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Film as archive: *Africa Addio* and the ambiguities of remembrance in contemporary Zanzibar

The Italian shock documentary *Africa Addio* contains a sequence about massacres that occurred during the Zanzibar revolution of 1964. Perceived by some of its Zanzibari viewers as a container of factual evidence of the brutality of this epochal event, this sequence is contested by others who assert that it was staged or re-enacted. One critical aspect of these oppositional views concerns the very status of this documentary and the trust that can be placed in it as an archival record. Whether *Africa Addio* is seen as authentic or fabricated, it provides Zanzibaris with a medium through which to revisit the past and rethink Zanzibari society in the present.

Key words *Africa Addio*, archive, documentary, revolution of 1964, Zanzibar

Introduction

‘Perhaps the most pitiless mass shooting in the entire macabre anthology of death’: these words subtitle the twenty-or-so-minute rough footage of the mass murders of the revolution of 1964 in Zanzibar that features in the controversial Italian documentary *Africa Addio* (Cohen 1966). This sensationalist characterisation casts a sinister gloom over the episodes of racial violence that tore apart this Indian Ocean archipelago only one month after it gained independence. Originally conceived and circulated for audiences in the former colonial metropolises, *Africa Addio* shows scenes filmed in the 1960s in several countries of Africa that are ‘so terrifying and horrific that one at times has to look away from the screen’ (Goodall 2006: 93). Produced by two Italian filmmakers, Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Prosperi, this disturbing visual document was castigated as an inauthentic and racist movie by film critics and anti-colonialist intellectuals after its release in 1966. It was criticised in scathing terms as a retrograde apologia for European colonialism; the film was lambasted for promoting the view that Africa without the European colonial powers would quickly revert to primitive brutality and bloodshed – hence the title’s more lurid translation as *Africa Blood and Guts* in the ‘truncated and hyper-sensationalist’ version released in the USA (2006: 105).

Yet *Africa Addio* is no longer just a spectacle for colonial sympathisers in the Global North: it has now surprisingly resurfaced in one of the ex-colonies allegedly depicted in the film,¹ circulating in new and unexpected contexts. In Zanzibar the Revolutionary Government banned the film for years in an attempt to control the interpretation of the revolution as well as to deny opponents of the regime any platform or ideological ammunition. But more recently, following political and economic liberalisation, the

1 Zanzibar, a pair of islands situated in the Indian Ocean a couple of miles off the East African coast, was a British protectorate from 1890 to December 1963. It has been part of the United Republic of Tanzania since 26 April 1964 after uniting with former Tanganyika.

documentary is now accessible through the Internet more easily, and the short sequence on the massacres of 1964 has been watched by growing numbers of urban educated Zanzibaris. This article will show that *Africa Addio* is increasingly appropriated and debated as archival evidence – in association with other types of materials, be they oral, written or visual, which circulate in Zanzibar – that ordinary Zanzibaris use to trace the 1964 event and make sense of its significance for the present and in the future. The use of non-conventional pieces of evidence to come to terms with the dark past of the isles has become a commonplace practice, especially among the historically conscious post-1964 generations who have not experienced the revolution, as few historical sources are readily available in authorised public records and archives in Zanzibar.

Recent intellectual and political engagement with *Africa Addio* as a potential repository of historical evidence has to do with the central role of the revolution of 1964 in the history of Zanzibar and its enduring legacy in shaping imaginaries of belonging and nationhood. The revolution was cast as the founding myth of the Zanzibari nation by the revolutionaries and their heirs who have wielded power until today, but is decried by its opponents as the ‘original sin’ (Burgess 2009: 2) that prompted the cultural, economic and political decline of the archipelago. It provoked a ‘collective trauma’ (Glassman 2011) from which the society still has to recover 50 years after. Although the official version of the revolution deployed by the state has long held a dominant position in the public sphere, the clandestine transmission of alternative historical narratives, based on living memories, has always undermined the hegemonic efforts of the revolutionary regime to control the official story. Since the mid-1990s, when political competition was reintroduced and a public sphere reconstituted, the regime’s historical interpretations of the revolution have been challenged (Fouéré 2012a, 2012b). *Africa Addio*, among other nonfictional media, has been appropriated to contest the supposedly clear-cut and unambiguous official version of the past. This explains why watching *Africa Addio* is not just a private and subjective act by isolated individuals, even though news about the documentary has spread by word of mouth, circulating in informal and dispersed, even secretive ways. Instead, I contend that watching *Africa Addio* is a socially embedded political practice: it prompts real-life enquiries and fuels collective interrogations about the significance of the revolution, its substance and meaning. These interrogations are ‘collective’ not in the sense that they would take place during public and open discussions that would equally involve all segments of Zanzibari society and be widely diffused in the media; the term here refers to locally situated debates among more or less close friends that one trusts and acquaintances one knows have a similar political leaning – mostly, in our case, urban middle-aged men who are sympathisers of the opposition party – yet which little by little, as individuals straddle several circles of sociability, happen to involve other sections of the population. This article will show that the documentary does not simply contribute to thinking and talking about power, politics and belonging in Zanzibar today; it can shape the imagination of a utopian post-revolutionary non-racial polity against deep-rooted racist narratives about Zanzibariness.

