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Iain Walker and Marie-Aude Fouere (eds.) *Across the Waves: Strategies of Belonging in Indian Ocean Island Societies* (Leiden: Brill Press, 2022). 231 pages. ISBN 9789004510098.

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This slim volume is a welcome addition to a growing literature that engages the modern states of the Indian Ocean in a comparative framework. As evident from the title, this work aims to explore the dynamics of belonging in Indian Ocean Island societies. In the introduction, the editors criticize the casual use of the term ‘belonging’ as a substitute for identity. Viewing belonging as always an in-process, Walker and Fouere see the term as “implying claims, negotiations, and performances” through which the boundaries of belonging are “drawn and redrawn” (3). They also argue that the term belonging is particularly salient to study for the island societies of the Indian Ocean “where everyone is an immigrant.” Overall, this collection of essays intends to explore the significant overlap between political and affective belonging, using the term social belonging. While this book studies multiple island societies, it primarily focuses on Zanzibar, an island whose modern history in Tanzania illustrates the tensions between different scopes and scales of belonging. Fouere’s chapter on belonging in Zanzibar is a major contribution to modern studies of Zanzibari national citizenship. Arguing that the language of “Zanzibari” vs “mainlander” has gradually replaced the language of “Arab” vs. “African” on the island, Fouere ascribes this transition to the re-assertion of a Zanzibari ‘nativism’ prompted by the perceived cultural and demographic threat of migration from the mainland. This point is well taken, although it bears mention that anti-mainlander rhetoric goes back to the 1950s and is not merely a post-revolution invention.

Continuing in the Zanzibar discourse, further chapters discuss familial, community, and religious identity on the island. For example, a chapter by Akbar Keshodkar argues how Zanzibari women of South Asian ancestry frequently seek spouses in India, despite having never lived there. This decision is not fueled by a desire to return to India, but instead a want to maintain their position within the *jat*, a community of Indo-Aryan people, in Zanzibar. Further, a chapter by Franziska Fay

explores the contested ‘rights of children’ as a colonizing western discourse resisted by Zanzibari parents in their efforts to maintain a role for community members in the protection, and sometimes physical punishment, of children. Specifically, Fay links the perceived erosion of ‘malezi ya jamii’ (the communities’ shared responsibility of socializing children) to anxieties over Zanzibar’s national and religious identity. Concluding these chapters on Zanzibar, Hans Olsson explores how African Pentecostal communities imagine their belonging on the island. Showing the connection of many Pentecostals in Zanzibar to mainland Tanzania, Olsson acknowledges the importance they place on the abolition of slavery, the ending of Arab rule, and the maintenance of the Tanzanian Union. Some members of the City Christian Center (CCC) in Zanzibar link religious extremism to Zanzibar separatism, pointing to how churches have been attacked during times of political contestation over the Tanzanian constitution. As pro-Union supporters and often connected through employment to the army, CCC members are an interesting case study of the existing paradox; one that shows how the alienation of non-belonging among a group generates intra-group solidarity.

Switching to discuss other communities, the next three chapters of *Across the Waves* analyze belonging through case studies in Madagascar, Mauritius, and the Comoros. Patrick Desplat describes Malagasy youth in the cosmopolitan city of Mahajanga, and their efforts to discreetly carry out their plans for international migration while avoiding the interference or sabotage of potentially jealous kin and friends. In the period following the 50th anniversary of Mauritian independence, Ramola Ramtohul assesses the construction of a Mauritian national identity in relation to previous social cleavages of language, ethnicity, religion, and race. Ramtohul finds the Mauritian model of multicultural citizenship to have “essentialized and frozen cultural differences” (174) rather than resolved them. Iain Walker concludes this section with an ethnographically rich essay on the relationship between Mayotte, a French ‘department’ in the Comoros archipelago, and the rest of the islands in the Comoros.

Overall, there is much value in this book for anthropologists and historians studying belonging in Africa and Asia. Yet, this volume may benefit from a more robust comparative framework around islands as sites of unique debates around belonging. While I enjoyed this work as a historian of Zanzibar, *Across the Waves* felt disproportionately Zanzibar-focused, and the comparativist in me felt it would have strengthened the volume’s effectiveness to have solicited essays from more Indian Ocean islands and island societies like Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Yemen’s Socotra .

Moreover, I also wished for a more focused thematic question about belonging to center this work. For instance, it would have been interesting for the introduction to have engaged in a more focused discussion of how the different state

policies on national citizenship - as an entitlement - and the rise of state migration control over once more lightly surveilled spaces had a specific historical impact on each island. In this same vein, an analytically precise way of using the term belonging is never established. This lack of a definition makes the concept of belonging inherently less useful than identity, a more straightforward noun.

As the volume's introduction acknowledges, processes of belonging differ depending on whether we are talking about formally belonging to a state, belonging to a sufi tariqa, belonging to a jat, or belonging to a family. The processes by which belonging is maintained differ as well, and the processes of un-belonging, or not belonging, are similarly diverse. What holds these diverse concepts together? The introduction does not ultimately resolve this dilemma, and the following essays take the still theoretically diffuse question of belonging in different directions.

The addition of a conclusion, by allowing the editors to summarize and conceptualize different paths out of colonial rule, different post-colonial state policies of belonging, and different receptions by different groups claiming belonging there, would have opened up a more robust future research agenda for studies of belonging in Indian Ocean islands.

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