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INSIDE THE NUMBERS: USING PRIVATE COMMERCIAL DATA TO ANALYZE EAST AFRICAN IMPORTED SOAP CONSUMPTION, 1870-1914

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Social historians identify soap as a “new need,” and argue its consumption indicates changing notions of bodily cleanliness, beauty and status. Relying largely on qualitative evidence such as traveler and missionary accounts, print advertising and oral interviews, they contend African soap use was influenced by Christian missions, colonial education and branding in the marketplace. Quantitative evidence – limited customs data – neither confirms nor challenges this position. More detailed commercial records, however, paint a somewhat different picture. The East African correspondence of William O’Swald & Co. indicates that soap marketing predated both Christian missions and colonial influence. Further, general purpose laundry soap was the overwhelming best seller. Personal toilette soaps lagged far behind. Laundering imported cotton textiles appeared the motive for initial soap purchases, and perhaps also the first step toward later personal soap use.

Social historian Timothy Burke recently identified soap as a “new need,” an important element in the development of early, colonial African consumer-commodity culture.¹ Drawing upon a Southern African example, and relying upon qualitative evidence, he contended that African soap use was influenced by Christian missions, colonial

education and branding in the marketplace. In particular, Burke argued that changing popular manners, hygienic practices and self-image became bound up with, or “commodified” by soap.² The East African example, and quantitative evidence, however, qualifies this interpretation. Quantitative evidence – commercial sales records – indicates that soap had a much longer history East Africa, predating the influences Burke identified. Moreover, the toilette soaps Burke emphasized, expressly intended for bodily washing, accounted for a very small percentage of overall sales, and then only in a select few urban areas. Instead, for more than half a century, laundry or general purpose household soaps comprised the overwhelming majority of sales. Thus, it could be argued that in the East African case, soap entered the market as a complementary good to the greater “new need” of the nineteenth century – imported cotton cloth. And over time, through a much wider variety of influences, and with the experience of laundering, more and more people adopted it for bodily washing.

Why Soap?

Economic historians have overlooked nineteenth century African consumption of imported soap for a number of reasons. The early literature mostly approached imports as stimuli to export production.³ It emphasized demand for cotton textiles, metal wares or firearms. Since manufactured soap was a minor import, it was ignored. In German East Africa, textile imports dwarfed those of soap – in 1913 textile imports were 7.5 times greater by weight, and 36 times greater by value.⁴ The later historical literature focused on imports as substitutes for indigenous wares, stressing the displacement of indigenous crafts, and sometimes the further release of raw materials used by these for export.⁵ Since manufactured soap did not displace production like textile imports did domestic weaving, or wire and hoe imports did African iron smelting, it was once again overlooked. True, many raw materials used in soap were harvested in East Africa, but manufactured imports did not directly factor into the release of copra or peanut oil for export. Finally, economic historians neglected manufactured soap because it rarely appeared as a separate category in official customs records until after the turn of the century.

Social historians, until Burke's contribution, have also ignored soap. Like economic historians, most have stressed major imports like textiles or beads.⁶ Influenced by post-modernist theories, they all associate increased demand for "Western" goods with underlying cultural and ideological change, in particular the shaping of new individual and group identities. But few so far have connected categories of imports, an assemblage which points to a more complete consumer, commodity culture.⁷ Instead, most have focused upon either the mediating role of colonial institutions or indigenous acts of appropriation. Finally, nearly all rely on qualitative evidence: anecdotes from missionary or traveler accounts, memoirs, oral interviews or advertising – and early references to soap in these sources are infrequent. Soap, therefore, is a neglected, often missing piece of the commodity culture puzzle, but one that might connect categories of goods and illuminate changing consumer attitudes.

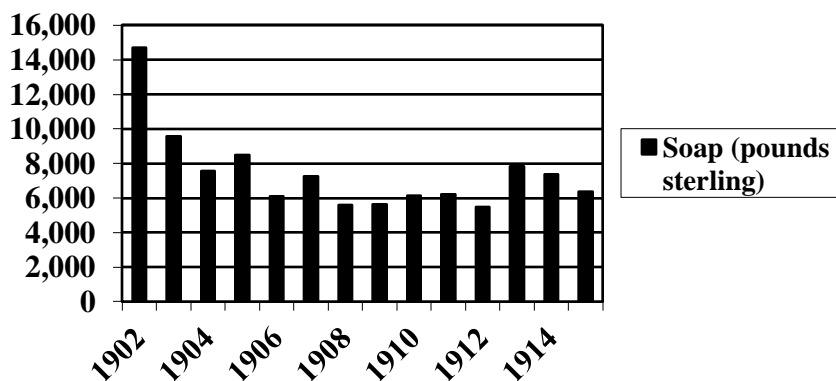
The Problem

While social history analyses, like Burke's, are strong on the popular motives behind import consumption, they are sometimes weak on the details of historical process. Burke presents an excellent analysis of soap consumption between 1920 and 1950; however, his study lacks a strong preamble, a process linking precolonial cleanliness or early colonial soap use to later colonial commodity culture. It may well be that in his Zimbabwe case study, Africans suddenly adopted soap for ideological motives; but this seemingly abrupt transition might also simply reflect the silence of his historical sources.⁸ Moreover, Burke makes contemporary assumptions about his evidence, projecting contemporary categories far back into the past. He links contemporary soap use to notions of bodily cleanliness, and hence categorizes soap with toiletry or beauty products.⁹ For the postwar era, this connection works quite well. Yet, for the late precolonial or early colonial periods it might not. In turn-of-the-century East Africa, soap was primarily associated not with personal hygiene, but with laundering, and it was considered a household product by most in the trade.

Better quantitative data on early imported soap consumption would go a long way toward clarifying these issues, in particular if it were to identify who consumed soap, when, in what quantities and of what kind.

Inside the Numbers: East African Soap Consumption

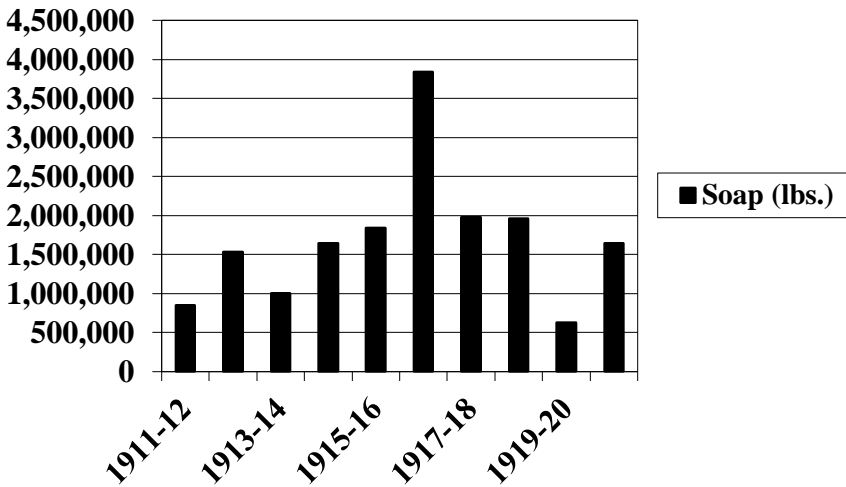
Such empirical evidence would outline the trajectory and scale of multiple soap consumption trends, and thereby provide a more detailed perspective on African soap use as an historical process. Unfortunately, obtaining adequate statistical data for such a study is difficult. Nineteenth century export statistics from Western, manufacturing countries are far too general to include a lesser export like soap.¹⁰ Likewise, sporadic import totals from the Zanzibar Sultanate fail to include soap. Thus, while references in some travelers' accounts imply an active East African soap trade, there is little "official" data for the late precolonial era.¹¹ British and German East African customs statistics are available for the early colonial period, but these too are over-general and incomplete. Colonial Zanzibar soap imports, outlined in Figure 1, were not listed as an individual category in protectorate customs reports until 1902, nearly two decades after the item became popular, and nearly half-a-century after it was first imported. These numbers, moreover, combine re-exports bound for the mainland with soap imported for local consumption. Thus, the downward trend in Fig.1 reflects Zanzibar's diminished colonial status as an entrepot, not necessarily declining soap consumption on the island.



