

Social History of Africa

FEASTS AND RIOT

Social History of Africa

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FEASTS AND RIOT

Revelry, Rebellion, and
Popular Consciousness
on the Swahili Coast,
1856–1888

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For my father

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PREFACE

In the second act of *Coriolanus* some “mutinous” Roman citizens debate the merits of Caius Marcius, a military hero who must win their approbation to be named consul. Their main objection is Caius’s contempt for the common people: at the time we rioted over the price of corn, complains one, “he stuck not to call us the many-headed multitude.” But another citizen contends that “the multitude” ought to be grateful to patrician benefactors like Caius, whose description of the plebs as “many-headed” was accurate, after all. “We have been called so of many,” he jokes, “not that our heads are some brown, some black, some abram, some bald, but that our wits are so diversely colored. And truly I think, if all our wits were to issue out of one skull, they would fly east, west, north, south, and their consent of one direct way should be at once to all the points o’ th’ compass.”

This book is about the “many-headed multitude” in a preindustrial small town society, and about the debates they engaged in at moments of rebellion—what Caius Marcius scorned as “insurrection’s arguing.” As in the Rome of Shakespeare’s play (and the Elizabethan England that he knew so much better), the crowd in precolonial Swahili society was divided over issues of gratitude and over the degree to which their position as clients privileged them to make demands of their patrician patrons. As a result the Swahili crowd displayed a colorful diversity of wit even at the moment that it was taking concerted rebellious action.

Such diversity can be as bewildering to students of popular consciousness as it was to Caius Marcius. But we should guard against Caius’s disdain. The historian of the Swahili crowd must reconstruct the motivations of lower-class rebels in settings where the most pervasive languages ordering social relations were those of paternalism and community rather than of class and nation, and where popular struggles were rarely concerned explicitly with issues of state power or the organization of economic production. The historian will want to approach this interpretive task sympathetically, avoiding what E.P. Thompson called the “condescension of posterity.” But this raises a fundamental difficulty. How is the modern scholar to reconcile an analysis of social conflict based on western sociological concepts with the consciousness of rebellious crowds who paid notoriously little regard to the expectations of educated observers, no matter how sympathetic?

This difficulty will not be strange to readers of American or East African newspapers: the 1992 Los Angeles riots come to mind, as well as the 1993 Kariakoo riots in

Dar es Salaam. The ambiguity of popular rebellion has occupied historians of early modern Europe ever since the appearance of Eric Hobsbawm's *Primitive Rebels* and George Rudé's *Crowd in the French Revolution*, both in 1959, and similar themes have been explored in incisive studies of twentieth century colonial societies. Less attention has been devoted to popular struggles in preconquest Africa, however, in settings where European languages of social authority had made little impact. No doubt this is partly a problem of the sources, which rarely offer detailed evidence of the thinking of people other than the powerful or otherwise exceptional. But in some African societies, colonial conquest sparked an internal crisis which in turn generated an unusual amount of documentation from European observers. Those documents, when read sensitively and complemented with an understanding of the cultural idioms of the society in question, can yield a rare glimpse of popular perceptions of power and authority, and of what prompted those at the lower rungs of the social ladder to defy those at the top. This book began life as a study of the massive rebellion that erupted in 1888 when German colonial officials attempted to establish a civil administration in the Muslim towns of the East African coast. But it soon became clear that the events of 1888 could be comprehended only if embedded within a full understanding of the experiences and perceptions of ordinary East Africans during the century prior to European intrusion. This interpretive strategy explains the overall structure of the book, whose first two thirds form an extended prologue to the narrative that closes it.

That closing narrative in some ways represents a return to an older fashion of historical writing. Since the 1970s historians of Africa have turned from the history of events—which had invariably been defined as the deeds of powerful men—to the histories of more mundane but no less profound matters. Such studies have given far greater depth to our understanding of the African past, showing how the textures of everyday life have changed for ordinary men and women, and outlining the social forces that have shaped historical change more fundamentally than have personalities. But the historian need not choose between an interest in political cataclysm and one in the commonplaces of everyday life. The best history teaches that the two are intimately connected, and perhaps the historian's most gratifying task is to disentangle the complex strands linking great events with the grind of daily life by which social structures and cultural idioms are reproduced from generation to generation. This study attempts that task, but it has been made possible only because of the twenty years of imaginative scholarship that have preceded it, scholarship that has reconstructed the struggles and hopes of the humblest members of Swahili society. Because this is in large part a work of synthesis, I am perhaps more keenly aware of my intellectual debts than is usual. Those debts will be obvious to any reader of the footnotes, but several names stand out, among them Alpers, Cooper, Feierman, Iliffe, Kimambo, Ranger, Sheriff and Strobel.

Less obvious are the tremendous personal debts I owe: generosity and gratitude stand at the core of this study more than simply as themes of analysis. Given the hardships of their everyday lives, the fact that so many Tanzanians found the time and energy to welcome a bothersome stranger bespeaks volumes concerning East African hospitality, volumes that I can never write. The family of Primus V. and Ritha M. Mtenga of the University of Dar es Salaam gave me my first lessons in Tanzanian *ukarimu*, and I continue to be their pupil. Many friends in Tanga helped me find my feet, including the families of Mwalimu Ali Lumwe, Mohammed Saidi Waziri, Grace Minja, and Mr. and Mrs. Mohammed Majura. My stays in Pangani would have been

fruitless without the friendship of Mr. and Mrs. Zahoro A. Kallaghe, Goodluck Mayani, Mama Zainabu Mohamedi, and (in Mkwaja) Dr. Fabiano Mpise.

The elders who gave so generously of their time and expertise are listed in the bibliography, but I must mention the particular assistance of Mzee Hashim bin Said Abdallah and Mwenyekiti Sharifu Saidi Omari Abdulkadir, both of Bweni, and Mzee Juma Omari of Mkwaja. It would be impossible to name the many village chairmen, ward secretaries and other local officials who went out of their way to help. Mwalimu Hamad Hassan Omari of the Zanzibar National Archives was both helpful and hospitable. I was generously welcomed into the family of Mr. and Mrs. Aboud Mzee of Vikokotoni, Zanzibar. Particular thanks go to their sons, Salum Mohammed, who shared his home with me, and Ali Aboud, who taught me much about faith as we sat on the steps of the Nambari Mosque during the long evenings of the Holy Month.

This book began during my apprenticeship to Professors Steven Feierman and Jan Vansina, and anything worthwhile that might be found on its pages must be traced to their influence. I am also grateful to Melissa Macauley, Thomas Spear, Steve J. Stern and Ivor Wilks for their critical readings of the manuscript. The maps are by Bernard Glassman and Mindy Yavorksy Glassman. Thanks as well to the following individuals for their valuable comments: Ralph Austen, Sandra Barnes, Keith Breckenridge, Ken Curtis, Nancy Hunt, John O. Hunwick, Paul Landau, Pier Larson, Richard Lepine, Sarah Maza, Joseph C. Miller, Tharcisse Nsabimana, Luise White, and students in my graduate seminars at Northwestern University. I have benefited from the opportunity to present parts of this study to the Research Seminar of the University of Dar es Salaam Department of History, the University of Chicago African Studies Workshop, and Northwestern University's Seminar on Contemporary Islamic Discourse in Africa.

Research and writing were made possible by a Fulbright Grant; a fellowship from the Social Science Research Council and American Council of Learned Societies; a University Fellowship of the Graduate School of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; a summer stipend from the National Endowment for the Humanities; and a fellowship from the Northwestern University Center for the Humanities. The research would have been impossible without the help of the Tanzania National Scientific Research Council, the History Department of the University of Dar es Salaam, and archivists in Zanzibar, Dar es Salaam, London, Potsdam, and Hamburg. The staff of the United States Information Service in Dar es Salaam were extraordinarily helpful during my stay in 1985–86. The employees of Hansing & Co. GmbH, Hamburg, kindly allowed me to consult some private papers. I am also grateful to Ingrid Brauchmann and her colleagues at Freie Deutsche Jugend in Berlin for making possible my stay in Potsdam. Of course, I alone am responsible for the conclusions expressed in this work.

James Kern saw me through this project with patience and humor and affection, to say nothing of his astute critical ear. My debts to him are immeasurable. The late Betty Freides was not able to wait for me to return home, but her generous spirit made the writing of this book possible. Finally I must thank my parents, Bernard and Vera Glassman, for their care and encouragement. My father first taught me to seek a sympathetic understanding of others, a search that forms the heart of the craft of history. I would never have come to this study without his influence, nor could it have been completed without his help. To him I dedicate this book, with the deepest gratitude, respect, and love.

GLOSSARY

Most Swahili words consist of a root to which prefixes and suffixes are appended. In the following glossary, plural and singular forms of all Swahili nouns are cross-referenced. But four noun prefixes have been used in the text without explanation, always in conjunction with the names of linguistic or ethnic groups. These are *Wa-*, signifying people; *M-*, a person; *U-*, a place; and *Ki-*, a language (or cultural manner generally). Thus "Wazigua" signifies Zigua people, "Mzigua" one of them, "Uzigua" the region inhabited by them, and "Kizigua" the language they speak. These forms are not used consistently: "Swahili," for example, is used to denote both people and language.

ada (sing. and pl.): customary payments due a *jumbe* or other official; duties; tribute.

Ada were paid on such occasions as the arrival of a caravan from upcountry, the slaughter of a head of cattle, or on any festive occasion such as a wedding.

akida (pl., *maakida*): an officer within the hierarchy of Swahili village and small-town culture. *Akida* was the highest rank within the *chama*.

Busaid: the ruling Omani Arab dynasty of Zanzibar.

chama (pl., *vyama*): a festival guild or "dance society" (literally, a society or social group). *Chama* members took ranked titles, the highest of which was *akida*.

fundi (pl., *mafundi*): a trained artisan or craftsperson; often an *mzalia* slave.

Ibadhi: a small ascetic sect of Islam whose East African practitioners were exclusively Omani Arabs.

jemadari (pl., *majemadari*): a military officer commanding the sultan's garrison; a *jemadari* was stationed at each of the major towns. Usually a low-status Arab.

jumbe (pl., *majumbe*): a Shirazi chief.

kibarua (pl., *vibarua*): a slave hired out by the day; a portion of his or her wage usually went to the master.

kilili: a litter or palanquin, hence a ceremony that involved being carried through the town in the *kilili*.

Kilindi: the ruling family of the Shambaa kingdom. Kilindi rule crumbled during the protracted warfare of the final third of the nineteenth century.

kiroboto: sing. of *viroboto*.

konde (pl., *makonde*): a plot of land on which were grown annual crops, mostly staples, and which could not be inherited individually. *Makonde* were often located on less valued land than were *mashamba*.

- koo*: pl. of *ukoo*.
- liwali* (pl., *maliwali*): A governor; the highest local official in the Omani state apparatus. By the 1870s the *liwali* was virtually always an Omani Arab.
- maakida*: pl. of *akida*.
- mafundi*: pl. of *fundi*.
- majemadari*: pl. of *jemadari*.
- majumbe*: pl. of *jumbe*.
- makonde*: pl. of *konde*.
- makuti*: thatched palm; the roofing material used on all but the homes of the wealthy.
- maliwali*: pl. of *liwali*.
- mapazi*: pl. of *pazi*.
- mashamba*: pl. of *shamba*.
- mateka* (sing. and pl.): lit., "booty"; captive slaves, esp. trade slaves captured and freed by British cruisers.
- maulid*: a celebration of the birth of the Prophet Mohammed. *Maulids* were typically long poems, in Arabic and increasingly in Swahili, which might be performed on any festive occasion or rite of passage.
- mafundi*: pl. of *fundi*.
- mgeni* (pl., *wageni*): stranger, outsider, non-citizen.
- mlango* (pl., *milango*): a corporate descent group of shallow depth, largely defined by common place of residence. Membership was usually traced patrilineally.
- mpambe* (pl., *wapambe*): a young woman or girl who was richly adorned in order to assist in various rituals, particularly weddings. *Wapambe* were often slaves.
- mtoro* (pl., *watoro*): a runaway slave.
- mshenzi* (pl., *washenzi*): a barbarian; a pagan. A term of abuse used to refer to upcountry people, including newly imported slaves. The opposite was *mwungwana*.
- mwungwana* (pl., *waungwana*): a gentleperson; a refined urban Muslim. The term was also used as a euphemism by coastal slaves who labored as porters on caravans, and who prided themselves as superior to so-called *washenzi*.
- mzalia* (pl., *wazalia*): a second or subsequent generation slave born on the coast and fully acculturated into coastal Islamic culture.
- ngoma* (pl. and sing.): dance, drum, and thus a mixture of the two; a public performance of dancing and music.
- ngoma kuu* (pl. and sing.): lit., "the great drum(s)." A special set of drums, and the dancing and rituals that went with them, that were expressive of the highest levels of Shirazi political and social authority.
- pazi* (pl., *mapazi*): a Zaramo *jumbe*; the rituals and customs of both offices were similar.
- qadi*: an Islamic judge (Arabic).
- Shafii*: one of the principal legal schools of Sunni Islam. Most East African Muslims followed the Shafii rite, as did Hadrami and Comoro immigrants.
- shamba* (pl., *mashamba*): a plot of land that could be inherited individually. *Mashamba* were generally used for permanent commercial tree crops and as house plots. Slaves who cultivated their masters' *mashamba* had particular rights and duties marking them off from other slaves.
- sherif* (pl., *shurafa*): someone claiming descent from the Prophet Mohammed (Arabic).
- Shirazi*: a status appellation commonly claimed by Swahili-speaking patricians in the towns of the northern Mrima; the term also refers to the variant of Swahili culture found on the northern Mrima.

shurafa: pl. of *sherif*.

Sufi: the tradition of Islamic mysticism; also a practitioner of Sufism.

Sunni: the largest branch of Islam, sometimes called the "orthodox" or "majority" branch. All East African Muslims practiced Sunni Islam, as did Hadrami Arabs.

By contrast, Omani Arabs belonged to the small Ibadhi sect, and most Muslim Indian settlers belonged to the Shia branch.

tariqa (pl. *turuq*): a Sufi sodality (Arabic).

ukoo (pl., *koo*): an unrestricted cognatic descent group; membership could be traced through either the male or female line. Unlike the *mlango*, the *ukoo* was not a corporate group.

ustaarabu: the state of being civilized. The root of the word points to the Arabo-centric nature of hegemonic ideologies.

vibarua: pl. of *kibarua*.

viroboto (sing., *kiroboto*): lit., "fleas;" a popular name given to the "irregulars" who served in the Sultan of Zanzibar's garrisons. *Viroboto* were low-status Arab mercenaries who generally practiced Sunni Islam.

vyama: pl. of *chama*.

wageni: pl. of *mgeni*.

wapambe: pl. of *mpambe*.

washenzi: pl. of *mshenzi*.

watoro: pl. of *mtoro*.

waungwana: pl. of *mwungwana*.

wazalia: pl. of *mzalia*.

zikri: the Swahili form of the Arabic term *dhikr*, a devotional ritual of Sufi mysticism.

Introduction: The Contradictory Consciousness of a Swahili Crowd

For in the last analysis it is human consciousness which is the subject-matter of history. The interrelations, confusions, and infections of human consciousness are, for history, reality itself.

As for homo religiosus, homo oeconomicus, homo politicus . . . [they are but] phantoms which are convenient providing they do not become nuisances. The man of flesh and bone, reuniting them all simultaneously, is the real being.

Marc Bloch¹

I

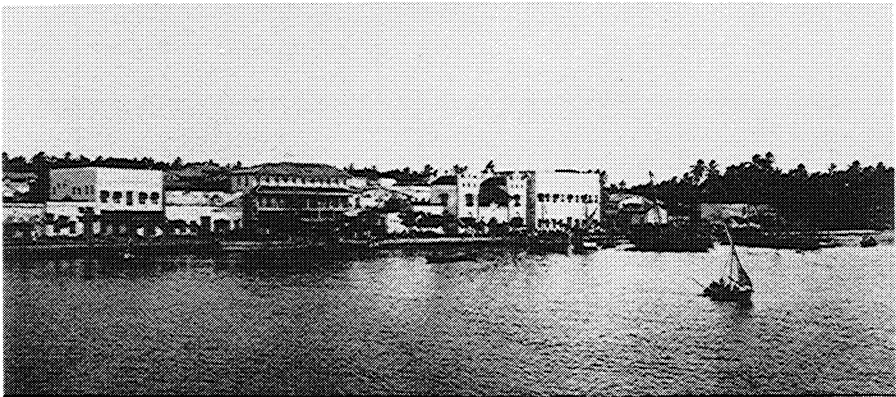
In mid-August 1888, a few days before the Muslim holiday of Idd al-Hajj, a brash young stranger named Emil von Zelewski appeared at the court of Abdulgawi bin Abdallah, the Omani Arab governor of the East African port town of Pangani, and insulted him. Zelewski was an employee of the German East Africa Company, a private enterprise whose sporadic activities in Pangani's hinterland had been a minor nuisance for some time. A few months before Zelewski's appearance, the German company concluded a treaty with Abdulgawi's overlord, Sultan Khalifa bin Said, the Omani ruler of the offshore island of Zanzibar. The treaty granted the Company administrative duties over Pangani and other towns in the Sultan's mainland dominions, on the coastal strip of what is today mainland Tanzania. This in itself was not surprising; the Sultanate had long contracted such duties to private Indian merchant

1. Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (New York, 1953), 151.

houses. But Zelewski astonished the governor's court by asserting that in a few days' time he would be the Sultan's highest representative in Pangani, and that it would be Abdulgawi's duty to obey his commands.

The courtiers were alarmed by Zelewski's arrogance, but their alarm was misdirected. The immediate threat to the Omani state came not from the German company, but from the crowds of revellers who were filling the streets of the town to celebrate the impending holiday. The revellers included lower-class townspeople as well as slaves, peasants and upcountry folk who were scorned by urban Muslims as *washenzi* or "barbarians." In the weeks to follow these crowds would not only expel Zelewski and his colleagues, but would also violently overthrow the Arab state and take control of the streets of the town, as the urban elites, both Arab and African, looked on helplessly. Some of Abdulgawi's courtiers would begin covertly negotiating in a desperate bid to have the Germans return and restore Omani power, no matter how diluted by German overrule. But social order would not be repaired until July 1889, with the brutal intervention of the German navy.

At the time of Zelewski's appearance, Pangani, a center of the cosmopolitan African culture now known as Swahili, was riding the crest of two decades of economic boom. For most of the nineteenth century the Swahili coast had been ruled by the Omani merchant-princes of Zanzibar, whose commercial policies contributed to the rapid expansion of the long-distance caravan trade. Pangani's narrow streets were periodically choked with noisy, polyglot crowds of African porters and the mountains of ivory they brought from the deep interior to help quench the industrializing world's spectacular thirst for such exotic goods. At the bustling quays, tusks were stacked next to barrels of gawdy manufactured imports, and the Swahili-speaking patricians who organized the caravans rubbed shoulders with Indian merchants and customs-officers and with Arab state functionaries, the latter coming and going from the island metropolis of Zanzibar. Sugar plantations on the outskirts of town were becoming so profitable that a few enterprising Arab settlers had recently imported steam technology with which to power the cane-crushing mills, although most mills continued to be driven by slaves.



Pangani waterfront, c. 1910.

Pangani's old Swahili-speaking patrician families had steadily been losing political power to the officers of the Omani Arab state for over half a century. Yet most considered Zanzibari overrule a light yoke to bear, for it had brought tremendous benefits. Under the rule of the Omani sultans, Pangani flourished as never before. To those caught up in the commercial boom it seemed as if endless wealth could be pumped out of the continent's interior, leaving a rich residue at the coastal towns through which it flowed. Even misery upcountry produced wealth at Pangani: warfare and famine in the town's mountainous hinterland generated cheap slaves for the sugar planters and profits for the traders who sold them. Never had Pangani's community life been more vibrant. Profits from trade went toward the construction of neighborhood mosques where patricians devoted long hours to religious study and debate. Or a successful caravan leader might construct an elaborate house fronted with an ample *baraza*, a verandah where local men would congregate to engage in the sophisticated pleasures of this literate urban culture. If a son were circumcised, a daughter wed, or a local political rank attained, the celebrant would host his neighbors at a public feast, at which he might display his piety along with his generosity by sponsoring a musical performance to honor the Prophet Mohammed.

But while the expansion of trade and of the Zanzibari state brought wealth for some, it brought ruin and misery for others. Pangani was filled with people who were continually frustrated in their attempts to share in the town's prosperity. For every



Commercial street in Pangani, c. 1910.

returning caravan trader who was carried into the town in triumph, others snuck back hoping to avoid their creditors. The boom accentuated Pangani's cosmopolitan flavor by attracting would-be entrepreneurs from deep in the African interior and from far across the Indian Ocean, as well as peasants from the surrounding countryside drawn to the glitter of town life and to the commercial opportunities that seemed to beckon. But many of these hopefuls tasted only the most bitter fruits of commerce, performing menial labor or becoming entangled in debt. Commerce also brought slaves from the interior to suffer on the sugar plantations. Men and women seeking to flee their bondage could often be found lurking at the waterfront or setting out incognito with a caravan. The opportunities for escape, adventure and prestige that were offered by the trade boom were skewed by gender: hence women not willing to tolerate an oppressive marriage, or so unfortunate as to lack a husband who could provide social stability and respectability, would often be found in the streets of the town earning a meagre living in ways deemed demeaning by prevailing standards.

The newcomers were attracted not only by the town's wealth; they also came to partake of the cosmopolitan town life that was gaining prestige in many parts of the interior. The older Swahili-speaking patrician families still dominated the Pangani community despite their frequent financial embarrassment and their political eclipse in the shadow of the Arab state. The patricians often called themselves *Shirazi*, a term referring to distant (and largely fictive) Middle-Eastern ancestry, ancestry that supposedly distinguished them from more recently arrived townspeople. Being excluded from Omani state politics, the Shirazi patricians in turn tried to exclude the newly arrived peasants and parvenus from dominant community institutions. The patricians were not wholly successful, and the outsiders made disruptive attempts to gain access to Pangani's established mosques, *barazas*, and Shirazi political ranks. Or, excluded from these characteristically Shirazi urban institutions, members of the lower orders created their own. As alternatives to the dominant religious institutions of the town, for example, plebeians established Koranic classes and prayer groups; their teachers were itinerant Islamic scholars who, like themselves, had been attracted by the commercial opportunities of the boom town only to earn humble livings as stevedores and peddlers.

Thus, the people at the margins of Shirazi society had an interest in urban political affairs as keen as that of the patricians sitting on their *barazas*. Although none of their circle were likely to have been present at Abdulgawi's court to witness his humiliation firsthand, they discussed the incident and debated its significance in the days to follow. Meanwhile, their numbers swelled as the streets of the town filled with slaves and villagers come to celebrate the carnival of the Solar New Year on August 18th and the major Islamic feast of Idd al-Hajj which, by chance, that year fell on the day immediately following. In addition, this was the end of the caravan season, and crowds of porters were continually arriving from upcountry, shooting guns as they entered the town in noisy celebration of having completed long and difficult *safaris*. In the midst of these multiple revelries all—plebeian, peasant and slave as well as patrician—would have the opportunity to see for themselves the further humiliation of the Omani aristocracy.

Zelewski's overriding concern was to get the Arab elite to comply with Sultan Khalifa's instructions to recognize the German Company as his sovereign representative. Hence the opening days of Zelewski's "administration" were taken up with a highly public squabble over who would have the right to fly the Sultan's flag, he or

Abdulgawi. The issue was decided on the eighteenth, when a small force of German soldiers bullied Abdulgawi into removing the flag from his official residence and re-hoisting it at the Company station house. But of far greater significance than the intransigence of the Arab governor were the holiday crowds who witnessed his humiliation, crowds who were engaged in revelries that openly mocked and challenged all constituted authority. Tensions continued to mount throughout the day, despite Abdulgawi's capitulation on the flag issue: revellers threatened Indian merchants with arson, and the bewildered Germans found themselves surrounded by hostile armed crowds. Zelewski began to panic, and when a German gunboat appeared in the harbor that evening, he signalled for help. Over a hundred German marines landed the next morning, just as the Idd al-Hajj prayers were getting underway. Thinking the recalcitrant governor the source of the unrest, Zelewski ordered his arrest. When the Germans were told that Abdulgawi was at prayer (the uncomprehending Zelewski had no idea that the day was a holiday), they forced their way into the mosque, disrupting the services by loudly demanding the governor's whereabouts. Wearing shoes and accompanied by one of Zelewski's hunting dogs, the Germans desecrated the mosque. Abdulgawi escaped, but the holiday prayers had to be cancelled.

News of the desecration and of Zelewski's other outrages was carried far and wide by the lower-class revellers who had witnessed it, and the net effect was the rapid destruction of the authority of the Arab elite. It is the responsibility of any Muslim government to guarantee the sanctity of religious institutions, and in this the Omani Arabs had failed. Zelewski broke open the jail and released the debtors and slave fugitives who constituted the bulk of its inmates, thus undermining the Arab state's major role as enforcer of debt and enslavement. But Zelewski cannot be credited with sufficient insight to have calculated the destruction of Omani state authority, nor was it in his interest to do so. He wanted only to chasten Abdulgawi and his supporters. The Germans had hoped to rule through the channels of Omani authority, and during the remainder of his short stay in the town Zelewski assiduously cultivated the graces of leading Omanis who might prove more pliable intermediaries than the refractory Abdulgawi.

Zelewski was to learn—to his discomfort—that power lay elsewhere. He had given little thought to the holiday crowds who filled the town; like most Europeans of his time and class, and indeed like the Arab elite themselves, Zelewski assumed that the lower orders of society would be cowed by the humiliation of their superiors. He was therefore doubly surprised when the crowd rose violently, not to defend the Omani state, but to complete its destruction. After the gunboat's departure on August 23rd, the Shirazi patricians and Omani elite abandoned the town for their country estates. The remaining townspeople simply ignored the petty decrees and proclamations that Zelewski issued to keep himself busy. Meanwhile, caravan personnel and other young men continued to stream into the town from many parts of the interior. In early September a crisis erupted in which armed crowds threatened Zelewski and his handful of colleagues. This alarmed the leading townsmen, who feared that Zelewski's death would embarrass the Sultan and outrage his powerful European allies. Deciding that getting rid of the Germans would be preferable to killing them, the Shirazi and Omani leaders locked the Germans in the Company station house and set a guard of Arab mercenaries to protect them from the crowds outside. But it was not until after several ugly altercations with the crowd that forces still loyal to the Omani

state could send the Germans safely to Zanzibar, and then only under the close guard of additional troops sent by the Sultan.

That same week Company officials were sent packing from Tanga, thirty miles up the coast from Pangani, and by the end of September the Germans had been either killed or expelled from all but two enclaves on the Tanzania coast by a broad but brittle alliance of Shirazi patricians, lower-class townspeople, peasants and slaves from the surrounding countryside, and warriors from many parts of the interior. The actions of these crowds irrevocably altered the history of East Africa. With the authority of Zanzibar in abeyance, the German company had to abandon its plans to rule through the Arab state apparatus. The expulsion of Zelewski and his colleagues wounded German national pride and forced a reluctant Bismarck to commit the resources of the *Reich* to suppress the rising, thus turning German East Africa from a private venture into a formal colony, something the Iron Chancellor had hoped to avoid. Like many other imperial adventures of the time, this one was justified as a move against the slave trade. It became politically expedient for the Germans to characterize the movement against them as an "Arab revolt," engineered by Omanis and other Arabs in an effort to preserve their position as the region's premier slave traders, planters and power-brokers. No serious observer believed this, largely because the few Omanis who at first supported the rising quickly switched sides as it became clear that the movement was directed against Arab rule as much as it was directed against the Germans.

At first glance the insurrection that expelled the Germans appeared to be yet the latest in a long series of struggles defending the viability and autonomy of Swahili community institutions against the onslaught of the state. At most of the towns the insurrection was at first led by Shirazi patricians, especially by holders of high political rank known as the *majumbe* (sing., *jumbe*). The insurgent *majumbe* attracted a mixed clientele of plebeians, slaves, and upcountry trading partners, all of whom aspired to participate in the institutions of the Shirazi-dominated communities. But this clientele's loyalty to their Shirazi patrons was no more absolute than was the *majumbe*'s loyalty to the Omani state, and any study of the event must account for the huge variations in the crowd's attitudes toward the local patriciate. Perhaps the most unified movement was at Saadani, a relatively new urban center where the full imposition of Arab rule had been successfully resisted throughout the 1870s and '80s by the charismatic Shirazi² leader Bwana Heri bin Juma. Toward the opposite end of the spectrum lay Bagamoyo, the main center of the caravan trade on the mainland coast, where the Germans maintained a presence throughout the crisis. Shirazi rebels there quickly became isolated, as plebeians and upcountry caravan personnel either lost interest in the insurrection or went over to actively support the Germans. The same was true of the nearby town of Dar es Salaam, an unimportant port save for the presence of extensive coconut plantations belonging to the Sultan. At both these places, German force and plebeian indifference or hostility combined to weaken the rebel *majumbe*, and the movement degenerated into a form of banditry.

2. Bwana Heri in fact called himself "al-Mafazii" rather than "al-Shirazii." "Shirazi" was but one of many titles claimed by Swahili-speaking patricians of the Mrima coast in their attempts to highlight actual or putative Middle-Eastern ancestry. In accordance with the somewhat misleading usage common in the literature, I use the blanket term "Shirazi" to denote Swahili-speaking patrician families of the Mrima which claimed descent from a distant Middle Eastern group, and whose positions as such were widely accepted.

Divisions in the rebel crowd were perhaps sharpest and most complex at Pangani, which soon emerged as the storm center of the movement. During the months following the expulsion of the Germans, resentments that had been building in the boom town for several decades revealed themselves in the way that power shifted uneasily and at times violently among three broad groups within the rebel alliance. The Shirazi patricians who claimed the lead at the opening of the crisis were joined momentarily by Omani planters and state functionaries who, like Abdulgawi, feared that under the Germans they would lose their local predominance. The Shirazi's attitude towards their Omani allies was ambivalent. For decades the power of the patrician *majumbe* had been eroded by the growth of the state, a process which the Germans threatened to continue to an alarming degree. But at the same time, the patricians had competed eagerly for Omani patronage, and they knew that the Sultanate had played an important part in overseeing the commercial expansion upon which their livelihood depended. After the expulsion of the Germans, the patricians demonstrated their intention to remain loyal to Sultan Khalifa by requesting that he send a governor to replace Abdulgawi, who had fled during the holiday crisis. Khalifa responded by sending Suleiman bin Nasr al-Lemki, scion of an Omani family close to the ruling dynasty and among the wealthiest of the Pangani planters.

But Suleiman bin Nasr was already working covertly for the Germans, beginning a brilliant career of collaboration that would continue for over twenty years. By the time the new governor arrived at Pangani, his fellow Omani settlers had come to realize that the most potent threats to their power came not from the Germans, but from the movement that had expelled them. Suleiman quickly established what he called a "peace party" of prominent Arabs, joined by a handful of the wealthiest Swahili patricians, which began to negotiate secretly for the Germans' return. The latter, chastened by their humiliating expulsion, were willing to accede to most of the compromises proposed by the "peace party," but Suleiman and his allies were never able to sway the opinion of the group which held the balance of power at Pangani.

This third group within the rebel alliance, the force most feared by the Arab elite of Suleiman's "peace party," were the plebeian crowds who had taken command of the streets of Pangani. As with the rebel crowds of early modern Europe who have received a huge amount of scholarly attention, it is difficult to determine exactly their identity or their motivations. The documents generally refer to them by vague labels, such as "young men" or "barbarians" (*washenzi*). At first, the patricians were able to exert some control over the crowd, especially when assisted by Bushiri bin Salim, a charismatic planter and caravan merchant whose leadership at the height of the crisis made him the most powerful man in Pangani. Patrician control was often challenged, however, particularly at public dances. The patricians had long regarded dance ritual as an important medium for the exertion and affirmation of their community authority. But during the crisis of late 1888, aggressive armed dancers used public festivities as occasions on which to defy the patricians, repeatedly overturning decisions made by their putative leaders. By November, the crowd even threatened Bushiri, and his loss of control over the popular movement at Pangani contributed to his hasty decision to leave the town altogether and lead a coordinated force against Bagamoyo, the German stronghold.

Bushiri's force of Arab and Shirazi aristocrats and their retainers would besiege Bagamoyo for six months; thus removed from the plebeian crowds of Pangani, Bushiri at Bagamoyo rapidly turned from a leader of a popular rebellion into the leader of an

elite movement to build a new Arab state, and his tactics increasingly became those of banditry.³ At Pangani, the plebeian crowd continued to hold sway without him, to be defeated only by German artillery in July 1889. The crowd controlled matters at Saadani too, where long after Bushiri's defeat Bwana Heri pursued a sustained guerilla war which the Germans were never able to completely suppress. Bwana Heri was offered honorable terms, and although he settled in German-ruled Saadani, the Germans repeatedly failed to persuade him to collaborate. Bushiri bin Salim's fate was quite different. His isolation rapidly led to his betrayal and capture, and the Germans hanged him in December 1889 after rejecting his repeated offers—the last made from the scaffold—to serve them as the governor of the coast.

II

No matter what elite figure claimed to be at the helm, it is clear that these events were propelled by deep social currents, in particular by an aroused and militant crowd whose thinking diverged, often radically, from that of the gentry who claimed to be their leaders. But most European observers were caught completely off guard by the eruption of violence in 1888. Even those who had been critical of the behavior of the Company agents were startled by the intensity of the African response: German activity, they noted, while often imprudent, had been extremely limited. Surely something other than German provocation was at work.⁴ But because Europeans assumed that African societies were "traditional" and unchanging (a stated motive of the imperialist impulse was to bring progress and change to the Dark Continent), few could comprehend what might have sparked such a response, other than foreign intrusion in the ancient ways of doing things.

The Europeans' confusion was grounded in a failure to consider the motivations of the crowd, beyond a vague recitation of racial stereotypes. The "indolent Negroes" of the coast had been thought incapable of launching a political movement on their own,⁵ and the most common explanation held that the simple-minded Africans were being manipulated by wily "Arabs" such as Bushiri bin Salim. (In the European view, any upper-class Muslim might be called an "Arab," even if, like Bushiri, he was born in Africa and spoke little or no Arabic.) Africans had "no will of their own," wrote one observer; thus they deferred naturally to the Arab elite of the towns.⁶ A handful of powerful Arabs had cajoled the "uncritical masses" to support an "Arab revolt" that went against their true interests.⁷ More discriminating observers acknowledged that the movement had slipped out of the hands of the Arab elites who had supposedly

3. Bushiri's siege of Bagamoyo and his subsequent capture and hanging lie outside the scope of this study. They are described in John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge, 1979), and Fritz Ferdinand Müller, *Deutschland-Zanzibar-Ostafrika, Geschichte einer deutschen Kolonialeroberung* (Berlin, 1959).

4. For an example of such responses: Strandes to Ottens, 30 Sept. 1888, ZStA, RKA 692, 51–6.

5. *Ibid.* See also *The Zanzibar Letters of Edward D. Ropes, Jr.*, edited by N.R. Bennett (Boston, 1973), 105 (letter of 21 Oct. 1888).

6. Oscar Baumann, *Usambara und seine Nachbargebiete* (Berlin, 1891), in a translation by M.A. Godfredsen, *Usambara and its Neighbouring Regions* (n.d., Pangani Valley History Project, University of Dar es Salaam), 39. Unless otherwise noted, all subsequent references to this work will be to the Godfredsen translation.

7. Rochus Schmidt, *Geschichte des Araberaufstandes in Ost-Afrika* (Frankfurt a. Oder, 1892), 29, 73–4; see also Paul Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika, das Land und seine Bewohner* (Leipzig, 1892), 137–8; and Brix Förster, *Deutsch-Ostafrika, Geographie und Geschichte der Colonie* (Leipzig, 1890), 48–50.

instigated it, and that in fact it had turned against them. But the rebels still seemed to look to the Arabs for guidance, if only in a confused way. This manifested itself in the remarkable state of affairs at Pangani, where the rebels expressed their loyalty to the Sultan by holding his representative, Suleiman bin Nasr, a virtual prisoner, refusing to let him leave and thwarting all his attempts to exert any real authority. Not surprisingly, the Sultan's enemies at court quickly began scheming to impute to Khalifa complicity in the revolt, in an effort to get his powerful European patrons to support a coup.

But race alone does not explain the views of European contemporaries. East Africa was an agrarian society, and the Islamic urban centers dotting its coastal fringe were recognized by the Europeans as oases of "civilization." It was only natural that westerners' perceptions of this society be colored by perceptions of the agrarian regions of their homelands, where the minds of peasants were believed to be firmly bound by custom and static "tradition." Most educated Europeans thought peasants were inherently docile creatures, whose political torpor could be broken only by the proddings of aristocratic or bourgeois malcontents, whom the peasants revered as their betters. This was precisely how many Europeans viewed the behavior of the rebellious Swahili villagers, who, according to one German, "display the greatest resemblance to our own thick-headed, narrow-minded peasants."⁸ In its irrational fear of change and "progress" (so Europeans thought), the ignorant mob had allowed itself to be harnessed to a reactionary movement to restore the *status quo*.

The snobbery of these earlier generations has continued in this century, elaborated into sociological theories. Most ubiquitous are concepts associated with neo-Weberian "modernization" or "developmentalist" theory, which has come to inform thinking far outside of scholarly circles. (It is commonly encountered in journalism and in the policies of international aid agencies.) The neo-Weberians argue that thought and behavior in agrarian societies are governed by widely shared "traditions," which a reluctant peasantry will abandon only when forced to do so by the external imposition of capitalism and rational-legal state politics. This approach has dominated much of the historical literature on agrarian rebellion. An influential example is the work on early modern Europe by the French historian Roland Mousnier. In the face of an encroaching modern state and an inexorably advancing capitalist economy, argued Mousnier, peasants were sometimes prodded into violent resistance by conservative rural elites. But since peasants are imprisoned by "the omnipotence of custom" and incapable of conceiving of change, their social movements, no matter how insurrectionary, must in essence be reactionary, their goal the defence of traditional ways of life.⁹

Similar views abound in the literature on African resistance to colonial conquest. In one famous formulation from 1962, leading authorities on British imperialism characterized resistance as "romantic, reactionary struggles against the facts, the passionate protest of societies which were shocked by a new age of change and would not be

8. Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 181; see also page 188.

9. Roland Mousnier, *Peasant Uprisings in Seventeenth century France, Russia, and China* (New York, 1970), 342-4 and *passim*. The work of Mousnier's disciples can be found alongside that of some of his critics in R.F. Kierstead (ed.), *State and Society in Seventeenth Century France* (New York, 1975). Similar analyses of Latin American peasant movements can be found in D.A. Brading (ed.), *Caudillo and Peasant in the Mexican Revolution* (Cambridge, 1980), and Steffen W. Schmidt (ed.), *Friends, Followers and Factions, a reader in political clientelism* (Berkeley, 1977).

comforted."¹⁰ This interpretation was little different from that of the conquerors themselves, and it was roundly excoriated by authors whose language was more sensitive to the nationalism then dominating African political thought. The critics (whose works included the major English-language accounts of the resistance to German conquest of East Africa) argued that resistance aimed at defence of "African tradition" against alien intrusion, in forward-looking movements that anticipated the mass nationalism of later generations. This argument marked a major advance in our understanding of the African past, for it suggested that historical actors were motivated by an active consciousness rather than by an involuntary spasmodic response to an external "shock." But, as some of these scholars themselves later pointed out, their argument left unexamined the content of "tradition," and merely assumed that all levels of African society were united in its common defense.¹¹ In this respect, their approach resembled that of the imperial historians whom they criticized, except that the nationalist authors transformed the defence of tradition from reactionary vice into proto-nationalist virtue.¹²

A somewhat different school of thought, that of Marxist-Leninist national liberation theory, produced the major work on German conquest. Fritz Ferdinand Müller's remarkable volume, written on the eve of African independence, expresses an impassioned dedication to anticolonialist struggle.¹³ It is nevertheless bravely unrepentant in its derogatory description of the traditions which African peasants, slave holders and pastoralists supposedly struggled to defend in 1888: the traditions were backwards, reactionary, and "self-lacerating." Müller's mordant prose bears a distinct likeness to that of Marx, who in a famous passage on rural insurrection likened peasants to potatoes; Engels, in his book on the great German agrarian rebellion of 1525, characterized peasant thought as "rural idiocy."¹⁴ Of course, there is little reason why these pioneering analysts of industrial capitalism should have viewed agrarian society any differently than did other nineteenth century middle-class Germans, such as the colonialist authors quoted earlier. But their intellectual heirs in the Third International continued to subscribe to the same assumptions; "developmentalist" approaches

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10. R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, "The partition of Africa," in F.H. Hinsley (ed.), *The New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. 11 (Cambridge, 1962).
 11. The seminal work was by T.O. Ranger, "Connexions between 'primary resistance' movements and modern mass nationalism in East and Central Africa," *JAH* 9 (1968), 437-53, 631-41; he illustrated the approach in *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-97* (Evanston, 1967), an exemplary monograph that avoided many of the pitfalls that trapped many who followed him. Some of the most incisive critiques of such literature were written by its own pioneers, including Ranger, "The people in African resistance: a review," *J. of Southern African Studies* 4:1 (1977), 125-46, and A. and B. Isaacman, "Resistance and collaboration in southern and central Africa," *IJAH* 10 (1977), 31-62. In the 1960s Ranger was a leading member of the so-called "Dar es Salaam School," and the following accounts of the resistance to German conquest of the Swahili coast were written under his influence: G.C.K. Gwassa, "The German intervention and African resistance in Tanzania," in I.N. Kimambo and A.J. Temu (eds.), *A History of Tanzania* (Nairobi, 1969), 85-122; Robert D. Jackson, "Resistance to the German invasion of the Tanganyikan coast, 1888-1891," in A.A. Mazrui and R.I. Rotberg (eds.), *Protest and Power in Black Africa* (New York, 1970), 37-79; J.A. Kieran, "Abushiri and the Germans," in Bethwell Ogot (ed.), *Hadith 2* (Nairobi, 1970), 157-201.
 12. For an extended discussion along these lines see John Lonsdale, "The moral economy of Mau Mau: the problem," in Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley* (London, 1992), esp. 270-6.
 13. Müller, *Deutschland-Zanzibar-Ostafrika*.
 14. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*; Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany*. Their views of rural society were more subtle than these phrases would indicate. In the passage on "potatoes" Marx referred to the peasantry's relative inability to forge a broad, united political movement, compared to the urban proletariat. Insofar as Marx's point is a comparative one, it is not as objectionable as it seems when the phrase is taken out of context.

assuming the inherent conservatism of rural thought have been as common to Marxist sociology as they have been within the neo-Weberian mainstream.¹⁵

Each of these views—imperialist, nationalist, Marxist-Leninist—was a mirror image of another. Each assumed the primacy of an overarching mode of thought called “tradition,” often using that assumption as a substitute for undertaking a careful examination of the conscious motivations of those who resisted conquest. Like their imperialist predecessors, the nationalist historians stressed the initiative of the elite, celebrating rather than vilifying them; resistance to German conquest of the coast is commonly called “the Bushiri War.” The nationalists’ basic paradigm was neo-Weberian, thus they assumed a unity of purpose between the elite and the lower orders of agrarian society, bound together by devotion to common “traditions.” Such absence of internal African struggle should have been untenable for a Marxist like Müller, but his assumption of a “backwards,” tradition-bound peasant consciousness prevented him from seeking to understand the nature of lower class initiative. Failing to discern class consciousness at the lower rungs of coastal society, Müller, like many Marxists of his time and since, simply assumed the presence of a “false consciousness” which impelled slaves and plebeians to defend the power of those who oppressed them.