Making *Africa Addio* a postcolonial archive

This article is first and foremost a contribution to the debate about the production of historical consciousness and political subjectivities. It focuses on the everyday and

mundane processes of sense making, rather than on state-led or elite initiatives, through which such consciousness and subjectivities emerge. *Africa Addio* is used as a gateway into social practices that common people and homespun intellectuals use to investigate and build knowledge of the past, interpret the present situation and imagine different modalities of social life – in other words, of an alternative polity for the future. This study therefore draws on a Foucauldian approach to subjectivity in order to shed light on the intertwined dynamics that both subject individuals to various kinds of power and allow them to take themselves as the object of their own action, displaying their agency. Within this theoretical framework, the study of the production, use and circulation of this documentary for historical enquiry, memory work and political imagination will be examined in depth from the point of view of its contemporary audience.

The notion of archive is not understood in a conventional way as a site and its contents, that is to say as materials abstracted from the ‘particular relations within which they originate and circulate (family, bureaucracy, religious institutions, etc.)’ (Chakrabarty 2009: 67) and stored to be accessible for consultation by an authorised public only – most of the time academic historians (Ricoeur 2000: 209–18). Instead, our detailed exploration of debates surrounding the authenticity and authority of *Africa Addio* will show that this process of historical and political sense-making is at the same time a process of archive-making. It implies, in other words, that the archive is constituted through the collective – yet ordinary – usage of documents. In this regard, *Africa Addio* can be conceptualised as an archive not because it has been selected and preserved by the state or any other official institutions, but for the reason that it is being constructed – or deconstructed – as a container of evidence, signs and clues to explore Zanzibari history. It is, in Appadurai’s words, a ‘collective tool’ rather than the product of state policies aimed at converting the archive into ‘an accessory to policing, surveillance and governmentality’; indeed, ‘the creation of documents and their aggregation into archives is also a part of everyday life outside the purview of the state’ (2003: 16). It reminds us that ‘archivability’ (Mbembe 2002: 19) does not rest in the hands of the state only. *Africa Addio* can all the more be considered a popular tool as it is manipulated by its audience to excavate a past whose living memories have started to crumble in the face of the many politicised historical narratives of the event that now saturate the public sphere – therefore echoing Derrida’s words that the archive is also a product of ‘the breakdown of memory’ (1996: 11). In sum, this article provides a genealogy of an archive in the making, exploring its construction and deconstruction that, to this day, has left its status undetermined.

This study is inevitably inspired by, and resonates with conceptions of nationalism and nationhood as an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1983). However, it does not simply attribute the building of such an ideational community through the formation of a public sphere² to the diffusion of the printed word, such as newspapers and novels. On the contrary, it asserts that images (photographs, movies, etc.) and spoken words can also be appropriated to establish such imaginaries and sentiments of collective belonging (Appadurai 2003). It also contends that the formation of a public sphere is in the line of fire of the everyday creation of historical sources as collective tools to reflect

2 In Zanzibar, the *baraza*, an everyday place of casual talk for men, plays this role of public sphere (Loimeier 2007). As it gathers friends and acquaintances, it is a place where discussions about *Africa Addio* take place.

on the past, just like the discipline of history ‘had the utopian ideal of the public sphere written all over it’ (Chakrabarty 2009: 67). The archives of the historian were indeed initially aimed at providing ‘unfettered access to historical information’ rather than reserving it to some ‘privileged’ communities (2009: 68).

This study is also situated within the field of memory studies focused on the study of loci such as monuments, sites, figures and rituals in which the past is recast in the present (Halbwachs 1997; Nora 1984–1987). The archive is one such locus; its study proves once again that shedding light on how collective memory works and is mediated is deeply relevant if we want to capture the present concerns of a society. Lastly, though acknowledging that Zanzibar society can be imagined in plural modes, according to the social status, ethnic or racial identities, generational belonging, political affiliations and biographical trajectories of the individuals considered, this article relies on Glassman’s argument (2011) about the pervasiveness of ‘racial thought’ in Zanzibar, notably since the struggle for independence in the 1950s and early 1960s, which has produced the essentialised categories of ‘Arabs’ and ‘Africans’. This shared discourse explains why today’s various ‘scripts’ of the revolution (Myers 2000), including those prompted by the screening of *Africa Addio*, tend to replay the secular and deep-rooted tropes about race and autochthony to define identity and belonging, albeit more positive conceptions of Zanzibariness that re-coup the pre-revolutionary past to imagine an ideal postracial society have emerged more recently.

