ABSTRACT

ROUPHAIL, ROBERT MICHAEL. Putting Race in its Place: Race, Empire and Spaces of Belonging in Colonial Kenya, 1890s-1960s. (Under the direction of Owen Kalinga, David Ambaras, Akram Khater and Kenneth Vickery).

This thesis investigates how local politics of land ownership and global currents of imperial knowledge production informed racial thought in colonial Kenya. Employing Timothy Mitchell’s analytic tool of “enframing,” the project first assesses how white settlers and British colonial administrators worked together to construct a logic of racial territoriality against a perceived threat of racial contamination through Indian settlement in the so-called White Highlands. This was done, I argue, by situating the “place” of the White Highlands in the “space” of the larger British Empire, through which knowledge produced on race, science and governance informed local political decisions. The second chapter argues that Indians in Kenya had created an alternative spatial framework that mobilized the political, economic and social authority of the British Raj in support of South Asian political claims in East Africa. The final chapter argues that the spatial paradigms of the British Empire and the Raj-governed Indian Ocean sphere deployed in the first thirty years of the century collapsed in the 1940s. Subsequent spatial imaginaries emphasized a contiguous White Africa in the case of settlers, while South Asians constructed a new Indian Ocean realm defined through anti-colonial nationalism and political non-alignment. The project draws from the online British National Archives, the Kenya National Archives at Syracuse University, collections of the periodicals held at North Carolina State University, and extensive secondary literature.
Putting Race in its Place: Race, Empire and Spaces of Belonging in Colonial Kenya, 1890s-1960s

by
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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of North Carolina State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

History

Raleigh, North Carolina
2013

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To my family.
BIOGRAPHY

Robert Rouphail received his BA in African history from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is currently a graduate student in the history department at North Carolina State University. His interests include the histories of race and racism in Africa and the Middle East, with a particular focus on racial thought in colonial and post-colonial East Africa. Outside of academia, he has worked as a teacher of English as a foreign language in Incheon, South Korea, Rabat, Morocco and Jakarta, Indonesia. After completing his MA at North Carolina State, he will pursue a Ph.D in African history at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I must first thank the history department at North Carolina State University, which has been my intellectual home for the last two years. Dr. Jonathon Ocko, our department head and Dr. Susanna Lee, our director of graduate studies, provided tremendous support for my research and have fostered a stimulating environment for graduate students. Dr. Judy Kertész and the graduate students who participated in her seminar on colonialism and genocide were tremendously supportive. The course allowed me to frame the arguments made throughout the thesis and it also introduced me to a dynamic body of literature on settler colonialism. Long conversations with Mike Mortimer and Chris Blakely on our respective research topics helped me untie conceptual knots, particularly some of the difficulties I encountered in approaching the history of the Indian Ocean. Dr. David Ambaras generously offered his time and expertise in a course on the Japanese Empire, which forced me to sharpen my arguments on race and sub-imperialism. Dr. Akram Khater’s support of my work has only been matched by his willingness to include me in other research projects, an experience which has proven to be an invaluable. Dr. Kenneth Vickery’s enthusiasm for my first foray into graduate studies of African history, which happened to be a study of Kenya, gently nudged me onto the path on which I find myself today. Finally, the unwavering support of my advisor at North Carolina State, Dr. Owen Kalinga, has been critical to this project. His knowledge and expertise on the history of Africa continue to be a source of awe and inspiration for me as an aspiring historian. I am tremendously thankful for
his patient readings of drafts, his insightful suggestions and our long conversations about African history.

Aside from the faculty, I must also thank the administrative staff of the North Carolina State History department. Noreen Miller, Courtney Hamilton and LaTonya Tucker have all helped my time here to run smoothly. Thanks also go to the staff of the African collection at the Syracuse University, Bonnie Ryan in particular. Her knowledge of the Kenya Archives helped guide my research and her suggestions made my stay at Syracuse a fruitful one. I must also mention the library staff at North Carolina State, who helped with accessing certain primary sources and facilitating interlibrary loan material.

On a personal note, I am immensely grateful for the love and support of my partner, Samantha Brotman. In addition to patiently editing my writing, her enthusiasm for her own areas of expertise has been a source of inspiration for me. Conversations in our ever-busy Agdal apartment, our stuffy Jakarta attic and our favorite Chinese restaurant in Washington have shaped my own ideas about the world.

Lastly, I must thank my family. Without their patience, love and steady support, this thesis would simply not exist. I follow in my mother’s footsteps as a student of the human condition. I have tried to channel her intelligence and eloquence in this thesis. My father’s thoughtful observations on my professional development been critical to my first foray into academia and his own success as a scholar is the model I follow. My brother Paul’s accomplishments as an artist, astonishing in their own right, have shown me what it is like to think both critically and creatively. I am forever indebted to them.
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Introduction: Race and Space in the Indian Ocean World

Kenya’s racial diversity reflects that of its physical landscape. Located on the east coast of Africa and on the western rim of the Indian Ocean, the land begins as hot and humid coastal lowlands, moves into a semi-arid desert to the immediate west and stretches to the northwest to the borders of Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan. Further west, the land rises and the temperatures cool. The area to the north and to the west of Nairobi until the shores of Lake Victoria receives plentiful rainfall and is well suited for agricultural production. It is these cool, fertile lands, the “White Highlands” as they have been known, that colonial administrators first saw an area that could support an agriculturally oriented European population.¹ In the 1910s and early 1920s, the Indian community resident in East Africa began to demand access to these highlands. The central place around which this thesis revolves, then, is the land of west-central Kenya. Up until the moment of Indian demands, European settlers had held the exclusive right to live on and cultivate the land after forcibly removing indigenous communities. Tensions about who exactly could settle in the highlands raised critical question about race and belonging in colonial Kenya. This thesis examines race relations and modes of racial self-identification in the South Asian (Indian) and white settler communities in Kenya. This examination uses the frameworks of British Imperial and anti-colonial space and the processes of immigrant “place-making” to illuminate how race was tied not only to one’s physical surroundings, but also to global networks of knowledge.

production and intellectual exchange. Additionally, these relationships between place and space in East Africa were, I argue, mediated, in part, by African political realities. Before exploring the implications of the tensions surrounding the highlands, it is useful to offer a brief sketch of empire building in East Africa and the ways in which historians have wrestled with the question of race in this region.

*Indians, Immigration, and the Imperial Indian Ocean*

British penetration of the East African hinterland began in earnest in the first decade of the twentieth century. While there had been a substantial bureaucratic and diplomatic presence along the coast (particularly in Zanzibar), the construction of railway, roads and other infrastructure allowed for easier and more permanent European and Indian settlement in the interior.

Long before Indians in East Africa became subjects of the British Empire, they had lived and prospered within the many political regimes of the Indian Ocean world. For centuries, Indian peoples had traded, lived, and prospered along the East African littoral, from the city-state of Mogadishu in present day Somalia to the islands of the Mozambique Channel. Indian political and economic power followed a similar trajectory to that of the Arabs in East Africa in the nineteenth century. Indeed, Indian economic power expanded during the era of the Omani Sultanate in Zanzibar, particularly under the leadership of Seyyid Said (r. 1806-1856). Indian financiers were crucial in the establishment of trade routes to the interior for slaves and ivory and also underwrote the large-scale production of cloves on the
islands of Zanzibar and Pemba. Moreover, they became deeply involved in maintaining the peace and enforcing British treaties imposed on Seyyid Said’s sons, who had struggled for control of their father’s empire following his death. Although the eventual supremacy of the British Empire in this part of the world necessitated the waning of Arab power, people with ancestral connections to the subcontinent continued to play a large role in the social, economic and political developments of coastal Africa.²

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, London began to turn to the government of the British Raj to recruit the necessary manpower to build the economies of the nascent British colonies in eastern and southern Africa. Indians from areas on the west coast of the subcontinent, principally from Gujarat and coastal communities stretching into what is today Pakistan, were brought as indentured servants to work on the sugar plantations of Mauritius and Natal, and on the railways of Kenya.³ In addition to being used as the necessary manpower for colonial expansion, the British also mobilized Indian economic influence in East Africa to encourage entrepreneurial efforts in “legitimate commerce” (i.e. not owning or using slaves). Indians also served as a critical mass of people necessary to draw more immigrants and de-populate the “overcrowded” subcontinent, as the British saw it.

In 1896 the British imperial office and the Government of India arrived at a formal agreement for indentured servants to come to East Africa on three-year contracts. Between 1896 and 1901 around 32,000 Indian workers arrived in East Africa. Some were initially

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used to quell the 1896 Mazrui Uprising in Mombasa, but most of the coolie labor was used in the construction of the Uganda Railway that stretched from Mombasa through the hinterlands to Kampala of present day Uganda. After many of the migrants who came to work on the railway stayed on after their contracts had expired, a number of these new Kenyan Indians encouraged family members from their home regions on the subcontinent to immigrate to East Africa. By the time that British citizens had begun arriving in the early 1900s to settle the highlands of the interior, Indians had become the largest racial minority in East Africa.

The initial settling of the highlands by Europeans was a process fraught with violence and deception. European machinations for control over the region first relied on the mobilization of waves of coercive violence throughout the region, often pitting one regional polity against another, a process duly sterilized with the title “punitive raids.” The territorial gains made from these raids then fell into the hands of colonial bureaucrats who divided up the land according to metropolitan prerogatives and those of newly arrived settlers. In 1902 the Crown Land Ordinance opened land up to ninety-nine year leases, for which Indian immigrants to the colony could apply. This offer was not open to Africans. In 1906, fearing a rush of Indian settlement in the highlands, Lord Elgin, the then Secretary of State for the Colonies decreed that the land be open only to European agriculturalists. A 1915 re-writing of the original Crown Land Ordinance stipulated that no non-European could purchase the original contract or lease it from its original European owners. After World War I, the British government amended the 1915 Crown Ordinance to provide land for British veterans of the

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5 Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley*, 54-55.
war. Known as the ex-Soldiers Settlement Scheme, the lands under its purview extended much further away from the zones of the original settlements. Although denied land due to this chronology of dispossession, many Indian migrants remained in the area, while a new Indian influx of merchants, artisans and intelligentsia migrated to Africa to join the Indian community.⁶

From the beginning, then, Indian people on the East African coast played a central role in realizing British colonial aspirations in the Indian Ocean. Their financial power, which relied on channels of credit and exchange with the subcontinent, was crucial in undermining the slave trade and, by extension, Arab control in the region. Indentured servants had built the infrastructure necessary to colonize the interior giving later generations the chance to make a name for themselves in the new colony. In order to penetrate the racial dynamic of the British Empire in East Africa, however, this examination uses the much-debated “Indian Question” of the 1920s as a focal point for its analysis.

“The Indian Question”

The Indian Question of early twentieth century Kenya refers to a period when Indian politicians resident in Kenya mobilized the economic, political and social capital of their community to push for increased Indian political power in the colony. These demands are divided into five separate but ultimately interrelated categories: franchise and representation on the Legislative Council in the Protectorate, the unqualified rejection of any quota on

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immigration from South Asia, membership on the Executive Council in the colony, and most importantly for this examination, an end to legal racial segregation and access to farming land in the white highlands. The five issues raised different responses in each interested group. Broadly speaking, it is the development and evolution of these responses that this thesis aims to explore. With respect to voting, Kenyan Indians demanded a common electoral role, one that required a minimum income and command of English language for voting participation. Furthermore, Indians argued for an equal number of Indian and European representatives. Indians also wanted no change to the amount of immigrants allowed to enter the country, and demanded the presence of at least one of their own on the Protectorate’s Executive Council. Finally, they pushed for “no segregation of any sort” and that the white highlands be “available to be sold first to Europeans” and would afterwards be “unrestricted on transfer.”

Settler responses to the Indian claim were not altogether surprising. An opinion piece published in the pro-settler East African Standard read as follows:

As a 17 years resident of Kenya… the Indian claim to equal status is not justified… as a matter of fact all the development of Kenya has been owing to white capital and energy and the ability to handle the African races… the Indian claim to enjoy full rights of citizenship throughout the Empire, says the government is evidently going to cause Kenya to concede their demands… the paper points out that Indians have already reaped the benefit of English blood, toil and money….it utterly condemns the

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7 British National Archives (henceforth, BNA)/ (Cabinet Papers, Henceforth, CAB)/24/158. Appendix III. The British government created both the Executive and Legislative Councils in 1907. The Executive Council was comprised, for the most part, of high-level colonial bureaucrats who advised the governor on policy. The Legislative Council was the lower body of the two, primarily concerned with passing revenue legislation.
Clearly, any push for Indian political gain was met with stiff resistance. To counter Indian claims, white settlers argued for only two nominated Indians on the lower-profile Legislative Council, with none on the Executive Council. They also asked that immigration be limited at the discretion of the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Finally, they demanded that there be “absolute segregation in residential and commercial areas” and that the white highlands be “definitely reserved by Statute for Europeans.” Locating the importance of the Indian Question also demands a discussion of how historians have understood race in East Africa. The following section sketches the historiography of race in the region and argues for a more nuanced understanding of the role race plays in colonial societies.

*History and Historiography of Race in East Africa*

The centrality of race in the history of modern East Africa, indeed throughout much of continent and the colonized world, is the subject of much debate amongst scholars. Interpretations vary. Marxist and other materialist readings deny its very existence, dismissing race as a false social construction deployed strategically in search of tangible gains. Some scholars reject the existence of racial difference in pre-colonial Africa, yet

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8 KNA/East African Standard/Film 1627/Roll 9. July 27th Article. “Indians: No Decision to be Made Yet.” This decision was in regards to the many debates forming the larger “Indian Question” *The East African Standard* was originally founded in 1901 as *The Standard* under the guidance of A.M. Jeevanjee, an Indian trader who will be discussed later in the examination. In 1905, he sold the paper to two British men who changed the name to the *East African Standard*. Published in Nairobi, the settler was a colony-wide organ of settler political opinion.

