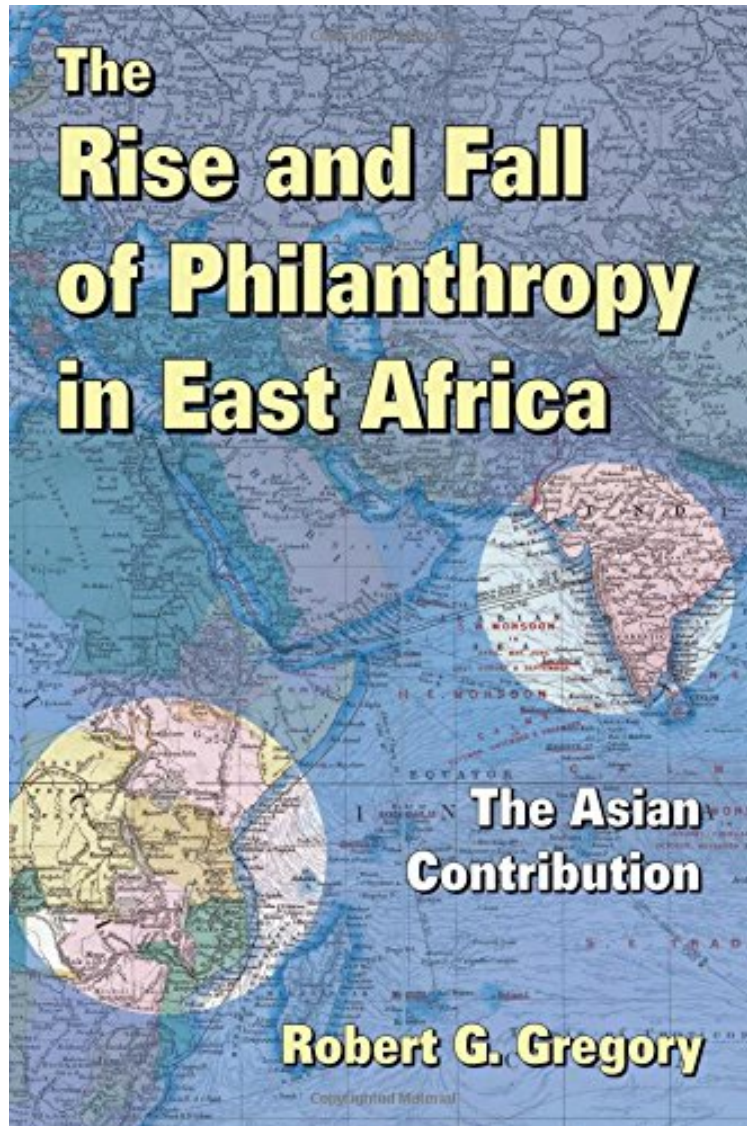


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The Rise and Fall of Philanthropy in East Africa: The Asian Contribution

Robert G. Gregory

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Robert G. Gregory : The Rise and Fall of Philanthropy in East Africa: The Asian Contribution before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Rise and Fall of Philanthropy in East Africa: The Asian Contribution:

Robert G. Gregory challenges the apparent assumption that non-Western peoples lack a significant indigenous philanthropic culture. Focusing on the large South Asian community in East Africa, he relates how, over a century, they built a philanthropic culture of great magnitude, and how it finally collapsed under the ascendancy of increasing state regulation and policies directed against non-African communities. Compelled by poverty to seek better opportunities overseas, most Asians arrived in East Africa as peasant farmers. Denied access to productive land and sensing economic opportunity, they turned to business. Despite severe forms of racial discrimination in the colonial society, they suffered few restrictions on their business enterprises and some became very wealthy. Gregory's historical analysis shows philanthropy as an important contribution, one that stemmed from deep roots in Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist culture. The sense of nonracial social responsibility cultivated social, medical, and educational facilities designed for all. This age of philanthropy terminated with the Asian exodus. The socialist and racial policies adopted by East African governments over the past few decades have virtually destroyed the foundation necessary for philanthropy as well as the distinct Asian cultural identity. Gregory's account of the East Asian's role in philanthropy deserves great attention and sober reflection.