Mondo shockumentaries

‘Be prepared to be disturbed!’ It is with this advertisement that a Mondo film night was organised by an aficionado of this genre, Charles Kilgore, in the mid-1990s in Washington DC, USA (Staples and Kilgore 1995). The warning aptly grasps the ‘culture-shock treatment’ that the screening of a series of sensationalist and extremely violent ‘documentaries’ filmed and released for a Western audience in the 1960s provoked. The Mondo film genre, this ‘ugly bastard child of the documentary and the peepshow’ (Kilgore 1988: 2) invented by several Italian filmmakers of the late 1950s, reached its apex with the controversial Italian filmmakers Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Prosperi. The two high-profile documentarians adopted a primitivist and voyeuristic stance to portray bizarre and exotic customs (or unrestrained cruelty and perverted sexuality) in trash documentaries that constituted the ‘Mondo cycle’, among them *Mondo Cane* (1963), *Africa Addio* (1966) and *Addio Zio Tom* (1972). Heir to patently staged and fake travel and exploration films of the 1930s to 1950s that combined field material with studio-staged scenes, the Mondo films constitute a ‘cinema of attraction’ that blurs fact and fiction and appeals to a ‘voyeurist pathology’ (Goodall 2006). *Africa Addio* is not, however, just another one of this Mondo series: fans of the genre consider it the greatest Mondo film, as it was the most shocking of all. This ‘masterpiece’ mixes scenes of violence and brutality exerted by Africans against wild animals in game reserves with the footage of Mau Mau rebels in Kenya, mass graves of Arabs in Zanzibar, the first genocides in Rwanda, and mercenary executions in Congo. Some of the film posters added such taglines to the title: ‘Consumed by savagery, conceived in blood’, ‘Savagery! Brutality! Inhumanity! It bathed the world in blood!’ or ‘This is Africa like it is! Where Black is beautiful, Black is ugly, Black is brutal!’

Shortly after *Africa Addio* was released in Europe and the USA, scandalised reviews were published to condemn the scenes of extreme violence that were so bluntly

featured. The renowned film critic Roger Ebert opened one of the first reviews of the film published on 25 April 1967 by stating, 'Africa Addio is a brutal, dishonest, racist film. It slanders a continent and at the same time diminishes the human spirit. And it does so to entertain us'. He strongly objected to the aesthetics adopted by the moviemakers to shock their viewers – hence these documentaries being called 'shockumentaries' – with their 'saccharine sound track, arty photography and ... authoritative-sounding narration' (Ebert 1967). The pro-colonialist and Afro-pessimist stance of the movie, which the opening sentences abruptly illustrate ('Europe has abandoned her baby just when it needs her the most. Who has taken over, now that the colonialists have left?'), was also severely criticised. The sequence about Zanzibar exemplifies the authors' patronising and infantilising attitude as well. In voice-over, Jacopetti and Prosperi indeed '(chastise) the colonial powers for abandoning Africa' (Glassman 2011: ix), declaring that they blame the European powers for 'hastily abandoning Africa to itself in the false modesty of antique colonialism, authorising a new Africa flooded with misery and blood'. Film critics were not the only ones outraged by the *mise-en-scène* of Africa in the documentary. In August 1966, German and African students protested against the West Berlin premiere of the movie. In the Netherlands protesters demonstrated with signs saying, 'With Africa Addio we are back in Hitler's time'. And although it continued to be screened in Italy where it earned over two million dollars at the box office, the film was banned in the USA and Great Britain, and blocked in France (Bandel 2005). Five African states requested a ban on *Africa Addio* at the United Nations (Shipka 2007: 72).

Another significant criticism pointed to the fact that many scenes seem to have been directed or staged by the filmmakers, although the voice-over repeatedly insists that *Africa Addio* is a testimony to the historical realities of decolonisation, not a fiction or an artwork. The Zanzibari footage, shot from a plane (or helicopter) that flew over the isles a few days after the revolution occurred, is said to be 'the only existing documentation of what happened in Zanzibar between January 18 and 20, 1964', therefore emphasising its historical truthfulness. Jacopetti and Prosperi have always presented themselves as impartial movie journalists, stating: 'We didn't have a political viewpoint. The film was totally objective. We were witnesses to a tragedy, political meaning left aside' (Gregory 2003). However, the authenticity and actual location of the events portrayed in the film have remained a controversial and unresolved issue until today. Because of its epistemological uncertainty, *Africa Addio* has much in common with 'the parafictional' as a category of creative works (Lambert-Beatty 2009) in which not only the real and the fictional are blurred, but where playing with reality aims at bringing out a truth that may otherwise not be stated. Finally, as the Mondo aficionado Kilgore emphasises, the core of the controversy surrounding *Africa Addio* has ultimately less to do with how Africa is represented than with the lack of deontology by the two filmmakers in the field. 'What is the responsibility of journalists who are present in a situation where they may have enough influence to save a life?' (Staples and Kilgore 1995: 119). As Jacopetti and Prosperi were accused in an Italian newspaper of orchestrating the executions of some of the people killed instead of trying to save their lives, much ink was spilled over this moral issue. In spite of recent attempts to rehabilitate the Mondo genre, notably in Goodall's essay (2006), most scholars remain scathing about the ethnocentric slant of *Africa Addio*. Given the ideological leaning and intentions of the filmmakers, the documentary does not constitute an archive from which to extract information about African decolonisation; rather, it is an archive of the popular culture and imagination of the 1960s produced by decades of colonialism – a

popular imagination that the filmmakers both reflected on the screen and stimulated through their end-of-empire movies.