The tremor that expelled the Germans was created by pressures that had long been building along the fault lines of coastal society, and these internal tensions are only obscured if we caricature consciousness in terms of unchanging “traditions.” The crowd in the Swahili towns was not propelled by blind reaction to external intrusion: indeed, the intensity of the rebellion from region to region seemed to be inversely proportional to the level of Company activity, and, as we shall see in Chapter Six, the German officers were most provocative not when they violated traditions, but when they acted most like “traditional” African potentates. The Germans may have been a necessary catalyst for the rebellion, but they were not a sufficient cause. The rebellious consciousness of the Pangani crowd was forged in the context of struggles that pre-dated Zelewski’s arrival, and once we recognize this, the study of the events of 1888 ceases to be one of resistance to colonial conquest. Resistance to colonialism became a major theme in Pangani’s history only after the Germans returned in mid-1889, this time with the full backing of the Imperial Navy and its machine guns, which alone rendered them a major historical force. Before that point, tensions within Pangani society overshadowed those between Africans and Germans. The holiday crowds who danced in Pangani’s streets and defied the urban patriciate fought against colonial conquest only by default; seen from their vantage point, the violence of 1888 was a moment in nineteenth century coastal history, not the beginning of the colonial era.¹⁶

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15. For “developmentalist” views of the peasantry in the Third International: Alastair Davidson, “Gramsci, the peasantry and popular culture,” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 11 (1984), 139–54.
 16. When the earlier scholarship placed resistance in the context of nineteenth-century history, it usually described that history entirely in terms of elite politics. An excellent example is A.C. Unomah’s shrewd study of the political tensions that crippled resistance in Unyamwezi: “African collaboration with the Germans in the conquest of Isike of Unyamwezi,” seminar paper, Makerere University, November 1970. Since the publication of Ranger’s and Isaacman’s auto-critiques in the mid-1970s (see note 11, above), several studies have appeared emphasizing how internal social conflicts shaped resistance to conquest. They include Timothy Weiskel, *French Colonial Rule and the Baule Peoples* (Oxford, 1980); Gwyn Prins, *The Hidden Hippopotamus* (Cambridge, 1980); Stephen Ellis, *Revolt of the Red Shaws* (Cambridge, 1985); J.B. Peires, *The Dead Will Arise* (Johannesburg, 1989).

This, then, is not a study of resistance to colonial conquest. Unlike the chroniclers of the "Bushiri Wars," we will not follow Bushiri bin Salim to Bagamoyo, for we are more interested in the rebellious crowds whom he left behind at Pangani. The only aspect of the resistance movement of interest to us is the opening stage of August and September 1888, a series of events which rendered visible tensions that might otherwise remain hidden. These events constitute a "good cataclysm" such as the ones which Marc Bloch taught could be so useful to the historian: upheavals that break open safes containing private papers or that reveal the social hierarchy of those fleeing Pompeii.¹⁷ Or, returning to a geological image, we can liken the events of 1888 to the Grand Canyon, as Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie likened a similar convulsion of carnival violence in sixteenth century France: such events constitute a moment that "articulates a complete geology, with all its colors and contortions."¹⁸ Our task will be to analyse the strata exposed by the events of August and September 1888. In so doing, we must work backward from that moment, not forward, as the archaeologist uncovers ever earlier levels as she digs.

Our excavation ends with a narrative of the events of 1888. Not being engaged in a study of colonial politics, we will leave the coast a few weeks after the Germans first arrive: not in the midst of conquest, as one might imagine, but just before it, during an uneasy interregnum between the rule of Zanzibar and the rule of Berlin, when the coast towns were under the control of rebellious crowds of peasants and plebeians. The few glimpses which we can glean of this brief period are extremely valuable, for, as Antonio Gramsci suggested, it is during such interregnums, between that which is dying and that which has not yet been born, that the rebellious crowd becomes most active in the elaboration of its own views of the world.

III

We have seen that earlier literature on African resistance was marred by an essential teleology in which all protest tended inevitably toward modern nationalism, and by a resulting failure to seriously consider peasants and plebeians as autonomous, thinking political beings. Recent studies have gone a long way toward rectifying these errors. The richest literature has dealt with peasant protest during the colonial period. This literature has shown that the political consciousness of peasants grew out of an awareness of conflicts integral to the agrarian communities in which they lived: peasants were neither led like sheep by educated elites espousing nationalism, nor were they locked in unchanging acceptance of "tradition." "Tradition" in much recent literature appears not as an overarching mode of thought, but as a cultural *language* or *idiom* in which peasants express conflicting views of the world and innovate new ones. Nor were peasants restricted to using any one idiom. They quickly grasped the enormous liberating potential of nationalism, a political language that came from outside of agrarian society, and adapted it to express their own specifically agrarian grievances. Although nonpeasant elites retained control of the nation-

17. *Historian's Craft*, 73-5.

18. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival in Romans* (New York, 1979), 370.

alist movements, there was a divergence of perception between them and their peasant “followers”, who had their own visions of the shape that the postcolonial nation-state should take.¹⁹

Thus, during the colonial period agrarian conflict and peasant protest were often rendered visible by nationalist movements using a “modern” political language that is relatively easy to discern—that is, a language that defined political aims in terms of control of the state or the shaping of state policy. But how is the historian to interpret protest and resistance that was not expressed in the language of state politics? Historians of Africa have done less well answering this question, especially when asking it about precolonial society.²⁰ Yet the question is not new. It was posed over thirty years ago by the British historian Eric Hobsbawm, in a book in which he discerned “archaic forms of social movement” in such historically obscure activities as banditry, secret societies, the urban mob, and heretical religious movements.²¹ Historians before Hobsbawm had dismissed such defiance of authority as lying outside the realms of “rational” politics, refusing to give serious consideration to political thought that resulted in rick-burnings and bread riots. But they were urged to reconsider when Hobsbawm and his colleagues (mostly within the British school of Marxist social history) demonstrated that peasants and plebeians had distinctive views of the world and the capacity to innovate new political goals and methods within the language of “tradition.”

Historians who followed Hobsbawm’s approach portrayed the motivations lying behind such activities as largely defensive: the lower orders of society had their own visions of the social universe, which they heroically defended against countervailing visions that the elites sought to impose on them. One of the best known concepts developed by these historians in their attempts to define precisely what it was that rebellious peasants and urban plebeians fought to defend was the “moral economy of subsistence.” The concept was derived from George Rudé’s analysis of food riots in the years leading up to the French Revolution, riots which he saw as essentially “defensive reactions” to the threats posed to traditional subsistence economies by emerging capitalism: “a massive protest against the new-fangled principle of allowing food prices to find their natural or market level, instead of being regulated by considerations of social justice.”²² In his influential elaboration of the concept, E.P. Thompson argued that the moral economy of the poor consisted of ideological innovations

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19. Once again some of the pioneers of what I call the “proto-nationalist” school took the lead in transcending their own earlier work: see the reviews by Terence Ranger, “Resistance in Africa: from nationalist revolt to agrarian protest,” in Gary Okihiro (ed.), *In Resistance: Studies in African, Caribbean, and Afro-American History* (Amherst, 1986), 32–52; and Allen Isaacman, “Peasants and rural social protest in Africa,” *African Studies Review* 33 (1990), 1–120. Significant examples of such literature include Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe* (London, 1985); David Lan, *Guns and Rain* (Berkeley, 1985); William Beinart and Colin Bundy, *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa* (Berkeley, 1987). Such approaches to peasant politics are not new outside of African studies: John Womack, *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (New York, 1968) and Eric Wolf, *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1969) both presented peasant political awareness as growing out of specifically agrarian concerns that formed the core of separate agendas within broader nationalist movements. Particularly incisive have been the analyses of Indian peasant politics by historians connected with the “Subaltern Studies” group; for a sample, see Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (eds.), *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York, 1988).
20. Indicative in this regard is Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance* (Chicago, 1985), an immensely subtle analysis of rebellious ideology in modern Africa which when it discusses the precolonial era, reifies a single, seamless Tswana world view, devoid of any historically significant conflict.
21. *Primitive Rebels* (New York, 1959).
22. George Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (London, 1972 [originally published 1959]), 225, 24.

fashioned out of components of the dominant paternalistic norms of patrician society, a kind of conceptual patchwork to which we shall return in a moment.²³ But in its most common manifestation, defense of the moral economy appears as a version of the neo-Weberian analysis of the defense of unchanging tradition against perceived abuse. The picture of agrarian and plebeian protest often read into Thompson's work has the poor uniting among themselves to defend traditional village-based norms of reciprocity against the inroads of change, which are perceived to emanate from the state and the market.²⁴

This common conception of the "moral economy" would on the surface appear to offer an excellent explanation of the insurrection of 1888. It suggests that Shirazi patricians and their plebeian clients united to defend the viability of a traditional mode of life against the onslaught of the state and modern commerce, forces represented by the exertion of German and Omani authority.²⁵ But there are two major problems with this explanation. First, rather than being devoted to a "traditional" economy, the most determined rebels were active and aggressive participants in the activities spurred on by the penetration of international commerce. This included Bwana Heri, who was respected by Europeans as one of the great "modernizers" of the region (that is, as a proponent of commerce and a friend of European travellers). And second, the concept fails to explain the rapid breakdown of patrician authority after the expulsion of the Germans. So long as the concept of "moral economy" connotes a unanimity of purpose or perception in the mind of the community, it can account for only a fraction of the many different forms of struggle in nineteenth century coastal society, including struggles between patricians and their clients.

These and other defensive models of rebellious consciousness share certain assumptions. The scholars who propound them are usually motivated by a desire to restore the voices of peasants, slaves and other non-elites who have remained silent in traditional history. They assume that these voices will be wholly distinctive, corresponding to the distinctive material experiences of the lower orders of society.²⁶ This

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23. "The moral economy of the English crowd in the eighteenth century," *Past and Present* 50 (1971), 76–136.
24. Perhaps the most elaborate and best-known use of the concept is in James Scott's early work, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* (New Haven, 1976), in which peasant consciousness becomes as universal and unchanging as the "traditional thought" of any neo-Weberian. Nearly identical interpretations of agrarian rebellion have long been a staple of mainstream sociological thought. Max Gluckman discusses them in chapter 1 of *Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa* (London, 1963), where he quotes relevant passages from the works of Weber, British structural-functionalism, and American cultural anthropology (pp. 11–12). Thompson's more subtle conceptualizations have been criticized by Suzanne Desan, "Crowds, community and ritual in the work of E.P. Thompson and Natalie Davis," in Lynn Hunt (ed.) *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, 1989), 47–71; and Hans Medick, "Plebeian culture in the transition to capitalism," in Raphael Samuel and Gareth Steadman Jones (eds.), *Culture, Ideology and Politics: essays for Eric Hobsbawm* (London, 1982), 84–113. Both authors argue for the retention of a modified version of the concept, as shall I. Thompson was careful to point out that plebs and patriciate differed to the point of violence in their respective interpretations of these norms, so he himself cannot be accused of taking the same position as the neo-Weberians. Essays Thompson published after the "Moral economy" are often overlooked by his critics; they are essential for grasping his dynamic, nonteleological interpretation of plebeian consciousness: "Patrician society, plebeian culture," *Journal of Social History* 7:4 (1974), 382–405; "Eighteenth century English society: class struggle without class?" *Social History* 3:2 (1978), 133–165.
25. In fact this roughly summarizes Randall Pouwels's analysis of Swahili resistance to the expansion of the Omani state. The leading townsmen united to defend "traditional ways of doing things, and traditional values." Pouwels allows, however, that some of the common folk took the Omani side against the patriciate, on the theory that their enemy's enemy was their friend. *Horn and Crescent* (Cambridge, 1987), 101.
26. For general critiques of such approaches to resistance see Timothy Mitchell, "Everyday metaphors of power," *Theory and Society* 19 (1990), 545–77; and Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Recovering the subject: *Subaltern Studies* and histories of resistance in colonial South Asia," *Modern Asian Studies* 22 (1988), 189–224.

assumption is based in turn on what Lynn Hunt calls "the metaphor of levels," in which cultural languages are taken "as expressing something else, something more 'real' than the words themselves."²⁷ Expressions of resistance (bread riots, dissenting religious sects) are taken to exist on a different level from underlying material phenomena, and it is the historian's task to penetrate the surface level of political speech and action in order to perceive the "reality" beneath. Hence the plebeian crowd's defense of the reciprocal values of a "moral economy" supposedly bespeaks its uniform reliance on a subsistence village economy, which in turn sets plebeians' consciousness entirely apart from that of those who seek to exploit them. The resultant analysis embodies a kind of class teleology: it is most apparent in Hobsbawm's early writings, in which workers engage in "primitive," "inarticulate" protest before a "specific language" inevitably emerges to give precise utterance to their "aspirations."²⁸ Gramsci criticized a cruder version of this interpretation among his comrades in the Italian Communist Party in the 1920s: he wrote of a "fatalist" approach to Marxism which held that the sharpening tensions of capitalism would of necessity bring the masses to realize the true class nature of their oppression; all the Party need do is maintain a "hard" line and the masses would eventually come its way.²⁹

Such approaches to popular consciousness are marked by what has been criticized as a "class-theoretical analysis," that is, analysis which proceeds from the assumption that "beliefs are formulated in accordance with class interests," and that the task of the scholar is to analyse belief systems "by showing to which class (or social group) they are appropriate."³⁰ "Class-theoretical" analysis leaves the historian of popular consciousness two analytic possibilities. The first is that no matter how seemingly inchoate, the consciousness of the crowd is "appropriate" to its own distinct material interests. This choice frequently results in class teleology such as that which mars Hobsbawm's work, and which is common in Africanist studies that, following Hobsbawm, seek to document protest and resistance in nonpolitical activities such as criminality and desertion. The best of such studies have shown how "everyday resistance" helped shape society overall, but all too often they depict each theft as an act of class warfare, an expression of the thief's underlying opposition to his or her oppression. When such scholars turn to cases of outright rebellion, the rebels are often assumed to be motivated by class consciousness.³¹

27. Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley, 1984).

28. *Primitive Rebels*, 2.

29. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York, 1971), lx, 336–7; additional critiques of these concepts can be found in passages discussing Amadeo Bordiga and the intellectual tendencies which Gramsci variously calls "abstentionism," "fatalism" and "finalism." These concepts were akin to the assumptions (including those of Lukács) which underlay the disastrous "partial actions" or *Teilaktionen* of German communists in 1921, assumptions which much of Gramsci's thought was focussed on correcting. See Perry Anderson, "The antinomies of Antonio Gramsci," *New Left Review* 100 (1976/77), 55ff.

30. Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill and Bryan S. Turner, *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* (London, 1980), 25.

31. Leroy Vail and Landeg White criticize the "violence done to language" by covering such activities with the blanket label of "resistance": "Forms of resistance: songs and perceptions of power in colonial Mozambique," in Donald Crummey (ed.), *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa* (London, 1986), 193–227. Nevertheless, studies of everyday resistance were of immense importance in advancing the study of African social history, for they were the first to cast ordinary men and women (rather than chiefs, kings and District Officers) in active and historically significant roles. See Allen Isaacman, *The Tradition of Resistance in Mozambique* (Berkeley, 1976), ch. 5; Charles Van Onselen, *Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia* (London, 1976), esp. chs. 7 and 8; Ray A. Kea, "I am here to plunder on the general road: bandits and banditry in the pre-nineteenth century Gold Coast," in Crummey, *Banditry*, 109–32;

The second possibility open to the student who subscribes to a "class-theoretical" analysis of popular consciousness is that the crowd is imbued with a belief system appropriate to some *other* class or social group. Many of Hobsbawm's critics have chosen this route, arguing that because peasants were locked helplessly into seamless webs of patron-client relationships, their thoughts and actions were entirely dominated by the rural elite. Thus, rather than an "inarticulate" expression of agrarian protest, banditry (the most commonly cited example) served the interests of landlords.³² As opposed to a teleology of class consciousness, such an argument posits the absolute ideological domination of one class by another; rather than the inevitability of conscious protest these studies assume its impossibility. If when defending a moral economy peasants and plebeians invoke their rights as clients, they merely express the world view of their patrons; theirs is a "false consciousness," that is, a consciousness "appropriate" to the material interests of a social group not their own.³³

If we are to consider peasants and plebeians as autonomous, thinking beings, we cannot accept the concept of their absolute ideological domination; it is absurd to assume that the thinking of whole classes of people is imposed on them by others, rather than arising from autonomous thought and action. Such assumptions, like the neo-Weberian portrayal of societies glued together by overarching tradition, preempt the possibility of conflict. Teleology, on the other hand, is bad historical practice. Although the growth of class consciousness can sometimes be documented, it ought never be assumed; its development is never automatic and is always fitful.³⁴ The material relations that characterize a given class are the analytic constructs of the scholar; historical actors do not necessarily share the scholar's perceptions of their class position, and if they do their perceptual languages differ radically. But more fundamentally: political awareness (be it class consciousness or something else) does not arise

also see Kea's *Settlements, Trade and Politics in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast* (Baltimore, 1982). For class teleology in African slave rebellion, see Fred Morton, *Children of Ham: Freed Slaves and Fugitive Slaves on the Kenya Coast* (Boulder, 1990), and the discussion in Jonathon Glassman, "The bondsman's new clothes: the contradictory consciousness of slave resistance on the Swahili coast," *JAH* 32 (1991), 277–312. In this type of analysis, the group whose material interests correspond to a specific mode of consciousness need not be a class: in *The Dead Will Arise*, Peires suggests that the millennial Cattle Killing of 1857 was ultimately a rational response to the economic crisis engendered by the lung sickness epidemic decimating Xhosa herds.

32. Anton Blok, "The peasant and the brigand: social banditry reconsidered," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 14 (1972), 494–503. A substantial literature on Latin American banditry has arisen in critique of Hobsbawm, which rarely looks beyond the perceptions of the "bandit kings" and their elite patrons to consider the motivations of the rank-and-file bandits and their peasant admirers, who were Hobsbawm's main foci. Examples include Linda Lewin, "The oligarchical limitations of social banditry in Brazil: the case of the 'good' thief Antonio Silvino," *Past and Present* 82 (1979), 116–46; Peter Singelmann, "Political structure and social banditry in northeast Brazil," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 7 (1975); Billy Jaynes Chandler, *The Bandit King, Lampiao of Brazil* (College Station, TX, 1978). Similar works include the chapters by Donald Crumney and Timothy Fernyhough on Ethiopian banditry (another of Hobsbawm's examples), and by Larry Yarak on criminality in nineteenth century Elmina, in Crumney (ed.), *Banditry, Rebellion*. Hobsbawm devoted several chapters of *Primitive Rebels* to his concept of social banditry, as well as a separate work, *Bandits* (London, 1969).
33. For a critical discussion of "false consciousness" see George Rudé, *Ideology and Popular Protest* (New York, 1980). The concept of false consciousness appears in non-Marxist literature in the form of structural-functionalist interpretations of African social dynamics. To choose an issue close to the heart of the present study: the structural-functionalist literature argues that rituals of rebellion serve an integrative function, in which juniors and women are made to accept the authority of senior men. The classic works in this regard include Gluckman, *Order and Rebellion*, and V.W. Turner, *Schism and Continuity in an African Society* (Manchester, 1957).
34. The classic interpretation along these lines is E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, 1963).

automatically from the material experiences of a single theoretically constructed social group. When scholars distinguish between "consciousness" and an underlying "social reality," they in fact impose their own analysis as "reality," and accuse their subjects of self-deception for thinking differently. Such accusations can do little to help us understand the motivations of historical actors.

In order to understand the rebellious consciousness of the plebeian crowd, it will be necessary to dispense with "class theoretical" models altogether. Beliefs are not created by or within one class or another. Rather, they are forged within the crucible of social interaction; they arise from the rough-and-tumble of everyday struggle. Perceptions of class and other group interests do not precede struggle, they grow out of it. As groups of individuals clash over particular material issues, they begin to elaborate perceptions of their differences, and conflicting views of the world may fitfully begin to emerge. Much conflict, as E.P. Thompson argued long ago, is "class struggle without class."³⁵ The most useful way to interpret the languages of political culture is to see them not as instruments for the defense of underlying interests, but rather as forms of *discourse* within which certain issues are defined and debated. This approach erases the false boundary between language and social "reality," for it stresses the degree to which the forms of discourse define how social and political interests come to be perceived.³⁶

Gramsci argued that popular consciousness is "appropriate" to the material interests of neither the subordinate nor the dominant class. Rather, its most notable characteristic is its *contradictory* nature. To be sure, Gramsci believed that in the final analysis a major force in the shaping of popular consciousness is a dominant or "hegemonic" ideology. But his approach differs from those we have criticized in at least three ways. First, Gramsci perceived ideology³⁷ not as a uniform "belief system," but as a form of discourse. He had a keen interest in linguistics, and recognized that language can convey and reproduce inherent perceptions of the world; like languages, ideologies "create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc."³⁸ The most powerful influence that hegemonic ideologies have on popular consciousness is not how they impose particular ideas, but rather the way that they shape the questions to be asked and the issues to be debated. This is most readily apparent in the day-to-day struggle to exist, in which what Marx called "the dull compulsion of economic facts" seems to necessitate acceptance of choices that may or may not be considered just (sharecropping tenancy or wage labor; segregated transportation or a long walk to work). Second, Gramsci did not subscribe to a "class-theoretical" interpretation of the nature of ideologies; he did not believe the hege-

35. Thompson's clearest statement of this position is in "Eighteenth century English society," but it appeared thirty years ago in the opening pages of *Making*.

36. This is the approach Lynn Hunt takes to the political culture of the literary elite in the age of the French Revolution. It is not much different from the way Thompson analysed popular culture, as Hunt herself acknowledges (*Politics, Culture*, 24, 50–1). Recent French social history has been particularly marked by an interest in discourse, but much of the literature has abandoned a dialectical approach to the study of the links between ideology and conflict, denying that there is any causal connection between cultural languages and referents external to the speakers who use them. For a critical review see Lenard R. Berlanstein, "Working with language: the linguistic turn in French labor history," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 33:2 (1991), 426–40.

37. Gramsci distinguished between "willed" ideologies, those spawned by individuals or individual groups (normally political), and what he called "organic" ideologies, which are tied to particular social formations. Most of his discussion is of "organic" ideologies, as is ours. *Prison Notebooks*, 376–7.

38. *Prison Notebooks*, 377; for language, see page 323.

monic ideology to be simply the production of one particular class, nor did he believe it to give unambiguous expression to the interests of the dominant class.³⁹ Thus, even if he argued that the dominant class simply imposed the hegemonic ideology on the thought of the subordinate classes, it would not follow that popular consciousness is "appropriate" to the interests of the oppressors and is therefore "false."

But, contrary to the view commonly imputed to him, Gramsci did *not* argue that popular consciousness is simply dominated by the thought of the ruling class, and this is the third and for our purposes most significant point about him.⁴⁰ Popular consciousness (he argued) is composed of many different fragments of thought originating in many different times and places. Some of these fragments originate in the elegant philosophies that justify the social order and dominate the thought of the ruling strata (the sanctity of property; the majesty of the law; the logic of the marketplace). Other ideas, by contrast, are produced by the subordinate population themselves, in the context of their daily experience or the experiences of their forebears. In the mind of any individual, these varied and conflicting thoughts meet and sometimes clash. The slave, peasant or plebeian absorbs many ideas from the hegemonic ideology but finds that ideas arising from her day-to-day experience as slave, peasant or plebeian may contradict them. The resulting *contradictory consciousness* often produces frustration and an apparent acquiescence to domination. It is in this confusion and frustration that Gramsci located the workings of ideological hegemony, not in the absolute domination of the thought of the subordinate population.⁴¹

Hegemony does not generate harmony; it may manufacture consent but not consensus, compliance but not conviction.⁴² Gramsci's concepts would be of little use in our search for an understanding of the consciousness of peasant and plebeian resistance if they implied that the subordinate population is locked into acquiescence or inaction, as is often alleged. In fact a major impetus behind Gramsci's study of contradictory popular consciousness was his desire to understand the motivations of agrarian rebels, and to identify in the rebellious consciousness of the peasantry the raw material for the construction of a revolutionary (or "counter-hegemonic") ideol-

39. This is evident in Gramsci's subtle and complex writings on the nature of philosophy and the role of the intellectuals. In nevertheless imputing a "class-theoretical" view to Gramsci, Abercrombie *et al.* draw a crude and distorted caricature of these writings (*Dominant Ideology*, 13-14). To be sure, Gramsci understood that many philosophies have been produced by the "organic intellectuals" of a particular class (hence his fascination with Taylorism and industrial design), and he hoped that the "organic intellectuals" of the proletariat (i.e., the cadre of the Communist Party) would do the same. Consequently, many pages of Gramsci's notebooks are devoted to an agenda for the construction of a "counter-hegemonic" ideology expressive of what he might have considered the "appropriate interests" of the working class. But these programmatic passages should not distract us unduly from his analysis of society as it was.

40. Gramsci's concept of ideological hegemony is often misunderstood to be the same as the common concept of "false consciousness." See the discussion in Joseph Femia, "Hegemony and consciousness in the thought of Antonio Gramsci," *Political Studies* 23 (1975), 32, and, for an influential example of such misinterpretations, Abercrombie *et al.*, *Dominant Ideology*. James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* (New Haven, 1985) rejects Gramscian analyses that equate hegemony with absolute ideological domination, and his own work is an eloquent demonstration of the degree to which hegemonic concepts are constantly challenged and reformulated by subordinate populations.

41. This discussion of Gramsci is based on a broad reading of the *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. For the concept of contradictory popular consciousness, the notebook on "The Study of Philosophy" is especially important (pp. 321ff.); also see the many passages which discuss "common sense".

42. In contrast to this view, Perry Anderson calls Gramsci's concept of hegemony "the conviction of consent" ("Antinomies," 41); James Scott describes it as "ideological consensus and harmony" (quoted by Mitchell, "Everyday metaphors," 554).

ogy.⁴³ Gramsci scorned the idea, common on the left, that peasant rebellion was inherently reactionary and that the only social movements worthy of study were those “governed by plans worked out in advance . . . in line with abstract theory.” Rather, he argued, “reality produces a wealth of the most bizarre combinations.” Peasants frequently refashion some of the elements of their contradictory consciousness into ideologies of popular rebellion which may seem confused or inconsistent to the trained intellectual (including the Party activist), but which are nonetheless effective in mobilizing resistance that significantly alters society. These rebellious ideologies are usually expressed in language marked by hegemonic ideologies, so they are rarely revolutionary in the fullest sense. (A common example is the phenomenon noted by Hobsbawm, of peasant rebels asserting that they fight in the name of a distant king—or, as in the present case, of a distant Sultan.) But such rebellious ideologies cannot simply be dismissed as “false consciousness,” for they contain much that is expressive of popular perceptions of struggle against those who dominate rural society.⁴⁴

Following Gramscian lines of analysis, we can restore some of the concepts of the British social historians as powerful tools for the understanding of plebeian and peasant consciousness, without risking the “class-theoretical” reductionism that has sometimes flawed their work. The moral economy should be viewed as an example of a contradictory rebellious consciousness, a “bizarre combination” of ideological components crafted in the course of struggle, in which individuals espousing many different agendas could find justification. In the face of threats which were perceived to come from outside the community, peasants and plebeians defended *certain aspects* of what they considered their “traditional” rights and privileges. The moral economy was not a coherent “belief system” expressive of particular class interests, but was rather an ever-changing patchwork quilt of thought, assembled from bits and pieces of perceptual language common in patrician-dominated society.⁴⁵ It was not a uniform political platform, but was rather the subject matter of contention, the mode of discourse, in the minds of the patriciate as well as of the rebellious plebs. Thompson stresses that the rebellious crowd “believed” that they were defending customary rights; his point is that their enemies in the patriciate believed they were doing the same.⁴⁶ Political awareness arose over conflicting definitions of custom and tradition, not because a customary moral economy of subsistence was defended by one side and attacked by the other.

Although when used in this way the concept of the “moral economy” can be enormously useful, the phrase itself is misleading, for it erroneously suggests that strug-

43. For Gramsci and the peasantry: Davidson, “Gramsci”; David Arnold, “Gramsci and peasant subalternity in India,” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 11:4 (1984), 155–77.

44. Many passages in the *Prison Notebooks* examine popular uprisings (mostly agrarian) inspired by contradictory rebellious ideologies such as religious millennialism; this paragraph quotes from pages 196–200. For excellent reconstructions of such “bizarre combinations” by authors inspired by Gramsci, see Gyan Pandey, “Peasant revolt and Indian nationalism” and Shahid Amin, “Gandhi as Mahatma,” in Guha and Spivak, *Selected Subaltern*, 233–87, 288–348; also Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, trans. J. and A. Tedeschi (Harmondsworth, 1982).

45. In a similar vein, Comaroff in *Body of Power* writes of “subversive bricolages” of ideological components taken out of hegemonic contexts and put together in new ways. The image of the *bricoleur*, who assembles odd bits of bric-à-brac into a coherent whole, is derived from Lévi-Strauss; my approach differs in that it does not insist on the coherence or internal consistency of the structuring vision. For a discussion of similar approaches in recent anthropological and sociological theory see Steven Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals* (Madison, 1990), ch. 1.

46. “Moral economy,” 78.

gles were perceived strictly in terms of production and exchange: defense of a moral economy of subsistence versus surplus extraction, defense of ideals of reciprocity versus those of the market. The issues of struggle might with more precision be regarded as discourse over the constitution of the moral *community*. Communities consist of people who engage in daily, face-to-face interaction, who share (and struggle over) local social institutions. In the agrarian or small-town communities of preindustrial society, no local institutions were perceived as discretely “economic,” “religious” or “political,” nor was any particular form of social activity so perceived. Those phantoms of modern bourgeois thought, *homo economicus* et al., did not haunt the minds of peasants or plebeians, nor indeed of most members of the elite. Social interaction was perceived in terms of what the French sociologist Marcel Mauss called “total social phenomena.”⁴⁷

In the relative absence of discretely “political” or “economic” institutions, conflict and struggle took forms that to the modern historian seem nonpolitical and non-economic—that is, “nonmaterial.” Nevertheless, “cultural” and “religious” issues could exert considerable material force. The social life of the pre-industrial community was mediated by what Hans Medick calls a “material culture,” that is, a culture that played an integral role in the everyday production and reproduction of social relations, including relations which we would consider economic.⁴⁸ Of course all cultures play this role; what we call “economic facts” are but the cultural or ideological ideals of our relationship with things, ideals which in turn order many of our relationships with one another. The crucial difference is that in bourgeois societies most people *perceive* a distinction between consciousness and economic fact—a perception that Timothy Mitchell calls the “enframing” of the social universe into two distinct dimensions—and act on that perception. In preindustrial societies, however, such ideals were not hegemonic, and most key social struggles took place outside of any explicitly “political” or “economic” arena.⁴⁹

Conflict in nonindustrial societies therefore frequently took the form of multivalent struggles over community institutions. This has been suggested by many historical studies of agrarian rebellion, including several on Africa, which focus on the defense of the peasant community. Unfortunately these studies often treat defense of the community as yet another class-specific mode of consciousness, in the same manner as some misapplications of the concept of moral economy. Agrarian rebels enunciated their motivations in terms of the defense of village tradition, and these terms are taken to denote the perception of an underlying solidarity of material interests within the village. As a result, such studies underestimate conflict within the community—conflict between men and women, old and young, rich and poor. Such an approach cannot do justice to many of the sharpest struggles in agrarian societies, which concerned not whether the community ought to exist, but rather what kind of community it ought to be.⁵⁰ Defense of the local community was not an objective

47. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, translated by Ian Cunnison (New York, 1967 [1925]).

48. Medick, “Plebeian culture,” 84. In a similar approach Gwyn Prins (*Hidden Hippopotamus*) uses the term “moral economy” to characterize such a “material culture.”

49. Mitchell (“Everyday metaphors”) cites Foucault, among others, when discussing the rise of this dichotomy of thought during the Enlightenment.

50. Such shortcomings lead Peires, in the midst of his magnificent analysis of rebellious consciousness, back to the neo-Weberian statement that the Cattle Killing of 1857 united “the major social classes of the pre-colonial social order in a communal defense of their way of life” (*Dead Will Arise*, 176). Similar assump-

goal of struggle, but was the form of discourse in which struggle occurred, a form of discourse shared at many levels of society. Plebeians and patricians did not perceive themselves as two groups contesting political power; rather, they were arguing over the precise meaning of shared community ideals. Whether the historian labels these ideals those of the moral economy or those of community tradition, the important thing is to analyze them not as a uniform mode of thought, but as an ideological or discursive language.

The nature of the tensions produced by perceptual differences over how a common idiom of community should be interpreted is captured in the word "plebeian," used by Thompson to describe popular consciousness in such struggles. Two arguments could be made in favor of retaining the term. One is pragmatic: "plebeian" is a convenient label with which to refer to the mixed population of artisans, petty traders, laborers, peasants, and others of the lower orders who made up the crowds which frequently challenged authority in the preindustrial town. The other appeal of the term lies in its suggestion of a highly ambiguous but nevertheless rebellious contradictory consciousness. The implications of the word are much like those of an analogous term used by Gramsci, "subaltern." Gramsci used this word not merely as a convenient non-class-specific shorthand for "subordinate population," writes David Arnold, but also because it

emphasizes the central importance of the relationship of power between social groups: they are not just peasants and landlords but subordinates and superordinates, conscious of the implications and consequences of their respective positions though not necessarily in terms that signify a developed class awareness.⁵¹

Similarly, Hans Medick proposes that the term "plebeian"

evokes well that obstinacy of behaviour and expression characteristic of the "lower orders", as it was seen with a mixture of contempt and fear "from above." It is this compound of simultaneous resistance and insurgency but also of dependence upon the ruling orders and classes and upon their "civilized" elite culture that we are after.⁵²

The term helps to emphasize the role played by patrician culture in the shaping of plebeian thought, no matter how rebellious the latter. Plebeians recognized themselves as members of a community dominated by others, upon whom they were dependent, but with whom they often came into conflict. They accepted the universality of a culture or set of ideals which were embodied most fully in the lifestyle of their patrician patrons, of which their own version seemed but a pale reflection. But this sharing of language did not preclude argument between plebeians and their betters. Everyone knew that plebeians could be pig-headed.

tions sometimes intrude on the fine studies of Mau Mau by Tabitha Kanogo, *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau* (London, 1987) and Frank Furedi, *The Mau Mau War in Perspective* (London, 1989). Overlooking crucial struggles over the *shape* of the community, Kanogo and Furedi engage in an ultimately sterile debate as to whether overseers defended Kikuyu squatter communities or abetted the landlords. (The crucial question ought to be: how did overseers interpret the meaning of village traditions?) Landeg White avoids such pitfalls in an exemplary study of struggles that were expressed in the contested idiom of community traditions: *Magomero: Portrait of an African Village* (Cambridge, 1987).

51. Arnold, "Gramsci and peasant subalternity," 162-3.

52. Medick, "Plebeian culture," 85-6.

As described by Thompson and others, plebeian struggle in eighteenth-century England took place in a hegemonic discursive idiom of paternalism. The provincial gentry relied on the support of rural clientele in their resistance to the encroachments of the absolutist state. Patricians envisioned the small-town and village community as being structured around ties of patronage and clientele and governed by ideals of reciprocity and paternalism. These perceptions were shared by the plebs. But whereas the patrician version of community ideals stressed the allegiance and deference of clients, the plebeian version stressed the generosity of patrons. These differences often became acute, and patricians constantly had to defend their interests against the aggressive demands of their clients. Plebeian ideals of community, although couched in the language of paternalism, did not express a unity of interest with the patriciate.

This situation was remarkably similar to that on the Swahili coast in the later nineteenth century, where the old Swahili patriciate, pressed from above by the Zanzibari state, sought the support of a clientele of plebeians, peasants and urban parvenus, only to find that the latter had their own ideas of the shape that the coastal communities should take. In both of these preindustrial settings, the hegemonic language was one of paternalism and generosity. The community was perceived to consist of networks of ties in which patrons could expect deference from clients, men from women, and seniors from juniors. Ultimately these were relationships of power, but they were defined and contested in the language of reciprocity. The resulting discourse took the form of what has been called "the politics of reputation," in which the weak might vilify the powerful for being ungenerous, and the rich ignore their obligations to those they deemed ungrateful. In societies in which the hegemony of the state and the marketplace were weak or uneven, such discursive struggles had substantial consequences: a man ridiculed for stinginess would lose public prestige, personal dependents, and power.⁵³

Because of their very nature, these bonds of patronage, seniority and patriarchy were established and reaffirmed, and their precise nature debated, in a wide variety of "total social interactions" that occurred outside of any discretely political venue. The sites of these interactions included many of the nooks and crannies of everyday life that are beyond the historian's normal range of vision, including gossip, backbiting, and what James Scott calls "offstage whispers."⁵⁴ But one important site is relatively accessible to historical investigation, even to the document-starved historian investigating Africa before European conquest. That is the arena of public ritual, which often appears in written records, and which can be understood if approached with a sensitivity to local cultural idioms.

The symbolic language of ritual, which derived much of its power from how it was embedded within the language of everyday life, has long been recognized as a major mechanism for the affirmation and reproduction of the relationships of domi-

53. The phrase "politics of reputation" was coined by F.G. Bailey; see Scott, *Weapons*, 24. Scott argues that the politics of reputation is "a one-sided affair," in which the weapons of the weak are "only symbolic." This may be so in bourgeois societies, in which the wealthy derive their power from the workings of the market and the modern state. It does not necessarily apply to other settings. For a subtle examination of what might be called the "economics of reputation" in modern Africa, see Sara Berry, *No Condition is Permanent* (Madison, 1993), especially chs. 6 and 7.

54. Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*, 42–3; Scott, *Weapons*. Scott's phrase is a further suggestion that the "weapons of the weak" are ineffectual (see previous note), for it assumes that the dominant group's definition of what constitutes "offstage" is determinant. Scott's brilliant study hence fails to deliver on its promise of showing us the historical effectiveness of everyday resistance.

nation that defined the community.⁵⁵ What is often overlooked, however, is that these relationships were not merely reproduced in the arena of ritual, they were also continually contested there; *discursive struggle over ritual constituted a major forum for the contestation of power*.⁵⁶ This was especially so in the realm of public ritual, in which large segments of the community jointly participated in ceremonies of concentrated visibility and meaning. One's very place in the community was perceived in terms of participation in these rituals. Thus, full rights in the Swahili community only accrued to those who participated in public rituals of Islamic worship, or who presided over reproductive rituals such as weddings and circumcisions. The hegemonic version of these rituals disadvantaged certain categories of persons, such as women, slaves, and newcomers of non-Muslim background: ritual defined their position as distinctly inferior, or excluded them from the community altogether. But although women, slaves and newcomers generally accepted the patriarchal and Islamic idioms that gave shape to public rituals, they did not necessarily share the dominant interpretation of them. They struggled to participate in these rituals on their own terms, or to fashion alternative versions of ritual which would give them enhanced opportunities to share in the life of the community.

Thus, discursive struggles over Shirazi ritual constituted struggles over the very relations of power that ordered the community. In the second half of the nineteenth century these struggles assumed inordinate importance for rapidly growing numbers of East Africans. The opportunities of the commercial boom attracted people at many levels of coastal society and from many parts of the interior. Opportunities were greatest at the urban centers of the coast, particularly for members of the Shirazi patriciate who dominated community institutions there. Ongoing conflict ensued as slaves, plebeians and rural people, both Swahili-speaking villagers from the coast and non-Swahili speakers from the further hinterland, sought full membership in the urban community, and as Shirazi patricians just as persistently fought to exclude the newcomers or relegate them to distinctly inferior roles.

These struggles for full participation in the public rituals of the Swahili community—what I call struggles for Swahili citizenship—lay at the core of the consciousness of the rebellious crowd. Those who challenged the exclusiveness of the patriciate did not, as a rule, reject the values of paternalism, patriarchy and Islam by which the Shirazi justified their domination of the community; they sought rather to reinterpret them. Particularly contested were several key criteria by which the hegemonic language of Shirazi ritual accorded full membership in the community. To be fully accepted into the Shirazi community one was expected to be a male of nonslave descent, who exercised patronage over numerous dependents, including women and junior kinsmen: thus the rituals by which kinship was defined were major issues in the struggles for Swahili citizenship, as were the shifting definitions of slavery. One had to be

55. Structural-functionalist analyses of African ritual demonstrated its power decades ago; this literature in turn had an enormous impact on such historians of Europe as Eric Hobsbawm and Natalie Davis. Notable recent analyses of ritual power and the language of everyday life include Comaroff, *Body of Power*; Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*; and Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*.