Source: *Statistical Abstract*, 1918, p.134.

Figure 1
Zanzibar Soap Imports by Value.

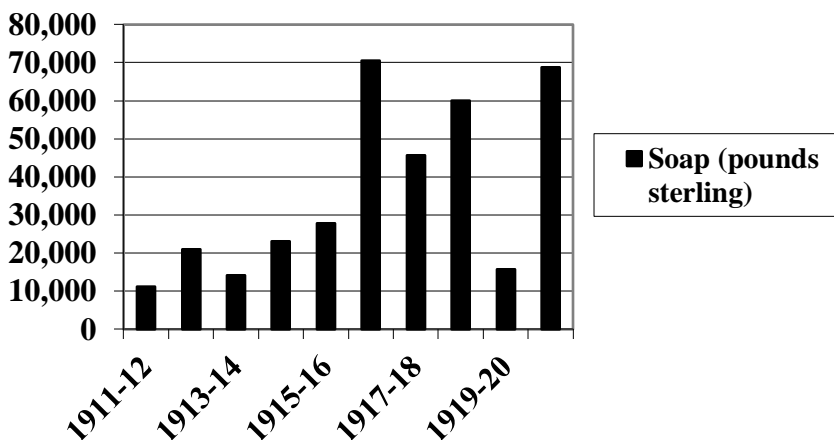
British East Africa Protectorate customs records listed soap totals much later, beginning in 1911-12. Moreover, the sharp, wartime peak in Figures 2 and 3 is difficult to explain. An official report labeled it an oversupply, resulting in an inventory worth several years. However, it is unclear whether this speculation anticipated more widespread consumption by Africans, or simply greater sales to wartime, colonial expeditionary forces.



Sources: Compiled from: *British East Africa Annual Report 1914-15. Customs Report.* Pages 5-6, Table 1; *British East Africa Annual Report 1915-16. Customs Report.* Pages 5-6, 18, Table 1; and *British East Africa Annual Report 1919-20. Customs Report.* Page 29, Table 1.

Figure 2
British East Africa Soap Imports by Value

Inside the Numbers: East African Soap Consumption

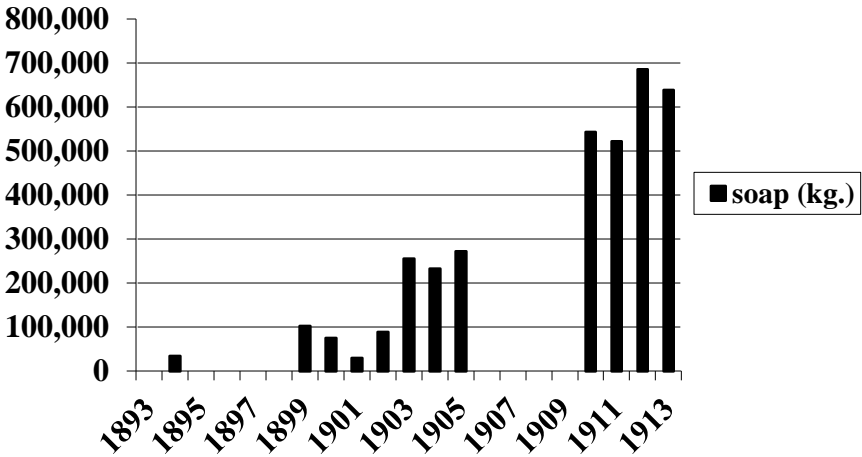


Source: Same as Figure 2.

Figure 3
British East Africa Soap Imports by Value.

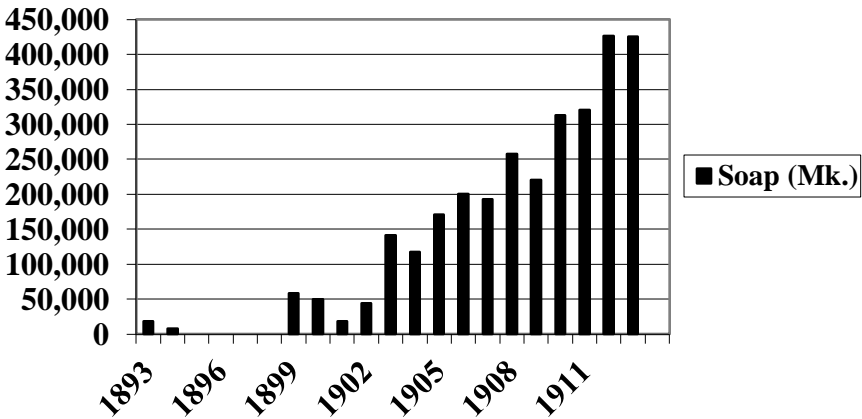
The German East African customs totals in Figures 4 and 5 are the most complete; yet they also illustrate the problem most acutely. They clearly indicate a turn-of-the-century increase in soap consumption. The pace, mathematically at least, appears rapid. But the numbers are too highly aggregated to reveal how widespread the trend truly was. Customs statistics rarely identify the varieties of soap imported. Moreover, they stop at the port. They give little indication of how and where soap was distributed, who consumed it, and in what proportion. All that really might be extrapolated from such data is an overly general, and perhaps misleading, measure of colony-wide, per capita soap consumption. To proceed any further, it is necessary to get inside the numbers.

Jones



Source: Compiled from: Aüswärtiges Amt, 1900-05; and Statistischen Amt, 1894-1915.

Figure 4
German East African Soap Imports by Weight.



Source: Same as Figure 4.

Figure 5
Soap Imports into German East Africa by Value

Methodology

African economic historians have largely ignored qualitative and quantitative evidence from private commercial correspondence. Some manufacturers, import-export houses, and shippers either left or still maintain archival repositories of product specifications, local African market reports or shipping, and sales receipts. These records are often not without gaps in time, and sometimes neglect particular market segments; but such evidence provides far greater detail than official sources; and thus can be employed to disaggregate trends within the broader customs numbers.¹²

To this end, William O'Swald & Company, a turn-of-the-century firm dealing with imports and exports between Hamburg and East Africa, was quite active in soap distribution, and many of its records still survive.¹³ The firm maintained its East African headquarters on Zanzibar from the late-1840s through 1914 and, after 1899, expanded to the mainland, and subsequently operated branches in Bagamoyo, Mombasa, Dar es Salaam, Tanga, Mwanza and Tabora. Diversified and competitive, O'Swald & Company at times held leading market shares in key imports, though interestingly in soap, a lesser import, the firm usually ran in the middle of the pack.

O'Swald & Company's inability to dominate in soap, works very much to the historian's advantage. While O'Swald may not often have featured the best seller, it always tried to keep up by copying the leader, and thus sales records may be taken to be broadly representative of trends in the market. Moreover, because of the firm's struggles in soap, O'Swald's records exhibit little complacency on the subject. The Hamburg home office pressed the Zanzibar general agent and various branch managers to boost import sales, and in response the men on the spot provided frequent reports, not only detailing their own difficulties, but also describing the products and outlining the strategies of their competitors. Discussions of soap in the O'Swald correspondence revolve around wholesale networks, retail methods, varieties and brands, quality, weights and prices, sales trends and market share. And from this evidence it is possible to:

- 1) Identify individuals who were wholesalers of imported soap, and their retail networks.
- 2) Determine popular varieties or brands, across East Africa, or in specific locations.
- 3) Discern periods of keen interest in particular soap varieties.
- 4) Track and measure changing dimensions and properties of imported soaps, and, from these exercises, make inferences as to who consumed soap, where, in what quantities and for which purposes.