9 BNA/CAB/24/158. Appendix III
others trace the violence of the 1964 Zanzibar Revolution, for example, to a highly racialized Pan-Africanist discourse that emerged in the middle twentieth century as a response to white supremacy in East and Southern Africa. Abdul Sheriff, for example, offers an explicitly Marxist reading of race in colonial East Africa, particularly in Zanzibar. Using the Zanzibar Revolution as a departing point, the central argument advanced in his edited collection, *Zanzibar under Colonial Rule*, is that race is a false social construct brought by Europeans and then wielded by Africans as a means to an economic end. Sheriff posits the peasantry’s relationship to colonial and post-colonial means of production is the only way one can access historical trends in Africa and the Third World. Sheriff consciously privileges class in his analysis, marginalizing race as essential un-African. While class can be a useful heuristic device, the fact remains that Sheriff’s reading of race is in East Africa privileges its European origins and in so doing overlooks African intellectual agency and rejects the presence of racial thought in pre-colonial times. Jonathon Glassman offers an alternative and more complete reading of race in the region.

In his two major works, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast 1856-1888* and *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar*, Glassman takes on not only the narrowness of Marxist analysis, but also the exclusivity of racial thinking to European colonialism. Countering both Sheriff’s examination of Zanzibar and Mahmood Mamdani’s work on

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Rwanda, Glassman contends that race had existed as a social construct in pre-colonial East Africa, albeit with boundaries not as rigid as European scientific racial entities. During the time of Arab hegemony on the East African coast, for example, non-Arabs could adopt Arab names and customs to become “Arabs,” a process known in kiSwahili as uestaarabu. In the middle of the twentieth century, Glassman continues, ideas of race became more politically charged, particularly the idea of blackness and attempts to link blackness to the geographic entity of Africa. Controversially, Glassman sees the roots of the Zanzibar Revolution in European colonialism, pre-colonial racial thought, and radical black nationalism in post-colonial Tanganyika.¹¹

These historiographic cleavages draw from evolving definitions of race over the last two centuries. Predating the aforementioned texts were arguments that traced race from a biological certainty to what is vaguely referred to as a social construction. Throughout the nineteenth century the category of “race” was closely tied to supposed biological difference between populations. Couched in the language of rationalist Europe, scientific racial theories attempted to tie the amorphous idea of “difference” to a natural, self-evident reality. More than just what constituted racial difference, this conversation attempted to define, in effect,

“reality” in the modern world. It privileged sensory experience over spiritual encounters and supposedly value-free scientific theorizing over expressions of faith. With the power of ecclesiastical authority waning and the scientific method ascendant, what appeared to be self-evident or “real”—including the physical difference between people—became a departing point for assessing cultural difference. The rise of the social sciences in the twentieth century, however, rejected biological difference between people and sought an alternative explanation. This alternative explanation of race defines it as a “social construct.”

Twentieth century social scientists have endeavored to debunk nineteenth century racial science.\textsuperscript{12} Indeed, the glut of studies on race and racism in the twentieth century has affirmed that race is not, in fact, a natural difference, but rather a socially constructed one, reflected not in science but in the discursive traditions of both the institutions of the state and in its citizenry. This was a radical transformation from the nineteenth century when race was understood as a question of blood.\textsuperscript{13} As such, the question of the “reality” of race is again raised. If race is a social construction, it can thus be deconstructed, one supposes, rendering what was once a natural and then social reality a fundamental unreality.

Understanding race as socially constructed is not without its pitfalls. As Henri Levi-Strauss contends, does not the constant “discussion of a category that one believes to be false always entail the risk, simply by the attention paid to it of entertaining some illusions about its reality [?].”\textsuperscript{14} In other words, does the attention paid to debunking the putative reality of

\textsuperscript{12} Sarah Daynes and Orville Lee, \textit{Desire for Race}. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 2
\textsuperscript{14} Henri Levi-Strauss quoted in Daynes, and Lee, et al. \textit{Desire for Race}. 
racial difference serve to reify it, rather than affirm its supposed falsehood? The answer to this question is not easy, but suffice it to say that racial identification does not belong exclusively to those who claim to be of a particular race nor to those who define those people as “others.” It exists between those who articulate racial self-hood and the powers that can affirm that self-identification. No single entity has the total power to create, define or destroy “race.” In the era of colonial states, however, the bureaucracy of that state had a critical role in establishing and maintaining difference between its populations, in defining who was in the fold, so to speak, and who was “marginal.”

Where this present examination contributes to the historiography on race in East Africa is three-fold. First, it attempts to place both settlers and Indians in an equal analytical framework. This framework is the dialectical relationship between place and space. Although the researcher cannot ignore the political asymmetry of race relations in East Africa, it cannot be denied that both communities were engaged in parallel processes of making a home in East Africa and inventing a home in the ancestral lands. It is the inherent tension between the political imperatives of ones physical place within a nation and fluctuations of global power that surround the nation that characterize the transnational and transregional space that frames that place. Out of the tension between space and place emerges the spatially-constructed imagination of white settlers and Indians in Kenya. If Kenya was the theater where the politics of race were played out, then it was the continent of Africa and the Indian Ocean world on to which that drama was projected.
The second contribution to the history of race in East Africa is that although the protagonists of this examination are settlers and Indians, I argue that it is African political agency that ultimately mediated the relationship between racial thought, domestic politics and, imperial space in colonial Kenya. Africans served as both a foil for racial self-identification and sources of guidance for articulating belonging in the colony. This is particularly the case for Indian arguments explained further in chapters two and three.

The third contribution to the literature is the rejection of the notion of Indian sub-imperialism in East Africa. More than concluding that the interests of Indians ran parallel to those of the metropolitan power, the stigma of the sub-imperial title firstly implies the active pursuit of economic and social autonomy in opposition to indigenous populations while at the same time overlooking similar metropolitan strategies in their home country. Secondly, and in the same vein, sub-imperialism implies the rejection of the ontological political condition of being colonized that both colonizer and sub-imperialist share. Through this characterization, the communities’ political aspirations become tightly interwoven into the continued success of empire, as opposed to the revolutionary possibilities of indigenous self-rule. Moreover, it flattens the landscape of colonial power into discrete (and oversimplified) categories of analysis—colonized, sub-colonized/er, and colonizer—that fail to encompass the complexities of colonial projects, especially those in multi-racial societies.¹⁵

Above all, however, the description of certain groups as sub-imperialist implies the active use of imperial power to further their own imperial aspirations. To this end, the best example in the African context is of the dissemination of Buganda political and cultural power throughout Uganda via the spread of British control in central Africa. This examination makes an important distinction between the type of power mobilized by the Baganda and the claims made by Indians in East Africa. While indeed there was a push among Indian elites for an Indian colony in what used to be German East Africa (to be discussed in more detail later), there was no larger Indian imperial project at work that used the power of the British Empire to achieve these goals. Indeed as Dharam Ghai and Yash Ghai point out, Indians (although at times assuming the role of agents of the British Empire), “suffered similar… racial injustices and humiliations” in East Africa as did they’re African compatriots, and were even more disposed to accept their marginal status in Kenya or Tanzania because of their relatively limited political and demographic power.

Therefore, an overarching theme of this thesis is that although Indians in East Africa mobilized the imagined physical scope of the British Empire to make claims for political gains within the colony, to consider Indians as sub-imperialists does little justice to contradictory strategies of survival and collaboration inherent in most colonial political situations. Acknowledging the hegemony of empire necessarily complicates notions of supr- imperialism. In other words, this examination is not concerned with what turns “subaltern

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migrants into sub-imperialists,” but rather why Indians made the choices they did, their intellectual justifications for doing so, and how the physical space of empire gave legitimacy to those claims.18 Critical to answering these questions is an assessment of land and space in colonial East Africa and the Indian Ocean.

Land, Place and Space

Land, of course, is a productive place to start when studying the history of colonialism, particularly settler colonialism, the brutal and controversial form that the French practiced in Algeria, the Japanese in Korea, and the British in large swaths of central, eastern and southern Africa in the twentieth century. Broadly speaking, large-scale seizures of productive territory by an imperial power, forced removals of people indigenous to those lands, the restructuring of agricultural economies, the destruction of rural social networks of power and kinship and the creation of new landed aristocracies have characterized the political agendas of Kenyan settlers, the colons of Algeria and Japanese in Korea.19 Caroline Elkins and Susan Pederson contend that settler colonialism privileges “the logic of extermination” over that of exploitation, and that the process in general was defined by the “ongoing negotiation and struggle amongst key groups: metropole, indigenous population, colonial administration and settler community.”20 Structurally, this form of colonialism

18 Jun Uchida, Brokers of Empire: Japanese Settler Colonialism in Korea, 1876-1945 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2012), 93
differs from the “traditional variant” practiced throughout much of Africa, characterized by Mahmood Mamdani as a system in which “the subject population was incorporated into—and not excluded from—the arena of colonial power.” All told, settler colonies have proven violent and destructive. These dynamics of this type of colonialism can be accessed, I believe, by looking at the relationship between the physical place of settlement and the physical and intellectual space surrounding it.

Throughout this examination, space and place are two different, but ultimately related categories. “Space” will be defined as the broad, transnational imperial network in which the geographic territory, the “place,” rests. To approach the relationship of race, place and space, however, I will rely on the theoretical framework that Timothy Mitchell developed through his concept of “enframing.” Enframing, Mitchell contends, “is a method of dividing up and containing, as in the construction of barracks or the rebuilding of villages, which

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22 Many historians have used these terms as analytical tools, particularly historians of colonialism and empire, who have recognized the need to assess the geographic relationship between colony and metropole. Space, Sugata Bose suggests, is a useful framework for understanding history because “the continuity of a spatial surface and an idea of its limits are dependent not only on physical structure but also on the cognitive domain of mental processes.” Ideas, therefore, take meaning and significance in part from the space that they occupy. Prasenjit Duara has argued that “spaces such as frontiers, borders and ‘contact zones’ represent relatively weak links in the ideological hegemony of nationalism and are hence often highly militarized or policed. The exploration of historical experiences in these regions does not simply reveal different histories, but also different ways of thinking about history and space.” Frederick Cooper claims that the “spatial imagination of political activists [whose frontiers were] neither global nor local [but rather were] built out of specific lines of connections and posited regional, continental and transcontinental affinities. See: Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006) p. 9; Prasenjit Duara, “Transnationalism and the Challenge to National Histories” in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, ed. Thomas Bender, et al. (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002) p. 32; Frederick Cooper. *Colonialism in Question*, 109
operates by conjuring up a natural surface or volume called ‘space.’” Enframing, therefore, provides a schematic that at once surrounds and makes legible “place” a specific geographic and temporal location. Through enframing, “space” makes “place” readable, so to speak. In this examination, I argue that in Kenya articulations of race in diaspora, whether it be on the part of white settler or Indian migrant, was made legible through claims to a specific place in the colony, while the invocation of “space,” the larger global British Imperial network, is marshaled to legitimize those claims.

One benefit of approaching the shifting political aspirations of Indians and white settlers through an analysis of space is that it highlights critical difficulties in assessing the run-up to the global post-colonial moment. As Chris Lee has observed, processes of decolonization were “uniquely individual in scope—to people, communities and nation states alike—and in retrospect seemingly universal: the world witnessed a momentous wave of newly independent nation states during the second half of the twentieth century.” Indeed, independent African countries no longer existed in a continental space almost entirely under the control of foreign powers, but rather one fully engaged in the vicissitudes of liberation politics and Cold War posturing. The political interplay between the local and the global is further complicated by the “provincializing of Europe,” as described by Dipesh Chakrabarty. The collapse of Empire, at the very least rhetorically speaking, signaled a broader rejection of European global planning and it decentralized European political power. The new,

revolutionary geographies of the anti-colonial and post-colonial world thus broker an intellectual space between local actors and global movements. Although at times this examination privileges those who physically crossed the space of the Indian Ocean or the expanse of British Africa (elites, administrators, and politicians) at the expense of local subalterns (in the case of the Indian community, at least), it rejects the teleological assumptions that these elites, as the dominant political actors in the post-colonial world, projected backwards onto the processes of white rule and decolonization in East Africa. Ultimately, white settlers and Indians were forced to confront the new realities that accompanied the end of empire: Pan-Africanism, Indian nationalism and a colonial administration increasingly reluctant to enforce any form of explicitly racialized governance in its colonies. Indians and settlers were thus forced to renegotiate a new social and political existence in East Africa.

Outline

Chapter One assess the extent to which white settlers and British colonial administrators worked together to construct a logic of racial territoriality in pre-World War II Kenya. Confronted by evolving definitions of race, both settlers and administrators created an alternative way to pull race out of the realm of the abstract and into the world of the tangible; they sought to make race “real” by tying it to the land. I intend to make two major arguments in this chapter. The first is that anxieties over racial thought necessitated an alternative articulation of racialized governance; the politics of land ownership and official
segregation did just that. Second, I demonstrate that although the British government had celebrated a policy of “native paramouncey,” the truth of the matter was that London and Nairobi were very much in step in that both entities sought white-only control in the highlands. This last point is important because it demonstrates a second and equally important stratum of spatial governance: the intimate (and inter-continental) relationship between settler colony and metropole. All said it is clear that global currents of imperial power buttressed the local politics of space. Race and space were inseparable in the imagination of the British settler.

