

A Note On Translation

For East African vernacular, original Kiswahili terms are used for political and social categories, especially because many are locally specific and were often appropriated and institutionalized by the German administration. For example, the political position known as *wali* (pl: *liwal*) can be translated as governor, but when Germans attempted to translate the term, they equated it to a city mayor or “*Bürgermeister*”. Both terms do not signify the historical uniqueness of this position.

Due to the specific historical context, I chose to avoid the signifier and category of “Indian”. I felt it important to employ the broader category of South Asian to draw a distinction between categories of contemporary practice and historical analysis. Throughout, I use South Asian and Asian interchangeably, but when important to specify, I use a specific cultural category, such as Ismaili Khojas, or differentiate socio-economically (e.g., petty-trading Asians versus affluent South Asian merchants).

As with other social categories, I have done away with scare quotes altogether, especially when a category or phrase is preceded by the adjectives so-called, ostensible, or assumed. When quoting or translating categories directly, I have consistently placed them in quotation marks, as with “natives” and “non-natives”, for example. The reader will also notice that the words Black and White are capitalized throughout the book. This is not simply because they are capitalized in the original German. I chose to capitalize Black and White because they are not signifiers of skin color but political terms. Capitalized Black and White therefore do not describe biological groups, but are capitalized to make clear that they are colonial constructions.

