“IS USE OF COSMETICS ANTI-SOCIALIST?”: GENDERED CONSUMPTION AND THE FASHIONING OF URBAN WOMANHOOD IN DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA, 1975-1990

By

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This study examines the shifting meanings and practices of gendered consumption in the city of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, through an analysis of the state-owned newspapers printed between 1975-1990. In this analysis I draw upon both political economy and cultural studies approaches by linking practices of consumption in colonial and postcolonial Tanzania to shifting patterns of production and labor as well as by examining the symbolic significance of consumer practices and showing how certain commodities became imbued with meaning at different historical moments. Specifically, I analyze discussions in the state-owned newspapers regarding urban women’s use of certain controversial cosmetic products, including skin-bleaching formulas, make-up, and hair straightening, curling, and dying kits. I argue that definitions of appropriate urban womanhood were defined and contested through women’s practices of consumption and I use the figure of the “consuming woman” to trace representations of women’s consumption in urban Tanzania through the 1970s and 1980s as well as to show how
differences of gender, race, class, and age were implicated in state-sanctioned constructions of legitimate consumption and respectable urban womanhood.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

One ought to accept the fact that after food and shelter, man needs objects and pleasures including cars, TVs, and fashionable dresses. It is this hierarchy of needs which sustains man’s acquisitive instincts, which in turn makes him work harder. Thus those who condemn importation of perfumes on the grounds of Socialism are doing a disservice to the very cause they purport to advance. I am sure Karl Marx himself would have shuddered at the suggestion that use of cosmetics is anti-Socialist.


Jumbe Ibrahim wrote this letter to state-owned newspaper in 1987, as people living in Tanzania experienced rapid social, political, and economic changes. In the mid-1980s, the government began revising the socialist policies which had structured state rhetoric and practice since 1967. Although President Ali Hassan Mwinyi initiated neoliberal adjustments in 1986 to ease the growing economic crisis, the government did not officially abandon socialism as the state ideology until 1992. Ibrahim’s letter, therefore, was written at a time when the political and economic status of the country seemed ambiguous. I have chosen to begin with this letter printed in the state newspaper to highlight some of the main arguments of this study. The first argument is that the “transition” from socialist to neoliberal economic structures was not as neat or easy as most economic and political accounts portray. Rather, as this excerpt shows, in the late 1980s, Tanzanians were themselves debating what practices and ideas identified people as socialist, or in this case, anti-socialist. I contend throughout this study that the state newspapers provide a rich source of information for examining the shift from socialism
to postsocialism from the intersection of postcolonial political power and everyday life in urban Tanzania.

My second argument is that highlighting consumption offers a useful analytical lens for examining the relationship between changes in political economy and the fashioning of new subjectivities. Because consumption has only recently become the object of analytical gaze, there remains a lacuna in anthropological literature describing the meanings and practices of consumption in postcolonial and postsocialist locations. However, Ibrahim’s letter indicates that while socialism is generally described in popular and academic literature as a mode of production, in this piece and others, Tanzanians discussed socialism and capitalism as distinct modes of consumption. Therefore, I contend that everyday practices of consumption were crucial to the ways that people defined and contested the meanings of socialism and capitalism on a daily basis. In this analysis I draw on recent theories of consumption situated between political economy and cultural studies approaches. I rewrite the history of colonial and postcolonial Tanzania, foregrounding changing practices of consumption over the course of the twentieth century and linking changing notions of legitimate consumption to the changing patterns of production desired by the colonial and postcolonial states. However, I also remain attentive to the symbolic significance of consumption practices and the way that certain commodities became imbued with meanings at specific historical moments.

Finally, the question that Ibrahim asks and answers in his letter, “Is Use of Cosmetics Anti-Socialist?” brings me to my third argument. This letter was not written in isolation, but rather was a contribution to an on-going debate in the late 1980s over the pleasures and dangers of certain cosmetic products and the rapidly expanding flow of
commodities entering the country more generally. More than any other commodity, beauty products like make-up, skin-bleaching creams, and hairkits dominated discussions of consumption in the state-owned newspapers during the 1980s. However, cosmetics were distinctly *gendered* commodities and therefore it was women’s bodies and practices of consumption that became the center of discussions over the intensified flows of commodities and capital entering Tanzanian in the years after the implementation of structural adjustments. In this analysis, I examine how women’s practices of consumption were treated in the state newspapers and argue that gendered consumer practices became central to definitions of respectable urban womanhood.

This study, then, explores the politics of gendered consumption in the capital city of Dar es Salaam during the 1970s and 1980s. In the first chapter, I situate my analysis of the state newspapers in the post-independence era by examining the politics of consumption, print media, and urban womanhood through the colonial and early postcolonial periods. Throughout the chapter, I contend that the sharp ruptures usually assumed to separate colonialism and postcolonialism are blurred and complicated by rigorous historical analysis. I offer a set of overlapping histories to contextualize the conversations taking place in the state papers in the 1970s and 1980s. First, I explore changing meanings and practices of consumption through the colonial, socialist, and postsocialist periods, paying particular attention to how shifting patterns of production and labor were accompanied by changes in consumer practices. Secondly, I examine the history of print media in Tanzania during the twentieth century. By placing the state newspapers within a longer media landscape of Tanzania, I attempt to show why these papers are a useful source for exploring the intersections of state power and everyday life
in Dar es Salaam. Thirdly, I discuss the emergence of the urban “consuming woman” in the late colonial period, arguing that this figure provides a unique lens for examining anxieties surrounding urban women’s sexuality and practices of consumption in Dar es Salaam.

In the second chapter, I turn to articles, features, letters to the editor, stories, and poems in the state newspapers to examine constructions of urban womanhood in Dar es Salaam during the period when socialist ideology dominated state discourses. While other studies of gender in Tanzania have examined the relationships between rural and urban women, in my analysis I focus on how journalists and contributors to the state newspapers articulated differences between groups of urban women. I describe the figure of the “socialist superwoman” who exemplified state discourses of respectable urban womanhood through her role in domestic and national production. I argue that this figure of the ideal socialist woman was defined through and against the other dominant trope of urban femininity in Dar es Salaam, the “consuming woman.” Furthermore, I contend that despite state discourses of legitimate urban womanhood that highlighted women’s role in production, it was women’s practices of consumption that determined their respectability. By comparing and contrasting “official” articles with pieces from the public forums of the papers (including letters, stories, and poems), I attempt to show the contradictions, ambiguities, and plurality of state discourses of proper womanhood.

After describing the construction of these dominant representations of womanhood in the state newspapers during the 1970s, I return to the debate over imported commodities that Ibrahim’s letter was addressing in 1987. In the third chapter, I examine discussions in the papers of a few controversial beauty products that became the center of
heated conversations in the 1980s. First, I examine changing state rhetoric in the papers over the course of the decade, paying particular attention to the way the government portrayed the shift from socialist to neoliberal economic policies. Then I use letters, comics, stories, and poems from the papers to describe the anxieties and desires produced by the rapid influx of imported commodities entering Dar es Salaam in the late 1980s. I argue that the body of the consuming woman who used products such as skin bleaching creams, cosmetics, and hair curling, dying, and straightening kits became a site where people (mostly men) expressed concern over the changes taking place in Tanzania’s political economy. I examine how women’s bodies were described through metaphors of health and disease and how these metaphors were conflated with concerns for the health of the body politic. Then, I examine representations of gender relations in Dar es Salaam, using narratives about the relationships between consuming women and their relationships with older and wealthier “sugar daddies.”

In the conclusion, I return to Ibrahim’s letter to show why his question and his response caught my attention and my imagination. While the discussions of women’s consumption of cosmetic products in the state-owned newspapers were predominately negative, by the late 1980s new viewpoints were beginning to appear that challenged socialist definitions of legitimate consumption and defended the use of beauty products. In the last section, then, I offer these emerging voices from the late 1980s. However, Ibrahim’s letter goes beyond any other viewpoint printed in the papers, and to me, represented a radical shift from the discourses that had dominated the state newspapers for the previous fifteen years.
The major goal of this study is to explore how meanings and practices of gendered consumption shaped and were shaped by changing political economic structures in Tanzania during the 1970s and 1980s. The conversations I present in the following chapter concerning the meanings of women’s liberation, the “problem” of urban prostitution, women’s use of imported commodities, and the illicit sexual relationships between young urban women and “sugar daddies” were not tangential to “official” state discourses, but rather became central to the government’s efforts to fashion (and refashion) appropriately gendered subjects. I argue that tracing the complex relationships between perceptions of gender and consumption can provide a method of examining the continuities, paradoxes, and contradictions that marked the shift from socialism to postsocialism in Tanzania. Specifically, I contend that narratives of “consuming women” in the state-owned media provide an ideal site to explore why and how women’s bodies, sexuality, and practices of consumption became matters of national concern at different historical moments.
CHAPTER 2
HISTORY AND METHODS

Production and Consumption in Colonial and Postcolonial Tanzania

The central role of everyday practices of consumption in the creation of colonial subjects and postcolonial citizens has only recently emerged in anthropological literature after decades of being overshadowed by an emphasis on issues of production and labor (Miller 1995a). In the postwar period, modernization models as well as Marxist critiques of modernization and functionalism assumed a distinction between economics (i.e. production) and culture (i.e., exchange and consumption). In the 1980s, this assumption was challenged in anthropology and other disciplines, resulting in new attempts to integrate cultural analysis and political economy (Ferguson 1988). It is important to note that the reemergence of studies of commodities and consumption during the last two decades has been fueled by theoretical engagements with questions of modernity and globalization. Heralded as a key feature of “Western modernity,” theories of consumption and its role in a globalizing world proliferated in the 1990s.¹ However, as Frank Trentmann has observed, this increased interest in theorizing consumption was not necessarily accompanied by “empirical reassessments of the historical dynamics of consumption” (2004: 373). Therefore, it is my objective to trace the practices and meanings of consumption in relation to changing social structures in colonial and postcolonial Tanzania.

¹ See, for example, Appadurai 1996; Miller 1995b; Breckenridge 1995
This section, then, will examine historical shifts in consumption practices in twentieth century Tanzania with a focus on how the production and labor needs of the colonial and postcolonial states were intricately interwoven with new practices and ideas of consumption. My analysis is guided by several questions: How, when, and why do practices of consumption change? What is considered legitimate consumption during different historical moments? What projects do definitions of legitimate and illegitimate consumption serve? Tanzania provides an ideal setting to explore these questions.

Throughout the twentieth century, missionaries, capitalists, colonial and postcolonial state officials, and Africans in Tanzania have all attempted to define what counts as legitimate consumption in relation to changing social, political, and economic formations.

Tanzania is a particularly useful site for examining changing notions of consumption for several reasons. First, the territory was colonized by two different European powers, first Germany and later Britain. As I will show, these two colonial governments varied in their policies regarding African consumers and set the stage for the policies enacted by the postcolonial state. Secondly, unlike many other African locations (including Zambia, Kenya, Uganda, Rhodesia, and West Africa), Tanzania did not undergo intensive industrialization and urbanization after WWII. Instead, shortly after independence in 1961, the first elected President, Julius Nyerere, declared Tanzania a socialist nation and pronounced rural production the key to modern development. Socialist rhetoric was pervasive in everyday life in Tanzania for the next twenty years, but in practice Nyerere’s socialist development strategies were marked by economic failure, resulting in Tanzania’s increased dependence on the aid offered by international monetary funds. In the 1980s, there was a noticeable shift in government policy towards
neoliberal structural adjustments at the request of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. President Ali Hassan Mwinyi, Nyerere’s successor, officially abandoned socialism as a national ideology in 1992. I argue here that twentieth century Tanzania, which has emerged through German and British colonial rule, nationalism, socialism, and neoliberalism proves an ideal setting for exploring changing meanings and practices of consumption. In this section, I outline the history of colonial and postcolonial Tanzania with a focus on consumer practices and the shifting boundaries of legitimate consumption during the twentieth century. Part of my argument is that using consumption as an analytical lens can disrupt the sharp historical ruptures characteristic of modernization and Marxist models and problematize the transitions from colonial to postcolonial and socialist to postsocialist.

Germany was the first European power to officially colonize the area today known as Tanzania. Although the German colonial period was short (1890-1922), German colonial officials and German capitalists created the infrastructure necessary to exploit the colony, including schools, hospitals, railways, roads, and a system of plantation cultivation for export to Europe (Koponen 1994). The Germans struggled to mobilize a labor force of indigenous males to “develop” the colony, but found that most Africans were unwilling to cooperate with colonial agendas. The imposition of taxation and forced plantation labor failed to inspire African males to engage in wage labor, and therefore the German colonial state devised a new strategy designed to reorient African personhood through the creation of new needs and desires. Karl Peters, founder of the German East Africa Company, described this project as an impetus to encourage “lazy” and “unproductive” African males to offer their labor: “An unsatisfied need creates a lack,
and this is a compulsion to action . . . Our task is therefore to create needs, which can be done by making known the obvious pleasures of civilization” (Quoted in Koponen 1994: 325-326).

As in other colonial locations, schooling became a key site for the inculcation of “civilized” values and manners, and both mission and colonial schools sought to assimilate Africans to European tastes and manners (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997; Burke 1996). By the end of the German colonial occupation, many changes in consumer practices were already in process in the colony. By 1913, all wages to African workers were paid in cash and new consumer items from Europe were available as never before. Favorite items included cotton cloth, oil lamps, matches, soap, and tobacco and were mostly available in urban areas, although these commodities increasingly penetrated inland during German rule (Koponen 1994). Wage labor, the beginning of a cash economy, the importation of consumer goods, and the creation of new needs and desires intersected to restructure the precolonial economy toward market principles. Through education, missionaries and colonial officials alike attempted to inculcate the benefits of “civilization” as an impetus to turn Africans subjects into desiring consumers dependent on wage labor.

These efforts were disrupted by the beginning of World War I. Battles between Germany and Britain in East Africa destroyed much of the infrastructure imposed by the Germans and after the war, Germany lost the colony altogether when the League of Nations mandated the territory to the British government, which renamed it Tanganyika. The initial British policy of indirect rule introduced by Sir Donald Cameron was marked by an ambivalence regarding African consumption. According to the ideology of indirect
rule, Africans should be encouraged to return to a “traditional” way of life. Cameron imagined that German colonial rule had destroyed precolonial social structures and he set out to rewrite the history of the colony, emphasizing the “tribal” nature of African life (Iliffe 1979). During the period when indirect rule dominated the British policies towards Tanganyika (1925-1940), the dichotomy between rural and urban lifestyles and social formations crystallized (Ivaska 2003). Cameron and other British colonial authorities imagined that Africans were physically and ideologically suited to rural conditions, and urban Africans engaged in wage labor caused much concern for both colonial officials and elder Africans. Most Africans living in towns were young, single men drawn to urban life by the promises of wage labor and the “bright lights” of the towns and cities. The capital city of Dar es Salaam epitomized the lure of excitement and material advancement, offering the opportunities for a wide variety of leisure activities, including going to cinemas, bars and clubs and the chance to purchase and flaunt the latest fashions in music, dancing, and clothing (Burton 2001). Colonial authorities regarded this trend of urban migration with ambivalence. On the one hand, the labor of African males was a necessary component of the colonial economic structure, yet on the other hand, these young Africans were under the threat of “detribalization” that is losing their “Africanness” as they consumed European commodities and images. An older generation of Africans also disapproved of the aspects of urban life that attracted youth, regarding these as evidence that the younger generation was under the risk of moral degeneration. For both colonial authorities and older Africans, the city came to be imagined as a site of conspicuous, feminized consumption defined against the wholesome, productive countryside (Ivaska 2003).
The end of World War II brought noticeable changes in the relationships between the British metropole and Tanganyika. With the British government facing an economy exhausted by war efforts, growing debts, and the disintegration of the British Empire, Tanganyika rose in importance in the colonial agenda and was subjected to a number of changes in the postwar period. These changes were epitomized in the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940, which made “development” the new strategy for urban policy and colonial rule more generally. Detribalization, which was regarded with such ambivalence in the 1930s, became a necessary, if difficult, stage of modern development under these new shifts in policy. Colonial officials hoped to create permanent settlements of educated Africans in towns and cities. Educational initiatives were expanded to prepare Africans for a greater involvement in the cash economy and the colonial Social Welfare Department opened centers in urban areas to inculcate African men and women with middle class skills and values. During the 1940s, migration to urban centers and especially Dar es Salaam skyrocketed and colonial authorities were soon concerned to “stabilize” urban populations for fear of disorder or insubordination (Burton 2001). Colonial urban policy during the 1940s and 1950s, therefore, took a two-pronged approach: first, the creation of a stable middle class of an educated African elite living in nuclear families, and secondly, the removal of “unproductive” people from the city to the rural countryside.

2 The Colonial Development and Welfare Act promoted the concept of socio-economic advancement of the colonized and was enacted due to British recognition that self-governance and possibly independence was approaching. This change in policy resulted from both economic burdens on the British Empire as well as the emerging nationalist movements in Asia and Africa.