Seizing on the conclusions made from the first chapter, specifically the relationship between racial self-identification and geographic imagination, Chapter Two will argue that Indians had created their own framework of spatial understanding that was part of the larger Indian Ocean world. I argue that the claims made by East African Indians in the 1920s for greater economic and political participation and most importantly access to land in the white highlands was based on a belief that their claims were not only justified by their historical presence in East Africa but also by the very nature of being a diasporic community of the British Raj. Indians mobilized a rhetoric of belonging that emphasized the tight historical connection to empire. Indians appealed to their imperial past not only because of deep ideological affinities with the British Empire (although that may have been in the case amongst certain elites), but also because the political environment of claim making in the

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25 Native Paramouncey refers to British imperial policy, ascendant after World War II, that emphasized British stewardship over Africans under its control. This was to extend to education policy, employment opportunities, etc. Native Paramouncey was also one of the arguments against Indian settlement in the highlands, as settlers saw Indians as corrupting agents in African communities.
colony at the time demanded as much. I show that African political thinkers also deployed the language and arguments of empire for their own political gain. Compelled by domestic political imperatives, therefore, Indians projected this imperial past and present onto their ancestral home, the subcontinent. This chapter emphasizes emerging political connections made between Indian and African political actors and pays specific attention to the political career of Harry Thuku, a prominent African activist.

Finally, Chapter Three shows how the ideas of race and space that informed each community in the early twentieth century (settlers as representatives of Britain and Indians of the Raj) collapsed and were subsequently re-imagined during the 1930s and 1940s. I will argue here that London ceased to be a source of administrative and intellectual authority, and gradually became replaced with the white state of Southern and Eastern Africa as a source of political inspiration and intellectual production. In other words, white settlers needed new global geographies to address local issues of race and territory.

Likewise, it is during this time period that Indian politicians and intellectuals re-imagined their own place in the world: they no longer embraced their position as imperial subjects but rather absorbed and molded the politics of nationalism and self-determination emanating from the subcontinent to address white colonial rule in Kenya. India, then, no longer became a source of imperial power, but rather the vanguard of the new “Third World.” Kenyan Indian diasporic consciousness was thus intimately linked to the demands of domestic Kenyan politics as well as how they imagined themselves in the world.
Chapter 1: White Anxiety, The Highlands, and the Logic of Racial Territoriality in 1920s Kenya

“The first subject I would like to raise with you is land” is how Margery Perham, British intellectual, colonial policy expert and author began a letter to Elspeth Huxley, member of the Kenya settler intelligencia, herself a prolific writer and apologist for the British colonial enterprise in Africa. In this chapter, following Perham’s lead, I center my examination on the question of land; more specifically—space, politics and race in the settler imagination in colonial Kenya. Throughout much of the 1940s Perham and Huxley carried on a vigorous correspondence that probed the putative benefits, misfortunes and contradictions of the British imperial presence in East Africa. In a series of letters beginning with the aforementioned one sent on June 10, 1942 these two women engaged the controversial topic of land settlement and usage in colonial Kenya. Perham continues,

Imagine that you are in an airplane over Kenya accompanied by a stranger of common sense and a feeling for justice who is completely ignorant of the Kenya situation…Your stranger, leaning over, observes the crowded little farmsteads of the Kikuyu and remarks [on] the dense population…[next] your plane sails over the boundary of the European highlands. The stranger makes an exclamation of astonishment … At last he says ‘who lives in these large farmhouses and wide estates?’ [You answer] ‘They are Europeans, a different sort of people, and—if you don’t understand its rather difficult to explain’

Huxley responds by offering a typical colonial trope in defense of European control in the Kenyan highlands: that the land was either vacant or under the stewardship of an

27 Perham, “The View from the Aeroplane”, Race and Politics in Kenya, 43
agriculturally unsophisticated people who were unable to make the land submit to their own tastes and the needs of a global market. Nevertheless, despite the systematic and at times violent land acquisition made by Europeans at the expense of indigenous space in Kenya (to be explored later in this work), Huxley’s contention that the process of racial self-identification is “rather difficult to explain” is indeed the case. Race in colonial East Africa was not simply a question of black or white.

Despite Perham’s cryptic allusions for more just and equitable relations between whites and Africans, the letters continue into discussions of rainfall amounts, herding practices and the multifaceted cultural deficiencies of native people that prevented them from fully taking advantage of the land. Nevertheless, within these conversations of the minutia of land-allocation and crude, all-encompassing discussions of indigenous cultures lay complex discursive webs of meaning and metaphor, intuition and imagination that imbue the landscape with much more significance than just its productive output. Indeed my central argument in this chapter is that the “spatial imagination” of white settlers deeply informed domestic Kenyan politics and intellectual traditions of race in East Africa. Whiteness became tied to the physical space of the Kenyan highlands.

To support this conclusion, I will show that to ease anxieties over fluctuations in racial thought (from scientific fact to “social construction”) necessitated an alternative articulation of racialized governance—the politics of land ownership and official segregation did just that. Moreover I show that although the British government had celebrated a policy of “native paramouncy,” the truth of the matter was that London and Nairobi were very much
in step: both entities sought white-only control in the highlands. This last point is important because it demonstrates a second and equally important stratum of the spatial paradigm I hope to illuminate here: the intimate (and inter-continental) relationship between colony and metropole. As such, this chapter is as much an examination of the processes inherent in “seeing as a state” as it is an investigation of the people who were “looking at the state” and attempting to wield the it for their own benefit. The way in which settlers mobilized the governing apparatuses of the imperial state speak to their own agency in constructing empire and the tensions inherent in this project. Broadly speaking, then, I see this chapter building on recent scholarship that has attempted to avoid a discussion of space that merely focuses on the “real, physical consequences” of “society’s spatiality” and focus instead on how the spatial imagination itself created both local and transnational “social meaning.” In other words, this analysis deploys space as an analytical category that can do heavier lifting than just describing de-facto and de-jure segregation in colonial cities, for example. To do so, I will employ the analytical device of “enframing” outlined in the introduction. Acknowledging this framework, this chapter will assess the extent to which white settlers and British colonial administrators worked together to construct a logic of racial territoriality in pre-World War II Kenya.

29 See: James Scott, Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed. (New Have, CT: Yale University Press, 1998). For a more complete discussion of how settler policies influence empire-building, see Jun Uchida’s Brokers of Empire (Harvard, 2011) Scott’s “authoritarian high modernism” refers to the strategies through which the state penetrated the lives of its citizens in order to make them more “legible” to the state. In colonial situations, this term usually refers to relations between colonizer and colonized. In this case, however, I extend it to include the relationship between plural colonizing parties: the imperial government in Britain and white settlers in Kenya.

30 Garth Andrew Meyers. Verandahs of Power: Colonialism and Space in Urban Africa. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 8
Confronted by an evolving definition of race, both settlers and administrators created an alternative way to pull race out of the realm of the abstract and into the world of the tangible; they sought to make race both “real” and “legible” by tying it to the land. In order to trace this development, I will first sketch the history of European city planning and biological knowledge in tropical Africa. Against this background I will place the primary source material: letters and official documents exchanged between British colonial officials, decrees made by white settlers, articles and letters sent to the major political organ of settler politics in Kenya, *The East African Standard*, and even correspondence between members of the Indian community who sought to puncture the illusionary, hermetically-sealed world of the “white highlands.” All said it is clear that global currents of imperial power framed local racial politics. Race, space and place were inseparable.

*Land and Race in the British Colonial Imagination*

The original conquest of the Kenyan interior shows the extent to which British administrators believed in the close relationship between race and land. When speaking of the highlands, Sir Harry Johnson, explorer and early colonial administrator, observed in 1901 that “here we have a territory (now that the Uganda Railway is built) admirably suited for a white man’s country, and I can say this, with no thought of injustice, for the country in question is either utterly uninhabited for miles and miles, or at most its inhabitants are wandering hunters who have no settler home, or whose fixed habitation is the lands outside
The healthy area.” Of course, the argument that the land is unpopulated or underused is a false one. Tirop Simatei observes that “What a colonizing topography…maps out as untamed, depopulated, [and] wilderness is acknowledged by the indigenous perspective as a scenic landscape of valleys, ridges, and hills that constitute ‘the heart and soul of [indigenous] land.’ Simatei has also argued that “colonial representation of land and its inhabitants becomes a form of epistemic violence to the extent that it involves immeasurable disruption and erasure of local cultural systems…[a] colonial representation aimed at the suppressions of the difference of the ‘other.’” The “epistemic violence” of stripping the land of its significance, however, was also matched by the physical violence of the British conquest of the Kenyan interior.

Along with the advancing construction of the Uganda Railway, small-scale British military forces arrived in the highlands at the turn of the century. Following the departure of European missionaries who had left the region in the 1890s, British armed forces moved into western Kenya and proceeded to mobilize “native auxiliaries,” as guides to draw up and enforce terms of agreement for the transfer of land from native polities. When unsuccessful in gains via negotiation, Imperial forces pursued a strategy of calculated violence. That is not to say that the violence was restrained. Indeed, these spurts of violence were usually described punitive raids: violence as punishment for non-cooperation. British military leaders in western Kenya deployed Africans in these raids, using Maasai fighters against the

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Kikuyu or Luo, for example. Between 1894 and 1908, the around fifty of these “punitive raids” reshaped the political landscape of the highlands. These raids served to destabilize systems of mutual political accountability between African polities across the space, allowing an easier path for European settlement. White settlers were not the main actors in military adventures in the highlands, but they did step into these destroyed spaces shortly after. That said, while Tirop Simatei’s above observation is correct in asserting that the reordering of the land under colonial systems was characterized by multiple iterations of violence, his analysis falls somewhat short. Indeed although the description of land by settlers invokes a certain “backwardness” regarding native people, the British Empire did not satisfy itself with merely categorizing people as “backward.” Instead they opted create scientific and cultural typologies of difference. Seizing on Sir Harry Johnson’s aforementioned conclusion, that the Kenyan highlands should naturally be reserved for white development, this section will explore the logic that informed these typologies: that the land one occupied informed the cultures and values of that race; affirming the link between race and place in the British imagination.

By recycling and recasting many dubious biological discussions of racial difference, the British Empire and the white settlers within it re-imagined the land as an important determinant of difference and as the ultimate governing metaphor of the colony. European supremacy in the this part of the country became “official” with the 1902 Crown Land

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34 Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley*, 60-61.
Ordinance that allocated leases of ninety-nine years to European settlers. Eventually, a 1915 rewriting of the Crown Land Ordinance restricted ownership of land to Europeans, explicitly prohibiting even the practice of sub-leasing land out to non-Europeans.\textsuperscript{36} White defense of the highlands, ultimately, was an attempt to prevent the land from becoming “abstract, exchangeable, and…deterritorialized space.”\textsuperscript{37} If that were to happen, the very notion of racial-selfhood would also become abstracted and contingent, allowing for both African and Indian anti-colonialists to pry open an intellectual space large enough to challenge white rule. Why was it, then, that territorial sovereignty became the means through which race was articulated? Why were ideas of “civilization” and “modernity” tied so intimately to land and space? The answer lies, in the beginning, with the science that informed the early stages of European colonization in Africa.

\textit{Tropical Science and Territorial Governance}

Colonial officials throughout imperial Africa often invoked the metaphor of geography by linking space, power and race. Indeed, in the middle of the nineteenth century, both French and British administrators began constructing their respective colonial states through, in part, an observance of medical topography. They studied the soil, the rainfall amounts and the temperatures of certain places in an effort to decide what places were healthy or unhealthy for European habitation. As Philip Curtin quipped, “some of the things

\textsuperscript{36} Morgan, “The White Highlands,” 40
they concluded were true; others were not.”38 One roundly observed practice of imperial state planning was elevating the European quarters of town above sections reserved for African habitation. The putative reason for doing so was to avoid contact with the malaria-carrying Anopheles mosquitoes. As such, both French and British city planners insisted on reserving the plateaus, ridges or hills that surrounded the cities for European habitation. The British had taken their inspiration from the many “hill stations” from which the Raj governed in India, while the French continued their practice of constructing an entirely new city, the ville nouvelle, which stood in stark distinction from indigenous living spaces.

Throughout the continent, however, opinions ranged as to what was the most hygienic distance from the ground that would sustain European life. Original estimates ranged from a mere ten to fifteen feet of elevation above the ground to as high as many thousands of feet. Perhaps the most extreme example was in central Africa. Explorer MacGregor Laird believed that safety from malarial mosquitoes could only be found above five thousand feet. The Germans would later take his advice and build their colonial capital, Buea, on the slopes of Mount Cameroon. Nevertheless, while colonial efforts to elevate the living spaces of Europeans was predicated on sound medical science that linked malaria to mosquitoes, the “avoidance of disease was not the only motive for moving administrators to higher places. It also satisfied the need to segregate the governors from the governed…”39 Indeed, the prominent Kenyan pro-settler paper, The East African Standard, frequently ran advertisements for “The Equatorial Hotel” in Entebbe, Uganda that boasted a property that

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38 Philip D. Curtin, “Medical Knowledge and Urban Planning in Tropical Africa.” The American Historical Review, vol. 90, No. 3 (June, 1985), 594
39 Curtin, “Medical Knowledge and Urban Planning in Tropical Africa,” 595
stood “on high ground with two views of the lake” and that it was “high and airy.”

These outposts of European life were not the large-scale settler projects of the Americas, Australia and New Zealand. What we see, rather, is a collection of small-scale and surgically managed “neo-Europes” throughout continental Africa. Indeed, if we are to extend Alfred Crosby’s thesis, these European enclaves, particularly those in the highlands of Kenya can best be called micro-Europes.

An often-cited characteristic of early British science in the tropics was the assumption that a balance of inputs and outputs governed the body; that fresh air, clean water and healthy food acted as a balance to respiration, perspiration and excretion. Humoral theory suggested that all of these inputs and outputs had to be kept in balance. If not kept in order, an imbalance would cause sickness. Although always implicit, many assumed that disease was “associated with immorality.” This immortality could also be passed down from one generation to the next, apparently. English citizens who had been born and raised in tropical colonies, some asserted, could never attain “the same physical and mental standard as those others of their fellow countrymen who had been born in the United Kingdom.” In an effort to mitigate these consequences, a 1911 medical report on West Africa confirmed that “it has been proven that the separation of Europeans from natives is one of the most efficient means

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40 KNA/East African Standard/Film 1627/Reel 1
42 Curtin, “Medical Knowledge and Urban Planning in Tropical Africa,” 597
of protection against disease endemic amongst native races.”

