed to care about. Indeed, the term “race” is essentially unused between the members of the AA in the 1920s–1940s. Even though there are around a dozen instances when the correspondence of the AA explicitly used the term “race,” and they did use the idea of an African race interchangeably with an African nation, the majority of these were letters sent to European administrators and were always written in English.⁵⁴ The Kiswahili term for race “*mbegu*” is wholly lacking in the Kiswahili correspondence between AA members, while at the same time there are dozens of references in both English and Kiswahili to the concepts that seemed to inspire them more – the nation of Africa and the unity of black people around the world.⁵⁵

⁵³ See similar arguments in Carina E. Ray, *Crossing the Color Line: Race, Sex, and the Contested Politics of Colonialism in Ghana* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015), 9–10.

⁵⁴ Each instance of AA correspondence using the English term “race” follows: PJI Notes of TNA 46/A/6/3/II/1 Sudi to PC Central, 5/2/1933; TNA 571/14/AA/84/22-23 “Agenda,” 4/18-22/1946; TNA 571/14/AA/84/27 AA Usangi and Ugweni to AA Dar es Salaam, 6/29/1946; TNA 571/38/AA/19B/07 AA Dodoma to AA Dar es Salaam, n.d.; TNA 571/38/AA/19B/105 “A Greetings Address,” 5/24/1937; TNA 571/46/AA/101/110 Borafia to CS Zanzibar, 11/29/1945; TNA 571/46/AA/101/117 AA Zanzibar to British Resistant Zanzibar, 5/11/1945; TNA 571/46/AA/101/128-130 AA Zanzibar to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 7/2/1946; TNA 19325/II/1 AA Dar es Salaam to Register of Cooperative Societies, et al., 8/3/1939; TNA 19325/II/7a AA Dar es Salaam to CS Dar es Salaam, c.5/3/1940; TNA 19325/II/67a [Minutes of the 5th East African Conference]; ZNA AK 1/73/29 AA Zanzibar to DC Zanzibar, 1/18/1939; ZNA AK 1/73/n.f. AA Zanzibar to The Information Officer, 11/15/1939.

⁵⁵ The narrower sense of “*mbegu*” as “seed of” or “son of” may occasionally have been used. Cases where the concept of an African nation was used will be explored further and can be found throughout the Hassan Suleiman Papers (TNA 571), and places in the Secretariat Files kept on the AA in both Tanganyika (TNA 19325 I & II) and Zanzibar (ZNA AK 1/73) as well as

The African Association and New Directions in Pan-African History

The historiography of pan-Africanism shares many traits with the writing on nationalism in Africa. There are disagreements over definitions and periodization. There is a lack of consensus over which stories and actors should be included in the cannon, and these decisions are often driven by various teleologies that try to place actors neatly onto straight narrative trajectories. There are also arguments over the nature of pan-Africanism. Was/is it primarily political or cultural? A movement or a practice? A philosophy or a religion? An idea or reality? Lastly, like histories of African politics, themes of liberation, resistance, and anti-imperialism have dominated academic discourse. This began with the influential writing of C. L. R. James in the late 1930s and has continued right up to the present.⁵⁶ *Building the African Nation* locates these early-twentieth-century East African pan-Africanists within these debates, but more importantly it argues for the need to create more inclusive and clear ways to talk about pan-Africanism that can more nimbly move between geographical and temporal spaces.

One of the earliest scholars to try and systematically understand pan-Africanism, Imanuel Geiss, argued that “it is probably one of the most complex phenomena in modern history, but also one of the hardest to pin down.” Indeed, his own definition included three

scattered throughout other files and occasional newspaper articles written by AA members.

⁵⁶ It is incredibly difficult to find work on mid-twentieth-century pan-Africanism that is not focused on themes of liberation, resistance, or anti-imperialism. The list of works on pan-Africanism that focused on these themes is long and really begins with the work of C. L. R. James in the 1930s. A small selection of others includes Michael Crowder, “Pan-Africanism since 1900,” in *The Cambridge History of Africa*, ed. Michael Crowder, Volume 8, from c. 1940 to c. 1975 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); P. Olanwuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776–1991*, Second Edition (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1991); Edem Kodjo and David Chanaiwa, “Pan-Africanism and Liberation,” in *History of Africa*, Vol. 8: Africa since 1935, edited by Ali A. Mazrui (Oxford: UNESCO, 1993); Rodney Walters, *Pan Africanism in the African Diaspora: An Analysis of Modern Afrocentric Political Movements* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997); Leslie James, *George Padmore and Decolonization from Below: Pan-Africanism, the Cold War, and the End of Empire* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015); Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism: A History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