3 Between 1948 and 1957, the rate of growth in Dar es Salaam increased by 9 percent and rose again to 14 percent between 1961-1967 (Ivaska 2003; Lugalla 1997).
Despite the efforts to maintain control over the urban population, by the 1950s, African intellectuals were beginning to articulate a distinctly African nationalist sentiment. Understanding the nationalist African movement requires an understanding of the stratified nature of economic conditions, especially in Dar es Salaam. Since the German colonial period, Europeans and Asians had dominated the productive and retail sectors, leaving Africans to work mainly in wage labor. The city itself was divided economically and spatially along racial lines designated by “native” vs. “non-native” status (Brennan 2002). Urban Africans chafed under the economic power held by European and Asian entrepreneurs and therefore articulated a nationalist platform that centered on “African” liberation from exploitation. Under these conditions, Julius Nyerere, an educated, Catholic schoolteacher founded the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) and within less than a decade, the colony gained independence from British rule and became a nation-state.

Before and immediately after independence, economic advice coming from Europe and North America encouraged a focus on agricultural development combined with privately owned industries. Although Tanganyika remained open to capitalist investment in the early independence years, by 1967 Nyerere and TANU declared that the nation was to follow a specifically African socialist development based on the nationalization of key industries, import substitution, and rural agriculture. In the Arusha Declaration of 1967, Nyerere outlined his plan for modern socialist development around the concepts of *Ujamaa na Kujitegemea* (Socialism and Self-reliance). While the majority of studies examining this period focus on the changes in production Nyerere envisioned under *Ujamaa*, here I want to discuss his intentions for changes in consumer practices. In the
early independence years, Nyerere expressed concern over the rise of a class of African petty bourgeoisie, including many of his contemporary TANU nationalist supporters. The Arusha Declaration was in many ways an effort to curb this trend of conspicuous consumption, most obviously through the Leadership Code included in the declaration. The Leadership Code stipulated that all government members must fall into the category of peasant or worker and forbade government officials (and their spouses) to hold shares in companies, own a private business, receive more than one salary, or act as a landlord.

The Leadership Code was not the only measure taken by Nyerere to define the boundaries of legitimate consumption. Like his colonial predecessors, Nyerere was concerned with the number of young people living in cities and consuming media, fashion, and other commodities readily available in Dar es Salaam and other urban areas. However, urban consumption took on new meanings in the postindependence period. Shortly after the Arusha Declaration, the government brought most key industries under state control and import substitution became the solution to the overdependence on foreign commodities. Legitimate consumption in this context was limited to the products produced in Tanzania by Tanzanian workers. Therefore, to Nyerere and the other TANU party members who dominated the government after independence, the imported commodities and images circulating in Dar es Salaam were in direct contradiction to the state project of national self-reliance.

The concept of *Ujamaa*, central to Nyerere’s vision of Tanzanian national culture, can also be read as an ideological critique of certain commodities and practices of consumption, especially in the urban context. In the post-Arusha climate, “national culture” took on a distinctly rural, socialist appearance in state discourses of *Ujamaa*
(Blommaert 1997). However, as James Brennan has observed, the rural emphasis of Ujamaa was not accompanied by any definition of a proper urban subject. Indeed, the very idea of “urban Ujamaa” was an oxymoron (Brennan 2002). In Nyerere’s narrative, Ujamaa was articulated in opposition to the materialistic and individualistic qualities of capitalism brought to Tanganyika by colonialists. Ideas of capitalism and socialism, in post-Arusha discourses, were placed in productive opposition, with socialism being defined as all the things that capitalism was not. Capitalism here came to mean more than a certain mode of production; it was also equated with a mode of consumption based upon the individual accumulation of wealth. In this context, imported commodities were symbolic of a rejection of state sanctioned consumption and prompted a series of initiatives by the government to control urban consumers. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the postcolonial state in its different figurations attempted to eliminate the widespread use of certain “Western” commodities, including films, music, clothing, cosmetics, and novels. These campaigns were marked by failure time and again as citizens continued to purchase and use commodities defined as “modern,” “urban,” and “Western.”

In the 1970s, TANU government officials drafted the first official constitution, joining TANU and the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) of Zanzibar to form Chama cha Mapinduzi (Revolutionary Party), the party that has since maintained control over the government apparatus. Nyerere was re-elected as President for a third and fourth term in

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4 In his semiotic analysis of Ujamaa, Jan Blommaert (1997) argues that the concept “contained a celebration of a pre-colonial rural Africa, which was pictured as consisting of small-scale, intrinsically socialist communities...these communities had, as part of their ‘culture’ a deeply rooted sense of communalism and solidarity, which, to Nyerere, equated with socialism” (139). He contrasts this to the way that capitalism was represented by Nyerere, as a “cluster of concepts and phenomena which were absent from traditional African societies, such as class concepts, individual ownership of land, forms of exploitation, meritocracy instead of respect for elders, individual accumulation of wealth, etc” (140).
1970 and 1975, and CCM continued to promote the same ideology of Socialism and Self-Reliance outlined in the Arusha Declaration. However, by the end of the 1970s the economic situation was steadily worsening. Nyerere’s plan to resettle people into communal development villages never achieved the rural-centered nation he had imagined. The situation was compounded by the inflation of oil prices in 1973 and again in 1979-80 as well as the war with Idi Amin in Uganda in 1979-80. By 1980, Nyerere was under pressure by foreign donors and the IMF to accept structural adjustment policies designed to liberalize the economy. He refused, arguing that privatizing the economy would compromise the values of Ujamaa. As a result of declining agricultural production and increasing foreign debt, even basic commodities were absent from store shelves in the early 1980s. Under these conditions, an informal sector flourished and imported items were frequently smuggled into the country. To combat this trend, Prime Minister Edward Sokoine initiated a nationwide campaign against “economic sabotage.” The police began to arrest people who were accused of hoarding luxury items when basic necessities such as soap, salt, sugar, and cooking oil were unavailable. Others were targeted for failing to contribute to national production by living in urban areas while unemployed. In this context, people violating the sanctions of consumption or remaining unproductive were literally enemies of the state, charged with economic treason and often sent to jail or repatriated to rural areas.

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5 See Hyden 1980, for a detailed description of why and how Nyerere’s villagization projects failed to inspire peasants to work for national self-reliance.

6 Sokoine initiated the Economic Sabotage Campaign on March 18, 1983. On April 22, the National Executive assembly passed the Economic Crimes Bill that authorized tribunals, searches, property seizures, and arrests. Between 1983 and 1984, the government arrested 4,363 people and seized about US$5 million in property and currency (Ofcansky and Yeager 1997).
The economic sabotage campaign never officially ended, but Nyerere’s efforts to retain the policies of Socialism and Self-Reliance slowly failed. In 1981, the government implemented the National Economic Survival Programme (NESP), followed by the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in 1982. By 1985, Nyerere could hold out no longer and he chose to step down as President to allow his successor, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, to accept the liberal economic policies in an effort to alleviate the worsening economic conditions. In 1986, Mwinyi initiated another phase of liberalization as Tanzania officially adopted the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP). The conditions of the structural adjustment policies stipulated removing import restrictions, devaluing the shilling, increasing producer prices for food and export crops, and privatizing state farms and parastatals.

This reorientation of the economy towards neoliberal policies facilitated the importation of commodities that had been unavailable or illegal for the previous 20 years. The initial results appeared to be positive. After years of empty shelves and food queues, in the late 1980s, shops were full of food, clothing, and other items. However, within a short period of time, it became obvious that not everyone was going to benefit from structural adjustment policies equally. The devaluation of the shilling pushed up the prices of both locally made and imported commodities, making these items difficult to obtain for most Tanzanians. The privatizations of parastatals meant that many Tanzanian state workers lost their jobs as private investors downsized for better efficiency. Furthermore, health and social services offered by the state declined at the same time that AIDS was rapidly spreading throughout the country. While some Tanzanians were able to use hidden capital to take advantage of the new climate of privatization, most people
found themselves surrounded by new commodities that they were unable to purchase, creating a visible division between those who were able to consume, and those whose desires remained unmet.

It is under these conditions that many Tanzanians turned to the informal economy to meet their everyday needs. With the state unable to provide adequate wages in the formal employment sector, many urban dwellers began to operate small-scale income generating projects, referred to as *miradi midogo midogo* (little projects) or *biashara ndogo ndogo* (small businesses), which ranged from sewing, food vending, petty hawking, carpentry, and hairdressing. The proliferation of informal sector activities compensated for the goods and services the state was unable or unwilling to supply. While the informal sector had been operating in Dar es Salaam since the late colonial period, the shifting urban landscape of the 1980s resulted in several changes in this parallel economy. Through the 1960s and 1970s, this sector consisted mainly of locally made products (Lugalla 1997). By the late 1980s, the nature of the informal economy had changed drastically, and imported commodities could be found on most streets in Dar es Salaam, and included second hand clothing, electronic equipment, music cassettes, cameras, household appliances, suitcases, and petroleum products for motor vehicles. Moreover, this influx of new commodities included new products associated with beauty and fashion, such as cosmetics, hair curling chemicals, perfumes, creams, and skin bleaching formulas.

These changes in available commodities were accompanied by new consumer practices as well as new perceptions of urban citizenship, and were central to the way Tanzanians redefined their position at the local, national, and international levels. While
the shift from socialism to neoliberal policies and ideologies is treated as relatively unproblematic in most political and economic accounts, I argue that tracing ideas and practices of consumption complicates teleological narratives that posit Tanzania’s acceptance of neoliberal policies as an inevitable stage in its trajectory of development. Using archival newspaper data, I take the vantage point of the “everyday” to explore how perceptions of gender, age, class, and race were implicated in changing ideas and practices of urban consumption. In particular, I focus on the figure of the urban “consuming woman” as a way to explore the links between morality and material accumulation. Practices of consumption, I argue, were crucial to shifting boundaries of “proper” and “improper” womanhood in Dar es Salaam and connected anxieties about women’s sexuality and mobility with concerns over the precarious position Tanzania held in the global political economic order.

The *Daily News* and the *Sunday News*, both state-owned newspapers, offer a view of urban Tanzania in the 1970s and 1980s that captures the mutual constitution of postcolonial political power and the dynamics of everyday urban life. Therefore, my analysis attempts to examine the relationships between state discourses of gendered consumption and everyday struggles taking place in Dar es Salaam. Before I explore the way that the “consuming woman” was constructed in these newspapers, I first situate the *Daily News* and the *Sunday News* within the larger print media landscape of colonial and postcolonial Tanzania. I then describe my use of these newspapers as evidence and examine how women’s consumption was represented in state media.

**Media History and Newspapers as Evidence**

I began my reading the *Daily News* and the *Sunday News* with the year 1975, when these two English speaking newspapers, accompanied by two Swahili dailies, *Uhuru*
(Freedom) and Mazalendo (Patriotism), were the only daily papers printed and circulated in Tanzania. These four papers were nationalized by the postcolonial government to promote the socialist development outlined in the Arusha Declaration and remained firmly under government control from 1972 until 1993. However, I want to begin my history of Tanzania’s media with the German and British colonial periods, following Sturmer’s argument that “the colonial policies of both European powers had a severe impact on Africa’s media landscapes so that many particularities of the continent's actual communications are considered a colonial heritage” (1998: 9). Therefore, to contextualize my analysis of postcolonial state newspapers, I describe the changing landscape of print media through colonialism, nationalism, socialism, and neoliberalism. It is important to note that throughout the colonial and postcolonial periods, the publication, circulation, and reception of newspapers took place mainly in urban areas, and Dar es Salaam in particular. Access to print media in rural areas was hindered by lack of transport for distribution and the centralization of an educated African elite in the cities.

Missionaries and German colonial officials published the first newspapers in German East Africa in the late nineteenth century. For the German colonial government, newspapers served to enable the communication necessary to begin implementing the colonial economic infrastructure. The British colonial government, on the other hand, used newspapers as a means of communication as well as propaganda tool for the colonial regime, making British colonial mass media a mouthpiece of the colonial government. By the British colonial period, the existence of a new group of elite, educated African males made newspapers a useful forum for the colonial state to promote and defend its policies. The Tanganyikan Standard, the precursor to the Daily News,
began circulating in 1930 and gained a wide African audience, increasing from 720-8,000 copies in circulation between 1933 and 1944 (Sturmer 1998). The *Tanganyikan Standard* was initially owned by the Kenyan East African Standard Ltd. and was the most influential publication during the British administration, indicated by its popularity and longevity (the paper ran from 1930 until 1967, when Nyerere changed it to the *Standard*).

While missionaries and German and British colonialists had trained Africans living in Dar es Salaam to type and operate printing presses, the first independent African newspaper did not actually emerge until 1937. Erika Fiah, a political activist and organizer who founded the Tanganyikan Welfare and Commercial Association, established the territory’s first African owned paper, *Kwetu* (Our Place). Through *Kwetu*, Fiah and other contributors criticized the actions and policies of British colonial officials. The paper raised questions concerning racial discrimination, economic exploitation, and European political control. According to Scotton, Fiah’s message could be described as “urban radicalism” (1978: 3). Indeed, Fiah directly challenged the British policies of indirect rule and the return to a “traditional” African past, instead advocating indigenous political control accompanied by educational and economic advancement.

During WWII Fiah continued to criticize colonial polices through *Kwetu*, but in the post-war era a lack of resources made further publication of the newspaper impossible. Between 1948 and 1952, there were no independent African produced publications circulating in the territory (Scotton 1978). The British colonial government published a series of Swahili newspapers with the hope of satisfying the demands of urban African readers, but by 1952 an independent African press had reemerged. The nationalist sentiments being articulated by African elites in the 1950s concerned colonial
administrators and resulted in policies designed to control the expanding African press. In 1952, the colonial government passed Newspaper Ordinance 35, making all African periodicals contingent on state approval through a process of registration and an expensive bond price. When TANU formed in 1954, the organization published a series of Swahili newspapers critiquing the reluctance of the British government to give the colony political and economic independence. In response to these publications, the British colonial government amended the Newspaper Ordinance in 1955 to prohibit the publication of any statements “likely to raise the discontent amongst any of the inhabitants or to promote feelings of ill will among the different communities” (Quoted in Sturmer 1998). This amendment corresponded with the colonial alternative to TANU’s demands for self-rule, the multiracial policies promoted by Governor Edward Twining (1949-1958). Twining argued for racial parity in government between Europeans, Asians, and Africans and organized a counter-party to TANU, called the United Tanganyika Party (UTP). However, as I described earlier, African elites were articulating a nationalist sentiment heralding liberation from the continued economic control of Europeans and Asians in the commercial and retail sectors and their newspapers reflected these conflicts between colonial and African imaginings of Tanganyika’s future.

Print media played an important role in the nationalist movement, as British officials were well aware. When TANU introduced the party’s official paper, *Sauti ya TANU* (Voice of TANU), Nyerere also encouraged Africans to boycott all British newspapers (Scotton 1978). The colonial authorities responded by arresting and convicting Nyerere of libel after he printed a critique (in English) of two colonial officials in *Sauti ya TANU*. Nyerere was offered the choice of paying a 3,000-shilling fine or
spending six months in jail. He chose to pay the fine, but did not stop publishing *Sauti ya TANU* and in 1959, TANU established its own publishing house. After independence, *Sauti ya TANU* became *Uhuru* (Freedom) and TANU renamed its printing house *Mwananchi* (Citizen) Printing and Publishing Company. The first decision of the new publishing house was to make *Uhuru* a daily newspaper and to add an English periodical called the *Nationalist*. This move by TANU had a twofold objective. First, the continuation of a Swahili newspaper was designed to promote Swahili as the national language and to begin the process of establishing a centralized Swahili press. Secondly, the introduction of an English state daily was a strategic move to legitimize the new nation in the eyes of the international community and to make outsiders aware of and sympathetic to Nyerere’s policies.

While *Uhuru* and the *Nationalist* acted as “the voice of TANU,” there were two other popular daily newspapers circulating in the early independence years. Both of these papers, one Swahili (*Ngurumo*) and one English (*The Standard*), competed with the Party papers for an African readership (Condon 1967). By 1967, Nyerere was touting the benefits of bringing mass media directly under state control to promote the unity and development of the nation. Even before the Arusha Declaration, Nyerere had commented upon the necessity of state-controlled media, pointing to the damaging effect foreign media could have upon the development of a “national culture.” He remained dissatisfied with the presence of foreign owned papers in the 1960s, but due to a lack of trained African journalists and proper equipment, he was unable to nationalize mass media institutions. However, in 1968, the postcolonial government announced that the colonial *Newspaper Ordinance Bill* was being retained and amended to give the President the
power to prohibit any newspaper that went against “public interest” (Sturmer 1998). In 1970, Nyerere successfully nationalized the *Standard*, which was owned at the time by the multi-national London-Rhodesian company (LONRHO). Nyerere appointed Frene Ginwala, a Marxist South African woman who had been working in London, to be the first African editor of the *Standard*. In a President’s Charter published on the front page on Feb. 5, 1970, Nyerere described the *Standard* as a socialist paper designed to serve the interests of the people and to spread an understanding of national development. Nyerere further solidified state control over newspaper media in the early 1970s. Ginwala was replaced by Sammy Mdee in 1971 and by that time the *Standard* (the government paper) and the *Nationalist* (the Party paper) were in direct competition, leading TANU to merge these two papers to create the *Daily News*. The *Sunday News*, which had accompanied the *Standard* since 1954, was retained and these two English papers were mobilized to promote the agenda of the TANU Party. *Uhuru* also continued to be published and circulated as well as *Mazalendo*, which became the Sunday edition. However, unlike the English papers, which included international news, the Swahili newspapers dealt mostly with local and national issues, leading Condon to comment that “the Swahili reader received a very limited view of the world outside Tanzania” (1967: 343).