This line of thought was continued in Kenya. Amongst the early correspondence of the East African Indian National Congress (EAINC), an official from the Nairobi Health Office denied a trading license to an Indian merchant, declaring that

“The health office cannot grant a license to trade in the Indian area of town because of the “insanitary (sic) filthy and dangerous practice [of] ‘sleeping in shops amongst food stuff and soft goods’ and therefore I cannot on hygienic grounds accede to your request that a license should be granted to trade…where this practice is carried on.”

An author in *The East African Standard* declared that the areas of Kenya’s cities where Indians lived were “certainly not a white man’s country unless they [make] their health ordinances more stringently than they were at home. In the tropics they had to be more stringent.” What thus emerges from this discussion of European science and city planning in tropical Africa is not the colonial archetype: the all-powerful conqueror who brought savage lands to heel. Rather, we see the anxieties of European settlers and administrators who saw Africa *both* as a land in need of European civilization, but one that was also the “white man’s grave.” It is through this paradoxical and contradictory framework that whiteness became territorialized, so to speak, in the lush highlands of west-central Kenya.

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45 KNA/ (East African Indian National Congress Papers, henceforth: EAINC Papers)/Film 1929/Reel 1

46 KNA/*The East African Standard*/Film 1929/Reel 1, July 27, 1921 opinion piece.
Race and Space in The 1920s White Highlands

During the crisis over the Indian Question of the 1920s, the overwhelming source of authority for racial governance for the white settlers was Great Britain. The local politics of territoriality were enframed by the global politics of London’s Colonial Office, as well as knowledge produced by experts in the metropole. Indeed, many delegations of settlers traveled to London in order to discuss, among many things, the status of white land in Kenya and the best way to address the “native” and Indian questions. These were not meetings of equals, however. One delegation not only “express[ed] the view of the European community, but rather proposed, admittedly without authority, an alternative scheme by which Indian aspirations with regard to representation could be more fully met…”47 These words, written by the Duke of Devonshire, the Minister of State for the Commonwealth and Colonies, leave no doubt as to who was the ultimate source of authority regarding colonial governance. In this decade, however, the interests of the settlers and that of the Empire as a whole ran, for the most part, parallel. It is important to note here that the global needs of the empire and the local needs of white settlers were largely still in step. In other words, both settlers and administrators believed that the highlands should be reserved for the white population.

Although there was certainly tension over the possibility of greater Indian representation and power in the colony, a careful reading of the documents reveals more coordination than divergence in the 1920s. A telegram between the Governor of Kenya and the Secretary of the State for the Colonies appears to reveal deep divisions and mutual suspicion between the colonial government and the white settlers. Governor Robert

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47 BNA/CAB/24/158 p. 5. Emphasis mine.
Coryndon speaks of “the possibility [of] the seizure of the Treasury, armoury, railway, customs and telegraph offices” by settlers angered over London’s encouragement of Indian political empowerment. He even goes so far as to mention, although disapprovingly, of the possibility of bringing in foreign troops.\textsuperscript{48} That said, one question, indeed the \textit{central} question to the debate over the white highlands—the validity of racial segregation—was one that both settler and administration agreed on.

A 1919 meeting of the Convention of Associations of British East Africa, known throughout administrative circles as the “White Man’s Parliament,” articulated settler anger over Indian demands for greater economic and political participation in the Protectorate. During this meeting the group published the “Resolution of Convention of Associations” which declared, among other things that the Secretary of State for the Colonies should not give

> “any system of franchise to Asiatics, nor…[allow] them to acquire land except in townships on short leases, nor [employ] Asiatics in Government work…[and ensure] that steps should be taken at once to restrict Asiatic immigration in order that this stronghold of European colonization in Central Africa may stand beside her sister colonies [South Africa, Nyasaland, North and South Rhodesia] in their Asiatic policy.”\textsuperscript{49}

Clearly, the settlers had begun to articulate an ultra-conservative stand against non-white political participation in the country. Settler anger, however, was in large part mitigated by

\begin{footnotes}
\item[48] BNA/CAB/24/158 p. 3
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the fact that both settler and administrative policy were in step on the question of racial
segregation and white exclusivity in the highlands.

In the 1920s, however, London sought to heal whatever divides they saw. Speaking at
the Kenya and Uganda Dinner in January of 1922, Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State
of the Colonies asked that all those concerned with East Africa to “take a broad Imperial
view of the position of the Indians who are at the present time in the two countries of Kenya
and Uganda.” He went on to celebrate “Mr. Rhodes’ principle of equal rights for all civilized
men. That means that natives and Indian alike, who reach and conform to well-marked
European standards, shall not be denied the fullest exercise and enjoyment of civic and
political rights.”\(^{50}\) Again, on face value it appeared as if the British administration had
consciously placed itself in opposition to the right-wing settlers. In practice, however, words
did not match deeds. Governments throughout eastern and central Africa, including Kenya,
functioned through a racialized framework, regardless of what liberal platitudes were
necessary to mouth at the time.

Less than a year later, unsurprisingly, in a telegram sent from Churchill’s office to Sir
Robert Coryndon, the Secretary of State declared that while affirming the nominal equality of
the races and a repudiation of segregation on racial lines, the Colonial Office “cannot
contemplate any change in the existing law” with regards to the question of the White
Highlands, meaning it remained in white hands.\(^{51}\) The shared belief in segregation is central
to the argument I am advancing. Why is it that even the Colonial government refused to

\(^{50}\) BNA/CAB/24/158. Appendix IV.
\(^{51}\) BNA/CAB/24/158. Appendix V.
question white dominance in this, the most fertile part of the country? I argue that in addition to ambivalence over how to govern an increasingly belligerent settler society, it demonstrated a fundamental belief in the highly racialized language that tied whiteness to the cool, fertile lands in West Central Kenya.

The 1923 Devonshire White Paper entitled “Indians in Kenya,” for example, speaks to the assumption that racial segregation was the most hygienic of all living arrangements in the colonies. Citing the “a distinguished sanitation expert, Professor W. J. Simpson,” the colonial administration “strongly advocated a system of racial segregation, both in the residential and commercial areas of the large towns.”52 This declaration, no doubt, had been informed by multiple concurring opinions, the most prominent of the time being that of Lord Milner, “The Officer Administering the Government of the East Africa Protectorate.” Writing from London in a May 1920 dispatch, Milner admitted that while racial exclusivity in the highlands “was not consonant with His Majesty’s Government,” it was apparently self-evident that there was a “limited area…on which European settlers can live…” and if that area “were to [be] thrown open to the competition of Asiatics, who are physically fitted to settle in other areas from which Europeans are by nature excluded, there would be, taking the protectorate as a whole, a virtual discrimination in favor of the Asiatic as against European settlement.” Milner’s argument was indeed not a unique one as many others had made the claim that it was the Indians who had effectively colonized East Africa at the expense of Europeans. Indians, it was claimed, had “misapprehended” the matter. “I have no wish,”

52 BNA/CAB/24/158 p. 4
Milner continued “to sacrifice Indian to European interests. But I am convinced that, as long as the Indians are fairly dealt with in the selection of the sites, the principle that in the laying out of townships in tropical Africa separate areas should be allotted to different races…”

In a 1921 speech at the Imperial Conference, Winston Churchill declared that within the British Empire there is no “barrier of race, colour or creed…but such a principle has to be gradually applied because intense local feelings are excited and there is no doubt that extraordinary social stresses arise when populations are intimately mingled in some of these new countries…” These tacit approvals of racial segregation, although couched in liberal language, do not substantially differ from the statements of the “White Man’s Parliament,” the settler’s Convention of Associations of British East Africa, who stated that “the maintenance of this country depends entirely… on the white man” and that Indians were not to be allowed to “acquire land except in townships on short leases.” Finally, the settlers “beg[ed] His Excellency the Governor to make known to the Imperial Conference, through the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for the Colonies, our earnest petition to…[extend] the same policies to the conquered territory, formerly called German East Africa.”

One arena in which settlers discussed racial difference was the local newspapers. The East African Standard often printed letters charged with political invective. A July 1921 opinion piece written by an ex-Indian Office Civil Servant entitled “Indians: The Root of the Problem,” repeated a warning seen in many other settler and administrative writings, official or otherwise, of the threat of being “swamped” by Indians. The symbolic nature of using the

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53 BNA/CAB/24/158, Appendix I
54 BNA/CAB/24/158, Appendix II
55 BNA/CAB/24/114, p. 5
word “swamp” to refer to land protection notwithstanding, the crux of the author’s argument was the inability for two peoples, “Eastern” and “European” to cohabitate. “Real India,” the author claims, is “narrow-brained and fanatic.”

While the documents do expose the similarities in racial thought between settlers and administration, perhaps the best evidence of dominant settler opinion regarding their relationship with London was a 1921 cartoon published by *The East African Standard*. In it, a “hot head” settler is seen scaling the a craggy cliff labeled “armed resistance, direct action, and boycott.” Below him, a “cool-headed” gentleman implores him to take the steps of “common sense” in an effort to achieve ultimate goal of “European highlands and electoral rights reserve.” All the while in the back, a tiger labeled “Indian menace” crouches (Figure 1). There is no doubt that settlers felt threatened by Indian political advancements, but the reality at this time was that they saw their path towards success not by breaking with the Empire but rather by working within it.

**Conclusion**

With the waning of nineteenth century racial thought that placed race in the realm of the hard sciences, when the interior boundaries of the colonial state were regulated by blood-lineage was being roundly rejected, how could race be made “real”? As Ann Laura Stoler explains, “being European was supposed to be self-evident, but was also a quality that only

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56 KNA/East African Standard/Film 1627/Reel 9 “Indians: The Root of the Problem.”
57 KNA/East African Standard/Film 1627/Reel 9, September 3, 1921 Cartoon.
the qualified were equipped to define.”58 Indeed this shift in racial logic was present in Kenya. Underlying settler and colonial administration attempts to segregate the races was not only the science of the nineteenth century discussed earlier in this chapter, but also an evolving discourse on cultural difference between Europeans and Indians. As mentioned before, the science of race was no longer viable. Although no less real in practice, race had become abstracted in theory. As such, cultural difference became another way, along with land, to speak about race. In East Africa, the discussion of race was no different.

In sum, this chapter has argued that the marshalling of tropical science, racial anxiety, and the physical landscape of the interior of Kenya all served to make race and racial difference a legible and tangible institution. Through “enframing” debates of white bodies, Indian hygiene, topography, through the larger channels of knowledge and power of the British Empire, white settlers reified racial difference in colonial Kenya. This is an important argument because it affirms the intimate connection between local political needs and transnational frameworks of power and knowledge. After all, as Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper have implored, students of Empire must place both colony and metropole on the same analytical plane.59 In doing so, we can more thoroughly penetrate the racial logic and international posturing of white settlers in colonial Kenya.

58 Stoler, Race and the Education of Desire., 105
59 Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler et al. Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997)
Figure 1. (KNA/ East African Standard/Film 1627/Reel 9, September 3, 1921 Cartoon)
Chapter 2: Across Space and Time in the Imperial Indian Ocean: Space, “Sub-Imperialism” and Diaspora in 1920s Kenya

As discussed in the previous chapter, the underlying social, political and economic foundations of the White Highlands of central Kenya held more significance to European settlers than just to establish profitable agricultural production. In their attempts to wrestle with the fluidity of the evolving meaning of race, white settlers and the British colonial administration were forced to make race real, so to speak, and attempted to do so by imbuing the landscape with the imaginary qualities that each distinct race needed to survive and thrive in the colonial political economy. White settlers mobilized imperial space, transnational networks of colonial power, and imperial intellectual production to stake their claim to the highlands of Kenya in the first decades of the twentieth century. While this chapter again picks up in the 1910s and 1920s, it shifts the focus of interrogation to the South Asian population. Specifically, this chapter looks at the spatial imagination of the Indian Diaspora using the political crises of the “Indian Question” in colonial Kenya as a lens to frame this process.

It was during the 1910s and 1920s that Kenyan Indians first began to agitate for increased political and economic power in the colony. To make these claims Indians mobilized the imperial space of the Indian Ocean, where the sub-continent held a privileged position as a source of power and legitimacy throughout the Indian Ocean World. The way that Indians constructed their historical and geopolitical position in the 1910s and 1920s can be traced, I argue, to domestic modes of political posturing in colonial Kenya.
Throughout these early decades of the twentieth century, African communities began to formally organize in opposition to white rule in Kenya by couching their complaints in the language of colonial power and by appealing to imperial structures of governance to enact change. Before the rise of anti-colonialism, therefore, the ways in which Africans spoke of change in Kenya were through the language of empire. This chapter thus argues that the spatial imagination that Indians created to lobby for political rights projected empire across the aquatic expanse of the Indian Ocean. It drew, first and foremost, from the domestic political realities of Kenya. Although there was an attempt to mobilize the history of Indian labor in the British conquest of East Africa, the emphasis of Indian imperial connections to the subcontinent do not reflect tacit Indian support for the colonial project nor an embrace of British political control over the territory of India. Rather, the use of imperial space to enframe and make legible Indian claims for political power reflect the political landscape of early twentieth century Kenya. Both Indians and Africans emphasized loyalty to the crown, for example, as a way to support their right to land ownership. Although this chapter touches on how Indians occasionally found themselves in the crosshairs of African arguments against colonial rule, it recasts Indian political action in the colony as well and the community’s relationships with Africans and the politics of the subcontinent. Specifically, it argues that Indians did not project the imperial power of the Raj into the colony but rather projected the articulations of political protest common in Kenya outward to reshape how Kenyan Indians understood the politics of the subcontinent. In so doing, this argument also pushes against
contemporary literature on Indians in East Africa that characterizes this community as sub-imperialists.60

Africans and Indians in Imperial Space

The fact that Indians laid their arguments for access to the highlands within the broader space of empire reflects the political landscape of British subjects in colonial Kenya. This section approaches African politics with three central questions: what were the broad characteristics of African political thought in early twentieth century vis-à-vis colonial rule? What was the relationship between Africans and Indians? How does understanding African political agency help frame Indian arguments for increased representation and access to the highlands?