56. Structural-functionalists argued that since Africans could not "see beyond the symbols" in terms of which they perceived their social universe, the "great public ceremonies" had the inevitable effect of maintaining "order and stability": M. Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard, "Introduction," *African Political Systems* (London, 1940), 17–21. Unfortunately many recent studies frequently fail to go much further. For a discussion of these themes see Ivan Karp, "Laughter at marriage: subversion in performance," in David Parkin and D. Nyamwaya (eds.), *Transformations of African Marriage* (Manchester, 1987), 137–54.

accepted as an orthodox Muslim by the dominant religious institutions of the community: thus, struggles over Islamic ritual were also significant, especially efforts to establish the validity of alternative rituals that enhanced the importance of women, slaves, and the nonliterate. Prestige and authority in the Shirazi community could be garnered from one's acquisition of the rank of *jumbe*, or acquisition of a lesser office in the neighborhood "dance societies," so-called because of the rituals by which participants secured or enhanced their rank within them. The hierarchy of the dance society was also, in general, that of the caravan, active participation in which was a further key component in the acquisition of prestige within the Shirazi community.

The struggle to participate in urban commercial life was at the same time a struggle to participate in urban community ritual; plebeians and their patrician opponents rarely distinguished between the two sets of goals. Unlike in the merchant houses of Hamburg, Bombay, or indeed of Zanzibar, the accumulation of wealth from the caravan trade was not an important aim in itself; many of the most powerful and prestigious of the Shirazi *majumbe* were hopelessly in debt, and their arduous safaris rarely resulted in monetary profit for anyone save the Indian financiers who stayed at home. The expansion of commerce created new opportunities for patricians and plebeians to enhance their authority within Shirazi community institutions. Commercial wealth was valued because it could be given away and thus be translated into influence and clientele. The most effective way to do this was to sponsor public rituals, where a celebrant might feast his neighbors in a setting that increased his reputation for piety and paternalism.

But as parvenus intensified their struggles for inclusion, festive ritual became the battleground of an increasingly embittered politics of reputation. An essential component of festive ritual was the display and distribution of luxury commodities, especially imported goods such as cotton cloth. In the ancient maritime culture of the Shirazi towns, whose leading families had long dominated overseas commerce, luxury trade goods were imbued with the symbolism of honor, ritual purity, and other attributes of patrician status.⁵⁷ During the commercial boom, growing numbers of plebeians secured access to these essential tools of Shirazi ritual, as manufactured imports flooded East African markets. This inflated the price of clientele, and guests at feasts made ever more insistent demands of their hosts and patrons. Moreover, many parvenus appeared who had become wealthy (at least temporarily) through long-distance trade, and who used their wealth in commodities to claim positions of status within the Shirazi communities. As the embattled patricians faced sharpening competition to prove their generosity, the control of community rituals slipped from their hands. Struggling desperately to preserve their domination of the towns, the patricians were drawn into an ever deepening spiral of competitive generosity, and, as in other parts of the world first feeling the impact of rapidly spreading commercialization, festive ritual became transformed into aggressive contests of ostentation and the destruction of wealth. A local religious scholar later observed that Shirazi feasts often led to violence.⁵⁸ In 1888, when multiple holiday feasts coincided with the public humiliation of the local aristocracy, festival led to riot.

These struggles were essential in shaping coastal society. Students of Swahili culture have long highlighted the interpenetration of influences from the western Indian

57. John Middleton, *The World of the Swahili* (New Haven, 1992), 110, 195–7 and *passim*.

58. Ali bin Hemedi el-Buhuriy, "Habari za Mrima," *Mambo Leo* 141–47 (Dar es Salaam, 1934–35).

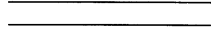
Ocean and the African interior as its most distinctive feature. Nineteenth century struggles over citizenship and over the redefinition of patron-client relationships considerably intensified this cultural interpenetration. The embattled patricians sought to heighten their exclusiveness by identifying themselves with overseas regions associated with Islamic authority and international commerce: the fictive appellation "Shirazi," from a port in the Persian Gulf, denotes this. By contrast, the word "Swahili" first came into widespread use as a term of self-identification by those engaged in popular struggles for citizenship. Derived from an Arabic root meaning "of the coast," the word was used as a euphemism by which slaves and others of low status could eschew their upcountry origins and identify with the Muslim culture of the coastal towns.⁵⁹

Thus, far from anxiously defending an outmoded traditional moral economy against the onslaught of the market, plebeian rebels were instrumental in shaping the new urban societies that emerged in the context of expanding international trade; they seized new commercial opportunities as weapons in their efforts to transform the coastal communities. The ultimate direction of change, however, would not be what they had foreseen. As patricians and plebeians increasingly sought imported commodities as key tools in the politics of reputation, their struggles would force a gradual shift in the perceptual framework through which social domination was viewed. Access to imported commodities would slowly become a goal in itself, and the marketplace would begin to be perceived as exerting powers distinct from others. Struggles over Swahili citizenship contributed halting, uneven steps toward what Mitchell calls the bourgeois "enframing" of economic forces as something over and against other realms of social interaction. Marx described the same phenomenon more pungently. Like Marc Bloch's, his imagery was spectral: he wrote of the dead beings of commodities becoming fetishized into phantoms that ruled the living.

Years before colonial conquest, this process of commodification was already taking a distinctly colonial form, as the commodities that were becoming sources of power and prestige came from outside of East Africa altogether—from Europe, India and North America. But the process was still in its earliest phase, the spread of commodities was highly uneven, and neither colonial hegemony nor the supremacy of the marketplace held any meaning for the men and women engaged in struggle in nineteenth-century East Africa. Although plebeians were deeply involved in the creation of new ways of life, they perceived and expressed their aspirations in the old language of patronage and clientele, patriarchy and Islam. Yet when they acted on those aspirations they forced a series of conflicts that transformed coastal society. Among the most significant transformations was the brutal onslaught of the German military state. This is the tragic irony that ends our story, brought about when Emil von Zelewski stumbled into a particularly delicate moment in the ritual calendar of the towns, as plebeians engaged in disruptive public discourse concerning issues of citizenship and authority. Unwittingly, the Germans provided a spark that caused the smoldering embers of plebeian protest to flare up into an outright conflagration.

59. Peter Lienhardt, "Introduction" to *The Medicine Man*, by Hasani bin Ismail (Oxford, 1968), 11–12; M.W.H. Beech, "Slavery on the east coast of Africa," *Journal of the African Society* 15:58 (1916), 146. For suggestions of how slaves introduced upcountry practices into nineteenth-century town culture, see Frederick Cooper, *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa* (New Haven, 1977) and Margaret Strobel, *Muslim Women in Mombasa* (New Haven, 1979).

PART I



PEASANTS, PORTERS
AND SLAVES

Peasants, Commodities and Power

O selo! Meli imekuja imeleta nguo!

Sail ho! The steamship has come, bringing cloth!

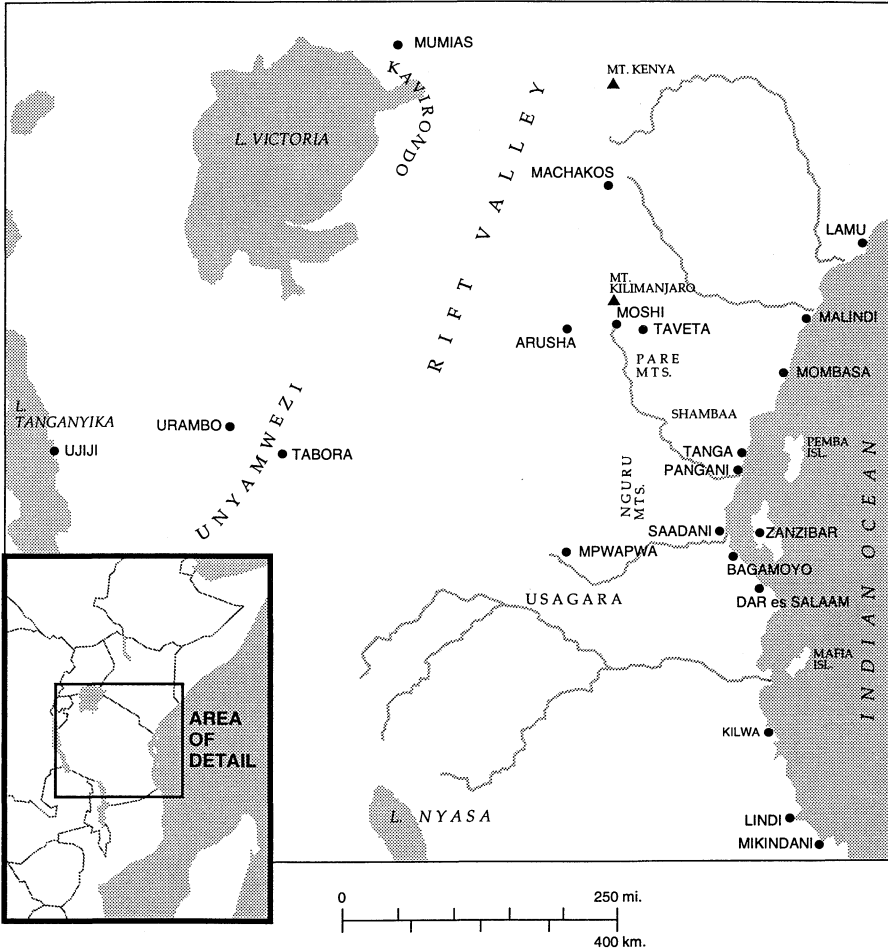
song from the northern Mrima, 1890¹

The Swahili coast is a string of towns and their dependent villages stretching from southern Somalia to just south of the Tanzania-Mozambique border, including the off-shore islands of Zanzibar, Pemba and Mafia. For the best part of a millennium these communities have been linked by a common language and culture, well-developed commercial networks, and sporadic political alliances and rivalries. The shared culture is literate and Muslim, its most distinctive attributes reflecting the maritime and mercantile life of the towns' leading citizens.

The Swahili communities have long enjoyed commercial ties to the wider world of the Indian Ocean. Although imports and exports had always been diverse, from the late eighteenth century two commodities—ivory and slaves—assumed inordinate importance. External demand for slaves, which were shipped to the Middle East and to French plantations on the Mascarene Islands, diminished in significance after the Napoleonic Wars and the rise of the European abolitionist movement. But demands for what British abolitionists called “legitimate” trade goods, particularly for the fine soft ivory of the East African interior, rose steadily throughout the nineteenth century. The demand for ivory came largely from India, but as the century progressed an ever greater proportion was consumed by the industrializing economies of Europe and North America. In addition, from mid-century there was a steadily growing North Atlantic demand for vegetable oils, which East Africans produced in the form of coconut and sesame, and for copal, a wild resin used in the manufacture of coach varnish. Both demands were the result of the industrial revolution, which also provided the means for payment: ever cheaper supplies of cotton goods manufactured on the power-looms of old and New England, which supplemented supplies from British India.²

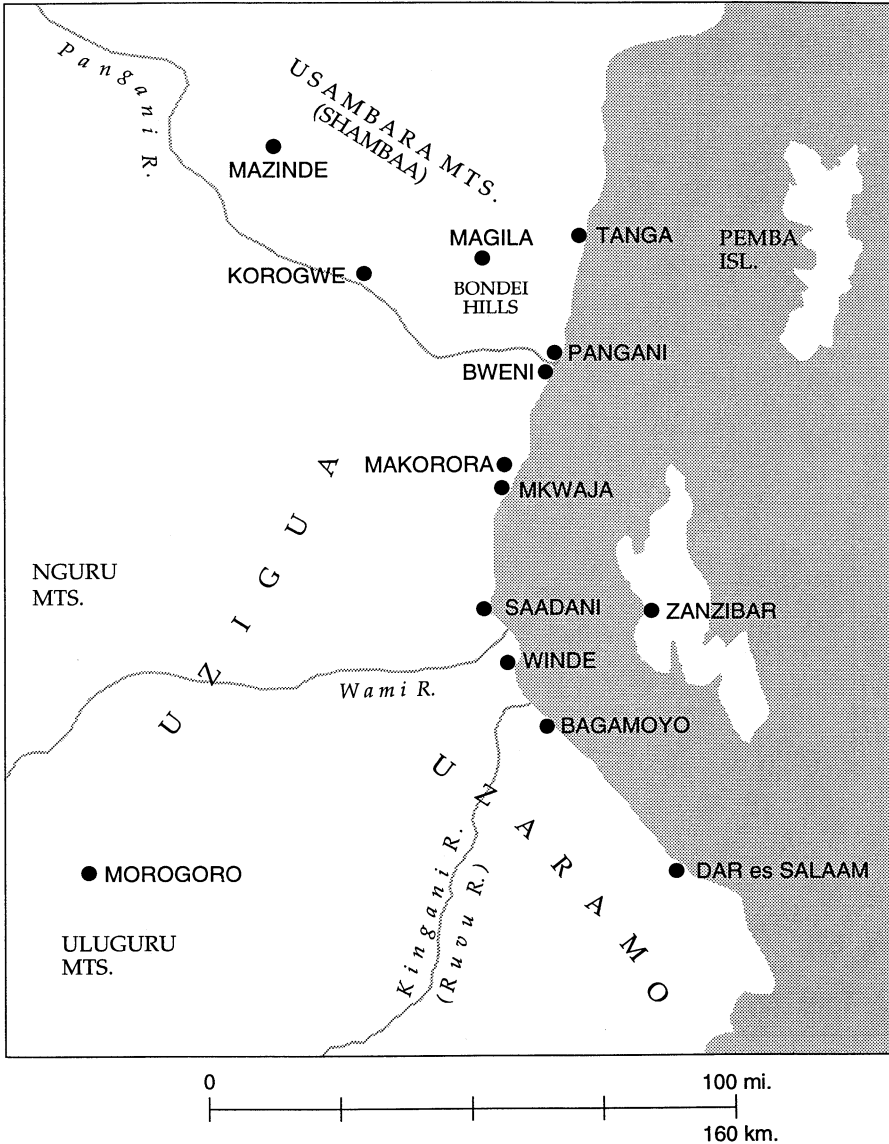
1. Baumann, *Usambara* (1891 Berlin ed.), Appendix vi, 347–9.

2. Essential works on nineteenth-century East African economic history include Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar* (London, 1987), and Edward Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa*



The nineteenth-century trade boom was overseen by a new political order on the East African coast. During the first third of the century, the ruling Busaid dynasty of Oman moved its court permanently to Zanzibar, replacing rival Mombasa-based Omani dynasties as the region's hegemonic power. In subsequent decades the new Omani Arab sultans of Zanzibar gradually expanded their control over the full length of the Swahili coast. Until the 1870s the political terms of this control tended to be loose

(London, 1975). These authors' analysis of the contours of the East African slave trade has generated much debate, but a consensus is beginning to emerge. See the following articles in *Slavery and Abolition* 9:3 (1988): Ralph Austen, "The nineteenth century Islamic slave trade from East Africa (Swahili and Red Sea coasts): a tentative census"; Abdul Sheriff, "Localisation and social composition of the East African slave trade, 1858-1873"; W.G. Clarence-Smith, "The economics of the Indian Ocean slave trade in the nineteenth century."



and informal, with the sultan's governors or *malizwali* (sing., *liwali*) striving to ensure amicable relations with prominent local African families by respecting the latter's customary privileges and maintaining generous flows of patronage.³

3. The expansion of Busaid political control is further discussed in Chapter 5. For a concise summary: Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*, 106–111.

Omani policies in the coast towns were governed by the sultans' paramount concern for the encouragement and control of commerce. Virtually all external trade was channelled through Zanzibar, which because of the monsoon winds was well placed to serve as an entrepôt for the entire Swahili coast. (The prime exception was the troublesome northern end of the coast, which was able to maintain direct communication with India and the Persian Gulf.) Indian merchants settled at Zanzibar under the sultanate's protection, bringing immense stores of capital and business contacts on which their Omani patrons were soon dependent. In the middle decades of the century, American and European consuls struck trading agreements with the sultanate, and from 1870 onwards the sultans were increasingly reliant on European political support. The Omani Arabs were largely a political caste, and although they remained important participants in international trade, the leading stratum preferred when possible to invest in large estates, particularly at Zanzibar, where they could lead comfortable lives as landed aristocrats. In so doing, they made use of the old networks of the slave trade to bring fresh supplies of laborers from the interior to the coast. Rather than export these slaves, the Omani planters put them to work producing export crops such as cloves and coconut, as well as provisions to feed the booming trade centers.⁴

Extension of Omani commercial control was most marked on the mainland coast directly opposite Zanzibar, a stretch known as the Mrima. The Mrima, extending from south of Dar es Salaam to just within Tanzania's present border with Kenya,⁵ was the source of the vast majority of Zanzibar's ivory exports, as well as virtually all of her copal. The treaties drawn up with the representatives of foreign merchants stipulated that all exports from the Mrima be channelled through Zanzibar, a provision that was enforced by officials of the Omani state stationed at the major towns, notably military garrisons and Hindu customs officials. The advantages of trading through Zanzibar evidently outweighed the onus of the customs duties, which were higher on the Mrima than they were at the northern and southern ends of the Swahili coast. The trade of the Mrima grew steadily under Busaid rule, as ever larger and more numerous caravans arrived at Bagamoyo, Saadani and Pangani, laden with ivory and other exports.

The growth of international trade and the rise of the Sultanate of Zanzibar constitute the broad context for this study. But in framing a description in these terms we risk overemphasizing the role of mercantile elites in the shaping of coastal society, especially the role of Arabs and of wealthy Swahili-speaking patricians who identified with Middle Eastern culture. Such overemphasis has in fact been the tendency of the received view of Swahili history. Fixing their gaze on the commercial and political elite of the major towns, who sustained the most intimate overseas contacts, Western scholars have stressed the cosmopolitan nature of coastal society. They have striven to identify the myriad cultural elements absorbed from across the whole arc of the Indian Ocean, including the numerous loanwords that Swahili, a Bantu language, has borrowed from Arabic and Farsi. These cultural influences, along with a well-developed tradition of Islamic scholarship and the urbane, com-

4. In addition to Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices*, see Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*.

5. The Mrima is also sometimes defined as stretching as far south as Kilwa. The etymology of the term is obscure, the most common explanation being that it refers to the hills and mountains (*milima*) that can be seen looming behind the northern portion of the Mrima.

plexly stratified nature of town life, once led most authors to describe Swahili culture, and the Swahili people themselves, as “Arabic” by origin. Such misperceptions were reinforced by the fact that our picture of precolonial Swahili culture relies heavily on sources from the nineteenth century, a period when many of the literate coastal elites indulged in a cultural trend of “Arabization,” linked in no small part to the growing prestige of the Omani sultanate.⁶ The misperceptions were further strengthened by a set of European racial assumptions by which Africans could not be conceived to have had the ability to build in stone; to compose elegant literary works of poetry, epic and theology; or to construct sophisticated institutions of trade and politics.⁷

More recent studies have reversed the emphasis: the historian’s gaze has turned from the Indian Ocean world in front of the coast towns to the African world at their back.⁸ Scholars now recognize that the city-states had always been sustained by intimate interaction with the non-Muslims of their rural hinterlands. Paradoxically, this very interaction is what gave rise to the self-consciously insular identity with which many of the townspeople sought to distinguish themselves from their non-Muslim neighbors and cultural cousins.⁹ The ideological trend toward insularity began relatively late in the history of the coastal settlements, perhaps no earlier than the sixteenth century. As elsewhere in Bantu-speaking Africa, the towns’ leading families invented elaborate genealogies that explained their uniqueness in terms of foreign origins—in this case origins that lay overseas, in distant parts boasting a fashionable Islamic cachet. They proclaimed their putative Middle-Eastern origins by taking *nisbas* or Arabic descent-names; one of the most common among Mrima patricians was *al-Shirazii*, from the Persian town of Shiraz.¹⁰

Such myths enabled the patricians to claim that they had deeper, firmer roots in Islam than did more recently arrived townspeople, even when the newcomers were Arabs such as those who were drawn to the coast in ever greater numbers by the nineteenth century trade boom. Indeed, Swahili-speaking patricians sometimes called themselves *Waarabu* or “Arabs,” reserving more precise labels for actual Arabic-speakers from the Middle East: *Wamanga* for the powerful Omanis, for example, or the pejorative term *Washihiri* for the humble Hadramis who arrived in successive waves throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Scholars have sometimes written of the Swahili-speaking patricians as “Old Arabs,” a term that reflects the wide

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6. James de Vere Allen, “The Swahili world of Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari,” appendix to Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari, *The Customs of the Swahili People*, transl. J.W.T. Allen (Berkeley, 1981); Derek Nurse and Thomas Spear, *The Swahili, Reconstructing the History and Language of an African Society* (Philadelphia, 1985), 4, 15.
 7. This older view is still to be found, particularly in the influential work of Jan Knappert. See Ibrahim Noor Shariff, “Knappert’s tales,” *Kiswahili* 41/2 (1971), 47–55; “Waswahili and their language,” *Kiswahili* 43/2 (1973), 67–75; “Knappert tells more tales,” *Horn of Africa* 4:2 (1981), 37–51.
 8. A concise summary of these views as they regard the early periods of Swahili history can be found in Nurse and Spear, *The Swahili*, on which much of the following discussion is based; also see Justin Willis, *Mombasa, the Swahili, and the Making of the Mijikenda* (Oxford, 1993), 24–7. Representative works include Fred J. Berg, “Mombasa under the Busaidi Sultanate,” Ph.D. dissertation (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1971); Marguerite Ylvisaker, *Lamu in the Nineteenth Century* (Boston, 1979); Thomas Spear, *The Kaya Complex* (Nairobi, 1978); Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*; and the numerous essays of James de Vere Allen, some of which are cited below.
 9. Such situations are not uncommon; strongly perceived ethnic differences are in fact more common between populations that maintain constant interaction rather than otherwise. Fredrik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Boston, 1969).
 10. Much of this discussion, and some of the language, is drawn from Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*, esp. 28–31, 35–7.

local acceptance of the patricians' claims of foreign origin while at the same time distinguishing them from "New Arab" immigrants such as the Omanis or Hadramis.¹¹ In this study the patricians are simply called "Shirazi," regardless of whether they traced their origins to Persia or to elsewhere in the Middle East. This is done not only to avoid confusion, but also because the term "Shirazi" has often been used to denote the distinct variant of Swahili culture practiced on the Mrima.¹²

This new emphasis has not only refuted racial definitions of Swahili culture as "Arabic," but it has also gone some way toward exposing the elitist focus of many Swahili cultural studies. Many of the criteria that have often been taken to define Swahili culture in fact pertained almost exclusively to the insular town elite. The most distinctive of these criteria, and a central symbol of Swahili culture in much of the literature, is the multi-storied, flat-roofed stone house, the *nyumba ya sakafu* or *nyumba ya ghorofa*. But although on some parts of the coast a stone building or two (usually a mosque) was a central symbol of the permanency of a settlement or of its ruling families, most Swahili settlements had very few stone buildings, or none at all. In even the most bustling of the large nineteenth-century port towns, only a tiny stratum of citizens could afford to live under roofs of stone; these were the same citizens who could devote long hours to religious study, political intrigue, and the pursuit of commerce. The *nyumba ya ghorofa* marked the extraordinary wealth and power of its inhabitants. But most townspeople lived under peaked roofs of thatched palm or *makuti*, as did their non-Muslim neighbors of the coastal hinterland. Bewildered by an inability to think of Africans as urban creatures, European visitors to such towns often described the stone-built elite neighborhood as the "Arab quarter" or even as the "town proper," dismissing the *makuti* houses surrounding it as mere "native huts," not proper houses.¹³ Thus the majority of townspeople were written out of the urban experience, which was deemed to befit them neither socioeconomically nor racially.¹⁴

Clearly, one did not need to live under a flat stone roof to partake of coastal urban culture. One did not even need to live in town. Most Swahili-speakers have always been agriculturalists, their lives differing little from those of non-Muslims of the coastal hinterland.¹⁵ The very origins of the Swahili settlements were often rural and

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11. Lienhardt, "Introduction," 13–14; Middleton, *World*, 12–13.
 12. De Vere Allen, "Swahili world." Other terms have been used, including "Mwambao" or "Mrima" Swahili (the two words are rough synonyms); Middleton in *World of the Swahili* writes (somewhat misleadingly) of "country town" Swahili. The fullest account of this variant of Swahili culture is Pamela Landberg's ethnography of a village near Pangani, "Kinship and community in a Tanzanian coastal village," Ph.D. dissertation (University of California, Davis, 1977).
 13. Examples include the description of Bagamoyo by Michahelles, 22 Oct 1888, ZStA: RKA 693, 14–15, and the following descriptions of Pangani: H.F. von Behr, *Kriegsbilder aus dem Araberaufstand in Deutsch-Ostafrika* (Leipzig, 1891), 154–9, 162, 213; Emil Werth, *Das Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Küstenland und die vorgelegerten Inseln* (Berlin, 1915), vol. II, 23; Keith Johnston, "Notes of a trip from Zanzibar to Usambara," *PRGS* 1879 (n.s. I), 546. In mid-century, when Pangani already had a considerable share of the international trade of the Mrima, the town contained fewer than two dozen stone houses: Richard F. Burton, *Zanzibar: City, Island and Coast* (London, 1872), vol. II, 143–4; Krapf, 30 March 1852, CMS, CA5/016/177.
 14. For a general discussion of these themes, see: Nurse and Spear, *The Swahili*; James de Vere Allen, "Swahili culture and the nature of East Coast settlement," *IJAHS* 14:2 (1981); *idem.*, "Witu, Swahili history and the historians," in Ahmed Idha Salim (ed.), *State Formation in Eastern Africa* (Nairobi, 1984), 216–49. The spatial division between an elite "stone town" and a mass of less imposing *makuti* houses is repeated in much of the ethnographic literature: examples include Lienhardt, "Introduction"; A.H.M. el Zein, *The Sacred Meadows* (Evanston, 1974).
 15. Jonathon Glassman, "Social rebellion and Swahili culture: the response to German conquest of the northern Mrima," Ph.D. dissertation (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1988), 31; this evaluates figures from A.H.J. Prins, *The Swahili-speaking Peoples of Zanzibar and the East African Coast* (London, 1967), 70–1.



FIGURE 1.1. A Swahili village near Dar es Salaam, 1888–89.

agricultural: a full third of the known sites had only a poor harbor or none at all. As we shall see throughout this study, villagers in the rural hinterlands of the city-states identified with Swahili culture and expressed their interests within the framework of town institutions. To define Swahili culture as exclusively urban and mercantile is to accept the biases of the nineteenth-century town elites. Contrary to those biases, Swahili community life was experienced and created by people who lived in villages as well as towns, under roofs of *makuti* as well as stone, and by pursuit of agriculture and fishing as well as trade.¹⁶

This shift in Swahili studies is part of a wider trend in the historiography of pre-conquest Africa. An earlier approach, sometimes dubbed the “Trade and Politics” school and criticized for its overemphasis on the activities of powerful men, has given way in the past two decades to studies that concentrate on local production rather than international trade, and on the social history of ordinary men and women rather than the political history of elites. When such revisionist studies take

16. In addition to the works already cited, see James de Vere Allen, “Town and country in Swahili culture,” *Symposium Leo Frobenius*, German UNESCO Commission (Cologne, 1974).

up the issue of international commerce, they emphasize its links to local production. In a recent book, Juhani Koponen argues that trade in pre-conquest East Africa was divided into two "spheres of exchange": one in "prestige" goods such as ivory and guns, the other in "subsistence" goods such as agricultural surpluses, salt and iron. International trade was predominantly in the "prestige" sphere, and previous accounts have stressed the kings and powerful chiefs who dominated it, including the Arab and Swahili entrepreneurs of the coast towns. But Koponen recognizes that the two spheres of exchange were never entirely discrete, and mundane items such as corn, tobacco and dried fish were traded together with ivory and European imports all during the nineteenth-century commercial boom. Koponen shows that the expansion of international trade had an enormous impact on ordinary men and women as the two spheres became even further linked or intertwined—that is, as it became increasingly possible, and even routine, for the people who produced subsistence goods to exchange them for prestige goods, including manufactured imports.¹⁷

These opening three chapters will discuss how urban markets came to play an important part in the lives of humble people on the coast and in its hinterland. They will describe the *commodification* of the regional economy: the uneven process by which an increasing amount of social interaction was mediated through the market, as ever more people devoted ever more time to the production and consumption of commodities. Marxist terminology describes commodification as a process by which economic actors become driven increasingly by consideration of the "exchange values" of the goods they produce, rather than merely of their "use values." Where commodification has proceeded furthest, not only is most economic activity geared toward production for the market (the production of exchange values), but also human labor itself becomes abstracted as an item of exchange.¹⁸ Chapters 2 and 3 will discuss the sectors of the regional economy that had become most highly commodified, in which production was directly dominated by urban mercantile elites: the caravan trade, where social relations often approximated wage labor, and the plantation sector, where the laborers themselves were beginning to be perceived as commodities by their employers. In this chapter, by contrast, we shall see how commodification affected even people who continued to operate within autonomous household economies geared primarily toward subsistence production, that is, toward the production of use values.

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17. Juhani Koponen, *People and Production in Late Precolonial Tanzania: History and Structures* (Uppsala, 1988), 109ff. Other analyses of pre-conquest African economies describe a third discrete sphere of exchange, that of "rights-in-persons." For a broader description of the process by which the boundaries between these spheres break down, see Igor Kopytoff, "The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process," in Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, 1986), 71ff. Several works argue that the long-distance trade routes under consideration in the present study grew out of regional networks of "subsistence" exchange. These include James L. Gibling, *The Politics of Environmental Control in Northeastern Tanzania, 1840–1940* (Philadelphia, 1992); Charles Ambler, *Kenyan Communities in the Age of Imperialism* (New Haven, 1988); Andrew Roberts, "Nyamwezi trade," in Richard Gray and David Birmingham (eds.), *Pre-colonial African Trade* (London, 1970).
 18. Commodification can therefore be defined as a process leading to "the progressive abstraction of social labour": Keith Hart, "On commoditization," in Esther Goody (ed.), *From Craft to Industry: the Ethnography of Proto-Industrial Cloth Production* (Cambridge, 1982), 38–49.

But to fully appreciate the impact of the commercial boom on people who were not members of the urban mercantile elite, we should travel a bit further in the direction taken by Koponen, and recognize that the very distinction between trade in “necessities” and trade in “luxuries” obscures the significance of the latter in the lives of common people. The anthropologist Arjun Appadurai proposes that luxuries be viewed not in contrast to necessities, but as “goods whose principal use is *rhetorical and social*,” access to which is restricted by law, price, or “complexity of acquisition.” Such “incarnated signs” enjoy “semiotic virtuosity, that is, the capacity to signal fairly complex social messages,” messages that are open to a variety of readings, to contestation, and hence to radical change. Thus, what constitutes a “luxury” fluctuates over time and place, as do the meanings attached to it. Some goods become imbued with meanings they previously lacked, or lose meanings they once had, as they become more or less difficult to obtain and as they become manipulated in different relations of power. Commodities, in Appadurai’s words, have a “trajectory” of meanings.¹⁹ Imported cotton cloth, for example, was an item of immense prestige among East Africans in the opening decades of the nineteenth century: chiefs wore it and distributed it to their clients as symbols of power. But by the end of the century (as we shall see), ordinary peasants were regularly selling agricultural surpluses to purchase a bit of imported calico, forcing powerful men to search anxiously for other markers of status.

These concepts suggest that, notwithstanding common criticisms of “Trade and Politics” history, two arguments remain for retaining a focus on expanding international commerce in “prestige” goods, even in a study such as ours which is concerned more with commoners than with kings. First, in a climate of rapid commodification, the increasingly dense links between the two “spheres of exchange”—indeed, the rapid erosion of any distinction between them—meant that goods that conveyed messages of prestige became ever more widely distributed. This in turn gave humble people the opportunity to contest the precise meanings of what had once been exclusive markers of status and political power. (Such contests will be discussed in part two of this study.) And second, even those trade goods that remained in the hands of only a narrow stratum of society, such as guns and slaves, could have an enormous ideological and political impact, as their deployment gave rise to perceptions that access to international markets could be an important source of power and authority—perceptions shared by men and women who themselves may have never bought a gun or worked a slave.²⁰

The peasants, porters and slaves who are the main subjects of these opening chapters were accorded no place in the ways that the insular town elites thought of Swahili community institutions. But the above considerations all suggest why common people might nevertheless have taken a keen interest in the affairs of the urban patriciate. The commercial and state institutions coordinating the trade boom were

19. Arjun Appadurai, “Introduction: commodities and the politics of value,” in Appadurai (ed.), *Social Life of Things*, 38. For the trajectories of meanings of a “luxury” commodity which will play a major role in this study see Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: the Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York, 1985).

20. Robin Law suggests a similar argument in *The Slave Coast of West Africa, 1550–1750* (Oxford, 1991), 345–6.

located in the Muslim towns; the towns were thus the principal nodes of market networks whose influence was being spread far into the interior. The rapid commodification of social relations meant that many non-elites of the coastal region and its hinterland, including people who lived in rural villages and pursued no calling other than household subsistence agriculture, felt the impact of what happened in town.

Agriculture on the Mrima Before the Rise of the Plantation Sector

Cultivation, not commerce, has always been the primary livelihood of Swahili-speakers, and until the final third of the nineteenth century most cultivation was for subsistence rather than the market. The greater importance of agriculture relative to trade is evident in coastal settlement patterns, which drew toward harbors only over the last few centuries. Even after the rise of international trade, dual settlement was common: communities consisted of one settlement (or several) sited to take full advantage of arable land, linked to another sited for fishing and maritime trade.²¹ On the Mrima, such polycentric settlements drew closer together, and closer to the sea, as the nineteenth-century trade boom progressed. The soils at the current site of Saadani, for example, cannot sustain cultivation, and the original settlements were on arable lands six or seven miles inland, at Ndumi and Mlembule. Bwana Heri, who presided over Saadani's rapid efflorescence as a trade center in the 1870s and 1880s, maintained his principal residence at Ndumi, coming to Saadani only to trade and to engage in political affairs related to the Omani state.²²

A similar trend can be discerned at Pangani. The present town consists of two separate settlements at the mouth of the Pangani River. Pangani proper is located on the north bank, on a sandy table surrounded by poorly drained land that was the ancient river delta. The oldest settlements, however, are located on better soils several kilometers to the north, atop the high bluffs marking the edge of the river's flood plain.²³ The settlement on the south bank of the river is called Bweni. In the last century, the present-day Bweni was known as Mji Mpya or "New Town," to distinguish it from the original settlement, now known as Bweni Ndogo or "Lesser Bweni," which is located a mile or so upriver. Mji Mpya is wedged improbably onto a narrow shelf of land between high cliffs and the river, as if the founders of the new settlement were desperate in their desire to locate it closer to the bay.

21. Allen, "Witu," 226-7; *idem.*, "Swahili culture;" Nurse and Spear, *The Swahili*.

22. Oral testimony of Bomu Juma Kirimo and Chande Maftaha, Saadani, 3-5 Nov. 1985. For Ndumi, see also Edward Hore, *Tanganyika, Eleven Years in Central Africa* (London, 1892), 16-18; Hermann von Wissmann, *Unter Deutscher Flagge quer durch Afrika* (9th ed., Berlin [1888]), 309; Claus von Anderton, Mbuzini, 9 Aug. 1886, KPK 1886, 298; Behr, *Kriegsbilder*, 296; Roger Price, 28 May 1876, LMS, Central Africa, Box 1/1. For Saadani's unsuitability for cultivation, see Bezirksamt Bagamoyo, 24 Jan. 1901, and Spalding, Wendt and Sheik Ahmed, 6 June 1901, TNA, G4/44.

23. Oral traditions hold that the oldest settlements were at Mkomwa, northeast of the town, and at Kumba, several miles upriver; the titles of the "chairs" of Pangani's *majumbe*, the old Shirazi chiefs, are taken from these place names. An archaeological survey has found that the present site of Pangani Town dates only from the eighteenth or nineteenth century, but that as early as the fifteenth century there were agricultural and fishing settlements (which engaged also in trade) on the bluffs near Mkomwa. R.M. Gramly, "Archaeological reconnaissance at Pangani Bay," TNR 86/87 (1981), 17-28. See also oral testimony of Makata Kombo, Pangani, 21 July 1985.



FIGURE 1.2. View from the cliffs behind Bweni, with Pangani across the river, c. 1889.

By the time of German conquest, Pangani society was acutely stratified. The main settlement on the north bank of the river contained about two hundred stone houses, built almost entirely after 1860 by Arab settlers who came from Zanzibar and Oman to establish estates of sugar cane and coconut, and Indian merchants who came to finance the expanding caravan trade. Stone houses were not typical of the Mrima as they were of towns on the northern Swahili coast, and the mansions built by these wealthy outsiders gave the boom town a close physical resemblance to Zanzibar.²⁴ But Pangani's narrow streets and alleys were crowded with the modest *makuti*-roofed houses of the bulk of the population, who engaged not only in agriculture, but also in fishing, crafts, and petty trade. To the north and west, the town was surrounded by lush groves of coconut palms, among which were scattered yet more thatched-roof houses and the gardens of their inhabitants.

The stratification of local society can be seen in the growing differentiation of agriculture and land tenure in the second half of the nineteenth century. Broadly speaking, there were two types of agricultural land at Pangani. One was the poorly drained land of the flood plain, which local people refer to as *bonde* or bottom land. This land included the gardens in the town's immediate vicinity, as well as the allu-

24. Werth, *Küstenland*, II, 22–3. For estimates of the growth of Pangani's population during the nineteenth century, including figures for the households of Indian merchants and the construction of stone buildings, see Glassman, "Social rebellion," 75–6, 40 n.

vial flatlands west of the town that were developed as sugar plantations in the last third of the century. Perhaps the most important crops grown in the gardens near the town were bananas, one of Pangani's staple foods, and coconut, which was not only central to Swahili cuisine and technology, but was also an important cash crop. Other tree crops, such as areca nut and mangos, were also grown. The extensive exploitation of the bottom lands for sugar cane, which arose only with the influx of Omani settlers, required the mobilization of large supplies of intensive slave labor, something that was economically and politically unfeasible for most locally born inhabitants. Staple grains demanded the better drained soils found on the bluffs north and south of town, where shifting cultivation was the norm. Pangani depended on the millet, sorghum and maize that was grown on these higher lands, as well as on imports from the coastal hinterland. Some rice was also grown in the moister areas of both the high land and the *bonde* land.²⁵

Different concepts of land tenure regulated access to land in each of these two ecological zones. While the fit between ecological and legal categories was never absolute, the rough correspondence indicates the differentiated uses to which land was put. As the expansion of commerce enhanced the value of coconut palms and house plots, bottom land near the town tended to be divided into holdings known as *mashamba* (sing., *shamba*). There was no Swahili concept of private land ownership, but individuals could control *mashamba* through manipulation of the concept of ownership of trees. The person who planted trees on a *shamba* established strong rights to them, rights that could be bequeathed to his or her descendants. The inheritance of these rights, and of rights to *mashamba* generally, was mediated by local descent group segments often known as *milango* (sing., *mlango*), which were considered the true owners of the *mashamba*. The literal meaning of *mlango* is "door;" the term (like its regional variants) implies a kin group flexibly defined by a common place of residence. Rules for tracing descent within the *mlango* varied considerably, when they existed at all, although in matters of property there was a bias toward patrilineal inheritance, following Islamic law. But the common practice was to manipulate claims to *mlango* membership so as to maximize one's opportunities.²⁶

25. In addition to personal observation of agriculture at Pangani today, this description draws on oral testimony of Idi Mwinyikombo, Mwembeni, 15 and 18 Sept. 1985; Mohammed Masanga, in an interview with Saidi Omari, Bweni, 27 June 1985; Makata Kombo, Pangani, 21 July 1985; Ndembo Maburuki, Pangani, 26 June 1985; Ali Waziri, Pangani, 12 Sept. 1985. Also: Burton, *Zanzibar*, II, 144; Joseph Thomson, *To the Central African Lakes and Back* (London, 1881), I, 44–6; G[ertrude] W[ard], *The Life of Charles Alan Smythies*, ed. E.F. Russell (London, 1898), 26; Johnston, "Notes," 546–7; Kayser's 1906 map of the lower Pangani valley, in the Pangani District Headquarters; Krapf, 19 Aug. 1848, CMS, CA5/016/173; Ludwig Krapf, *Travels, Researches and Missionary Labors* (Boston, 1860), 304; Msgr. Gaume, *Voyage à la Côte Orientale d'Afrique pendant l'année 1866 par le R.P. Horner* (Paris, 1872), 183; Baumann, *Usambara*, 16; Werth, *Küstenland*; Sultan Hamed bin Thweni and Soliman ben Nasor ben Soliman el-Lemki, deed of sale, 12 July 1896/30 Muharram 1314, TNA, G46/13.

26. Any description of nineteenth-century concepts of kinship and land tenure must be extremely tentative. This and the following paragraphs are based on R.E.S. Tanner, "Land rights on the Tanganyika coast," *African Studies* 19 (1960), 14–25; Prins, *Swahili-speaking*; Landberg, "Kinship and community"; John Middleton, *Land Tenure in Zanzibar* (London, 1961); Ann Patricia Caplan, *Choice and Constraint in a Swahili Community* (London, 1975); G.E.T. Wijeyewardene, "Some aspects of village solidarity in Ki-Swahili speaking coastal communities of Kenya and Tanganyika," Ph.D. thesis (Cambridge University, 1961); Pangani District Book, vols. II and III, TNA, MF 7 and MF 9; E.C. Baker, *Report on Social and Economic Conditions in the Tanga Province* (Dar es Salaam, 1934), 29–39 and *passim*; Ylvisaker, *Lamu*. Kinship will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

Male outsiders—that is, men who could not claim membership in a local *mlango* through descent—might obtain rights to cultivate *shamba* land in several ways. Marriage to a member of the *mlango* might confer certain land rights, but only so long as the marriage lasted. Because of the temporary nature of marriage on the Mrima, it was customary for an in-marrying male stranger to reinforce his land rights by taking a patron within the *mlango*. Fathers-in-law commonly played the role of patron in coastal society, and it is likely that a member of the *mlango* whose daughter married an outsider would sponsor his son-in-law's claims to the right to cultivate *shamba* land. But outsiders were generally prohibited from planting permanent tree crops on the *shamba*, even if married to a local woman; a common arrangement was for the patron to allow them to cultivate food crops between his coconut palms. Such clients often came from outside of coastal society altogether, a situation reflected in the colloquial phrase, *kila mwenyeji na mshenzi wake*, "every citizen and his *mshenzi*"—the latter word signifying a dependent, inferior stranger, presumably non-Muslim by origin. It sometimes happened that such a stranger eventually would be fully absorbed into the community, after long residence, conversion to Islam, and birth of children into a local kinship group.