Yet, in Zanzibar, it is neither the pro-colonial and anti-African slant of *Africa Addio* nor questions of deontology that fire most local debates, but rather its historical authenticity and, consequently, its potential to be used as an authoritative archive of the 1964 revolution. The question is whether the footage that appears in the film is truthful or fictional. The document notably shows hundreds of dead bodies in mass graves and scattered on beaches that, the filmmakers say, are located in Unguja. Interrogations about the truthfulness or fictiveness of *Africa Addio* are locally crucial because the revolution has not only 'left a deep, and so far unhealed wound' (Shivji 2008: 3), but because it has deeply influenced present-day networks of sociability, determining whom Zanzibaris 'call their friends, with whom they share a cup of coffee, or whom they welcome to their homes as in-laws' (Burgess 2009: 2). Although Jacopetti and Prosperi's shockumentary remains a troubling document for Zanzibari viewers, as will be shown below, it is also a powerful tool to rethink the revolution and recast conceptions of belonging and nationhood.

The revolution of 1964

The revolution refers, in state discourses and official history, to the overthrow of the first independent government of Zanzibar – a constitutional monarchy under the rule of a Sultan and his elected government – on the night of 11–12 January 1964. This armed take-over happened only one month after the archipelago had gained independence from British rule and was conducted by forces that legitimated their action through discourses that conjoined race, belonging and legitimacy to exercise power. They claimed they had expelled the oppressive rule of an alien Arab minority and gave it to the African majority of genuine autochthones who had been deprived of their natural right to sovereignty on the islands for centuries. This explains why this coup d'état was labelled, in the writings of its supporters, the first 'African revolution' in East Africa. Massive violence occurred during the following days, even weeks, targeting people of Arab origin as well as Indians and Comorians considered allies to the 'Arab oppressor'. They were humiliated, beaten, raped, killed. Attempts to control or contain the turbulence of the revolution appeared vain in the face of the violence and 'terror' (Clayton 1981: 71) that was unleashed for days (see also Lofchie 1963, 1965).

Similar bloody incidents, though on a smaller scale, had occurred before. The population had experienced mob violence and pogroms in June 1961, during and after tense elections, at a time when the competing political parties had engaged in a politics of racial hatred. These killings had deepened the racial divide between 'Africans' and 'Arabs' and profoundly traumatised a society that, before the 1950s, was characterised by ethnic fluidity, racial indeterminacy and a cosmopolitan heritage (Glassman 2011: 5, 282), but was also bearing the legacy of slavery. Zanzibar had served as the main slave trading point for East Africa and the Indian Ocean in the 18th and 19th centuries and its economy flourished on a slave-based plantation system (Cooper 1980; Sheriff 1987). Far from resulting from any spontaneous uprising, the killings rested on a narrative of reclaimed justice for the Africans after decades of oppression and enslavement. They were also deeply tied up with the political aspirations and social programmes of the revolutionaries for a profound transformation of the isles. During the year that

followed the revolution, the Arabs and other minorities who had not been killed or expelled from the archipelago witnessed the confiscation of their lands, shops and houses, and were systematically excluded from government employment.

The revolution, however, has remained an ‘enigma’ (Shivji 2008: 62) for the common citizen as much as for the historian. The identity of the planners of the coup and the scope and scale of the killings remain uncertain, if not unknown. As Jonathon Glassman notes, ‘the full story of the revolution has yet to be written’ (2011: 284). No systematic historical materials have been collected as yet, and at the National Archives of Zanzibar the records of the revolutionary days remain unavailable. Some say that these documents or accounts have been intentionally or carelessly destroyed, or assert that many files may still lie hidden away in inaccessible and protected government offices. It suggests that, as with other regimes, the Zanzibari state had thought it ‘could defer the archive’s ability to serve as proof of a suspect fragment of life or piece of time’ and tried to ‘shut down the past for once and for all so that (it) could write as if everything was started anew’ (Mbembe 2002: 23).

As far as the scale of the killings is concerned, Glassman reminds us that opponents of the revolution tend to inflate the number of deaths while its defenders minimise this figure to less than a hundred (2011: 374 n1). The megalomaniac memoir of the self-appointed leader of the insurrection, ‘Field Marshall’ John Okello, boasting of 7,994 people killed during the very first days and a total of 11,995 Arabs killed by the end of uncontrolled violence (1967: 160), can be seen as ‘apocalyptic fantasies’ (Glassman 2011: 374 n1). More trustworthy figures estimated by less partisan external observers range between 3,000 and 5,000 deaths, ‘Africans’ included. Clayton states that ‘the deaths ran into several thousands’ (1981: 81 n63), his estimate relying on the overall figure of 8,000 deaths provided by a witness who counted burned-out houses after the violence. He also estimated that the pre-independence Arab population of 50,000 was reduced by 12,000 to 15,000 as a result of the mass murders but also the deportations and the flights during the months that followed the coup. Clayton also mentions that during the revolutionary days, ‘bodies were buried five to an average-sized grave in some graveyards or pushed down well-holes’ (1981: 80). It is because the number of deaths remains so uncertain that local debates about the revolution in Zanzibar focus so much on it – as exemplified in the case of *Africa Addio* discussed below – even though numbers always fail to express the social dislocation and trauma that the massacres brought about.