different forms that played out on six different planes.⁵⁷ Writing many years later, Peter Olsanwuche Esedebe listed at least seven components of pan-Africanism.⁵⁸ The most recent comprehensive history of Pan-Africanism by Hakim Adi narrows it down to two main strands or periods – one during the trans-Atlantic slave era and one during the anti-colonial struggle – and he argues that what tied both strands together was the desire for the social, economic, cultural, and political emancipation and liberation of all African peoples, including those of the diaspora.⁵⁹ But as will be demonstrated, more narrow definitions like Adi's exclude individuals and groups that were most certainly pan-Africanists. Therefore, I promote using the most simple and inclusive definition and then discussing the many *expressions* of pan-Africanism. Drawing on Esedebe, I see pan-Africanism as a belief and a desire. It is the belief that all Africans and peoples of African descent share a common bond, and that this imagined communion should inculcate a desire to create unity among all Africans. These feelings of solidarity and a desire to unify have had many expressions throughout history and have taken many forms – political, cultural, and economic. It has led to movements and ideologies, as well as informed cultural practices and values. Pan-Africanism has also shaped, and been shaped by, religious beliefs and has led to new interpretations about the past and the future.

The expression of pan-Africanism that has garnered the lion's share of scholarly attention is the movement for the political emancipation and unification of the continent. This is sometimes referred to as Pan-Africanism with a capital P and was considered a coordinated unification movement seeking to overthrow political structures that subjugated people of African descent.⁶⁰ Just as scholars have been engrossed by narratives of political nationalism, the historians of pan-Africanism too have been preoccupied with the anti-colonial elements. Most scholars have utilized a chronology that looks at the unfolding of

⁵⁷ Imanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement: A History of Pan-Africanism in America, Europe and Africa*, trans. Ann Keep (New York: Africa Publishing Co., 1968), xi, 3–5.

⁵⁸ Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism*, 3–5. ⁵⁹ Adi, *Pan-Africanism*, 1–4.

⁶⁰ George Shepperson was the first to bring up whether or not pan-Africanism should be capitalized and he suggested that when discussing the proper name of the movement towards liberation and unification it should be capitalized. Shepperson, "Pan-Africanism," 346–348.

pan-Africanism in either “phases” or “stages” moving towards a climax of anti-colonial radicalism and nationalism. Scholars such as Geiss, Crowder, Moses, and Adi have thus referred to those figures like Olaudah Equiano, Edward Wilmot Blyden, and J. E. Casely Hayford who were not trying to overcome imperial systems as “forerunners” and “proto-Pan-Africanists,” suggesting that the “pre-history of Pan-Africanism” ended only with the formation of the Pan-African Congresses in the 1900s (especially the Manchester Congress of 1945) or in 1958 with the All-Africa’s Peoples Conference in Accra if they saw territorial nationalism as the first step towards the political unification of the whole continent.⁶¹ For instance, writing on Tanganyika, Joseph Nye Jr. argued that Julius Nyerere only became interested in pan-Africanism after the foundation of TANU in the mid-1950s and that it was not a social force in the territory until after the independence of Ghana in 1957.⁶² But this fixation on anti-colonialism and the push for African statehood has sometimes distorted our understanding of the history of pan-Africanism and has produced several blind spots in the literature. It has also meant that some individuals and groups who were pan-Africanists have either fit awkwardly in these narratives or been left out altogether.

One major stumbling block to being inducted into the pantheon of pan-African heroes has been positive views of aspects of the British Empire. With the reverence for anti-imperialism among most scholars of pan-Africanism, crucial figures such as Blyden, Henry Sylvester Williams, Aggrey, and others, have been faulted or were left out of these stories for long periods of time. But the complicated reality was that “the Father of Pan-Africanism” (Blyden), the person who arguably coined the term pan-Africanism and established the first Pan-African Conference in London in 1900 (Williams), and the first

⁶¹ Adi, *Pan-Africanism*, 8–14; Adekunle Ajala, *Pan-Africanism: Evolution, Progress and Prospects* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1973), 3; A. Adu Boahen, *African Perspectives on European Colonialism*, reprint Johns Hopkins Press (Baltimore) 1987 (New York: Diaspora African Press, 2011), 92; Crowder, “Pan-Africanism since 1900,” 95, 103, 131–133; Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism*, 34; Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement*, 13, 58; Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism: 1850–1925*, reprint, Archon Books 1978 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 25; Tibebe, *Blyden*, 9; Williams, *Pan-Africanism in Ghana*, 4–5; Walters, *Pan Africanism in the African Diaspora*, 51.