Despite the government’s efforts to promote the state newspapers, the privately owned newspaper *Ngurumo* (Thunder or Roar), was still the most popular paper in Dar es Salaam in 1970s. The government again mobilized colonial tactics, introducing a Newspaper Act in 1973 that gave the President and the Information Minister the power to control, prohibit, or ban the publication or importation of papers (Sturmer 1998). The last issue of *Ngurumo* was published in 1976, clearing the way for almost twenty years of
state-controlled print news media. In 1975, the state run Tanzanian School of Journalism (TSJ) opened. All students in the school had to be recommended by TANU and later CCM party leaders, and until 1990 almost ninety percent of all journalists working for the state papers were CCM Party members (Sturmer 1998). Even though all major newspapers were under state control by 1977, the government again amended the Newspaper Act that year to allow the arrest of any person criticizing the state through print media. In 1977, several people who had been publishing small, sporadic papers were arrested and fined by the state. Therefore, aside from state-owned newspapers and occasional missionary publications, almost no other news print media was available in Dar es Salaam and the rest of Tanzania from the late 1970s until the 1990s.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the Daily News and the Sunday News followed the creed of journalism articulated by Nyerere in his 1970 President’s Charter. According to Nyerere, national news media should serve the interests of the people of Tanzania, support the socialist ideology of the Arusha Declaration, initiate discussions relevant to the development of a socialist democracy, criticize the government and its policies, supply readers with domestic and world news, and spread an understanding of socialism. I explore the content and structure of these two papers from 1975-1995 in more detail in the next section. Here I want to move to the late 1980s to discuss the effects of the structural adjustment policies enacted by President Mwinyi on news media. After the liberalization of the economy, the government was urged by money lending institutions and human rights organizations to allow the publication of private papers. The first private paper to appear in 1988 was called Business Times and focused on economic and
political issues, but it was not until 1992 that the government officially legalized private newspapers.

Within less than a decade, the Tanzanian media landscape changed drastically. The dailies that emerged after the legalization of private media often published sensationalized news stories and explicit critiques of CCM, the ruling party. In a last attempt to regain control over the news media, Mwinyi urged the government to pass the Media Professions Regulations Bill, which required that all journalists be registered with the state and which had the power to de-register any offending journalists. Mwinyi banned several papers after this pronouncement, but the Bill was not successful. In 1991, the United Nations announced the Windhoek Declaration, which labeled censorship as a violation of human rights and heralded a pluralistic press as a crucial tool in the process of development and democratization. By the 1990s, several groups of independent media professionals had emerged, including the Tanzanian Media Women’s Association (TAMWA) and the Independent Media Council of Tanzania (IMCT) and these media professionals mobilized international human rights discourses to argue for the repeal of the Newspaper Ordinance and increased freedom of the press. However, as the first multiparty elections approached in 1995, the government continued to strongly warn private journalists and editors to maintain an ethical standpoint and to not encourage division along religious and ethnic lines. Despite the efforts of the state to control the private media, by 1996 the Daily News and the Sunday News were competing with at least nine other daily newspapers. Circulation of the state newspapers fell from 50,000 copies per day in 1986 to only 15,000 by 1996 (Sturmer 1998). The loss of both readers
and journalists to the private newspapers affected the layout, structure, and tone of the state newspapers as they struggled to maintain legitimacy in a changing media landscape.

As this media history indicates, late colonial and postcolonial policies towards print media were strikingly similar. It is noteworthy that although Nyerere was only arrested once during the nationalist movement for his criticisms printed in the TANU newspaper, he continued and even strengthened the censorship policies initiated by the British colonial government by nationalizing all mass media institutions in the post-independence period. Nyerere’s decision to ban other daily papers stemmed from his belief that freedom of opinion was less important than political and economic goals such as the abolishment of poverty, disease, and ignorance (Sturmer 1998), and the state newspapers were explicitly designed to act as tools of national development. Because almost all editors and journalists were trained in the Tanzanian School of Journalism (TSJ) and therefore indoctrinated in CCM party doctrine, the paper strongly reflected the desires and projects of the state. As a result of Nyerere’s post-Arusha media policies, the Daily News and the Sunday News during the years 1972-1993 not only acted as “the voice of the state,” but were also the only daily source of local, national, and international news for most people in Dar es Salaam and other urban areas. Obviously the heavy censorship policies of the postcolonial state make it necessary to point out that the discourses in the state newspapers certainly do not cover the broad range of positions taken by Tanzanians. However, as Ivaska has pointed out, even though state rhetoric may have failed to completely interpolate citizens politically or economically into

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7 It is also important to note that the Daily News and the Sunday News were both written in English in a nations where English is not the first language of most people. I suspect that an analysis of the Swahili state papers during this same period might offer very different perspectives of the topics I take up in this study.
Nyerere’s imagining of a socialist country, this does not necessarily mean that state rhetoric did not strongly affect the everyday lives of people who came of age during the period of *Ujamaa*. Rather, he contends that state rhetoric provided a powerful vocabulary through which other generational, gendered, racial, and classed struggles in Dar es Salaam were mediated (2003).

What, then, can these state newspapers tell us about shifting perceptions of gendered consumption during the periods of socialism and neoliberalism? How, when, and where was women’s consumption addressed in these state dailies? Who was speaking in these conversations and what was being said? To begin to answer these questions, I want to describe how the shifting content and structure of these two newspapers shaped discussions and representations of gendered consumption between the years 1975-1990. My reading of the state newspapers takes a somewhat unique methodological approach in that I follow discussions of women’s consumption across different sections and genres within the paper. The *Daily News* and the *Sunday News*, like most newspapers, consisted of not only articles, but also features, letters to the editor, poems, stories, humor columns, cartoons, and opinion pieces. Tracing discourses of urban women and their practices of consumption, I move back and forth between pieces considered “fact” and “fiction,” “official” and “unofficial,” arguing that within the context of state control, all of the pieces printed in these papers were designed to promote state policies of modern development as well as to fashion proper gendered identities. Therefore, I attempt to highlight the contradictions and tensions between the official rhetoric of the front page and the variety of viewpoints expressed in public forums, stories, poems, humor columns, cartoons, and opinion pieces. Comparing the representations of women within these
different genres, I argue, reveals how definitions of “proper” urban womanhood were constituted through practices of gendered consumption.

The layout and structure of the papers themselves contributed to what kinds of representations of women were possible. From 1975 until the late 1980s, the Daily News and the Sunday News were composed of about 8-12 pages following a basic structure. Page 1 was generally dedicated to government related news, page 2 to international affairs, page 3 to local incidents, and last to page sports. The rest of the issues were usually interchangeable and include some assortment of classifieds, advertisement pages, opinions, commentaries, technical reports, and features. The Sunday News also included a “Society/Entertainment” section, which included short stories, articles about health care and the law, wedding announcements, and humor columns. Supplemental sections were also added to commemorate national events or holidays, such as May Day, Worker’s Day, and the anniversary of CCM. During this period, there were two public forums available for public contributions. These included the “Letters to the Editor” page and a column called “Action Line,” which allowed people to write in with specific grievances that were addressed the following week along with an official response.

By the late 1980s, however, I began to notice several changes taking place in the structure and content of both papers. While the public forums had taken up a large place in the newspaper throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the “Letters to the Editor” and “Action Line” sections began to slowly decrease in size until eventually the opinion section of the Daily News was almost completely removed from the paper. Opinion sections became increasingly sporadic throughout the 1990s, eventually being limited to the Sunday News alone. While staff writers still wrote opinion columns on various topics, the “Letters to
the Editor” page was no longer the kind of public forum it had been in earlier years (most likely because people found the newly emerging private papers a more conducive place to voice complaints and concerns). New sections were also added to the state-owned papers during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Weekly pages dedicated to “Science and Technology,” “Business and Finance,” and “Economic Development” emerged after 1992 in an attempt to keep up with Tanzania’s changing political and economic environment and to compete with private newspapers. The “Letters to the Editor” that were published increasingly focused on political and economic issues; some days in the early 1990s all of the letters in the opinion section were about the benefits and limitations of multipartyism.

As I read through the years 1975-1990 looking for pieces pertaining to women, I began to learn when and where to find representations of women in the pages of the *Daily News* and the *Sunday News*. During the period when socialism was promoted as the national ideology, conversations about women in these newspapers were almost always framed by the government women’s organization, the Union of Tanzanian Women (UWT), and generally took the form of what I call “Women Told” articles. These articles invoked a tone of exhortation with headlines that gave direct orders such as “Women Told to Defend Socialism,” “Women Told to Work Harder,” “Women Told to Form Co-ops,” “Be Productive, Women Told,” or “Wives Told: Respect Your Husbands.”

“Women Told” articles were complemented by features presenting what I call “Exemplary Women,” which told the story of individual women who exemplified the ideal of socialist womanhood. With titles like “Why I Find Happiness in UWT Life,” “Love of Figures Made Margaret an Engineer,” and “Meet the First Women Auditor,”
these features highlight women whose work and sexuality remain firmly within the boundaries of domestic and national obligations. What is striking about these pieces is the consistency with which women’s political, educational, and economic achievements are compared with their marital status and domestic duties. Almost all of these featured women were married and these articles often dealt with how well they balanced their work with their domestic obligations. However, both “Women Told” articles and features of “Exemplary Women” rarely addressed issues of consumption, but rather attempted to define women’s role in the nation in terms of domestic and national production. In fact, the state papers rarely published “official articles” dealing with women’s consumption. However, within the Letters to the Editor, poems, stories, cartoons, and humor columns, journalists and letter writers alike consistently, and often heatedly, discussed issues of women’s consumption, specifically women’s consumption of certain fashions defined as “Western,” “foreign,” decadent,” and “modern.” It is these discussions that I take up and explore in the remainder of this study. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, concerns over young urban women’s autonomy, work, mobility, and sexuality were expressed through discussions about mini-skirts, cosmetics, perfumes, hair kits, and skin bleaching creams. The immoral “consuming woman” who emerges in these pieces shares many of the same characteristics of the Exemplary Women heralded by the newspapers: she is an educated worker living in an urban area. However, unlike the “ideal” socialist woman, her productive efforts are perceived as negated by her overwhelming desire for conspicuous consumption.

However, the changes in the content and structure of the Daily News and the Sunday News in the late 1980s and 1990s also meant changes in representations of
women. Issues of women’s consumption of fashion were not abandoned completely, but during the change to neoliberal policies state discourses concerning women began to be framed mostly in terms of women’s relationship to political and economic development. The loss of audience to private newspapers resulted in increasing debts that forced state newspapers to allow private interest groups to buy space in the newspaper. For example, TAMWA, the women’s media organization, began to buy space in the state newspapers to campaign against violence against women. In 1992, members of TAMWA, in conjunction with intellectuals at the University of Dar es Salaam, held a workshop on women in media. The consensus of the meeting was that women were portrayed in most media as greedy, deceitful, manipulative, and overly sexualized and the participants demanded an improved image of women in media. As a result of these changes, the immoral city woman who dominated discussions of consumption in the 1970s and 1980s became less explicit in state discourses in the 1990s.

By following discourses about the urban “consuming woman” through the periods of socialism and neoliberalism, I hope to situate anxieties over women’s conspicuous consumption within the changing political, economic, and social context of postcolonial Tanzania. First, however, I examine the emergence of the figure of the urban woman within the specific historical context of late colonial and early postcolonial Tanzania.

**Fashioning Urban Womanhood: The Emergence of the “Consuming Woman”**

Discussions of the African “urban woman” proliferated during the late colonial period, although women had long lived in Dar es Salaam and other cities. However, during the German and early British colonial periods, urban spaces remained dominated by African males engaged in temporary wage labor. Colonial officials and elder Africans alike expected African women to remain in rural areas to grow food and take care of
children and elderly family members. Those women who did live in cities were generally ignored by colonial authorities or else tacitly accepted for their ability to provide “the comforts of home” (White 1990) to wage laborers through various forms of prostitution and co-habitation. Prior to the 1940s, then, the city was imagined by Africans and colonialists as a place where African men only belonged according the varying labor requirements of the colonial state and African women remained “shadow figures—anomalous creatures inhabiting invisible spaces in a male domain” (Geiger 1997: 22).

The shift in urban colonial policies after WWII redefined the place of African women in towns and cities. Determined to create a stable middle class of African elites, British colonialists began to encourage the permanent establishment of nuclear families in Dar es Salaam. Missionaries and colonialists alike assumed that women, through their roles as wives and mothers, were best suited to teach their families about the values of personal and social hygiene, hoping that women’s influence in the domestic sphere would contribute to colonial efforts to “stabilize” urban areas in the midst of rapidly increasing rural-urban migration. Through mission and colonial schools as well as urban women’s clubs, African women learned new patterns of consumption as well as new notions of cleanliness and domesticity. Women were taught by missionaries and the wives of colonial officials to practice discerning consumption, limiting their purchases to commodities which would contribute to the health and hygiene of their families (Burke 1996).

It is interesting to note that during the same period when British colonialists and Africans were attempting to negotiate the meanings of legitimate urban womanhood, the figure of the urban prostitute rose from the shadows and became an issue which,
according to Iliffe, “obsessed African men after 1945” (1979: 301). I argue that this sudden proliferation of discussions surrounding women’s sexuality in urban areas during the 1940s was not so much a castigation of actual sex work, but rather an indication of the anxieties felt by colonial officials and African men regarding the place of women in urban spaces. Practices of consumption became crucial to definitions of legitimate urban female personas. According to colonial discourses, “proper” women constrained their sexuality and material consumption within the domestic realm, purchasing necessary items for their families and limiting their sexual relations to the bonds of marriage. But colonial officials could not completely control the increasing number of female migrants in Dar es Salaam. Young rural women, denied access to a Western education and excluded from new cash crop initiatives introduced by the colonial state, began migrating to urban areas to escape the control of male relatives as well as to experience the pleasures of city life. These women rarely engaged in wage labor, but found better economic incentives in the informal economy: brewing beer, selling food, and practicing various forms of sex work. This situation resulted in male anxieties over the actions and attitudes of “town women,” who were seen as “poor marriages partners” compared to rural women. In his 1963 Survey of Dar es Salaam, Leslie found that African men thought urban women were “taken with town life, less easy to please, more liable to demand that water be carried by a servant,” and “wanting to be well-dressed and fed and to go to dances and cinemas.” Moreover, within this context, almost any unmarried urban African woman was regarded suspiciously and risked being identified as a prostitute (Geiger 1997).
This figure of the promiscuous and demanding urban woman is not limited to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Rita Felski has shown how the figure of the “consuming woman” was mobilized to critique the growth of consumption and female autonomy in the public sphere in nineteenth century Britain. She argues that while consumption was perceived as a necessary “familial and civic duty of the middle-class woman,” the growth of consumerism was perceived by many as morally degenerative, raising concerns about the ability of consumer practices to disrupt social hierarchies. As in Tanzania, young, single women migrating to cities were especially suspect. Felski describes the way that young unmarried urban women in Britain were perceived:

Young women who moved to the city in search of work were considered to be highly susceptible to promiscuity and ultimately prostitution, because their appetites for luxury, once awakened by their proximity to an alluring profusion of material goods, could only be satisfied by selling their bodies for financial gain (Felski 1995: 72)

The links between female desire for material accumulation and female sexuality are intricately intertwined in this description of single urban women. However, what is surprising is the degree to which Felski’s description of the nineteenth century “consuming woman” resonates with anxieties about women’s autonomy, mobility, work, consumption, and sexuality in diverse postcolonial locations. Whether it is the “good time girl” in Ghana (Newell 2000), the “society girl” in Nigeria,8 the “shebeen queen” of Zimbabwe (Burke1996), or the “big sister of the city” in Tanzania (Stambach 2000), the urban woman has been associated with promiscuity, greediness, and an overwhelming desire for conspicuous consumption.