Unsurprisingly, African responses to the Indian presence in East Africa were diverse. Politicians like Harry Thuku, an important early voice in the Kikuyu political movement to be discussed later, for example, celebrated cooperation across racial lines, while other organizations remained suspicious. In his discussion of the Lebanese in Ghana, for example, Emmanuel Akyeampong identifies the vilification of “auxiliary diasporas,” like the Lebanese in West Africa or Indians in East Africa, as the result of African actors being politically unable to direct their anger and dissatisfaction at Europeans in the colony. Other racial

minorities operate as stand-ins for Europeans, symbols of Empire. This section shows that while this does seem to be the case when discussing low-level commercial relations between Africans and Indians (the dukawallah, for example), other African politicians sought greater cooperation with Indians. This cooperation was sought even after some African thinkers adopted argument familiar to white settlers, that Indian civilization was anathema to economic, social and political development in the colony. In sum, this chapter reveals the extent to which while there was no uniform reaction amongst Africans to Indian politics to white rule, there was a significant level of cooperation and ideological overlap between many African and Indian actors.

When Indians had begun to push for access to the highlands in the 1910s and 1920s, the very people who had been displaced in the original European conquest of the land, the Kikuyu, the Kamba and Embu, had also begun to mobilize in resistance to white control. The most prominent leader of Kikuyu resistance of the time was Harry Thuku, a mission-educated man from the highlands who founded the Young Kikuyu Association (YKA) in 1921. The organization soon changed its name to the East African Association (EAA) in 1921 to reflect the desire of the small, educated ruling cadre of the EAA to be a multi-ethnic organization that included both rural Kikuyu and urban Nairobians from around the colony.

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62 The dukawallah are Indian shop owners, usually in rural areas. They often forged close economic relationships with their African customers.
63 Harry Thuku, with Kenneth King. *Harry Thuku: An Autobiography.* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1970) p. 20. One of the purported causes of the rise in taxes and lowering of wages, Thuku contends, was settler uncertainty after the currency in Kenya had changed form the Indian Rupee to the shilling.
Primarily, the EAA fought for a way to guarantee native land rights, fight against lower wages and higher taxes, and end the infamous *kipande* pass system.\(^{64}\)

Thuku and the EAA believed in the powerful possibilities of uniting African and Indian political movements in the colony. One strategy of Thuku was to turn the historically tense relationship between Indian merchants and African customers into one of mutual benefit. The *dukawallah*, or petty shop owner, for example, was often the embodiment of both African and European hostility and caricature. In the eyes of some, the *dukawallah’s* monopoly over trade and exchange within specific African areas in staple goods like cooking oil encouraged them to charge higher-than-market prices.\(^{65}\) Thuku argued, however, that the presence of the *dukawallah*, was an example of the close bonds forged between Indians and Africans in the colony. The economic relationship between the *dukawallahs* and the Africans that patronized their shops encouraged Thuku explore “the opportunity to collaborate with the Indians in the public realm…”\(^{66}\) Thuku actively pursued this collaboration, forming a particularly close relationship with the Gujarati-born activist and editor of anti-settler newspaper, *The East African Chronicle*, Manilal Desai.

Throughout 1922, the two men exchanged a series of letters expressing their mutual support for each other’s cause. After being arrested in March of 1922 for being identified as a

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\(^{64}\) First established in 1915, the *kipande* system was a compulsory identification scheme that required African men to carry cards with personal information with them at all times. It was a roundly detested system and emblematic of African subservience in the colony.


\(^{66}\) Aiyar, “Empire, Race and the Indians in Colonial Keny’a Contested Public Sphere,” 141
threat to the colonial state, Thuku sent a letter to Desai, in which he reminisced about his close acquaintances at home: “I have been known by some Indians…especially by Messrs. Allibhai Abdullalli. I use [sic] to go visit them every time in their shop.” Not long later, Desai responded, noting that in regard to Thuku’s imprisonment, “I am very sorry to hear about your arrest and I believe that all justice-loving people felt likewise.” Desai empathizes: “I am sure that those who know you, know perfectly well that you are always for constitutional agitation to get regress of the grievances…and that you are loyal to His Majesty the King and that you are quite innocent, but it is very difficult to prove unless you are put on trial.” Thuku responds shortly after with a request for Desai to draft a petition in support of him to present to the Governor of the colony. What is striking from this exchange is Desai’s emphasis of Thuku’s loyalty to the Crown. This is indicative of that fact that empire was still the network through which politics were negotiated and disputes settled. Anti-colonialism was not yet present in theory nor in practice.

Thuku’s organization first ran into resistance amongst older African elites, many of whom worked closely with the British. Local “Chiefs” including Chiefs Mbiu and Kinanjui strongly resented Thuku’s call for political protest against the ruling powers and Thuku’s characterization of them as “paid servants” of the colonial government. Increased political

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67 Letter from Thuku to M.A. Desai from Detention. Kismayu, 28th March 1922. In Harry Thuku, p. 88
68 Excerpt from Letter to Thuku from M.A. Desai. 11th April 1922. In Harry Thuku, p. 89.
69 Letter from Thuku to M.A Desai. Kismayu, 2nd May 1922. In Harry Thuku, p. 92
70 To this point, it should be noted that Jomo Kenyatta, future president of the independent Republic of Kenya, also pursued his claims through the machinery of empire. After working under Thuku in the EAA, Kenyatta established the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA). In his capacity a general secretary, he traveled to London in 1929 to make his claims for land access and an end to the kipande to the crown.
71 Aiyar, “Empire, Race and the Indians in Colonial Kenya’s Contested Public Sphere.” p. 145

There were also some African political entities that not only rejected Thuku’s strategies, but who also actively fought against Indian political power. This was done not by identifying South Asians as the physical embodiment of empire per se, but by characterizing them as threats to the benefits of colonial rule. The most prominent voice that spoke against the dangers of Indian influence stunting the progress of the British was that of the Muganda expatriate and Nairobi-based newspaper editor, Z.K. Sentongo, who spoke through his publication *Sekanyolya*.\footnote{Thuku, *Harry Thuku*, p. 20} One editorial published in *Sekanyolya* attacked the Indian community’s efforts at lobbying the colonial authority for land in the highlands:

> We, the educated natives of this country view with alarm the fact that an Indian deputation is going to England to lay their claims before the responsible authorities…Indians have done nothing in the way of Native education…our education and training has been carried out on western lines, as being the best for our advancement…Can this be possible under two opposing civilizations one eastern and the other western?\footnote{Sekanyolya. 1 July, 1922. Quoted in Aiyar, Sana. “Empire, Race, and Indians in Colonial Kenya’s Contested Public Political Sphere, 1919-1923. *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute*. Vol. 81, No. 1 (February, 2011) p. 43}

Shortly after this was published, however, the EAA countered this claim by asserting that Kenyan natives “put on record that in its opinion the presence of Indians in the colony and
The protectorate of Kenya is not prejudicial to the advancement of natives…and is of the further opinion that next to missionaries the Indians are our best friends.\textsuperscript{75} The common thread that emerges from this brief discussion of Thuku, Desai, older African elites and those wary of Indian political power is a strain of political claim making that situates its legitimacy within empire. Both Thuku and Desai emphasize loyalty to the crown and fidelity to colonial rule of law as the best path towards political gain. Similarly, both African elites and Africans from outside the colony recognized the importance of using the framework of empire to make their claims. All said, most groups acted pragmatically and strategically within the political space of Empire. But showing that Indian and African political strategies were largely in step with each other is only part of this chapter’s argument. The fact that Indians embraced a parallel political strategy to Africans does not explain why the subcontinent held a privileged place in the Indian political consciousness. To explain this, the next sections discusses how the formation of a diasporic consciousness was critical for Indians to articulate their claims.

\textit{Race, Place and Diaspora in Indian Politics}

The East Coast of Africa has not been the only part of the continent shaped by processes of transnational migratory movements. The arrival of migrant communities has shaped the social and cultural trajectories of many African communities—from the arrival of

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{75} Quoted in Aiyar “Empire, Race and Indians”, p. 143. Africans from the colony of Kenya furthermore asserted that the invective leveled against Indians by Sentongo and Sekanyolya was more a plea by Buganda business leaders against Indian business, not any notion of racial solidarity. For more on Sentongo and Indians, see: Twaddle, Michael. “Z.K. Sentongo and the Indian Question in East Africa.” \textit{History in Africa}, Vol. 24 (1997) pp. 309-336.
\end{footnotesize}
Europeans in South Africa to the relatively small Lebanese communities of Sierra Leone, Senegal, Cote d’Ivoire and Ghana. In all of these distinct social and political environments, racial minorities formulated transnational vernaculars of belonging. The ways in which Indians in East Africa articulated and defended their presence in Kenya and Tanzania must thus be understood through larger processes of diaspora formation.

Sana Aiyar has described diasporas as the “embodiment” of transnational thought, often politically and culturally connected to both their homeland and host land. It is through these diasporas, she argues, that “political articulations [about] the extraterritorial resonance of anti-colonial nationalist discourses can be identified.” While the collective voice of East African Indians was not yet “anti-colonial nationalist” in the scope of time covered in this chapter, Aiyar is correct in asserting that diasporas physically embody transnational thought. Notions of transnationalism are, however, mediated by supranational networks of economic, political and cultural movement. Because the dominant form of global power in the first half of the twentieth century was empire, Indians in East Africa were thus compelled to make their claims for increased political power in Kenya to the British Empire. As a displaced and dislocated group, these claims were made legible by mobilizing the imperial space of the Indian Ocean World.

One important intellectual category that East African Indians used in pursuit of political and social power was the notion of “Greater India.” Broadly speaking, Greater India was a transnational formulation of diaspora. The diverse ways in which East African

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76 Aiyar, “Anticolonial Homelands” 987
77 Aiyar, “Anticolonial Homelands” 987
78 Brennan, Taifa, 6
Indians understood the concept of “Greater India,” however, are highly contested in contemporary scholarship. There are those who highlight the cosmopolitan nature of the project—Sana Aiyar and Sugata Bose, in particular—whose works unravel the various iterations of Indian solidarity extending from the east coast of Africa to Southeast Asia. These scholars emphasize the movement as one “nourished by many regional patriotisms, competing visions of Indian nationalism and extraterritorial affinities of religiously informed universalisms.” Indeed, the notion of multiple political and social allegiances fits in larger narratives of cosmopolitanism and multiracialism in Indian Ocean history. Some scholars are quick to point out, however, that Greater India and other transnational political structures in the Indian Ocean realm were not value free, and had been predicated on traditions of racial and political inequality. To this point, James Brennan is correct to complicate the overly celebratory nature of Indian transnationalism as practiced in the diaspora. He is particularly wary of the dangers of obscuring unequal racial relations between Indians and blacks in East Africa and concludes that the larger project was an effort to “secure a set of [Indian] national rights within an imperial context.” To reiterate, however: were not many imperial subjects, particularly those not broadly considered subalterns, also seeking rights in an imperial context? Did they have control over what Brennan refers to as the “imperial context?” This section hopes to add nuance to this conversation on diaspora by locating domestic Kenyan politics within the intellectual construction of Greater India.

79 Bose, A Hundred Horizons, 151
80 Brennan. Taifa, 6
The important role that Indian financiers played in the pre-colonial slave trade and British penetration of East Africa must not be overlooked when approaching discussion of race relations in East Africa. Even on the ground, relations between poor Africans and Indian dukawallahs fed the image of Indian exploitation of Africans, opening themselves to accusations of outright collaboration with the British. Nevertheless, the dovetailing of diasporic articulations of belonging and the realities of imperial racial hierarchies should not obscure the important way in which Greater India served as a claim-making strategy as well as an articulation of belonging amongst Indian communities from East Africa to Southeast Asia. Given their long history in East Africa, Indian claims for settlement in the Kenyan highlands reflected their own spatial imagination that traversed the aquatic space of the Indian Ocean. Just as white settlers looked to London as a source of imperial authority and knowledge production, so Indians did to the subcontinent, the seat of the British Raj in the early twentieth century. Thus the spatial imagination that informed relations of power and prestige within Kenya encompassed not only the lived realities of East Africa, but also the political developments on the subcontinent.

*The Practice of Greater India*

Greater India cannot be understood without examining the people and the institutions that created transregional connections. From the outset, there are two individuals who, while clearly not singularly responsible for the generation of a sphere incorporating India and East Africa, represent two central threads of the narrative of Indian Ocean connectivity: the Indian

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role in building the British colony and the privileged position of the Raj in the British Empire. These two strands are represented, in part, by Indian businessman, Alibhoy Mullah (A.M.) Jeevanjee, and the Secretary of State for the British Raj from 1917 to 1922, Lord Edwin Samuel Montagu, respectively. In addition to these two men, urban Indians organizations in Kenya and the members that filled their ranks reinforced Indian imperial connections. As such, this section first outlines Jeevanjee’s contribution to the articulation of an Indian Ocean world sphere. It then looks at how Indian organizations in Kenya facilitated these connections. Finally, it incorporates the arguments made by Montagu to show the relevance of Indian claims in the African context.

