From the Studio to the Front-line
The Emergence, Development, and Impact of Asian Photographers in Colonial and Independent East Africa

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The critical study of photography in East Africa is particularly limited when compared to other regions (Haney 2010, Landau and Kaspin 2002). The key ongoing contribution made by photographers of Asian descent, who are part of the South Asian diaspora that arrived in East Africa from the early nineteenth century onwards, has been especially under-studied. Links between Asia, the Arabian Peninsula, and East Africa have existed via Indian Ocean trade networks for at least two millennia (Delf 1963:1–4, Ghai and Ghai 1970:1–14, Gregory 1993:9–42, Hourani and Carswell 1995). This article seeks to go beyond what Enwezor and Zaya (cited in Haney 2010:6–12) describe as “the visual fictions of the African continent” and offer some accounts of photographers of Asian descent that provide compelling counternarratives. By presenting the works and biographies of photographers of Asian diasporas in East Africa, I endeavor to extend the total archive of African photography and challenge the problematic manner by which the term “Africa” is understood, “most of all,” as Haney eloquently declares, “for the way it is often substituted as a singular term to stand for a multiplicity of cultural, political, and artistic experiences” (2010:6–12).

A 1998 exhibition in Munich included works by three modernist photographic studios in East Africa, those of Narayandas V. Parekh, Omar Said Bakor, and Likoni Ferry Photos in Kenya (Behrend 1998a, 1998b, 1998c). However, for the most part there is limited mention or analysis of photographers of Asian descent in East Africa in the scholarship in general. Among the works to do so is Gijsbert Oonk’s Asians in East Africa: Images, Histories, and Portraits (2004). Recently, Oonk was asked to write a second book (Oonk 2009) by Hatim Karimjee, whose merchant family’s extensive history was one of the main case studies in Oonk’s previous publication (Karimjee’s forebear, Jiwanjee Budhabhoy, arrived in Zanzibar in 1818; Oonk 2004:18–21, 28–29, 39–42). P.C. Evans’s Early Postcards of Zanzibar (2005) is a rich directory of postcards predominantly taken by Asian photographers from South India, with some factual material provided.

Zarina Patel has published two biographies that discuss the anticolonial activism of her grandmother Alibhai Mulla Jeewanjee (1856–1936) (Patel 1997, 2002) and another of trade unionist leader Makhan Singh (d. 1973) (Patel 2006). She is also one of a team of African and Asian editors of the quarterly cultural magazine Awaaz. The November 2008 issue (Rajan and Patel 2008–09a) focused entirely on the history of Kenyan Asian photographic studios. Asian photographers have been publishers or the focus of publications themselves. Photojournalist Mohamed Amin (1943–1996) prolifically published photographic books in conjunction with his travels (Fig. 1; Smith and Amin 1998:293–95). Two biographies have been published as well as a documentary film on his life, which ended on a hijacked plane that crashed into the Indian Ocean (Tetley 1988, Smith and Amin 1998, Mills and Rayani 2006). Photojournalist Mohinder Dhilon (b. 1931), a compatriot of Mo Amin, is currently writing an autobiography (Fig. 2). Photographer/filmmaker Shravan Vidyarthi (2009) has directed an award-winning documentary which premiered at the Zanzibar International film festival on the life and work of his father’s photojournalist cousin Priya Ramrakha (1935–1968), who died tragically working for Time and Life magazines in the Biafran war in Nigeria. All three photographers covered conflicts in Africa during the 1960s.

Photographers Muzu Sulemanji (b. 1951) (Sulemanji 2010), Arvind Vohora (b. 1953), Javed Jafferji (b. 1969) (Moore 2006), and Masud Quraishy (b. 1934) (Quraishy 2009) have published and/or exhibited works on architecture, tourism, advertising,
and wildlife. Masud Quraishy also coauthored a chronicle of Punjabi Muslim pioneers of Kenya with Cynthia Salvadori and others (Salvadori et al. 2010). With the exception of Narayandas V. Parekh (Haney 2010:152–76, Behrend 1998a), these Asian photographers have been for the most part excluded from the critical gaze of scholarship. Parekh’s photographic collection was bought by Italian poet Adriano Sarenco in 2001 and taken to Verona, where a selection was published in a monograph, _An Indian in Mombasa_ (Sarenco 2002; see also Patel 2008–09). It is questionable whether his work would have attracted scholarly notice had it not been revealed by a European collector.