8 I came across this term while examining archival newspapers from Nigeria in the 1960s and 1970s. This term was used pejoratively to describe single urban working women who enjoyed the pleasures of city life, especially bars and dance clubs.
The immoral “town women” of the British colonial period did not disappear in the post-independence era. Despite the negative connotations of city life in state narratives of socialism, migration to Dar es Salaam increased exponentially in the postcolonial period, including a rapid influx of women migrating from rural areas for the first time. These women were the first generation of educated and single women living in Dar es Salaam and they gained new degrees of social autonomy unavailable in their rural homes. Urban women no longer needed to marry to maintain economic security and this new dynamic caused considerable tension between men and women as many men failed to make the same kind of economic progress that seemed to come easily to young urban women (Ivaska 2004). Moreover, during the early independence years, new commodities and fashions became available as never before as former colonial powers attempted to refashion the colonies into markets for European made commodities. In the 1960s, Dar es Salaam became imbricated in flows of international cosmopolitan fashions and products, offering Tanzanians a wide array of foreign commodities, including clothing, cosmetics, films, books, and music. At the same time as these products were becoming readily available and increasingly popular among young Tanzanians, the new government under TANU leadership was attempting to define a Tanzanian “national culture” by collecting those aspects of a rural African past which could provide an national identity able to unite over 120 different ethnic groups. In this context, the consumption of foreign commodities by young men and women caused great concern for Nyerere and other leaders. After the Arusha Declaration, the condemnation of urban youth who were embracing international fashions increased and urban woman in particular became a target for these anxieties. According to Ivaska, “women were considered the worst of the city’s unproductive
masses, and the city itself was gendered feminine, a site of excess, consumption, illicit leisure, and thus a target of the new politics of frugality and hard work” (2003: 147).

Audrey Wipper offers a sketch of the how the urban Tanzanian woman was portrayed in East African media in the 1960s which exposes many of the anxieties surrounding women’s mobility, work, sexuality, and consumption. I quote in full here as her description resonates with the way urban women were represented in the state newspapers through the 1970s and 1980s. She writes,

The urban woman, like fashion, is regarded as superficial, pretentious, sensuous, and fickle. Having no crops to tend, she has a much easier life and much free time which she idles away visiting friends and looking for the latest fashion. She tends to be lazy, likes a good time, and neglects her duties to her children, parents, and relatives. She no longer shows the respect due to her relatives and older people. She is arrogant, demanding, and grasping. Her excessive taste for material luxuries combined with her dislike of hard work draws her towards men who give her gifts. A ‘gold-digger’ and a ‘fortune seeker,’ she stays with men only as long as they provide for her material wants. If single, she is undoubtedly a prostitute. (Wipper 1972: 339)

This category of the “urban woman” should be read as a heuristic device rather than an actual personality or individual. The description of the consuming urban women laid out by Wipper does not encapsulate any one woman, but rather represents a certain kind of feminine identity associated with urban life, modern fashions, and Western institutions. Central to this category of urban womanhood was the figure of the prostitute, the ambiguous and manipulative character who at any one time could refer to actual sex workers as well as any single woman living in the city, including the secretary, the bargirl, the schoolgirl, and the girlfriend of the sugar daddy. These multiple figurations of the urban woman all share certain characteristics. They are associated with Western education, wage labor, and a particular urban style of consumption. Moreover, as Wipper points out, the urban woman held a special relationship with fashion. Not only did her
own personality seem to be as fickle and unstable as fashion, but also her sexuality and
desire for material accumulation were displayed by the foreign and “decadent” style she
embodied.

The anxieties surrounding urban women’s work, sexuality, and consumption were
exacerbated by the types of commodities which were becoming popular in Dar es Salaam
in the 1960s, including miniskirts, skin lighteners, cosmetics, and chemical hair kits. As
in other postcolonial locations, commodities associated with fashion, style, and beauty
were the subject of heated and occasionally violent struggles in Dar es Salaam. I noted in
the previous section that the postcolonial state enacted several campaigns against the
purchase and use of certain commodities after the Arusha Declaration. One of the first
and most violent of these initiatives was Operation Vijana, a state-organized ban initiated
in 1968 on all commodities deemed “Western” or “decadent,” which resulted in several
months of public attacks on women by male members of the TANU Youth League
(TYL). 9 This campaign, I argue, highlights the gendered, racial, generational, and class
struggles taking place in Dar es Salaam in the post-Arusha years. Operation Vijana, as
Ivaska points out, was largely a campaign initiated by young men against young urban
women who were gaining a new degree of economic autonomy. Women who wore the
banned fashions were accused by young men of “gaining a market,” that is, using these

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9 Operation Vijana (vijana translates as “youth”) was announced October 3, 1968 and consisted of a
national ban on miniskirts, wigs, women’s bleaches, and tight males trousers. The initiative was aimed at
defending “national culture” and advancing the socialist aims of the Arusha Declaration. The campaign was
planned and designed by Party Youth (TYL) league members and enforced by Chairman L.N. Sijaona (the
first Minister of Culture and Youth) and Chief Commander Rajabu Diwani. 500 TYL cadres took to the
streets in October 1968 and put up posters describing “decent” dress. Over the next three months women
and girls wearing banned fashions were harassed at bus stations, carried off buses, and chased and stripped
naked by men in the street. Strangely, the campaign was not supposed to officially begin until January 1,
1969, but after the attacks in late 1968, the initiative was quietly abandoned and by February 1969, the
attacks had stopped.
commodities to enhance their beauty with the hopes of competing for sugar daddies, the older men who had the resources to give them gifts and cash. Many young urban men, who found themselves without money or the chance of material accumulation due to the lack of wage labor in the city, deeply resented the older generation of men who seemed to have easy access to multiple sexual partners (Ivaska 2004).

The banned fashions of Operation Vijana continued to be purchased and used by young women in Dar es Salaam despite the efforts of the state to define the boundaries of legitimate consumption. However, products such as short dresses, cosmetics, skin-bleaching chemicals, and hair kits evoked strong reactions in post-independence Tanzania, not only for the reasons listed above, but also because many thought that they were symbolic of the colonial oppression which Tanzanian had just overthrown. By dressing like “Western” women, many young urban females felt that they were “going with the times” and defended their right to use such commodities. Others, however, perceived these commodities quite differently, arguing that African women were literally trying to become “white” through the use of such fashions (Ivaska 2003). In post-Arusha Tanzania, therefore, practices of consumption were central to defining “proper” citizens and “proper” womanhood. However, the desire of Nyerere and other state leaders to curb urban consumption through campaigns like Operation Vijana resulted in failure time and again.

**Conclusion**

I have presented these overlapping histories of consumption, print media, and urban womanhood in an attempt to challenge and problematize standard historical metanarratives of Tanzania’s political, economic, and social history, rejecting the tendency to present unproblematized transitions between colonial and postcolonial and
socialism and postsocialism. In the remainder of my analysis, I turn to my evidence from the *Daily News* and the *Sunday News* to examine issues of gendered consumption in Dar es Salaam between the years 1975-1990. Using the figure of the urban “consuming woman,” I trace discourses of women’s sexuality, work, mobility, and consumption at the intersection of postcolonial political power and everyday struggles in urban Tanzania. How did the state use media to inculcate ideas of legitimate gendered consumption during the periods of socialism and neoliberalism? How were state sanctioned perceptions of consumption challenged by young urban women? Why did issues of women’s fashion become such a long-running and vigorously discussed topic in these state dailies? What was at stake for the postcolonial government and citizens who castigated women’s use of miniskirts, cosmetics, perfumes, hairkits, and skin bleaching creams? How were differences of gender, generation, class, and race articulated in these discourses? And most importantly, how did definitions of proper and improper female urban citizenship emerge through these discussions of women’s consumption of fashion?
CHAPTER 3

Although state campaigns in the 1960s failed to completely control urban consumption of foreign imports, this did not deter the Tanzanian government from attempting to define and control the boundaries of legitimate consumption in Dar es Salaam. After the failure of Operation Vijana in 1969, the state made several more concerted efforts to stop urban women from desiring and obtaining imported fashions. From 1970-71, the police force initiated a campaign that harassed and arrested women wearing “indecent” clothing in Dar es Salaam.¹ Other official attempts to control urban consumption included an order in 1975 that women wearing short skirts would not be allowed on city buses, a ban on the sale of imported second hand clothing throughout the 1970s, and an increased sales tax on “luxury” items in 1981.² The state-owned media reinforced these legislative initiatives and became a key tool for inculcating a sense of what kind of consumption was appropriate for Tanzanian urban women (or more specifically, what kind of consumption was definitely not appropriate). In this chapter, I examine the years 1975-1981 of the Daily News and the Sunday News, tracing

¹ This initiative took the form of periodic police raids, in which women found in downtown areas of Dar after dark were arrested or sent to rural villages.

² The ban on miniskirts in buses was announced on the front page of the Daily News Friday, Jan. 14, 1975. The article reports that the People’s Militia rounded up 39 women wearing short dresses. These women were forced to do manual labor and then released after promising not to wear short dresses in the future. The ban on imported second-hand clothing began in 1974, but the state continued to threaten and arrest street vendors found selling these items throughout the 1970s. The increased tax of luxury items went into effect Feb. 1, 1981 and included all imported beers, spirits, tobaccos, soaps, khanga, and kitenge (the last two are cloth worn by women).
conversations about urban women through official and unofficial pieces in these state newspapers. I will argue that discussions in the newspapers about gendered practices of production and consumption offer a unique window into the anxieties experienced by many Tanzanians as young, single urban woman began to challenge gendered and generational hierarchies in Dar es Salaam.

In the beginning of 1975, two issues dominated discussions of women in the *Daily News* and the *Sunday News*, and both of these discussions addressed urban women in particular. First, the United Nations Declaration that 1975 would be recognized as International Women’s Year and the first year in the UN Decade for Women sparked debates in the state-owned newspapers that lasted for several years. The Declaration came as a result of the World Conference of International Women’s Year in Mexico City, when issues of women and development in Sub-Saharan Africa were brought to the attention of the international community for the first time by participants from “underdeveloped” nations. The new awareness of the condition of women in postcolonial locations resulted in an increased effort among feminist scholars, women’s rights advocates, and NGOs to include women in the development process. This international declaration also provoked lively conversations about the meaning of women’s liberation in Tanzania, as state leaders and citizens struggled to define women’s status in the home and in the nation. State leaders, I argue, attempted to harness the women’s liberation movement to the liberation of the nation as a whole and to define the meanings of women's liberation in a way that ensured that urban women did not abandon their “traditional” domestic responsibilities.³

³ I have claimed that these discourses of women’s liberation were primarily concerned with urban women for several reasons. First, my reading of the paper indicated that most conversations about women’s
The second issue that received a great deal of attention in the state newspapers in 1975 was a perceived increase in the number of prostitutes in urban areas, and Dar es Salaam in particular. While I have shown that the city prostitute had long been a target of anxieties in Dar es Salaam, this particular discussion of urban prostitution in 1975 was initiated by a series of features written by Roving Reporters Scholastica Kimaryo and Nestas Kageuka, in which they interviewed various people in Dar es Salaam about their opinions on prostitution and invited readers to give their thoughts in the Letters to the Editor column of the paper (called People’s Forum). As a result, dozens of letters were printed over the next several years addressing what people perceived to be the causes and effects of prostitution in the city.

What surprised me as I read through these pieces was the frequency with which journalists and contributors to the newspapers alike assumed a connection between the women’s liberation movement and increased urban prostitution. I was also initially bewildered by the contradictions between state discourses of women’s liberation (which heralded the importance of education and wage-labor for urban women) and the hostility and anxieties directed at schoolgirls and working women (including explicit accusations that these women were most likely prostitutes). However these tensions become less contradictory when examined as discussions about urban women’s modes of production and consumption. While front page articles and “official” pieces framed urban women’s liberation in terms of productivity in the home and nation, in letters to the editor, stories, and humor columns a wider spectrum of interpretations could be found, including

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liberation addressed women in Dar es Salaam. Secondly, as Geiger (1982) has shown that a lack of resources and poor transportation limited the national women’s organization, Umoja wa Wanawake wa Tanzania (UWT) to working in or around urban centers.
frequent accusations that women’s new roles in production were the reason behind the increase in urban prostitution. Practices of consumption became a key component in distinguishing respectable women from those who used education and wage labor as a means to benefit themselves rather than their families or the nation. In these public forums, women’s liberation through access to education and work was often seen as a catalyst toward a certain style of consumption (namely of products labeled as “decadent” and “foreign”) which drove women to engage in sex work. Therefore, I argue in this chapter that these discussions in the state newspapers about women’s liberation and increased urban prostitution should not be read as two distinct issues, but rather as a related set of discourses about women’s production and consumption through which perceptions of urban womanhood were defined and contested on a daily basis.

In this chapter, then, I examine these discussions of women’s liberation and urban prostitution in the state newspapers during the socialist period. I begin by describing the changing conditions of Dar es Salaam during the 1970s, most notably the increased migration of single and educated women to the city. I then turn to articles, features, stories, and letters in the state newspapers to explore how notions of proper and improper urban womanhood were negotiated through these discourses of women’s liberation and prostitution.

**Dar es Salaam in the 1970s**

Although Nyerere’s policies of Socialism and Self-Reliance called for a return to rural agriculture as the key to Tanzania’s development, migration to urban areas steadily increased throughout the socialist period. By 1971, women migrants were the majority of new arrivals in Dar es Salaam (Ivaska 2003). This group of women migrants differed from the women who had migrated to the city during the 1950s and 1960s. Among this
generation of women, many had received some education and came to the city with the expectation of attaining work in the formal sector. However, the growth of the urban population in the early 1970s strained the urban infrastructure, which was ill equipped to absorb the number of new migrants. Jobs, housing, and social services lagged behind population growth, resulting in an urban environment where material resources were constantly the catalyst of struggles between differently placed groups and individuals.

Many of the women who moved to Dar es Salaam in the 1970s were both educated and unmarried. They represent what Marjorie Mbilinyi referred to as the ‘new Tanzanian women’ (1972), the generation of educated female wage earners who took advantage of opportunities for work in urban areas during the postcolonial period. The Maternity Leave Bill passed by the government in 1975 facilitated women’s entry into wage employment, but despite the increased number of women working in the formal economy in the 1970s, most of these jobs were relatively low paying and low-status. Those women who were able to secure wage labor generally worked as factory workers, secretaries, or bargirls.

Although more women were engaged in wage labor by the 1970s than ever before, the majority of women living in urban areas still relied on the informal economy (Tripp 1989). In 1974, workers in the formal sector in Dar es Salaam experienced a decline in real wages, a trend which continued throughout the decade and into the mid-eighties. This decrease in wages was one manifestation of the economic crisis taking place in Tanzania as a result of poor performances in agriculture and industry, the declining international prices of coffee and other exports, the rising price of imports, recurring droughts, and a costly war with Uganda (Tripp 1989).
The competition for wage labor, housing, social services, and commodities among people in Dar es Salaam created a context in which social struggles over wealth and resources took place on a daily basis. In the next two sections, I argue that discourses of women’s liberation and urban prostitution provide an entry point into these everyday struggles and highlight the differences of gender, generation, race, and class which emerged as the postcolonial state and urban men and women negotiated the urban landscape. I begin by examining how these state newspapers constructed an “ideal” socialist urban woman defined by her productivity in the household and the nation. I then turn to discussions of urban prostitution to explore perceptions of the “consuming woman” who, for many, represented the darker side of the women’s liberation movement.

“Women, Do Thy Share”: Women’s Liberation and the Construction of the “Socialist Superwoman” Through National Production

Total liberation of the African woman would depend on their understanding of Africa’s problems as spelled out by revolutionary forces in the continent…In Tanzania, women can only achieve their goal if they fully understand the policies of the Party.


Equality between men and women will be achieved only if women involve themselves fully in productive work and genuinely cooperate to build socialism.

-Quote from National Vice-Chairman of UWT Salome Kisusi (“Work for Equality” Women Advised, Daily News, July 12, 1975)

Women need to liberate themselves mentally and physically and to participate in the country’s development and the rest of society…Women should consider themselves equal members of society in their places of work, while also fulfilling their domestic obligations.

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4 “Women, Do Thy Share” was the title of a poem written by M.S. Mathi and published in the People’s Forum section of the Daily News (Apr. 15, 1975).
Women have the power to encourage positive economic and social development in the country, but if not properly oriented, they are also capable of doing the opposite and bringing about economic and social destruction to the nation.


In Tanzania, the concept of women’s liberation took on specific meanings in state discourses and became an idiom through which state officials and citizens negotiated the boundaries of respectable urban womanhood. The post-Arusha government officially embraced the idea of women’s liberation, and Nyerere mobilized this international discourse to support his own plans for socialist transformation. He conceived of women’s liberation as a two-part struggle. First, he proposed, “doing away with loopholes and laws that prevent equality between men and women” and secondly, he urged women to “overcome mental attitudes imposed…by social orders” (Geiger 1982). These two objectives outlined by Nyerere, changing laws that perpetuate inequality and inculcating a new attitude among women, framed many of the conversations concerning women’s liberation in the state papers. Over the next several years, the government made several attempts to increase the number of women in education and formal employment. Policy initiatives such as universal primary school education for all children and a mandatory maternity leave for female workers were among the state’s efforts to change women’s status through legal avenues.