⁶² Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Pan-Africanism and East African Integration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 30–31.

continental celebrity and most prominent proponent of African unity in the continent in the 1920s (Aggrey), all appreciated and promoted certain elements of British imperialism in Africa.⁶³ Therefore, we need frameworks that can account for elements of both imperial appreciation and pan-African promotion, which is otherwise denied by a scholarship that sees the anti-imperial expression of African unity as the only true form of pan-Africanism. For many pan-Africanists around the turn of the twentieth century, their project was to transform empire and not to escape it, and we need to examine what they actually said, wrote, and did, and not what postcolonial logics of the twenty-first century would have presumed they should have said.⁶⁴

Building the African Nation explores two understudied expressions of pan-Africanism that are not tied to anti-imperialism – practical pan-Africanism and redemptive pan-Africanism. Practical pan-Africanism refers to the way in which Africans and people of African descent sought to build unity in order to help each other out in their everyday lives.⁶⁵ This could be financial assistance during times of distress or to fund economic endeavors; or it could be aiding in disputes with landlords or other legal cases. Sometimes it might be unifying voices when making appeals to local governments to pass laws that would benefit

⁶³ Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement*, 181; Hollis Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot, 1832–1912* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 250; Drake, *The Redemption of Africa*, 68–70; V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 98–118; Tibebu, *Blyden*, 126; Harry N. K. Odamtten, *Edward W. Blyden's Intellectual Transformations: Afropublicanism, Pan-Africanism, Islam, and the Indigenous West African Church* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2019), vii–viii; Owen Charles Mathurian, *Henry Sylvester Williams and the Origins of the Pan-African Movement, 1869–1911* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976), 41–43; Marika Sherwood, *Origins of Pan-Africanism: Henry Sylvester Williams, Africa, and the African Diaspora* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Ethan R. Sanders, “James Aggrey and the African Nation: Pan-Africanism, Public memory, and the Political Imagination in Colonial East Africa,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 52 (2019): 399–424; and Chapter 1.

⁶⁴ Frederick Cooper, “Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective,” *Journal of African History* 49 (2008): 174; Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*, 3–4.

⁶⁵ The first use of this term appears to be by Kenneth King in his introduction to Ras Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism from Within*, ed. Kenneth King (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), xv.

African communities. In fact, pan-African visions have almost always been accompanied by helping to fulfill the practical needs of people involved in pan-African associations and their communities. This form of African assistance goes back to the trans-Atlantic commercial enterprises of Paul Cuffee in the early 1800s and the endeavors of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association in the 1900s to provide economic outlets for people of color such as laundry services, grocery stores, or a millinery shop.⁶⁶ Even those known for more radical forms of pan-Africanism also promoted the practical elements of African unity. For instance, the influential Guyanese T. Ras Makonnen who lived in England during the 1930s and 1940s and helped found the Pan-African Federation and organize the Fifth Pan-African Congress at Manchester invested in African-run restaurants and clubs, and the Federation used its money to support the legal fees of Nigerian and Somali sailors. They also set up the Pan-African Publishing Company, helped fund a children's home for children of color, and worked with black migrants. Makonnen reflected that "all of it was to show that as people of African origin we were determined to stand by each other. This was as important an aspect of pan-Africanism as the formal conference which was held now and then."⁶⁷ The African Association of East Africa also saw practical pan-Africanism as a central platform of their attempts to create African unity. Assisting in land disputes, improving local hospitals, increasing educational opportunities for Africans, serving as the voice of Africans to local governments, and mediating disputes were all forms of African unity that attracted members to the organization and was a central vision of many of its leaders.⁶⁸

The second expression of pan-Africanism explored in this book is what I am calling "redemptive pan-Africanism" based on forms of Ethiopianist thought mentioned briefly earlier and examined more fully in Chapter 1. Like many storylines in African history, Ethiopianism has been swept up into the anti-colonial nationalist narrative as Africanists have been most interested in Ethiopianism as a separatist church movement, and not as a form of thought, because

⁶⁶ Sidbury, *Becoming African in America*, 148–164; Adi, *Pan-Africanism*, 30.

⁶⁷ Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism from Within*, 135–147, quote on 142.

⁶⁸ See Chapters 4–6.