Jeevanjee was born in Karachi in 1856, and by the age of thirty had already begun a lucrative career trading between the Indian subcontinent and Australia. In 1890, he moved to Mombasa, and in 1895, was contracted by the British government to oversee the importation of Indian labor and equipment for the construction of the Uganda Railway. His work for the colonial government made him extremely wealthy, and by the turn of the century, he had established himself as the most powerful businessman in Mombasa. From there he moved to Nairobi, where he invested a considerable amount of money into the construction of the city with an English partner. In 1906, as a sign of his support for the crown, Jeevanjee presented a statue of Queen Victoria in Jeevanjee Gardens in Nairobi, a symbolic gesture that emphasized the Indian community’s self-ascription as imperial subjects. In 1909 he was appointed as the only Indian member of the colony’s legislative council, and in 1914 he founded the East African Indian National Congress (EAINC). From then until his death in
1936 he would become the leading voice for Indian politics in the colony and even lead delegations of Indian politicians to London to lobby the crown for access to the highlands in 1920, 1921 and 1923 (in addition to other personal trips taken to the metropole.) Indeed Jeevanjee was the first to mobilize the deep connections between India and East Africa for political purposes.

As mentioned before, however, multiple organizations promoting Indian life in East African grew at the turn of the century. The first of these groups was the Mombasa Indian Association (MIA), established in 1900. Organizations like this and the individuals who attended its meetings and paid its dues were the physical stuff of diaspora. The much larger EAINC would later recognize the importance of these institutions. One EAINC document celebrates how the London All-India Moslem League, for example, published an open letter to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1908 that outlined the major historical claims Indians had for increased political power. Authored by a certain Khaderbhoy, the letter demanded immediate political empowerment for Kenyan Indians due to “Indian investment and capital” before white Europeans had even established themselves in the protectorate.

Two years after that letter, in 1910, Jeevanjee traveled to London to petition the crown for increased rights for the colony. In an interview with the London Standard, he asserted “A deliberate attempt is being made to debar us from any share in the commerce

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83 KNA/ EAINC Papers/ Film 1929/Reel 1
and agriculture of the country. We are marked down because of our race and colour… I say nothing about the South African Union towards us. But the case of British East Africa is entirely different. We were already there…”

The argument is a powerful one. Jeevanjee articulated a transnational claim for rights in London. These rights were to be exercised in East Africa and the justification for those rights was based on a history of immigration from South Asia.

The invocation of the colonial history of importation of Indian labor in East Africa and the subsequent voluntary immigration from the sub-continent were exemplary of a growing Indian Ocean Imperial sphere, one in which the Raj exerted increasing influence throughout the region. Laborers on the Uganda Railway, for example, were secured the right to settle in East Africa through negotiations between the government of the East African Protectorate and that of the British Indian government, the Raj. Indeed, the fact that the government of the Raj negotiated the status of Indians is revealing: the British Indian government managed the political sovereignty of its de-territorialized subjects. It cannot be forgotten, moreover, that it was Jeevanjee who facilitated these movements. It was this history of connections that more recently arrived East African Indians pointed to in their attempts to justify increased political and economic participation in the colony. India’s imperial past and present relationship with East Africa was thus mobilized in pursuit of Indian political empowerment, particularly access to the white highlands.


\[85\] Blyth. *The Empire of the Raj*, 94
After World War I, the British colonial administration sought multiple ways to extend the power of the Raj in East Africa. One idea advanced after the German defeat was to transform German East Africa (modern-day Tanzania, delegated to the British East Africa Protectorate after World War I) into a colony of British India. The idea of Indian colonialism was not altogether novel. Many of the Empire’s “dominions,” had presided over expansions of British influence: Australia had extended into some of the neighboring Pacific Islands like Samoa, while the Cape took control of South-West Africa, today Namibia. The push for an Indian colony in Africa gained traction amongst Indians and British alike. In 1915, an editorial in the London journal, *John Bull*, stated that the efforts of the “Hindu population” in the war effort could “not be denied, and in view of the loyal fashion in which our Indian fellow subjects have rallied to the flag, our appreciation could not be better expressed than providing a scope in a land *climatically suitable*, fertile and sparsely in habited.” 86 While some in London were enthusiastic, white settlers remained suspicious.

Jeevanjee indicated his support for an “empire of the Raj” in East Africa by declaring that the “annexation of this African territory to the Indian Empire…would be more beneficial if it is placed under the control of the Indian government in stead of the Colonial Office…East Africa will assuredly become [a] second India in no time.” 87

Lord Montagu would later make a similar argument to that of Jeevanjee and other members of the Indian community at the height of the “Indian Question” in Kenya. Fearing a

87 Blyth, *The Empire of the Raj*, 96
reoccurrence of a mass-movement that broke out throughout the subcontinent in 1919 in reaction to mistreatment of Indians within and outside of India, Montagu began to lobby both the local government in Kenya as well as the larger Imperial government for an improvement of Indian rights in East Africa. Montagu, although a paternalist and pragmatist in terms of race relations broadly speaking, is described as having “believed passionately in equality for Indians and the right to some form of colonial enterprise.” On November 1, 1920 he authored a secret, internal document in which he outlined the grievances of Indians in Kenya. The document outlined the principle claims of East African Indians to his superiors. The first claim was that the policy of racial segregation, as practiced in East Africa should be abolished. Secondly, that the “future political status” for Indians “should as far as possible be guaranteed.” Montagu then declared that under the policy of racial segregation, Indians would be denied the right to own property and obtain business licenses for the areas in which they practiced business. By citing the “general rule” that there be “no transfer of land either way [between Indian and European]” the East Africa Protectorate’s government had effectively given in to the demands of a vociferous settler community. Indeed, that does seem to be the case in this situation. Despite Montagu’s aggressive push for greater Indian political power in East Africa, the British colonial administration remained ambivalent as to how to reconcile Indian goals with the prerogatives of empire. In sum, however, Montagu’s attempt to extend the influence of the Raj across the Ocean reflected the pragmatism of Indians in East Africa as they lobbied for increased political power.

88 Blyth. *The Empire of the Raj*, 107
89 BNA/CAB/24/114 p. 326
Conclusion

The central question that this chapter has addressed is how Indian agents sought political and historical legitimacy for their claims in 1910s and 1920s East Africa. Neither equal partners in the colonial project nor an abjectly oppressed minority, Indians in Kenya mobilized what historians refer to as “Greater India,” a framework that members of the South Asian Diaspora used to couch their claims for political gains, as well as a way to rationalize and articulate belonging in foreign lands. More than just a political framework, Greater India was an iteration of spatial interconnectivity.

To trace the development of this Indian geographic imagination, however, this chapter has examined African arguments on white rule. Specifically, I have looked at those regarding Indian political agency and white settler power, with special attention paid Kikuyu activist Harry Thuku. This assessment of African politics allows for a contextualization of Indian political strategies. The chapter explained how “Greater India,” shows a pragmatic claim to the power of empire deployed by both Africans and Indians. Ultimately, an analysis of how both Indians and Africans imagined space in early-twentieth century Kenya serves as a fruitful avenue for understanding Indian political agency and racial thought in East Africa.
In 1953, the Indian Association in Nakuru, Kenya, sent a letter to Indian High Commissioner in Nairobi with twenty-five applications for Indian national passports. Seven years later, in August of 1960, a message of greetings from the Indian government to Indians living in Nakuru, Kenya concluded with the salutation “Jai Hind.” Jai Hind, the nationalist cry made popular by Indian anti-colonial statesman Subhas Chandra Bose, usually meant one of many possible derivations of “victory to India” and had entered into the vernacular of the revolutionary Indian Ocean world during India’s struggle for independence in the first half of the twentieth century. By the 1950s and 1960s, the phrase had made its way to Kenya, reflecting, in part, the embrace of revolutionary anti-colonial politics by large parts of the Indian population in Kenya. Both the use of Jai Hind in formal correspondence and the official request for passports, themselves important symbolic accoutrement of the nation state, speak to the larger phenomenon of the political reorientation of the Indian Ocean world. It was a project that necessitated the semiotic expressions of racial and national solidarity across the aquatic expanse, but one that also recognized the important role that India, as an independent nation state, played in representing these connections. Seizing on the formation of this transnational political and cultural project, this chapter will explore the how both the Indian community and white settler community reconstituted their respective global geographies. It examines how they remade global forms of political legibility to embrace emergent discursive frameworks of anti-colonialism and white-rule, respectively. All said,

90 KNA/Indian Association of Nakuru/Film 2081/Roll 28
this chapter will advance the analysis of spatial politics by tracing the collapse of Indian and white settler geographic imaginations and by examining new spatial and political paradigms for white and Indian communities in late-colonial Kenya.

This section will continue to interrogate the use of geographically informed racial politics, but shifts the focus of analysis to the post-war period in East Africa. After the crises over land ownership in the 1920s and particularly after the Allied victory in World War II, new global political realities compelled white settlers and Indians in Kenya alike to construct alternative ways to talk about race and power in post-war Kenya. Here, I will demonstrate that although the war was a boon for the settler economy in Kenya, it also served to further isolate the white community from most parties with which it interacted: Africans, Indians, and of particular importance to this examination—the imperial administration in London. It also undermined the connections of power and privilege that settlers in the pre-war colonial regime had rested upon. This encouraged settlers to shift their point of reference of political authority and intellectual production away from the northwest (London) to the southwest (Lusaka, Salisbury, and Johannesburg). This shift can best be shown by exploring how settlers reacted to increasing political militancy amongst Africans, growing political and economic power in the Indian community and the immediacy of decolonization throughout Africa and the Indian Ocean world. Faced with a new global and domestic political landscape, European Kenyans sought to leave the Empire and join “White Africa.”

91 For analysis of specific policy shifts in the post-war period, see Frederick Cooper, Africa Since 1940. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
Similarly, both the disillusion that many Indians felt towards the British Empire after the war and the ascendancy of Indian nationalist thought on the subcontinent compelled Kenyan Indians to imagine India less as a source of imperial legitimacy that could be wielded against white settlers and rather as an emerging intellectual hotbed of anti-colonial thought, nonracial nationalism and Third Worldism. Indians formed a new diasporic consciousness predicated on rejecting their imperial past.

Political, intellectual and cultural homelands, Sugata Bose suggests, could exist both in India and in East Africa; nationalism was not necessarily delineated by colonial state boundaries, nor derivative of identical historical processes. For Indians in Kenya “home” was therefore simultaneously their adopted place of East Africa and their ancestral geographies of origin, scattered throughout the sub-continent. Acknowledging this, we can see that while the Indian Diaspora’s politics were deeply informed by the on-goings of the subcontinent, they were not pure imitations of racial and revolutionary thought therein. The nationalist politics of India were understood, molded and deployed all within a Kenyan context, forcing Indians to confront their past claims to imperial power and emerging Pan-Africanist movements. As global politics changed, then, so did local racial politics in Kenya.

*Removing the Stigma of Empire: Indian Anti-Colonialism in East Africa*

Despite the concerted efforts of Indian politicians to open the white highlands to multi-racial settlement (discussed in Chapter 2), the area remained a white-only domain throughout the colonial period. The Indian community had rejected the logic of the settlers

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92 Bose, *A Hundred Horizons*, 150
who sought to prevent Indian settlement in the highlands, but had remained ambivalent towards the colonial administration, which had continued to support settler claims for white-exclusivity in agricultural lands while at the same time preaching non-racialism in the Empire. As discussed before, initial Indian claims for political parity with whites was predicated on their status as imperial subjects. In the 1930s and 1940s, however, Indian political leaders sought to recast their claims, moving instead towards a global language of anti-colonialism.

The shift to a more radical brand of politics was not immediate however. A 1930 draft constitution for the Indian Association of Mombasa (IAM), for example, declared that it sought equal political, economic and social standing with “other subjects of H.M. the King by all legitimate means.” What are we to make of this claim for equality still based on imperial membership? To be sure, the argument for total equality was a more forceful call than those of previous decades; “other subjects of H.M…” opens space for African actors in concert with Indian politics. It should also be noted that the men who made up the ranks of these Indian organizations were for the most part notables: lawyers, doctors, traders. Just as Indians had been clamoring for access to the white highlands in the 1910s and 1920s, they had also called for more political representation—although their numbers would still not have reflected their demographic advantage over whites. Thus while the IAM’s 1930 governing constitution can be read as a small step towards adopting a more combative tone, its members still sought to use the empire as its main argumentative framework. But this

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93 KNA/Indian Association of Mombasa Documents and Correspondence (henceforth IAM Correspondence). Film 1926/Reel 6. 1930 Draft Constitution of IAM.
pragmatism was neither uniform within the larger Kenyan Indian community nor within Mombasa’s powerful Asian community, however. Indeed, a letter in the same year from the very same organization, the IAM sent to the Indian National Congress declared that

…a mass meeting of Indians of Mombasa and Kilindini was held on Sunday the 20th of April 1930 under the auspices of the Indian Association, Mombasa….to protest against the repressive measures of the Government of India…This mass meeting is deeply concerned and reports its emphatic protest against the repressive policy adopted by the government of India and congratulates…Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the President of the Indian National Congress and other compatriots, who have made such tremendous sacrifices for the cause of the mother country.  

The Indian organizations in the coastal areas of Mombasa and Kilindini, whose Indian populations had been substantial even in pre-colonial times were not the only ones pushing for a closer relationship between nationalists in India and those in Kenya. A letter the following month from the increasingly vocal EAINC based in Nairobi to the IAM asked for logistical support for its secretary, Isher Dass, who “is proceeding to India next month to join [Gandhi’s] Satyagraha movement.”

The Kenyan Indian community was beginning to reformulate how and from where it drew its political voice and legitimacy.

By the 1940s Indians had started to articulate a more militant anti-colonial stance that explicitly rejected its association within the British Empire. Running parallel to ascendant Indian radicalism, however, was the consolidation of white power in Kenya. In 1938 the Colonial Office in London passed the Native Lands Trust and Crown Lands (Amendment) Ordinance that, once and for all, reserved the highlands the for European settlement. The entrenchment of white power in rural Kenya compelled the Indian anti-colonial leaders to

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94 KNA/IAM Correspondence/Film 1926/Reel 6. April 1930 Letter from IAM to INC
95 KNA/IAM Correspondence/Film 1926/Reel 6. May 1930. Letter from EAINC to IAM.
turn their political projects to urban centers as the loci for general advances in the colony. Throughout Mombasa and Nairobi, henceforth, Indians became increasingly active in the labor movement. Through labor politics Indian and African activists began to make overtures to each other in an attempt to create a united, anti-colonial front.