Despite official definitions of women’s liberation that declared education and work as the solution to women’s subordinate social status, not all educated or working women were perceived as “properly” liberated. The second aspect of Nyerere’s articulation of women’s liberation, the perceived need for women to change their detrimental “mental
attitudes,” naturalized the concept that it was women themselves who were hindering their own liberation and opened up a space for the state to define how a “liberated woman” should think and act. How did the postcolonial government use state media to define the meaning of “women’s liberation”? What did a properly liberated woman look like in the state dailies? In this section, I begin to answer these questions using examples from the state newspapers of women who embodied state sanctioned discourses of national development through hard work.

The “Women Told” and “Exemplary Women” pieces I described in the previous chapter exemplify government attempts to fashion a particular kind of urban female identity. These articles draw explicit connections between the women’s liberation movement and postcolonial political agendas. As a result, these “official” declarations of women’s duties and responsibilities are almost always framed in terms of women’s productive role in the family and the nation. Take for example, the following headlines printed between 1975 and 1981: “Work for Equality, Women advised,” “Work With Men, Women Told,” “Women Told to Work Harder,” “Flex Your Muscles, Women Told.”\(^5\) As the quote by Party Secretary Selefman at the beginning of this section indicates, official discussions of women’s liberation constantly reminded women to combine their individual efforts for liberation with the national project of socialism. In this context, women’s liberation is equated with their right to receive an education and participate in wage labor.

In these “Women’s Told” pieces, the government women’s association, *Umoja wa Wanawake wa Tanzania* (Union of Tanzanian Women, UWT), is charged time and again

\(^5\) These articles were printed in the *Daily News* on July 1, 1975, January 12, 1976, August 9, 1976, and December 4, 1980, respectively.
with the responsibility of teaching urban women to combine their efforts for liberation
with the development of the nation while maintaining their roles as wives and mothers.
Women were frequently warned against allowing their liberation to alter gendered
hierarchies, especially within the household. Another revealing “Women Told” article
printed in 1975 advised women to balance their desire for liberation with respect for their
husbands. In this article, UWT member Asha Ngoma warned women of the “danger of
misusing the 1975 International Women’s Year to breed misconduct and disrespect
towards their husbands.” She urged women to “educate themselves fully on the policies
of the country” and to “identify themselves with the country’s aspirations.” Ngoma also
told women that it was inappropriate to “misbehave in front of your husbands just
because this year has been declared yours.”

Articles such as these highlight the ambivalence state officials experienced when
trying to define women’s liberation; on the one hand, the Arusha declaration had
promised equality to all Tanzanian citizens, regardless of gender, race, religion, or class
and state leaders were eager to promote equality between men and women as a way to
legitimate the nation in the eyes of the international community. Moreover, Nyerere
recognized and frequently commented that women’s productive efforts were absolutely
critical to the construction of a stable socialist economy. On the other hand, the same
leaders were concerned to define women’s liberation in a way that would not disrupt
existing hierarchies. Therefore, urban women were repeatedly reminded of the
boundaries of their liberation. To be a liberated urban woman, according to the official
discourses in the state newspaper, was not to change gendered asymmetries within the

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household, but rather to enter into the wage economy and work for the benefit of the nation.

These views were not entirely limited to “official” pieces in the paper. Many letter writers and contributors also expressed concern that women’s liberation was causing women to forget their “proper” place in the home. One letter, written by George Makusi, accuses women of abandoning their “motherly obligations,” arguing that “contact with big bureaucrats makes women identify themselves with the superior positions of their bosses at their working places, so that, back home, they begin to look down upon their fellow workers- their husbands- as inferior.” Anxieties about women’s changing social status were particularly evident in the multiple meanings which were attributed to the UWT slogan, “Wanawake Juu.” Wanawake translates as “women,” but the use of the word juu caused problems for several journalists and readers. Juu is a locative term and can be translated in several ways depending on the context. Literally, it means “up” or “above,” so it roughly translates to Western feminist discourses of “uplifting women” or “raising women’s status.” However, many men and women interpreted this slogan to mean that women were literally trying to position themselves above men. This is clearly illustrated in a feature by Scholastica Kimaryo entitled, “Is it Womankind Against Mankind?” In the article, her grandmother comes to stay with her and offers her opinions of International Women’s Year. The grandmother describes going to a UWT meeting during which UWT members told women:

This is our year. This is when we should tell men the hell with them. They have oppressed us, made us beasts of burden and done all the mean things to us. This

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8 Dr. Rose Lugano helped me to explore the multiple interpretations of this slogan.
year they will know that women are really equal to men, even if it means them having to carry us around physically shoulder high to prove the point.9

She goes on to describe how the women had forced men to pick them up and carry them around the meeting hall while they yelled, “Wanaume zii!” (Men, Boo!). A male letter writer cited a similar experience of going to a UWT meeting only to be told that the point of women’s liberation is to “humiliate men and prove to him that women are now entering a new phase of being superiors.”10 UWT leaders responded to these accusations by claiming that many women simply did not understand the true meaning of International Women’s Year. Anna Abdallah, a UWT District Secretary, was quoted as saying, “This year is not dedicated to a war between men and women…Our intentions are to seek ways through which women can more effectively be involved in our country’s struggle against all types of oppression and for building socialism and self-reliance.”11

“Women Told” articles primarily used exhortation to convince women to change their behavior to be more in line with official definitions of women’s liberation. On the other hand, “Exemplary Women” features offered examples of women who managed to successfully embody state imaginings of proper urban womanhood. The women in these features can be compared to the “socialist superwomen” discussed by Susan Gal and Gail Kligman (2000). In their examination of state-controlled women’s magazines in socialist Europe, Gal and Kligman describe the paradoxical images of ideal socialist womanhood, in which one woman was expected to effortlessly perform the roles of educated worker,


11 UWT Fights for Women’s Affairs Commission” Daily News, July 23, 1975
attractive wife, dedicated mother, and political activist. “Exemplary Women” features in the *Daily News* and the *Sunday News* also promote a similar “socialist superwoman” figure. Take for example, one such piece entitled “First Women Labor Officer.” In this feature, readers are introduced to Flora Manjonda, a former teacher who became the nation’s first female labor officer. The author of this piece, James Mpinga, remarks that Manjonda carries with her an air of determination, which is one of the qualities that allows her to work full-time as a Registrar in the Labor Tribunal, maintain a healthy relationship with her husband (also a trade unionist), run a smooth and efficient household, and take care of their three children. Mpinga writes that Manjonda “has succeeded in what most women find difficult to do- divide her time between work and household chores- and still take care of her darling children.” Manjonda, he points out, does not allow her work to “interfere with the smooth running of her home, as she believes the two always go together.” According to this feature, she lives by the motto, “An efficient housewife is essentially a good worker” and apparently is able to “execute her duties both at home and work with the utmost belief that she can combine them to the advantage of society.”

Other “Exemplary Women” pieces echo this theme of balancing work and domestic duties. Another piece, called “Why I Find Happiness in UWT Life” describes the life of Beatrice Mhango, then Secretary General of UWT and a worker in the Ministry of Community Development. As in Manjonga’s article, Mhango’s performance in her formal employment position is compared with her ability to run her household. She

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claims that despite the long hours she works, her husband and two children are “very, very happy.” While Mhango expresses some remorse over the lack of time she has to spend with her children, she contends, “This is not much of a problem to distract my attention and concern to serve the nation.” Another feature concentrates on the life of Martha Mvungi, a teacher who at the time of the article was not only teaching, but also taking classes, raising three children, and preparing an English novel. The author of this piece, Mike Sikawa, describes Mvungi as a remarkable person marked by her “courage” and lack of aversion to “hard work.”

The women who were featured in these pieces share several characteristics. They are all educated working women living in urban areas, they are all married with children, and they are all portrayed as dedicated to combining their roles in national production with their domestic duties. However, while it is not made explicit in these articles, these women are all also among the relatively small group of elite women who were able to acquire well-paying jobs in the government and service sectors and therefore represent a minority of the women working in Dar es Salaam in the 1970s. It was this group of elite educated working women that primarily made up the national women’s organization, UWT, and who came the closest to embodying the ideal of socialist womanhood. Therefore, I argue that it is important to examine how structures of class shaped definitions of the women’s liberation movement in Tanzania. Despite the claims of the postcolonial government that socialism could create a society free of class inequalities, state discourses of women’s liberation articulated a model of ideal socialist womanhood.

14 “Love of Children Made Her a Teacher” Mike Sikawa, Sunday News, July 10, 1977
based on the experiences of a small group of urban elites. In this context, the idea of women’s liberation itself emerged as part of the class structure of the postcolonial state.

The role of UWT, as the branch of the postcolonial government dedicated to “women’s affairs,” was to educate other women about the proper meaning of liberation through exhortation and example. But who exactly ended up being the targets of UWT’s efforts? In most cases, not the rural women who lived far from the urban areas where most elite women resided and worked. Rather, it was other urban women who were seen as needing education on their liberation, especially the generation of young, single, women who were migrating to Dar es Salaam in increasing numbers throughout the 1970s. Leading members of UWT, however, were concerned to distinguish themselves from other urban women by emphasizing their hard work and dedication to Socialism and Self-Reliance as well as by castigating women who failed to conform to this style of womanhood. Even a glance at newspaper headlines indicates that UWT members hoped to maintain a firm boundary between themselves and other “less productive” women, specifically those outside the wage-earning sector. Take for example, these headlines printed between 1975 and 1979: “UWT Won’t Defend Lazy Women,” UWT Chief Castigates Loiterers,” UWT Won’t Protect Dishonest Women,” and “UWT To Evict Jobless Girls.” These articles and others not only warn urban woman against their “natural” tendencies towards laziness, deceit, negligence, decadence, irresponsibility, gossip, backbiting, and competitiveness, but also promote a certain kind of socialist womanhood defined by hard work for the benefit of the family and the nation.

15 These articles were printed in the Daily News on August 25, 1975, March 3, 1976, March 20, 1976, and February 16, 1979, respectively.
It is important to point out that these positive examples of “Exemplary Women” appeared far less frequently in the state papers than discussions about women who did not meet the standards of the “socialist superwoman.” UWT officials saw these “other” urban women as both a threat and a target for rehabilitation. The tensions between these differently positioned women becomes more obvious when the “hard-working” socialist women described in these features are compared with the discussions about “consuming women” that dominated the public forums of these papers.

“Prostitute or Girlfriend?”: Sexuality, Liberation, and the “Consuming Woman”

Prostitution is a deadly cancer which must be removed from our society at any cost if we are to build a nation truly imbued with socialist morality. But before that can be done, the disease itself must be properly diagnosed and the reasons for its occurrence exposed.


Currently many men are being exploited by the unequal women especially the educated and working girls...a man will be expected to meet all the bills, she will just sit there and bleed him to economic death. Young girls find sugar daddies; he has more money to lavish on her. He has got a car. He has got everything to satisfy her luxurious needs. Such girls undermine the aspirations of women to equality.


The new styles of the Western world have been spreading like the winds of fire to support prostitution. The clothes perpetuated by Western fashions all lay emphasis on soliciting in public for sex.


Many people tend to confuse girlfriends and prostitutes. A girl demanding money from her boyfriend is not only corrupt but also a prostitute. Money turns friendship into prostitution.

In the beginning of 1975, two female reporters for the state newspapers, Scholastica Kimaryo and Nestas Kageuka, wrote a series of features on the “problem” of urban prostitution.16 In one of these pieces, Kageuka writes that prostitution “is a subject nobody really wants to talk about. We all feel it is too embarrassing to be discussed.”17 However despite her claim that prostitution was a taboo subject, my own reading of these state newspapers indicates that prostitution was actually discussed with great frequency, and invoked to comment upon other debates, including, but not limited to, the meaning of women’s liberation, young women’s relationships with older “sugar daddies,” and women’s consumption of “Western fashions.” In the years after these first features were printed, dozens of letters were printed in the state newspapers as people offered their own answers to the questions posed by Kimaryo and Kageuka: What is the root cause of prostitution? Who is to blame? What can be done? I argue that this proliferation of discussions of urban prostitution in 1975 was not arbitrary, but rather emerged at a time when the state was concerned to control the definitions and effects of women’s liberation. If the “socialist superwomen” described above represented a state-sanctioned example of the “liberated woman,” then the urban prostitute can be said to represent another, if less desirable, result of the women’s liberation movement.

It is interesting to note that conversations about urban prostitution took place primarily in the public forums of the newspapers rather than the front pages, and therefore offer another perspective on urban womanhood in postcolonial Dar es Salaam.

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17 The Night Trotters: Twilight Girls Tell Their Own Tragic Tale Daily News, March 17, 1975
that looks very different from the self-sacrificing “superwoman” who embodied state discourses of Socialism and Self-Reliance. Letters to the editor, stories, poems, and humor columns focused on issues of women’s sexuality and practices of consumption that “official” articles rarely addressed. While “Exemplary Women” were described almost exclusively in terms of their domestic and national productivity, the dangerous urbanity of “consuming women” was critiqued with accusations that laziness and greed produced an urban woman who was both adverse to hard work and obsessed with material accumulation (both antithetical to state projects of production and consumption).

In these conversations, then, conspicuous consumption was equated with prostitution and any woman who practiced a style of “capitalist” consumption risked being labeled as a sex worker. Kageuka, for example, wrote in one of her pieces on urban prostitution that every woman she interviewed “talked of money and the need to make more money to enable them to make a good living and afford extra articles that they want.” One of the women interviewed, Esther, admitted that she had failed to “secure even the simplest job in town” and refused to “return home to do farming.” When asked by Kageuka why she could not return to her rural home, she replied that there were “other, easier ways of earning good money without much sweating …because she was brought up to like material things it was imperative to demand money from men for her services.”

Kageuka’s description of Esther resonates strongly with socialist state discourses that equated unemployment with laziness and exploitation. However, what is more striking is how often the very women who were successfully taking advantage of state initiatives in education and wage labor were also called prostitutes. One male letter writer, Alex Njunji, offered these four categories of prostitutes: “street trotters, doorstep
waiters, schoolgirls, and working secretaries." Why are schoolgirls and secretaries included in this list of potential prostitutes? If education and formal employment were central to a state-sanctioned model of “liberated” urban womanhood, then why were these groups of women imagined to be engaging in sex work? One answer to these questions can be found in the quotes offered at the beginning of this section. The three male letter writers all pointed to certain practices of consumption that distinguished “prostitutes” from respectable urban women. Anxieties about single women’s sexuality and their presumed desire for material accumulation are interwoven in these letters, and indicate that an examination of state discourses of women’s liberation through their role in production offers only a partial view of the postcolonial government’s attempts to fashion proper female urban personas.

In many cases, then, definitions of proper womanhood were dependent on how and what women consumed, and those women who used education and wage labor to gain access to “luxurious” and “decadent” commodities rather than to help their families or the nation became particularly suspect. In other words, although these “consuming women” actively pursued the educational and employment opportunities that Nyerere stressed as central to women’s liberation, they fell short of meeting the standard of “liberated” women because they had failed to overcome the “mental attitudes” he attributed to previous “social orders” (i.e. the introduction of capitalist economic relations through colonialism). In this context, it did not matter whether these women were actual sex workers or simply urban women who received financial support from boyfriends and “sugar daddies,” they all became suspected of prostitution due to their “capitalist” style of

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18 “This Social Cancer Must Go” Letter from Alex Njunji, Daily News, Apr. 22, 1975
individual consumption. Therefore, I refer in this section to the “consuming woman” as a figure that represents any single urban women perceived to be using their sexual relationships as a means of gaining access to certain illegitimate fashions. Women’s sexuality and postcolonial economic structures are tied together in this figure of the consuming woman and offer unique insights into government anxieties over the capitalist relations still affecting the nation as well as everyday gendered struggles taking place in Dar es Salaam.

With this in mind, it becomes useful to return to the series of features that initiated these conversations about urban prostitution in 1975. The purpose of these pieces, as the quote from Kimaryo at the beginning of the section indicates, was to “diagnose” the causes of the “deadly cancer” that was prostitution in order to eradicate the practice from society. Kimaryo’s use of medical language to discuss prostitution was shared by many others who wrote into the paper and reveals a great deal about how the figure of the consuming woman embodied anxieties about the place of Tanzania is the larger economic order. Letter writers responding to the features used a similar language of disease to discuss prostitution. Take for example, this letter entitled “This Social Cancer Must Go.” The writer, Alex Njunji, calls prostitution “a deadly cancer which must be removed from our society at any cost if we are to build a socialist and self-reliant society in Tanzania.” Other letter writers evoked a similar narrative of disease, calling prostitution a “social malady” and a “menace to the healthy development of society.” Not surprisingly, the cure offered to this social “disease” was socialism. The general consensus among journalists and letter writers was that only a change in economic structures could end prostitution.