African denominational separatism in the late 1890s and early 1900s in Africa seemed like the foreshocks of the later earthquakes of anti-colonial nationalism.⁶⁹ But when looking at the ideas of Ethiopianism, a central element is a belief in a better future, that Africa and its people will one day be regenerated or redeemed and do great things on the world stage. These ideas can be traced back to the precolonial period and throughout the period of European imperialism.⁷⁰ Elements of Ethiopianist thought can also be found in the discussions over the “African Renaissance” declared by Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki at the close of the twentieth century, which continue to be debated by Africans well into the twenty-first.⁷¹ *Building the African Nation* focuses on how elements of Ethiopianism and redemptive pan-Africanism inspired East Africans in the early twentieth century – well before Manchester or the anti-colonial pan-Africanism of the 1950s – and how they grappled with and refashioned these ideas, and ultimately how such ideas continued to influence the postcolonial thinking of Julius Nyerere, the most famous member of the African Association.

⁶⁹ On Ethiopianism as either primarily a church movement or as a precursor for anti-colonial nationalism, see George Shepperson, “Ethiopianism and African Nationalism,” *Phylon* 14 (1953): 13, 16–17; G. Shepperson, “Ethiopianism: Past and Present,” in *Christianity in Tropical Africa: Studies Presented and Discussed at the Seventh International African Seminar, University of Ghana, April 1965*, ed. C. G. Baeta (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 249–251, 257–263; Boahen, *African Perspectives on European Colonialism*, 72–75, 88; Ogbu U. Kalu, “Ethiopianism in African Christianity,” in *African Christianity: An African Story*, ed. Ogbu U. Kalu (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2007), 264, 270–277; Graham A. Duncan, “Ethiopianism in Pan-African Perspective, 1880–1920,” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 41 (2015): 202; Odamtten, *Blyden’s Intellectual Transformations*, ix–x, 43–47, 165–174; The first scholar to talk about Ethiopianism as “a thought-style” and not just a movement was St. Clair Drake. This would be expanded on in the many works of Wilson Jeremiah Moses and, more recently, by William Scott. Drake, *The Redemption of Africa*, 48–50; Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism*; Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *The Wings of Ethiopia: Studies in African-American Life and Letters* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990); Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Classical Black Nationalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); William Scott, “The Ethiopian Ethos in African American Thought,” *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 1 (Winter/Spring 2004): 40–57.

⁷⁰ See Chapter 1.

⁷¹ Chris Dunton, “Pixley kaIsaka Seme and the African Renaissance Debate,” *African Affairs* 102 (2003): 557–559; see also the collection, Chris Landesberg, ed., *Africa Rise Up! Perspectives on African Renewal* (Johannesburg: Real African Publishers, 2018).

African Intellectual History and the Boundaries of Time and Space

As discussed earlier, there have been significant drawbacks to traditional political histories that have restricted their scope of analysis to the colonial boundaries of time and space – limiting their studies to either the colonial or postcolonial periods and narrowly focusing on one territory or the other. *Building the African Nation* is built on the belief in the need to use frameworks that are not hindered by such boundaries, and has therefore taken a global intellectual history approach that best enables us to follow ideas and their impact in various contexts. Even though intellectual history is often associated with studies of the towering figures of Western European thought such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Locke, or J. S. Mill, African intellectual history as a subdiscipline has been around for several decades and is growing in new directions. In his overview, Jonathon Earle defines the subfield of the intellectual history of Africa as being “concerned with understanding how communities in the past understood and debated the spaces they inhabited, and how discourses circulated and changed over time.”⁷² Early on in the postcolonial period, scholars interested in African intellectual history felt hamstrung by a perceived lack of sources, and focused on how the African educated elites translated European thought among Africans. But new sources and new approaches have opened up new avenues and eventually four areas of African intellectual history have emerged: histories of precolonial knowledge, studies on ethnicity and moral economies, explorations of gender discourse and domesticity in Africa, and, most recently, the growth of global intellectual history among scholars interested in the exchange of ideas between continental Africans and the rest of the world.

Growing out of its roots in social history, scholars of African intellectual history have long been committed to fighting the Eurocentric currents that dominated histories of Africa during the age of imperialism. This inclination can also be found among the twenty-first-century scholars interested in applying global intellectual history approaches to

⁷² Jonathon L. Earle, “African Intellectual History and Historiography,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of African Historiography: Methods and Sources*, ed. Thomas Spear (Oxford University Press, November 20, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.305>.