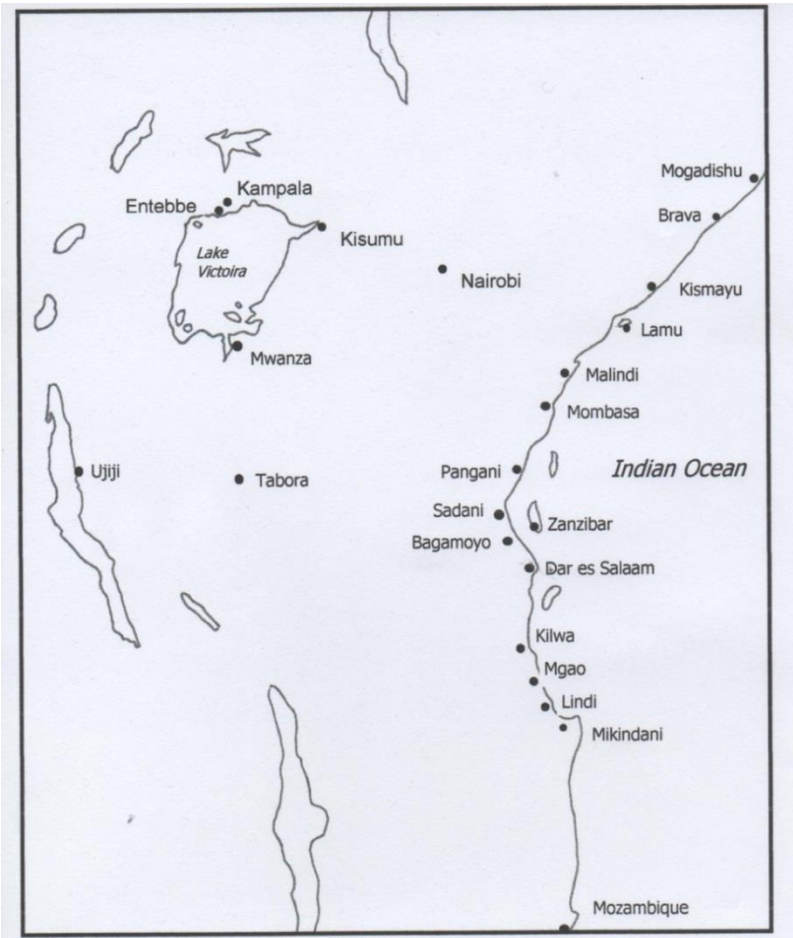


Figure 6
East Africa, 1910

Emerging Commodity Culture

In East Africa, a map of which appears in Figure 6, demand for soap grew within the context of an expanding global economy, and in connection with an emerging array of imported goods, in particular cotton cloth. Commodity culture – the identification with an assemblage of imported, manufactured goods – began in the early nineteenth century, and its subsequent development largely predated the influences ascribed by Burke: Christianity, colonial education and advertising. The adoption, substitution or appropriation of imported goods was a gradual process, as consumption spread along caravan routes and later rail lines to the interior. And it proved an uneven one, as there was considerable variation in style, tastes and needs across regions, classes and communities. Cotton cloth, however, proved the central, unifying “new need.” Throughout the nineteenth century it remained the largest consumer import category by value and volume, and by the early twentieth its use had become nearly universal.¹⁴

On the coast, increased raw material exports paired with increased demand for consumer imports. Wealthy from caravan trade and plantation agriculture, coastal merchants desired the prestige goods of the Indian Ocean world, especially Arabian and South Asian woven and printed cotton textiles; along with new status markers like clocks, mirrors, kerosene lamps and umbrellas.¹⁵ Slaves and ex-slaves, along with free farmers and fishing people – the coastal poor – also gained greater access to imports, as cheap, industrially-manufactured goods from North America, Europe and South Asia flooded East African markets. Respectability was an important theme. Many slaves and ex-slaves sought the goods and more traditional cotton attire they considered in keeping with their new Swahili-speaking, Muslim identity.¹⁶ But so too was personal autonomy, as many slave and ex-slave women became bold fashion trendsetters, acquiring body jewelry, umbrellas and colorful cotton prints.¹⁷

On the coast, imports were foreign in origin, but largely familiar in form. A few constituted “new needs” in that they were quite novel, even transformational.¹⁸ Most, however, were industrial variants or facsimiles of established, Indian Ocean favorites, and constituted “new needs” only in that many people had long admired the original, but now could

actually afford the industrial ware. This was particularly the case with textiles. Indian dye and print workshops, increased output and lowered costs by first transitioning to imported English raw cloth in the early nineteenth century, and then to raw cloth from new Bombay mills after mid-century. European mills also turned out lower cost imitation wares for the wider Indian Ocean market. For example, English and French print handkerchiefs, imitations of South Asian head wraps, were exported to Zanzibar from the 1840s. William O'Swald & Co. worked with a Swiss mill on facsimiles of Muscat cloth in the 1870s and 1880s.¹⁹ And finally, by the late nineteenth century, a few imported print textiles developed as new styles, like the *leso*, *malabari*, and *kanga*, women's two piece wraps. Not strictly imitations of older favorites, these were largely local Zanzibar designs, communicated to Bombay print workshops or European mills through importers like O'Swald, and shipped for the next season.²⁰

Such long distance trade also extended to many communities beyond the coast, and in fact, they consumed the majority of imported manufactures. Unlike local or regional networks, throughout the nineteenth century long distance trade was generally limited to products with high value per weight – principally ivory and human captives, though also cattle, and closer to the coast, hides and skins, and later, wild rubber. Regional elites often controlled the extraction or capture of such exports and, therefore, so too the reciprocal flow of imports. Elites required English firearms and gunpowder, both to further extraction and maintain power. However, they also demanded a wide variety of imported prestige goods: cotton textiles, glass and porcelain beads, metal wires and bottled alcohol, not only for themselves, but also for their allies and local supporters. And, just as on the coast, elite tastes along the caravan routes ran to Indian Ocean styles, especially in cotton cloth. *Kaniki* cloth, Muscat cloth, *kikoi* cloth, Indian satins, and dyed handkerchiefs all denoted status.²¹

Many ordinary people gained access to imports during the caravan era. Tens of thousands of young men and women traversed the routes as porters, and many rural communities sold produce to passing caravans. Interestingly, to some extent these new import consumers emulated elites, acquiring many of the same goods. Male porters invariably sought

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guns, along with elements of coastal attire: *kikoi* cloth, red *bendera* cloth for head wraps, belts and later fezzes.²² Farmers sought imported iron wire and beads, both as currency and adornment.²³ Above all, however, nearly everyone sought unbleached white sheeting, especially the durable, heavyweight import from New England mills, popularly known as *merikani*. A malleable intermediate good, white sheeting could be wrapped, cut, dyed or tailored to fit any local style.

Finally, rural populations became even more engaged with import consumption during the early colonial period, when steam transport rendered the export of their produce profitable, and at the same time considerably lowered the cost of manufactured goods. Shops vending imports sprang up in rural markets radiating out from the rail lines, and increasingly roving traders offered imports in exchange for crops and animal products. Most rural people, even those who had not consumed imports before, demanded goods familiar to them – staples of earlier long-distance trade like wire, beads, or prestige cloth.²⁴ O'Swald & Company, for example, enjoyed its best sales of imitation Muscat cloth designs between 1903 and 1914, as many men sought to emulate the dress of earlier elites. Rural consumers also substituted much cheaper, industrial facsimiles for local wares, like iron hoes and knives. A few people preferred the new – the goods migrant laborers often returned with – like matches, lanterns and kerosene, cigarette papers, playing cards, umbrellas, boots, blankets, suitcases and, of course, t-shirts and *kikoi* cloth for men, and *kangas* for women.²⁵ Nearly everyone, however, purchased *merikani*.

Soap as a Complementary Good

Perhaps one of the greatest attractions of cotton cloth was that it could be repeatedly rendered bright, comfortable and sanitary through laundering. Most indigenous attire could not. Some was more or less disposable. Raffia, or shredded palm fiber, for example had a rather short lifespan, and was simply repaired or replaced when well worn. Other attire, like bark cloth, did not take water well. In the Lake Victoria region people fumigated it on a basket frame, scenting it with aromatic burning wood or grass.²⁶ Otherwise, bark cloth was stretched out to be heated in the sun, and then folded and pressed.²⁷ Hides and skins were

washed during preparation, but thereafter regularly oiled.²⁸ By contrast, indigenous cottons and early cotton cloth imports were washed throughout their useful life. Soaking, pounding and rinsing could be accomplished simply with water. And in precolonial Western Tanganyika, a cotton cloth weaving area, people made a cleaning solution from the shredded bark and leaves of a “soap” tree, which produced a sudsy liquid when soaked in water.²⁹ It is not clear, however, the extent to which it was effective or convenient.³⁰

As it became more available, consumers adopted soap as a complementary good to cotton cloth, since they needed it to best retain the greater comfort, color and hygiene of their new imported attire. Imported soap possessed many advantages over indigenous cleaning methods or agents, especially for laundering cotton cloth. Relatively compact in its solid state, soap was easily handled, moved about or stored. It was less perishable. It could be applied in concentrated form or diluted, by a number of actions like scrubbing, smearing or soaking. And most importantly, soap was water soluble and it chemically bound with fats and oils. Thus, washing with soap and then rinsing actually removed both soap residue and grease or dirt.