19 “This Social Cancer Must Go” Letter from Alex Njunji, Daily News, Apr. 22, 1975
One male letter writer, Freddie Macha, pointed out that prostitution could not be examined as simply a “sexual problem,” contending, “it is socio-economic relations that determine how people live…Only socialism will end it!” 20 Another letter claimed, “Prostitution is based on private property and bound to fall with it!” 21 These letters assume that prostitution is linked to a certain economic structure (i.e. capitalism) and therefore a result of colonial occupation. This is clearly illustrated in this letter from Rommel Mauma:

I strongly believe that one reason why this unbecoming behavior manifests itself is because of the commercialization of sex. Sex among the culprits has formed an economic exchange of relations. This is the result of a Western economic system which has brought with it “money civilization”…Prostitutes bodies get embedded in nothing but economic supply and demand! 22

The articulation of prostitution as a specifically capitalist phenomenon meant that women’s practices of consumption were an important indication of how they were perceived in relation to state definitions of socialist womanhood. In this context, women who purchased and wore “Western” fashions became the target of hostility because their actions signaled that they did not support the socialist claims of the state. Whether or not these women were actually sex workers was not necessarily the point. Rather, it was their style of consumption and their perceived desire for Western commodities that resulted in accusations of prostitution, for despite the postcolonial government’s attempts to make a clean break with pre-independence colonial structures, single urban women who desired “Western” fashions and commodities were perceived to be perpetuating the colonial

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22 “Sex Trade” Letter from Rommel Mauma, Sunday News, Feb. 2, 1975
mentality that was blamed for many of the country problems in the postcolonial period. The rather vague “mental attitudes” of women Nyerere cited as an obstacle to women’s liberation become more specific when situated within discussions of women’s practices of consumption. One such “mental attitude” frequently invoked to explain women’s susceptibility to “Western” fashions was an inherent inferiority complex (which is interesting when compared to the fears I described above that women were suffering from a superiority complex). Letter writers (almost all male) accused women of lacking the self-confidence to resist the temptations of foreign styles of clothing and cosmetics, which made them resort to prostitution as a means of satisfying their excessive desires.

As one man wrote in a letter to the editor:

> These women hoping they will be more attractive when they wear heavy make-up, wigs, and micro-minis need society desperately to cure them from their mental conditions of acute inferiority complex and socio-economic insecurity.23

Temba goes on to argue that socialism “is the only way we can diminish prostitution and other social evils.” In his letter and others that discuss prostitution through a narrative of disease, women’s “mental conditions” and “socio-economic insecurity” can only be “cured” by the eradication of inequality through the national project of socialism.

In light of these discussions that indicate socialism and prostitution were essentially incompatible, one would expect that the postcolonial government would have taken legal action to limit prostitution. However, throughout the entire socialist period and despite the negative portrayal of urban prostitution in these state papers, no law was passed making prostitution officially illegal. How can this be discrepancy be explained? Why would the government take action against women who wore “indecent dress” (as in the

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23 “Men Miss the Point” Letter from Peter Temba, Daily News, May 5, 1975
case of Operation Vijana) while neglecting to pass laws against prostitution (which was described as a social cancer that was deadly to socialist society)? The answer to these questions can perhaps be found when we take into account the men who were engaged in sexual relationships with these consuming women. In the final part of the Roving Reporter series, Kimaryo asks, “Are Men the Patrons of Prostitution?” She describes discussing the series of articles about prostitution with a government official who asked her rather skeptically if the Daily News really wanted to eradicate prostitution. According to Kimaryo, this government official claimed that he thought prostitution was a “necessary social service.” He argued that he saw no need to get rid of urban prostitutes, for it was to them that men turn to “after their frustrations with their wives and even their jobs.”

Kimaryo also interview an anonymous UWT member about her thoughts on men and prostitution. While UWT refused to take any official stance on prostitution, this woman gave her personal thoughts on the relationship between prostitutes and their patrons:

Who are the customers of these prostitutes? Men, of course. There can be no market that involves the exchange of goods and services for money without customers with money to exchange! People with cars lure women to nightspots, away from the town and the eyes of the public. They have the money to buy women expensive clothes and dinners. Women fall easy prey to this because it is the way some of us were brought up.24

Who were these “men with money” in Dar es Salaam? In most cases, they were the older generation of men who benefited from the nationalist movement and received jobs in government offices or civil service positions after independence. These notorious “sugar daddies” who lured vulnerable women into sexual relationships with expensive cars,

24 “Are Men the Patrons of Prostitution?” Scholastica Kimaryo, Daily News, Apr. 21, 1975
clothes, and food were often the very same men who were in positions of high authority in the postcolonial state, an irony not lost on many contributors to the paper.

The relationships between young single women and sugar daddies received a great deal of attention in the public forums of the state newspapers, especially from the younger men who were trying to compete with these wealthier men for sexual partners. Many among this younger generation of urban men lacked the financial resources to offer women the kinds of gifts they received from older men and resented what they saw as women’s excessive desires for money and material accumulation. It was not that there was necessarily anything necessarily wrong with men giving gifts of cash and personal items to their girlfriends. However, when women were suspected of desiring these gifts too much, or when they were accused of having relationships for money and not for love, then their role as girlfriend seemed to fade into prostitution. For example, in a letter titled “Some Girls Sabotaging Women’s Liberation,” Moses Paul complains about urban women who place unreasonable demands upon their boyfriends:

Girls, don’t you think this is sheer exploitation of your boyfriends? If this is the trend, then what liberation are you shouting about? You are slaves of money and you are betraying your own cause. Money is not everything!25

Another male letter writer, Abby Sekidunga, accused women of being interested only in “material wealth,” and questioned why working women expected their boyfriends to support their demanding lifestyles:

It is a pity that most of our girls are not willing to spend even ten cents on their boyfriends. Some of these girls earn much more than their boys, but they always expect the boys to pay for everything—dance, drinks, and cinema…Some of these

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girls do not have steady boyfriends and the reason is that they are so demanding and expensive that few boys can afford to go along with them for even a month.26 Letters like these from Paul and Sekidunga reveal many of the anxieties and tensions surrounding everyday gender relations in Dar es Salaam at this particular historical moment. While in the 1960s, the average urban wage had been relatively high, by the 1970s, many workers were experiencing difficulty as wages declined. Between the years 1976 and 1984, real wages dropped sixty-five percent at the same time that consumer prices increased tenfold in Dar es Salaam (Tripp 1989). After a decade of men being able to support a family on one wage, in the 1970s their role as breadwinner was challenged if they were unable to satisfy the material needs of their sexual partners. Take, for example, a humor column written by Freddie Macha in 1981. The column, entitled “What Manhood is All About,” describes one of his former lovers who constantly castigated him for being broke, mocking him and asking, “What kind of man are you?” In the end of the story, Macha tells the girl that she is employed too and that she can buy things for herself, which results in her leaving him, after she laughs and says, ”What woman is ready to go around with a man like you? Always broke, always broke, eh?”27

I close this section with a story written by popular fiction writer Anduru Agoro and printed in the Sunday News in 1981.28 The story, called “Wretched Love,” was composed as a letter from a young man to a woman who has denied his advances. In the letter,

28 Agoro’s stories were printed in The Sunday News for several years from the end of the 1970s until the middle of the 1980s. He was enormously popular and often letters to the editor would commend his stories and his ability to capture the reality of life in Tanzania. He eventually went on to make a book out of his short stories, called Temptations. His stories were known for dealing with issues of relationships and love.
Agoro laments the kind of women who value material accumulation over romantic love. He accuses this woman of abusing her liberation by living in the city and “walking erect” in her high-heeled shoes while her sisters work in the millet fields. He writes to her that despite the blessing education has brought you, there is also a curse lurking behind you. The artificial glitter of urban life is destroying you…the only human whose existence you recognize is your godfather and that is simply because he foots the bill for your cosmetics, not because you love him…Money is the only thing that can arouse human sentiments from you now. Sister, you are dead!

Agoro’s story not only indicates the way that women’s liberation and prostitution were tied together in the figure of the consuming woman but also reveals the frustrations felt by young men who were trying to maintain relationships with women while competing with older, wealthier sugar daddies. As this excerpt indicates, many men felt that urban women’s education and access did not liberate them so much as make them slaves to their material desires.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have outlined the political economy of Dar es Salaam in the 1970s, and examined how the figures of the “hard-working socialist superwoman” and the “consuming woman” were placed in productive opposition in state discourses during the socialist period. By juxtaposing the interwoven discourses of women’s liberation and urban prostitution, I have attempted to show the everyday work that went into defining respectable urban womanhood. However as I have already mentioned, the women’s liberation movement was a distinctly classed project, despite the claims of the socialist government which promoted equality for all women. While issues of class were rarely addressed explicitly in the state-owned newspapers because of the government’s attempts to elide class differences, these conversations about women’s liberation and urban prostitution provide interesting insights into the paradoxical nature of the state project of
socialism. Because people did not address class inequalities directly, these discussions of different groups of urban women became a site where class differences were discussed and critiqued. What is interesting about these conversations is that it was not the elite group of women who received criticism in the state papers, but rather a lower class of working women who had recently migrated to the city. As I have been arguing throughout this chapter, it was women’s practices of consumption that defined their place in relation to the state project of socialism. Although women accused of prostitution were generally of a lower class than the “Exemplary Women” heralded by the state, their consumption of Western commodities identified them as part of a consumer culture that directly contradicted state discourses of Socialism and Self-Reliance. Therefore, in socialist Tanzania, practices of consumption often became more important than income in perceptions of class differences. While some women made more money than others, they were not perceived as a threat to the socialist myth of a society without class inequalities because they did not display their wealth through extravagant acts of consumption. On the other hand, women who made less money, but still consumed clothing and other bodily adornments that signaled their desire for individual accumulation became the target of derision and criticism.

The intersections of age and class in discussions of women’s liberation and urban prostitution resulted in two dominant constructions of urban femininity in the state-owned newspapers: the hard-working “socialist superwomen “ and the “consuming woman.” The group of elite older women maintained their respectability because their work, consumption, and sexuality remained firmly anchored in their domestic and national duties. On the other hand, the young single women migrating to Dar es Salaam
to find wage labor were perceived by older women and men alike as a threat to national claims of gender and class equality. The bodies of urban prostitutes and other consuming women embodied the inequalities that structured the nation and acted as reminder to the postcolonial government that the socialist project remained incomplete.
CHAPTER 4

In the last chapter, I explored dominant representations of urban womanhood in Dar es Salaam during the 1970s by using discourses of women’s liberation and urban prostitution in the state newspapers to delineate the figure of the “consuming woman” against her counterpart, the hard-working “socialist superwoman.” I have laid out this history of the consuming woman in socialist Tanzania to contextualize the discussions that I take up in this chapter of urban women’s consumption of imported beauty products during the period of structural adjustment. I will discuss the years 1982-1990 of the *Daily News* and the *Sunday News*, the period during which Tanzania gradually shifted from a nationalized to a liberalized economy at the insistence of international monetary organizations. I argue in this chapter that conversations in the state papers about women’s consumption offer a useful analytical lens for describing the changes taking place in Tanzania’s political economy in the 1980s and contend that gendered consumer practices became a crucial site where people negotiated the “transition” from socialism to postsocialism on an everyday basis. Therefore, in this chapter I follow the figure of the consuming woman through the state newspapers to trace how conversations about women’s consumption were linked to broader shifts in political economic structures.

Many of the attributes associated with the consuming woman of the 1960s and 1970s continue to define this figure in the 1980s, particularly the association of this style of womanhood with practices of conspicuous consumption and unchecked sexuality.
However, what is different about discussions of women’s consumption in the 1980s was the marked increase in articles, features, letters, poems, and cartoons concerning a few very specific commodities, including skin-bleaching creams, cosmetics, and hairkits. Within these discussions, the figure of the consuming woman who purchased and used these products was often mobilized as a critique against emerging practices of consumption based on the individual accumulation of wealth as well as a commentary on everyday gender relations in Dar es Salaam.

In this chapter, I begin by examining changing state rhetoric over the course of the decade, paying close attention to how the government presented the shift from socialist to neoliberal economic policies in the state-owned media. I then turn to the discussions of women’s consumption of cosmetic products, specifically those associated with a distinctly “white,” “Western,” or “foreign” style of beauty. First, I describe how women’s bodies and practices of consumption became idioms through which people (mostly men) expressed concern over the economic, political, and social changes taking place in Tanzania. Secondly, I examine how discussions of certain beauty products were used to comment upon the relationships between consuming women and “sugar daddies” in Dar es Salaam. In this chapter, I draw on features, letters, stories, poems, and cartoons printed in the state papers, arguing throughout that the figure of the consuming woman in these debates offers an entry point into the multiple desires and anxieties produced by the intensified flow of capital, goods, and styles into Tanzania during the 1980s.

**State Discourses in the 1980s: From Economic Sabotage to Economic Liberalization**

Whereas during the 1970s discourses of production dominated official discourses in the state papers, in the early 1980s discussions of urban consumption came to the front page as state leaders struggled to curb the increasing flows of illegally obtained
commodities in Dar es Salaam. Several years before the Economic Saboteur Campaign was officially initiated, Nyerere and other state officials were already using the state newspapers as a medium to warn urban residents against their tendency toward conspicuous consumption of imported goods. However, in 1985 Nyerere stepped down and his successor, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, began the process of economic liberalization and privatization. How was this change represented in the state papers? How did the government justify its decision to abandon socialist policies after twenty years of attempting to indoctrinate Tanzanians into a socialist mindset? How were practices of consumption implicated in these changes?

By the 1980s, international monetary organizations began to strongly urge the Tanzanian government to reorient the economy toward open market policies. Among the suggested changes in policy was a call for removing the strict limitations on imports that had been instituted in the post-Arusha period. In negotiations with the IMF in 1980, Nyerere refused to accept these economic policies, claiming they were incompatible with the state project of socialism. However, over the next several years, the Tanzanian government enacted a series of internal policies designed to alleviate the economic crisis, including the National Economic Survival Plan (NESP) in 1981 and The Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in 1982. These policies laid emphasis on increasing food production, promoting exports, and limiting domestic consumption. However, the economic crisis meant that the state was unable to provide the social services promised by the government. With the price of agricultural exports dropping, the government lacked the financial capability to import basic commodities such as fuel, clothing, sugar, soap, and cooking oil. Steadily increasing inflation combined with a higher cost of living
eroded the purchasing power of urban residents (Lugalla 1997). Scarcity became the norm in Dar es Salaam in the early 1980s as people struggled to obtain basic commodities in any way possible, including hoarding consumer goods, buying imported products on the “black market,” and using connections to influential friends and relatives to get money and commodities.

These strategies used by urban residents to gain access to commodities were met with alarm by the Tanzanian government and Nyerere and other state officials took measures to bring urban consumption under state control. The state-owned newspapers became a medium used by the government to warn urban residents against their tendency toward a distinctly capitalist style of consumption. For example, a front-page article with the headline “Capitalists Face Fire” quoted a speech given by President Nyerere in 1982. In this speech, Nyerere warned “capitalists and their allies” from any acts intended to compromise the nation’s values of Socialism and Self-Reliance. He also criticized Tanzanians whom he saw as becoming “victims of greed, craving wealth in the most untoward manner.” He goes on to argue that the only legitimate way of gaining wealth was through hard work, and castigated people who violated this dictum. He is quoted as saying, “Instead of seeking wealth through work, as most Tanzanians did in their villages and at work places, others wanted to get wealth without working.” It was these “unproductive” people that Nyerere singled out as “thieves and racketeers who cashed in on shortages of consumer goods.”

1 “Capitalists Face Fire” Daily News, Jan. 26, 1982
Exhortation was not the only strategy used by the state to define and control urban consumption. In addition to speeches and articles such as this, the state also initiated two campaigns during 1983 to curb urban consumption. The first initiative was called *Kazi Nguvu* (Hard Work), a campaign to move “unproductive” people from Dar es Salaam to rural areas to farm. The second was the Economic Sabotage Campaign, in which urban residents were arrested and fined if they were caught purchasing or selling imported commodities. However, despite these official interventions, urban consumption practices constantly escaped state control. During the early 1980s, the informal economy (which had long existed in Dar es Salaam) rapidly expanded to meet the needs of urban residents that the state was unable to provide. This parallel economy caused a great deal of concern for state leaders and was cited as one of the reasons that Tanzania was experiencing an economic crisis. In the 1984 Economic Outlook printed in the *Daily News*, the Minister of Planning and Economic Affairs blamed people involved in the informal economy for the country’s problems, claiming, “one of the scourges of many developing countries today is the proliferation as well as mushrooming growth of petty hawkers and sellers who eke a sterile existence by changing hands a small quantity of what is produced, each time substantially jerking up the prices.”

In state rhetoric, then, it was not the government that was to blame for the economic crisis, but rather those people who made a profit as middlemen between producers and consumers, a role that was supposed to be the domain of the state alone.