**STUDIO PHOTOGRAPHERS AND THEIR ARCHIVES**

_Fareh the charer_ is a Gujarati proverb translated as “A person who roams (or travels) advances” (Kirmani and Kirmani 2002).

A.C. Gomes from Goa opened a studio in Zanzibar in 1868 and was part of an earlier migration to East Africa from South India, along with Gujarati traders from northwest India (_Zanzibar Unveiled_ 2000). Asian studio photographers from Goa have been discussed and analyzed to a certain extent by Haney (2010:51, 68–69), who remarked that the earlier studios “catered primarily to Europeans, the Indian merchant class, and tiny African elite,” including the production of postcards intended for European visitors and audiences. Postcards by A.C. Gomes and sons, de Lord, Continho Bros., Ali Pira Harji, Karim Essa Allibhai, and others have been catalogued by Evans (2005). The visual topography within this collection is reminiscent of “human type/occupation” photography, festival depiction, colonial trade, elites, staged tableaux, and possibly photographs that were commissioned privately but were printed for wider circulation.

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1 Cover photo on Mohammed Amin’s biography, _The Man Who Moved the World_ (1988, Nairobi, Kenya). _Photo: Duncan Willets_

2 Mohinder Dhillon at his home in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2012, posing with one of his post-retirement paintings. _Photo: Nasira Sheikh-Miller_

3 Tayabali Hasanali Adamjee and son Abid in their Zanzibar studio, Tanzania, 1990s, by an unknown photographer, possibly a friend or acquaintance.

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**ZANZIBAR**

My grandfather never believed in making a lot of profit. He always used to say, just make enough to get by.

Born in Mombasa in 1901, of Dawoodi Bohra Muslim background, Tayabali Hasanali Adamjee (1901–1994) descended from a family primarily involved in trading textiles. His granddaughter Fatima Sadikot believes he started his self-taught photographic career in his twenties in Kiponde St., Zanzibar. By 1971, the studio was run principally by his photographer son, Abid Tayabali Hassanali (d. 1998). The studio was configured to a familiar spatial idiom of an elegant salon decorated with furniture; props and backdrops assisted collaborative creative engagement between photographer and patron (Fig. 3). Agfa-Gevaert supplied equipment, chemicals, color tints, and other photographic requisites. However, props such as a parasol and silk flowers were purchased from Japan. Tayabali Hasanali Adamjee was keen to learn from photographic text books. He also imported cameras and equipment to sell. Patrons included influential clients such as the Sultan and his family, the Ruwehy family (members of the

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local elite), the Karimjee Jivanjees (Fig. 4), the Aga Khan, and British Royal visitors, as well as patrons from Zanzibar’s diverse communities. Although Oonk (2004:20–21, 40–41, 47) included many photographs of the Karimjee Jivanjees in his book, he did not identify the photographers.

African families, Indians, Parsis, Persians, Arabs, everyone came. I remember the Persian ladies would really dress up. All negatives would be returned to them, they arrived in full purdah. They trusted him. There were stylish clothes for people to wear, if they wanted.

In 1964, during the revolution in Zanzibar, the family was forced to destroy photographs taken of the Sultan, in case their possession put their lives in danger. With the exception of returned photographs or those lost in the revolution, every copy from the studio’s seventy-five years or so of operation was kept on the premises. After Abid’s death in 1998, copies were returned to known patrons, with the remaining photographs and cameras dispersed among family members and some equipment given away to local photographers. Haney (2010:55) has discussed the scattering of archives and, in this instance, political and social factors, as well as the studio’s closure, led to the dispersal of the collection.

KENYA

The Italian produced this book [An Indian in Mombasa], I think he basically did this to preserve the photographs, not to make money, he just loved the photographs.