This volume makes an important contribution to the literature on Asian communities in Africa. The subject, philanthropy among Asian communities from the 1920s to the great Asian exodus of the 1970s, has not received widespread attention. . . . An important underpinning of this study is that the core of Asian philanthropy was centered around individual and family efforts, with philanthropic organizations and cultural societies supported by individual entrepreneurs and wealthy families. Thus, corporate philanthropy as practiced in the West, was absent from Asian communities. . . . The book is well-researched and rich in primary sources. Interviews with individuals involved in Asian community life, commerce, and philanthropy enhance the text. The use of detail brings these communities to life for the reader, revealing something of the internal conflicts, contradictions, aspirations, and fears of Asians in East Africa. . . . [T]his is an interesting and readable book, with much to offer for those working in Asian studies, comparative education, African studies, and to general readers alike. Richard S. Glotzer, *The Journal of Asian Studies*

The Rise and Fall of Philanthropy describes the nature and function of Asian charitable organizations, and the establishment of religious and medical facilities and libraries as well as schools. Gregory acknowledges that the major impetus to philanthropic activity of Indian immigrants was lack of service availability specifically to Asians. Marina Tolmacheva, *African Studies*

Gregory. . . aims to challenge the Euro- and Americo-centric assumption that the roots of philanthropy lie in the Western world and that philanthropic acts of the non-Western people are not worthy of consideration. He gives a detailed account of the charitable organizations and activities of Asians in the social, medical, educational, and religious fields, and notes for the first time, the contributions made by them in the fields of arts and literature. . . . [F]ill[s] a major gap in East African historical literature. Years of hard work are reflected in the rich archival information, references, and interviews conducted with many Asian informants in different parts of East Africa. Richa Nagar, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*

Asians in East Africa were committed philanthropists. Ignored by colonial governments that concerned themselves mainly with European affairs and peripherally with Africa, the Asians had to establish their own community infrastructure their own schools, hospitals and welfare organizations. . . . [Gregory's] account makes clear that beyond the strictly economic cost, the expulsion of Asians from Uganda and Zanzibar and their exodus from Tanzania and Kenya have had severe costs to civil society. A vibrant community with extensive civic experience has effectively disappeared in Uganda and Tanzania and been much weakened in Kenya. Its commitment to the welfare of East Africans has, accordingly, been diminished. Rhoda E. Howard, *Canadian Journal of African Studies*

"Specifically focused on ideas and ideals of the Asian community and how they helped transform Asian practices of charity into modern philanthropy for the benefit of the East-African Society, an aspect almost totally ignored by the historians of East Africa, and not adequately appreciated by Western scholars. . . . A significant contribution to the history of Asians in East Africa and to the history of East Africa as a whole." R. R. Ramchandani, Emeritus Fellow (U.G.C.), former professor and director, Centre of East African Studies, University of Bombay, India

"Against [the] . . . meager nature of the literature on the subject, the study by the well-known expert on India-Africa relations, Professor Robert Gregory, fills in significant measure the void that exists in the literature on the subject. . . . This is a product of skillful marshalling of facts and figures drawn from...official and private sources. . . . The study, indeed, represents a high water-mark in the study of Africa-India relations and provides very profound multi-disciplinary insights into the nature and magnitude of the philanthropy of Asians and East Africa." P. Y. Chinchankar, former head of the Employers Federation of India

"This is a ground-breaking study which challenges several underlying assumptions regarding philanthropy in the modern world. Professor Gregory demonstrates that philanthropy flourished in East Africa for a century and that its origins can be traced to the South Asians who settled there in the late nineteenth century rather than to European colonizers. . . . Gregory's book will be of great value to Africanists and, equally important, to students of comparative and international philanthropy."

Vernon F. Snow, Syracuse University

About the Author Robert G. Gregory is professor of history at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs of Syracuse University.