By the mid-1980s, however, the tide was beginning to turn. In 1985, Nyerere announced that he would not be running in that year’s election. His replacement, Ali

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Hassan Mwinyi, was far more willing to make the changes in economic policy that Nyerere had been refusing. Nicknamed Rais Ruksa (President Permit) Mwinyi began the process of liberalizing the economy to meet the standards of international monetary lenders. In the years after he was elected, Mwinyi opened up the economy to foreign investment, began to sell state farms and parastatals, officially acknowledged and registered self-employment projects in the informal sector, and facilitated the importation of previously unavailable commodities. While he did not officially abandon the state project of socialism until 1992, in the latter half of the 1980s, Tanzania’s ideological and economic status seemed ambiguous as state leaders and citizens alike attempted to (re)define the meanings of socialism and capitalism and Tanzania’s place in the global economic order. Despite the obvious changes in economic policy, state leaders continued to proclaim socialism as the national ideology, claiming that trade liberalization policies were designed as a temporary measure, a necessary stage in the project of socialist development. In 1987, a front-page article entitled “Socialism Here to Stay” quoted Prime Minister Rashid Kawawa as saying, “the people who thought that the period for building Ujamaa was gone were wasting their time.” In 1988, an article warned people that “Tanzania’s Western oriented consumption pattern must be checked to allow the nation to move successfully through the transition period towards socialism.” An official quoted in the article, a member of SHIHATA (the Tanzanian news agency), criticized Tanzanians who “continued to import a lot of consumer goods from the ‘capitalist camp’ instead of the ‘socialist camp.’”

3 “Socialism Here to Stay” Daily News, Mar. 19, 1987
4 “Check Capitalist Patterns” Daily News, May 5, 1988
The state newspapers became a site where people expressed multiple views on the economic changes taking place. Some journalists and contributors to the paper supported official discourses that claimed neoliberal policies and socialist ideology were not necessarily incompatible. In an essay on the “Potentials of Privatization,” Patrick Cardiff encouraged readers to consider the benefits of the role of the private sector. He argued, “In the African context, healthy competition between private traders and state monopolies could be encouraged, leading to beneficial results, without compromising ideological commitments.” He urged Tanzanians to cultivate a “better attitude towards profit and entrepreneurial achievement,” while still qualifying his statements by claiming, “This is not to imply a negation of social equity as a primary national goal. Quite the contrary, privatization will emphasize a strengthening of the social productive base through a concerted, pragmatic approach to development.”5 An editorial by Joseph Mihangwa expressed similar sentiments. He argued that “socialism is not against private property, per se, only when such is institutionalized and has become a hindrance to the basic objectives of socialism.”6

However, not all Tanzanians expressed optimism about policies of trade liberalization and privatization. Some felt that despite official reassurances, the acceptance of structural adjustment policies compromised the values of socialism. In one feature, Guido Magome argued that neoliberalism was a “betrayal of socialism.” He wrote, “An important factor which can destroy the development of socialism in new

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nations is a disease known as liberalism... It is a killer disease for socialism especially at the nascent stages. We must wage a constant war to combat liberalism or else we are all dead ideologically.”

Others agreed with this perspective and challenged official declarations that these policies were simply a period of transition toward a socialist future. For example, in a feature printed in the *Daily News*, Attilio Tagalile wrote

> Trade liberalization policies were supposed to be a temporary measure! Imports were supposed to be monitored, but they are not. Local importers have thus literally turned the country into a dumping ground of commodities from countries which could not have otherwise found markers anywhere under the sun.

While many of the pieces discussing Tanzania’s economic status tended to use abstract or metaphorical terms, Tagalile describes the effects of neoliberal policies through the changing landscape of commodities in Dar es Salaam. To him, the failure of the state to control the flow of imports was an indication of Tanzania’s vulnerable position in the global economic order as a place for wealthier countries to “dump” unwanted commodities. What exactly were these commodities entering Tanzania that could not be sold “anywhere under the sun?” Who was the market for these products? What made certain commodities so dangerous? To begin to answer these questions, I move from these articles and features to the public forums of the state papers, where discussions of controversial commodities took on a distinctly gendered appearance. I discovered that many of the imported commodities considered hazardous to the nation were purchased and used primarily by urban women, especially beauty products such as skin-bleaching creams, cosmetics, and hair-kits. The figure of the urban “consuming woman,” who had long been associated with foreign fashions and standards of beauty, was once again

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mobilized in these conversations to comment upon the potential pleasures and dangers of
the intensified flows of ideas and capital entering Dar es Salaam in the 1980s.

“Beauty is Natural”: Women’s Bodies and the Body Politic

Young women tell me
Young men help me
Can one beautify oneself
And become like another person?
Can adornments beautify
And make a woman the most beautiful?
My opinion is different
I say beauty is natural.

Young women curl hair
They want it to be soft
Like ostrich plumes
Others use medicines
To change their skin colour

What is it all about?
To be like white women
I say beauty is natural

Africans have black skin
They possess black hair
Which is soft and short
Our sisters do not like that
To them black skin is bad
Short hair is not attractive
They want imported hair
They wear dead person’s hair

They quarrel when asked
They say this is civilization
Is frying hair civilization?
And destroying skin, development?
This is wizard’s language
The answer of unwise persons
Don’t soil our Africanness
Beauty is natural

Sisters tell me
What do you want to look like?
Can a hyena change into a wolf?
or a lion into a leopard?
That won’t be possible
Think of your origin

Don’t betray your culture
A graceful giraffe cannot become a monkey

Adornments cannot beautify you
Your original elegance is enough
Black colour is beautiful
Colour of our skin and hair
What you do lets you down
Remember my sisters
Whether back or white
Beauty is natural

-Julius Kam Mganga (“Beauty is Natural” Poem printed in the Daily News, August 16, 1987)

Over the course of the 1980s, the genre of “Exemplary Women” features I
described in the previous chapter began to disappear.9 One reason for this is perhaps

9 “Women Told” articles continued to appear throughout the 1980s. Most of these articles addressed the themes I discussed in the previous chapter. Women were encouraged to work hard, improve their self-confidence, and fight for Socialism and Self-Reliance. For example, the following headlines were printed between 1982 and 1990: “Be Confident, Women Told” (Daily News, Dec. 31, 1982), “Be Productive, Women Told” (Daily News, Aug. 1, 1984), Double Efforts, Women Told” (Daily News, Oct. 5, 1984),
because few urban women during the 1980s were engaged in the kind of productive labor sanctioned by the state. During this period of economic crisis, many urban women began to seek alterative sources of income in the informal economy. According to Aili Tripp, beginning in the early 1980s, women increasingly left their positions in the formal employment sector in favor of personal income generating projects referred to as *miradis* midogo (little projects). She estimates that by the mid-1980s, women made up only 9 percent of the formal sector wage labor force in Dar es Salaam (1989). In 1984, Marjorie Mbilinyi pointed out that the largest proportion of wage earning women were employed in the informal sector and depended upon street trade, beer brewing, agro-processing, and prostitution.\(^\text{10}\)

While the “socialist superwoman” began to fade from state discourses in the 1980s, discussions of the urban consuming woman proliferated. Narratives of the consuming woman during the 1980s were framed around a few controversial products, specifically those associated with a distinctly “white” style of beauty. Skin-bleaching formulas, cosmetics, and hair dying, curling, and straitening kits became the center of debates over women’s practices of consumption and respectable urban womanhood in Dar es Salaam. Amy Stambach (1999) has examined these debates over imported fashions in the Letters to the Editor page of Tanzanian state newspapers and argued that women’s fashions objectified opposing viewpoints of the economic, political, and social changes taking place in Dar es Salaam in the 1980s. She points out that for some Tanzanians, products

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\(^{10}\) “Equal Opportunities for Women Urged” *Daily News*, Aug. 22, 1984
like skin-bleaching creams, cosmetics, and hairkits represented increased corruption and
a loss of cultural identity, while at the same time indicating for others the progress of
personal and national development. Within these debates, Stambach notes, letter writers
frequently conflated anxieties over young women’s bodies and practices of consumption
with concerns over the health of the body politic. In this section, I build on her
observations by analyzing how these debates over skin-bleaching creams, cosmetics, and
hairkits emerged in the early 1980s and were mobilized throughout the decade to
comment upon women’s bodies and practices of consumption. However, while
Stambach’s analysis of the state-owned papers begins in 1988, I found that these
intensified debates over cosmetic products began as early as 1982. I argue here that for
almost the entirety of the 1980s, representations of these commodities and the women
who used them remained predominantly negative. Therefore, in the next two sections, I
examine these dominant perspectives in the state papers. In the conclusion, I discuss the
emerging voices in the late 1980s that offered alternative readings of these products and
their users.

The beauty products that became the center of debates in the 1980s were not
necessarily new to Tanzania. Many had been available in the country since before
independence and some had been banned during Operation Vijana in the 1960s.
However, the discussions of these commodities in the 1980s were in some ways
markedly different than those of the previous decades. Perhaps the most immediately
noticeable difference is the tendency by the 1980s to question the impact of these
products on women’s bodies. Journalists, letter writers, and other contributors to the
papers often described the effects of cosmetic products in terms of health and disease. For
example, one of the first extensive pieces published concerning imported beauty products was a feature written by female journalist Halima Shariff called “Skin Bleaching Hazards.” Shariff begins her feature by arguing that it was becoming increasingly common for women in Dar es Salaam to use skin-bleaching creams to change the color of their faces. She urges women to rethink this practice and lists the detrimental side effects that accompany these products. She argues that after a temporary change of color, the skin “softened,” causing even a minor scratch to result in “profuse bleeding.” Other features and letters also commented upon the physical dangers of cosmetic products, claiming that use of skin bleaches, curlkits, and make-up caused a “myriad of medical problems” including sores, rashes, bleeding skin, hypertension, premature aging, softened bones, itchy lesions, broken hair, prematurely grey hair, scalp cancer, skin disease, and heart, chest, and kidney problems.

Other letter writers also used narratives of disease to describe the bodies of women who used cosmetic products, although many did not list medical symptoms, but rather accused women of destroying their bodies and transforming into something ugly and unrecognizable. One opponent of lipstick warned women that they were blindly imitating a “foreign culture,” and that while women may have thought that cosmetics made them more attractive, in fact they resembled “creatures who cannot even be classified by biologists.” Another man called cosmetics “a colonial cultural mentality that spoils the natural beauty of African girls” and claimed he felt nothing but disgust when he saw a

11 “Skin Bleaching Hazards” Halima Shariff, Sunday News, Dec. 12, 1982


woman who “smeared herself pink-red when her complexion is black or brown.”\textsuperscript{14}

Perhaps the most graphic description of women who used cosmetic products was a letter to the editor written by Johnny Makoroma in 1984. In the letter, he castigates

The species of women who are so ‘sophisticated’ that they don’t mind fumigating their hair of it’s ‘black shame’ with chemicals from America and Europe so that it approximates the more up to date hair of the Caucasians…the species of our daughters and sisters who are ‘educated’ just to the right level to be able to operate the famous ‘curlkit’ and use it to manhandle their beautiful natural African hair until it cringes and curls into cadaverous wisps of humiliation.\textsuperscript{15}

Makoroma goes on to describe a woman who uses lipstick as “a vampire who has been having her lunch,” women who bleach their faces as “cadaverously beautiful,” and women who use curlkits as having “funny looking debris of hair on their skulls.” The imagery of diseased female bodies used by these men to critique women’s consumption and use of these products highlights the “foreign” nature of these commodities. These letters accuse women of destroying their “natural” bodies in an attempt to imitate the appearance of white women.

The dichotomy of natural (read: black/African) versus artificial (read: white/Western) beauty framed many of the descriptions of consuming women. As the poem in the beginning of the chapter indicates, many Tanzanians feared that women were trying to use beauty products to change into something else, namely white women. Skin-bleaching creams, cosmetics, and hairkits in this context became antithetical to “natural” African beauty. Many Tanzanians in the state newspapers who opposed these products cited the idea that beauty was natural and cosmetic adornment was a foreign and artificial

\textsuperscript{14} “What’s in Lipstick?” Letter from James Maiyolo, \textit{Daily News}, Sept. 11, 1985

attractiveness. Take for example, this letter entitled “Artificial Beauty” by Aziz Varda in which he describes the “modern girl” living in Dar es Salaam:

> The modern girl has fallen far below the ideals of womanhood…She is over busy with physical adornment. Lipstick and rouge powder and cream, up-to-date maxis and blouses are her obsessions. One of her greatest ambitions is to be well-dressed and to look beautiful not by her natural charms, but with the help of artificial aids to beauty.16

Another man compared cosmetics to “a neocolonial dose taking root in our cultural minds.” He called upon women to stop “aping the white man’s appearance and mannerisms…preserve our natural blackness.”17 Shariff’s piece echoes these sentiments. According to her, urban women used skin bleaching creams and other cosmetic products because of their supposed lack of self-confidence, dwindling African pride, and desire to emulate “Western women.” She writes that skin lightening “clearly shows the inferiority complex harbored by most of our women…they believe that dark skin is unattractive and that one should struggle to get rid of it.”18 The idea that woman suffer from an “inferiority complex” is not new here, but rather emerged from decades of state rhetoric that blamed women for their own subordinate social status by claiming women’s “mental attitudes” were somehow lacking. Like the other letters quoted above, Shariff encouraged women to overcome these attitudes by embracing their authentic “Africanness.” She writes that the solution to the increase in skin bleaching was for women to “fight this complex and remain as natural as they are.”

These pieces in the state newspapers discussing the dangers of certain beauty products can be read as more than just concern over women’s bodies and appearance.

Rather, I contend that these commodities were perceived by many Tanzanians (especially men) as the material manifestation of Tanzania’s increasingly vulnerable position in the global economic and political order. Tagalile’s comment that Tanzania was becoming a dumping ground for more developed nations takes on new meanings in this context. Compare his statements with the following pieces discussing the importation of beauty products:

A lot of African hairdressers are using cheap and dangerous chemicals passed off by manufacturers in developed countries to the Third World countries. Some of these chemicals have been declared dangerous abroad and even banned. The capitalist countries are so lustful for profits that they sell their trash to the Third World (Chemi Che-Mponda “When the Head Gets Wet” Sunday News, Oct. 14, 1984).

Some women think by curling their hair they enhance their beauty. They ignore the myriad of medical problems that underlie the practice. But why should women jump for artificial beauty—even at the expense of their health? …Our shops are stocked to the ceiling with chemicals and cosmetics which have been banned in Europe and America…Who authorizes the importation of such chemicals, cosmetics, and associated gadgets when our hospitals go without medicine, when we go without clean water, when our transport system is diabolical? Who issues the foreign exchange to the businessmen who import such junk? …The government should stand up and take notice. Our women do not need the trash we see in shops (Dionister Temba “Curl Your Hair and Die Soon” Daily News, Oct. 30, 1988).

In these pieces, the body of the consuming woman who purchases and uses imported beauty products becomes symbolic of the health of the body politic. Women’s supposed desire for “artificial” as opposed to “natural” beauty makes them and therefore the nation vulnerable to the dangerous chemicals and waste being imported from wealthier countries. Women who used skin bleaches to lighten their skin, curlkits to change the texture of their hair, and cosmetics to change the color of their skin were seen as quite literally embodying a white/Western style of beauty that was “unnatural,” and therefore dangerous.
While many of the pieces from the state papers describe women’s bodies as unattractive and in various states of disease and decay, this perspective is only a partial truth. As Burke (1996) has shown in his analysis of cosmetic products in Zimbabwe, women who used these products became objects of desire as much as subjects of criticism. As I show in the next section, one of the reasons consuming women were portrayed so negatively in these pieces was that their practices of consumption and beauty made them simultaneously desirable and unattainable for many men living in Dar es Salaam. Again the body of the consuming woman can be read as a metaphor for the changing landscape of commodities in Dar es Salaam. While more products were available than ever before, the distinction between who could take advantage of these new commodities only became more pronounced in the 1980s. Many of the consumer goods desired by urban dwellers seemed to be out of their reach. In the next section, I explore this notion of desire through narratives of consuming women and sugar daddies, focusing specifically on how women’s consumption of beauty products was implicated in their sexual relationships with older men.

“Cost of Living, Cost of Loving:” Consuming Women, Sugar Daddies, and Gender Relations in Dar es Salaam in the 1980s

Figure 4.1. Dezo, by James Gayo (Daily News, Aug. 4, 1989)
These three comics printed in 1989 begin to gesture towards some of the tensions surrounding urban relationships in Dar es Salaam during the late 1980s. Each cartoon touches upon different (but related) issues concerning sexual relationships and women’s practices of consumption. The first scene takes place in a bar (a spot frequently associated with “immoral women) between a young man and a young woman with curled hair. The woman is confidently informing the man that her “ration” comes from

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19 The Dezo comic strip appeared in 1988 and was printed in the Daily News for no more than a year or two. Unlike more explicitly political cartoons that frequently appeared on the second page of the paper, Dezo commented upon everyday life in Dar es Salaam, and often portrayed relationships between men and women. Another similar comic strip appeared around the same time and was called Leo Kivumbi. Both of these cartoons were centered on the life of a young man living in Dar es Salaam.
cosmetics, clearly alluding to her ability to get money from rich male admirers. Women who used cosmetic products were assumed to be doing so for the sake of attracting men, as indicated by the jealous husband in the second cartoon who suspiciously asks his wife who she is “trying to impress” by using a curlkit to change her hair. The final cartoon captures one of the most pervasive fears expressed by men writing to the paper; the concern that women were only dating them for their money and that women would leave the relationships when men were no longer able to satisfy their desires.