The mid 1920s witnessed a proliferation of Asian studios in Kenya among those that were European owned. In the capital, Nairobi, Ram Singh & Sons Photographers opened in 1924 on Victoria Street (now Tom Mboya Street), while Thakor L. Bhai Patel (T.L. Patel) established Anand Studio during the same decade. The latter was described as a pioneer photographer by the photographer Bhupendra M. Patel (Bachu M. Bhai Patel) of Vanguard Studios. Bachu Bhai remarked on the similarities in terms of style between T.L. Patel and Parekh.

Manibhai Patel commenced working for T.L. Patel as a photographer in the 1920s, when he observed his mentor as a passionate, meticulous photographer who consulted academic textbooks and viewed his work as an art. Moreover, he was specifically commissioned to take portraits of European clients. Manibhai...
subsequently founded Vanguard Studio in the 1930s. The name "Vanguard Studios" was taken from the original studio in Bombay, underlining how Indian Ocean networks were sustained. Pinney refers to a 1931 advertisement made by the Bombay studio, with its “emphasis on artistry” (Pinney 1997:77–78).

N.V. Parekh (1923–2007) was the son of an immigrant to Mombasa from Gujarat, India, in 1905. The elder Parekh first worked as a clerk for the merchants Allidina Visram & Co., then going into business himself. In 1939, at the age of sixteen, N.V. Parekh was offered a job at a photographic studio in Nakuru after his father died unexpectedly (Sarenco cited in Patel 2008–09:28, Behrend 1998a). Parekh’s portraiture has been appraised in terms of the glamour of Hollywood and the Bombay film industry (Behrend 1998a, Raheja and Kothari 1996, Kabir 1985). The conventions of the studio are extended in the composition of spatial geometry such that Sarenco (cited in Patel 2002:28) stated that "I thought of himself [sic] as an artist in every sense.”

Parekh opened Victory Studio in 1942, after he had worked with the artist and photographer Surani. Surani passed on the techniques of painting photographs, well developed in India, together with the pencil retouching technique of eradicating flaws and lightening skin. As Pinney has noted in his study of the Nagda Studio, these photographic elements, honed in India, whether theatrical references in composition, retouching, the adoption of "signs of power,” or painting photographs (Fig. 5), were a means “in which to stage idealized versions of oneself” (1997:175–86).

Patrons visited studios to document events and to mark rites of passage such as male circumcision in Zanzibar; weddings; festivals such as Diwali, Eid, and Christmas; before and after pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj/Umrah); and so on (Oonk 2004). Moreover, the labile and changeable dispositions of photographic image-making offer abundant potential to construct diverse self-presentations of the individual. As an example of this, Hamida Essaji and her friends would go to Parekh studios to devise creative constructions for
their photographs, with the cost divided amongst friends. In her youth, Hamida also participated as part of a group of a bride and her bridesmaids (Fig. 6); the bride’s family would purchase the photographs and gift each bridesmaid a copy as part of a reciprocal exchange (Mauss 1990).

Kenyan writer and actor John Sibi Okumu, who was until recently one of the editors of Awaaz, recounted the making of a portrait of himself and his mother (Fig. 7). He recalled his journey to the Noble Studio in Nairobi as a child in 1958, when going to the city was an event for rural dwellers like himself. It was also during the Mau Mau resistance. He recalls, “My mother had made particular effort, with her blouse, skirt, and matching handbag ensemble, to look as trendy as the trendiest woman of the day” and contrasted the “exalted, feel good plane” of the studio to photojournalism’s “recording the hatred, violence, calamity and like” (Sibi-Okumu 2008–09:8–10).

**ASIAN AFRICAN PHOTOJOURNALISTS: CROSSING BOUNDARIES**

Photography has many different trajectories, as Tagg (1988) has noted, and the photographic image-making of East Africa has been situated from the outset in documentary and other representational fields linked to colonial histories and positionings. These images are often consumed through both local and international news media. Local African photographers participated in the production of images within discourses of documentary reportage. These professional photographers had professional trajectories that differed from those of studio photographers and often utilized different visual conventions in the making of images, although individual photographers often overlapped in their use of visual conventions and in fluctuating professional roles.