Plots of land under shifting cultivation of subsistence crops, such as those on the bluffs north of Pangani, were known as *makonde* (sing., *konde*). Whereas *shamba* land was where town houses were constructed and the most important commercial crops cultivated, *konde* land was relatively remote from town and the staples grown there did not have high commercial value; whereas the former was tightly controlled by individual owners and their *mlango*, the latter was considered the common property of the entire community, and any resident could claim rights to it. The ideas that regulated access to *makonde* were not heavily influenced by Islamic concepts of property and contract, as was *shamba* ownership. Instead, any disputes that might arise over the allocation of *makonde* were settled by ritual specialists called *wavyale* (sing., *mvyale*), who derived their authority from propitiation of local ancestors and spirits connected with the land. It is not surprising to find that the *mvyale* was often a woman. Women were generally becoming frozen out of the structures of authority based on commerce and Islam that were assuming ever greater hegemony throughout the nineteenth century, but they remained important participants in older forms of productive and ritual activities such as subsistence agriculture and localized spirit cults.²⁷ The rituals and festivals presided over by the *mvyale* were reckoned according to a solar agricultural calendar, as opposed to the lunar calendar of Muslim ritual. One of the most important rituals connected with the *mvyale* was the festival of *Siku ya Mwaka* or the Solar New Year, one of the holidays being celebrated when the Germans claimed control of the coast.²⁸

In the face of the tightening control of *shamba* land, customs connected with *makonde* cultivation would be the more likely focus of humble persons seeking to claim access to agricultural resources in the coastal communities. It was easier for an

27. Marja-Liisa Swantz, *Ritual and Symbol in Transitional Zaramo Society, with Special Reference to Women* (Uppsala, 1986).

28. For the *mvyale* see John Gray, "Nairuzi or Siku ya Mwaka," *TNR* 38 (1955), 1–22, and Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*, 91–3, in addition to the sources already cited. "*Mvyale*" was the specialized term; these ritual experts were sometimes referred to by the more generic titles of *mwalimu* (teacher) or *mganga* (ritual healer).

outsider to gain access to *makonde* than to *mashamba*. If the *konde* had previously been cultivated and was lying fallow, the outsider might gain rights to it by payment of a nominal fee either to the village elders or to the person who had originally cleared it. If the land was still bush, there was little to prevent an outsider from clearing it herself. By contrast, it was much more difficult to gain rights to *shamba* land without belonging to a patrician *mlango*. Indeed, as the pressures of debt hemmed in members of Shirazi families in the second half of the century, much of the most valuable *shamba* land passed out of their control altogether and into the hands of wealthy Omani settlers. Other lands that were alienated by Omani Arabs were effectively converted to *mashamba* by the planting of areca and coconut palms. But this was only a nod of recognition in the direction of local concepts of land tenure. The Omanis did not mediate their claims to *mashamba* through the *milango*, but rather invoked concepts of private ownership. And behind those claims stood the power of the Zanzibar state.

The overall trend in Pangani agriculture during the final third of the nineteenth century was a steady differentiation between wealthy townsmen, especially Omani settlers, who controlled an ever greater proportion of *mashamba*; more humble landholders, who increasingly had access only to *makonde*; and slaves, a growing number of whom were becoming subjected to an intensely exploitative version of plantation agriculture on the Omani estates. The alienation of *shamba* land meant that powerful settlers came to dominate the production of the most important cash crops, coconut and sugar cane. But it was still possible for most residents, including those born outside the coastal community, to secure access to a plot of land on which to grow food crops. Even the gang slaves who labored on Omani sugar plantations along the banks of the river retained the right to devote several days a week to their own *makonde* on the bluffs above. Slaves probably consumed most of what they grew on these plots, but they also actively marketed surplus produce. Like others who were being excluded from the best commercial opportunities, slaves nevertheless strove to carve out a place for themselves in the expanding market economy.

Household Crafts and Petty Commerce

Although most inhabitants of the coast and its hinterland relied on household agriculture for the bulk of what they consumed, few expected to subsist solely on the produce of their gardens. People who specialized in the long-distance ivory trade and in plantation production of cloves and oil seeds were of course most fully reliant on the expanding market economy. But international commerce also sparked regional demands for foodstuffs with which to provision the caravans, plantations and burgeoning commercial towns, and household cultivators responded to these incentives by growing large surpluses of food crops. They also produced some cash crops for export to Europe and India, in particular sesame and coconut. Even the humblest of cultivators commonly planned to market small surpluses from their *makonde* subsistence plots, as we shall see in a moment.

There were also a variety of nonagricultural activities pursued within the household that, although producing goods largely for local consumption, were nevertheless becoming influenced by the expansion of international markets. Per-

haps the most significant was fishing, which supported substantial numbers of specialists. Boatwrights, boat owners, crews, makers of traps and nets, curers and fishmongers were linked to one another and to the wider regional economy by ties of commerce. The catch was usually purchased by specialists who salted or smoked it; in this form it played an important role as an item of trade. Indian merchants bought cured fish wholesale for export to the plantation economies of Zanzibar and Pemba, and it was an important barter good on upcountry ivory caravans, where it doubled as a provision for the porters. As we shall see in other cases, the most commercialized and prestigious occupations were closed to women: custom forbade them from having anything to do with sailing vessels; hence they were shut out of deep-sea fishing, the most profitable pursuit. Women in fishing villages were left to cultivate subsistence crops. But they could also fish from the shore with traps and weirs, and one suspects that much of their catch found its way to market.²⁹

Other crafts specialists were also tied into the expanding commercial networks. Mat-makers, who were predominantly women, purchased dyestuffs from Indian merchants and from non-Muslims of the interior. Women also brewed beer from surplus crops grown on their *makonde*, which they sold to sojourning caravan porters from upcountry.³⁰ The latter activity was undoubtedly frowned on by the towns' more pious Muslims, as well as by the Indian shopkeepers who often complained of the drunken behavior of caravan personnel. Much more respectable—and hence largely restricted to males—was the craft of tailoring, especially the manufacture of *kanzu*, the flowing Arabic-style robes worn by urban gentlemen, and *kofia*, finely embroidered prayer caps. Neither article of clothing was restricted to town Muslims: the expanding caravan trade brought them to upcountry pagans such as Semboja, the powerful Shambaa trader and politician, who prized coastal fashions. Although weaving was present at the end of the century, it was already dying out, and coastal tailors and embroiderers worked with imported materials. Likewise, blacksmiths often utilized iron imported from Europe. Some craftsmen worked in precious metals; still others carved the ornate doors for which Swahili towns are famous, and which can still be found in great numbers, especially on the mansions built by Omani planters and Indian merchants.³¹

Some specialists produced nonagricultural goods exclusively for export. The major copal-producing zones were near Dar es Salaam, Bagamoyo and Saadani. The resin was collected in the dry season by gangs of several dozen men from rural villages, often assisted by women and children: once again we see women being relegated to the margins of the most important commercial activities. Each group would elect a man thought to have a superior knowledge of town ways to take charge of bargaining with Indian merchants for sale of the copal.³² Mangrove poles were an

29. Werth, *Küstenland I*, 245–6; Mtoro, *Customs*, 121ff; Prins, *Swahili-speaking*, 52–7; Karl Kaerger, *Tangaland und die Kolonisation Deutsch-Ostafrikas* (Berlin, 1892), 46.

30. Mtoro, *Customs*, 118, 114; "Hiki kissa cha zamani za Bagamoyo," in Carl Velten (ed.) *Prosa und Poesie der Suaheli* (Berlin, 1907), 303.

31. Werth, *Küstenland I*, 279–82; Kaerger, *Tangaland*, 46–7; Justus Strandes, *The Portuguese Period in East Africa*, transl. Jean Wallwork (Nairobi, 1971 [orig. 1899]), 79.

32. Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari, "Khabari ya inchi ya Wazaramu na dasturi za Wazaramu," in C. Velten, *Safari za Wasuaheli* (Göttingen, 1901), 236–7; Frederick Elton to Prideaux, 26 Dec. 1873, and *idem.*, "Copal districts south of Dar es Salaam," 9 March 1874, ZNA, AA2/13. See the trade figures in Glassman, "Social Rebellion," Tables 1.3 and 1.4.

important item of trade to Arabia and the Persian Gulf, where they were used as a common building material.³³ Cowries were collected on the mainland and shipped to Zanzibar in small vessels, where they were purchased by German merchant houses and reexported to West Africa; some were also purchased for trade to India. Such trade was akin to currency speculation, and was important for only a brief period in mid-century. Nevertheless Pangani and Tanga were still exporting a considerable number of the shells in the mid 1880s.³⁴

But the most widespread economic activity outside of cultivation was small trade in agricultural surpluses. Most of these surpluses were produced in the coastal hinterland: in the well-watered Bondei hills and Shambaa highlands and in the rolling, semi-arid Zigua plains. Although the ivory caravans which went deep into the interior constituted the most distinctive and prestigious form of Swahili trade, it was more common for individuals or small groups of Swahili men to comb through the villages of the near interior, purchasing foodstuffs and other agricultural goods. Alternately, the producers themselves might bring their goods to the coast, to trade at the village markets or *magulio* just behind the towns. The Bondei market known as Nguu Ngima drew several thousand people every nine days: mostly hinterland folk who came to sell their surplus grain, and coastal merchants who came to purchase it. The *magulio* were not regulated by the Islamic institutions of the towns: they did not keep to the Islamic seven-day cycle. This suggests the level of active participation by non-urban men and women, and especially by non-Muslim peoples from the near interior.³⁵

Even this predominantly domestic trade was linked to expanding export markets. The booming commercial towns relied on provisions from the near hinterland, and agricultural goods were also exported to Zanzibar. In the 1880s such goods constituted the largest portion of Pangani's exports in volume, and in value were second only to ivory. Most of these exports were surplus staples, such as maize and sorghum, but some predominantly cash crops were also grown. Townspeople on the coast and at Zanzibar valued tobacco from the Zigua plains and the Shambaa and Chagga highlands; producers cured the leaf and brought it to the coast in small cakes. It often reached the end user in a mixture made with areca nut, the product of Arab-owned plantations. This symbolizes the degree to which household agriculture in the hinterland was integrated into coastal commerce.³⁶

Of the cash crops grown on the coast itself, many were tree crops produced primarily on *mashamba*, most notably coconut, areca nut, and sugar, which while not a tree crop, came to be treated like one, for reasons to be explored in a later chapter.

33. Burton, *Zanzibar* II, 146, 157; Kirk, 31 May 1873, FO 84/1374, 175–9. (The latter source lists “timber” as a major export.) For more on the export of mangrove poles see P.D. Curtin, “African enterprise in the mangrove trade: the case of Lamu,” *African Economic History* 10 (1981), 23–33.

34. Playfair, Administration report, 31 May 1864, ZNA, CA4/1/6, 39 ff; Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices*, 99, 134; Glassman, “Social rebellion,” Table 1.3.

35. Farler, 6 Dec. 1880, FO84/1599, 15–17; Johnston, “Notes;” Baumann, *Usambara*, 184–8; Werth, *Küstenland* II, 24–5; Mtoro, *Customs*, 120; *idem.*, “Safari yangu ya Udoe hatta Uzigua,” in Velten, *Safari*; Erhardt, 22 June 1854, CMS, CA5/09/16; Koponen, *People and Production*, 117–18, 138–9, 236–8. Also see Steven Feierman, *The Shambaa Kingdom* (Madison, 1974) and Giblin, *Politics*.

36. Yao tobacco was also prized at Zanzibar. C.W. Schmidt, 1 Apr. 1886, KPK 1886, 109–10; Johnston, “Notes,” 557–8; Franz Stuhlmann, “Bericht über eine Reise durch Useguu und Unguu,” *Mittheilungen der Geographischen Gesellschaft in Hamburg* 1887–88, 157; Werth, *Küstenland* I, 277–78.

But other cash crops were grown on *makonde* subsistence plots, and thus, like surplus foodstuffs, could be produced and marketed by slaves and other non-Shirazi who were unable to secure access to *shamba* land by claiming membership in a local *mlango*. The most notable of these crops was sesame, which in the 1880s was one of Pangani's principal agricultural exports. Unlike other cash crops, sesame was grown exclusively for export to foreign markets. It had been produced in East Africa only since mid-century, when German and French merchants first sought it as a cheap substitute for olive oil. The initial sources were on the northern Swahili coast, including Malindi and the Lamu archipelago, but in the 1880s production at Pangani grew so rapidly that the town boasted several camel-driven mills for pressing the seed.³⁷ A small industry had arisen to process an export crop grown on modest subsistence plots.

Commodities and Power in an Agrarian Society

By the end of the century these economic activities had begun to integrate even the humblest of the Mrima's rural households into international commercial networks. Travellers on the coast and in its immediate hinterland observed that although most fields were cultivated for the direct subsistence of their owners, almost everyone produced some surplus, and these surpluses played a major role in the commerce of the towns.³⁸ In 1879 a British missionary made a typical statement when he wrote that Zigua villagers

always grow much more corn than they need for their own use, and then, during the season when there is little or no work to be done in the gardens, they go down [to the coast] in parties of twelve to twenty men, carrying their corn to sell. By this means they get cloth and a variety of things such as they need at home.³⁹

In other words, the majority of the region's inhabitants can be described as *peasants*: autonomous family farmers whose economic activities were geared primarily toward subsistence and the production of use-values—that is, they grew most of what they ate—yet who yielded a regular surplus to a nonproducing elite. In this case, the surpluses were transferred increasingly through the mechanisms of commodity exchange, and the elite included the mercantile families of the coast, especially the Indian and European merchants of Zanzibar in whose hands accumulated the lion's share of the profits from regional commerce. Thus the peasant households of the Mrima and its hinterland became yoked to the Swahili towns.⁴⁰

37. Playfair, Administration report, 31 May 1864, ZNA, CA4/1/6; Hansing papers, 22 Sept. 1880; O'Swald papers, import and export figures, 1848–1898 (no. 2), 19 Nov. 1873 (4 Bd. 24), 14 Jan. 1874 (4 Bd. 25), HStA 621–2; Kaerger, *Tangaland*, 9, 47; Oral testimony, Idi Mwinyikombo, *loc. cit.*

38. Baumann, *Usambara*, 186–7; Werth, *Küstenland I*, 253.

39. J.T. Last, "The tribes on the road to Mpwapwa," *Church Missionary Intelligencer* 1879, 660–2.

40. Surpluses were also transferred through tributary exchange to elites whose authority was perceived in terms of slave–master relations and (especially in hinterland areas such as Shambaai and Uzigua) chiefship. But as we shall see, these masters and chiefs themselves became tied to commercial networks. For a subtle analysis of the process in Uzigua, see Giblin, *Politics*.

As their involvement in the commercial economy deepened, the region's peasants rapidly became accustomed to consuming goods that they themselves did not produce. On the coast this was revealed in Swahili dietary patterns. Rice was not simply a preferred food, it was also a social necessity at the numerous feasts that were central to the ritual life of the coast. It was a "luxury" food, but only in Appadurai's sense; even the poorest villager could expect to eat some from time to time, as the guest of one of her wealthier neighbors. Yet only small quantities of rice were grown locally; most had to be imported from as far away as India, even as the region exported large amounts of less favored grains such as sorghum and maize.⁴¹ In the coastal hinterland peasants slaked their thirst for imported commodities by energetically marketing agricultural surpluses. A German traveller in the mid-1880s wrote that Zigua villagers were enthusiastic bargainers, and he described them competing fiercely with one another to sell him foodstuffs in exchange for cloth and other manufactured imports.⁴² European missionaries, convinced that commerce could have a salutary effect on African souls, praised the Ziguas' eagerness to truck and barter, and their "willingness to change their customs" to acquire trade goods.⁴³

Commercial economic relations penetrated inland most rapidly along the caravan routes, as peasants living near them took advantage of the frequent opportunities to provision passing caravans, engage in part-time portering for a wage, or sell surplus livestock which would be driven to coastal markets by returning caravans.⁴⁴ These villagers demanded to be paid in manufactured imports, which quickly became standardized barter goods; this can be seen in the numerous travellers' accounts which carefully list the particular kinds of wire, beads or cotton cloth required in each region through which the routes passed. The spreading use of cash, mainly coins from India and Europe, was even more eloquent testimony to the modification of the hinterland. In the 1870s and 1880s travellers observed that villagers near the coast preferred to be paid in cash; further inland only barter goods were accepted. But the zone where cash was necessary was expanding rapidly. Even the Sultan's experienced military commander, Lloyd Mathews, underestimated the amount of currency he would need to purchase provisions for his porters along the Saadani caravan route in 1880: cash, he discovered, was demanded far deeper into the interior than he had expected. Not only did an ever-growing number of peasants demand payment in cash for their goods and services; they also developed a keen awareness of the relative stability of various currencies, and were particular about the coins they would accept.⁴⁵ By 1884 the concepts of banking and drawing checks were being discussed as far inland as Kilimanjaro.⁴⁶

41. Werth, *Küstenland I*, 253–7; Kaerger, *Tangaland*, 10.

42. Claus von Anderton, 9 Aug. 1886, *KPK 1886*, 299.

43. Last, "Tribes," is a representative sample. For a general treatment of these themes in other parts of the Mrima hinterland, see Koponen, *People and Production*.

44. Last, "Tribes;" Alexandre LeRoy, "Dans l'Oukwéré, l'Oukami et l'Ousagara," in E. Baur and A. LeRoy, *A Travers le Zanguebar* (Tours, 1886), 128, 195; I.N. Kimambo, *A Political History of the Pare* (Nairobi, 1969), 126–7; Ludwig von Höhnel, *Discovery of Lakes Rudolf and Stefanie*, trans. N. Bell (London, 1894), I, 46.

45. Mathews to Kirk, Ndumi, 30 August 1880, ZNA: ARC/363. British missionaries had a similar experience in 1877: Edwin W. Smith, *Great Lion of Bechuanaland: the Life and Times of Roger Price, Missionary* (London, 1957), 233. See also Thomson, *Central African Lakes I*, 90; Stuhlmann, "Bericht," 144–5; Höhnel I, 44; Johnston, "Notes," 545; Wissmann *Unter Deutscher Flagge*, 308; Koponen, *People and Production*, 123–4. Other travellers observed negligible commerce away from the trade routes, although even in these cases there seemed to be fairly steady trade in agricultural surpluses and cheap manufactured imports: Père Picarda, "Autour de Mander: notes sur l'Ouzigoua, l'Oukwéré et l'Oudoé," *Les Missions Catholiques* 18 (1886), 248–9.

46. H.H. Johnston, *The Kilima-Njaro Expedition* (London, 1886), 555.

The uneven spread of exchange economies had enormous political impact in the hinterland. From mid-century, access to credit and foreign markets became a key mechanism by which particularly shrewd and well-placed men acquired the wealth to attract large followings of clients and the firearms to protect and empower them. Although many of these strongmen sought to legitimize their authority through the manipulation of preexisting political ideologies, they did so in entirely new ways, enhancing their prestige through the accumulation and redistribution of imported commodities. Thus they have often been called "new men" in the historical literature. The most powerful of them might also be described as "trading warlords," since much of their power was based on access to Western firearms which in turn gave their clients the power to dominate extensive stretches of countryside. From their settlements in the hinterland, the new strongmen presided over the sale of ivory, slaves and agricultural surpluses to coastal merchants. The last-mentioned commodity was produced for them by slaves or commanded as tribute from their subjects.⁴⁷

As these new trading chiefs competed for power and clients, they induced political disruption and widespread insecurity in the hills and plains behind the towns. In Shambaa, the center of political power shifted from the royal capital in the highlands to the plains below, where Semboja, scion of an insignificant line of the ruling Kilindi dynasty, dominated the Pangani caravan routes from his base at Mazinde. Semboja became a major power broker despite the fact that he lacked control of the royal rain charms which had long been essential to Kilindi authority. The inordinate power of his well-armed followers enabled him to ignore popular injunctions that Kilindi rulers safeguard the well-being of subject peasant communities, many of which suffered from the slave raiding he sponsored. Trade brought Semboja powerful allies from outside of Shambaa altogether, including coastal Muslims whose culture and commercial lifestyle gained prominence as the old rain medicines proved incapable of protecting people from death and enslavement.⁴⁸

Among Semboja's major allies and rivals were Zigua traders and slave raiders who had built up their authority from the middle decades of the century. The new Zigua chiefs had originally been of low status: ironically, many were escaped Zanzibar slaves whose bondage may have given them their first exposure to the power that could be derived from commerce. After returning to the mainland, they established ties with merchants at Zanzibar and the coastal settlements of the Saadani area, to whom they sold ivory and slaves in return for the imported goods that enabled them to attract clients and command slaves. These were the strongmen whom the explorer and linguist Richard Burton had in mind when he wrote that Zigua chiefs do not inherit their authority, but rather derive it from possession of "the loudest tongue, the most open hand, and the sharpest spear." Burton observed that this pattern "tends . . . to raise up a number of petty chiefs." It also tended to increase warfare among them, as is revealed by the heavy fortifications built around many Zigua villages. Like the Shambaa warlords, these Zigua chiefs were able to retain power despite flouting customary obligations that they ensure the well-being of their subjects. Their eagerness to trade, so praised by missionaries,

47. Three major works describe these processes for the Mrima hinterland: Kimambo, *Pare*; Feierman, *Shambaa*; Giblin, *Politics*. See also Kennell Jackson, "The dimensions of the Kamba pre-colonial past," in B.A. Ogot (ed.), *Kenya Before 1900* (Nairobi, 1976).

48. Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*, 112–19.

sometimes extended to a willingness to sell communal grain reserves rather than store them against famine years.⁴⁹

The depth to which the commercial economy had begun to transform social relations can be partly gauged by the rising influence of coastal culture and religion, which began to be regarded as potential alternative sources of prestige and authority in regions where warlords and trading chiefs were making nonsense of older political verities.⁵⁰ But even more revealing (and more common) was the spreading perception that the control of imported commodities was linked to power. Hinterland people, especially the trading warlords who were most active in the commercial economy, knew that coastal Arabs and Swahili townsmen were not at the apex of the new political and economic pyramid. That place was reserved for the Indian merchants who dominated virtually all coastal trade, and, above them, the Europeans who produced the most prized commodities, including the guns which were all-important as new sources of both power and prestige.

An awareness of this pyramid of power and influence can be found in the remarks made by an aged Zigua chief in a conversation with a French missionary in the mid 1880s. The chief, who is quoted verbatim, describes the various types of *bwana*, a word that in the last century referred to a master of men, a powerful dignitary.

In the first place, in order of the *bwanas* . . . , comes the white man. He has second rank after God and far surpasses all the others. After the white man comes the Banyan [Hindu merchant]. Next is the Muslim Indian. In fourth and last place is the Arab, who does nothing but cheat men and steal women. He is not capable of doing anything. Everything that he has comes from *Ulaya* (Europe). He doesn't know how to make rifles, nor cloth, nor gun-powder, nor anything of value. Therefore, we neither like nor esteem him. So that is the order of the *bwanas*.⁵¹

The obsequiousness of this chief was probably not the norm, but the picture he draws, a precise political economy of the most powerful elite of coastal society based on their place in the market hierarchy, no doubt reflects common knowledge. The Arab, who controlled the Zanzibari state and the coast towns, did not possess the wealth or trade connections of the Indian. Of the Indians, the Hindu merchants ("Banyans") were the most powerful; it was they, for example, who farmed the customs. But the prized commodities that bestowed power on those who manipulated them came first and foremost from Europe.

49. Richard F. Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa* (New York, 1860), 99, 76; Feierman, *Shambaa*, 137-9; Giblyn, *Politics*; Krapf's journals in CMS, *passim*, especially CA5/016/177 (20 March 1852) and CA5/016/179/36; LeRoy, "Dans l'Oukwéré," 166-7, 199ff; Koponen, *People and Production*, 238. See the latter work, *passim*, and Isaria Kimambo, *Penetration and Protest in Tanzania* (London, 1991), for treatment of these themes in other parts of the Mrima hinterland.

50. This is suggested by the analysis in Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*. Islamization will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

51. Picarda, "Autour de Manderu," 269. Today the word *bwana* simply means "mister;" the history of its usage parallels that of its English equivalent. North America is included in the concept of *Ulaya* ("Europe").

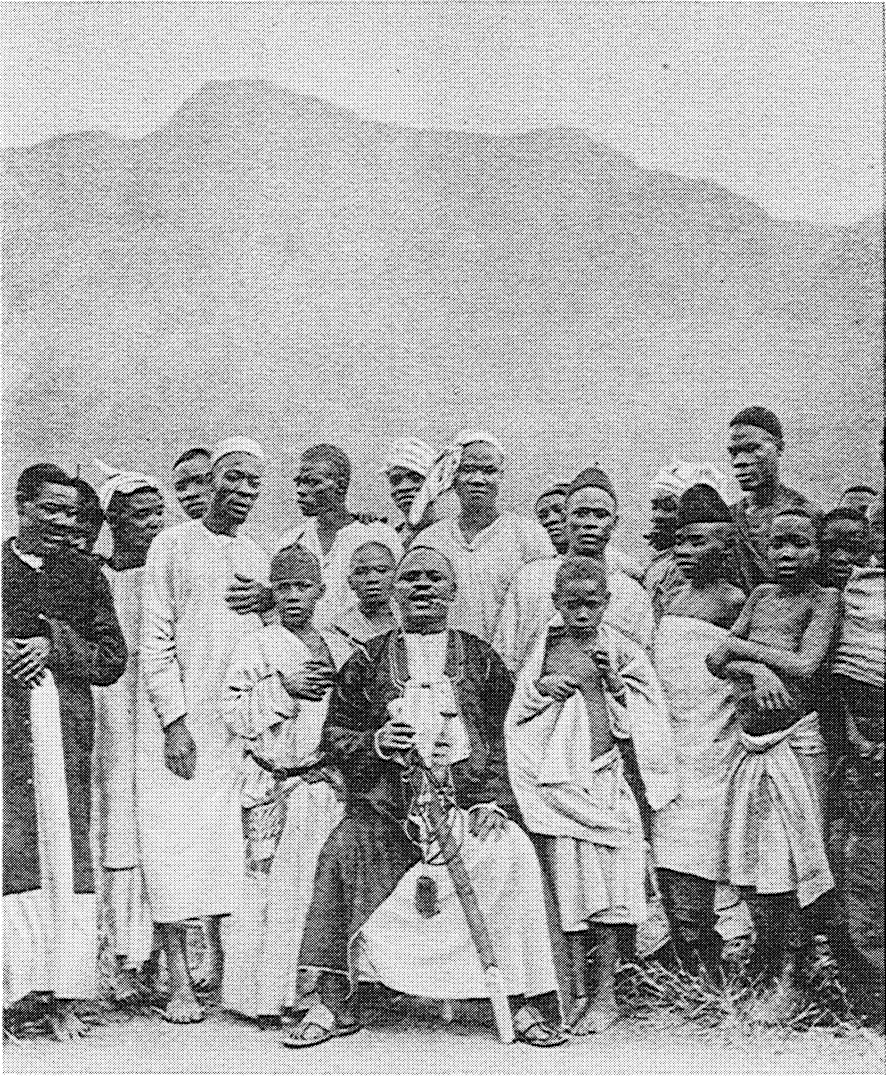


Figure 1.3. King of Morogoro, one of the trading warlords of the Mrima hinterland. Arab-inspired coastal fashions were considered a mark of prestige.

In the pervasive demand for imported cloth, arms and other manufactured goods, and in the attribution of power and prestige to those who made and distributed them ("second rank after God"), one can discern a growing mystique of imported commodities. This mystique was perhaps most apparent in the personae of the new trading chiefs. Consider Rindi or Mandara of Moshi, on the southern slopes of Kilimanjaro. The charismatic Mandara was keenly interested in solidifying his ties to

international markets. He spoke fluent Swahili, and proudly received his guests in a square Swahili-styled residence for which he continually sought European furnishings. (By contrast, his wives were housed in less prestigious conical structures built in the traditional Chagga style.) Mandara even named his son Meli after the Swahili word for steamship, or so he told his friend, the missionary J. Alfred Wray. *Meli*, which comes from the English term "mail boat," also refers to the particular types of commodities imported by steamships. It is the same word used in the Swahili song quoted at the beginning of this chapter, a song expressive of sentiments that were apparently shared by Mandara. He explained to Wray that just as the English mail boat was "the carrier of all good things," so he hoped that his son Meli "might be the bringer of every blessing to his house."⁵²

But Mandara's admiration for the "good things" brought by European steamships was not indiscriminate. Various imported luxuries conveyed various messages, and the perceived distinctions grew especially pronounced as certain commodities, such as imported cotton cloth, became too common to serve as markers of authority. In 1883 the geologist Joseph Thomson found himself enjoying Mandara's hospitality at Moshi. The young Scot "thoughtlessly" invited Mandara to inspect his latest-model weapons, which were not yet available in coast markets. He then offered Mandara a gift of cloth, ammunition, and some less up-to-date guns. Mandara scorned the gift. Were they meant for the servants who accompanied him? he asked sarcastically, or did Thomson actually mean to offer the mighty Mandara a "Zanzibar-made gun only fit for a porter?" Mandara raged out of Thomson's tent and voiced his anger in the presence of the crowd gathered outside:

Why had I [Thomson] shown him all my things, if I did not mean to give him some? What did he care for coast goods? He had plenty of them! What he wanted was European articles befitting his greatness!⁵³

Mandara's speech indicates the "trajectory of meanings" taken by commodities in the Mrima hinterland in the late nineteenth century. While imported cloth and common trade guns may once have been major markers of status, by the time of Thomson's visit Mandara's dignity could be satisfied by only the rarest, most technologically sophisticated Western goods. The values of "coastal" and "European" as rankings of prestige had transcended the actual provenance of the commodities spoken of. An ordinary Western trade good was perceived to be "Zanzibar-made." But the most prestigious goods came directly from Europe.

An almost identical incident took place in early 1887 when Semboja was visited at Mazinde by the Hungarian traveller Count Samuel Teleki. Semboja, in coastal dress, received Teleki in a house "decorated with a few European curiosities, such as . . . a picture of a steam-engine going at full speed." Teleki presented his host the

52. J. Alfred Wray, *Kenya, Our Newest Colony* (London, n.d.), 60; Joseph Thomson, *Through Masai Land* (London, 1885), 139; Wray, 13 Dec. 1885, FO 84/1772, 18–22. For *meli* see also the *Standard Swahili-English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1939). Such rhetoric might be somewhat discounted, as Mandara was a noted diplomat who was not above flattering outsiders whom he suspected might prove useful. See Kathleen Stahl, *History of the Chagga People of Kilimanjaro* (The Hague, 1964), ch. xi.

53. Thomson, *Masai Land*, 147–50.

usual gifts of cloth and other trade goods, including two cases of gin, fifteen pounds of gunpowder, a pocket watch, and other assorted baubles. Semboja expressed his anger and disappointment through Teleki's translator: "Tell your master that I am a great Sultan," he said, "and I want money, lots of money, hunting weapons, and medicine, and not all that rubbish."⁵⁴ In demanding money, weapons and medicine, Semboja demanded three things that helped put Europeans at the apex of the newly emerging political economy. We have already mentioned modern weapons. The most valued currencies came from British India and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and in the following chapter we shall see how the credit structures of the Pangani hinterland were dominated ultimately by Europeans. And although people in the region esteemed many different healing techniques, African no less than foreign, exotic new medicines were in many ways the one type of commodity of which Semboja was most in need. He did not control any of the major rain medicines by which Kilindi rulers were believed to command the ability to maintain or withhold the well-being of the land; hence he was particularly interested in securing alternative sources of healing power. European medicine was widely known and respected in the region, as English missionaries in Bondei had been distributing it in great quantities for at least a decade.⁵⁵

While Europeans were recognized as dominating these new sources of power, Africans distinguished between different orders of Europeans, just as the old Zigua chief quoted earlier distinguished between different orders of *bwanas* generally. Significantly for what would transpire in 1888, Germans were ranked low compared to other European nationalities. Although German merchants had been established at Zanzibar since mid-century, few of the goods that they imported were consumed on the mainland; of those that were, most were not of German manufacture, and the few German goods were of decidedly inferior quality. German reputation suffered as a result. A German naturalist who had travelled in the Pangani hinterland in the 1880s admitted that he "often took offence when a simple-minded Negro demonstrated . . . that good things come only from England."⁵⁶ To be sure, English prestige was based on political power as much as on economic presence; for much of the century, Zanzibar's direct trade with Britain accounted for less than did trade with Germany. But the dominant trading partner throughout the century was British India, and the British consul at Zanzibar was the official protector of the Indian merchants, as well as the unofficial power behind the Omani throne.

The power of the British consuls was well known on the coast. The actions of British squadrons, which since mid-century had been engaged in suppressing the slave trade, had given rise to widespread perceptions of British naval hegemony.⁵⁷ The British used the ideology of abolition to justify the extension of their control over

54. Höhnel, *Discovery* I, 71–3.

55. The search for "alternative paths to social health" in the wake of the breakup of the Shambaa kingdom is analysed in Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*, ch. 4. For Bondei missionaries and medicine, see the UMCA files on the Mkuzi and Magila mission stations, *passim*.

56. G.A. Fischer, *Mehr Licht im dunklen Weltteil* (Hamburg, 1885), 3–4. The French had similar difficulties when undertaking conquest of their West African colonies: Weiskel, *French Colonial Rule*, 35.

57. Such perceptions were expressed in 1890 by leaders of the anti-German resistance movement at the southern port of Mikindani. In an appeal to the British Consul, they wrote that because "the sea is in your hands since the time of our master Sayed Said" (d. 1856), they would hold Britain responsible should the Germans launch a sea attack. Elders of Mikindani to English Consul, 19 Shabaan 1307, ZNA, AA2/56/141.

the Omani state; this was freely admitted by the Consul-General during the crisis of 1888, when the Germans used the same ideology more cynically for their own ends.⁵⁸ The British government supported the Omani sultans in exchange for acceptance of ever more stringent treaties against the slave trade. But such support created ambivalent local attitudes toward the power of the Omanis. In 1877, for example, British forces seized the governor of Kilwa, a kinsman of the sultan, for complicity in the slave trade. The incident was widely discussed the whole length of the Mrima, and in Bondei it gave some people the impression that the British consul was more powerful than the sultan himself.⁵⁹

From 1870 to 1888 the throne was held by the most powerful sultan in Zanzibar's history, Barghash bin Said, who tightened the sultanate's control over the towns of the mainland coast. But behind Barghash's throne stood two powerful Britons: his trusted military commander, Lloyd Mathews, and the Consul General, John Kirk. Both men were shrewd and well known on the mainland. Kirk often took a visible part in the workings of the Omani state, which included stepping in to protect his Indian subjects and to enforce labor relations in the caravan trade.⁶⁰ By the mid-1880s, when Joseph Thomson made his visits to the mainland, John Kirk's was "a name to charm with." He was known the full length of the coast and far into the interior simply as the *balozi*, the ambassador, and "was more feared and yet liked than even the Sultan. To Arab and negro alike he was the embodiment of some tremendous unseen yet benign power."⁶¹ The involvement of the British consul with all that was connected with the new sources of power in East African society—the Indian-dominated commercial economy, Western commodities, the Omani state, and modern weapons—ensured that he would be respected by many of the new warlords and trading chiefs who were becoming important players in the political arena.⁶²

Commodification and the Urbanization of the Countryside

The thirst for commodities, and the respect for the power and prestige that could be gained from commerce, was felt at virtually every level of coastal society by the closing decades of the century, both in the towns themselves and deep into their agricultural hinterlands. Even the humblest subsistence cultivators became tied to urban markets as they began to consider the exchange values of the goods they produced. And since the factors that determined exchange values were increasingly divorced from local conditions, these peasants were also becoming tied,

58. Euan-Smith to Anti-Slavery Society, 17 Dec. 1888, Rhodes House, Mss. Brit. Emp. S.22 G.3.

59. Farler to Buzacott, 18 Oct. 1877, Rhodes House, Mss. Brit. Emp. S.18 C.47.

60. An example can be found in Roger Price, *Report of the Rev. R. Price of his Visit to Zanzibar and the Coast of Eastern Africa* (London, 1876), 4–5.

61. Joseph Thomson, "East Africa as it was and is," *Contemporary Review*, Jan. 1889, in ZStA, RKA 695, 42–7.

62. In 1885, Mandara expressed his great respect for the *balozi*, and his desire that Kirk bring him some more furnishings for his house. Wray, 13 Dec 1885, *loc. cit.* For Kirk's reputation see also Johnston, *Kilima-Njaro*, 99–100; Frederick Jackson, *Early Days in East Africa* (London, 1930), 61.

if only indirectly, to international economic forces. The most valuable commodity produced by Africans was ivory, which enjoyed high exchange value in international markets but little local use value, and the commodities most sought by Africans themselves were manufactured overseas. Thus, East Africans were becoming dependent on markets dominated by foreign demands, markets that might be described as protocolonial.⁶³

The hands that spread the influence of the market were not invisible; East Africans saw plainly who benefitted from the control of commerce. Trading chiefs dominated the countryside in part because of their ties to the Shirazi merchants and Arab state elites who dominated the port towns, and behind the new Omani regime of the coast stood Indian financiers and European consuls. Insofar as credit and markets were dominated regionally by the Muslim towns, Swahili culture and values came to represent the ideals of commercial life. Most people, however, recognized that the townsmen's power and wealth derived ultimately from elsewhere. The trading strongmen in particular distrusted Shirazi merchants and Omani state officials as rivals as much as they relied on them as allies, for the townsmen stood between the countryside and the ultimate sources of commodities and power. Semboja may have worn coastal fashions and sometimes styled himself a "sultan," but his relations with the Islamic urban elite were ambivalent and often stormy.

The emergence of protocolonial commodity relations was therefore revealed not only in the growing fashion of coastal culture but also in the mystique of European trade goods and in perceptions of European power and prestige.⁶⁴ I do not mean to imply, however, that participants in the commercial economy accepted the rule of those who dominated the market. First, the spread of market relations was highly uneven, and it coexisted with many other forms of power and authority. Furthermore, many of those who were most enthusiastic about the virtues of Western commodities and the benefits of commerce would be among the most bitter opponents of German conquest, and would acknowledge European superiority in fire power as well as in the marketplace only after a brutal fight. Such acknowledgment may have been one step toward the acceptance of colonial rule, but the journey was a long one and, in many cases, was never completed.

Yet when East Africans pondered questions of power and authority, they asked increasingly about who controlled commodities, and this question directed their attention to the towns of the coast. We can speak, in fact, of the rapid urbanization of the countryside in the second half of the nineteenth century, not only in a narrow economic sense, as commerce transferred wealth from the villages to the towns,⁶⁵ but also in a political or ideological sense. Most of the rural population continued to regulate their day-to-day lives in cultural idioms that had arisen in the villages, idioms that made little reference to Arab state officials or to Indian merchants. But the villages had increasingly frequent contact with

63. This process has been described in Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves*, and Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices*.

64. This mystique is akin to the meanings attached to European commodities in the so-called cargo cults of early colonial Pacific societies, although the latter is an "extreme example," as Appadurai points out in his suggestive comments in "Introduction," 51-3.

65. Ray Kea uses these terms to analyse a similar process in *Settlements, Trade and Politics*.

townsmen who came to the countryside to trade, to recruit political support, and to proselytize. Conversely, the attractions of commerce and urban life drew many villagers to the towns, including non-Muslims from the coastal hinterland. Many of these newcomers settled down, built houses with *makuti* roofs, and became active participants in the ongoing synthesis of a constantly changing urban culture. And in all cases, townspeople and villagers were coming to share a common interest in commodities—in their production and consumption and in the manipulation of their meanings—and a common respect for the power that grew from their control.

2

Struggles for the Caravan Trade

Men of character went on safaris upcountry, while fools occupied themselves washing their clothes and swaggering about the town, with no food in their homes.

an oral history of Bagamoyo, 1895.¹

The caravan routes were the most direct avenues to the prestige of commerce, and many rural people wished to travel them. Of course, a route was viable only if villagers along the line of march were willing to market surplus staples. But such everyday interaction only sharpened the desires of many—especially younger peasants who chafed at the control of village elders and agricultural slaves weary of the drudgery of the plantation—to experience the glamor of a caravan firsthand. These ambitions brought a rising tide of newcomers to the coast towns, where their attempts to break into the caravan trade led to bitter conflicts with the Shirazi elite.

Outsiders' demands for full participation in the caravan trade posed challenges to patrician control of urban community institutions. The Shirazi had long regarded commerce as an essential part of the good life, and by mid-century the flourishing ivory trade had become central to their self-definition. This was especially so on the northern Mrima, where the Shirazi remained aggressive caravaners even after it was clear that the trade brought them indebtedness more often than wealth. Rituals connected to the caravans were key mechanisms by which prestige and authority were accrued within the hegemonic ideologies of the Shirazi patriciate. So in contesting the makeup of the caravan trade, outsiders also contested the ties of domination that ordered the Swahili community. Their struggles with the patriciate involved more than economics; they involved culturally specific issues of ritual and authority.

Nevertheless, although the struggles over the caravans cannot be explained by commercial factors alone, they were fought within a framework created by powerful new market forces. Those forces were set in motion early in the century by a surge in

1. "Hiki kissa cha zamani za Bagamoyo," in Velten, *Prosa und Poesie*, 303. Unnamed elderly informants set this work to paper in 1895.