As this series of cartoons indicates, urban women’s consumption of imported beauty products in the 1980s provoked anxieties not only about Tanzania’s weak economic position, but also about changing gender relations in Dar es Salaam. The tensions surrounding the relationship between money and sexuality in urban relationships emerged here as a critique of young women’s consumption and desires. The most common theme in these conversations was the relationship between “consuming women” and “sugar daddies.” The sugar daddy is the unspoken figure eluded to in the three Dezo cartoons. In the first, he is the rich man who gives Shangingi her “ration,” in the second the potential lover of the man’s wife, and in the third, the man who is now most likely dating this angry young man’s ex-girlfriend. Narratives about sugar daddies and their girlfriends were not new to the 1980s, as I have shown in the previous chapter. However, during the 1980s, the number of pieces in the state papers addressing these sexual relationships between young women and older men increased substantially. As this series of comics indicate, cosmetic products appeared time and again in discussions of consuming women and their “godfathers.” According to most journalists and contributors to the newspapers, women who had relationships with sugar daddies used their sexuality
to maintain an expensive beauty regime that was designed to lure men into their cycle of conspicuous consumption.

The portrayal of consuming women who had relationships with older men is almost always negative in the state papers, since it was assumed that these women were employing illegitimate strategies for economic survival, namely, prostituting themselves to get money and gifts. One feature written by female journalist Chemi Che-Mponda in 1984 captures many of the themes structuring narratives about consuming women and sugar daddies, especially the articulation between female sexuality and urban women’s desire for material accumulation. Entitled “When Sugar Daddies Meet Sugar Babies,” the piece begins with a description of Ruth, a single secretary working in Dar es Salaam who embodies what I have been referring to as the “consuming woman.” According to Che-Mponda's description, “Ruth’s salary is very small, but she lives beyond her means. One would not know Ruth is just a typist seeing the way she dresses. She is also after a husband who can maintain her expensive living habits.” The kind of man Ruth desires, in other words, is a sugar daddy. Che-Mponda offered this definition of the sugar daddy for readers:

A sugar daddy is a married man of any age who runs around with young women and girls who are not married. They come in all shapes and sizes. However the older ones are more permanent and more noticeable…At some point in their lives all men can become sugar daddies.20

Women’s desire for conspicuous consumption is cited by Che-Mponda as the reason women and girls fall victim to these men. Arguing that “the lust for money among urban girls is great,” she describes schools, hostels, and work places as the spaces where

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women’s competitiveness emerges and drives them to engage in questionable relationships with married men. She writes,

Young women are always competing with each other when it comes to dresses, shoes, make-up, perfumes, and various hairstyles, including the wet look. They compete as to who eats at the most expensive hotels through lunch and dinner offers. They meet with each other and compare notes about their Sugar Daddies, then go to the Sugar Daddies and demand more from them.

Che-Mponda’s description captures the cycle of sex and material accumulation structuring narratives of the consuming woman and her older sexual partners. However, as the title of this section indicates, many young men felt that the “cost of loving” was at odds with the “cost of living” in Dar es Salaam. The author, Wilson Kaigarula, pointed out that only “some people were earning enough money to give girls money and presents.”21 The distinction between men who could afford to have relationships with young women and those who could not became even more pronounced during the late 1980s. In 1985, Mwinyi implemented the Open Funds Import Scheme, which allowed people who had been hiding foreign capital during the period of the Economic Sabotage Campaign to purchase licenses for import businesses and make a large profit. Urban men who had the resources were able to increase their wealth substantially through import contracts, giving them access to both money and gifts to entice women. However, this group of wealthy entrepreneurs remained a minority. Most men in the 1980s found themselves in a difficult situation as a result of increasing inflation, rising prices in consumer goods, and escalating unemployment, making the idea of satisfying a demanding girlfriends a daunting prospect. Men writing to the paper often discussed the excessive desires of urban women with hostility. In another feature, Kaigarula describes

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young men’s concerns that they are “dealing with lovers who are likely to switch
loyalties according to the ‘heaviness’ or ‘lightness’ of the items dished out.” Cosmet-
ics were perceived by young men as an indication of women’s desire to
attract older wealthy men. In a letter to the editor, Alex Mwakanyamale castigates
women who use lipstick, arguing

Most of our sisters use these things only to be embellished, hence to compete in
netting sugar daddies with their good earnings and as a result these girls can’t get
married because many young men are dismayed with their character.

The frustration felt by Mwakanyamale and other men writing to the papers concerning
women’s seemingly impossible demands indicate the anxiety many young men as they
envisioned the difficulty of marrying and raising a family on their steadily decreasing
wages. Only older, wealthier men, with their “good earnings” are perceived as able to
satisfy the desires of these lipstick-wearing women.

The accusations directed at single urban women by urban men are interesting when
compared to women’s actual role in the economy during the 1980s. While many of these
pieces portrayed women as completely dependent on older, wealthier men, in actuality
women in Dar es Salaam were beginning to gain a new degree of economic autonomy
through their projects in the informal sector. According to Tripp, women’s income
generating projects allowed them to earn an independent income and often increased their
autonomy and power within the household (1989). However, despite (or perhaps because
of) women’s increased mobility and economic independence, they were still frequently
accused of making most of their money through sexual relationships with wealthy men.

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To further explicate these fears surrounding women’s practices of consumption, sexuality, and beauty, I turn to a story printed in 1990. This story, written by Henry Muhanika, was called *Ana’s Money Spinning Project*. This brief narrative ties together many of the anxieties surrounding urban “consuming women” that I have been discussing: women’s preference for “artificial” beauty, women’s perceived desire for material accumulation, women’s sexual relationships with sugar daddies, women’s susceptibility to foreign products, and women’s participation in the informal economy. In the story, Muhanika describes his female protagonist, Ana Sheba, as “27 year old spinster” who was “a beauty to reckon with.” She lives in the city and works as a telephone operator at the National Garment Limited. However, what makes Ana unique is her expensive lifestyle, which is incompatible with the salary she makes at the garment company. Muhanika gives detailed descriptions of Ana’s practices of consumption. For example, we are told that Ana visits a fancy hair salon every month to “have her hair roasted and twisted so that in the end of the process it looks artificial and un-African.” She also spends large amounts of money buying make-up, perfumes, creams, lotions, soaps, and other products “readily available in the era of free trade.” Ana is also known for her expensive and fashionable clothing and she has a preference for imported clothing rather than the local clothing made at her place of employment. She owns over 100 pairs of shoes so that she does not have to wear a pair more than a few times a year and wears gold jewelry everyday. Her apartment is in the “whites only” section of town and she also rents another apartment in the “middle-class” section of town. She eats well and will

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inform dates that it is better not to take her to lunch if they cannot afford to buy her whatever she wants.

Before Ana became so wealthy, however, she lived an ordinary life. She had been expelled from secondary school for indiscipline and moved to the city to find work. She got her job as a telephone operator through an uncle who worked there and lived with him and his family for two years. During the mid-1980s, however, the economic situation strained her uncle’s family and she decided to move out since she was now comfortable in the city. At first, she rented a simple room and lived like any other single girl, but soon her standard of living began to rise as she “steadily embarked on the road to elegance and accumulation of worldly possessions.” Her fellow workers were baffled by her ability to spend so much money on her limited budget and they began to ask what sort of mradi Ana had discovered. Because normal miradi activities, such as cooking or selling in the streets, were not for Ana (who was too sophisticated), people began to wonder if she had found a rich sugar daddy, although there was no evidence for this. Finally it is discovered that she has been earning her money by “hunting dollar-loaded tourists in expensive hotels.” She told colleagues that this money making project was so successful that “she stopped having any dealings with poor black men including self-styled local millionaires.”

After confessing her money-spinning project, it is discovered that one of the men she had been sleeping with died of AIDS and “Ana learned the hard way that her apparently lucrative project was actually a deadly one.” In the end we are told that Ana deeply regrets her previous actions and she wants to spend the time before her death teaching others “about the dangers of resorting to part-time prostitution as an mradi in
this world of strange and lethal Sexually Transmitted Diseases.” The last paragraph in the story is an explicit warning to other women and especially those who had been jealous of her elegant lifestyle. Muhanika writes, “Ana Sheba’s story is itself a warning to thousands of girls who have been envying her for her lifestyle all along and have even been tempted to follow her footsteps. On learning that she is now on the death queue, sensible ones might retreat.”

Ana Sheba is perhaps the ideal example of the urban consuming woman: she is a single, working woman living in Dar es Salaam, she is “in love” with conspicuous consumption, she prefers imported products to locally made commodities, and she has relationships with wealthy men to support her luxurious lifestyle. However, what makes Ana different from other descriptions of urban consuming women from the 1970s and 1980s was that she was not satisfied to date “poor black men” or even “self-styled local millionaires.” Instead, her appetite for conspicuous consumption led her to the newly built tourist hotels where she could find foreign men to accommodate her desires. However, in the end her disdain for African men resulted in her contracting a deadly disease from the “other” with whom she was so enamored (i.e. white, wealthy capitalists). AIDS here is used as a moral punishment not only for Ana’s refusal to date black men, but also to critique her uncontrolled sexuality and her decadent practices of consumption.25 The reference to her sexual exploits as an mradi indicates some of the tension that surrounded these new enterprises for women and shows the suspicions that

25 For more on the AIDS as a moral discourse of women’s mobility and consumption, see Weiss 1996. In his ethnographic study of Haya men’s perspectives on women, AIDS and consumption, he discovered that many men perceived women who had sex to get access to money and gifts as “buying their own graves.” The narratives of the men he interviews resonate strongly with the kinds of opinions I found in the state papers.
miradis could lead to prostitution and a thirst for more wealth. Far from making women more independent, in this narrative, miradis lead them into dangerous and uncontrollable patterns of sexuality and consumption.

This narrative about Ana Sheba ties into my earlier arguments concerning the relationship between images of diseased female bodies and anxieties over the political, economic, and social changes taking place in Dar es Salaam in the late 1980s. I have argued in this chapter that women’s bodies and practices of consumption became idioms through which people expressed concern over the health of the body politic at a time when socialist rhetoric and practice were slowly losing legitimacy. However, it is important to note that these metaphorical connections between individual women’s bodies and the national body were not merely symbolic, but rather fully imbricated in techniques of power and control. Women who purchased and used imported cosmetic products to attain a distinctly white/Western style of beauty literally made national boundaries porous and allowed the “disease” of neoliberalism to enter the nation. Under these circumstances, curbing women’s consumption and desire through exhortation, criticism, name-calling, and the threat of disease became mechanisms through which to maintain control of individual bodies as well as the political body.26

Conclusion

As I have noted before, narratives of women like Ruth and Ana Sheba did not necessarily reflect the attitudes and actions of urban woman in Dar es Salaam in the 1980s. While there were most likely women who used sexual relationships as a strategy for gaining access to money and goods, my discussion of the consuming woman should

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26 For other works discussing the relationships between individual bodies and the body politic, see Lock and Schepet-Hughes (1987) and Martin (1994)
not be read as a description of any individual woman, but rather as an idiom through which definitions of legitimate consumption and urban womanhood were defined and negotiated. While narratives of consuming women reveal much about the anxieties surrounding the rapid changes taking place in the 1980s, they can obscure as much as they reveal about the lives of urban women. While descriptions of urban women in the state papers remained distinctly negative throughout the 1980s, in reality women in Dar es Salaam actively creating strategies to take care of themselves and their families. In many cases, these discussions about consuming women are initiated by men speaking to other men about women’s attitudes and behavior. However, as I discuss in the conclusion, by the end of the 1980s, these negative portrayals of the consuming woman in the state papers were beginning to be challenged by people who questioned the definitions of legitimate consumption offered by the state. In this chapter, I offered perspectives that equated consumption of cosmetics with a loss of “natural Africanness” and a betrayal of socialism. In the conclusion, I offer examples of the few voices that were beginning to challenge state definitions of socialist consumption in favor of a style of consumption based on the individual accumulation of wealth.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

While during the 1970s and early 1980s, most contributors to the state newspapers portrayed women’s consumption negatively, by the end of the 1980s, a wider spectrum of opinions were being printed in the Daily News and the Sunday News. Some people began to question state definitions of legitimate consumption and to argue for their right to purchase and use commodities labeled as “decadent” or “luxurious” by the socialist government.¹ In regards to the discussions taking place concerning women’s consumption of beauty products, some people argued that there was nothing inherently problematic about consuming these imported commodities. In one letter, entitled “Nothing Wrong With Lipstick,” Montanus Lilanzi claimed that cosmetics should not be considered a new or modern product. He argued, ”the so-called make-ups were also applied in the past. They were locally made and they were known even before modern lipstick.”² Here Lilanzi situates cosmetic products within a longer history of beauty and adornment. From this perspective, make-up and other cosmetics did not appear threatening because they were not linked to a foreign and dangerous culture, but were rather part of Tanzania’s cultural history. Several other letters defended the use of cosmetic beauty products as well. Some contended that practices like hair curling were

¹ It is also important to note that while discussions of women’s consumption practices had been dominated by men throughout the 1970s and most of the 1980s, by 1987 women’s voices began to appear in the public forums of the state-owned papers.

² “Nothing Wrong With Lipstick” Letter from Montanus Lilanzi, Sunday News, July 12, 1987
“fine and okay” or “just a fad.” A letter from two girls in secondary school argued that if cosmetics were really dangerous, the WHO would have banned them before they entered the country. In this case, these girls are appealing to a power above and outside of the Tanzanian state and mobilizing international discourses to defend their right to use certain products.

Other people living in Dar es Salaam in the late 1980s also offered positive assessments of increased imports and trade liberalization more generally. In a feature called “Fashion: Is it Affordable?” Pudenciana Temba interviewed women about their views of the recent influx of imported fashions. While some people she interviewed claimed that life was better in the days before trade liberalization, others took a different point of view. One girl said that she and her friends “thank trade liberalization.” She went on to say that the whole issue was “not of paramount importance…let the things be in the shops, those who can afford to buy will buy and those who cannot, leave.”

Moreover, by the late 1980s, women were writing to the papers to challenge the stereotypical views of women as the ones who destroyed relationships through their practices of consumption. In a letter entitled “Some Men Are Selfish,” Nellie Kidela accuses men of being chauvinists. She argued that men encouraged their wives to consume because having an attractive sexual partner made men look good. She also pointed out that men’s practices of consumption were not above criticism, and argued

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that in most situations it was men who squandered money. According to Kidela, if men did not give money to their wives to buy clothes and beauty products, men would just “have gone to spend it on booze.”

All of these pieces defend women’s consumption of beauty products from different perspectives. While some argue that cosmetics are not dangerous or not foreign, other contend that these commodities are “just a fad” or even “not of paramount importance.” Others, like Kidela, defend women’s consumption and challenge male views that women are in love with conspicuous consumption. However, as I stated in the introduction, Ibrahim’s letter differed from these other responses from defenders of cosmetics. Ibrahim was one of the first and only people in the late 1980s to defend people’s right to purchase and use luxury items like cosmetics for their own personal pleasure. His suggestion that “after food and shelter, man needs objects and pleasures including cars, TVs, and fashionable dresses” only becomes striking when compared with the previous fifteen years of state rhetoric. A statement like Ibrahim’s that people should consume “decadent” products to fulfill individual desires would never have appeared in the state newspapers even a few years earlier. Indeed, in the early 1980s, this statement would have identified Ibrahim as an “economic saboteur” and a traitor to the nation.

This returns me to Ibrahim’s initial question: Is use of cosmetics anti-socialist? Throughout this paper, I have engaged this question, not so much to provide an answer (because there were multiple opinions on the matter), but rather to explore why and how this question emerged at a particular historical moment. I have attempted to show that the shift from socialist to neoliberal economic policies in Tanzania during the 1980s was often negotiated through conversations long regarded as trivial or tangential within
academic theorizing, such as the political and economic status of lipstick. I have argued that viewing socialism and capitalism as modes of consumption can offer new insights into how people actually experienced political, economic, and social changes in their everyday lives. In this study, I have used gendered consumption as an analytical perspective to trouble teleological narratives of the “transition” from socialism to postsocialism by showing how important continuities were embodied in the figure of the urban “consuming woman.” Moreover, I have attempted to show that the figure of the consuming woman was shaped by perceptions of gender, race, class, and age and became at many times a site where the boundaries between respectable and immoral womanhood were defined and contested. Finally, bringing the “consuming woman” to the forefront of my analysis has allowed me to examine the complicated ways that political economy is always powerfully shaped by gendered discourses and practices.
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