The photojournalist photographers under consideration spent some or a major part of their careers photographing or filming news events either for international organizations or by working as staff photographers for national papers such as the Nation, in Nairobi, or the East African Standard, with offices in both Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. Several started their careers in studios.

Mohamed (Mo) Amin (of Muslim heritage), Mohinder (Mo) Dhillon (of Sikh heritage), and Priya Ramrakha (of Hindu heritage) all have family roots in the Punjab region of India. Their families were drawn to Africa as a result of the British East African Protectorate Railways project, which precipitated what has been described as the second wave of migration from India, with “Indians … imported as indentured laborers to build the Uganda Railway—the practical and symbolic heart of imperial power” (Nair 2008:77). The Uganda Railway, dubbed by some the Lunatic Express, traversed from the Kenyan Coast to Uganda to serve Britain’s commercial, military, and strategic interests (Smith and Amin 1998:39–50). Approved by the British Parliament in the 1890s, this controversial and expensive project required 31,983 Indian railway workers to build it between 1896 and 1903 (Miller 1972:390–91). After its completion, a workforce was required to maintain and run the lines, and hence the migration from India continued, with workers now coming from Karachi (Patel 1997:8–27). The fathers of Mo Dhillon and Mo Amin both responded to posters advertising opportunities in Britain’s latest crown colony and departed to Kenya, travelling by dhow and steamship to Mombasa between 1917 and 1927. Dhillon’s father left his family in Punjab to be looked after by his brother.12

It was quite often the case that men would attempt to establish a stable income in the new region while maintaining their ties with the “homeland,” returning to marry, as did Mo Amin’s father in 1939 to marry Azmat Bibi. Until then, he worked as a stone mason, building bridges for the Kenya Uganda Railway in the Rift Valley town of Nakuru. He eventually settled with his family in the area of Eastleigh, which was to be the vicinity of the Mau Mau encampment in the 1950s. Mo Amin’s schooling and early photographic career took place in Dar es Salaam, after the family was moved to a railway-owned estate there (Smith and Amin 1998:39–50; Oonk 2009:21–32).13 Nair (2008:89) describes this cyclical interconnection as a process by which “the homeland is never actually left behind but rather is extended and attached to regions of social life that extend over space without alienation or stark separation; and because the homeland is not an imagined place of origin but a living land of family life.” This is echoed in the experiences of many of these Asian families.

Dhillon’s father was accommodated in a Gurdwara and then helped to find work, often assisted by other Asians who were settled there (Oonk 2004:25, Chandan 2008:18–23). In time, he established himself as a railway storekeeper, sending remittance...
to the Punjab. Mo Dhillon was sixteen at the time of the move to Kenya. He provides a vivid description of his first experiences of the outside-mechanized world of 1947. His family was spared the horrors of Partition, he writes, with violence breaking out within weeks of the family’s departure.

In an interview in 2012, photojournalist Anil Vidyarthi remarked that Asian communities in Kenya were insulated from the internecine tensions in India. His grandfather arrived in the 1890s and made his career as stationmaster. Girdhari Lal Vidyarthi (Anil’s father), founded a printing press in 1933 that published the Colonial Times newspaper, a subversive bilingual English/Gujarati publication created to challenge British rule. Furthermore, he established Habari Za Dunia, the first publication of its kind in Swahili to be printed independently, and the Luo weekly newspaper Ramogi. Both were edited by African Kenyans F.M. Ruhinda and Achieng Oneko. These and other papers (including the Citizen Times) broadcast critiques and raised issues which the colonial government sought to suppress (Vidyarthi 2002:22–29).

Girdhari Lal Vidyarthi was imprisoned by the British Colonial Government for sedition in April 1945. According to Anil, “He got into a lot of trouble with the British as he was always writing against their Colonial Rule.” In 1995, Anil Vidyarthi himself was charged with printing seditious publications under the government of Daniel arap Moi and then acquitted (Vidyarthi 2002:22–29).

EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND INFLUENCES

Mo Amin learned darkroom skills, processing, and printing at the Indian school through the photographic society. He was an innate entrepreneur; his first Box Brownie camera was paid for by selling sweets made by his mother to his older brother Iqbal. In 1958, at age fifteen, he covered his school’s Boy Scout troop’s official visit to the governor’s house, using the school’s Rollieflex camera. On his own initiative, he processed the film, taking the best images to the Tanganika Standard (Tanzania’s main newspaper of the time), which printed them on the front page the next day. He remarked that this early achievement aroused as much excitement in him as any of the world exclusives later in his career (Smith and Amin 1998:39). Also at fifteen, his work was published by the East African edition of the black magazine Drum. With such early success, Mo Amin decided to leave school without completing any exams to pursue a career in photojournalism (Fig. 8). He set up his company Camerapix in 1963, two years after Independence, and by this time was highly experienced in the workings of the news media. He taught himself to use cine film by making a 16mm hand-cranked Bolex newsreel of two white South African opponents of apartheid who were given sanctuary by Julius Nyerere’s government.

Mo Dhillon’s father bought him a Box Brownie camera, and Dhillon noted that he learned by reading small pocket guide books and processing films in a small enamel bath soap holder. In 1952, unable to pass his O-level exams, he stumbled inadvertently into a career in photography by responding to an advert for a junior accounts clerk placed by the proprietor of a pharmacy. She also owned Halle Studio photo studio. He was, unsurprisingly, rejected for the clerical post, but was given a chance to work in the studio’s darkroom. He notes that “this interview was actually my first conversational contact with a white person on that level.” In 1955 he took ownership of Halle Studio. In 1960 he formed Africapix with one of his white colleagues, journalist Ivor Davies, whom he became friendly with at the East African Standard through the studio. It was at this time that he taught himself how to make newsreels on a suggestion from a visiting European executive at United Press International, having obtained two A4 sheets of instructions.

Cousins Priya Ramrakha and Anil Vidyarthi (Fig. 9) were situated within a family milieu of printing, publishing, and activism and were encouraged to pursue their interests. Priya was initially self-taught and contributed material to various local newspapers such as the Nation, the Citizen Times, and his uncle’s newspaper Colonial Times. American photographer Eliot Elisofon, while working as a photographer in Nairobi, spotted Priya’s potential and helped him obtain admission into the Art Center School in California in 1958/9 to study photography. He was contracted with Time and Life magazines in 1962 on his return to Nairobi.

Anil Vidyarthi’s interest in photography was sparked by his older cousin’s work. He recalls a time in the 1950s when Daniel arap Moi came into his father’s printing press with Priya, who asked Moi to pose with a spear, noting that “I was more inter-
ested in the way he [Ramrakha] was taking the photograph than the camera itself and their banter. He was quite good at making friends.” After a brief stint at a couple of photography studios in River Road, Nairobi, Anil joined the Nation newspaper in 1962. On leaving that organization in 1967 he set up a block printing press.

Priya’s death in an ambush during the Biafran war in Nigeria in 1968 ended Anil’s plans to run a studio with his cousin. Moreover, Anil was influenced by his photographer friend from Dar es Salaam, Nazir Sulemanji, to enroll in the Derby College of Art in the UK in 1968 to study film and photography; he was granted a year’s exemption due to the skills he had acquired in Kenya. The Education Minister in the newly independent Kenyan government had helped him secure a loan for his degree. Nazir Sulemanji’s grandfather, Gulamhussein Mulla Sulemanji, a Dawoodi Bohra Muslim, arrived in Zanzibar by dhow to seek trading opportunities in the mid-nineteenth century, during the earlier era of Indian migration from Gujarat, which led to ties with the Karimjee Jivanjee family through friendship and communal contact (Oonk 2009:21–32). Nazir Sulemanji was thus informally funded by his grandfather’s business and the Karimjee Jivanjee families, based in Zanzibar and Dar es Salaam, who funded his study in photography and film at the Derby College of Art in the UK. On his return to Dar es Salaam, he worked at the Daily News as a press photographer, going on to found Color Centre in 1972 (Sulemanji 2010). This was initially a photo studio offering processing services that later evolved into a graphics center. Nazir trained his brothers Salim and Muzaffar (Muzu) in studio photography and the business helped fund Muzu’s advanced education in Applied Arts in Mumbai, India, and at the Design School in Basel, Switzerland. Nazir may too have nurtured an interest in photography in his cousin Javed Jafferji, who visited the Color Centre studio frequently with his father as a young child. Javed went on to study photography, television, and film at Paddington College and Salisbury College of Art and Design in the UK (Jafferji 2005).