Indian demand for East African ivory. Entrepreneurs from western India settled at the towns of the coast and began purchasing huge shipments in exchange for manufactured imports, initially Indian cotton goods. But with the acceleration of the industrial revolution the nature of this trade changed profoundly. Indian textile production declined in the face of cheaper British imports, and increasing amounts of ivory went to feed the burgeoning industrial economies of Europe and North America. Throughout the final three quarters of the century ivory prices were driven up by the insatiable demands of the West, even as the cheaper costs of industrial manufacture reduced the price of cotton cloth, East Africa's major import and barter good. These convergent price curves were advantageous to sellers of ivory, who received more bolts of cloth per tusk. As a result, elephant herds were hunted to near extinction and the "ivory frontier" was driven on a devastatingly rapid advance to the Great Lakes and beyond, crushing underfoot individuals and entire polities that stood in its way.²

Despite the importance of these international market demands, the origins of the caravan trade lay in the African interior, and upcountry traders struggled tenaciously to preserve their position against interlopers from the coast. There were three major sets of trade routes. Those from southern ports such as Kilwa and Lindi, which went to Lake Nyasa and the highlands of the southwestern interior, need not concern us here.³ The most important ivory routes struck west and northwest from Bagamoyo and other ports directly opposite Zanzibar. These central routes would later become notable for a high degree of Arab control and for the exclusion of upcountry people from all but the most menial of roles. But they had been pioneered by trade specialists from the deep interior, whom coastal people loosely called "Nyamwezi" or "westerners."⁴ Nyamwezi first arrived at the coast sometime before 1800, carrying a few tusks along with other trade goods. Shortly thereafter, the first coastal caravans penetrated inland in search of ivory and slaves, eventually coming to prefer the Nyamwezi routes. Coastal and Nyamwezi caravan traders then entered a period of interaction and competition which by the 1880s was marked by intense bitterness.⁵

The second most important source of ivory by the 1870s and 1880s was the northern or so-called "Maasai" routes, which went from the coast between Pangani and Mombasa to the regions of Kilimanjaro, Arusha, and highland Kenya. Before the nineteenth century, ivory from these sources had usually "filtered" its way to the coast, along many-linked chains of local markets. Occasionally a single trading party would

2. Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices*, ch. 3. For concise statements of the disruption wrought by the advance of the ivory frontier, see P.D. Curtin, S. Feierman, L. Thompson and J. Vansina, *African History* (Boston, 1978), ch. 13, and John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge, 1979), ch. 3.

3. By mid-century the southern routes were most notable for their supply of slaves to the growing plantation economies of Zanzibar and the Mrima and Kenya coasts. For these routes and their non-Muslim pioneers see Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves*.

4. Literally, "of the moon." The ethnic boundaries of the group now known as Nyamwezi are a creation of the early twentieth and late nineteenth century. Before then the term referred to peoples who today are split into several ethnic groups of north and west central Tanzania, including Nyamwezi, Sumbwa, and Sukuma. See Erhardt, 24 Aug. 1854, CMS, CA5/09/16; P. Broyon-Mirambo, "Note sur l'Ouniamouézi," *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de Marseille I* (1877), esp. pp. 254-5.

5. Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices*; Roberts, "Nyamwezi Trade"; C.F. Holmes, "Zanzibari influence at the southern end of Lake Victoria: the lake route," *IJAHS* 4:3 (1971), 477-50.

penetrate the entire length of the chain, starting from either the upcountry or coastal end. The pioneers in this caravan trade were Kamba ivory hunters from the interior and non-Muslim Mijikenda from the hinterland of Mombasa and Malindi. By the 1830s coastal Muslims began to organize regular caravans to the far interior, and by the 1860s they dominated the long-distance ivory trade. The Kamba ivory traders were reduced to the level of upcountry agents of Swahili merchants, and Kamba ivory caravans no longer made their way to the coast.⁶

The overall trend, then, was for urban Muslims to take control of the caravan routes at the expense of traders from upcountry and the coastal countryside. The crucial factor was access to credit, available at the Muslim towns in the form of advances of imported commodities. Once those who dominated urban commerce took a more active interest in the long-distance trade to the interior, peasants who traded part-time could no longer compete. This was perhaps most pronounced among villagers living in the immediate hinterlands of the Swahili city-states. These peasants mostly sold surpluses from their household gardens, but they had also intercepted goods brought from the deep interior, and in the opening decades of the century town merchants regularly went to village markets to purchase ivory. After merchants started to finance expeditions to the interior to purchase tusks directly, however, ivory disappeared from village markets at the coast. By the 1850s coastal peasants had been cut out of the trade almost altogether.⁷

The process of exclusion went furthest on the heavily financed central routes, especially those terminating at Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam, where Omani Arabs, using their political and financial connections to the Zanzibar Sultanate and its Indian clients, soon dominated access to credit. As a result, even the Shirazi were pushed to the margins. By the end of the century their primary interest in the ivory trade consisted of the *ada*, customary payments, which their chiefs or *majumbe* demanded of all caravans coming to the coast. But Omani merchants turned to their powerful patrons to deny the Shirazi *majumbe* even this perquisite. When the Zanzibar sultans energetically consolidated Omani state power in the second half of the century, they frequently clashed with the *majumbe* by trying to limit or abolish *ada*, as we shall see in a later chapter. The *majumbe*'s defense of their perquisites also put them at odds with the ever-decreasing number of Nyamwezi who continued to lead independent ivory caravans to Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam. The caravan trade at these towns was therefore highly polarized between the Nyamwezi, the Shirazi, and the Omani Arabs. By contrast, the Omanis had never become deeply involved in the trade of Saadani, another major terminus of the central routes, and they had stayed out of Pangani's northern or "Maasai" trade altogether. As a result, the cara-

6. Feierman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, 99–140; Spear, *Kaya Complex*, ch. 4; John Lamphear, "The Kamba and the northern Mrima coast," in Gray and Birmingham, *Pre-Colonial African Trade*, 75–101; R. Cummings, "Wage labor in Kenya in the 19th century," in C. Coquery-Vidrovitch and P. Lovejoy (eds.), *The Workers of African Trade* (Beverly Hills, 1985), 193–208.

7. Burton and Speke, "A coasting voyage from Mombasa to the Pangani River," *JRGS* 28 (1858), 194–5; Ludwig Krapf, 15 July 1848, CMS, CA5/016/173; Richard Burton, *Zanzibar: City, Island, and Coast* (London, 1872), vol. II, 127–31. Mijikenda villagers in the Mombasa hinterland continued to sell ivory which they obtained from Oromo and Waata trading partners. But such local sources of ivory were of limited importance to the coast's export economy, and Mombasa's ivory exports declined. Spear, *Kaya Complex*, 81, 90–1.

van trade at the latter towns produced far shallower tensions than at Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam.

Thus, variations in the local preeminence of the Shirazi conditioned struggles by low-status outsiders to participate in the commercial life of the towns. Where the Shirazi were most marginalized, as at Bagamoyo, they were least willing to tolerate challenges to their fragile exclusiveness. But the boom in the Bagamoyo ivory trade ensured that such challenges would be legion nonetheless. By 1888, Bagamoyo's social fabric was extremely brittle, and the movement to resist the Germans there was crippled from the outset by bitter divisions that left the Shirazi *majumbe* exposed on all sides. Bagamoyo can be contrasted with Saadani, which had never been conquered by the Omanis, and where the leading townsmen, led by Bwana Heri bin Juma al-Mafazii, maintained intimate ties with non-Swahili of the coastal hinterland. This largely accounts for the striking degree of solidarity displayed there during the crisis of 1888–89.

Pangani lies somewhere in the middle of this spectrum. Although the Omanis had a strong presence there, it was more recent and far less extensive than at Bagamoyo, being restricted to the state and the new plantation sector. The Shirazi retained control of the northern caravan routes, which continued to serve them as important avenues for the accrual of prestige, authority, and (less often) wealth. But these sources of power were under attack by the same forces of debt and political disempowerment that had already crippled the Shirazi at Bagamoyo. Lacking the finances to marginalize non-Shirazi caravaners and suppress the autonomy of porter labor as Arabs were doing on the Bagamoyo routes, the Pangani patriicians were able to continue their domination of the northern caravan trade only because of their willingness to treat porters as autonomous clients. This gave porters a good deal of power in determining the nature of their ties to their patrons. Hence Pangani's Shirazi patriicte was highly susceptible to pressures from the plebeian crowd.

The Caravan Trade at Bagamoyo and Dar Es Salaam

By the early 1850s coastal Muslims had become so active on the central routes that they established a permanent trade center at Tabora, near the heart of Unyamwezi. Tabora soon grew into an extensive Muslim town, dominated by Omani Arabs, from which caravan routes branched off north to the interlacustrine kingdoms and west into the Zaire basin. Muslims also built towns on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, the best known being Ujiji. By the 1870s, when the famous Swahili-speaking merchant-warlord Tippu Tip was in eastern Zaire building his power and that of Zanzibar, independent Nyamwezi trade was well in decline. As the receding ivory frontier drew the trade further into the heart of the continent, it became enormously difficult to marshal the resources necessary to make commercial enterprises profitable over such far-flung distances. Omani Arabs and their Indian financiers made large investments in the central routes, which can be denoted in the mid-century growth of towns such as Tabora and Ujiji. Well-financed men like Tippu Tip had the wherewithal and the political connections to combine savvy business practice with ruthless empire building. Only a few local potentates in Unyamwezi

were able to follow suit, and usually these had to choose between striking an alliance with the powerful coastal merchants, or, as in the case of Mirambo of Unyanyembe, fighting them.

As ever more Nyamwezi were drawn into the expanding trade of the central routes, the terms of their participation changed drastically. With Shirazi and especially Arab merchants in the ascendance, Nyamwezi caravan specialists found their cherished autonomy steadily subverted, their services welcomed only on terms that roughly approximated wage labor. When they managed to bring some of their own ivory to trade at the coast, they found themselves discriminated against by huge differentials in the duties that they had to pay to Zanzibari customs agents, as compared with those paid by their coastal competitors. The historian Abdul Sheriff describes the result as incipient proletarianization, as substantial numbers of Nyamwezi trade specialists lost access to all significant economic resources save their labor, which they sold for a wage. By the 1890s, writes Sheriff, the Nyamwezi had become a "nation of porters" for Arab-controlled caravans, "and their country a labour reserve."⁸

But despite their deteriorating position in caravan enterprises, Nyamwezi porters continued to perceive themselves as autonomous agents engaged in a prestigious quest for honor and adventure. Caravan labor was seen not as a way to earn a living, but as a way to prove one's manhood. Carrying a load to the coast was part of a young man's initiation, and Nyamwezi marching songs ridiculed those who preferred to stay at home "to be idle with the women."⁹ Porters' self-esteem as patriarchal household heads was enhanced when they brought their wives and children with them, often against the wishes of their coastal employers, or persuaded women along the line of march to join them as their dependents.¹⁰ However brutal or alienating labor conditions became on coastal caravans, Nyamwezi porters clung to the conviction that they were engaged in an endeavor worthy of autonomous patriarchs.

In defending this self-perception against the countervailing pressures of proletarianization, Nyamwezi porters continued to shape the caravan trade of the central routes even after it came under the domination of coastal Muslims. They pressured their coastal employers to allow them to trade independently during the journey, and to carry a few of their own commodities which they sold upon arrival at the coast—exactly as porters did on autonomously organized Nyamwezi caravans. Nyamwezi porters who were employed for wages further defended their autonomy by insisting on the retention of traditions of collective leadership that they had developed during their long history as trade specialists. These traditions included the election of ranked leaders, or *viongozi*, who enjoyed particular privileges and ritual responsibilities. Formal councils of *viongozi* claimed the right to review all

8. The preceding discussion is based largely on Sheriff, *Slaves*, chs. 4 and 5 (the quote is from page 182), and Holmes, "Zanzibari influence."

9. Mtoro, *Customs*, 166.

10. LeRoy, "Dans l'Oukwéré," 128; Henry Morton Stanley, *Stanley's Despatches to the New York Herald*, ed. N.R. Bennett (Boston, 1970), 190–1; Leue, 25 Oct. 1895, TNA, G1/35. Leue reported that Arab caravan merchants at Tabora were enthusiastic about his recommendation that the new colonial government impose regulations prohibiting porters from bringing their dependents along on the march. For more on Nyamwezi porter labor, see Iliffe, *Modern History*, 44–6.

decisions made by the head of the caravan and argued their constituents' grievances on such issues as rations, the length of the daily marches, or the number of halts.¹¹ These traditions were adopted by non-Nyamwezi porters as well and came to characterize the organization of all caravans on the central routes.

But Nyamwezi porters found their spirit of independence and self-esteem sorely tested on reaching the coast, where, as outsiders, they were vulnerable to the predations of townspeople. They usually spent several months in the towns, awaiting an opportunity to engage with a caravan returning upcountry. In September, when caravans customarily arrived, Bagamoyo became crowded with as many as ten thousand Nyamwezi porters, most staying in a packed quarter called "Kambi Mbaya" or "bad camping place." If they had any goods to sell, local custom obliged them to take a patron among the Shirazi *majumbe*, who would arrange the transaction with an Indian merchant. The *jumbe* charged an extortionate commission, which he probably justified as *ada*. He might also arrange for some menial jobs, such as cutting firewood, by which the sojourner would be able to live during his stay.¹² Indian shopkeepers advanced cash to porters at exorbitant rates of interest, thus trapping them in ties of debt that made it possible to engage in the lucrative business of contracting caravan labor. By the late 1880s one Zanzibar businessman, Sewa Haji, had created a virtual monopoly of contracting Nyamwezi porter labor at Bagamoyo and Zanzibar, skimming off half the advance wages typically paid to porters. There is some evidence that debt was also used as a pretext to seize sojourning upcountry porters and smuggle them as slaves to the clove plantations of Pemba, especially during the clove boom of the late 1870s.¹³

These mechanisms of debt were largely responsible for effecting the partial and uneven proletarianization of Nyamwezi porter labor. But paradoxically, the same mechanisms helped porters avoid perceiving themselves as subordinated laborers. The ties of indebtedness that bound them to urban merchants seemed to confirm the porters' self-image as aspiring entrepreneurs in the mercantile economy of the towns—as autonomous clients in mutually beneficial relationships with their creditor-patrons. Still, the terms of credit were such that porters quickly pledged their few material possessions to their creditors, on whom they found themselves dependent for their very livelihood. And the growing power of the Zanzibari state, which used its prisons to enforce debt, made it ever more difficult for porters to escape such relationships. As a result Nyamwezi porters came to be regarded as the cheapest of caravan labor, more abject even than slave porters. Their pay and rations were so meagre that they often had to sell their advance wages (usu-ally paid in cloth) just to get enough to eat. Or a porter might abscond with his advance wages, either dropping the

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11. Gaume, *Voyage*, 133–47; Thomson, *To the Central African Lakes*, I, 84–5; Le Roy, "Dans l'Oukwéré."
 12. Gaume, *Voyage*, *loc. cit.*; Le Roy, "Dans l'Oukwéré," 118; Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 126–7; James Christie, *Cholera Epidemics in East Africa* (London, 1876), 427; Burton, *Lake Regions*, 46–7; Walter Brown, "Bagamoyo, an historical introduction," *TNR* 71 (1970), 79. In 1873, Kirk described the system of "enforced patronage" at Kilwa, generalizing his description to serve for the entire Mrima: FO 84/1375, 220–8 (28 Aug. 1873); also FO 84/1486, 193–6.
 13. Kurt Toeppen, "Handel und Handelsverbindungen Ost Afrikas," *Mittheilungen der Geographischen Gesellschaft in Hamburg* 1885–86, 230–31; Velten, *Prosa*, 217–18; Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 126–7; Mathews to Euan-Smith, 5 July 1888, ZNA, AA2/47/364.



FIGURE 2.1. Nyamwezi porters at the coast.

load entrusted to him or not, depending on his attitude toward such points of honor. This kind of resistance was widespread, and it routinely induced merchants to call on Omani state officials to enforce contracts more tightly.¹⁴

Another strategy for resisting the pressures of proletarianization was to assert one's status as an urban gentleman. This strategy was most common among the many slaves who labored on Bagamoyo caravans. Slave porters usually belonged to a category of hire-slaves who were paid a daily wage, a portion of which they were expected to yield to the master. (This of course made them no different from the many free-born Nyamwezi porters who were bound by labor contracts to their creditors; in fact, many slave porters were similarly contracted by Indian merchants, especially at Zanzibar and Bagamoyo.) The freeborn called such hire-slaves *hamali* or *vibarua* (sing., *kibarua*), words that carry connotations of subordinated labor.¹⁵ But the slave porters them-

14. Examples abound in the sources. Typical is Price, *Report*, 66, 4-5. In 1895 Arab caravan traders at Tabora were eager for the new German government to enforce such contracts: August Leue, Tabora, 25 Oct. 1895, TNA, G1/35, 87-8.

15. The precise meaning of *hamali* is a stevedore, a bearer of loads; the same Arabic root has been used to form the Swahili verb to endure, suffer, be patient. *Kibarua*, which is used today to denote a contract laborer, comes from the Arabic root for contract or letter; in Arabic the same root was used to denote a similar category of slave. Such slaves were also sometimes called *wa taja*, from the word "to hire out."

selves preferred another word, *mwungwana* (pl., *waungwana*). Although today *mwungwana* is often taken to mean a freeman as opposed to a slave, a more exact translation would be "gentleman." In the nineteenth century, the word was used to connote not any particular social status, but rather the general qualities of urbane gentility. Thus a person identifying with the urban culture of the coast, slave or free, might presume to call himself *mwungwana*, as opposed to an *mshenzi* (pl., *washenzi*), a "barbarian" or "bumpkin" from upcountry.¹⁶

By calling themselves *waungwana*, porters on the central routes expressed their self-perception as autonomous participants in the communal and commercial life of the towns. Just as the euphemism *mswahili* was used to mask upcountry origins, so the appellation *mwungwana* was used by coastal porters, especially slaves, to distinguish themselves from porters fresh from upcountry, such as those who continued to identify themselves as Nyamwezi, and from slaves trapped in less prestigious modes of life, such as plantation labor. *Waungwana* porters from the coast (or any porter seeking to identify with coastal society) scorned the lowly Nyamwezi porters as *washenzi* or as *wapagazi*. The latter word is derived from the verbal root "to bear a load" through what linguists call the causative extension of the verb; thus it carries the implication of subservience, of being caused to carry a load by another agent. *Waungwana*, by contrast, perceived themselves as autonomous agents, as gentlemen and as entrepreneurs.¹⁷ If the *mwungwana* porter were a *kibarua*, or a slave of some other category aspiring to that status, he might enlist on a departing caravan without first obtaining his master's consent, thus contesting the hegemonic definitions of his status by engaging in a contract autonomously, like any freeborn townsman. In such a case the temptation would be greater than usual to deny the master the portion of the cash advance that was his due, and masters went to great lengths to get Zanzibari state officials to prevent such arrangements.¹⁸

Slaves were not the only outcasts to claim the status of *waungwana* or "gentlemen". Free-born Nyamwezi porters sometimes decided, during their long stay at the coast, to settle permanently and become townsmen.¹⁹ But whether the would-be *mwungwana* was slave or free, such claims by porters of non-Muslim, noncoastal background posed implicit challenges to the exclusiveness and authority of the Shirazi patricians. Paradoxically, although the decision to become a *mwungwana* (or an *mmrima* or an *mswahili*, two other common designations for a townsman) entailed conversion to Islam and an abandonment of one's noncoastal, nonurban identity, it was often prompted not by an acceptance of the authority of the Shirazi patricians who ruled the towns, but by a desire to defy or evade their control.

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16. For *mwungwana*: de Vere Allen, "Town and country," 311; Charles Sacleux, *Dictionnaire Swahili-Français* (Paris, 1939–41), 577, 959. Concrete examples of such usage are abundant: see, e.g., Toeppen in *DKZ* 1887, 557; Henry Morton Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent* (London, 1899: second ed.), I, 37; Rechenberg, 15 Feb. 1909, ZStA, RKA 701, 150–4.
 17. Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, I, 92; Henry Morton Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone* (London, 1882), 94–5. Other sources for *waungwana* porters include Fischer, *Mehr Licht*, 84; Höhnel, *Discovery* I, 46; and Velten, *Prosa*, 219.
 18. See, e.g., Price, *Report*, 6, for his appeals to Bwana Heri, as the Sultan's representative at Saadani, to punish an uncooperative *kiongozi*; Arthur W. Dodgshun, *From Zanzibar to Ujiji; the journal of Arthur W. Dodgshun, 1877–1879*, ed. by N.R. Bennett (Boston, 1969), 50; Toeppen, in *DKZ* 3:17 (1886), 521, and 4:18 (1887), 558. The frequency of such occurrences is suggested in a Swahili phrase book created for German colonial officers, who, when contracting porters for a safari, are instructed to emphasize: "Do not bring me runaways, or unreliable people." Velten, *Prosa*, 217.
 19. Brown, "Bagamoyo," 79.

The tensions that induced attempts to become considered *waungwana* are neatly illustrated by an incident at Tanga in mid-century, a time when this northern Mrima port was connected to the central routes. In 1854, missionary J. Erhardt spent eight months at Tanga trying with little success to compile word lists of upcountry languages. His troubles were compounded by the difficulty of distinguishing between locally born townspeople and upcountry people who had settled permanently on the coast and adopted coastal customs. He tells of two of the latter, brothers whom he had at first mistaken for locally born *Wamrima* or Swahili. In fact they were Nyamwezi, who had come to the coast only six years earlier, having been hired as porters by an Arab entrepreneur. On reaching Zanzibar, wrote Erhardt, the brothers "could not get their promised cloth and beads, and by their repeated calls for payment came even in danger of being sold into slavery." To prevent this from happening they became Muslims, having been persuaded to do so by other Nyamwezi converts. (Islamic law forbids the enslavement of freeborn Muslims.) The brothers then undertook regular service on coastal caravans, for they were unwilling to return home without trade goods. But their new lifestyle as the Muslim employees of coastal patrons eventually reshaped their sense of identity. The caravans took them back to Unyamwezi, "but being disgusted with the way of living of their country men they have returned again to the coast."²⁰

Thus these two Nyamwezi porters became Swahili townsmen in order to claim what they considered their fair share of the towns' commercial wealth. When town-born Muslims threatened to marginalize their participation in the commercial economy, these men defended their autonomy by manipulating elements of the patricians' own hegemonic ideology: the sanctity of Islam, and the prestige of urban life. But I do not mean to suggest that these brothers' conversion to Islam and their embrace of coastal culture were cynically calculated for material advantage. To make such a suggestion would be to presume that they consistently distinguished between commercial profit, political influence, and prestige. On the contrary, the evidence suggests that they genuinely identified themselves as coastal people, to the point of scorning the customs of their non-Muslim, nonurban kinsmen whom they had left in the interior.

It is significant that this incident occurred on the northern Mrima, where social boundaries were more fluid than at Bagamoyo, and that it occurred at mid-century, before the pressures weighing upon the Shirazi were fully felt. As the century progressed, it became increasingly difficult for an outsider to claim status as a Muslim townsman, especially at Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam. The Shirazi patricians at those towns were under sustained Omani attack, both political and economic, and in response they became ever more anxious in the defense of their exclusiveness. This anxiety underlay the tendency of many Shirazi to affect an "Arab" identity in the latter part of the century. Not only did they wish to put themselves on a par with the prestigious Omani newcomers from overseas, but they also wished to set themselves apart from the humbler newcomers entering through the town's landward gates, whom they scorned as barbarians. Under such conditions, Nyamwezi caravan traders must have sensed the futility of trying to be accepted as townsmen.

20. Erhardt's Tanga journal, 23 Aug. 1854, CMS, CA5/09/16.

Frustrated in their attempts to share the benefits of urban life, burdened both by discriminatory Zanzibar customs officers and by the *majumbe's* demands for *ada*, Nyamwezi caravan personnel rarely identified with the urban culture of Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam. Far from wishing to call themselves *waungwana*, they reviled the townspeople. "My mother, my mother, listen," Nyamwezi porters sang as they marched, "the rich *waungwana* are swindling us."

All is gone in dues and taxes
O father, all is gone.
Go away, you *waungwana*.²¹

Excluded from urban society by people whom they resented as rapacious frauds, Nyamwezi caravaners felt they had little at stake in the preservation of any of the forms of authority, Arab or Shirazi, then dominant in these towns. Thus embittered, many welcomed the Germans in 1888.

The Saadani Caravan Routes

When the British traveller Richard Burton visited Saadani in 1857, it was a small village of several hundred inhabitants, roofed entirely of thatch. Regional trade consisted of small excursions to the Nguru Mountains, a week's walk into the coastal hinterland. Within little more than a decade, however, Saadani had grown into a major terminus of the central caravan routes to the deep interior. By the late 1860s, traders from Saadani and the neighboring settlement of Winde had preceded Tippu Tip into eastern Zaire, and in the 1870s and 1880s the Saadani route came to be preferred by many European travellers. By 1889, Saadani had become so important that the German conquerors felt compelled to destroy it, as trade there frustrated their attempts to control the central routes from Bagamoyo.²²

A large part of Saadani's flourishing commerce was in the hands of non-coastal traders, especially Zigua trading chiefs and Nyamwezi caravaners, the latter resisting the pressures of proletarianization with far greater success than at Bagamoyo. In the 1870s and 1880s social boundaries at this boom town were extremely fluid, and much of the growing urban population consisted of hinterland people who had been attracted by Saadani's commercial life. In contrast to the discrimination encountered at Bagamoyo, traders of upcountry origin found access to credit and urban patrons relatively easy to obtain at Saadani. Arab competition was nonexistent—the Zanzibar sultans had never succeeded in imposing Omani governors as they had at the other termini of the caravan trade—and the Swahili-speaking patriciate, far from jealously guarding its exclusiveness, was only beginning to emerge.

21. Mtoro, *Customs*, 165. The Kinyamwezi original uses the word "*walungwana*": Carl Velten [ed.], *Desturi za Wasuaheli na Khabari za Desturi za Sheria za Wasuaheli* (Göttingen, 1903), 249.

22. Burton, *Zanzibar*, II, 267–70; Sheriff, *Slaves*, ch. 5; N.R. Bennett, *Arab versus European* (New York, 1986), 113; Holmwood, 19 Nov. 1881, FO 84/1601/138–40; Broyon-Mirambo, "Note"; Price, *Report*; Thomson, *Central African Lakes*, 263; F. Stuhlmann, "Bericht über eine Reise," 158–65; Wissmann, 15 June 1889, ZStA, RKA 739, 47. Saadani remained the only active point of the central caravan trade during the months of the rebel siege of German-occupied Bagamoyo in 1888–89.

Thus noncoastal caravan traders continued to do well at Saadani even as their counterparts at Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam were being pushed to the wall. Many Nyamwezi caravans came to Saadani and Winde to sell their ivory, and descriptions of their arrival suggest that they retained much bargaining power. The porters announced their approach by blowing horns and beating drums, at which time town dwellers went out to meet them and competed with one another to persuade the caravaners to enter the town as their clients. As at Bagamoyo, Saadani's streets were often clogged with large numbers of Nyamwezi and the tusks they had brought. But relations between the Nyamwezi caravaners and their urban hosts were more equitable than at Bagamoyo. There was no Omani merchant community at Saadani, and the Zanzibar state was represented only nominally by Bwana Heri bin Juma, a Swahili-speaking African who ruled Saadani autonomously from at least the 1860s until German conquest. Bwana Heri was a major trading partner and patron of Nyamwezi caravan entrepreneurs, who aided him in political and military affairs. Given his independence from Zanzibar, it is unlikely that Bwana Heri enforced the discriminatory taxes against his Nyamwezi friends and allies that burdened them elsewhere.²³

Bwana Heri's well-maintained ties with upcountry entrepreneurs were among the major factors contributing to Saadani's popularity as a caravan terminus. He was often described as the "Sultan of Uzigua." This is a doubtful title, given the fragmentation of authority in Uzigua, but it sheds light on the extent of Heri's influence in the Saadani hinterland. He was an ally and confidant of the powerful Zigua rulers of Morogoro, and his network of influence extended as far as Unyanyembe, where he maintained a close relationship with Mirambo, the Nyamwezi rival of the Arab merchants of Tabora. The latter connection made Saadani a particularly attractive destination for Nyamwezi caravans. Bwana Heri's ties to Zigua chiefs also enhanced Saadani's commercial attraction, but for somewhat different reasons. Because of the endemic rivalries attendant on the rise of the new trading and slaving strongmen, caravans passing through Uzigua were continually endangered by raids and counter raids. Bwana Heri often had sufficient influence upcountry to be able to adjudicate disputes, and a letter from him, or the presence of one of his recognized deputies, could help avert conflict en route.²⁴

Bwana Heri's effectiveness as a political leader lay in this ability to straddle two worlds, the world of the hinterland, still dominated by values associated with village agriculture, and the world of the coastal towns, where new values were rapidly being forged in the context of expanding international commerce. Although

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23. Baumann, *Usambara*, 178; Kirk, 6 Sept. 1876, FO 84/1454, 117-19; A. Mackay, 9 Aug. 1877, FO 84/1486, 40; Picarda, "Autour de Mandra," 184; "Description of Windi," Bagamoyo District Book, vol. I. 55-6, TNA, MF30; Oral testimony, Chande Maftaha, Saadani, 4 Nov. 1985. Price (28 May 1876, LMS, Central Africa, 1/1) observed a large caravan "owned" by Nyamwezi which, on arrival in the town, piled its ivory in front of Bwana Heri's house. Autonomous Nyamwezi caravaners were selling ivory at Saadani as late as 1899, although the description by then (Andres, 31 March 1899, TNA, G1/35, 152-5) stresses that they were being "swindled" by Indian merchants. Their patron and protector, Bwana Heri, had long since been ousted from power.
24. Dodgshun, *Journal*, 51 (27 Dec. 1877); J.T. Last, 24 Aug. 1885, FO 403/94/119; Broyon-Mirambo, "Note"; Holmwood, "Memo of a visit to the Ziguha country," 19 Nov. 1881, FO 84/1601/138-40; Kirk, 29 May 1885, FO 84/1725/207-11; E. Baur, "Dans l'Oudoé et l'Ouzigoua," in Baur and LeRoy, *A Travers le Zanguebar* (2nd ed.: Tours, 1887), 84, 89; Price, *Report*, 27.

Bwana Heri lived most of the time at Ndumi, an agricultural community six miles inland, he is remembered for having moved down to the coast to establish the trading center of Saadani. This cannot be literally true, as Saadani existed before Bwana Heri came on the scene. Nevertheless as a historical figure who is prominently remembered for his association with Zanzibar and the international trade, Heri is made Saadani's mythological founder-hero, who moved from his rural home to found a Swahili town.

More perhaps than any other historical figure, Bwana Heri represents how the fluidity of ethnic categories, the constant shifting of "African" and "Arab" identity, reflected basic currents in nineteenth-century Swahili society. Elders on the Pangani-Saadani coast still debate Bwana Heri's "true" ethnicity. Some say he was a Zigua or a Swahili, born at Ndumi; others say he was an Arab. One informant, a man of advanced years who grew up in the last decade of the nineteenth century, reasoned that since Bwana Heri was an Arab, "white as anything," he must therefore have been born at Zanzibar, from whence he came to establish Saadani.²⁵ We know from photographs, in fact, that Bwana Heri was not "white as anything." He was an African born in Saadani's hinterland, and he spoke Swahili and Zigua as his first languages.²⁶ But he also wore the turban, sandals, and flowing *kanzu* of an "Arab" gentleman, carried an ornately inlaid Arabic sword, and appended the Arabic-sounding *nisba* "al-Mafazii" to his name (as other Swahili patricians appended "al-Shirazii"). He also lived in a two-story stone house.²⁷ More than giving any precise biographical information on Bwana Heri, our elderly informant's testimony suggests the dominant ideologies of the late nineteenth century, in which the categories of race, class and culture were inextricably intertwined and behavior associated with urban patricians was taken to denote Middle Eastern ancestry. Our informant was the son of a Yao slave, and he identified his own ethnic origins as "African." He identified Bwana Heri, by contrast, as an urban aristocrat, a politician and the representative of the Sultan of Zanzibar. Bwana Heri must, therefore, have been an Arab, "white as anything."²⁸

The process by which Bwana Heri's biographical existence has been absorbed into a general view of the broad categories of coastal society reflects the fact that he presided over a period of intense social change at Saadani, when entrepreneurs from the coastal hinterland aggressively appropriated the attributes of Shirazi gentlemen.

25. Chande Maftaha, Saadani, 4-5 Nov. 1985. The phrase used was "*Mwaarabu huyo, mweupeee!*"

26. The most common opinion is that Heri was born at Ndumi or Mlembule, of a Bajuni father from the northern Kenya coast (his *nisba* suggests that his father came from Faza in the Lamu archipelago) and a Zigua mother. Oral testimony from Saadani, Nov. 1985: Bomu Juma Kirimo, Chande Maftaha, Mwinyimvua Waziri, Bilali Buheti (were the latter's testimony to be fully accepted, it would appear that Bwana Heri was raised speaking only Zigua); also Mafuta Mtoo, Mwera, 25 Oct. 1985. In 1886 Bwana Heri told a European commission that he had been born at Saadani and that his father was a "Swahili born at Zanzibar": Official summary of statements of liwali Heri bin Juma, 24 Feb. 1886, FO 84/1798, 46-7. For a colonial officer's description of Bwana Heri, "a full blooded Negro" born in the mid-1830s, see A. Becker, "Die endgültige Niederwerfung Bana Heris," in C. von Perbandt, G. Richelmann and Rochus Schmidt (eds.), *Hermann von Wissmann, Deutschlands größter Afrikaner* (Berlin, 1906), 314.

27. For this detail: Wookey, 14 June 1880, LMS, Central Africa Journals, 3/22.

28. For similar patterns in the historical memory of a Mombasa woman whose parents were first-generation slaves, see the life history of Ma Mishi in Sarah Mirza and Margaret Strobel (eds.), *Three Swahili Women* (Bloomington, 1989), 71 and *passim*.



FIGURE 2.2. Bwana Heri bin Juma of Saadani, with his nephews.

The confusion over Bwana Heri's ethnic identity tells us much about how individuals perceived their roles in the commercial networks of the region. The main initiators of Saadani's commercial life came from the hinterland and from the interior; there were neither plantations nor Arab settlers, as there were at Pangani and Bagamoyo, and the community of Indian merchants who were attracted to Saadani by the trade boom of the last third of the century sank very shallow roots, quickly disappearing after German conquest.

Given this context, it is no wonder that the question of "Swahili" ethnic identity is most confused on the Saadani coast. Informants argued endlessly as to whether villages along this stretch of coast were "Swahili" or "Zigua." They told of Wazigua becoming Waswahili, and of Africans from the interior calling themselves "Arabs"

and trying to hide their origins. Written evidence from the last quarter of the nineteenth century indicates that Zigua of the area adopted Swahili manners and called themselves *watu wa Mrima*, "people of the Mrima," much as slave porters called themselves *waungwana*.²⁹ Many of the Zigua and Nyamwezi who came to trade at Saadani were strongly attracted to town life, and they found few obstacles to their attempts to gain access to urban citizenship. Saadani, the Swahili urban center that they themselves did so much to create, was notable for the extreme permeability of its social boundaries. Climbing the ladder of urban society was still a viable aspiration at Saadani; hence any threat to local control of the town and its commerce was resented more widely there than at Bagamoyo.

The Pangani Caravan Trade

Pangani's northern trade developed with astonishing speed after 1850. Before then the town had shared in the development of the central routes. (Pangani merchants were among the founders of Ujiji in the 1840s.) But beginning in mid-century, Zigua trading chiefs gave fierce, often violent competition to traders from Pangani who needed to cross Uzigua to link up with the central routes.³⁰ Thereafter Pangani's ivory traders, and those of Tanga, began developing northern routes to Kilimanjaro and the so-called Maasai country of Arusha and the Great Rift Valley, on which they soon exclusively relied. The routes from Pangani passed through the Bondei hills and along the foot of the Usambara and Pare Mountains; they were relatively well watered, and soon came to be preferred by travellers from other towns of the northern Mrima, as well as by Mombasa merchants seeking to avoid the dry wastes of their own immediate hinterland.³¹ As early as 1852, Pangani was exporting large quantities of ivory from Pare and the Rift Valley, and by 1861 the town's traders had reached Lake Victoria and the Kenya highlands. Pangani then entered a period of steady growth: its community of Indian merchants (most of them Hindu) grew by more than half between 1857 and 1873.³²

In 1867 Pangani was Zanzibar's second most important ivory port after Bagamoyo, a position it retained until conquest. A huge spurt of growth came in the decade beginning in the late 1870s, during which Pangani's ivory exports nearly doubled. By 1885–86, Pangani was exporting 70,000 pounds annually, far outstripping its closest rival for second place after Bagamoyo. Figures for that year also show

29. Baumann, *Usambara*, 177–8; Kirk, 29 May 1885, FO 84/1725, 207–211. Oral testimony: Juma Omari, Mkwaja, 25 Aug. 1990; Hashim Abdallah, Bweni, 1 and 3 Sept. 1985; Hatibu Salim, Mwera, 29 Oct. 1985; Group interview, Mwera, 25 Oct. 1985; also the Saadani informants cited previously.

30. Bennett, *Arab*, 91; Erhardt, 21 Oct. 1853 and final entry, CMS, CA5/09/15; Krapf, 31 July 1848, CMS, CA5/016/173; James MacQueen, "Killimandjaro and the White Nile," *JRGS* 30 (1860), 128–36 (map); Baumann, *Usambara*, 181–2.

31. Charles von der Decken, "Geographical notes of an expedition to Mt. Kilimanjaro," *JRGS* 34 (1864), 1–6; Erhardt's Usambara journal of 1853, CMS, CA5/09/15.

32. Krapf, 23 Feb. 1852, CMS, CA5/016/177; J.H. Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (Edinburgh, 1863), 12; T. Wakefield, "Routes of native caravans from the coast to the interior of Eastern Africa," *JRGS* 40 (1870), 303–23; Gebhard Schneider, *Die Katholische Mission von Zanguebar: Thätigkeit und Reisen des P. Horner* (Regensburg, 1877), 13–14; Charles New, *Life, Wanderings and Labours* (2nd ed., London, 1874), 47, 62; Burton, *Zanzibar* II, 145. For Indian merchant households, see Glassman, "Social Rebellion," 75–6, 112–13.

Pangani's ivory to have been more valuable, rupee per pound, than exports from any other port. This is because Pangani specialized in *pembe*, a soft, high-quality ivory, as opposed to *gendi*, a harder, lower quality ivory that constituted the bulk of exports from Bagamoyo and elsewhere. In terms of value, if not in terms of labor inputs, Pangani's export economy was totally dominated by ivory.³³

Pangani's ivory trade had far-reaching ramifications in the interior, touching people who did not participate directly in it. Trading chiefs and warlords such as Semboja and Mandara built up their power through mediation of the trade. Semboja's clients tended large herds, which he tapped to purchase Kamba and Maasai ivory; he then sold the ivory to Swahili traders for arms and other imports. In Machakos in the Kenya highlands, a new class of elite arose by acting as the agents of Pangani merchants. They engaged porters and hunters to scour the countryside for ivory and bring it to central points where it was collected by coastal caravans. Craftsmen at Machame in Kilimanjaro did a brisk business manufacturing ornamental chains to sell to Pangani caravans for wire, cloth and beads; the chains in turn were sold to the Maasai for ivory.³⁴

Although the general trend on the northern routes, as on the central, was for up-country entrepreneurs to be gradually displaced by coastal Muslims, the Pangani ivory trade never became as polarized as that of Bagamoyo. As a result, social interaction along the Pangani routes was often intimate, and cultural boundaries relatively loose. Whereas the major waystations of the central routes, such as Tabora and Ujiji, were centers of coastal Muslim culture, dominated by Arabs and garrisoned by Zanzibar, those of the "Maasai" routes by contrast were multiethnic communities where coastal Muslims and their hosts lived on a more or less equal footing. Pangani merchants settled for periods of years in central and western Kenya, cultivating gardens as well as trading for ivory. They frequently married the daughters of local chiefs, subsequently bringing their newly converted brides to the coast. Their access to imported arms made them popular political clients. In one instance two brothers from Bweni, Hassan and Omari bin Abdallah, succeeded in converting Mumias, chief of the area of that name near Mount Elgon, after their armed assistance had proven decisive in the defeat of some of Mumias's enemies. These same brothers established networks of religious teachers in western Kenya in the early 1880s, resulting in some of the earliest conversion to Islam in the East African interior. Such successful proselytization attests to the intimacy that Pangani merchants enjoyed with their upcountry hosts.³⁵

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33. For the export trade of Pangani and the Mrima, based on figures in consular archives in London and Zanzibar, see Glassman, "Social rebellion," 77-8 (Tables 1.3 and 1.4), 112-13. For *pembe* and *gendi*, see Walter Brown, "The politics of business: relations between Zanzibar and Bagamoyo in the late 19th century," *IJAHS* 4:3 (1971), 633-4. In 1857 Pangani was noted for exporting 35,000 pounds annually of "the whitest, largest, heaviest, softest, and, perhaps, finest ivory known." Burton, *Zanzibar*, II, 145.
34. Abdallah bin Hemedi 'Aljemy [1906], *The Kilindi*, trans. by J.W.T. Allen and W. Kimweri bin Mbago (Nairobi, 1963), 129-31; Cummings, "Wage labor"; G.A. Fischer, "Bericht über die im Auftrage der Geographischen Gesellschaft in Hamburg unternommene Reise in das Massai-Land," *Mittheilungen der Geographischen Gesellschaft in Hamburg* (1882-83), 48-9; Ambler, *Kenyan Communities*, 100-105.
35. Hassan bin Abdallah died in Nakuru in 1936 at the age of about eighty. Many families of Bweni origin can still be found in western and central Kenya. Oral testimony, Bweni: Saidi Omari, 27 June and 24 Aug. 1985; Abdallah Mahine, 25 Sept. 1985; Bakari Mohammedbin Abdallah, 17 Aug. 1990. M.A. Quraishy, *Text Book of Islam, Book I* (Nairobi, 1981), 184-6; Livingstone to Granville, 1 July 1872, *PRGS* 16 (1872), 439; Kirk, 3 July 1886, FO 84/1774/115-19; Fischer, "Bericht," 217-19.