Interestingly, in the East African interior, soap itself became indigenized. Soap-making techniques diffused along the central caravan route, in the wake of cotton cloth imports, during the second half of the nineteenth century. Later anthropological accounts noted that in Tabora, a key caravan hub, local people boiled down animal fat, together with wood ash for lye; when it gelled, they molded the paste into soap cakes or balls.³¹ A similar technique appeared in Buganda, at the northern end of the route a few decades later. There, an observer claimed “Arabs” or coastal traders had introduced soap making, though by the 1890s it was carried out by market women, who sold the soap balls for laundering imported cottons.³²

Despite their complementary relationship, for many decades the level of soap imports languished relative to those for cotton cloth. The two products’ sales did not advance in sync. In part, this disparity reflected the pace of industrialization. The textile industry experienced productivity gains throughout the nineteenth century, and many of the most significant innovations came early. Raw cotton prices fluctuated,

but generally tracked downward. Hence, cheaper cloth arrived early. The industrial manufacture of soap, however, did not even occur until mid-century, and cost reducing innovations came largely from ingredient substitutions and applications of chemistry in the second half of the century. Thus, cheaper soap arrived much later. In part too, the lag also reflected soap's much higher transport cost. While imported soap could be efficiently distributed along the coast, by sea, it had far too little value per weight for high volume, human portering into the interior. There, imported soap was a luxury and local production served market towns, until the establishment of rail line and lake steamer connections around the turn of the century sharply reduced the cost of bulk imports.

Early Soap Marketing

From the outset, O'Swald & Company marketed soap as a popular product. Apparently, so too did its competition. O'Swald's Zanzibar branch initially distributed imported soap either to large-scale laundries or through networks that supplied small-scale, neighborhood vendors.³³ Interestingly, O'Swald records listed few if any up-scale clients taking soap. Zanzibar bazaar merchants rarely placed large orders. O'Swald regularly imported a range of toiletries: perfume, especially eau d'cologne, scented waters, perfume bottles and mirrors; but on Zanzibar, sales of early toilette or personal hygiene soap proved disappointing. Instead, as early as the 1880s, local merchants classed soap as a *taka taka* item – an immediate household need.³⁴ Thus, imported soap largely retailed in neighborhood shops, kiosks or open markets, grouped with other popular, *taka taka* items: European or South Asian imports like rice, vermicelli, *samli*, sugar, tea, matches, kerosene and tobacco.³⁵ In that trade, Bombay foodstuffs yielded most of the profits.³⁶ Retail margins on imported soap were slight, and any return came from cutting fresh bricks or sticks of soap into pieces for “small change sales to Africans.”³⁷

Later, on the mainland, O'Swald distributed soap much more widely. O'Swald recorded its first soap transaction with a coastal wholesaler in 1881, though sales there did not really pick up until the mid-1890s.³⁸ By the early 1900s, nearly every mainland wholesaler or shopkeeper on O'Swald client lists placed occasional soap orders, indicating widespread

use both in coastal towns and their rural hinterlands. Bagamoyo caravaneers began making orders for the Tabora route in 1902.³⁹ And after the construction of the Uganda Railway, O'Swald sent large soap shipments to customers in Uganda, and later to its own wholesale branch on Lake Victoria, at Mwanza. Thus, imported soap consumption in interior towns and some more distant rural areas lagged about two decades behind the coast. Moreover, despite greater geographic coverage, and presumably an even more diverse customer base, soap sales trends at these locations tracked similarly to those on Zanzibar. Most wholesale clients requested cheap soap, for retail as a *taka taka* item, not more expensive personal hygiene, bar soap varieties. Some Mombasa and Nairobi vendors eventually ordered toilette soap; but elsewhere, commercial demand was simply for multi-purpose household or laundry soap.

Both on Zanzibar and the mainland, few importers marketed soap like or as a "Western" product. While several European manufacturers ran personal hygiene and household cleanliness-oriented advertisements, these came relatively late, after 1910, and were printed in English, with European figures and images, in newspapers read largely by European settlers or South Asian merchants.⁴⁰ O'Swald directed no similar campaign toward its wholesale clients or their African customers. Instead, the firm's general manager on Zanzibar opined that the best way to make a new soap product known was simply to display it in as many shops and kiosks as possible.⁴¹ The firm simply labeled its soap crates, "Oswald soap" and "first quality" in Swahili in Arabic script.⁴² In their correspondence too, O'Swald managers implied that most local discussions of soap used Swahili nomenclature. Moreover, O'Swald, made little effort to Westernize the appearance of its soap imports. Once, the Zanzibar branch attempted paper wrapping, largely to preserve the soap better, but quickly abandoned the idea.⁴³ And for many years the firm found little success with European bar soaps. The only popular, "Western" association that O'Swald agents did trade on concerned quality. Like every importer on Zanzibar, O'Swald sought to imitate the markings on competitors' best-selling brands; in this case, for example, the eagle stamp on some American resin soaps or the three stars on Gossage Imperial. Both retailers and consumers identified with goods by

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their point of manufacture. Brown resin soaps, for example, were known as *sabuni merekani*.⁴⁴ Thus, initially, imported soap would appear to have been popularly regarded more as Western in origin, than Western in kind.

As manufactured soap became established in East African markets, between 1880 and 1914, any “Western” influence upon consumer tastes appears to have been mediated through local or regional commercial networks. There is little evidence in the O’Swald correspondence that either Europeans or their colonial institutions pioneered or widely modeled the use of soap. Christian missions, schools or other colonial facilities never factored into O’Swald’s client network or marketing strategy. In fact, Christian missions rarely placed orders with them, and further were little discussed in any sales or market reports. No doubt missions used and promoted soap among their converts, but in the overall scheme of soap sales, their early role remained minor.

Instead, on Zanzibar, O’Swald relied chiefly upon two wholesalers, Lodda Maujee and Alidina Canjee to distribute the bulk of their imports.⁴⁵ The proprietors of these firms were of South Asian origin and Muslim. They and others like them organized the soap trade, within the context of their wider enterprises – cotton cloth wholesale, *taka taka* wholesale, and laundering. Their client retailers – South Asian and African – offered soap to the public. It is doubtful any were Christian. And few could have afforded a colonial education in South Asia; most arrived impoverished, and attempted to become self-made men in East Africa. Like everyone else they knew imported soap from laundering and the cloth trade. Thus, while much of the soap vended was “Western,” most agents of modernity in the colonial market place were not.⁴⁶

Gauging Consumer Demand

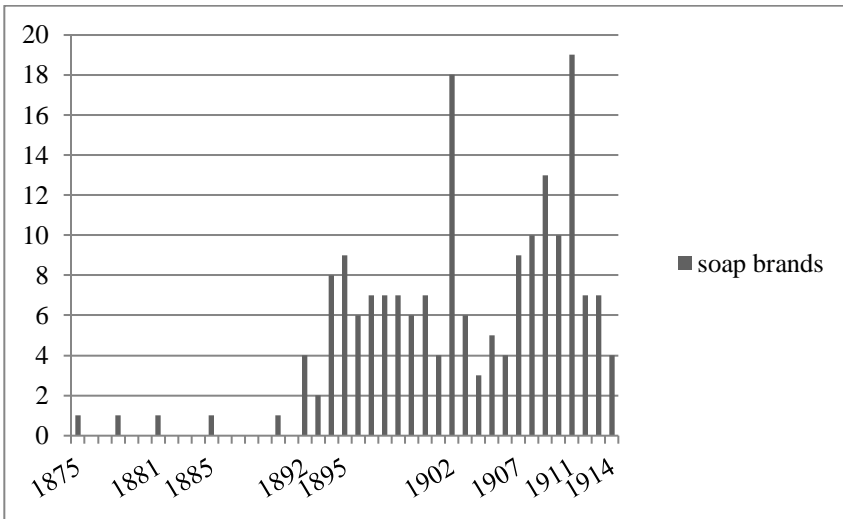
O’Swald correspondence makes clear that while soap was first imported around mid-century, it was not widely consumed on Zanzibar until the early 1880s. Its use spread to the coastal towns in the early 1890s, and then along transport routes in the interior at the turn of the century. This temporal and geographic pattern of expansion is consistent with the annual increases in soap imports recorded in East African

customs reports, and thus increased imports might be explained by an expanding, popular, customer base. However, wholesale orders, sales invoices and brief market summaries also suggest that shifts in consumer taste – more frequent use by some or perhaps new applications by others – may also have contributed to increased demand. Interestingly, each significant rise in customs import totals for soap also correlates with the introduction of new varieties or brands.