Muzu Sulemanji went on to overlap photography with fine art, for the main part painting architectural buildings in Zanzibar from photograph transscripts. Haney (2010:126) has written on the mode of interrelationship linking painting, printing, and photography and how the “iconicity of a photograph—its tangibility, its portability, its connection to a lived presence—is transmitted into other forms and materials.” At ease with painting, photography, and graphics, Muzu recently published a photographic book on Dar es Salaam, focusing by and large on its urban architecture (Sulemanji 2010).

**HAZARDS ON ASSIGNMENT**

“No picture is worth your head” was a piece of advice given to me by a press photographer at UPI when I was working in Northern Ireland in the 1970s during the conflict between the Ulster Unionists and the Irish Republicans. Hazards are a recurring condition in the field of photojournalism, in many ways contrasting with the role of studio photographers in preceding generations. Mo Dhillon, who has survived into his eighties, details numerous near-fatal incidents. Both Priya Ramrakha’s and Mo Amin’s lives abruptly ended in the course of their work, Ramrakha’s at the age of 33 in the Biafran conflict in Nigeria in 1968 and Mo Amin at the age of 53 on the hijacked plane that landed in the Indian Ocean in 1996. Moreover, Mo Dhillon and Mo Amin endured grave injuries in the course of their careers. The latter, having covered the Ethiopian famine in the 1980s, lost his arm in Addis Ababa in 1991 when he inadvertently encountered an exploding ammunition dump following the rebel army’s routing of Mengistu’s rule in Ethiopia. These photographers’ inventive approaches to unpredictable circumstances, the application of every resource within reach, and often the opportunities of fortuitous coincidence are apparent in their work (Smith and Amin 1998:14–38, 237–44; Mills and Rayani 2007; Vidyarthi 2009). In Zanzibar’s 1964 revolution, Ugandan-born John Okello’s overthrow of the government resulted in mass killings of Arab and Asian families, with thousands fleeing and the State expropriating their properties. In order to cover this revolution, Mo Amin took a dhow from the former slaving port of Bagamoyo after his chartered plane was...
refused permission to land on Zanzibar. Undeniable pictures of the scenes of revolution as well as the first pictures of the revolutionary leaders were sent out by dhow. These films were carried by CBN, UPIN, and Visnews.

Salim Amin recalls how his father was able to speak directly to Ugandan President Idi Amin immediately after he seized power and was granted permission to photograph him. The shared surname was key to an association that permitted access to Uganda unprecedented at the time. In spite of their Asian ethnicity, both Mo Amin and Mo Dhillon were particularly cordially received by President Amin, even though, in 1972, he nationalized properties owned by Asians and Europeans amid the expulsion of 60,000 Asians. It is possible that Idi Amin was following a regional trend. The Tanzanian Acquisition of Buildings Act of April 1971 was not targeted at Asians, but nevertheless had a severely detrimental impact on their income. Oonk (2009:161–67) has written about the impact of the Act on the Karimjee Jivanjee family. There are estimates that 60% of Tanzania’s Asian population—150,000 people—left the country (Oonk 2009:105).

Mo Amin documented these excesses in Uganda, although his films were wired without a byline. He also photographed a controversial and flamboyant performance wherein Idi Amin was carried on a seat by four white British businessmen (Fig. 10). This enraged white expatriates and was to become iconic of Idi Amin’s regime worldwide. The pressure to be the first to relay footage of hitherto unseen or unknown events was unremitting and, in spite of congenial rapport between photojournalists, ardent rivalry was evident (Tetley 1998, Smith and Amin 1998, Mills and Rayani 2007, Vidyarthi 2009).28