The most important trading station on the northern routes was Taveta, just below Mount Kilimanjaro. Unlike Tabora, Taveta could not be described as an outpost of coastal culture so much as a center of intense cultural and social exchange. Caravaners halted at Taveta to gather information about trading conditions further up-country, decide upon itineraries, and combine into large joint groups for the risky trip through the land of the Maasai and the Kikuyu. But despite its importance as a caravan center and its relative proximity to the coast, Taveta never became dominated by coastal Muslims. In October, at the end of each trading season, the separate encampment in which Muslim traders had lived was ceremonially burned to the ground by the elders of Taveta's dominant clans, as an affirmation of their ultimate control of all activities within the community. Relations between the clans and the coastal Muslims were cordial. Pangani caravaners frequently brought female dependents with them as far as Taveta, leaving them there until their return journey. And as at waystations further inland, coastal merchants and their hosts at Taveta forged ties of political alliance and intermarriage.³⁶

One of the greatest hazards faced by Pangani caravans was traversing the arid steppes of the Rift Valley, which since the 1830s had been racked by endemic warfare among the Maa-speaking pastoralists who dominated the region. Interaction between Muslim traders and the Maa speakers (commonly but misleadingly known as the "Maasai") was complex and often intimate; social and cultural boundaries were regularly crossed and recrossed. Sometimes contact was hostile, as when pastoralists attacked coastal caravans, especially during the dry season. But trade and intermarriage were also frequent. Defeated pastoralists who had lost their herds to their enemies often took refuge in the agricultural communities that fringed the plains, including waystations of the Pangani trade routes. Such former pastoralists, contemptuously called "Iloikop" by other Maa speakers, were frequently absorbed into the kin groups or age sets of their agricultural hosts.³⁷ Similarly, "Iloikop" sometimes took a Shirazi patron and settled in the coast towns, where they converted and became Swahili. At times they came to the coast as slaves: in 1883 Joseph Thomson encountered two slaves of Maasai origin leading a Pangani caravan to their old homeland. Cultural influences flowed the other way as well. Maa speakers were valued as political allies because of their reputed military prowess, and Maasai military techniques and cultural attributes were fashionable among traders in the Pangani Valley. Coastal Muslims were initiated into Maasai age sets, as were Semboja and Mandara and many of the other warlords and trading chiefs of the region.³⁸

36. Ann E. Frontera, *Persistence and Change: a History of Taveta* (Waltham, Mass., 1978); Christie, *Cholera*, 222, 229–30; Thomson, *Masai Land*, 99ff.

37. Richard Waller, "Economic and social relations in the central Rift Valley: the Maa-speakers and their neighbours in the nineteenth century," in B. Ogot (ed.), *Kenya in the Nineteenth Century* (Nairobi, 1985), 83–151; Godfrey Muriuki, *A History of the Kikuyu, 1500–1900* (Nairobi, 1974); Frontera, *Persistence and Change*.

38. Fischer, "Bericht," 45–6, 70, 95; Thomson, *Masai Land*, 283, 414–17; Gaume, *Voyage*, 220–23; Waller, "Economic and social"; John L. Berntsen, *Maasai and Iloikop: Ritual Experts and their Followers*, Occasional Paper no. 9, University of Wisconsin African Studies Program (Madison, 1977). I will follow my coastal informants in using the commonly recognized term "Maasai" to refer to all Maa-speaking pastoralists.

A famous Swahili resident of Kilimanjaro, Fundi Haji, neatly personifies the complex patterns of social and cultural interaction that took place along the northern caravan routes. He was born in Kavirondo, on the shores of Lake Victoria, but after coming to Pangani to trade he converted to Islam, and he was soon well known on the northern routes as a Swahili ivory trader. In the early 1880s, Fundi Haji was invited to settle permanently on Kilimanjaro by Sina, the chief of Kibosho. Sina was the mightiest of several Chagga chiefs who were building up their power at the time, in part by recruiting the support of Maa-speaking warriors. Soon after accepting the invitation, Fundi helped Sina defeat one of his chief rivals on the mountain, Mandara of Moshi. But Mandara had his own coastal allies, and he soon returned to power with the assistance of Kimemeta, a Pangani *jumbe* and Fundi's business rival.³⁹ These events no doubt intensified the Chagga chiefs' already substantial reliance on coastal merchants, and during the political crises at the coast in 1888–89 Kimemeta would persuade Mandara (and probably his Maasai warrior clients) to support the Shirazi *majumbe*. The case of Fundi Haji unites two general trends in the interaction of coast and interior. Like the Shirazi Kimemeta, he was a Pangani Muslim who exerted influence over Chagga and Maa-speaking allies. But his own origins lay in the deep interior, and he maintained ties to Kavirondo until the end, temporarily retiring there upon German conquest.

Credit and Finance in the Pangani Caravan Trade

Coastal Africans like Fundi Haji and Kimemeta dominated the caravan trade of Tanga and Pangani. Arab caravan merchants, believing the Maasai routes too risky and difficult, left them in Shirazi hands.⁴⁰ And although noncoastal Africans continued to participate in the northern trade, the Swahili townsmen kept their share of credit to a minimum.⁴¹ One observer wrote that while all trade at Pangani was "of course" dominated by Indian financiers, "the *watu wa mrima* [people of the Mrima] have no competitors as middlemen for the hinterland."⁴² In the interior, coastal Muslims were widely perceived as people who lived by the manipulation of money and credit—in the Shambaa highlands some believed that gold coins possessed a sinister power that could be wielded by Swahili merchants—and the towns were known as places where access to credit was essential to one's livelihood.⁴³

Yet this dependence on credit, combined with the high levels of risk that deterred potential Arab rivals, made Pangani's Shirazi caravan traders extremely

39. G.U. Ekemode, "Fundu: trader and akida in Kilimanjaro, c. 1860–1898," *TNR* 77/78 (1976), 95–101; Mathews, 17 Oct 1885, FO 84/1799/228 (clipping from *The Times* of 13 Nov. 1885); Farler, Nov 1885, ZNA, AL2/25/207–208. For Sina and Mandara (or Rindi) see Stahl, *History*, ch. 11.

40. Fischer, "Bericht," 38–9; Baumann, *Usambara*, 182. Reichard (*Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 119–120) suggests that the Pangani caravan leaders exaggerated the dangers of the Maasai routes to discourage Arab competition.

41. For Zigua and Nyamwezi caravans operating from Saadani on the northern routes: Stuhlmann, "Bericht," 165. For a description of the struggles of Pangani Muslims to exclude non-Muslims of the hinterland from access to credit, see Krapf's Usambara journal, 23 Feb. 1852, CMS, CA5/016/177.

42. Baumann, *Usambara*, 18.

43. Abdallah, *Kilindi*, 157–9; Glassman, "Social rebellion," 122–3.

vulnerable. Their position in the financial hierarchy was humble. In 1888, a German merchant with long East African experience described Pangani's credit system, which, he wrote, spread deep into the interior. His description began with European wholesale merchants at Zanzibar, who sold almost all of their goods on credit to Indian middlemen.

The latter resell these goods, on six to nine months' credit, to small traders [also Indian] on the mainland coast, and these, in turn, once again give credit to natives on the coast or in the interior, or they use the goods to outfit caravans. Thus the merchants of Pangani have business ties with the Maasai, which are risky even in normal times.⁴⁴

This credit system was a pyramid that structured the distribution of imported commodities, thereby helping to determine the flow of power and prestige throughout extensive regions of East Africa. Whereas Europeans occupied the apex of the pyramid, Swahili caravan leaders and upcountry trading chiefs were very near the bottom, just above the Maasai and the other peoples of the far interior who actually produced the ivory.

Indian merchants made sure to keep the base of this pyramid broad enough to absorb the chronic financial shocks of the Maasai trade. The notoriously high risks of the northern routes can be attributed to several factors. They had received far less infrastructural investment than the central routes, where the Omani state and its clients had established garrisons and built towns at places like Tabora and Ujiji. The dangers of Maasai raids were cited by porters to justify demanding over twice the pay for the Pangani routes than they received for the central routes, which were longer; many *waungwana* and Nyamwezi porters refused to serve on the Pangani routes altogether.⁴⁵ Indian financiers coped with these risks by spreading them over many undertakings at once. The enterprises were always initiated by the caravaners themselves, usually Shirazi, who, either individually or in groups, approached the Indian to apply for a loan of barter goods and munitions. The financier profited in three ways from this arrangement: first, the imports that he advanced to the caravaners were valued at prices that already reflected a profit; second, he charged a high rate of interest on these loans, estimated at 15 percent by one observer in the mid-1880s, as opposed to the rate of 9 percent then current at Zanzibar; and third, he made a profit disposing of the ivory which the terms of most contracts obliged the returning caravaners to channel through him. But even so, the risks connected with financing any one caravan were great. An observer estimated that one in five might give its Indian financier a good return, two only "mediocre" profits (probably meaning that the caravaners themselves would have nothing to show for their pains), and the remaining two would incur losses.⁴⁶

44. Albrecht O'Swald, Zanzibar, 17 Sept. 1888, ZStA, RKA 690/65-7. Euan-Smith offered a similar description (25 Sept. 1888, ZNA, AA1/61/280), which he may have obtained from the more experienced O'Swald.

45. Kurt Toeppen, "Handel und Handelsverbindungen Ost Afrikas," *Mitteilungen der Geographischen Gesellschaft in Hamburg* (1885-86), 227-28; Fischer, "Bericht," 37-9; Baumann *Usambara*, 182; Mackay, 10 Jan. 1877, in *Church Missionary Intelligencer* n.s.II (1877), 395-6.

46. Toeppen, "Handel," 230; Burton, *Zanzibar* II, 147; Baumann, *Usambara*, 182-3.

Although the Indian merchant who spread his risks usually prospered, the caravan leaders themselves often went deeply into debt, and the pressures of indebtedness became more acute as the century progressed. In the opening decades of the development of the Maasai trade, Indian creditors accepted slaves in repayment of loans, and caravan leaders returning to the coast after an unsuccessful journey were therefore tempted to seize children or other captives with which to pay their creditors. Opportunities to take captives were especially abundant because of the endemic warfare in the Pangani hinterland following the collapse of the Shambaa kingdom in the 1860s and 1870s, and Indian merchants at Pangani seemed more prone than their counterparts elsewhere to take slaves in payment for debt. No doubt this partly reflects Pangani's advantageous position in the slave trade, located just across the channel from the expanding clove plantations of Pemba. But it probably also indicates the high rate of failure in the Pangani ivory trade. The problems of indebtedness only became worse in the 1870s when the British consuls took vigorous actions to prevent their Indian subjects from owning slaves, thus putting an end to the caravaners' option of repaying debts with captives.⁴⁷

The mechanisms of debt were enforced by the Zanzibari state, and as the power of the state grew in the 1870s and 1880s under Sultan Barghash and Consul-General Kirk, it became ever more difficult for caravan leaders to escape their creditors. By the mid-1880s even the most powerful of Pangani's trading *majumbe* were entangled in debt. Early German administrators at Pangani, who assumed the reins of the Arab state after 1889, complained of the huge amounts of time they spent adjudicating litigation brought by Indian creditors against Shirazi debtors, especially during the season when caravans returned to the coast. Many of these debts dated back to the 1880s, having been rolled over repeatedly at annual interest rates of as high as 25 percent. If a caravaner returned without sufficient ivory to make at least a payment on his debts, he could find himself imprisoned and his houses and estates confiscated. There was a flourishing trade in promissory notes, many of which eventually ended up in the hands of powerful Indian and European financiers in Zanzibar. When these debts were finally called in, the *liwali* who decided the case could not well ignore the demands of such high-placed clients of the sultan.⁴⁸

As the Shirazi patricians sank deeper and deeper beneath the burdens of debt, their resentment understandably became focused on the state. This can be seen in the experience of *Jumbe* Kimemeta. In 1886, Kimemeta was called to the Sultan's court in Zanzibar to settle his financial affairs. Whatever that arrangement, it apparently did not satisfy Kimemeta's many creditors, for a few weeks later, in early 1887, the Sultan's officials at Pangani jailed him for debt. Later that year Barghash arranged for Kimemeta to make a partial payment of \$2800 on his debts, which freed the *jumbe* to undertake trading journeys again. But returning from a successful safari three years later, Kimemeta was faced with a dilemma that had become painfully common to men of his position: the governor of Pangani, pressed by

47. Glassman, "Social rebellion," 127-8.

48. These issues are discussed in TNA G1/14, *passim*, including Diertert, 21 April 1893; Rode, 19 June 1893; Neuhaus, 1 Nov. 1893 (includes translation of an 1886 promissory note). For observations dating from before conquest, Höhnel, *Discovery* I.

Kimemeta's creditors, seized the entire property of the caravan for debts outstanding. Although the *liwali* was now under the orders of the new colonial government rather than of the Sultan, the state's relationship with Shirazi debtor and Indian creditor remained much the same.⁴⁹ Kimemeta no doubt had foreseen this relationship when in 1888 he joined other indebted *majumbe* in rebellion; it is hardly surprising that one of the targets of the rebels was the Zanzibari state.

Organization of Caravan Labor on the Pangani Routes

Starved of cash and capital, Pangani's trading *majumbe* could not hope to command porter labor through the commercial means used by Omani merchants on the central routes. Only by developing strong ties of patronage with their porters were the Shirazi able to continue participating in the caravan trade of the "Maasai" routes at a time when their counterparts at Bagamoyo found such participation rapidly becoming impossible. The comparison is instructive. On the Bagamoyo caravans, porters and their employers spoke in increasingly divergent idioms, Nyamwezi, Arab or Shirazi. Arab merchants contracted wage labor from Indian financiers, Nyamwezi trading strongmen and the owners of *vibarua* slaves. The porters themselves maintained various forms of self-identity and organization, depending on whether they considered themselves slaves, *waungwana*, self-employed Nyamwezi, or Shirazi. By contrast, Pangani caravans consisted almost entirely of coastal Africans or of people identified as such by European observers.⁵⁰ On the northern routes, caravan leaders and their porters spoke a common cultural language rooted in the coastal communities, and bonds between them were mediated within the discursive framework of Shirazi ideology. This ideology defined porter labor not merely as the lowly work of slaves or "*washenzi*," but as a service which a Swahili client freely rendered his patron. Thus the Pangani caravan trade linked plebeians and patricians in webs of reciprocal patron-client obligations, and porters could make relatively effective demands for status within the Shirazi communities by expressing them within the hegemonic idiom of patrician culture.

As on the central routes, many of these porters were slaves, frequently belonging to the trading *majumbe* themselves. Those who succeeded in gaining acceptance as autonomous clients worked as the "trading agents" of their masters, as John Kirk expressed it; they regarded themselves as *mafundi* (sing., *fundi*), or skilled craftsmen. *Mafundi* slaves conducted themselves as independent entrepreneurs while on safari, establishing blood-brotherhood and other ties of patronage with trading partners. Burton wrote that "the slave intrusted [by his master] with cloth and beads suddenly becomes a great man, . . . lavish" in the maintenance of his dignity. And in fact such slaves could amass huge debts on their

49. Camrudin Amirudin, 24 March 1890, ZNA, AA2/53/301; Michahelles, 27 May 1890, ZNA, AA2/56/497; Höhnel, *Discovery I*, 7, 57; plus many files on Kimemeta in TNA G1/14, *passim*, including Redwitz, 11 Dec. 1890, and Perbandt, 16 April 1891. For a similar incident concerning Upanga, another Shirazi *jumbe* and caravan leader: Rode, 19 June 1893, TNA, G1/14, 156-7.

50. Kirk to FO, 31 May 1873, ZNA, AA2/12; Burton, *Zanzibar*, 146; Höhnel, *Discovery I*, 16.

own.⁵¹ According to a descendent of Hassan and Omari bin Abdallah, the famous caravan leaders of Bweni, the slave himself often initiated the engagement. "Send me upcountry," he would propose to his master, "and when we return, you will receive such-and-such a portion of the profits." Caravans were often led by trusted trading slaves, such as the two Maasai-born slaves encountered by Thomson in 1883. And because all Pangani porters required capital for their independent trade, they always demanded a larger advance on their wages than did porters on the central routes.⁵²

But the trust enjoyed by *mafundi* trading slaves was not always freely given; like all slaves, they frequently clashed with their masters over how to interpret the bond between them. Although masters had the legal right to choose the kind of work that their *vibarua* and *mafundi* would undertake, they rarely exercised it, and were likely to encounter resistance when they tried. A *fundi* trading slave was just as likely as a *kibarua* to defy his master by enlisting on a caravan against the master's wishes. He would first take out a loan of goods to trade on the journey, an act that constituted a particularly threatening form of disobedience, for the master could be held legally responsible should the slave-debtor default. Yet such loans were made frequently. Indian merchants, who as British subjects were forbidden to hold slaves, apparently welcomed such opportunities to bind other men's slaves to themselves through debt.⁵³

Not all Pangani porters were slaves (although it would be hard to distinguish trading slaves from other clients). Pangani porters can best be described as clients with a variety of personal ties to Shirazi caravan leaders.⁵⁴ Labor relations on Pangani caravans were enunciated in a general language of clientelist authority, the hegemonic language of Shirazi society. This made them different from the highly commodified labor relations of the Bagamoyo routes, where Indian contractors and the Arab state played a direct role in the enforcement of labor contracts and in the organization of a quasi-proletarianized labor force. To a greater extent than on the central routes, labor on Pangani caravans was organized in such a way that it was difficult to tell a porter from a Shirazi entrepreneur. To be more precise, because porters and caravan leaders on the Pangani routes expressed their obligations to one another in a common language of paternalism, struggles between them

51. Glassman, "Social rebellion," 132; Rigby to Bombay, 15 July 1859, ZNA, AA12/2, 30–2; Kirk, "Report on slavery," 6 May 1876, FO 84/1453, 208–10; Burton, *Lake Regions*, 93, 516–17; Fritz Weidner, *Die Haussklaverei in Ostafrika* (Jena, 1915), 20–1; Documents dated 19 Rabi el Akhir 1282 and 14 Ramadhan 1282 (Aug. and Feb. 1866), ZNA, ARC/344. The activities of such trading slaves were not restricted to the Pangani routes, of course; see Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*, 198.

52. Oral testimony: Abdallah Mahine, Bweni, 25 Sept. 1985; Christie, *Cholera*, 222; Thomson, *Masai Land*, 283; Höhnel, *Discovery I*, 23.

53. Weidner, *Haussklaverei*; Mathews to Euan-Smith, 5 July 1888, ZNA, AA2/47/364. Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari wrote that the master was not legally responsible for the debt if the slave hadn't received his permission to borrow. But the fact that Mtoro mentions this, and that he dwells on creditors' attempts to get masters to pay the debts of such slaves, suggests that it was a common source of friction between slaves, masters, and merchants. Mtoro, *Customs*, 176; the untranslated portion of this work (by Baraka bin Shomari) contains further information on debt, trade, and slavery: Velten, *Desturi*, 310ff.

54. "Some were hired out—they were paid a certain amount. Others were slaves. Still others came from various settlements hereabout. [Porters] did not constitute any particular class of people." (Oral testimony: Abdallah Mahine, Bweni, 18 Oct. 1985.) This statement sums up the views expressed in various written and oral sources.

generally took the form of differences over the interpretation of that which they held in common.

The lines of authority on a Pangani caravan were expressed in the same ideological terms as were the lines of authority between patricians and their clients in the Shirazi communities. Particularly relevant in both cases were institutions that came to be called "dance societies" during the colonial period, but which had earlier ordered many aspects of community life in the Shirazi towns.⁵⁵ The highest rank within the dance society was that of the *akida* (pl., *maakida*), who commanded a regular hierarchy of officers and clients. The authority of the *akida* was surpassed only by the *jumbe*, the most powerful political position in the Shirazi community outside the ranks of the Zanzibari state. *Majumbe* and *maakida* also presided over Pangani caravans, where the officers of the dance society were responsible for organizing the porters and maintaining discipline. Conversely, service as a porter was an essential first step up the ladder of rank within the dance societies, and hence was an important way for a young man to earn prestige and authority within the Shirazi community.⁵⁶

The ivory trade thus offered not merely the opportunity for travel, adventure and (occasionally) wealth, it also offered plebeians and outsiders a way to enhance their status within the Shirazi communities. Slaves could share these ambitions as well as the freeborn. The dance societies did not exclude them, and, like any other member, a slave porter would be called by the title of whatever position he won. Thus a slave might elevate his status in the eyes of the townspeople, even if his title were relatively humble, such as the one called *mwinyimtwana* or "lord of the slaves." Nor were slaves restricted to only the lowest titles—in the next chapter we'll meet some who attained the rank of *akida*. Indeed, if an experienced trading slave rose to the top of the hierarchy it was quite possible that his subordinates on the march would include free-born porters. Such arrangements, which seemed to allow slaves to transcend their status altogether, baffled the missionary Edward Hore. He wrote that it was common to see a caravan of "poorly clad native porters . . . led by an amply-dressed and armed superior," in which the former were free men, the latter a slave. "A most complicated system," he added, "the details of which require years to understand."⁵⁷ Many men of humble birth must have risked the dangers of the caravan in hopes of eventually being able to lord it over others. These aspirations were expressed in a song with which women bade farewell to caravans departing for the interior. The song likened a man undertaking a safari to a slave who had won the position of overseer:

55. The major work on colonial-era "dance societies" is T.O. Ranger, *Dance and Society in Eastern Africa* (Berkeley, 1975).

56. Baker, *Report*, 10, 23; Ali bin Hemedi el-Buhuriy, "Habari za Mrima," *Mambo Leo* 141–47 (Dar es Salaam, 1934–35), no. 144, page 192. Fischer wrote of a special class of porter on the Pangani caravans whose job it was to organize the purchase of ivory. He refers to them as "the so-called soldiers" (thus implying that they were not in fact soldiers), and although he does not give the Swahili term, it was probably *akida*, which among its other usages carried this meaning. Fischer, "Bericht," 223; for *akida*, see Ludwig Krapf, *A Dictionary of the Swahili Language* (London, 1882): "*akida ya askari*, the leader, or commander of soldiers, the second in command."

57. Quoted in Koponen, *People and Production*, 333.

Beloved, my beloved, go far.
 My husband is absent, go far;
 He has gone to the plantations, go far,
 To watch over slaves, go far,
 And he himself was a slave, go far.⁵⁸

The language of authority that ordered labor relations on Pangani caravans was expressed not only in the ritual idiom of the dance society, but also in that of coastal Islam. Caravans generally consisted of many small parties that gathered at one place, usually Pangani or Bweni, until there was a large enough number to travel together in safety. The auspiciousness of the departure date would first be ascertained by a ritual specialist or religious teacher. Religious rites were strictly observed on the march, some of them tailored to the rigorous conditions of up-country travel, and the services of a specialist well-versed in coastal traditions were highly valued. Kimemeta was famed not only as a *jumbe* and caravan leader, but also as a ritual healer (*mganga*) and Islamic scholar. His expertise in these latter fields did much to enhance his authority over porters: the length and direction of daily marches was often ascertained by his divinations. Conversely, it is said that coastal Muslims would not accept a religious teacher who had not performed at least one safari to the Maasai country.⁵⁹

In their struggles to participate in the caravan trade, slaves, outsiders and others of low status in urban society also struggled to gain access to Shirazi rituals of authority and prestige. They accepted the Shirazi language of authority because the patricians dominated the northern caravan trade on terms that promised honor and opportunity to their clients. These terms encouraged porters to perceive themselves as autonomous clients, and to aspire to become patrons themselves. If a porter served as *akida* on a caravan led by a *jumbe*, he could expect to enjoy not only the generosity of his patron, but also the respect and deference of his subordinates further down the hierarchy. Those subordinates in turn expected the *akida* to assist them in their own aspirations.⁶⁰

Yet although the Shirazi language of authority was broadly shared on Pangani caravans, conflict was far from absent. Plebeians struggled for acceptance into the hierarchy of the dance societies; patricians struggled to maintain their exclusive positions at the top of the Shirazi hierarchy. Later in this book, we shall see that the offices of *akida* and of *jumbe* were achieved only by sponsoring lavish dance competitions. A favorite occasion on which to do this was the triumphant return of a caravan, when the prospective *akida* might be flush with the success of his journey, having just earned profits with which he might feast the community and so earn respect as a patron. But claims to those profits were never unambiguous, and the conflicting demands of creditors and clients often racked such festivities with violence.

58. Velten, *Desturi*, 240. For a slightly different translation, see Mtoro, *Customs*, 160.

59. Oral testimony, Bweni: Saidi Omari, 27 June 1985; Hashim Abdallah, 27 June 1985; Abdallah Mahine, 25 Sept. 1985 and 17 Aug. 1990. Thomson gives vivid descriptions of Kimemeta's ritual practices while on safari: *Masai Land*, 223-4, 258-60, 318-19, and *passim*. Pouwels' Mombasa informants also recalled the importance of ritual expertise, including *falak*, astrology or divination, in the authority of caravan leaders: *Horn and Crescent*, 121-2.

60. Similarly textured labor relations continue to characterize small-scale enterprises in many parts of twentieth-century Africa: Berry, *No Condition is Permanent*.

A balance sheet cannot explain why Shirazi caravaners continued their aggressive pursuit of trade; they and their clients sought prestige far more than profits. The patrician ethos of the northern Mrima prescribed participation in the long-distance ivory trade as an essential part of the behavior by which a man earned authority and respect within the Shirazi communities. This ethos was attractive to many who had not been born into Shirazi families and indeed who had not been born on the coast at all. The enunciation and manipulation of components of this ethos, both by patricians intent on preserving their domination of urban community institutions and by newcomers intent on breaking into them, were crucial to the operation of the caravan trade.

Struggles over the caravan trade might therefore be seen as conflicts over Swahili citizenship, as struggles both for acceptance into Shirazi community institutions and for the enhancement of status within them. At Bagamoyo—where interests in the caravan trade were highly polarized among Shirazi patricians, Nyamwezi trade specialists, *waungwana* porters and Arab entrepreneurs—Shirazi institutions were of marginal significance to newcomers. Thus Bagamoyo's patriciate commanded relatively little authority or respect.

At Pangani, by contrast, the perceived risks and interests of the caravan trade were spread among networks of Shirazi patrons and their personal clients, and these networks of patronage and clientele were enunciated in a distinctly Shirazi idiom of rank. Although this enabled the debt-ridden patricians to cope with the high risks of the "Maasai" trade, it did so only at the price of allowing their lower-level clientele a direct stake both in particular trading enterprises and in the structures of authority that shaped the Shirazi community. The situation was similar at Saadani. At both places, the structure of the caravan trade encouraged low-status parvenus to perceive a keen proprietary interest in the affairs of the Shirazi community. This strengthened the patricians when they faced threats from outside the community, such as from Germans or Omani Arabs. But at the same time it introduced new tensions in the heart of the communities, between Shirazi patricians struggling to preserve their precarious domination of the towns and the demands of the upstart parvenus on whose support they relied.

These internal tensions were compounded during the accelerating trade boom of the 1870s and 1880s, as the lower orders of Pangani society, especially slaves, sought to take advantage of new commercial opportunities. At the same time, the chronically indebted Shirazi patricians felt ever more threatened as many mortgaged and then lost their *shamba* estates to new Arab settlers, who were building a plantation sector that had no place for autonomous trading slaves. This complex mixture of conflicting wills eventually ripped Pangani apart.

3

Brute Beasts and Articulate Rebels

"Slaves have no words of their own."

—Swahili proverb

Not all outsiders who struggled for a place in the towns had come to the coast voluntarily. Slaves, as we've seen, were present throughout the urban communities: enlisting on caravans, competing for positions of honor in the Shirazi dance societies, even calling themselves *waungwana*. Yet the freeborn regarded them as quintessential outsiders. This contradiction made slaves' aspirations a particular threat to the insular patricians, giving rise to anxieties that were cogently expressed in proverbs that described slaves as alien to the basic humanizing qualities of community and religion. "Slaves are brute beasts," said the bluntest of these, "enemies of God and the Prophet." Several proverbs implied the then-widespread Islamic belief that slaves were made fully human only by virtue of their bondage to a properly paternalistic Muslim, whom they might mimic. Since slaves have no words of their own, they must learn to speak the language of their masters. Such reeducation would civilize newly imported captives and hence teach them to accept their inferiority. "Give the raw slave new clothes," masters were advised, "so he will forget his homeland." (The proverb presumably referred to the Islamic fashions of the coast.) That distinctive human quality, the urge to create communities, was beyond the slave's capacity, and the only significant social tie that the slave could enjoy was the bond to his or her master. Whereas "free men hold together, assist each other in word and in everything," common wisdom taught that "slaves do not and cannot, because they are dependent on their master and cannot join others."¹

Such were the views of the masters, idealized in proverbs. But they must not be accepted at face value: slaves had their own thoughts, and they often refused to play

1. W.E. Taylor, *African Aphorisms, or Saws from Swahili-land* (London, 1924), nos. 313, 351; Krapf, *Dictionary*, 126. For nineteenth-century conflicts over the interpretation of Islamic ideologies regarding enslavement, see John Ralph Willis (ed.), *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa* (London, 1985), and Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery* (Cambridge, 1983).

the parts assigned them in the masters' script. Slaves, after all, were not brute beasts but articulate humans, and as much as any others of their species, they yearned for the comfort and protection that came from active participation in the rituals and institutions of kinship and community. Like other low-status newcomers to the coast, slaves aspired to establish their own households and community structures on a basis of peasant agriculture or petty trade and to win prestige through the intertwined mechanisms of commerce and ritual.

The tensions between these aspirations and the dominant views of the masters created the characteristic form of struggle in coastal slavery. And slaves won many of those struggles. Although the patricians may have viewed slaves as unfit to become full members of the urban community, for most of their history masters had neither the ability nor the interest to press the issue. Many in fact felt that their own prestige and wealth might be enhanced if their slaves were allowed to achieve prominence in the caravan trade or the dance societies. Thus slaves often succeeded in prodding their masters to acknowledge them, however grudgingly, as autonomous members of the Swahili communities.

This outcome may seem at first glance perplexing. Most of us share an image of slaves as human chattel, as utterly powerless people whose only role is to satisfy the wants of the master. But the comparative study of slavery (especially in Africa) suggests that this conventional image is unduly restrictive. The type of slavery with which we are most familiar—plantation slavery—was in fact a historical rarity that arose only in peculiar circumstances, growing out of less specialized forms of bondage.² Slaves were treated as personal dependents far more often than they were treated as chattel, and they performed many duties other than that of forced field hand, such as autonomous peasant, professional soldier, domestic servant, even trusted councillor. What all these subordinates had in common, and what they shared with the gang slave of the New World plantation, was the way they were perceived by the dominant members of society—the status accorded them within the hegemonic ideologies of the slave-holding societies. That status was everywhere a variant of the ideals we've seen expressed by the Shirazi patricians: slaves were viewed as outsiders, whose chief defining quality was their origin as people who had been wrenched from their natal communities and brought forcibly into the community of their masters, upon whom they were utterly dependent. In most cases this debased, dependent status was imparted to subsequent-generation, locally born slaves as well, who like their parents were scorned as less than full members of the community.³

To observe that someone was a slave, then, is merely to observe something about his or her ascribed status. It tells us nothing more precise about that person's social condition, which varied widely from place to place, from period to period, and

2. New World plantation slavery may seem to be a major exception, but in fact it had grown out of less specialized forms in the Mediterranean and Eastern Atlantic before being transplanted by European expansion. Furthermore, given particular circumstances such as a frontier setting, New World slaves could play the role of personal dependents. Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex* (Cambridge, 1990); Peter Wood, *Black Majority* (New York, 1974).

3. Moses Finley, "Slavery," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. XIV (MacMillan, 1968); Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982). Patterson does not always acknowledge the potential chasm between the masters' perceptions and those of the slaves or the historical role of the struggles between them.

indeed from slave to slave.⁴ In some times and places slaves were restricted to relatively few positions in society, all of them lowly; in others, by contrast, opportunities abounded for upward mobility. These variations have often been explained in systemic terms: slavery has been said to constitute fixed cultural "systems" that could be either "open" or "closed." Accordingly, most African slavery has been characterized as "open" and "absorptive"—as systems in which the slave was always regarded first and foremost as a personal dependent, whose social marginality was to be reduced to manageable proportions, or even (over several generations) eliminated altogether, by an ineluctable process of absorption into the communities and kin groups of the masters.⁵

While there is much truth to this picture—Swahili slaves, we have seen, were expected to become more docile after being offered the "new clothes" of coastal culture—it is misleading to describe as a coherent system something so fraught with conflict and change as the relationships between masters and slaves. The general condition of slaves in any given society was not determined by overarching cultural norms, but was the outcome of struggles between masters and slaves, struggles in which slaves demanded what the masters' ideal of the slave-master bond would deny them: fuller participation in local community institutions. Slavery was "absorptive" only in those instances where masters lacked the interest or the ability to wholeheartedly resist those demands, where masters failed to put into practice their ideal vision of the slave as a permanent outsider.⁶

Those instances were many, especially in Africa. But slaves could also find their fortunes reversed. The nineteenth century was a particularly bad time for African slaves, as in many parts of the continent masters attempted to respond to growing market demands by forcing their slaves to produce agricultural commodities. In many ways slaves suffered the results of commercial and political initiatives that were touted by European missionaries and merchants as the means to their salvation. The humanitarians advocated the armed suppression of Africa's old slave trade and its replacement by a new trade in commodities needed by Western industry—the so-called "legitimate trade." But in a richly ironic turn of events, the boom in legitimate trade induced masters within Africa to work their own slaves harder, the spread of imported firearms gave trading warlords the means to capture more slaves more efficiently, and the European naval blockades depressed the price of slaves in coastal regions that had once specialized in their export, making slave labor an attractive investment for growing numbers of entrepreneurs within Africa.⁷

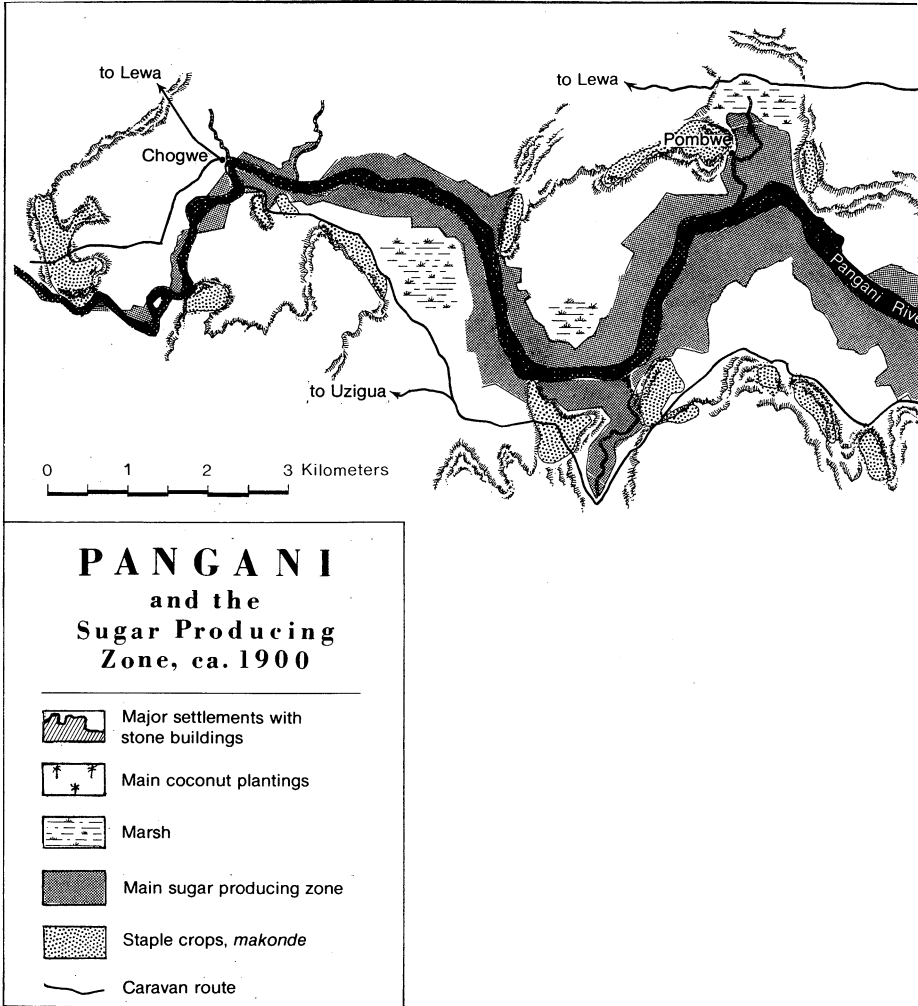
Thus commodification and the collapse of the external slave trade gave rise to more severe forms of slavery within Africa, especially near the seaports, as many

4. The distinction between slave status and the slave's "condition" is derived from Claude Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery: the Womb of Iron and Gold*, transl. Alide Dasnois (Chicago, 1991). Meillassoux writes of the slave "state" (*état*) rather than "status," restricting the latter term to describe positive attributes.

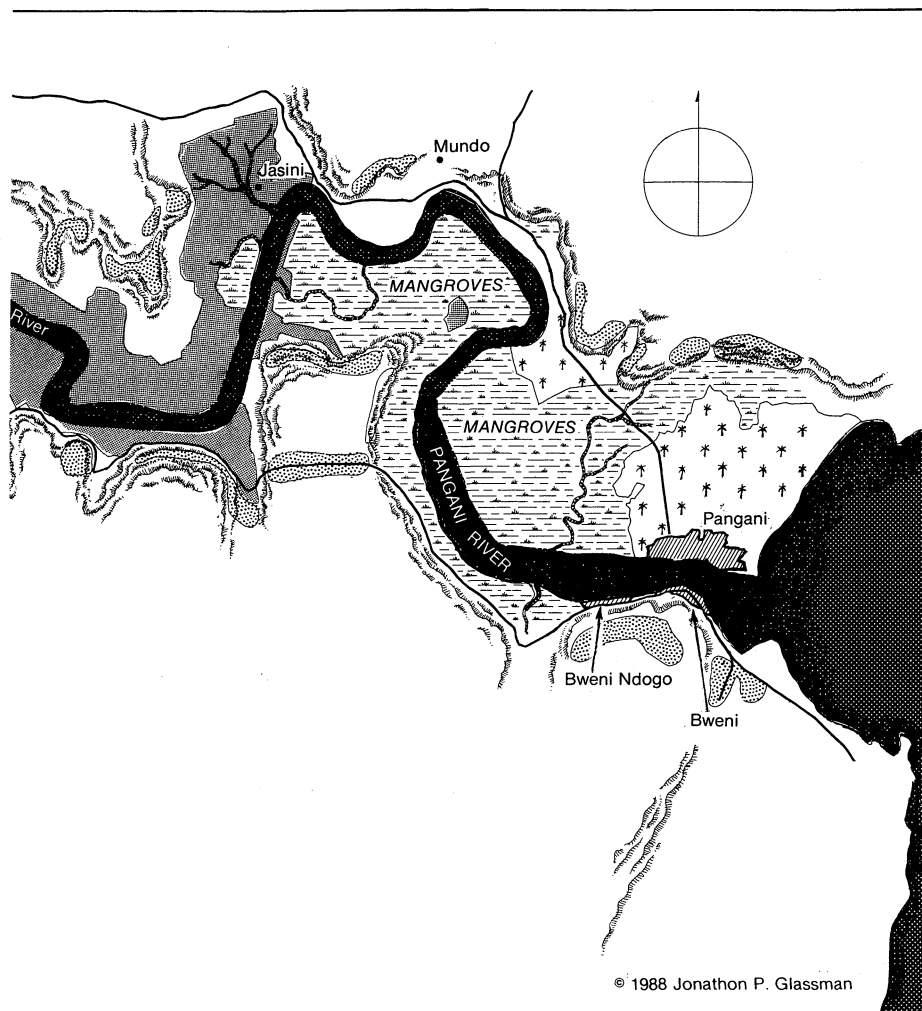
5. The most subtle interpretation along these lines is the influential essay of Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, "African 'slavery' as an institution of marginality," Miers and Kopytoff (eds.), *Slavery in Africa* (Madison, 1977), 3–81. Also see James L. Watson, "Slavery as an institution: open and closed systems," James L. Watson (ed.), *Asian and African Systems of Slavery* (Oxford, 1980).

6. I argue this at greater length in "The bondsman's new clothes: the contradictory consciousness of slave resistance on the Swahili coast," *J. Afr. Hist.* 32 (1991), 277–312.

7. These interlocking processes produced "a century of ironies in East Africa," according to the concise account in Curtin et al., *African History*, ch. 13. For other parts of the continent, see Lovejoy, *Transformations*.



masters attempted to reduce their slaves to driven field hands. On the East African coast, Arab settlers, Swahili-speaking townsmen and their non-Muslim neighbors used slave labor to cultivate plantations of cloves, coconut, grains and sugar, largely to feed the growing commercial economy coordinated at Zanzibar. The abolitionists were not unaware of these developments; indeed, they encouraged them. In 1873, John Kirk tried to persuade the *liwali* of Pangani of the benefits to be derived by the enforcement of new treaties in which the Sultan agreed to abolish the seagoing trade in slaves. Rather than smuggle slaves overseas, argued Kirk, Pangani entrepreneurs “might derive far greater benefit” if they put those slaves to work performing “continuous labour” on their own estates. Kirk thus advocated the export of the products



of an expanded and intensified slave regime as somehow preferable to the export of the slaves themselves.⁸

But the *liwali* and his fellow Omani settlers at Pangani had little need of Kirk's advice, for by the time of this conversation the intensification of slavery had proceeded further on their plantations than perhaps anywhere in East Africa. In the final third of the century the owners of sugar estates on the banks of the Pangani River

8. Kirk to F.O., 31 May 1873, ZNA, AA 2/12. This passage of Kirk's report is crossed out in the rough draft in the Consular archives in Zanzibar and (for obvious reasons) does not appear in the final copy sent to the Foreign Office in London. For other examples of these ironies on the Mrima, and British officials' awareness of them, see Glassman, "Social rebellion," 141-4.

abandoned practically all consideration of their slaves as autonomous clients, and fiercely resisted their slaves' demands for a role in local community institutions. These settlers were beginning to coalesce as a *planter class*; that is, they were becoming conscious of their common interests as a group dependent on large-scale forced agriculture, in which the labor supply was to be replenished primarily by the slave market.⁹ There was little room, in this transformed view, for slaves who were anything but driven fieldhands, the producers of agricultural commodities. Consequently, these particular masters made concerted efforts to deny their slaves any aspirations for social autonomy. They were hostile even to their slaves' desires to establish families. Because planters looked to the market for fresh generations of laborers rather than to sexual reproduction, they deemed it more efficient that slaves devote their energies to the raising of crops than to the raising of children. Their attempts to deny slaves any control of the terms on which even the most elemental social ties were reproduced from generation to generation aroused resentments that made slaves the most militant members of the plebeian crowd, and Pangani's plebs one of the most volatile on the Mrima.