African history. There is also a related desire for the need to further understand Africa's role in world history and how connections outside the continent shaped African history. In this vein, Sir Christopher Bayly called for the further development of global, or at least transnational, intellectual histories as intellectual historians in America and Europe had rarely ventured beyond the Western world, and historians of Asia and Africa tended to only work on national or regional issues.⁷³ In their 2013 edited volume, *Global Intellectual History*, Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori tried to give structure to the emerging field and to delineate some of its advantages and limitations and they arrived at a simple inclusive definition of the subdiscipline as any "intellectual history extending across geographical parameters far larger than usual." Important to this endeavor is that any global intellectual history model must be tailored to the temporal or geographical spaces across which concepts or ideas appeared. *Building the African Nation* largely follows the model of looking at intermediaries, translations, and networks, and is concerned with tracing the conceptual connections between different locales and understanding the circulation of ideas and the material mechanisms by which they moved from place to place. By focusing on these networks, and their "far-flung knowledge brokers," we can better understand how concepts or ideologies develop, move, and get reshaped when they encounter local ideas and realities.⁷⁴

This study recognizes the limitations of certain elements of global intellectual history, and it is not searching for ideas that fit a truly "global" framework, nor is it interested in understanding the growth and movement of ideas in the abstract. However, *Building the African Nation* is written with the assumption that historical actors worked in multiple frameworks – ethnic, gender, religious, national, regional, and global – and thus we have to seek to understand the interplay between these dimensions and how historical actors mediated between the

⁷³ Christopher Bayly, "History and World History," in *A Concise Companion to History*, ed. Ulinka Rublack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 17–18.

⁷⁴ Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, "Approaches to Global Intellectual History," in *Global Intellectual History*, eds. Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 3–13, quote on 4; see also Frederick Cooper, *Africa in the World: Capitalism, Empire, Nation-State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 10.

trans-regional and the local, or other frameworks.⁷⁵ It is crucial to explore not only how the circulation of ideas shaped thought but also how those new political ideas inspired action and shaped social or political realities on the ground.⁷⁶ In this sense, all good intellectual history that is concerned with cause and effect relationships, and not just the philosophy of ideas, should be sociocultural and/or political history at the same time, because when historical actors seek a deeper understanding of their changing place in the world, it almost always affects their be-ing in the world.⁷⁷

Intellectual history is also well suited to address the dilemma of trying to analyze historical actors who had scant regard for political borders and did not fit neatly into national modes of historical writing.⁷⁸ It also helps address the challenge of reconstructing the history of the AA, whose members disparaged colonial borders for many years and had political imaginations that were global in scope, but whose own material and intellectual reach was actually much smaller. Thus, a global intellectual history approach focused on a network of ideas and how those ideas led to action is best equipped to study the African Association and the phenomenon of the growth of African identity in East Africa more widely. I try to follow the various circuits of ideas throughout by focusing the lens wider or narrower as necessary, being sure to pay attention to shifts in language and changes over time due to developments in local, territorial, regional, or global contexts. In following the trail of ideas, it has led me to archival research in nine countries in four regions, substantiating Christopher Hill's remark that "the boundaries of a given topic in global intellectual history will not always be clear at the beginning of the project and

⁷⁵ Frederick Cooper, "How Global Do We Want Our Intellectual History to Be?," in *Global Intellectual History*, eds. Moyn and Sartori, 283, 286, 291.

⁷⁶ Derek R. Peterson, *Creative Writing: Translation, Bookkeeping, and the Work of Imagination in Colonial Kenya* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2004), xi; Sean Hanretta, *Islam and Social Change in French West Africa: History of an Emancipatory Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3–4; Sidbury, *Becoming African in America*, 7.

⁷⁷ C. A. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 24.

⁷⁸ One of the first scholars to key into this challenge was Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 32.

will have to be refined during research.”⁷⁹ But I have also tried to not treat ideas of “Africa” as a singular package that has just been passed around the globe, but have attempted to be mindful about how its parameters shifted to fit changing needs, and how even within a group like the AA there were differences over the implications of such ideas between members, and between leaders and the rank and file. It is best to see the organization as an arena of discursive dialogue.⁸⁰ For instance, while men and women worked together in the AA, members of the two genders were sometimes at odds with each other as to what belonging to an African union entailed and what initiatives should be pursued. This made meetings contested spaces where there were differences over what being African should entail.

As Chapter 6 shows most poignantly, ideas also morph with changing times and as new individuals with their own disparate intellectual backgrounds engage with the ideas. Moreover, ideas that have political implications, such as African identity, are partly formulated through the very process of political action. The logistics of political organization forces leaders of groups to put their theories into practice, and, as a result, ideas are occasionally reformulated *in medias res*, while at other times underlying ideologies are reinforced or come into sharper focus through the achievements or challenges of political practice.⁸¹ Thus, to comprehend how the political imaginations of the leaders of the African Association developed throughout the organization’s three-decade-long existence, and the growth and movement of political thought in Africa more generally, it is necessary to understand the many intellectual currents that leaders drew from, as well as how such ideas were molded by the various, and at times variant, views of its many individual members. Moreover, one also has to take into consideration how the process, the very mechanics of political organization, reinforced and refashioned leaders’ ideas and led to ever-changing structures and initiatives.