The ‘Great Revolution’ was turned into the foundational narrative of the new Zanzibari nation by the new regime in power – that is, of a nation in which ‘Africanness’ was made the criterion of belonging and citizenship. Led by a Revolutionary Council, the new regime functioned as an authoritarian state under the personal autocratic rule of Abeid Amani Karume until he was assassinated in 1972. ‘Revolution Forever’ (*Mapinduzi Daima* in Swahili) was made the slogan of the single party, the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP), and repeated over and over during public rallies, on government publications, on buildings, in songs, etc. The expression is still used in the present day by the ruling party, which was in 1977 renamed CCM (*Chama cha Mapinduzi*, the Party of the Revolution) after merging with the single party on the Tanzania mainland, TANU (Tanganyika African National Union). From 1964 to the mid-1980s, the state and its repressive security apparatus controlled most channels of expression in order to suppress narratives of the revolution that could compete with the state’s official story. Not only was history banned in schools but several pro-government publications and Swahili

novels (Myers 2000) were made required readings to impart pupils with a partisan version of history.

This official injunction that called for silence did not, however, induce a forgetting of the past in the isles. The murky period of the revolution could not be referred to in the open, but it was clandestinely talked about within circles of close acquaintances, therefore leading to the transmission of fragments of individual, familial and community memories within intimate networks. The change introduced by political democratisation in the mid-1990s is that the not-so-secret topic of the revolution came to be discussed publicly in newspapers, on street-corners and in open forums. Although still addressed with caution, as a consequence of self-censorship adopted in the face of state control, the dark past has resurfaced (Fouéré 2012b). The revolution has been mainly politicised in the political struggle between the incumbent CCM party and the main opposition party, the Civic United Front (CUF). Its opponents compare CUF to the former Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP) overthrown by the revolutionaries, which was supported by most Arabs in pre-revolutionary Zanzibar. CUF is sometimes accused of planning to restore the Omani sultanate and institute an Islamic republic (Glassman 2011: 285), or even of plotting, in case of an electoral victory, the massacre of people of African descent (Bakari 2001: 279).

***Africa Addio* in contemporary Zanzibar**

In this tense political context where belonging has been essentialised and equated with binary political loyalties (Arabs vs Africans rhetorically paralleling CCM vs CUF), a new vocabulary developed within circles of political activists heir to the ZNP political party and/or among victims of the revolution. It qualifies the revolution as an ‘ethnic cleansing’ or ‘genocide’, and the overthrow of the regime as an ‘invasion’ of mainlanders. These terms appear in some printed publications about the politics and history of Zanzibar produced since the mid-1990s (Fouéré 2012a). They also appear in the passage of *Africa Addio* featuring the revolution in Zanzibar that was extracted from the original Italian documentary and posted on YouTube in several different edited versions. One such version put online under the title of *The Untold Massacre* and edited by a production house identified as Sheep 2012 Production³ was very likely made by a descendant of a victim of the revolution, as it bears the following notation: ‘This video is dedicated to my grandfather who managed to escape this bloody massacre’. The overdramatic violin orchestra soundtrack of the 2000 movie *Requiem for a Dream* was added to it. Several intertitles with stationary text were inserted in the midst of the filmed sequence to add comments that convey palpable emotion: ‘a horrific event occurred in Zanzibar’, ‘an ethnic cleansing (sic) event that target (sic) Muslims and Arabs’, ‘some escaped... Some buried alive... Some raped in front of their husbands...’. One such title card takes position in the debate about the number of deaths, asserting that ‘over 10,000 Muslims and Arabs’ were killed. The last intertitles presented as the video’s epilogue emphasise the author’s profound sense of grievance. He bitterly condemns the silence that has surrounded these massacres, saying ‘Have you learnt about this in schools? On TV? In books? No Media Coverage’. He blames the international powers for closing their eyes, even suggesting they were implicated in these

3 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4lpY8_mKvjk (posted 13 August 2008; accessed 14 November 2015).

events ('No U.N. backed resolution... Where was the United Nations? (...) Why were the war criminals never been brought (sic) to Justice? Why did Britain supply those Africans with weapons?'). In another YouTube version edited as a photomontage,⁴ Carl Orff's 'Carmina Burana' backs the series of macabre snapshots that concludes with the following comment in Arabic: 'After this massacre, Zanzibar has become the poorest country in the world. No money, no freedom, no peace nor justice and democracy; and obscurantism has become pervasive'.