This transformation of "absorptive" or clientelist slavery into "closed" plantation slavery was not a process of one "system" replacing another. Rather, it was the product of increasingly bitter conflicts, often violent, between masters bent on crushing their slaves' social autonomy, and slaves who aspired not only to defend but to expand it. Confronted by the ferocious onslaught of would-be planters, slaves' typical first defense was to invoke their own interpretation of older notions of client slavery, in which masters had conceded some measure of participation in local community life. Their demands were similar to those of other outsiders—parvenus from the countryside and recent converts to Islam and to town life—who struggled for active roles in urban institutions of rank, commerce and religion. Slaves defended a plebeian moral economy in which subordinates were to be treated as autonomous clients by generous patrons. This tactic of resistance embodied the slaves' contradictory vision of their bondage: they accepted their subordinate position in the Shirazi community, but contested the masters' definition of that position. Slaves had long used this tactic, often with great success. But it proved less and less effective as the rapid spread of commodity exchange induced many masters to value their slaves more as producers of market goods than as personal clients.

Masters took smug comfort from the fact that slaves enunciated their demands in the hegemonic discourse of clientelism. No doubt such demands seemed to confirm the notion that slaves were incapable of independent thought, pliable creatures whom "new clothes" could seduce into forgetting their lost freedom. And it is true that slaves for the most part learned to speak Swahili, worship the God of Islam, and call the coast their home. But the Swahili they spoke had its own distinctive accents, their modes of worship defied important aspects of patrician authority, and the homes they built for themselves were often not what their masters had intended. Nor did acceptance of the language of Shirazi paternalism preclude slaves' ability to enunciate a total break with their masters, a break that was more likely to

9. Lovejoy, *Transformations*; Meillassoux, *Anthropology*. Both authors regard the dependence on slave markets (and/or on the systematic seizure of captives through raiding and warfare) as characteristic of what they call a "slave mode of production." Given the preponderance of examples in which slavery did not fit this pattern, the term is misleading.

come when the latter began to behave as members of a planter class. Kirk offered his advice to the *liwali* of Pangani at just such a time and place—for at that very moment slaves on Pangani's sugar estates were plotting to reject their bondage altogether. Yet even when these slaves took arms against their masters to rise in mass rebellion, they expressed their grievances in the hegemonic language of an urban Islamic society ruled by Shirazi patricians and Arab potentates, a society to which they yearned to belong.

The Swahili Language of Slavery

Masters had long been accustomed to regard their slaves as personal clients. Patriarchs relied on followings of loyal armed slaves to give them advantage in the turbulent factional politics of the towns, and poems and chronicles from early in the nineteenth century portray slaves fighting alongside the freeborn and participating in debates on public policy.¹⁰ Even after the rise of plantation economies in the later nineteenth century, it was observed that the usual Swahili word for slave, *mtumwa* (pl. *watumwa*), could be used to denote a "delegate," a "person who is sent on an errand, who does not act in his own name."¹¹ In fact the word was commonly used to designate any servant or laborer. "Thus," explained a well-informed German naturalist, "I have often heard our sailors, when seen working, called '*watumwa*'."¹² In his masterful analysis of the development of plantation slavery at Zanzibar and on the Kenya coast, Frederick Cooper stresses that even those masters who were intent on transforming their slaves into a class of commodity producers had to temper their actions with an eye to their ancient duties as patrons.¹³

Yet the nature of these relationships was not predetermined; nothing inherent in Swahili culture dictated that masters must accept their slaves as autonomous clients. On the contrary, on first entering coastal society slaves were scorned as non-persons, as kinless outsiders totally reliant on and subservient to the master. Newly imported slaves were despised as "barbarians" (*washenzi*, sing. *mshenzi*) or as uncultured "ignoramuses" (*wajinga*). But from the moment that they first arrived at the coast in this dehumanized state, slaves began drawn-out struggles to assert their humanity and to stake out places for themselves in the new communities into which their enslavement had inserted them. The most effective forms of struggle were those in which slaves defined their humanity in a variant of the paternalistic ideologies that were hegemonic in coastal society. Thus they fought to be accepted as personal clients who shared with their masters a devotion to Islam, commerce and the other values of urban life.

Not surprisingly, those who were most successful in such struggles were slaves who had been born into coastal culture and religion. Known as *wazalia* (sing., *mzalia*)—literally, those "born here"—these slaves commonly attained social positions

10. Glassman, "Social rebellion," 152–3.

11. Sacleux, *Dictionnaire*, 618; Krapf, *Dictionary*, 257. The word is derived from the verbal root *tuma*, to employ a person or send him on a mission as an agent or deputy; a related word, *mtume*, is used to denote a messenger of God, particularly *Mtume Mohammedi*, the Prophet Mohammed.

12. Fischer, *Mehr Licht*, 60. For an example of such usage in classical poetry, see Mwana Bukhalasi, "Utendi wa Masahibu," in J.W.T. Allen (ed.), *Tendi* (New York, 1971), verse 119.

13. Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*.

that had been denied their “barbarian” forebears. But because masters and slaves rarely agreed on what the “proper” nature of their relationship should be, this generational improvement in social position was neither foreordained nor irreversible. When masters found it in their interests and within their power to try to reverse the trend, *wazalia* could find themselves threatened with indignities supposedly reserved for *washenzi*.

We can get a rough picture of the ways in which slaves struggled to reduce their social marginality by looking at how they moved from one occupation to another. Slaves who labored outside of the master’s household fell into four overlapping occupational categories. (For the moment we will leave aside those household slaves whose duties were predominantly domestic, sexual and consultative.) A newly imported slave would most likely be put to work on the master’s *mashamba*, where he or she would cultivate under the supervision of slave overseers on three to five specified days per week. On the other days such slaves were expected to raise their subsistence on *konde* plots. (See Chapter 1 for *mashamba* and *makonde*.) Masters might allow their slaves a portion of the crops grown on the *shamba*, but they were under no customary obligation to do so. By contrast, all produce of the *konde* was the unrestricted property of the slave who cultivated it.¹⁴

Slaves who were trusted with more autonomy, be they *wazalia* or *washenzi* who had become accustomed to life on the coast, might be left free to cultivate entirely on their own, provided they give their masters an annual or monthly tribute known as *taja* or *ijara*. Such slaves resembled bonded peasants. Unlike *shamba* slaves, they retained near-total control over the productive process and over the disposal of crops, so long as the master received his tribute. *Ijara* slaves often cleared land from bush or forest, and if the slave village lay far from town, masters might only rarely visit to collect the tributary payment. Such arrangements, together with the fact that the *ijara* payment varied according to the productiveness of the land, suggest that, as in the medieval expansion of northwestern Europe, patrons used lower rents or tribute as an incentive for client agriculturalists to clear new land.¹⁵

Both forms of agricultural slave had considerable success in claiming a share of the social and commercial life of the towns, although *ijara* slaves enjoyed more autonomy. In neither case did the master command the entire labor of the slave. *Shamba* slaves could sell the surplus of their *konde* plots, or they might hire themselves out as casual laborers on the days they were free from the obligation to cultivate the master’s *shamba*. Both *ijara* and *shamba* slaves lived in autonomous villages, governed by their own elders. (Masters on the Mrima sometimes took steps to preserve the integrity of these villages by preventing the separation of slaves from the land on which they lived, should ownership of slave or land be transferred through sale or inheritance.¹⁶) Like peasants, village slaves were vigorous participants in the commercial economy, raising fowl and small livestock and engaging in crafts specialties. They either carried

14. Velten, *Desturi*, 255–56; Sacleux, *Dictionnaire*; Weidner, *Hausklaverei*, 18–19; August Leue, “Die Sklaverei in Deutsch-Ostafrika,” *Beiträge zur Kolonialpolitik und Kolonialwirtschaft II* (1900–01), 607; Oral testimony, Idi Mwinikombo, Mwembeni, 18 Sept. 1985. Ylvisaker, *Lamu*, has much on *konde*. Sacleux observed that *mgunda* was a common synonym for *konde* on the Mrima.

15. Beech, “Slavery,” 147; Werth, *Küstenland I*, 300–1; Hardinge to Salisbury, 12 April 1896, PP 1896, v. 59, c. 8274.

16. This resemblance to serfdom furthers the analogy with European forms of tributary servitude. Leue in *DKZ* 1889, 198; for an example of such provisions see the deed of sale between Sultan Hamed bin Thweni and Suleiman bin Nasr al-Lemki, 30 Muharram 1314 (12 July 1896), TNA G46/13.

these wares to town markets themselves or sold them to the small peddlers who frequented their villages, many of whom were also slaves.¹⁷

A third category of slave consisted of the *vibarua* or hire slaves whom we met in the preceding chapter. Some sources treat *vibarua* as a subcategory of *ijara* slavery, since the portion of the wage yielded to the master was often considered the equivalent of *ijara* tribute. But it is important to distinguish between the two to understand how slaves struggled to enhance their involvement in Shirazi community institutions. Unlike *ijara* agricultural slaves, *vibarua* were mostly occupied in urban wage labor, and this gave them greater opportunities for participation in the commercial and social life of the towns. *Vibarua* tended to be owned by relatively poor people—including other slaves¹⁸—who would be least likely to have a *shamba* on which to work their slaves. One or two low-priced juvenile slaves made an attractive small investment for such humble masters, which partly explains why children and young women constituted a large proportion of the *vibarua* who performed the most tedious unskilled labor in the coast towns, such as sorting and cleaning copal, carrying building materials, or performing heavy domestic tasks for European and Indian employers, who were forbidden to own slaves themselves.¹⁹

But certain *vibarua*—particularly young men—were more fortunate. Many were owned by Hadrami Arabs, humble immigrants who had first come to the coast as menial laborers, often specializing as stevedores or *mahamali* (sing., *hamali*). By the late 1850s, many of the immigrants had accumulated enough capital to invest in slaves whom they put to work in their place, and soon *hamali* labor was dominated by *vibarua*. *Hamali* slaves possessed skills that were highly valued by caravan leaders, and their occupation offered them numerous opportunities to enlist as porters on safaris to the interior—with or without their masters' consent, as we have seen. It is not surprising that *mahamali* demanded, and received, higher wages than did other *vibarua*.²⁰

A dissatisfied male *kibarua* or agricultural slave might therefore enhance his participation in the commercial life of the towns by running off to join a caravan. Another common method was to learn a craft. Trading slaves, in fact, were part of the fourth overlapping category of slave, that of craftsmen or *mafundi* (sing., *fundi*), a category that included artisans, caravan specialists, sea captains and their crews, and fishermen. *Mafundi*, slave and free, were respected for their specialized knowledge; the derivation of the word points to their qualifications to teach others. Hence the slave *fundi*—typically an *mzalia* who had been apprenticed to his craft in the town—commanded a certain degree of prestige and domestic autonomy. He maintained his own

17. Baumann, *Usambara*, 36, 74; Kaerger, *Tangaland*, 6; Leue, "Die Sklaverei," 607; Kirk, "Report on slavery," 6 May 1876, FO 84/1453, 208–10.

18. Hardinge to Kimberley, 27 Apr. 1895, PP 1896, v. 59, 44; E. Quaas, "Die Szuris, die Kulis und die Sklaven in Zanzibar," *Zeitschrift für Allgemeine Erdkunde* (Berlin), neue Folge, IX (1860), 443–4; Mohamed H. Abdulaziz, *Muyaka, Nineteenth Century Swahili Popular Poetry* (Nairobi, 1979), 30. These sources do not specify that the slaves owned by other slaves were *vibarua*, but it is likely that this would be the case.

19. Kirk, "Report on slavery"; G.A. Fischer, "Einige Worte über den augenblicklichen Stand der Sklaverei in Ostafrika," *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin* 17 (1882), 75; *idem.*, *Mehr Licht*, 65–6; Donald Mackenzie, "A report on slavery and the slave-trade in Zanzibar, Pemba, and the mainland," 6 May 1895, in Rhodes House, Anti-Slavery Papers: MSS Brit Emp S.22 G.3, 30; Otto Kersten, *Baron C.C. von der Decken's Reisen in Ost-Afrika* (Leipzig, 1869–71), I, 83; Elton to Prideaux, 18 March 1874, ZNA, AA2/13; F. Holmwood, "Report on the southern ports," 30 Jan 1880, FO 84/1574, 190–1.

20. Kirk, "Report on slavery"; Quaas, "Die Szuris," 421–9; K. Toeppen, "Aus Sansibar," *DKZ* 1887, 557; Kirk to F.O., 9 Jan. 1878, FO 84/1514, 37–40; Fischer, "Einige Worte," 74–5.



FIGURE 3.1. A *hamali* slave: Zanzibar, 1888–89.

household and exercised full control over his productive labor.²¹ “He retains his own profits,” wrote a Swahili observer, Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari of Bagamoyo, “and if he is a good *mzalia* he remembers his master and gives part to him.”²²

But Mtoro’s wording clearly implies that not all *mafundi* were “good” and that many ignored or challenged their master’s definition of their obligations. We have already seen this in the case of trading slaves who insisted on access to credit. The tie with a creditor was one of many links to the community that *fundi* slaves and other *wazalia* forged autonomously of their masters, despite the latter’s ideal of the slave as a creature whose only significant social bond was that with the master. A master’s disregard for these links could arouse sharp resentments, especially when he violated the customary prohibition against the sale of *wazalia*. This issue was the cause of widespread tension on the northern Mrima in the 1870s, when temporarily high prices tempted many masters there to sell their *wazalia* to clove planters on the island of Pemba. In one of many cases, a Tanga blacksmith named Baruti made use of his friendship with the captain of the dhow that had been hired to smuggle him across the Pemba Channel. Warned by this fellow *fundi* (and perhaps fellow slave), Baruti ran away to seek employment with British missionaries in the Bondei hills, from whom we get our detailed knowledge of his case.²³

The boundaries between these four categories remained ambiguous and constantly shifting, largely because of slaves’ unceasing attempts to cross them. Ambitious slaves struggled to carve a space for themselves within the coastal community by insisting that their bonds to their masters be defined in the same generalized language of patronage–clientele that defined ties of domination among the freeborn. Slaves could use this language to contest the master’s power to dictate their social position. Thus, for example, when a slave established ties of credit independently of his master in order to join a caravan, he was exercising the common prerogative of the dissatisfied male client to seek alternative patrons. The slave’s ability to control commodities and other property (such as the trade goods that might be loaned a would-be trading slave) was a common bone of contention, because such control could serve as the material basis from which a slave might claim greater autonomy from his master. Male trading slaves and other *mafundi* were especially jealous in the defense of their property rights. Their possession of the skills and tools of their trade gave them considerable material capacity to secure clients (including the purchase of slaves), take on female dependents (including marriage to multiple wives), and forge ties with patrons other than their masters. In short, it gave them the ability to act like Swahili gentlemen, and hence to make realistic claims to roles in Shirazi community institutions.

Readers will have noticed that these patterns of resistance were gendered: male slaves enjoyed greater access to the dominant institutions of coastal society than did females because the hegemonic ideologies defining those institutions were patriarchal. (We shall see this in greater detail in the following chapter’s discussion of marriage and Islam.) Thus the option of earning profits and prestige in the caravan trade was open

21. Sacleux, *Dictionnaire* (“funda”); New, *Life*, 62–3; Abdallah bin Hemedi, *Kilindi*, 139; J.P. Farler, *The Work of Christ in Central Africa* (London, 1878), 23–4; Kirk to FO, 22 July 1873, FO 84/1375, 59–63 (for comments on how “remarkably independent” slave mariners were); Quaas, “Die Szuris,” 443, 448. For slaves as caravan leaders and trading agents, see Chapter 2.

22. Mtoro, *Customs*, 172.

23. Kirk, 14 July 1877, FO 84/1485, 327–8; FO 84/1515, *passim* (1878); FO 84/1575, 330–1 and *passim* (1880). For Baruti: Farler, *Work of Christ*, 23–4.

only to males. Although bearing heavy loads was considered women's work, dominant male consensus prevented women from enlisting as porters.²⁴ Whereas male slaves often managed to avoid field labor by securing employment as porters or stevedores or *mafundi*, female slaves rarely succeeded in doing so. They were left to cultivate, and this explains the preponderance of women in the ranks of *shamba* slaves.²⁵

Some female slaves were able to escape field labor or the arduous life of an urban *kibarua* by becoming concubines. A concubine who bore a son by her master lost many of the stigmata of slavery and gained the prestige and protection of having mothered a free person. But such a path to upward mobility was fraught with uncertainty, for it relied entirely on the whims of masters (and perhaps the tolerance of mistresses). Even if the concubine achieved the highest possible status—marriage to her master and hence manumission—she would still be the absolute dependent of her former master, unlike the male *fundi* who managed to maintain his own autonomous household. And although an aggressive ambitiousness might help an intelligent and lucky male slave realize his aspirations, such character traits would hardly be likely to help a dissatisfied female slave become the docile sexual servant most masters desired.²⁶ "The slave girl has sharp teeth and bites," slave women sang as they toiled in their masters' fields: "I want her no more, send her to the country and let her dig." In another wry verse punctuated by swings of the hoe, slave women reflected bitterly on the changeable fortunes of the concubine:

A concubine is still a slave,
Today the concubine is still a slave.
Do not think about lying on a mattress,
A concubine is still a slave.²⁷

The hegemonic ideology of patriarchy provided slaves with a rhetorical weapon that they might use to claim greater autonomy: male slaves invoked their position as husbands and fathers, and female slaves their position as wives and mothers, as counterweights to their masters' claims as slave owners. But the weapon was double-edged, for the male slave's perceptions of his rights over women could clash with those of the master. An example comes from 1874, when the Welsh-American explorer Henry Morton Stanley was leaving on one of his famous journeys to the African interior. As Stanley's caravan departed from Bagamoyo, some of his porters "induced" about fifteen slave women to abandon their masters' fields and accompany them. The porters no doubt hoped to enjoy the prerogatives of a male household head while on the march, and the slave women probably looked forward to escaping the drudgery of the *shamba* and to sharing some of the prestige and glamor of caravan life. When an official of the sultanate caught up with the caravan and ordered the women to return

24. For an incident in the Pangani hinterland in which free-born women attempted to enlist as porters, but were prohibited from doing so by their menfolk, see Höhnel, *Discovery*, I, 49–51.

25. A. Leue, "Die Sklaverei in Deutsch-Ostafrika," *DKZ* 1901, 238–9; New, *Life*, 62–4; Baumann, *Usambara*, 13–14. Male slaves enjoyed greater opportunities for social mobility elsewhere in Africa, as well: Claire Robertson and Martin Klein, "Women's importance in African slave systems," in C. Robertson and M. Klein (eds.), *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Madison, 1983), 12.

26. The nineteenth-century ideal of female sexual department is most famously enunciated in the classic "Utendi wa Mwana Kupona": Allen (ed.), *Tendi*, 55–75.

27. These work songs are recorded in Mtoro, *Customs*, 125–6. For concubinage see Strobel, *Muslim Women*, 49–51. There is some confusion as to whether a concubine would be freed for bearing her master a daughter or only for bearing a son, whether she would be freed immediately or only on her master's death, and whether her daughters or only her sons were born free. See Middleton, *World*, 118.

to their masters, the porters defended their domestic arrangements with guns. The official, backed by Stanley, prevailed in enforcing the masters' view.²⁸

A particularly revealing episode occurred in 1877, when an experienced trading slave belonging to Mambosasa, a well-known Shirazi *jumbe* of Bweni, ran off with some of his master's concubines. In his complaint to a British consular court, Mambosasa hinted that this was a contest between slave and master for control over the same women. When the concubines "took to going to other houses at night," Mambosasa explained, he was obliged to chain them up to protect his "domestic establishment" and his reputation as one of Pangani's leading patricians. At this point the *fundi* freed them and together they sought the protection of new patrons, British naval officers to whom the trading slave had been selling provisions. One can only speculate as to the precise motivations of the slaves. By taking on his masters' concubines as dependents, the *fundi* may have intended to establish an autonomous household based materially on commerce and the patronage of his British customers; the concubines, for their part, may have been invoking their subordinate ties to a husband or lover as a defence against the more brutal subordination they were suffering at the hands of their master. Mambosasa himself drew parallels between his rights as a slave owner and a male slave's powers over his wife.²⁹ So if our speculations about what motivated the flight of the *fundi* and the concubines are correct, the ideals of patriarchy were used both by Mambosasa and by his defiant slaves.

Conflicts engendered by slaves' defence of their domestic autonomy and of their ability to hold property were intensified by the increasing pace of commercialization in the final third of the century. Expanding markets and the flood of credit provided both slaves and masters with new weapons to use in their struggles. Numerous caravans to the interior, including those hired by Europeans, offered ever-growing chances for male slaves to improve their lot in life. Significantly, European travellers were warned to verify any slave porter's claim that he had received his master's permission to take employment. (They were also advised to strike the deal directly with the slave before going to the master, for a slave whose owner had ordered him to serve or who was dissatisfied with his share of the wage would make an unreliable porter.³⁰) But the increasing pace of commercialization also offered masters incentives to treat their slaves more as chattel than as personal clients, as in the case of *wazalia* whose masters sold them to supply the labor demands of the Pemba clove boom. At the very moment when more and more slaves were enticed to try their luck as autonomous peasants and traders, many masters saw new opportunities to put them to work producing cash crops on *mashamba*, as we shall see. As the stakes grew ever higher in the struggle of slaves to participate as independent householders in urban community institutions and the struggle of their masters to exclude them, the breaking point was reached with increasing frequency, and slaves often rejected all their masters' claims by running away.

As they struggled to improve their lives, slaves seized on certain elements of the hegemonic ideologies of the Shirazi patricians, including patriarchy and the prestige

28. Stanley, *Despatches*, 190-1.

29. Questioned about a female slave of his who had been abused, Mambosasa replied that she had been flogged "not by me but by her husband . . . , also my slave"; the cause of the flogging was "a domestic affair of their own and a trouble similar to my own." (Emphasis added.) Statement of Diwan Mambo Sasa, 12 March 1877, FO 84/1484, 254-5.

30. Fischer, *Mehr Licht*, 84-5.

of clientele, and recast them in new variants expressive of popular resistance. *Mafundi* slaves—or slaves aspiring to that position—wished to establish autonomous households and to practice the commercial lifestyle of an urban merchant. They also sought full participation in the Islamic institutions of the towns and competed for titles within the dance societies that shaped Shirazi political life. Together these four sets of aspirations—the prestige of patriarchy, commerce, Islamic ritual and rank—added up to claims of full access to the institutions of the free-born community, for they involved the key attributes by which patrician status was defined on the Mrima. To be considered a *mwungwana* or gentleman in the Shirazi towns one needed to be a senior male who exercised dominance over female dependents, a Muslim considered orthodox by prevailing opinion, and a man who utilized the prestige and profits accrued on upcountry caravans to secure one or several ranked titles. In Chapters 4 and 5 we shall see the precise rituals by which a man established his legitimacy in each of these spheres, rituals in which slaves and other low-status outsiders struggled persistently to participate. The Shirazi patricians, intent on preserving their exclusiveness in the face of the expanding power of the Arab state of Zanzibar, just as persistently threw numerous obstacles in the outsiders' way.

Thus this paradox: by accepting the masters' culture—by struggling to become Swahili citizens—slaves at the same time challenged the masters' view of their bondage. This is perhaps best seen in the realm of Islam, which, like other universal religions, draws much of its strength from its ability to be interpreted in varied and even conflicting ways, offering solace and dignity to people in many different walks of life. Slavery had long been an issue of religious debate in the Muslim world, nowhere more so than in nineteenth-century Africa. Unbelief had been the classic justification of enslavement, and although slaves who converted did not thereby become free, the burden of their servitude was often interpreted as the result of a refusal to embrace Islam, either by the slaves themselves or by their forebears. However unjustified by Islamic law—and many Muslims insisted that it was a travesty of the Prophet's teachings—slaves were commonly thought of as somehow less than human and, even after they had converted, as somehow less than Muslim. These notions sometimes developed into an Arab-centered racism, traces of which can be found in the views of Swahili patricians who elaborated or invented genealogical links to the Middle East as a way of emphasizing the purity of their Islam over that of parvenus.³¹ But by converting to Islam the slave could openly reject his master's view of him as an "enemy of God and the Prophet." The Muslim slave proclaimed himself neither a "barbarian" nor an "ignoramus"—neither *mshenzi* nor *mjinga*—but rather a "civilized slave" or *mtumwa mstaarabu*. He might even go so far as to imitate the pretensions of the patricians and say, as did a Zanzibar slave encountered in mid-century, "*mimi Mwaarabu*"—"I am an Arab."³²

The dominant forms of Islam in the coastal towns were as insular as were other patrician beliefs. Like other low-status outsiders, slaves were not allowed full participation in established religious institutions—even their access to the mosques was of-

31. Lovejoy, *Transformations*; Willis, *Slaves and Slavery*, vol. I, especially chapters by Willis, Paulo Fernando, and Akbar Mohammed. For the Swahili example, see Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*, and Morton, *Children of Ham*.

32. Sacleux, *Dictionnaire*, 598; Quaas, "Die Szuris," 447.

ten restricted or denied.³³ Contrary to the teachings of the Prophet, many masters did not bother to instruct their slaves in religious doctrine.³⁴ Oral informants at Pangani—the children of both slaves and masters—stated that masters were more likely to teach religion to domestic slaves and other *wazalia* than to plantation slaves. “How could a slave be taught religion?” one informant asked rhetorically. “A slave was worked, morning and evening—when would he find the opportunity to study or pray?” Since most large plantations at Pangani were owned by Arab settlers, it is not difficult to understand informants’ statements that Swahili masters taught their slaves more often than did Omani Arabs, nor the observation of a contemporary visitor that Omanis put less stress on the spiritual merits of manumission than did African Muslims.³⁵ Slave converts therefore embraced the majority, Sunni branch of Islam, rather than the Ibadhi rites which helped mark the Omanis as a distinct caste.

But even within the community of Sunni Muslims, Shirazi patricians often frowned on their slaves’ religious practices. They frequently singled out the slaves’ fondness for incorporating dance into their devotions. A poem that has as its refrain the proverbial belief that slaves are “enemies of the Prophet” scorns this use of dance as one of the more egregious examples of slave depravity.³⁶ The patricians’ complaints became ever more common in the final decades of the century, as the patrician monopoly of piety was challenged by religious teachers who taught an egalitarian brand of Islamic mysticism, or Sufism, that allowed and even encouraged such seemingly heterodox behavior. Like others of low status who were unable to worship in the studied forms valued by the dominant members of coastal society, slaves were attracted to the teachings of Sufis who valued spiritual accomplishments as much as scholarly ones. By active participation in the Sufi orders, slaves were able to claim membership in the brotherhood of Islam—perhaps the single most important defining attribute of Swahili citizenship—without accepting their masters’ exclusionary interpretation of the faith.

These contests over religious practice, as well as similar contests over the rituals of kinship and rank, are examined in Part 2. My purpose here is simply to suggest that before the rise of plantation economies (and continuing in importance thereafter) the predominant form of slave-master conflict involved slaves’ struggles for greater participation in Shirazi community institutions, struggles in which slaves sought to

33. J.S. Trimmingham, *Islam in East Africa* (Oxford, 1964); Herrmann, Dar es Salaam, 5 Dec. 1908, ZStA, RKA 701, 137–9; Patricia Romero Curtin, “Laboratory for the oral history of slavery: the island of Lamu on the Kenya coast,” *American Historical Review* 88:4 (1983), 874. As late as 1968, patricians in a village near Lamu continued to exclude slave descendants from religious office: Janet Bujra, “An anthropological study of political action in a Bajuni village in Kenya,” Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1968, 152–7. For a detailed interpretation of the exclusiveness of coastal religion vis-à-vis slaves, see el Zein, *Sacred Meadows*; for the exclusion of outsiders generally, see Lienhardt, “Introduction,” 13.

34. New, *Life*, 57–8; Quaa, “Die Szuris,” 447; W. Hutley, “Mohammedanism in Central Africa,” Aug. 1881, LMS, Central Africa, 4/2/D (for coastal Muslims settled along the central routes); Frederick Cooper, “Islam and cultural hegemony: the ideology of slave-owners on the East African coast,” in Paul Lovejoy (ed.), *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* (Beverly Hills, 1981).

35. The quote is from Ali Waziri, Pangani, 12 Sept. 1985; see also Ndembo Maburuki, 26 June 1985; Gustav Meinecke, *Aus dem Lande der Suaheli* (Berlin, 1895), 53. Meinecke describes the differences over manumission as those of doctrine, Ibadhi versus Sunni, but it is more likely that his impression stems from the historically specific experiences of the two religious communities at Pangani, where the majority of planters happened to be Ibadhis.

36. “Shairi la mtumwa,” in Carl Velten, *Prosa*, 401–3. See also New, *Life*, 65–6; Peter Lienhardt, “The Mosque College of Lamu and its social background,” *TNR* 53 (1959), 233–41.

enhance their prestige and power in the same arenas as did the freeborn. So long as slaves made some headway in these struggles, they could fight to reduce their social marginality without completely rejecting their bonds to their masters. Some individual masters, mostly Arab settlers with particular interests in plantation production, were entirely hostile to their slaves' efforts to win autonomy within coastal society. But so long as masters did not coalesce as a planter class to insist that slaves be excluded altogether from community institutions, the low-level conflicts we have been describing could continue without becoming transformed into outright rebellion. Indeed, most patricians relied on the support of networks of personal clientele for their social eminence, rather than on the regimented labor of forced commodity producers. This was especially so in the long-distance caravan trade, where slave porters served Shirazi entrepreneurs as autonomous clients motivated by the opportunity to win prestige within the dominant institutions of the coastal communities. Such masters would be hesitant to contest the ritual and cultural language of clientele in which slaves perceived their bonds. They might argue with their slaves over the nature of a particular relationship, but it was agreed that slaves, and in particular *wazalia*, exercised certain ambiguously defined rights of property, patriarchy, and political and religious participation.

Such struggles ensured that there would be little in the language of the slave-master bond to distinguish it from other ties of domination pervading coastal society and that the line separating slaves from nonslave clients would therefore remain ambiguous. Widespread consensus held that juniors should defer to seniors, women to men, and clients to their patrons. The language of slavery was but a set of variations on these themes. The slave saw himself in relation to his master as but a variant of a client; the master often saw himself as but a variant of a patron. Many of the public rituals by which slaves expressed their subordination to the master were markers of paternalist domination among the freeborn as well. Slaves were expected to greet their masters, for example, with the deferential expression "*shikamoo*," literally, "I grasp your ankles." Women greeted their husbands in the same way, and children their elders. Masters feasted their slaves on festive occasions such as holidays and weddings; in response to such largess, slaves were expected to display their deference, often in the form of a small tribute payment. As we shall see in a later chapter, such rituals of festive gift exchange were essential to the affirmation of many different relationships of patronage and clientele throughout Shirazi society.³⁷

These ritual obligations long outlived the actual bond of enslavement, and this only compounded the difficulty of distinguishing slaves from other subordinates.³⁸ The boundary was most ambiguous in the case of *wazalia*. Like the freeborn, *wazalia* prided themselves on their knowledge of Islam and the possession of other urbane

37. Cooper by contrast suggests that these practices were emblematic of the tie between slave and master: *Plantation Slavery*, 223–6. For usage by free persons, see Chapter 5 of this book; also Quaas, "Die Szuris," 444–45; Baumann, *Usambara*, 17; Mtoro, *Customs*, 42. Swahili speakers still use *shikamoo* as a respectful greeting to seniors.

38. Quaas, "Die Szuris," 444–5, 448. For the continued tie of clientage between the descendants of slaves and their masters, see Patricia Romero, "Where have all the slaves gone? Emancipation and post-emancipation in Lamu," *J. African Hist.* 27 (1986), 497–512, and the following oral testimony: Abdallah Mahine, Bweni, 25 Sept. 1985; Group interview, Bweni, 23 June 1985; Saidi Omari, Bweni, 27 June 1985; Ndembo Maburuki, Pangani, 17 and 26 June 1985, 18 Oct. 1985. The tie of freedman clientele is called *wala* in Arabic, and is a common aspect of Muslim tradition; a useful discussion can be found in Patterson, *Social Death*, 241–7.

traits that distinguished them as members of the coastal communities. Also like the freeborn, they scorned newly arrived slaves as *washenzi* or “barbarians,”³⁹ masking their own origins by calling themselves “people of the coast,” using the fashionably Arabic derivation *waSwahili*. It is perhaps an index of the long-term success of such efforts that some twentieth-century informants claim that the appellation “Swahili” implied free or patrician status.⁴⁰ In fact, only those of slave descent would have been likely to use the term; patricians identified themselves either with a clan name or with a title that pointed to the specific town of their origin.⁴¹ Some *wazalia* might even aspire to call themselves *waungwana* or “gentlemen,” and although it was unlikely that they would be treated as such by the patricians, it was not unheard of.⁴²

In sum, the most common forms of slave resistance were struggles for citizenship, struggles for inclusion in the community life of the Muslim towns. By making use of the ambiguous Shirazi language of patronage and clientele, slaves were able to challenge the masters’ view of their subordination without repudiating that subordination altogether. Theirs were not struggles to escape slavery and become “free”; in societies such as those of prequest East Africa, where most people relied on ties of personal dependency to provide social security and social identity, it would be difficult to find an equivalent of the modern Western concept of “freedom.” Other types of struggle were much more common, such as the agricultural slave’s attempts to take employment on a caravan, a *kibarua*’s search for credit to set himself up in business, or a *shamba* slave’s search for an opportunity to enhance her autonomy by marrying a householder, perhaps one of her master’s *fundi* slaves. This analysis must not be misconstrued to imply that slaves were content with their bondage and sought only to defend an older, “benign” version of it against the inroads of change.⁴³ On the contrary, in their struggles to enhance their participation in the commercial and community life of the towns, slaves used the ideological language of clientelism to express personal agendas that were aggressive and innovative.

Slaves pushed insistently at the limits of what the clientelist structures of slavery might allow, using the material wherewithal offered by the commercial boom, especially expanding credit opportunities, to make viable claims for membership in the freeborn community. But the masters pushed back. They too hoped to respond to the new market opportunities, some in ways that placed severe limits on their slaves’ abilities to practice even the most rudimentary elements of autonomous community life. In the 1870s and 1880s, just as ever-increasing commercial opportunities were leading to a peak in slaves’ attempts to move up the ladder of coastal society, a planter class coalesced at Pangani that sought to drag its slaves down to a level lower than

39. Fischer, *Mehr Licht*, 80–1; Toeppen in *DKZ* 1887, 557.

40. E.g., Ylvisaker, *Lamu*, 20. Jan Knappert writes that “genuine Swahili” were by definition patricians: *Traditional Swahili Poetry* (Leiden, 1967), 51.

41. Beech, “Slavery,” 146; Thomson, *Central African Lakes* I, 91–2; Lienhardt, “Introduction.” I discuss these and other sources in “Social rebellion,” 172–3.

42. Middleton, *World*, 90. Krapf recorded this expression: “although he is a slave his spirit is that of a *mwungwana*” (*Dictionary*, 257). Significantly, as we have seen, the slaves who consistently got away with calling themselves, and being called, *waungwana*, were porters who spent most of their time far from the coast, in what was essentially a frontier setting.

43. This is Morton’s misreading of Cooper and of other so-called “hegemonists” who have taken their inspiration from Genovese’s studies of U.S. slavery. See my review of *Children of Ham* in *JAH* 33 (1992), 146–7.

anything ever experienced on the coast: that of chattel gang slavery. These planters hoped to raise sugar cane, a crop notorious for its regimented demands on labor and the basis of some of the most brutal slave systems in world history. In so doing, these masters attempted to transform altogether the terms of discourse between them and their slaves. This was the historical moment when the conflict between master and slave became more commonly irreconcilable.

Planters and Gang Slaves

For most nineteenth-century Swahili speakers, the concepts of "slave" and "master" denoted vague status ascriptions, not precise class positions. The only characteristic uniting *shamba* slaves, *vibarua*, concubines and slave *mafundi* was their common status as subordinated clients who were descended from kinless outsiders brought forcibly into coastal society. By pursuing petty trade, crafts and peasant agriculture, slaves were able to establish autonomous households and reproduce locally—thus losing their kinlessness and many of the attributes of outsider status. In most places, slave owners had neither the desire nor the cohesiveness to repress such autonomous local reproduction. This was so even on the large estates of clove, coconut and grain which Omanis and other settlers established at Zanzibar, Pemba and the Kenya coast in paradoxical response to the boom in "legitimate trade." The wide variety of slave-master relations on those estates prevented masters from coalescing as a conscious planter class. Some masters, at some times, saw their slaves primarily as economic producers; others, at other times, saw them more as personal clients. Usually the two aspects were combined in a mix that fluctuated according to circumstance.⁴⁴

But at certain circumscribed locations, at certain moments, social, economic and cultural factors converged in such a way that more or less cohesive groups of masters came to perceive common interests in a particular set of relations to the means of agricultural production and reproduction. Such emergent local planter classes began to regard their slaves primarily as commodity producers whose number could be reproduced through the mechanisms of the slave market. There was little room in their view for slaves who devoted labor to building autonomous families, small businesses and communities or to participation in the institutions of the freeborn community. In short, the planters' perceptions gave slaves little scope to behave like autonomous clients.

Two places on the coast stand out for the emergence of local planter classes. One was at Malindi, on the Kenya coast north of Mombasa, where Omani settlers came to establish large grain plantations.⁴⁵ The other was Pangani, where by the mid-1880s sugar planters possessed the most highly developed class consciousness of perhaps any group on the Mrima, a consciousness that would display itself during the political crisis sparked by German conquest. As at Malindi, the cohesiveness of Pangani's planter class was strengthened by a common cultural self-definition. Virtually all the sugar planters were Arabic-speaking outsiders, and most were Omanis who worshipped according to the minority Ibadhi sect of Islam. They were also distinguished by their well-developed ties to the Zanzibar state, which not only bolstered their po-

44. Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, 79 and *passim*.

45. Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, 98–9.

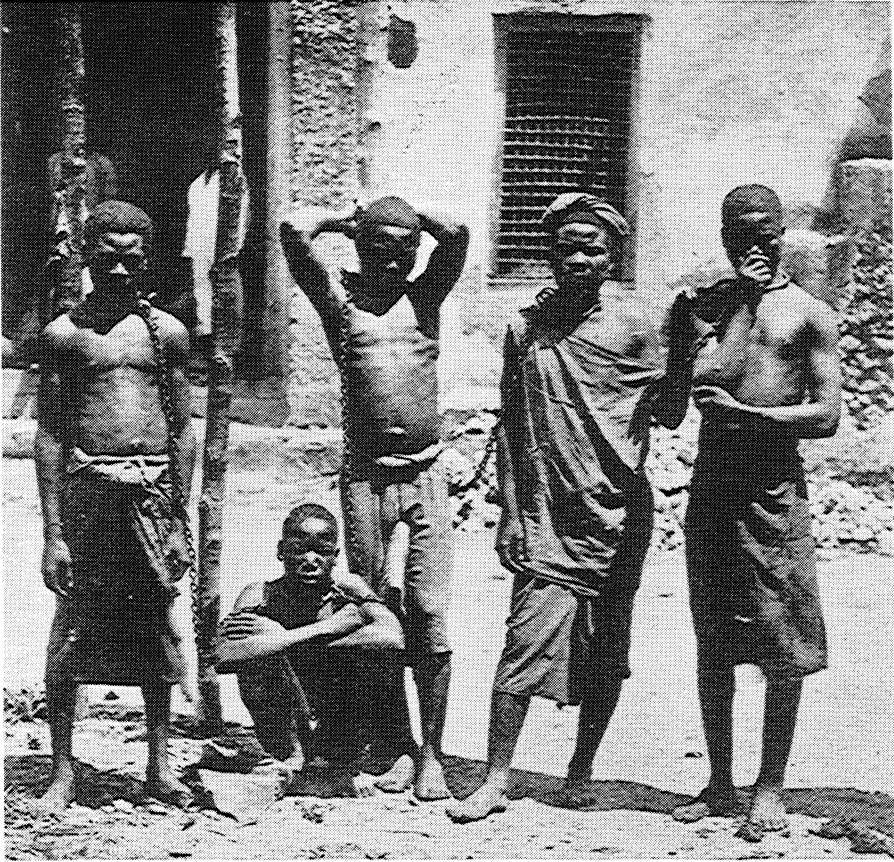


FIGURE 3.2. Chained prisoners, probably slaves: Zanzibar, 1888–89. The sultanate’s prisons were important tools in the control of slaves, especially at centers of plantation production such as Zanzibar and Pangani.

litical self-identity but also gave them great leverage in the enforcement of contracts and labor relations.⁴⁶ All of this set the sugar planters apart from the Shirazi trading patricians.

But the key factor that distinguished the Pangani planters as an emergent class and united them in much political action was the manner in which they exploited slave labor. This can be seen in the exceptional cases of planters who did not share the cultural attributes described above. Some were Hadrami immigrants, who in establishing large estates were able to transcend their humble beginnings and the scorn in which they were held by the powerful Omanis. Perhaps the most significant exception was a locally born patrician, *Jumbe* Mambosasa, a pioneer of Pangani sugar production and apparently the only Shirazi in the ranks of the planter class. (Other patricians held large estates, but they did not exploit slave labor in large-scale sugar

46. Glassman, “Social rebellion,” 185–8.

production.) By dint of his extraordinary power, Mambosasa was admitted into the ranks of the Omani political elite, symbolized when Sultan Barghash granted him permission to wear the "turban of the Busaids," the ruling dynasty. This was an unusual privilege for a Shirazi, and Barghash's courtiers are remembered to have vigorously objected. But Mambosasa's sugar estates put him in the ranks of the predominantly Arab planter class despite differences of language and religion. During the ten months in 1888 and 1889 that Pangani was controlled by rebel crowds in defiance of the sultanate, Mambosasa would be almost alone among the ranks of the Pangani *majumbe* in joining the collaborationist "peace party" organized by the Omani governor Suleiman bin Nasr al-Lemki. The latter, along with the sultan himself, was one of the largest sugar planters of all.⁴⁷

The planters sought to subjugate their slaves to the form of forced field labor that is practically necessitated by the economics of sugar production. Because the planters were for the most part powerful aliens, they found that driving their slaves was a more straightforward affair than it would have been had they been Shirazi patricians. The patricians, as we've seen, accrued prestige and power from their domination of community institutions (including those connected to the caravan trade) in which they relied on the personal loyalty of low-status clientele. The prestige of a Shirazi patron might actually be enhanced should his slave client agree to serve him on a safari to the "Maasai" country and should the slave subsequently use his trading profits to bid for a rank in the dance societies. But such considerations meant little to Omani settlers whose authority came almost exclusively from their privileged ties to the Zanzibar state and to Indian financiers. They valued their slaves above all as forced laborers, not as clients, and they had nothing to lose by denying their slaves the ability to participate in the institutions by which humanity was defined within local Shirazi culture.

