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*The History of Indians in Zanzibar from the 1870s to 1963*

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### **Summary**

This dissertation examines the social, political and economic history of Indians in Zanzibar from the 1870s to 1963. It argues that during this period, the history of Indian migration in Zanzibar was impacted by the religious, economic and social diversity of the Indians, and British colonial interests. Indians had been in contact with the coast of East Africa, including Zanzibar, even before the nineteenth century. However, permanent settlement of the Indians in Zanzibar started in the nineteenth century only, following Sayyed Sa'Īd bin Sul'Ān's decision to move his capital from Oman to Zanzibar in the 1840s. Sayyed Sa'Īd persuaded several Indians who had already invested in Oman to move to Zanzibar and expand their business opportunities. Sayyed promised the Indians security, religious freedom and tax reductions, and allowed them to trade in his trading zone. As a result, many Indians with substantial capital relocated to Zanzibar. They occupied a variety of key positions in Zanzibar's economy, working (for example) in the retail and wholesale business as well as supervising customs and banking.

The Indians' economic role in Zanzibar changed dramatically following British colonisation in 1890. As a colonial power, the British had their own economic aspirations, to which the presence of Indians was seen as a hindrance. Thus, the colonial government came up with strategies and laws that affected economic interests of Indians in Zanzibar. In this regard, the

study brings together social, political and economic aspects of the history of the Indians in Zanzibar that have never been fully explored before.

This dissertation analyses the economic changes that affected Indians from the establishment of the British Protectorate of Zanzibar in 1890 until independence in 1963. Based on evidence collected from oral interviews and written archival documents, research yielded the following key findings: Firstly, there were heterogeneous migration patterns among the Indian migrants in East Africa, influenced by factors such as religion, caste and the historical contexts in which migrants arrived. Secondly, different social, physical, economic and political processes in India and East Africa motivated Indians to leave their homeland and to form a community in Zanzibar. Thirdly, the desire to pass on religion, traditions and customs to their descendants was a significant motivation for Indians to open their own private schools. Fourthly, the change of administration in 1890 had a major impact on the Indians in Zanzibar, especially investors who had already invested heavily in the local economy. These effects came about because the British colonial government passed strict laws that shook Indian trade and capital to the core. Finally, despite their minority status compared to other communities such as Africans and Arabs, Indians participated in the politics of Zanzibar that led towards independence. They used their newspapers, associations, and political parties to play a part in the politics of independence.