⁷⁹ Christopher L. Hill, “Conceptual Universalization in the Transnational Nineteenth Century,” in *Global Intellectual History*, eds. Moyn and Sartori, 153.

⁸⁰ Earle, *Colonial Buganda and the End of Empire*, 23, 28; Brennan, *Taifa*, 118–120; Hunter, *Political Thought and the Public Sphere in Tanzania*, 1, 8, 11.

⁸¹ My ideas here were sharpened by conversations with Derek Peterson and the late C. A. Bayly. See also C. A. Bayly, “Afterword,” *Modern Intellectual History* 4 (2007): 163–169.

There are other limitations and benefits of a larger-frame African intellectual history that affect the treatment of sources and methods used in writing this book. First, unlike literary scholars interested in African identity who settle for “implicit dialogue between dispersed times and places,”⁸² every attempt has been made to find evidence that actually ties individuals to certain ideas – sometimes more successfully than others – and not just assume that similarities or analogous ideas across time and space have a direct connection. This involves finding evidence for what historical actors actually read, or linking them to people or events where particular ideas were shared, or maybe even finding an acknowledgment of influence. Tracing specific connections has been the aim.⁸³ Second, because intellectual history is concerned with how people made sense of the world, it is not limited to just elites or writers but includes subalterns or everyday people as well. In recent years, though, there has been a tendency in African intellectual history to shy away from the major authors who are seen as detached and focus on peasant intellectuals or more localized debates.⁸⁴ The issue of African identity, however, cut across social classes in East Africa and *Building the African Nation* seeks to transcend the elite–subaltern divide by doing both in-depth textual analysis and intellectual biographies of the major thinkers connected to the African Association – James Aggrey, Paul Sindi Seme, and Julius Nyerere – while also trying to comprehend how the rank and file understood, contested, and used these ideas.⁸⁵ To do this, I have relied heavily on the Kiswahili material of the Hassan Suleiman Papers housed in the Tanzanian National Archives. Unlike the largely Anglophone correspondence with the colonial secretariat, which is what most scholars have relied on when writing about the AA, the Suleiman Papers were the records the AA kept for themselves and are filled with correspondence between members, meeting minutes, and membership application forms. These materials, though with their own limitations, give insights into what everyday members complained about to leaders, or what illiterate

⁸² Kanneh, *African Identities*, 1. ⁸³ Cooper, *Africa in the World*, 10.

⁸⁴ Brennan, *Taifa*, 16–17; Hunter, *Political Thought and the Public Sphere in Tanzania*, 9–11; Steven Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

⁸⁵ C. A. Bayly et al., “AHR Conversation: On Transnational History,” *American Historical Review* 111 (December 2006): 1452; Sidbury, *Becoming African in America*, 14–15.

members spoke up about in meetings captured by branch secretaries, or insights into who was joining and why. As Jonathon Glassman reminds us, “indigenous intellectuals spoke to one another more than they addressed the colonial state or responded to its demands.”⁸⁶ This study is attuned to these internal dialogues.

Lastly, a final advantage of an intellectual history approach is that it is not limited by the boundaries created by more traditional movement-focused histories. Studies of nationalism, pan-Africanism, and Ethiopianism have often focused on these phenomena as movements, with their own beginning and end points and with emphases on the factors of their rise and fall. However, the ideas that influenced these movements often outlasted the movements themselves and continued to have influence even if the formal movements failed. As noted earlier, Ethiopianist thought contributed more than just inspiration to the “proto-nationalist” movement in Western and Southern Africa, but its ideas also shaped African identity in East Africa and beyond. Similarly, movement-focused histories of pan-Africanism have tended to only care about how it succeeded in or failed to achieve certain goals or contributed to other movements. Attention was more on official timelines and major events and less on how it affected individuals and their communities.⁸⁷ By following the twists and turns of particular ideas of pan-Africanism, it allows me to move more freely across the boundaries of periodization and better understand how ideas influenced social realities, before, during, and after a movement (however defined), ran its course.

Building the African Nation aims to move African intellectual history forward in two ways. First, it has been noted that almost all studies of trans-regional interaction between Africans and outsiders, especially members of the African diaspora, have focused on Western or Southern Africa.⁸⁸ This book hopes to help bring East Africa more prominently into these conversations. Even though East Africans’ interactions with the West and diasporic Africans were far fewer in number during the mid twentieth century, they still had a significant

⁸⁶ Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones*, 17.