O'Swald employees carefully tracked import sales trends, alert to new brands or products with the potential to capture market share. Whenever a competitor introduced a successful import, like a new soap brand, O'Swald agents quickly obtained samples. They reported price, weight and measure information to Hamburg, along with any observations as to popular reaction. If a popular new entry undercut O'Swald sales, the Zanzibar and Hamburg offices drew up specifications for a facsimile ware, and relayed these to the firm's contracting manufacturers. Thus, in the case of soap, when sales were steady and O'Swald's lines were in a strong position, there was relatively little mention of the competition's brands in routine correspondence. However, when the soap market was in flux, or when O'Swald's share was decreased by new entries, references to other varieties or brands dominated reports to Hamburg. In particular, from quantitative analysis of the O'Swald import correspondence, as shown in Figure 7, four junctures stand out: 1894-5, 1902-3, 1907-8 and 1911.

The first spike in 1894-95 reflected heightened interest in blue and red mottled soap. Sales had been increasing for nearly a decade, and thus, by the mid-1890s nearly every importer was attempting to capture market share with a new brand, or profit by developing a low cost imitation of a best seller. References in the O'Swald correspondence perhaps underestimate the trend. O'Swald occupied a very strong position in soap at the time. In 1896 it held the lead with 31 percent of the Zanzibar market, nearly all of it red and blue mottled.⁴⁷ Therefore, perhaps overconfident, the firm's agents appeared lax in monitoring the competition.

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Source: William O'Swald & Company sales records, 1875-1914

Figure 7

Number of Soap Brands Mentioned in O'Swald & Co. Correspondence

At any rate, O'Swald correspondence certainly establishes that importers clearly focused their attention on mottled household or laundry soaps during the initial rise in East African soap consumption. Similarly, the second spike in 1902 corresponds with the debut of Seychelles soap, an inexpensive, regionally produced, gray mottled soap. O'Swald agents closely tracked this development, as the firm's sales slumped toward the end of the 1890s. Price competition in red and blue mottled soaps grew quite keen, after several firms developed successful imitations. Resin soaps also enjoyed a brief comeback in coastal towns. Most importantly, however, Seychelles gray mottled soap made rapid inroads into the cheap soap market segment. O'Swald correspondents noted African consumers on the coast preferred it to all other varieties. Apparently, with the market expanding, and market share up for grabs, nearly every firm experimented with new varieties or brands hoping to attract customers; and the most successful were those who produced very inexpensive

laundry soaps for an expanding market of new consumers on the mainland.

Later bursts of interest in new soap brands proved much more speculative. The third spike in 1908 resulted from competitive experiments in toilette soaps. While smaller, scented bars had been imported for some time; between 1906 and 1909 they finally found a niche in Mombasa and Nairobi. Sales were still by no means strong, but apparently importers expected much. Within the O'Swald organization, there was a flurry of correspondence about scented bars and nearly everyone appeared to be testing samples or new lines. Even local manufacturers got into the act producing knock-offs of well-known European brands. Unfortunately, importers failed to gauge consumer demand accurately. Heightened commercial interest neither reflected nor foreshadowed any widespread change in consumer behavior. Toilette soaps did not readily catch on with the wider public.

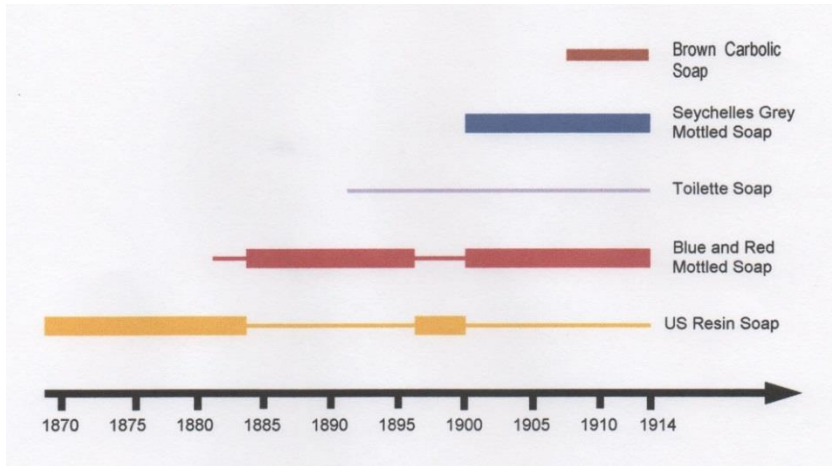
Similarly, the final spike in 1911 stemmed from O'Swald's panic over the entry of the Unilever Sunlight brands onto the East Africa market. Sunlight soaps enjoyed considerable sales in Kenya; and O'Swald agents in Mombasa collected samples and reported regularly on their progress. Unilever advertised its products heavily, and had considerable name brand recognition among European settlers and South Asian merchants. However, its soaps were not very price competitive, and thus did not penetrate broader working class or rural African markets quickly. Again, these later spikes in commercial interest do not fully explain the aggregate increase in soap imports. But the presence of major brand names like Sunlight, and the number of importers testing the market, certainly might indicate that by 1910, large metropolitan manufacturers deemed East Africa a potential growth market.

Leading Soap Varieties

The increasing number of brands and varieties mentioned in the O'Swald correspondence would seem to indicate soap sales were diversifying. However, more detailed descriptions in O'Swald invoices and shipping records qualify this finding somewhat, pointing more towards a progression of dominant best sellers. Therefore, if O'Swald sales records and observations of the competition may be taken as

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representative of the broader market, it would appear that only a few varieties generated an overwhelming share of sales.



Source: William O'Swald & Company sales records, 1870-1914

Figure 8
Leading Soap Varieties, 1870-1914

Figure 8 shows the leading soap varieties sold by O'Swald over time. During the 1870s, brown resin soap apparently sold best. It was virtually the only variety mentioned in O'Swald general correspondence.⁴⁸ Mostly of American manufacture, New England trading houses monopolized early resin soap import. O'Swald agents collected competitors' manifests from the Zanzibar customs house, and summaries of these indicate both the Boston Ropes and New York Cheney firms delivered American brown resin soap in enormous quantities, from 50,000 to 75,000 lbs. per shipment, along with American cotton cloth and kerosene.⁴⁹ They distributed through the network of their chief client and benefactor, Taria Topan.⁵⁰ O'Swald soon followed suit with an American soap, Morgan's Eagle brand. Later, it attempted to market a British imitation, complete with eagle markings, but this venture proved unsuccessful on price and quality. Resin soap remained popular on Zanzibar, especially with launderers, through the late-1880s. It was also the favorite on the southern coast well into the 1890s.⁵¹ Resin soap

imitations enjoyed a brief resurgence in popularity across East Africa just before the turn of the century, but thereafter sales leveled off.⁵²

Brown resin soap's popularity resulted from its familiarity, cost and cleaning power. American resin soap, or *sabuni merikani*, arrived early, and therefore many on Zanzibar formed a strong association with it. And interestingly, on the mainland brown resin soap must have appeared rather familiar to some, since it was produced from tallow and wood ash, through the boil-down method, much like the local soaps along the central caravan route.⁵³ Moreover, by the 1870s, resin soap had also become relatively cheap. American consumers increasingly viewed it as inferior to new, vegetable oil soaps, and its manufacture there was declining.⁵⁴ Essentially, American brokers dumped it in East Africa. And later, Gossage developed low cost brown resin soap for the British India market, which was often diverted to East Africa. Finally, brown resin soap enabled extreme cleaning. A very hard soap, it was molded into large oval bricks or cakes which might be gripped for vigorous scrubbing. And most importantly, genuine American resin soap was a very concentrated lye soap, and hence quite caustic.