The people who mentioned *Africa Addio* to me in 2008 belonged to the urban educated elite I was interviewing during the early steps of my fieldwork on the 1964 revolution. My initial aim was to collect family memories in order to capture variations between communities and between generations. The first person to cite the documentary was an educated Zanzibari in his thirties who had worked as a research assistant for various outside researchers, had graduated from university, had travelled abroad and was a CUF sympathiser (though not an active member). He concluded our discussion saying, 'You really want to know what happened during the revolution? Then I must lend you a copy of this documentary shot from a helicopter and showing Arab mass graves'. Since this first occurrence, *Africa Addio* was regularly spontaneously mentioned during fieldwork. Its centrality in discussions showed that it was impossible to limit research to orally transmitted memories, as the oral clearly intersects with the written and visual material in reconstructions of the past. Yet, the ethnographic material presented here reflects a specific viewership made up of urban computer-literate educated men in their middle age residing or working in Stone Town and its close vicinity, who constituted my primary interlocutors. Most of them were well disposed to – or even have strong allegiance with – the opposition party CUF, and are therefore critical of the official story of the revolution promoted by the ruling CCM party. Many insisted on the past government restriction on the circulation of *Africa Addio*. As a Zanzibari man of Asian origin in his early fifties put it, while looking for a CD copy of the movie he thought he had kept at home but never managed to retrieve: 'I remember seeing it in colour, of good quality, not like this YouTube version; there was an Asian guy, he has an Internet café nearby, who kept copies of the documentary. You should try to talk to him, though I doubt he would confirm he had them, because he may think you are a spy of the government'. The government restriction on the circulation of the documentary may even give the film the appearance of greater authenticity: today many Zanzibaris see the ban as indicative that the film contains certain truths that the government may prefer to hide. If watching *Africa Addio* is often prompted by curiosity, it generally brings about perplexity and puzzlement, or disturbance and even distress. This emotional entanglement propels some of them to undertake a quest to seek out sources of historical understanding, as the life history of Salim⁵ will now illustrate.

Salim and *Africa Addio*

Salim is a married man in his early forties. He first went to school in Zanzibar and then continued his education in mainland Tanzania (where he got his Master's degree) and

4 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ycr3WRelbC8> (posted 17 February 2010; accessed 14 November 2015).

5 All names used in this paper are pseudonyms. Interview citations are translated from Swahili.

was a government officer when we met for the first time. He was born right after the revolution from a mother of mixed Afro-Arab descent and an African father. Salim therefore does not have any personal memories of this historical event, but only, as he insisted, a 'blurred understanding' built on accounts of others, mostly within his family. However, neither his father nor his mother ever spoke to him about the events of the revolution. His father was an army soldier whom Salim describes as an austere and inflexible man who rarely recounted his past at home. Salim remembers that when directly faced with his children's questions about the revolutionary times, his father would always remain elusive or simply refuse to answer. Today, Salim suspects this reticence was because his father participated in the revolution and killed people. As for his mother, only briefly mentioned by Salim, she never talked about Zanzibar's dark past at home, apparently afraid of her husband.

It is from his light-skinned maternal grandmother, a woman of Arab origin who in early 1964 lived in the city recently occupied by the revolutionaries, that Salim got to hear about the revolution when he was still a young man. On several occasions, he recounts, she explained to him how she had to hide from the revolutionaries who were forcing their way into houses in search of people of Arab origin. She only managed to avoid the slaughter because she was an ASP member, the party that claimed to have organised the revolution, and could show her membership card when the revolutionaries gained entrance into her house. Yet, from the top windows of her multi-storey dwelling, she witnessed the looting of shops and the murder of people in the streets during the most intense days of the revolution. Salim also recalls two of his uncles telling him about the revolution when he was in his teenage years. One of them, a fisherman, recounted several times how he had taken advantage of the general disorder of the revolution to loot shops once the revolutionaries had left the premises. Salim also remembers his other uncle, his father's brother and also an army officer, mocking the revolution, describing it as 'just a big mess' but unwilling to go into detail about why he called it so.

Salim insists that, apart from these evasive and fragmentary family testimonies, he does not know much about the history of the isles because history was not taught at school. Official versions of the revolution were pervasive and everyday discussions were controlled by the state, as explained above. Except from his family, therefore, channels of historical knowledge were not accessible to Salim. But when he was in his thirties, a friend of his, who lived in London, recommended he watch a documentary he had then never heard about, *Africa Addio*. After several months, he managed to clandestinely get a DVD copy and watch it. As he tells me, the screening 'was a total shock', for he had never heard about the mass killings and mass graves of the revolution. He describes several scenes that left him aghast: long lines of prisoners seemingly walking to death guarded by armed men; mass graves of dead bodies and even people about to be buried alive; and corpses scattered on the beach after people allegedly tried to escape the islands by boat. After watching the DVD, Salim embarked on an active quest for historical knowledge. He gathered information from the Internet, especially on the different waves of migrations to the islands, with a view to comparing them with what *Africa Addio*'s images of the revolutionary massacres implied about the intensity of racial divisions. Yet given that, according to him, he could not find any satisfactory and useful data, he decided to confront some members of his family with scenes from *Africa Addio*.

He watched the sequence of the documentary featuring the Zanzibari revolution with his uncle, in an attempt to compare it with his uncle's testimony, insisting that,

even though his uncle had been an army officer, the trust and mutual appreciation that had developed between them allowed him to expect some sincere answers. The uncle viewed the documentary with scepticism, quickly asserting that the images did not correspond to anything he had seen or heard about; moreover, he asserted, the scenes featured in the film were unquestionably staged. For instance, the white Muslim clothes of the captives walking to their deaths were too clean and white; in actuality they would have been stained with blood or dirt. Moreover, too many people in the film were portrayed as wearing Muslim dress but in Zanzibar in 1964 such garments typically were only worn on Fridays or on special occasions. And all the victims still wore their Muslim caps on their heads, while most people would have lost them in the jostling and scramble unleashed by the revolutionary uprising. To Salim, the questions raised by a witness to these events did not simply amount to a cross-checking of words and images, but also enabled him to look for further evidence and clues that could help him decide how much credit to give to *Africa Addio* – testing the authenticity and authority of the document as an archive on which to found his historical quest.