One of the pioneers of the Indian labor movement, Makhan Singh, was the primary actor who reached out to his African counterparts. Singh was born in India in 1913 and moved to Kenya in 1927. After schooling in Nairobi he went to work in his father’s printing press and would found the Labour Trade Union of East Africa in 1934, where he opened to the ranks of the union to anyone, without concern for “caste and creed or colour.” After rising to prominence in the trade union movement in Kenya, he later returned to India in 1939, where he immediately became involved in the growing nationalist movement. The Indian colonial government arrested Singh at a protest in 1940, where he was detained in his home village in Punjab for close to four years. After his release he returned to East Africa and in 1949, with Fred Kubai, a mission-educated trade unionist from the Kiambu district, founded the East African Trade Union Congress in 1949. Later, Tom Mboya, one of Kenya’s most famous labor leaders, would point to the cooperation between Kubai and Singh as “the first real attempt to form a central organization” of labor unions. Singh’s success at organizing Indians in Kenya laid the groundwork for greater cooperation of non-white communities in

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97 Aiyar. “Anticolonial Homelands,” 999
the realm of labor politics. All told, however, the late 1930s and early 1940s saw a substantial shift in Indian political consciousness by embracing African political agendas as parallel to their own. In addition to labor politics, however, Indian opinion on their place within the empire also shifted after World War II.

While Indians from the subcontinent and East Africans had died fighting on most fronts of World War II, East African Indians found themselves in bureaucratic limbo from 1939 to 1945. From the start of the war there was little agreement as to how exactly Indians resident in East Africa were to approach what they characterized as one of the “white man’s quarrels.” Many Indian elite pushed to be allowed to enroll as infantry to fight for the Crown. The colonial government, however, was unwilling. In 1939, then governor of the colony, Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, declared that Indians could only serve the army in a non-combat manner. They were to be clerks and managers of major army transportation networks. This did not sit well with A.B. Patel, an Indian member of the Legislative Council, who argued that the Indian community had been “totally ignored,” and that the Indian role should not be limited to “the capacity of third-class citizens such as motor drivers, taxi drivers and all sorts of things like that.” Despite this resistance, most Indians were drafted into the army as clerks. In 1942, the colonial government passed the first in a series of anti-

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100 KNA/EAINC Papers/Film 1929/Reel 10. 1944 Address to EAINC.
emigration “Defense Regulations” to ensure a supply of Indians in the colony to fill these roles.

Oppositely, many Indians actively sought to avoid fighting for the crown as they saw this war as the logical outcome of a long history of white violence, as “nothing but a dog fight between the whites.” As such, many Indians tried to leave the country to pursue government or educational opportunities abroad to avoid service. Unable to do so under the recently passed Defense Regulations, Indians began to protest. The broader issue of Indian immigration to and from South Asia was thus reopened. In 1944 the colony enacted an additional Defense Regulation that dramatically increased the requirements for new immigrants to come to Kenya. Although this appears counterintuitive given the wartime prerogatives of the government, it more broadly reflects settler anxiety over Indian political and economic ascendancy during the war, a point to be returned to in later sections of this chapter.\(^{102}\)

In 1944, a commentator in an EAINC meeting declared: “The fact is, as it exists today, that we claim to be here as our rights as British subjects. We have bought this right at a very formidable price, i.e. at the cost of our birthright as free men…and by bartering our very motherland, India, without which the British Empire would not present a very nice picture…”\(^{103}\) Perhaps surprisingly, the speech begins this way, recalling with little ambiguity, the fact that Indians had died for a project that was not their own, the colonization of East Africa. He continues:

\(^{102}\) Seidenberg, *Uhuru and the Kenya Indians*, 27-29

\(^{103}\) KNA/EAINC Papers/Film 1929/Reel 10. 1944 Address to EAINC.
Having paid this price, we have come to know in this colony the real value of a British subject whom he [sic] happens to be born in India. We have come to know that a white man who may be out to kill and indeed be out to wipe out the whole British Nation, including women and children, has more superior status and better rights than a British Indian Subject, although such British subjects are called upon and expected to kill the white man, who for the time being, be [sic] the enemies of the British nation.\textsuperscript{104}

The solution offered by the speaker was to have “the stigma of being British Subjects removed.”\textsuperscript{105} Removing this “stigma” was indeed quite a far cry from a generation earlier, when Indians had deployed their imperial subject status to their advantage. India, the commentator claimed, “has never had any…ambition or desire of usurping the land of Africans.” East African Indians would, however,

…like to continue their trade connections with Africa and Africans, as they have done all over the world. But if they have forfeited this right because of their being British Subjects, and because of Great Britain wishing to reserve these rights in Africa for their white friends, as well their white foes, we should have no objection—indeed no alternative—but to quit this country. We have never entertained the mad idea in our heads that Africa can ever be a brown man’s country. We believe that it has always been and will always be the black man’s country.\textsuperscript{106}

Later that year, a rewritten EAINC constitution stated that one of its prime objectives was “to achieve full and equal citizenship for all races in East Africa.”\textsuperscript{107} These grand declarations were not solely results of rising Indian nationalism in the subcontinent, but Indian recognition of African political aspirations.

\textsuperscript{104} KNA/EAINC Papers/Film 1929/Reel 10. 1944 Address to EAINC
\textsuperscript{105} KNA/EAINC Papers/Film 1929/Reel 10. 1944 Address to EAINC
\textsuperscript{106} KNA/EAINC Papers/Film 1929/Reel 10. 1944 Address to EAINC.
\textsuperscript{107} KNA/EAINC Papers/Film 1929/Reel 10. 1944 EAINC Constitution
Nevertheless, the political wrangling over the East African Indian role in World War II left many in the community disillusioned with the British administration. Some Indian observers described Axis powers as “mad dog[s] with no scruples for good behavior.” Indian sacrifice in the war thus seemed not only fruitless but also unrecognized. A 1944 pamphlet speaks to this anger:

“YOU! INDIANS IN EAST AFRICA! INDIAN HONOUR IS AT STAKE! INDIAN FUTURE IS IN DANGER!” If you wish your genuine military service to the British government to be recognized…If you wish to save from starvation, misery and ignominy the children and wives of the 52 military Indian motor drivers who have been sentenced from three to five years imprisonment for mutiny THEN WAKE UP!”

The sense of betrayal felt during the war was also projected backwards. In an essay circulated throughout the EAINC, Indians claimed that “historical pledges” that included, among others, the 1923 Devonshire White Paper that nominally renounced racial politics while supporting white settlement in the highlands, were “…treated as scraps of paper.” The essay continues, “Eastern people have been accustomed to treat the Royal Declarations and promises as pledges…but the politicians of this age tell us that [they] didn’t apply to Her Majestie’s [sic] Indian subjects…” After World War I, the author claims, Indians only received more restrictive controls within both India and Kenya, and the infamous Jainwallah

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108 KNA/EAINC Papers/Film 1929/Reel 10. 1944 Address to EAINC.
109 KNA/EAINC Papers/Film 1929/Reel 10. 1944 Voter Pamphlet. The pamphlet references a case which I was unable to find details on, but one in which truck drivers were accused of orchestrating a “mutiny.” The pamphlet goes on to claim that these men were innocent, for when they were found, they were unarmed.
110 KNA/EAINC Papers/Film 1929/Reel 10. 1944 Essay.
Bagh massacre at Armritsar. Indian attempts to reflect on their past relationship with Europeans in the colony is significant in that it shows a recognition of their attempt at cooperation with the empire in pursuit of political gain. However, it also shows a determined effort to produce a uniquely anti-colonial narrative, one that emphasizes European deceptiveness.

In the immediate post-war period, then, many Indians in Kenya reconstituted the geography that they occupied from a colonial space to a revolutionary one. This was catalyzed by fluctuations of their political status during WWII, and by forming closer bonds with African political actors. In so doing, the Indian community began to reckon with their recent past as imperial subjects. I argue that closer political ties between Africans and Indians and the politics of the War signal an embrace anti-racialist thought and broad rejections of colonial planning and social management. Given these shifts, Asians in East Africa re-cast their ancestral home, the subcontinent, as a parallel anticolonial homeland. Similarly, white settlers in Kenya, faced with increasing anger over the threat to their rule colony and exclusive access in the white highlands, sought to construct new geographies of white rule in post-war Africa.

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111 KNA/EAINC Papers/Film 1929/Reel 10. 1944 Essay. The Amristar Massacre is remembered as a critical moment in the Indian nationalist movement. On April 13, 1919, British Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer opened fire into a crowd of men, women in children who had congregated in a park in the city of Amristar in protest of colonial rule.
A Closer Union: From London to Johannesburg

This section argues that white settlers also confronted emerging political realities in East Africa by reconstructing a geography of belonging that turned away from the centre of metropolitan power, London, to emerging white-controlled states in central and southern Africa. This shift came from settler fear of increasingly militant African politics on the ground, a growing frustration with an ascendant Indian political apparatus and economic machine in Kenya (not to mention a closer relationship between Indians and Africans) and the realization that empire was waning. Independence was imminent.

Critical to understanding how white settlers framed their presence on the physical place of the highlands of Kenya and their larger role in the space of colonial Africa is a consideration the political and cultural ramifications of the 1952-1960 Mau Mau Uprising. As discussed in earlier chapters, violence was the dominant strategy of the systematic displacement of indigenous peoples in the highlands of Kenya. Landless populations in the highland and a burgeoning number of newly unemployed farm hands cultivated political and monetary connections with radical working class elements in Nairobi, forging a violent political movement that mobilized the memory of land dispossession in the highlands as its call to arms. With the brutal 1952 assassination of a “chief” complicit the imperial project, Chief Waruhiu, the country plunged into an “emergency.”112 Despite the fact that the claims for land and the spatial imagination of indigenous peoples do not form a significant part of this specific examination, they do play a role in understanding the evolution of political

thought of settlers in East Africa. Although the complexities of the Mau Mau Uprising are
dealt with in much contemporary scholarly literature on Kenya, a central aspect of the
uprising was the intersection of historically-based Kikuyu claims for land reclamation and
with colonial narratives of white stewardship over the highlands. A brief investigation of the
politics of Mau Mau can be useful in assessing the shift in settler politics and spatial
imagination in the middle of the twentieth century.

Dane Kennedy has, along with other historians of the British Empire, contended that
the British domestic economy, having already moved from agriculture into industrialization,
had begun a prolonged decline in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. While
never entering a recession, a dramatic slow in growth in many areas of the economy pushed
many out of their traditional sectors of livelihood. The decline in the agricultural sector,
suffering from cheap imports from other corners of the world, encouraged the migration of
many small landowners to diverse areas of the Empire. As already discussed, British East
Africa offered a landscape of cool, rolling hills, one perfect for the cultivation of coffee,
sisal, tea and in the British psyche, the nurturing of white bodies. The White Highlands,
however, were inhabited by the Kikuyu people who, after being forcefully displaced, took up
positions as menial laborers on white-owned farms. Settler farms prospered. David Anderson
reminds us that these new British settlers were not all rich, but “race alone was enough to
elevate and preserve their status.” The rapid reshuffling of the social hierarchy of the

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114 Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 79
metropole within the colony even led Winston Churchill to quip, “Every white man in Nairobi is a politician; and most of them are leaders of parties.”115

With the outbreak of war in 1939, each corner of the British Empire was called upon to provide money, troops and supplies for the war effort. The farms in Kenya became particularly successful in exporting crops to troops in Europe, North Africa, and Asia. With the money that flooded into the farms of the highlands, many European agriculturalists purchased technologically advanced machinery that allowed for fewer farms hands to do more work. Those whose positions were deemed redundant by the influx of technology joined those already displaced in the initial white settlement of the highlands. These farms hands were, for the most part, “squatting” on white land that had originally been their own. Many of these squatters were farmers in their own right. In the immediate post-war period, then, the Kenyan highlands faced a growing population of listless and unemployed. These “squatters” joined the ranks of people already displaced by European farmlands. As such, the highlands gradually became a center for politically-active youth, those that would become the core of Mau Mau fighters.

Landed Europeans were not the only community to flourish during World War II in Kenya. The war was also good to Indian traders in the colony. In their role as traders, many Indian businessmen had cultivated close international economic ties. When goods became scarce in the wartime economy, Indian merchants, wholesalers in particular, were able to acquire products in demand, often time through credit, at low prices. They would then sell

115 Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 79
these products to settlers, for example, at inflated prices. Indeed, the growth of Indian wealth in the colony catalyzed a resuscitation of virulent anti-Indian sentiment amongst settlers during the war years.\textsuperscript{116} One letter to the editor in the settler newspaper the \textit{Kenya Weekly News} from Nakuru argued that:

\begin{quote}
The soldier farmer’s wife is at the mercy of the Duka Wallah (incidentally not a single Indian in this area has been called up)….Like the last war, the swine who remain behind us are going to grow right---you must help to stop it and jail some of them.\textsuperscript{117}
\end{quote}

Another letter spoke of the threat of becoming “a financial satellite of India.” A statement by a settler organization provided a particularly bleak assessment of the European future in the colony, stating that

\begin{quote}
We, the Europeans of this Colony, have given and are giving one hundred per cent of the war effort. In doing so, we are fast losing ground in the economic and industrial fields. The Asiatics are exempt from Military and most essential services and are using this opportunity to amass capital resources and to establish themselves in spheres which hitherto remained largely the prerogatives of the Europeans.\textsuperscript{118}
\end{quote}

The irony that many Kenyan Indians had tried to join the war effort but were refused had escaped these writers. Nevertheless, growing Indian wealth throughout the colony coupled with the specter of a violent uprising pushed settlers to reconsider the imperial space in

\textsuperscript{116} Seidenberg. \textit{Uhuru and the Kenya Indians}, 31
\textsuperscript{117} Seidenberg. \textit{Uhuru and the Kenya Indians}, 32
\textsuperscript{118} Seidenberg. \textit{Uhuru and the Kenya Indians}, 32
which they operated. In an attempt to impose order on the colony in response to the imminent threat of an uprising, the colonial administration acted.