Actually, brown resin soap not so much lost sales as it failed to gain them. If the number of soap invoices in the O'Swald correspondence provides any indication, popular soap use increased considerably after the mid-1880s, and much of this new or additional consumption was of mottled soap. O'Swald first tested it in 1881.⁵⁵ According to the firm's invoices, demand steadily increased, such that by the early-1890s, blue and red mottled soap became best sellers. O'Swald routinely dispersed 20,000 to 40,000 lb. shipments on Zanzibar.⁵⁶ Moreover, by the mid-1890s, nearly every import house on Zanzibar carried a mottled soap line. English brands, like Gossage, became the most sought after, and the most widely imitated. O'Swald went with two Hamburg brands, MP, a red, and MBP, a blue.⁵⁷ These were heavily consumed both on the coast and in the interior. Even at O'Swald's most distant branch, Mwanza, on Lake Victoria, for example, red and blue mottled soaps stood out as clear favorites.

Mottled soap, sometimes called Marsailles soap, was an industrial imitation of high quality, olive oil based Castille soap. Soap makers achieved the blue or red marbling by adding ultramarine or iron oxide

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during saponification, largely for cosmetic effect. Launderers, however, interpreted the coloring as an indicator of quality, since the water content of the soap had to be below one-third in order to suspend the pigments. Thus, mottled soap tended to be hard, and was more concentrated than resin soaps – it delivered more cleaning power per weight.⁵⁸ Gossage pioneered industrial mottled soap during the 1860s by substituting lower cost palm kernel and later coconut oil as the vegetable fat, and employing industrial caustic soda for alkali. Thereafter Gossage further lowered the cost by inserting 20 to 30 percent filler, initially silicate of soda or as it was termed in the trade, “liquid glass.”⁵⁹ Thereafter, many imitators produced cheaper and cheaper mottled soaps with a wide variety of oil blends.⁶⁰ By the 1890s, blended or filled mottled soap was the cheapest on the market, generally going for 20 percent less than brown resin soap.⁶¹ Not surprisingly, mottled soaps became the leading soap exports to Africa and Asia, since they offered the cultural advantage of vegetable oil soap, with considerable cleaning power, at a lower price than other industrial competitors.⁶²

After the turn of the century, grey mottled soap from the Seychelles also gained popularity, especially with rural African consumers.⁶³ Between 1903 and 1905 it appeared poised to dominate the market on Zanzibar, but by 1913 genuine Seychelles had receded to a 6 percent market share.⁶⁴ Nonetheless it influenced the market considerably. Seychelles soap was actually a light blue, mottled soap, manufactured from imported caustic soda, ultramarine and East African copra. Some said it had a grey appearance, and somewhat softer texture, which many Africa customers clearly preferred. Seychelles soap cost as much as 30 percent less than comparable imported all copra soaps, probably as a result of its lower transport costs on local sailing vessels and bulk packaging in repurposed kerosene tins.⁶⁵ It also proved consistently fresher than other, more distant imports, which often dried out shortly after arrival.⁶⁶ O’Swald and other importers directed their European manufacturers to produce a grey mottled imitation; however, they struggled to compete on a price or quality basis. O’Swald correspondence further indicates that a number of local entrepreneurs, encouraged by the success of Seychelles soap, gradually opened additional small-scale soap works on Madagascar, Zanzibar, and in

Mombasa and Tanga.⁶⁷ Blue and red mottled imports still retained considerable sales, but only because the filled or mixed oil varieties still ran about 15 percent cheaper.⁶⁸ Thus, with local competition, importers had to continuously hold down the price of these in order to retain market share.

Between 1908 and 1914, it would appear no single soap variety dominated. Instead, the market broadened with entry of a number of major brand names, and particular soap varieties settled into market niches. While Unilever aggressively marketed its Sunlight brand, correspondence from East Africa indicates that Gossage's brown carbolic soap quietly captured the high end of the household or laundry soap market. Gossage's was followed by other brand name competitors like Crosfield's Umbrella Brand, as well as a host of dubious brown carbolic soap imitations, relegating O'Swald to a shrinking middle tier with its better quality MP and MBP mottled soaps. O'Swald's imitation brown carbolic soap failed miserably. Filled mottled soaps and Seychelles soap competed for inexpensive sales, and thus ate into O'Swald's sales from the end of the market.

Gossage's brown soap was noteworthy on two counts. First, looking backward, it continued a line of colonial South Asian soaps. Bombay soaps enjoyed some success on Zanzibar and the coast during the 1880s and early 1890s. And much of the imported English mottled soap that displaced it had been formulated for the wider Asian market. Gossage as well produced its brown soap largely for colonial India, where it proved enormously popular. Many South Asian immigrant wholesalers, launderers and retailers clearly continued to select soaps familiar to them, and in that sense, East African soap consumers shopped as much in the orbit of colonial South Asia as they did "the West." Second, looking forward, Gossage's brown soap, like Crosfield's Umbrella and Unilever's Sunlight, had a new glycerin and vegetable oil formulation, somewhat less irritable to the skin.⁶⁹ It also contained carbolic acid, a coal tar derivative, which gave it antiseptic qualities as well as a distinctive odor. Some consumers came to associate it with clean laundry, others disliked the strong smell.⁷⁰ Most importantly, the new brown soap variety crossed categories. Brown carbolic soaps ran the gamut from Gossage's heavy duty laundering bricks to competitors'

somewhat milder, low-end toilette soap bars. And to this end, it should be noted that Lifebouy, the later Unilever brand Burke (1996) emphasized in his work, was a mild, red glycerin carbolic soap.

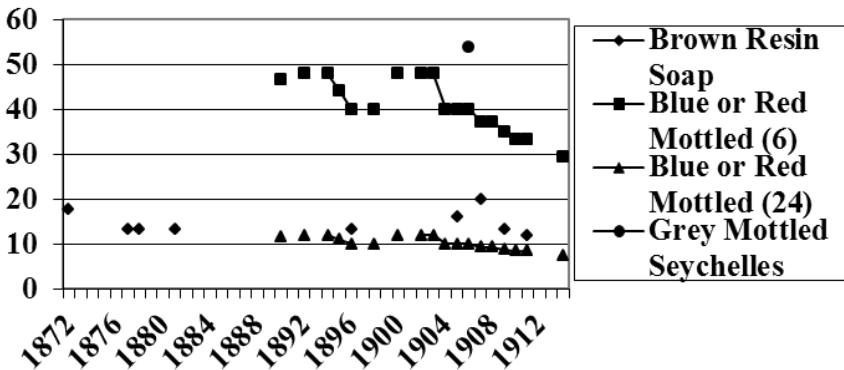
Laundry vs. Toilette Soap

While Burke's Southern African study linked soap use with changing notions of bodily cleanliness and beautification, East African importers, wholesalers and retailers dealt overwhelmingly in laundry soap from 1870 to 1914, and concerned themselves exclusively with its effectiveness in cleaning cotton cloth. In their records, O'Swald correspondents grouped soap with wash soda and ultramarine, and on occasion linked sales to cloth fashion trends. They appeared to have spoken often with their wholesale clients, and continually reported on the quality and cleaning power of laundry soaps. Every reference to a soap product's prospects regarded textile cleaning or brightening, especially whites.⁷¹ The Zanzibar office even tested new soap brands with their launderer.⁷²