Investigating the past?

I presented the case of Salim's historical quest in detail because it illustrates the search-for-the-truth adopted by many urban educated Zanzibaris challenged by *Africa Addio*. They place at the centre of their enquiry historical clues and traces that they think could help discriminate the authentic document and the counterfeit, and draw the line between the truthful and the fictional, if not forgery and falsification. Yet, like all my interlocutors, Salim did not reach any satisfactory or definitive conclusion. To him, none of the pieces of evidence scrutinised could testify to the film's authenticity, and Salim eventually admitted that he had to suspend his investigation on the status of the Zanzibari scenes of *Africa Addio* for lack of proof. This difficulty or even failure to authenticate the film echoes the Mondo aficionado Kilgore's remark that even sounds like a warning today:

no one has ever come forth with an article saying this film has been staged, that these events didn't really happen the way they are presented. If they did stage it, they were far more masterful at staging it than anything they staged in the two Mondo Cane films, where a lot of the segments appear staged. (Staples and Kilgore 1995: 120)

Undeniably, the *intentio lectoris* of *Africa Addio* among Zanzibaris largely brimmed over the *intentio auctoris* of the authors. In any intellectual production, the meaning sought by the author indeed never 'inscribes itself in an immediate and transparent way, without resistance or deviation in the mind of its readers' (Chartier 1985: 82). Yet beyond the intrinsic multivocal character of any intellectual production, this discrepancy between the production and the reception of the documentary in Zanzibar today is the product of several related factors. On the one hand, Jacopetti and Prosperi did not provide an explicit protocol – whether on or off the screen – that could have guided the reading of *Africa Addio*. Contrary to 'parafictioneering' artists discussed by Lambert-Beatty (2009), who eventually disclose the parafictional nature of their artwork, *Africa Addio*'s moviemakers always insisted that they were dedicated to the pursuit of historical facts and truth. Considering also that the targeted audience of *Africa Addio*, and all Mondo films, was the Western public of the 1960s, the visual, aesthetic and formal

codes used in the documentary do not necessarily resound in the same way among an African audience in the 21st century. Moreover, the current conditions of circulation of the Zanzibari part of *Africa Addio* through the Internet contribute to the construction of meanings that depart from those projected by the directors. As seen above, the YouTube versions about the revolution have been abstracted from the original documentary and presented as if they could stand on their own; they have been reworked, adding dramatic soundtracks and comments that implicitly validate the authenticity of the images and explicitly aim at directing the viewer's interpretation in a way congruent with oppositional historical scripts of the revolution – unsurprisingly, seeing that the authors of these reedited versions are those who were dispossessed or dislocated by the revolution, or their children.

On the other hand, oral memories or written texts used to confront *Africa Addio*'s footage of the revolution provide no firm ground to (dis)qualify the documentary or to determine its archivability, in the sense defined by Mbembe (2002) and Appadurai (2003). For, as mentioned earlier, there is no consensual and homogeneous memory of the revolution, but rather a collection of fragmented and competing memories that say one thing and its opposite (Loimeier 2006; Myers 2000).⁶ And there is no in-depth historiography either to build consensus on historical understanding. As historian Gary Burgess reminds us, 'no text speaks with an authority to all islanders about their past' (2009: 7). This lack of reliable and readily accessible sources explains why Zanzibaris are both eager to delve into their past yet quickly realise the difficulties of reaching a full and conclusive understanding of it. Lastly, and as mentioned above, the historical conditions in which this documentary is being circulated today are characterised by the recasting and politicisation of essentialised racial categories that profoundly shape today's reception of the documentary.

In view of these various factors that affect how *Africa Addio* is taken up by its Zanzibari audience, it is not surprising to see people navigate between two extreme positions, one that gives full credit to the film as an original archive to be used to understand the anatomy of atrocity; and one that sides with revisionist narratives that minimise, sometimes even refute, the scope of the massacres. None of those interrogated who discredited the truthfulness of *Africa Addio*, however, ever suggested that a faux or a partly fictionalised document could produce plausibility – as in the case of a parafictional work of arts (Lambert-Beatty 2009) – by hinting at the real facts lying behind the images, rather than (re)presenting them; when they characterised the documentary as a faux, they rejected it as a lie. Interestingly, how *Africa Addio* is appropriated today by Zanzibaris seems to go against new patterns of disjuncture between location, community and memory prompted by the new media whereby, as argued by Appadurai, the electronic document 'denaturalizes the relationship of memory and the archive'. On the contrary, in our case, they reinforce this link by prompting reflections on the 'way in which traces and documents should be formed into archives' (2003: 17). It is instructive, in this regard, to see that a recent publication by a prominent scholar, Ibrahim Noor Shariff, titled *Tanzania na propaganda za udini*

6 Only witnesses of or participants in the revolution are able to evaluate *Africa Addio*'s images with reference to their own experiences. Yet, when I showed the documentary to a group of revolutionaries, now in their seventies – some of them had seen it when it was released in the mid-1960s, while others attested they did not know about it – they asserted that they had not seen such mass graves in Zanzibar, or bodies scattered on the beach, during and after the revolution. They characterised the documentary as fake and fictional (23 October 2013).