With the rise of politically active Kikuyu, Meru, Embu and Kamba and the first intimations of the violence of Mau Mau, the colonial government responded by bringing in Sir Evelyn Baring from Southern Rhodesia as the new governor and flying in soldiers from the different imperial territories to quell the uprising. By bringing in Baring and troops from other parts of White Africa, the colonial government attempted to simultaneously affirm growing settler cries for tighter political bonds between Kenya and South African and the Rhodesias, and to also impose its legal and political authority in the region. In November of 1954, The East African Standard reported that the Rongai (Settler) Association approved a motion to bring in South African troops “in order to protect their wives while they went to hunt “Mau Mau gangs…Because of common interests, the proposal was just as much to the advantage of South Africa as it was to Kenya.” These common interests, one supposes, were the dangers that African political agency would pose to white rule.

The colonial government also expanded the Kenya Police Reserve (KPR), a settler paramilitary organization, whose ranks were primarily made up of white settlers. Although the colonial administration valued the military intelligence brought by these settlers, it was clear that settlers increasingly ignored administrative calls for restraint. Many members of the KPR joined independent “strike squads” in pursuit of their suspects. The government’s difficulty in controlling renegade elements in the KPR was noted by General Erskine a

119 KNA/The East African Standard Film 1627/Reel 205.
military commander brought in from Egypt by a nervous colonial administration to give teeth to Baring’s judicially-oriented policy in the face of Mau Mau. Erskine’s own turbulent political relationship with settler politicians lead him to describe the Kenya colony as “a sunny land for shady people.” His observation, echoing that of Churchill earlier, reveals a growing disconnect between the British imperial administration, as embodied in Erskine in this case, and the increasingly aggressive settler population. But the divergence between the political goals of the British and their colonial representatives were not limited to the proper execution of anti-insurgent techniques. There was an active push for more political autonomy on the part of the settlers.

In the years after World War II then, Kenyan settlers began seeing themselves less as transplanted Britons, and more as an emergent nation of white Africans that stretched from the Cape to the highlands of Kenya. The “winds of change” blowing through Africa that British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan would refer to in Cape Town in 1960 were beginning to chill white settlers to the bone. Given the rapid processes of decolonization that had begun on the continent and the Indian Ocean World—India in 1947, Egypt in 1952 and Ghana in 1957—settlers embraced racialized governance in the form practiced in southern Africa in order to rationalize white privilege. This imperative compelled settlers to intercede on the administration’s management of Mau Mau on their own behalf in order to demonstrate their sovereignty and to impose racial rule. Although the language that supported white rule had been spoken for decades, concerted political efforts to achieve this end truly began in

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120 David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 85
earnest in 1954. On February 3, for example, a group of settlers visited Governor Baring in Nairobi in order to express “grave concern among the general public at the pace at which the emergency is being dealt with” and to bring the emergency to a “speedy end.” 121

Relations between the two European camps had become so strained that in August of 1954 both sides called for a “political truce.” A meeting was called that hoped to solidify this truce. The meeting encouraged the discussion of “subjects on which it is known a large measure of agreements exists.”122 Nevertheless, less than a year later a settler political entity known as the European Electors Union issued a statement with “great anxiety” imploring the government to come down harder on the so-called Mau Mau terrorists. The Union read a statement with “the greatest anxiety as it discloses once more a complete misunderstanding, deliberate or naïve, of the growing feeling of resentment prevailing throughout even the most moderate section of the European community at the suppression of their own interests and the wider interests of Kenya in a thinly veiled effort to appease influence hostile to European settlement in Kenya.”123 The group then went on to iterate eight points of reform they believed would rectify this situation. Amongst the eight were petitions to “reaffirm the relative position of all races,” and “that character and ability be the only tests of appointment and that appoints not again be made in racial proportions.” The petitions went on to demand that English be the lingua franca and “that an early statement be made on how loyalty to the Crown is to be measured and proved.”

121 London Times. Feb 3, 1954 (6f)
122 London Times, Aug. 15, 1954 (4g)
123 London Times, July 6, 1955 (6a)
On December 28, 1955, a group calling itself the Reconstituted Confederate Party of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was formed in British Central Africa “with the aim of rallying all good European opinion from the Cape of Good Hope to the White Highlands of Kenya.” The group “call[ed] for a United States of southern, central, and eastern Africa under the legislative control of the European populations of the territories concerned.”124 The intention here was clear: the establishment of an apartheid-like state that spanned the continent.

Settler attempts to forge connections between themselves and the white administrations throughout southern Africa were not limited to formal political connections, however. As noted in the first chapter of this examination, imperial networks of knowledge production supported the political authority of the British Empire in East Africa. Throughout the middle of the twentieth century, the scientific and socio-cultural information produced by British scientists and anthropologists changed, however, and subsequently posed a challenge to long-held assumptions of white supremacy and the putative benefits of racial segregation. In other words, the change in settler attitudes vis-à-vis London was thus not limited to only the perceived inaction of the colonial administration towards the Mau Mau, but also the ways in which emergent trends in colonial knowledge rejected explicit racial segregation.

It should be noted here, however, that settler opinion, like that of the Indian community, was not uniform in approaching the question of independence and revolution in late-colonial Kenya. One settler of particular prominence, Michael Blundell, actually sought

to stem the push towards an apartheid state in East Africa by encouraging multi-racial cooperation in the 1950s, at the height of Mau Mau violence and European separatism. In 1954 he founded the United Country Party and in 1959 formed the New Kenya Party, both of whose platforms were firmly multi-racial. Despite his liberal leanings, however, neither party was able to draw significant support from neither Africans or Asians. They did, however, draw broad condemnation from the settler community who, as discussed above, sought increased political control within the colony. Despite Blundell’s vision, however, settler politics remained decidedly conservative, and looked towards White Africa for political guidance. The shift in the political community that Kenyan settlers saw themselves as part of is critical to understanding the shifting geographies of colonial Africa. As discussed in Chapter 1, intellectual traditions of racial thought originating in Great Britain, served to buttress the political projects of settlers in Kenya. The type of intellectual production that supported white rule, however, began to change as early as the 1920s.

Not long after the beginning of the Indian Question in Kenya, British scientists began to push against some of the assumptions that laid the intellectual groundwork for segregation and domination in tropical Africa. A 1924 article published in the *British Medical Journal* entitled “Indians in Kenya” advanced the argument that while racial segregation was the preferred political solution to confront Indian agitation for increased political and economic parity with whites, racial segregation was indeed “not absolutely essential for the

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preservation of the health of the community.” This conclusion had been arrived at by “competent medical authorities.”

Despite the fact that this conclusion had been made in 1924, it was only after World War II, faced with the imminent threat of a rural uprising, that settlers turned to alternative sources of intellectual production and justification for white rule.

One specific attempt to forge closer political and intellectual ties with White Africa was mobilize South African expertise in racial governance and social planning. In October of 1945, the Nairobi Secretariat sent a letter to the heads of all departments in the colony to plan for the visit of Dr. Isaac. Schapera, an anthropologist from the University of Cape Town. In addition to broadly “advise on the project of anthropological research in Kenya,” Schapera intended to “investigate and report” on two major issues:

…(1) the means to achieve the fullest possible degree of beneficial occupation of the existing native lands, and any added lands, including the constitution, powers, duties and education of native Land Authorities designed to implement them; and (2) possible means of relieving present and preventing further constitution of those lands and any added lands, including the system of systems of tenure…

Schapera was an early practitioner of what is today referred to as “applied anthropology,” that is to say that his research was designed to form policy. Much of his work in South Africa looked at the ways in which African communities encountered the white state, and was consulted by both African and white polities. Considered a liberal in his own age, his research relied heavily on testimonies from Africans literate in European languages, an

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126 *British Medical Journal*. Vol. 1 No. 3292 (Feb. 2, 1924) p. 208
127 KNA/Secretariat Circulars Film 2807/Roll 4/ Letter 102//Oct. 10, 1945. Subsequent letters from the secretariat report that Schapera was ultimately unable to visit due to illness.
approach that would be considered problematic in contemporary scholarship.  

Nevertheless, the emphasis of South African knowledge production in East Africa reveals the geographic shift underway amongst Europeans in Kenya, even if settlers were bringing in a “liberal.” In both the realm of intellectual production and political legitimacy, England was no longer the dominant voice in the settler psyche; it was now voices from Johannesburg and Salisbury.

Moreover, in the midst of the Mau Mau Uprising, the British army in Kenya began to rely increasingly on settler “expertise” when confronting Kikuyu fighters. In 1952, for example, soldiers fighting the Mau Mau began to administer “counteroaths” to those whom they suspected of being affiliated with the uprising. This political strategy was taken from the anthropological work of Louis Leakey, a European anthropologist raised in Kikuyu territory who contended that counteroathing was a way to mitigate the wave of Kikuyu oathing ceremonies. Under the direction of settler leaders and intellectuals, the British fabricated complicit indigenous religious authorities, nicknamed “Her Majesty’s witch doctors,” to perform the counteroathing ceremonies.  

On the whole, however, counteroathing was a failure. A steep rise in Mau Mau activity during 1953 proved that the experiment was not working, and this was due to many reasons: the fact that “oathing” was not the genesis of Mau Mau grievances, the misuse and invention of Kikuyu symbolism by inexperienced and corrupt “witch doctors”, and, perhaps most importantly for this work, the violence that

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accompanied these ceremonies. Branch explains that many suspected Mau Mau fighters were lead to counteroathing ceremonies by Home Guard troops. The suspects were often beaten into the proper squatting position and had guns trained on them for the duration. Clearly, the information produced by Leakey and other settler “experts” was neither reliable nor effective for their political aims. Despite the failure of local “expertise” to confront the threat of Mau Mau, it reflects a larger shift in settler policy away from British knowledge production.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that shifting conceptions of space reflected the political upheaval of post-war Africa and the Indian Ocean World. This shift in spatial imagination was significant in that it emphasized emergent political affinities across physical space. Indians resident in East Africa, faced with the upsurge of nationalist sentiment on the subcontinent, Pan-Africanism in their adopted homes, and broad disappointment with how the British government treated its non-British subjects, rearticulated modes of geographic belonging. They rejected their imperial connections in favor of new, revolutionary governance in the Indian Ocean World. This was done in recognition of the fact that they had “failed to integrate into the heart of the African.”

Likewise the settlers occupying the highlands of Kenya shifted their gaze from London to Johannesburg, so to speak. By the middle of the twentieth century, the continent

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130 The Home Guard being the government militia organized to fight the Mau Mau.
132 Aiyar. “Anticolonial Homelands,” 1009
had been steadily moving towards political independence. Ghana would be independent from British control in 1957, and Sekou Touré would lead Guinea-Conakry away from French West Africa a year later. The British administration, and in particular the newly elected Conservative government in 1957, had resigned themselves to this fact. After all, they had already left India less than a decade before. Settlers were thus compelled to look for new sources of social and political authority, and the white-supremacist states of southern and central Africa filled that role. Settlers reconstructed their own geography of belonging, locating the place of the white highlands in the space of white Africa.
Conclusion

The central argument of this thesis is that there is an intimate relationship between local ways of articulating belonging, the physical place that a community inhabits and global iterations of political power. Although this examination has focused primarily on how white settlers and Indian immigrants wrestled with the conundrums of race and power in East Africa, this thesis has shown that the dominant forms of articulating belonging in Kenya were closely tied to global histories of empire and migration throughout Africa and the Indian Ocean. It has also attempted to highlight the importance of indigenous actors in forming the arguments put forward by immigrant groups, particularly those of the Indian community. In so doing, this thesis has situated East African political developments in the larger history of the Indian Ocean World.

One critical implication of these arguments is the interconnectivity of daily life in colonial Kenya with the broad historical trajectories of empire building and decolonization. The relationship between local debates and global geopolitical shifts was mediated by people involved in those questions and the institutions that facilitated transnational connectivity: the East African Indian National Congress and Reconstituted Confederate Party of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, for example. In other words, the evolving nature of global spaces was made manifest in the tensions, the contradictions and the fluctuations in the conversation about contested places like the White Highlands.
In addition to the exploring how analyses of space and place illuminate connections between the global and local, this exploration of mid-century spatial politics in Kenya also complicates the notion of “sub-imperialism.” As discussed in the body of this work, Indian political aspirations for increased access to land in the highlands and greater participation in the colony’s governing bodies are often characterized as sub-imperialist, a title that obscures the nuanced political atmosphere in which these subjects operated. While this examination has not categorically rejected the importance of Indian cooperation with the Imperial project, it has argued that Indian politics in East Africa must be understood in its historical context: empire. Interrogating the role that minority communities play in imperial situations can, I believe, offer a productive departing point for considering the political trajectories of these communities. Embedded in each claim for increased political relevance by Indians in Kenya, for example, were considerations for future relations with both indigenous people and the structures of power that shape social and political relations between white settlers, Indian immigrants and African subjects. This sensitivity to the ways in which marginal communities operated within imperial situations can be used to explore the political agendas of Chinese and Indians in colonial and post-colonial Indonesia and Malaysia, Lebanese throughout West Africa and the Americas and Koreans throughout northeast China, to name a few examples. Through examining these liminal actors in colonial situations, empire ceases to be a series of Manichean dualities—white versus black or European versus native—and becomes a complex social experiment where identities and loyalties were perennially destroyed and rebuilt in order to engage changing political realities.
All said this thesis has attempted to complicate narratives of race and race relations in the imperial situations. To be sure, political debates in Kenya reflect larger global historical processes of negotiating belonging, diffusing power and reckoning with indigeneity. As such, a critical examination of race and racism in places like the white highlands can add nuance to our understanding of race and empire in the colonial world.
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