It is also clear that photojournalists worked in a multiethnic environment within a local context, as well as competing with and working alongside international foreign correspondents. Mo Dhillon, while in the Congo with Dennis Neeld of the Associated Press and Ian Colvin of the Daily Telegraph, recollected that his regional roots and fluency in Kiswahili aided him when he attempted to film and photograph the leaders of the Simba rebels fighting Mobuto’s government forces at their base in Albertville. He recalled, “From the point of view of the Simba rebels we were an important PR opportunity for them. For the outside world we got an opportunity to put a face to the men behind the rebellion.”29 As Landau (2002:156–57) has pointed out, photography was a significant means by which former colonial authorities manipulated imagery in the Congo, and in postcolonial Zaire under Mobuto, photography was used to mitigate wider political activity. However, photographs also offered a visual testimony and counternarrative to colonial representations. Priya Ramrakha’s photographs of African nationalist leaders, Mau Mau prisoners, and the Lari massacre (an atrocity carried out by Mau Mau militants in 1953) relayed the “only way large numbers of people in Kenya could see what they looked like and what they were experiencing. The Mau Mau did not win independence—it was the national movement” (Landau in Vidyarthi 2009).

In interviews with these photographers in 2012, instances of direct racism were often recollected. Anil Vidyarthi spoke of institutional racism while he worked at the Nation newspaper, such that “When I meet the new generation of staff, I would joke with them and say ‘do you still have toilets for White, Black and Indian?’ There are shocked expressions and then I would tell them the story.”30 Priya Ramrakha discovered parallels between segregation in British East Africa and the Civil Rights struggle during his time in the US. Resonating with the experiences of Kenyan nation-
photography, and society. Shirin Adamjee opened her Gianni La 
narratives pertaining to the changing relationships among gender, 
(Patel and Rajan 2008–09, Chandan 2008–09). There are also 
photographed African nationalist activists in the 1940s and 1950s 
(1958–2008) and Gopal Singh’s Star Studio (1942–1971), which 
bar’s and Mombasa’s communities. In doing so, they also sanction 
debates beyond those of authenticity and representation perva-
Parts of the continent.

It was often the case that photographers’ earlier experiences of 
photography as a hobby would lead to a photographic career. 
If this led to a successful professional enterprise, it would often 
become a family concern. This was true for studio photographers 
as well as photojournalists. There were multiple means of acquiring 
photographic skills. Higher degree courses were undertaken 
in Europe or India, and self-taught photographers would refer to 
advanced texts published in Europe. Furthermore, the varied but 
often overlapping trajectories of photography afforded differing 
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rakha, whose careers illustrate the intensity of involvement with 
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**CONCLUSION**

The case studies of Tayabali Hassanali Adamjee and Naryandas 
V. Parekh’s photographic studios present visual narratives beyond 
those of elite concerns. Their archives contain depictions of non-
newsworthy events in private worlds of patronage (Figs. 11–12). 
As such, they offered a now-vanished past of Zanzi-

Shirin has spent much of her life involved in photo-
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Shirin began working in her father’s business as 
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Salim is the son of Mohamed Amin, the Kenyan 
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and was a regular user of the well-known local 
photo studio run by N.V. Parekh.

Bachu’s father founded Vanguard Studios in Nai-
robi in the 1930s. Bachu now runs Vanguard, but 
the studio has subsequently moved into the provi-
sion of medical instruments and screening tools 
and away from its roots in photography.
I want to thank a number of people based in Kenya who generously gave of their time and expertise for this project, especially while I was undertaking my research in Nairobi. Salim Amin, the son of photojournalist Mohamed Amin, and his co-CEO Aqil Sheikh, who together run Azam Media in Nairobi, granted full access to their offices and photographic collections and archives. Mo Dhillon provided the first draft of his autobiography, and Anil Vidyarthi facilitated a private viewing of a film concerning the career of Priya Ramrakhia. I would also like to acknowledge the very kind assistance of Zahid Rajan, Zarina Patel, and John Sibi-Okumu. Photographers and their family members gave access to cameras, equipment, and almanacs of an earlier age, including Bachu Bhai Patel in Nairobi and Fatima Sadikot in London. Lastly, I would like to thank all of my interviewees and family members and friends in East Africa, UK, and Canada for their kind help and assistance.

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