Toilette soaps, those produced expressly for bodily washing, fared very poorly. Despite the introduction of major, international brand names, and repeated experiments with cheaper facsimiles, popular demand in the East African soap market remained overwhelmingly for inexpensive, bulk, laundry soap. O'Swald did not often keep running tallies of sales between varieties of its own soaps, however, in 1896, its Zanzibar manager reported that while the firm sold 14,000 cases of "large" soap, approximately 320,000 lbs., it sold fewer than 25 cases, or roughly 3,300 lbs. of scented soap.⁷³ Later, for 1901, the Zanzibar manager noted that the firm sold 15,092 cases of "ordinary" soap on Zanzibar and in Mombasa, approximately 271,600 lbs.; but it sold just 65 cases, or 8,184 lbs. of toilette soap.⁷⁴ And as late as 1911, on Zanzibar, O'Swald sold 9,328 cases of laundry soap as opposed to just 110 cases of toilette soap.⁷⁵ The pattern for sales in the interior appeared much the same. The Bagamoyo branch, which listed many caravaneers as clients, reported that for 1903 it sold 2,420 cases of bulk soap, but only 48 of toilette soap. In 1904 it sold 2,826 cases of bulk soap, to just 19 cases of toilette soap.⁷⁶ In fact, for O'Swald, toilette soap really only moved in

settler and commercial enclaves like Mombasa and Nairobi, and even there the firm only wholesaled 15 to 20 cases per month.⁷⁷

Cost certainly held back toilette soap sales. O'Swald did offer an imitation household toilette soap which wholesaled for just 10 percent more than the best quality mottled laundry soap, but the others in the line ran at least 50 percent more.⁷⁸ Moreover, these same toilette soaps wholesaled for at least 80 to 200 percent more than the least expensive mixed oil or filled mottled laundry soap.⁷⁹ The higher cost did not necessarily reflect profit-taking, but rather the fact that toilette soap simply cost more to manufacture. It was colored. O'Swald offered red, yellow, brown and blue. The more expensive soaps were scented. And toilette soaps were less caustic and thereby less irritating to the users' skin because they contained fewer alkalis and more expensive fats and neutralizing agents.



Source: William O'Swald & Company invoices, 1870-1914

Figure 9
Bar Weight (Ounces) for Laundry Soaps

Since it was manufactured expressly for bodily washing, toilette soap's limited function also proved an impediment to robust sales. Even low-end household toilette soaps were too small for vigorous scrubbing, and too gentle for heavy cleaning — Figures 10 and 11 illustrate typical uses of soap in Zanzibar around the year 1910. O'Swald's toilette soaps ranged from one to three ounces, whereas laundry soaps came in bricks,

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Source: Unattributed postcard, c.1910.

Figure 10
Women Washing in Zanzibar



Source: Postcard, A. C. Gomes & Son, c.1910.

Figure 11
Woman Washing in Zanzibar

sticks and bars ranging from ten ounces to three pounds. Although laundry soaps trended smaller throughout the period, as can be seen in Figure 9, they still remained much larger than toilette soaps. And while laundry blocks and sticks in particular were often cut into smaller square or oblong pieces at retail, they nevertheless afforded the option to work with a large piece longer, and therefore were much more easily gripped for hard application. And of course, toilette soaps were not caustic enough to lift dirt from cotton textiles, or strip grease from pots and pans.

Obviously, from sales record evidence, turn of the century East African consumers purchased laundry soap. Very few were willing to pay more for toilette soap, especially given that it did not launder well. Imported cotton cloth was the great “new need” of the nineteenth century, and imported soap entered their market basket as its complement. Nevertheless, people found further applications for laundry soap – washing pots and pans, household cleaning, or even bodily washing. O’Swald correspondence is silent on other uses; agents may not have been or aware or more likely did not perceive other potential uses as a strong selling point. Turn of the century soap industry literature on the region, however, does make reference to bodily washing with brown carbolic soap.⁸⁰ Anthropological and missionary accounts from the interior and coast also reference soap use, but note that bodily washing with imported soap followed later, after laundering, and that this was not initially a widespread practice.⁸¹ Most nineteenth century laundry soaps were simply too caustic for direct application to sensitive skin surfaces without rapid rinsing. However, the lye or caustic soda gradually diluted the longer suds remained in a basin, and thus the suds left over from laundering might be mild enough for bodily washing. And therefore for some, laundering cottons may well have served as the initial impetus to bodily washing with imported soap – not necessarily Christianity, colonial education or advertising.

Conclusions

A careful review of the East African example, and data gleaned from the O’Swald correspondence modifies Timothy Burke’s (1996) argument that soap was a new need, generated within Christian missions, colonial schools and the marketplace, and motivated by changing notions of

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beauty and bodily cleanliness. East African soap sales clearly predated the influence of Christian missions, colonial education or advertising campaigns. Moreover, during the early colonial period, most soap vendors and many consumers were unaffected by mission Christianity or colonial education. The overwhelming best sellers in East Africa, from 1870 to 1914, were laundry or general purpose, household soaps. While these might also be used for bodily washing, that was not their chief purpose. Early soap use therefore, might be better connected with the greatest “new need” and most popular import of the era – cotton textiles. Thus, the historical process through which consumers adopted imported soap was gradual; and if later notions of bodily cleanliness became commodified in commercial soap brands, it was only after long experience with household, laundry soap.

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NOTES

¹ Timothy Burke, 1996, p.2.

² Ibid, pp. 8-11.

³ A classic case in point would be C. C. Wrigley, 1959, who heavily emphasized desire for imports as motivation for cash crop production. Later, more nuanced studies would include: Elias Mandala, 1990; Robin Palmer and Robert Parsons, 1977; or John Tosh, 1978.

⁴ Statistischen Amt, 1915, pp. 464-5.

⁵ Juhani Koponen, 1988.

⁶ Recent studies include: Jean Comaroff, 1996; and Hildi Hendrickson, 1996.

⁷ One recent exception would be Jeremy Prestholdt, 2008. He both situated import consumption within an East African, coastal cultural and

ideological context, and discussed an array of goods, in particular those from South Asia.

⁸ *ibid*, p. 24.

⁹ Burke, 1996, p.4.

¹⁰ Abdul Sheriff, 1987, pp. 249-58.

¹¹ Sir Richard Burton, 1872, vol.2, p.424.

¹² Abdul Sherrif, 1987, p. 260, employed a similar approach, using American shipping company records to better understand Zanzibar textile imports during the first half of the nineteenth century.

¹³ The William O'Swald & Company correspondence was deposited in the Hamburg State Archives between the 1920s and 1960s, and survives largely intact. It is cataloged in the commercial papers collection, 621, number 1. There are numerous series, 1-27, for the firm's incoming and outgoing correspondence with its branches across East African and Madagascar. Correspondence is cited here by author, location, recipient, location, date, series, volume, letter, page number.

¹⁴ Like the customs numbers for soap, nineteenth century textile import statistics for Zanzibar are fragmentary. Abdul Sheriff, 1987, provides an excellent table of Bombay-Zanzibar trade in appendix a, along with references to mid- century British trade. For the colonial period, consult the *Statistisches Jahrbuch, 1894-1915* for German East Africa, and the *Statistical Abstract* for British East Africa.

¹⁵ For the tastes of the Zanzibari elite, consult Jeremy Prestholdt, , 2008, chs 3 and 4, and for the coast see Jonathon Glassman, 1995, chs.1-2.

¹⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁷ See Prestholdt, 2008 , chs. 3 and 4, as well as Laura Fair, 1998.

¹⁸ Kerosene, for example, provided cheap, bright light which pushed back the night and altered work, leisure and sleep patterns.

¹⁹ *Ibid*.

²⁰ See Jeanette Hanby and David Bygott, 1985; Elizabeth Linnebuhr, 1997; Laird Jones, 2000;

Lutz Schwidder, 2004, pp.446-9; and Mackenzie Moon Ryan, 2013.

²¹ Jonathon Glassman, 1995, pp.47-53; Jeremy Prestholdt, 2008 , ch.3.