(Tanzania and religious propaganda), uses some extracts of the movie as historical evidence about the religious and racial divide in Zanzibar (Shariff 2014: 75–81). Written in Swahili, available in the main bookshop of Stone Town, this book may contribute to further disseminate the images of the documentary among the urban literati of Zanzibar by presenting *Africa Addio* as an authentic and legitimate source of historical information.

Utopian Zanzibar

‘*Africa Addio* still exists, it is still relevant today’. When Gualtiero Jacopetti uttered these words, he had in mind that the documentary, as a ‘picture of the agony’ of Africa, bespeaks the ugly face of endless conflicts with their primitive violence, their lawless mercenaries, their brutal deaths (Goodall 2006: 104). He may not have imagined that *Africa Addio* could radically move beyond the initial intentions of its creators. They aimed to produce a testimony about decolonisation that would constitute at the same time evidence of the repetition of a history of violence and death in Africa; yet the film is now being used by the very subjects of the movie to precisely break away from such history – at least intellectually. For, like elsewhere, Africans ‘have always sought to master their past, have had their own historic discourses which render and interpret the facts of the past, placing them in an explicative and aesthetic frame producing the sense of their past’ (Mudimbe and Jewsiewicki 1993: 3–4).

Yet, the homespun use of *Africa Addio* and its constitution or rejection as a heuristic historical device does not simply look back at the past, but at the present and towards the future. In the case of Salim, it is his own family story, his mixed-blood descent, the complicated relationship between his African father imbued with the revolutionary ideology and his matrilineal side with people of Arab origin that Salim is trying to read again, in order to rethink his identity and position in Zanzibari society. More broadly, it is his conception of what Zanzibari society should be as a moral community that is projected onto his historical inquiry. Salim now defends the idea that the cosmopolitan and creolized identity of the isles should be foregrounded, instead of turning a blind eye to it as the state has been doing for years. Against the aesthetics of hatred and race of *Africa Addio*, he imagines a pacified Zanzibar as a peaceful melting pot of races where Arabness and Africanness would be subsumed under the common denominator of Zanzibariness. This utopian polity resonates nostalgically with rosy colonial descriptions of Zanzibar as an idyllic archipelago inhabited by a peaceful blending of people from various horizons (Bissell 2005). Imagined futures emerge out of efforts to forge a historical continuity that erases the revolution as a moment of radical rupture, even though it remains a politically charged epochal event. Salim’s trajectory of historical consciousness and political subjectivity illustrates an emergent trend in the imagination of what today’s body politic should ideally be. Ironically, it is this very social utopia that was said to be the driving force under the revolutionary efforts to liberate islanders from a colonial system of class exploitation and establish a ‘society of tolerance and mutual respect’ (Burgess 2009: 3–4).

The introduction of *Africa Addio* in debates about the past and the present in Zanzibar is undeniably the result of a certain state of technology characterized by the manipulation and circulation of electronic documents through the Internet. Through websites and storage sites, the archive is indeed expanded and is ‘gradually freed of

the orbit of the state and its official network' (Appadurai 2003: 17). Yet, although the material conditions of knowledge are a prerequisite to understanding access to knowledge and its circulation, the centrality of this pseudo-documentary in today's local historical investigation cannot be explained outside of the political realm, and without considering broader ongoing discussions about the past, first muffled by the state and coming into the open since the 1990s. *Africa Addio* is therefore appropriated at this specific moment of history because of its availability, but also as one piece of evidence among others, whether first- or second-hand, that Zanzibaris knit together to produce narratives about their past. As Stuart Hall asserts,

constituting an archive ... occurs at the moment when a relatively random collection of works, whose movement appears to be propelled from one creative production to the next, is at the point of becoming something more ordered and considered: an object of reflection and debate. (2001: 89)

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Le film comme archive: *Africa Addio* et les ambiguïtés du souvenir à Zanzibar aujourd'hui

Le documentaire choc italien *Africa Addio* contient une séquence sur les massacres qui ont eu lieu pendant la révolution de 1964 à Zanzibar. Pour certains de ses spectateurs zanzibarites, cette séquence fournit des preuves factuelles de la brutalité de cet événement historique. D'autres la contestent et affirment qu'elle est une mise en scène et une reconstitution. Un aspect critique de ces divergences d'opinions a trait au statut de ce documentaire et à la confiance à lui accorder en tant que document d'archives. Qu'il soit conçu comme authentique ou fabriqué, *Africa Addio* constitue, pour les Zanzibarites, un support pour revisiter le passé et reconsidérer ce qu'est la société zanzibarite aujourd'hui.

Mots-clés *Africa Addio*, archive, documentaire, révolution de 1964, Zanzibar