⁸⁷ Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement*; Jim C. Harper II, *Western-Educated Elites in Kenya, 1900–1963: The African American Factor* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Adi, *Pan-Africanism*; This can also be seen in the anonymous introduction to Drake, *The Redemption of Africa*, 6.

⁸⁸ Earle, “African Intellectual History and Historiography.”

impact on the region's history, and we are learning more about the way East Africans shaped the outside world.⁸⁹ Second, while global intellectual historians have demonstrated “how Africans re-worked European political ideas into local vernacular debates about the past, and how Africans have shaped the modern world,”⁹⁰ far fewer major studies have looked at how global black political ideas have been reworked by Africans. While there is no such thing as pure black thought, as all modern political ideas are a mix of local and global discourses,⁹¹ and the sources of the AAs' political thought were many, the case study in this book traces how colonial East Africans, previously believed to have been largely closed off from non-European ideas from the outside, were actually intricately tied into circuits of black thinkers and writers who had shaped an oral and literary tradition on African identity since the 1700s.

Organization

The first two chapters set out to trace the multiple sources of influence on the African Association's desire to build the African nation. Chapter 1 does this by focusing on the intellectual biography of James Aggrey, whose ideas had the greatest influence on the early leaders of the Association. Aggrey is a remarkable figure who was shaped by his trans-Atlantic life experience: the political milieu of Gold Coast politics at the end of the nineteenth century, his educational and vocational formation in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church in the American South, and his time in New York studying at Columbia and as a member of the influential Negro Society for Historical Research. All of these episodes shaped the man who went on two educational commissions sponsored by the Phelps Stokes Fund in 1920–1921 and 1924 to eighteen different colonial territories in western, central, southern and eastern Africa, and in the process became the first continental-wide African celebrity.⁹² He was the very model of a “Black Atlantic” figure, though I prefer the term

⁸⁹ See Bedasse, *Jah Kingdom*; Seth M. Markle, *A Motorcycle on Hell Run: Tanzania, Black Power, and the Uncertain Future of Pan-Africanism, 1964–1974* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2017).

⁹⁰ Earle, “African Intellectual History and Historiography.”

⁹¹ Bayly, *Recovering Liberties*, 8.

⁹² Sanders, “James Aggrey and the African Nation.”

global black intellectual as he cannot be merely an Atlantic figure when so much of his impact was felt on the shores of the Indian Ocean.⁹³ Regardless, Aggrey helped directly tie East Africans in the 1920s into a network of black thought that shaped their understanding of African identity and their role in the continent's past and future.

Chapter 2 traces the many other strands of influence on the nascent African Association, including encounters with South Asians, other East African political figures such as Harry Thuku and Akiki Nyabongo, and a random, but influential, engagement with an African-American named F. Burgess. Attention will also be given to lessons learned by some leaders in missionary schools and some of the local issues in Dar es Salaam that led to the group's formal incorporation. Chapter 3 shows how the AA attempted to spread those ideas further and deeper into the interior of Africa by "learning the secrets of politics" and building a material circuit of ideas that they wished would expand to all Africans across the globe in whatever continent they lived. Indeed, the practical work of building the African nation came through the mastery of the postal system, the circulation of statute books and membership forms, and the creation of regional conferences. Special attention will be given to Paul Sindi Seme, the chief architect and popularizer of this vision of continental and global expansion. Seme was not only a prolific letter writer but also completed three manuscripts, two of which – the first history of East Africa written in an African language by an African (c. 1937), and a political memoir (1975) – give insight into how ideas of Ethiopianism and redemptive pan-Africanism captured the vision of this little-known pan-African intellectual and organizer in the 1930s and 1940s.

Chapters 4 and 5 seek to explore the lives of those who embraced the practical pan-Africanism of the Association and why they chose to embrace an organizationally based inclusive African identity. The first of these two chapters looks at the big picture of who was joining the AA by utilizing membership lists and application forms from several Tanganyikan chapters, and combining this evidence with biographical information about other known members of the AA. The

⁹³ For a discussion of this, see Ethan R. Sanders, "James Emman Kwegyir Aggrey: Educator, Minister, and Global Black Intellectual." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* (Oxford University Press, 2016). Article published October 18, 2023; doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.1439>.