- ²² Jonathon Glassman, 1995 , pp.59-64; Laird Jones, 1999; and Stephen Rockel, 2006.
- ²³ Juhani Koponen, 1988, pp.122-5
- ²⁴ Jonathon Glassman, 1995, p.46; and Laird Jones 1997.
- ²⁵ Laird Jones, 1999.
- ²⁶ Rev. John Roscoe, 1923, pp.237-8; 1921, p.221; and Margaret Trowell and K. P. Wachsmann, 1953, pp.180-85.
- ²⁷ Roscoe, 1923 , p.238.
- ²⁸ Wilhelm Blohm, 1933, p.85-6.
- ²⁹ Wilhelm Blohm, 1931, p.166.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Wilhelm Blohm, 1931, p.166; and Dr. Franz Stuhlman, 1910, p.49.
- ³² Paul Kollman, 1899, p. 33; and John Roscoe, 1911, p. 414.
- ³³ Framheim, Zanzibar to O'Swald, Hamburg, July 3, 1893. HSA 621-1/4/44; ad#21:3.
- ³⁴ Albert O'Swald, Zanzibar to O'Swald, Hamburg, April16,1893. HSA 621-1/44/4; ad#14:6-7; and Schipmann, Zanzibar to O'Swald, HamburgSeptember 2, 1895. HSA 621-1/4/46; ad#14:3-4.
- ³⁵ Framheim, Zanzibar to O'Swald, Hambrg, November 3, 1893. HSA 621-1/4/44, #37: attached sales receipt; and Oehlerking, Zanzibar to O'Swald, Hamburg, June 3, 1900. HSA 621-1/4/60, ad#17.
- ³⁶ Schipmann, Zanzibar to O'Swald, Hamburg, September 2, 1895. HSA 621-1/4/46; ad#14:3-4.
- ³⁷ Schipmann, Zanzibar to O'Swald, Hamburg, September 2, 1895. HSA 621-1/4/46; ad#14:3-4; and Anders, Zanzibar to O'Swald, Hamburg, December 16, 1899. HSA 621-1/4/94, ad to Mombasa letter:7.
- ³⁸ Grallert, Zanzibar to O'Swald, Hamburg, August 26, 1881. HSA 621-1/4/32.
- ³⁹ Receipts, DOAL Rotterdam-Bagamoyo-Dar es Salaam, February 24, 1902. HSA 621-1/4/64.
- ⁴⁰ See the *Weekly Standard*, Nairobi and the *Gazette*, Zanzibar.
- ⁴¹ Meyer, Zanzibar to O'Swald, Hamburg, December 12, 1909. HSA 621-1/4/94, #444, import letter: 3.

⁴² “Sabuni yumba Oswald” and “Sabuni yumba Koll.” Meyer, Zanzibar to Hamburg, November 26, 1909. HSA 621-1/4/94, #41, import letter: 7. O’Swald also printed customized labels in Swahili in Arabic script for large wholesale clients. Schipmann, Zanzibar to Hamburg, April 10, 1895. HSA 621-1/4/46, #13, import letter: 6.

⁴³ Meyer, Zanzibar to O’Swald, Hamburg, January 21, 1914. HSA 621-1/4/115, #5, general representative’s import letter: 2.

⁴⁴ *Warenhandel mit Ostafrika*, 1897-98, p.6.

⁴⁵ Framheim, Zanzibar to Hamburg, July 3, 1893. HSA 621-1/4/44, ad#21:3; and Schipmann, Zanzibar to Hamburg, September 2, 1895. HSA 621-1/4/46, ad#14:4.

⁴⁶ For an extensive discussion of modernity in an East African, coastal context, see Prestholt, (2008), 88-91 and 172-3.

⁴⁷ William O’Swald, Hamburg to Zanzibar, January 7, 1897. HSA 621-1/3/48, ad#1:24-6.

⁴⁸ There is one mention of “Liverpool” soap on a manifest from 1875. HSA 621-1/4/26. Otherwise, there are several references per year in the late 1870s to American resin soap. Indian soap may well have been imported too, though O’Swald references to it do not begin until the mid-1880s.

⁴⁹ Manifests. HSA 621-1/3/22:174-5; Manifest, February 23, 1881.

HSA 621-1/3/24:123; Manifests, April, 1881. HSA 621-1/3/24:146.

⁵⁰ Manifests, April, 1881. HSA 621-1/3/24:147.

⁵¹ Oehlerking, Zanzibar, October 20, 1903. *Berichte über Reise nach Kilwa und Chole von 21/9-9/10.03*. HSA 621-1/4/68:23.

⁵² Oehlerking, Zanzibar to O’Swald, Hamburg, December 11, 18966. HSA 621-1/4/48; ad#43:3-4.

⁵³ “Twenty-Five Years of Soap History,” 1897, p.15

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ William O’Swald, Hamburg to Zanzibar, March 9, 1881. HSA 621-1/3/24:106.

⁵⁶ Framheim, Zanzibar to O’Swald, Hamburg, June 17, 1893. HSA 621-1/4/44, #20:4; Oehlerking, Zanzibar to O’Swald, Hamburg, December 18, 1898. HSA 621-1/4/54, ad#41:13.

⁵⁷ For O'Swald's relations with its suppliers see Lutz Schwidder, 2004.

⁵⁸ Charles R. Partington, 1838, p.714.

⁵⁹ Charles Wilson, 1968, p.32.

⁶⁰ "Twenty-Five Years of Soap History," 1897, p.16.

⁶¹ Calculated from *Warenhandel mit Ostafrika*, 1897-8, p.6; O'Swald invoices and sales receipts: Bagamoyo, 1907, Mombasa 1901-3, 1908, Zanzibar 1901, 1905, 1912.

⁶² Charles Wilson, 1968, p.11.

⁶³ Oehlerking, Zanzibar to O'Swald, Hamburg, October 7, 1900. HSA 621-1/4/60, ad#32:3; and Anders, Zanzibar to O'Swald, Hamburg, June 5, 1910. HSA 621-1/4/99, ad import letter: 1.

⁶⁴ Unger, Zanzibar to O'Swald, Hamburg, June 30. 1912 to August 7, 1912. HSA 621-1/4/107, ad balance letter: 5.

⁶⁵ Calculated from *Warenhandel mit Ostafrika*, 1897-8, p.6; O'Swald invoices and sales receipts: Bagamoyo 1907, Mombasa 1901-3, 1908, Zanzibar 1901, 1905, 1912.

⁶⁶ O'Swald reports unendingly complain about shipments that either arrived dry, dried out a few days after unpacking, or had to be sold quickly because they would soon dry out.

⁶⁷ Meyer, Zanzibar to O'Swald, Hamburg, December 13, 1909. HSA 621-1/4/93, ad#43:2; Meyer, Zanzibar to O'Swald, Hamburg, May 1, 1909. HSA 621-1/4/94, #18:2.

⁶⁸ Calculated from *Warenhandel mit Ostafrika*, 1897-8, p.6; O'Swald invoices and sales receipts: Bagamoyo, 1907, Mombasa 1901-3, 1908, Zanzibar 1901, 1905, 1912.

⁶⁹ Charles Wilson, 1968, p. 32-8.

⁷⁰ Unger, Zanzibar to O'Swald, Hamburg, March 23, 1911. HSA 621-1/4/104, #13, import letter: 4.

⁷¹ O'Swald, Hamburg to Zanzibar, June 3, 1891. HAS 621-1/3/36, import letter: 5.

⁷² Oehlerking, Zanzibar to O'Swald, Hamburg, June 11, 1897. HSA 621-1/4/51, ad#19:4.

⁷³ O'Swald, Hamburg to Zanzibar, January 7, 1897. HSA 621-1/3/48, ad#1.

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- ⁷⁴ Oehlerking, Zanzibar to O'Swald, Hamburg, April 27, 1902. HSA 621-1/4/66, appended to ad#16.
- ⁷⁵ Unger, Zanzibar to O'Swald, Hamburg, June 30, 1912 to August 7, 1912. HSA 621-1/4/107, ad balance letter: 3.
- ⁷⁶ Meyer, Bagamoyo to O'Swald, Hamburg, January 23, 1904. HSA 621-1/16/2, #1:3-4 and Meyer, Bagamoyo to O'Swald, Hamburg, January 8, 1905. HSA 621-1/16/3, #1: 4.
- ⁷⁷ Mombasa Order Receipts, 1908. HSA 621-1/12/9.
- ⁷⁸ Calculated from *Warenhandel mit Ostafrika*, 1897-8, p.6; O'Swald invoices and sales receipts: Bagamoyo 1907, Mombasa 1901-3, 1908, Zanzibar 1901, 1905, 1912.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁰ James Carter, 1916, p. 61.
- ⁸¹ Rev. John Roscoe, 1911, p. 414; and Franz Stuhlman, 1910, p.125.

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