reconstruction of the group's demographic makeup provides surprising results. In the past, the AA has uniformly been branded as elitist, and an exclusive group of highbrow Western-educated figures.⁹⁴ However, this chapter demonstrates that the inclusive appeal to any black African regardless of ethnicity, religion, education, wealth, gender, or territorial origin, produced a membership from a plethora of professional, educational, and social backgrounds as well as being ethnically and geographically diverse. In fact, the most commonly held trait between the members of the AA was not an educational or a religious one, but that a large percentage of them lived or had traveled outside their "native homeland" according to colonial terminology. By promising to be the *sauti ya watu waafrika*, the voice of the people of Africa, and creating a space where Africans could come and share their opinions and desires with each other as well as the ruling powers, the Association attracted those seeking solidarity in finding practical solutions to life in Indirect Rule Tanganyika or the culturally stratified Zanzibar Protectorate.⁹⁵

The practical pan-Africanism of the African Association and the allure of an African identity proved enticing to the women of the region as well. Despite previous scholars' claims that there were no women in the AA,⁹⁶ from at least the early 1930s a significant percentage of several chapters' membership was made up of women.⁹⁷ While many men like Seme were inspired by the redemptive pan-Africanism of the AA, Chapter 5 argues that many of these entrepreneurial female activists found the AA most useful for their own purposes by helping them meet specific needs or accomplish personal or collective objectives. The most salient factor for women joining the organization was that it gave them access to governing authorities and a voice in the largely male-

⁹⁴ The list is long. See Sanders, "African Association," 22–23.

⁹⁵ This will be examined in Chapter 6.

⁹⁶ John Iliffe was silent on whether there were women in the AA while Susan Geiger, the foremost scholar on women and politics in Tanganyika, denied that women ever took part in the AA. Susan Geiger, *TANU Women: Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism, 1955–1965* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1997), 68–69, 113; Susan Geiger, "Engendering and Gendering African Nationalism: Rethinking the Case of Tanganyika (Tanzania)," in *In Search of a Nation: Histories of Authority and Dissidence in Tanzania*, eds. Gregory H. Maddox and James L. Griblin (Oxford: James Currey, 2005), 285.

⁹⁷ See Chapter 4 for details.

dominated political sphere. Thus, the practical pan-Africanism strain was often most enticing for the women who embraced an African identity for pragmatic purposes. As the chapter shows, however, this sometimes clashed with the civilizational aspirations of some male leaders who hoped to use the organization to discipline refractory women, protect their modesty, and reform African womanhood in the name of building the African nation. The Association was thus also an arena of contested gendered space, and this chapter unpacks some of the implications of this rare example of a mixed-gendered political organization in colonial Africa.

Chapter 6 demonstrates first how the AAs' vision of unity and practical pan-Africanism required them to mediate and move between multiple fields of action – local, territorial, regional, and global. It then shows how this project was derailed as there was a territorial split in the organization and a turn towards territorial anti-colonialism in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Thus, contrary to seeing the African Association's movement towards territorial political nationalism as a natural progression, I argue that this was simultaneously a rupture in the group's thinking and a shrinking of vision. In fact, it was not a completely smooth road towards territorial nationalism, as the rejection of certain elements of the AA's platform and the decisions to move in a new direction were contested and sometimes painful. This bolsters the claim by Frederick Cooper that pan-Africanism was more salient throughout the continent in the 1930s and 1940s than in the 1950s and that the later focus on territorial political units constituted "a narrowing of political imagination and political possibilities."⁹⁸ This chapter looks at the factors that led to the change of course for the AA in both Tanganyika and Zanzibar.

In order to elucidate how the ideas of the African Association were not limited by the colonial boundaries of time, Chapter 7 looks at some of the ways the AA's ideas were reshaped and reused in the postcolonial period. It does this primarily by looking at the intellectual history of Julius Nyerere, who led the struggle for *Uhuru* and became prime minister and then president of Tanganyika and, following the merger with Zanzibar, Tanzania (r. 1961–1985). Because of the political stature of Nyerere as a global black intellectual, there have been many scholarly searches into the intellectual origins of his political

⁹⁸ Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 108–109; Cooper, *Africa in the World*, 65.

philosophies and ideas. These histories have either focused on his upbringing in the cultural milieu of the rural Zanaki community in the 1920s and 1930s or have focused on his time studying the Western political cannon at the University of Edinburgh between 1949 and 1952. However, in the 1940s before leaving for Europe, Nyerere became an active member of the African Association when he was exposed to a number of currents of global African political thought. Ethiopianist ideas surrounding the redemption of Africa, as well as the AAs' interests in practical pan-Africanism and their requirements of *umoja*, or African unity, shaped elements of Nyerere's political thinking and can even be traced to postcolonial policies that he promoted. The chapter also explores his ideas surrounding an African identity and Africanness, or *Uafrika*, and highlights the inherent tension between projects of territorial nationalism and African nationalism.