Indeed, it was in the planters' direct commercial interest to repress one of their slaves' most basic aspirations: the desire to establish autonomous families. Rather than rely on slave women to bear and raise succeeding generations of laborers, Pangani's planters were able to turn to what Claude Meillassoux has called, in a striking metaphor, "the womb of iron and gold," that is, the mechanisms of warfare, capture, and the slave market.⁴⁸ Thus planters were willing to deny male slaves the power to command their own households, and female slaves the prestige that came from motherhood. The slaves, of course, had wills of their own, and were not about to be stripped of what they regarded as their essential humanity without a struggle. But this struggle was very different from that between trading patricians and their client slaves. Although for the most part the slaves continued to press for greater rights of inclusion, the newly emergent planter class had unusually little interest in compromise and refused to acknowledge slaves as autonomous clients, or indeed as full persons.

The sugar estates were concentrated along the banks of the Pangani River just west of the town, in an area known as Mauya. These fertile bottom lands had once belonged to Shirazi families, but the ever-increasing indebtedness of the patricians forced many to mortgage or sell their best *mashamba*, which eventually passed into the hands of Arab settlers. The alienation of the Mauya estates is a powerful in-

47. Oral testimony, Abdallah Mahine, Bweni, 25 Sept. 1985; Meinecke, *Aus dem Lande*, 127–33; Deed of sale, 18 Shabaan 1317 (1902), ZNA, AL2/37, 22–5. These and other sources are discussed in Glassman, "Social rebellion," 186–8.

48. Meillassoux, *Anthropology*.

dex of the degree to which coastal society had become commodified. We have seen that *mashamba* were owned by local corporate descent groups (*milango*) rather than by individuals, but that the latter might accrue proprietary rights in permanent tree crops that they or their forebears had planted. With coconut becoming an important cash crop on the northern Mrima it was soon a common practice for indebted members of Shirazi *milango* to seek solvency by pledging their coconut palms. The net effect was the mortgage or sale of the land on which the trees stood, the land's value calculated on a per-tree basis. This is how much of the land in Mauya was alienated. Significantly, the new planters maintained coconut and areca-nut palms scattered over their sugar estates. The practice spread so quickly that in the 1860s the Shamba rulers of Bondei, where similar customs of land tenure and tree ownership were practiced, forbade the planting of fruit trees, in fear that the Arabs who were gaining rights over coconut groves along the coast would begin doing the same in the immediate hinterland.⁴⁹

Since it was nearly impossible to pay off debts on land that had been used as collateral, many debtors found it preferable to raise money by selling the land outright. Strictly speaking, land was pawned, not mortgaged. As soon as a coconut *shamba* was pledged, it passed into the hands of the creditor, where it remained until the debt was repaid. The debtor was obliged to maintain the property—using his own slaves, if necessary—but the creditor received the profits of the harvests, after having paid only a nominal sum per tree. Creditors who were devout Muslims thus got around the religious prohibition of usury, and those who were subjects of British India got around the prohibition of slave ownership. Baraka bin Shomari, the author of a valuable description of Mrima legal customs, wrote that the debtor who pledged his land was “used like a slave” by the creditor. Given such conditions, it is easy to see why the sale of one's property would be an appealing alternative to its mortgage. If the person who had pawned his land had no other way of getting money, wrote Baraka, “if he had no income, nor any debtors of his own who might make him a payment, nor any opportunity to undertake a trading safari, he would have to sell whatever he had.”⁵⁰ This was precisely how many of the Mauya estates passed into the hands of Arab settlers.⁵¹

While Arab settlers at other points on the Mrima acquired land through similar means, the trend was nowhere so pronounced as at Pangani. Arabs settled at Pangani with the express intent of establishing plantations, whereas at Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam they established estates almost as an afterthought, as places to settle down after a strenuous career in the caravan trade. (A significant exception were the sultan's extensive coconut plantations at Dar es Salaam, which Barghash vigorously expanded in the 1870s and 1880s.) Accordingly, estates on the central Mrima sustained a wide variety of food crops, and commercial plantation agriculture never became as

49. Baker, *Report*, 29–40; “Land and land settlement,” *Pangani District Book*, vol. II, TNA, MF/7; “Bondei Customs,” *ibid.*, vol. III, TNA, MF/9; Velten, *Safari*, 206; Meinecke, *Aus dem Lande*, 26; Oral testimony: Makata Kombo, Pangani, 21 July 1985; Mohammed Masanga, in interview with Saidi Abdallah, Bweni, 27 June 1985. For coconut and areca-nut palms planted among the sugar cane: Kayser's 1906 map of the lower Pangani River Valley, hanging in the Pangani District Headquarters; Höhnel, *Discovery*, I, 23; Meinecke, *Aus dem Lande*, 58.

50. Velten, *Desturi*, 318–20; Baker, *Report*, 34–6.

51. Oral testimony: Abdallah Mahine, Bweni, 25 Sept. 1985; Hashim Abdallah, Bweni, 27 June 1985; Idi Mwinyikombo, Mwembeni, 18 Sept. 1985; Akida Karimu, Mkwaja, 13 Feb. 1986; Makata Kombo, Pangani, 21 July 1985; Mohammed Masanga, *loc. cit.*

important to the local economy there as it did at Pangani. As a result, the settlers of Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam never took the keen interest in maximizing the production of slave labor as did the Mauya sugar planters, and labor relations on their estates were relatively relaxed. At Bagamoyo, *ijara* slavery was the rule: slaves were left to cultivate on their own, and their elders routinely claimed a share of the tribute paid to the master. Even the hundreds of slaves employed on Barghash's Dar es Salaam estates—in the mid-1880s they numbered six or seven hundred—were regarded as dependable clients who might be armed if necessary.⁵²

In mid-century, refined and semirefined sugar was a widely known luxury commodity throughout northeastern Africa; it was imported from vast distances, for example, to be sold in markets in Sudan and Abyssinia. Much of this sugar was shipped up the Nile from Egypt, whose reform-minded rulers sponsored large-scale sugar production as early as 1818. Smaller amounts were imported from India via Red Sea ports.⁵³ Omani Arabs who settled at Zanzibar in the early nineteenth century experimented with sugar cane as well as with other commercial crops. But sugar cane never caught on, partly because international markets were unfavorable, and partly, perhaps, because the Omanis were not yet firmly enough established on the island to control the heavily regimented labor force required for profitable sugar production.⁵⁴

Further attempts at East African sugar production were made in the 1860s, culminating in the establishment of the Mauya estates. Perhaps not coincidentally, these years witnessed a collapse of Egyptian sugar production, thus opening opportunities both for import substitution and for provisioning markets in the interior. But the proximate cause of the renewed attempts was a crisis of overproduction in Zanzibar's plantation sector, which led to a collapse in the price of cloves, the main cash crop there. In response to this crisis, Zanzibar planters sought to diversify. The most notable result was the expansion of coconut and sesame cultivation to meet growing European demands and the establishment of new plantations on the mainland coast. Fresh attempts were also made to produce sugar at Zanzibar, with substantial investments from British and Indian financiers. In the late 1860s and early 1870s, a British entrepreneur named Fraser achieved a certain notoriety after having purchased a large estate at the northern end of the island, on which he grew sugar with the labor of several hundred slaves contracted from the Sultan and others. Fraser's enterprise failed in 1874, and he fled his creditors. But the venture made a deep impression on the Sultan and other wealthy Omanis, whose investments in sugar cultivation along the lower Pangani River began during these very years.⁵⁵

Mauya's fertile alluvial flatlands had not been extensively cultivated before the rise of the sugar plantations in the late 1860s. Muslim townsmen had established limited settlements earlier than that, but warfare between Zigua chiefs and the Kilindi

52. Glassman, "Social rebellion," 192–5.

53. Colette Dubois, "Miel et sucre en Afrique Orientale, 1830–1870: complémentarité ou concurrence?" *IJAH* 22 (1989), 453–72.

54. A.M.H. Sheriff, "The slave mode of production along the East African Coast, 1810–1873," in Willis (ed.), *Slaves and Slavery*, II, 165–6. The insecurity of Omani control is illustrated by the endemic slave revolts and armed conflicts with the indigenous Wahadimu that plagued the Omanis in these early years. See also G.A. Akinola, "Slavery and slave revolts in the Sultanate of Zanzibar in the nineteenth century," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 6:2 (1972), 223.

55. Sheriff, "Slave mode," 173–6; Frere, 12 Feb. 1873, FO 84/1389, 241–50; Prideaux, 23 Nov. 1874, FO 84/1400, 353–7; Prideaux, "Administration Report," 8 Feb. 1875, FO 84/1415, 215, 231.

rulers of Bondei prevented them from expanding cultivation.⁵⁶ However, by 1866 Pangani had acquired a reputation for its thriving sugar cane cultivation. At Zanzibar it was commonly said that one had only to throw aside a piece of cane at Pangani and it would grow itself.⁵⁷ Sometime during Barghash's reign—probably soon after his accession to the throne in 1870—he is said to have travelled to Pangani to come to an agreement with Sengambo, the most powerful of the Zigua chiefs who were disturbing the security of the Mauya settlements. Barghash was assisted by *Jumbe* Mambosasa of Bweni, who had ties of marriage with local Zigua families. The agreement that Mambosasa brokered with the Zigua trading chiefs, and the increased power of the Sultanate under Barghash, enabled Mauya to be further settled. Mambosasa is remembered to have been one of the first to own large cane plantations there and to use machines to extract the cane juice for cooking into sugar.⁵⁸

The cane plantations expanded rapidly in the 1870s and 1880s, a period coinciding with Pangani's boom years. With Arab settlers and their slaves arriving from elsewhere on the coast and from overseas, the town's population doubled between 1874 and 1890. So did the price of Pangani's semirefined sugar.⁵⁹ By the time of Zelewski's ill-fated appearance in 1888, travellers saw sugar cane cultivated right up to the river banks and heard the singing of slave gangs as they turned the winches of the crushing mills. A few of the mills were already powered by steam engines.⁶⁰ In 1894, several years after the Germans reconquered the coast, a visitor to Mauya was struck by the "bright green of the sugar cane shimmering everywhere." The expanse of the fields was interrupted only by the thatch-roofed sugar mills, wrote the visitor, which were usually "driven by donkeys or by men."⁶¹ Rough estimates were given of 2500 acres under sugar cane and thirty boiling houses. An average of 360,000 hundredweight of cane was processed yearly for export, the equivalent of about 14.4 million stalks.⁶² Such production demanded huge amounts of forced labor.

Because the available trade statistics only record goods exported via the Zanzibar Customs House, they underrepresent commodities like Mauya sugar that were marketed predominantly on the mainland. Yet even so, these figures suggest sugar's growing significance throughout the 1870s and 1880s, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of total commercial production. Calculated as a share of Pangani's total exports to Zanzibar by value, sugar grew from something over 3 percent in 1872–73 to around 10 percent at the time of conquest. More remarkable is the degree to which sugar came to dominate local commercial agriculture. Already in 1873, it made up about a third of Pangani's agricultural exports to Zanzibar, and it grew steadily to over half by the end of the 1880s.⁶³

56. Krapf, *Usambara journal*, 23 Feb. 1852, CMS CA5/016/177; Erhardt, *Tanga journal*, 8 and 9 April, 4 May, 7 July 1854, CMS CA5/09/16; Burton, *Zanzibar II*, 155; Kersten, *Decken's Reisen*, vol. I, 220. Mauya probably got its name from a Zigua chief who once ruled the district; for conflict between the townspeople and the Zigua of the lower Pangani valley, see Giblin, *Politics*, 51–2.

57. Gaume, *Voyage*, 180.

58. Oral testimony: Abdallah Mahine, Bweni, 25 Sept. 1985; Hashim Abdallah, Bweni, 27 June, 1 and 3 Sept. 1985; informal group interview, Bweni, 23 June 1985.

59. Baumann, *Usambara*, 72; Ottens to Hansing and Co., 9 Jan. 1878, Hansing Papers; Kaerger, *Tangaland*, 23.

60. Oscar Baumann, *In Deutsch-Ostafrika während des Aufstandes* (Vienna, 1890), 40; Franz Stuhlmann, in *DKZ* 1888, 388.

61. Meinecke, *Aus dem Lande*, 57.

62. Meinecke, *Aus dem Lande*, 123, 138–40; "Das Zuckersyndikat für Ostafrika," *DKZ* 1896, 245. The figure of 14.4 million stalks is derived from Meinecke's average of 40 stalks per hundredweight.

63. Glassman, "Social rebellion," 200, 205 and Tables 3.1 and 3.2.

The commercial significance of Pangani sugar was even greater than these export figures suggest. We've seen that the spread of market relations involved ever-growing demands for luxury commodities. Not all those commodities were imports. Sugar and honey had long been among the most widely prized luxury goods in East African exchange networks and, as in other parts of the world, the international trade boom made it possible for unprecedented numbers of ordinary people to purchase manufactured sugar.⁶⁴ Two products of the Mauya sugar mills were widely traded in mainland markets. One was a crude dark sugar known as *guru*, which commanded the same price as did white sugar imported from Mauritius. Also popular was a lower-priced syrup, marketed in small oil drums that had originally held petroleum products imported from the United States. These drums were available in huge numbers, since cheap American oil had penetrated markets far into the interior; nevertheless the trade in Mauya syrup was of such volume that empty drums had to be shipped regularly from Zanzibar to Pangani.⁶⁵ Both *guru* and syrup were traded as far north as the Benadir coast of Somalia, where they were exchanged for international exports such as rhino horn, sesame, and orchil (a lichen used in the manufacture of dyes).⁶⁶ More significant was the use of Pangani *guru* as a barter good in the ivory trade to the deep interior; early in the twentieth century this was observed to be its chief function in East African markets. Sugar carried to Uganda was said to command ten times the price—presumably in bartered ivory—that it did at the coast.⁶⁷

Thus the entirely domestic production and exchange of Mauya sugar was intimately tied into global market networks. In fact, it is precisely because Europeans had so little to do with it that the growth of the sugar estates constitutes eloquent testimony of the depth to which coastal society was becoming transformed by its links to an externally dominated market economy. Save for a few Hamburg firms that used *guru* as a barter good, Europeans took no interest in Mauya sugar; it was produced by Arab planters and African slaves, retailed by Indian and Shirazi merchants, and purchased by coastal Muslims and inland peoples along the caravan routes. Unlike ivory—and, indeed, unlike the oil seeds that were produced on other coastal plantations—*guru* and syrup did not directly feed foreign markets. Nevertheless, the Mauya estates were sustained by a commercial economy founded on European demands for ivory and oils. Indian merchants told visitors, with perhaps some exaggeration, that ivory was the only East African commodity of any value on world markets.⁶⁸ Yet car-

64. Dubois, "Miel et sucre." For a global perspective: Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*.

65. Meinecke, *Aus dem Lande*, 125, 135; Kaerger, *Tangaland*, 22–3; M. Dieter, "Bagamoyo und Handel und Wandel in Deutsch-Ostafrika," *Beiträge zur Kolonialpolitik und Kolonialwirtschaft* II (1900–01), 590 (for petroleum); Heyman to Lang, 23 Sept. 1889, ZNA, AA 2/51/338 (enclosure).

66. Meinecke *Aus dem Lande*, 125; also Hansing Letters of 1878, *passim.*, including Ottens to Hansing and Co., 9 Jan. 1878, "Bermerkung zum Abschluss pro 1877," 31 Dec. 1877, and "Zusammenstellung der Ein und Ausfuhr der in Zanzibar ansässigen Deutschen Häuser pro 1877." Hansing and Co. regularly carried shipments of "molasses" to the Benadir, where they did much of their business purchasing orchil, sesame, and other goods. In 1877 the firm exported \$8862 worth of sugar from Zanzibar, and although this figure does not state the source of the sugar, it is likely that it includes the "molasses" carried to the Benadir.

67. Meinecke, *loc. cit.*; Werth, *Küstenland*, vol. II, 173; Oral testimony, Bweni: Abdallah Mahine, 18 Oct. 1985; Hashim Abdallah, 27 June 1985. Dieter discusses profits that were made on the central caravan routes by trading sugar that was imported into Bagamoyo ("Bagamoyo und Handel," page 591). He does not specify from where the sugar was imported, but it is reasonable to assume that at least some of it came from up the coast, as did other commodities that he discusses, such as dried fish from Lamu.

68. Fischer, *Mehr Licht*, 12–13.

avan traders could purchase ivory with Mauya *guru*, and such purchases were where the sugar derived much of its commercial value.

The effects of these commercial transformations were felt most acutely by the slaves who suffered on the sugar estates. The most striking aspect of the rise of Mauya sugar was the manner in which domestic market demands for a luxury commodity created a brutally rationalized form of plantation production unlike anything then known in East Africa. Up and down the coast, the Mauya estates gained a reputation for a peculiarly cruel form of slavery that served the needs of commerce; oral informants recalled that Mauya slaves were considered "capital" by their masters (*rasilimali*) and were used for "business" (*biashara*).⁶⁹ A well-known tale illustrates how people perceived the links between commerce and the sufferings of Mauya slaves. When travelling upcountry, it is said, coastal traders would entice local people with a taste of Mauya *guru*. "This is the soil of the coast," the merchants would say of the sticky black-brown substance. Thus beguiled by the sweetness of a coastal trade good, the gullible country people would follow the townsmen to Pangani, where they would be enslaved.

The Pangani River provided unusually favorable conditions for the creation of a large-scale plantation sector. The northern Mrima consists of a narrow coastal shelf of sandy soils, behind which the land rises to a low plateau of red clays. The Pangani River cuts through both zones, creating a swath of alluvial bottom lands. The alluvial zone begins several miles upriver from Pangani where the water becomes less salty, behind the belt of mangrove swamps surrounding the town. The river is estuarial as far as Chogwe, 30 kilometers up, and it provides an ideal means of transport, as journeys in both directions can be timed to take advantage of the ebb and flow of the tide. The Mauya plantations were thus tied directly to the port of Pangani and to the great entrepôt of Zanzibar, and the river also provided convenient means for transporting cane to the crushing mills located along its banks. The regular flooding of the river also enriched the soil with alluvial nutrients washed through an extensive system of irrigation canals.⁷⁰

But while the river provided a fertile setting for the growth of a sugar industry, huge inputs of forced labor were necessary to make it work, and many estates employed scores or even hundreds of slaves. Arduous year-round labor was needed to maintain the irrigation canals, for example, without which much valuable bottom land would be lost to erosion.⁷¹ Labor was most concentrated during the harvests, when the cane had to be processed in the shortest possible time so that its sucrose content would not be lost. Fifteen-hour work days were common then. Gangs of female *shamba* slaves cut the cane and loaded it onto river boats for transport to the boiling houses. The cane was then crushed in simple mills powered by gangs of eight to ten

69. Most of the informants were recounting the impressions of their parents; a few remembered the last days of slavery themselves. Oral testimony, 1985–86: Akida Karimu, Mkwaja; Bomu Juma Kirimo, Saadani; Hatibu Salim, Mwera; Chande Maftaha, Saadani; Abdallah Mahine, Bweni; Hashim Abdallah, Bweni; Juma Omari, Mkwaja. Baumann also contrasts Mauya slavery with that existing elsewhere on the Mrima: *Usambara*, 34.

70. Kaerger, *Tangaland*, 18–23; "Das Zuckersyndikat," *DKZ* 1896, 245; Meinecke, *Aus dem Lande*, 56–8, 111–13, 119–24. The river is used to similar purpose today by owners of the coconut plantations that have replaced those of sugar.

71. Notes by Crop Supervisor A.H. Scott (undated, but probably from the 1930s), Pangani District Book, vol. II, TNA, MF 7. Scott notes that modern landowners' inability to command the labor to maintain the irrigation canals led to great land loss. Maintenance of the canals constitutes the main form of labor outside of the harvest season on the Mauya coconut plantations of today.

slaves pushing on long poles attached to winch mechanisms. The juice ran directly into large cooking pots, which had to be kept constantly full so as to minimize burning. The resulting syrup was then allowed to cool and was either packed into drums or sent to a second set of pots to be made into *guru*. The latter process required that labor be tightly coordinated, as the sugar would set only if heat, lime, and wood-ash were applied with exact timing and measurement. The labor demands of such an operation were enormous by local standards. Slaves were needed to power the mill, keep it constantly fed with cane, remove the crushed stalks, tend the fires, skim the pots, and cut and haul firewood. One of the most efficient mills in Mauya, although steam-powered, nevertheless required as many as 43 slaves to run, to say nothing of the uncounted number who were engaged in cutting the cane and transporting it to the boiling house.⁷²

Planters elsewhere on the coast recognized that the customs of *shamba* slavery allowed for a more regular appropriation of the product of slave labor than did *ijara* or *kibarua* slavery, and for a tighter control of production.⁷³ Thus it is not surprising that the Mauya labor regime was a variant of *shamba* slavery, adapted to serve the needs of large-scale commodity production. Slaves cultivated subsistence crops on *makonde* on the heights overlooking the cane plantations, and, like other *shamba* slaves, were free to sell any surplus. Labor on the *mashamba* was directed by overseers, typically *wazalia*, who were expected to assign daily tasks according to each slave's ability. If the field slave finished her task early, she was free to go for the day. Slackers were whipped. Oral informants of both slave and patrician descent agree that violent coercion was necessary to impose the harsh regimen of sugar production—so much so, add some, that townsmen muzzled quarrelsome house slaves by threatening them with sale to Mauya.⁷⁴

These unusual levels of violence suggest that slavery at Mauya, although an adaptation of previously existing forms of servitude, differed in one important aspect from anything ever experienced on the Mrima: the extreme degree to which the planter class refused to countenance their slaves' efforts to participate in local community life. The economics of sugar production demanded such an intense exploitation of labor that the Mauya planters sought to prevent their slaves from devoting energy to anything other than work on the *mashamba* and the cultivation of food-stuffs with which to keep themselves alive. We've seen that the Omani planters were less likely than other masters to encourage their slaves' involvement in religious activities. They also imposed restrictions on the exercise of property rights which *shamba* slaves had customarily valued as a basis for participation in urban commerce. Thus, Mauya slaves were allowed only two days per week to work on their own behalf—the lowest number on the mainland coast—and the common prohibition of

72. Meinecke, *Aus dem Lande*, 127–29, 135ff; Kaerger, *Tangaland*; Oral testimony: Akida Karimu, Mkwaja, 13 Feb. 1986; Ali Waziri, Pangani, 12 Sept. 1985; Ndembo Maburuki, Pangani, 26 June 1985. The lack of labor for running the mills was a major cause of the postconquest decline of the estates: Hermann Paasche, *Deutsch-Ostafrika, Wirtschaftliche Studien* (Berlin, 1906), 379.

73. See the highly suggestive comments contrasting landlords employing the *shamba* system with those employing *ijara*, in Beech, "Slavery," 147–8.

74. Sources for the discussion of Mauya *shamba* slavery on these pages include the following oral testimony, 1985–86: Abdallah Mahine, Bweni; Akida Karimu, Mkwaja; Ali Waziri, Pangani; Hashim Abdallah, Bweni; Hatibu Salim, Mwera; Heri bin Isa and Nusura bin Isa, Makorora; Idi Mwinyikombo, Mwembeni; Juma Omari, Mkwaja; Juma Omari, Pangani; Ndembo Maburuki, Pangani. See also Weidner, *Hausklaverei*, 18–19; Baker, *Report*, 36; Baumann, *Usambara*, 34; H.F. von Behr, *Kriegsbilder aus dem Araber-aufstand in Deutsch-Ostafrika* (Leipzig, 1891), 216.

tree crops on *makonde* was extended to include nonarboreal cash crops such as sugar cane and sesame.⁷⁵

But the assault of the planter class went much further than this. Like sugar planters in other parts of the world, those of Mauya wanted to repress their slaves' very ability to establish families. Less time spent rearing children meant more time toiling in the fields. But if slaves were prevented from having families, where would the plantations secure succeeding generations of laborers? The Omani planters came up with the same answer as did planter classes elsewhere: the marketplace. The slave trade would enable planters to realize in practice the ideal vision of the slave as a person with absolutely no social ties—not even those of father or mother, son or daughter—except those of bondage to the master.⁷⁶

Several factors placed Pangani planters in an exceptionally strong position to take advantage of slave markets. In 1873 the British imposed a treaty that obliged the sultan to ban the sea-going trade in slaves. Unlike previous abolitionist treaties imposed on Zanzibar, this one affected major patterns of trade within the Sultanate itself. The southern port of Kilwa was the great emporium of the East African slave trade, shipping slaves from the southern interior to the plantations of Pemba, Zanzibar and the Kenya coast. The new treaty outlawed such shipments, and in response to its enforcement slave traders developed a new overland route, marching slaves from Kilwa up the coast to the Pangani area. From Pangani, the slaves could be easily smuggled across the channel to Pemba, where there was a keen demand in the 1870s. Many of the imports were absorbed by the Mauya estates, however, which were major collecting points for the new trade. This was especially so once Pemba's demand for smuggled slaves slackened off in the early 1880s. Pangani's slave markets were further supplied by captives taken in the endemic warfare that followed the collapse of the Shambaa Kingdom in the late 1860s. Few of the latter slaves were used locally—escape to their nearby homelands would be too easy, hence they would be too difficult to control—but their presence in local markets lowered prices generally, thus making southern imports all the more attractive to the sugar planters.⁷⁷

Planters at Pangani, then, had access to uniquely ample market supplies of slaves, which freed them to take steps to repress their slaves' devotion of labor to autonomous social and sexual reproduction. The planters' active discouragement of slave reproduction is suggested by local traditions describing what induced Mauya slaves to rebel in 1873. Oral accounts of the cruelties of the sugar estates focus exclusively on the mistreatment of children and female slaves, especially expectant and recent mothers. They stress that children were worked alongside their parents, and they add that if an infant interrupted its mother's work in the fields, the Arab master

75. *Shamba* slaves were also worked five days per week at Malindi, whose planter class was as highly developed as Pangani's; at Kilwa, the great entrepôt of the slave trade where most slaves were newly imported "washenzi"; and on the sultan's extensive plantations at Dar es Salaam, where the coercive powers of the Zanzibar state were unusually pronounced.

76. The classic description of such a state of affairs was made by Stuart Schwartz; for a concise statement, see "Colonial Brazil, c. 1580–c. 1750: plantations and peripheries," in Leslie Bethell (ed.), *Cambridge History of Latin America*, (New York, 1984), II, 423–53. For other examples see Herbert S. Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Oxford, 1986).

77. In 1876 British diplomats won a treaty totally abolishing the slave trade within the Sultan's dominions, but by this time the overland route was firmly established, and British squadrons, still largely responsible for enforcing the ban, were incapable of policing it. Sources on the overland route are discussed in the notes to Glassman, "Social rebellion," 202–4. For captives enslaved in warfare in Shambaa and Bondei, see Feerman, *Shambaa Kingdom*, and Baumann, *Usambara*, 34.

would seize the child and hurl it in the river to drown. Whether or not this anecdote is literally true, its wide currency suggests the type of grievance that motivated the Mauya slave rebels. The slaves' defence of their networks of kinship and community, and the masters' attempts to deny slaves what coastal culture defined as the essential attributes of citizenship and humanity, were becoming sources of bitter conflict.

The Contradictory Consciousness of Slave Rebellion

Even on the worst of the Mauya estates, slaves found their bonds defined in the ideological language of *shamba* slavery, a language that allowed them to expect opportunities for autonomous participation in the commercial and community life of the Shirazi towns. Their Arab masters, intent on a radical reduction of those opportunities, were therefore confronted by slaves who invoked what might be described as a moral economy of client slavery. The slaves' rhetoric was made more effective by the fact that the values of this moral economy were still widely shared by the majority of Pangani's freeborn population, values enshrined not only in the general language of clientelist social relations but also in the specific language of slavery. Although the plantation sector was gaining in commercial importance, few patricians were involved in it; their preferred economic activities, as we have seen, depended on well-cultivated relations of clientele with their slaves. Mauya plantation slavery was regarded as an aberration; all around them sugar slaves could see other patterns of slavery still in operation, albeit under siege. As they were whipped in the cane fields or prevented from raising cash crops on their *makonde*, gang slaves knew that nearby their counterparts were enjoying the prerogatives of urban *mafundi* or winning prestige as porters and caravan leaders.

Although the tactics of slave resistance often involved an invocation of "custom," it would be mistaken to think that slave rebels longed to return to a golden age when masters treated them with paternalistic indulgence. Slaves knew that the client slavery that existed before and outside of the plantation sector had never been without conflict and that slaves who were lucky enough to command their own households or engage in trade had won those privileges only through struggle. Nor did rebellious slaves yearn to turn away from the rapid commodification of coastal society that had given rise to the plantation sector. On the contrary, one of their chief aspirations was active and aggressive participation in urban commerce—not as forced laborers, but on their own terms. Even when their masters' power and intransigence pushed slaves into fleeing from the coast, runaways did not seek escape from urban society so much as they used flight as a strategy for claiming a fuller role in urban institutions of commerce and community.

Thus the most common form of slave rebellion embraced a paradox: fugitive slaves ran away from the Swahili communities in order to intrude more forcefully into them. Despite the fact that many runaways or *watoro* (sing., *mtoro*) had been born up-country, the settlements they built in the inaccessible margins of the towns' hinterlands constituted outposts of coastal Muslim culture. They prayed in mosques, lived in square, Swahili-style houses, and when possible engaged in commerce and the pro-

duction of cash crops.⁷⁸ Flight did not express a desire to break with urban society, but a desire to become more fully integrated into it. Although the *watoro* and their former masters differed over the particular nature of relations of servitude, they shared an underlying ideological framework in which the ideal community was Muslim, commercial, and—perhaps above all—governed by interlocking networks of patrons and clients. Slave rebels sought community, not “independence.” The social structures in which they struggled to participate consisted not of free and equal individuals, but of strong men and weak (the strong were almost always men), in which the former protected the latter in return for pledges of personal loyalty. Accordingly, after running away from their masters, *watoro* sought other patrons who could help them participate in the institutions of coastal urban society.

I must admit straightaway that this assessment of what motivated runaway slaves flatly contradicts sentiments expressed in some of the best-known documents on the subject, those written by European missionaries with whom many runaways sought protection.⁷⁹ The missionaries preached that their *watoro* had made the simple choice of individual liberty over personal dependence. But such descriptions must be treated with extreme caution. The missionaries were fighters on the front lines of abolitionism, zealous propagandists of the liberal ideologies of triumphant capitalism in which the free individual was placed at the center of the “natural” social order. Isolated in hostile environments that they often could not comprehend, missionaries understandably indulged in the illusion that their civilizing mission was proceeding according to plan. The unlikely choice that they imagined their *watoro* clients had made would have entailed a complete rejection of the ideological structures with which slaves had lived all their lives, whether they were *wazalia* born into coastal slavery or *washenzi* born into some other agrarian society. No doubt some proselytes managed to internalize the recondite teachings of their abolitionist mentors, but this would have happened only after their arrival at the mission station and would have been irrelevant to what had motivated their flight in the first place—to say nothing of what motivated the flight of the great majority of *watoro*, who did not end up at the missions. In fact, few slave converts were *watoro* at all; most were *mateka* (“captives” or “booty”), unacculturated trade slaves whom British squadrons had captured on the high seas and who had never experienced coastal slavery.

The attitudes of mission converts, then, can hardly be taken as typical of the consciousness of rebellious Swahili slaves. And the missionaries probably misunderstood the motivations of their slave adherents in any case. Slaves (and others) fled to the missions not in search of “freedom,” but in search of sustenance and protection, just as

78. Jonathon Glassman, “The runaway slave in coastal resistance to Zanzibar: the case of the Witu Sultanate” (M.A. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1983); Travers to Krauel, 25 Aug. 1885, ZStA, RKA 394, 20–1. For parallel examples from other parts of East and Central Africa, see Lee V. Cassanelli, “Social construction on the Somali frontier: Bantu former slave communities in the nineteenth century,” in Igor Kopytoff (ed.), *The African Frontier* (Bloomington, 1987); Allen Isaacman, “Ex-slaves, transfrontiersmen and the slave trade: the Chikunda of the Zambesi Valley,” in Paul Lovejoy (ed.), *Africans in Bondage* (Madison, 1986), 273–309; W.G. Clarence-Smith, “Runaway slaves and social bandits in southern Angola,” in Gad Heumann (ed.), *Out of the House of Bondage: Runaways, Resistance and Marronage in Africa and the New World* (London, 1986), 23–33. Swahili *watoro* communities are compared to the well-known Caribbean cases in Glassman, “Bondsmen’s new clothes.”

79. More important, it contradicts the judgments of two of the foremost scholars of African slave resistance: Lovejoy, *Transformations*, and Morton, *Children of Ham*.

they might seek refuge with other powerful patrons. To isolated individuals lacking the security of well-established kinship ties, the missionaries must have seemed ideal potential patrons: they were linked to important new sources of commercial power and were known to be actively recruiting low-status clients. Details about their obscure religious convictions were of secondary importance; people in the region had long been accustomed to learning about exotic new faiths. The missionaries were regarded by their neighbors as yet another brand of trading chief or warlord, who competed for political hegemony by the time-honored technique of building up followings of slaves. Liberated *mateka* may well have been grateful to the Europeans for having delivered them from the cruelties of the slave trade, but they were still treated as slaves—they were still outsiders whose major social tie was their bond to the abolitionist who had settled them on the mission stations and who regulated their daily lives. In fact, *mateka* were sometimes known as “*watumwa wa balozi*,” “slaves of the (British) consul,” the latter being the official who had pirated them from Arab slave traders.⁸⁰

Such perceptions were so common that the *mateka* and *watoro* who settled at the mission stations were often called the “slaves of the Christians.” And there is evidence that these sentiments were sometimes shared by the runaways themselves. It was not unusual for vulnerable persons to seek succor by pledging themselves as servile clients. Thus many of the adherents of the Catholic missions at Bagamoyo and at Mandera, in Uzigua, were single mothers who had courted the protection of the holy fathers by begging to be taken as slaves. And, indeed, having arrived at these missions they were subjected to work conditions that were virtually identical to those of Swahili *shamba* slavery, albeit of the older, preplantation type.⁸¹ Slaves who sought to escape a brutal master by taking refuge with the Christians were often disappointed to find that the daily mission regimen of work, prayer and corporal punishment was harsher than that which they had left behind. This led to several scandals, most notably at the stations of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) near Mombasa and on the central caravan route near Mpwapwa. After watching a CMS adherent get beaten senseless for the crime of fornication, one Mombasa slave concluded that “it is much better to be the slave of an Arab than the slave of a European.”⁸²

I do not mean to imply that *watoro* were content to be slaves, or that their only desire was a more comfortable form of the slave bond. On the contrary, their attempts to build autonomous social lives for themselves went against the dominant definition of slave status. But even those rebellious slaves who took the extreme step of flight were not averse to forging new ties of clientele with patrons whom they hoped might tie them to the urban society they had fled. Thus *watoro* allowed themselves to be drawn into Swahili factional politics, to be used as counterweights by

80. For the missionaries as big men, see Giblin, *Politics*, ch. 4. UMCA missionaries in Malawi found themselves in similar predicaments concerning slavery and patronage: White, *Magomero*. For “slave of the *balozi*,” see Höhnel, *Discovery*, I, 15.

81. Etienne Baur and Alexandre Le Roy, *A Travers le Zanguebar* (Tours, 1886), 107, 341–2. Baur wrote that such women would open with the entreaty, “*Blanc, achète-moi!*” For the general patterns by which vulnerable women became repeatedly enslaved and reenslaved, see Marcia Wright, “Women in Peril: a commentary on the life stories of captives in nineteenth century East-Central Africa,” *African Social Research* 20 (1975), 800–19.

82. Fischer, *Mehr Licht*, 59–61. For an emblematic Freretown story see Mirza and Strobel, *Three Swahili Women*, 74–5. The CMS scandals are described in Morton, *Children of Ham*; Bennett, *Arab versus European*, 68–75, 95–8, 177–80; and R.M. Githige, “The issue of slavery: relations between the CMS and the state on the East African coast prior to 1895,” *J. of Religion in Africa* xvi (1986).

Shirazi patricians, Arab potentates and non-Muslim trading chiefs, as well as by European missionaries. Strongmen in the Pangani hinterland actively recruited Muslim *watoro* as political clients. As a result the *watoro* played a role similar to that played by the Shirazi adventurers described in the preceding chapter. In the Lamu area *watoro* formed the backbone of the long resistance of the patrician Nabahani family to the encroachments of the Zanzibar state, and similar trends prevailed in the hinterlands of Mombasa and Malindi. During the political crises that followed the German irruption of 1888, *watoro* who had settled on the Kingani River behind Bagamoyo were recruited by Arab and Shirazi warlords in their struggles to control the Mrima towns.⁸³

Slave flight peaked during periods of rapid plantation development, as masters attempted to reduce their slaves' participation in institutions of community and kinship.⁸⁴ Thus the rise of the Mauya planter class in the 1870s and 1880s led to an upsurge in *watoro* activity and to a simultaneous increase in the political tensions engendered by the competition to secure the allegiance of these masterless men and women. The people of Makumba, in the Bondei Hills about six hours' walk from Pangani, were notorious for enticing slaves to escape from the Mauya plantations and then enlisting them as armed clients in their conflicts with Kibanga, the Kilindi chief who was trying to subjugate the area. Makumba thus drew the enmity of the coastal planters as well as of Kibanga. The Anglican missionaries in Bondei got caught in the middle of this conflict by recruiting runaway slaves themselves. The elders of Makumba complained bitterly that the Anglicans were depriving them of their *watoro* clients.⁸⁵

The most dramatic indication of the changing tenor of slave-master conflict was the massive slave revolt of 1873, which led to the founding of the powerful *watoro* community of Makorora. Whereas most previous acts of flight had been performed by individuals or by small knots of slaves, the flight to Makorora, which occurred just as Mauya sugar production was entering its boom phase, can be regarded as a conscious social movement, sparked by the efforts of the planter class to impose a new labor regime. Yet even at this moment, when tensions between masters and slaves sharpened into something that might plausibly be called class conflict, the motivations of the rebels remained highly ambiguous. The rebels did not articulate a clearly delineated class consciousness; they neither demanded "freedom" nor did they reject the slave-owning society of their masters. Although many, if not most, were born in the southern interior, the *watoro* of Makorora built their community along the lines of their masters' culture and sought the protection of powerful Arab patrons. Their motivating consciousness was a complex web of paternalist ideologies, into which were woven ideals of patriarchy, commerce and tributary submission to an Omani overlord.

83. Burton, *Lake Regions*, 86, 519; *idem.*, *Zanzibar*, II, 150–1; Krapf, CMS, CA5/016/173 (15 July 1848), CA5/016/177 (29 March 1852) and CA5/016/179; New, *Life*, 49; C. Guillain, *Documents sur l'Histoire, la Géographie et le Commerce de l'Afrique Orientale* (Paris, 1856–8), III, 263–4; Behr, *Kriegsbilder*, 104, 132, 172–3; Glassman, "Runaway slave"; Travers to Krauel, ZStA, *loc. cit.*

84. Those periods were mid-century near Mombasa and in the 1870s and 1880s near Malindi and on the Mrima. Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, 208–9; Iliffe, *Modern History*, 73.

85. The mission's relationship with its neighbors was further compromised by its being perceived as the ally both of Kibanga and of Barghash, who was their official protector. These conflicts are discussed in UMCA files concerning the Magila, Umba and Mkuzi missions, especially Boxes A1(iv)A, A1(v)B and A1(vi)A; also FO 84/1599, 11–42, 74–81.

The earliest record of the revolt dates from July 1873, when John Kirk, reporting to his superiors on the events of the previous six months, wrote that “slaves on the Pangani [River] have . . . left their masters in a body.”⁸⁶ The consul-general may have learned of the revolt during his visit to Pangani two months earlier, when he explained the contents of the impending slave-trade treaty to the *liwali*. Kirk, a major figure in abolitionist circles, initially attributed the rebellion to news of the treaty he had negotiated, and this would seem to support the argument that slave rebels were motivated by ideals of “freedom” imparted by Western consuls and catechists. But as we’ve seen, Kirk’s conversation with the *liwali* could have given little indication that emancipation was the purpose of the treaty, and in a later dispatch he retreated from his abolitionist idealization of the rebels’ motives. “Although these runaway slaves assert their own independence,” he wrote, “it would be a great mistake to suppose they have any sympathy for freedom in the abstract, as experience of existing settlements of the kind shows that they hold slaves, and engage in slave trade like any others—it would be indeed strange were it otherwise.”⁸⁷ At any rate, neither the British nor any of their treaties are mentioned in oral traditions preserved by the rebel leaders’ descendants.

Both written and oral sources suggest that the rebels were defending their status as autonomous clients against attempts by Arab masters to subject them to regimented plantation labor. A contemporary German wrote that many of the rebels were caravan traders resisting enslavement for debts incurred in the ivory trade. This cannot be exactly correct because Swahili customs of debt slavery would have prohibited the enslavement of Muslim caravan personnel. (It is in fact uncertain whether debt slavery was practiced at all.)⁸⁸ It is more likely that the caravaners described by this observer had been not free traders enslaved for debt but rather *vibarua* or *fundi* slaves such as those who had always been autonomous participants in Pangani’s ivory trade. In the late 1860s and early 1870s, just as the commercial boom was opening opportunities to which such trading slaves were eager to respond, their masters tried to force them into the role of *shamba* slaves on the new sugar estates.

This view is reinforced by oral accounts. The revolt is remembered to have been led by two slave overseers, Akida Amrani and Akida Bushiri, who, although born up-country, had established substantial interests in coastal society. Like many overseers, they bore the title of *akida*, the highest rank in the Shirazi dance societies and one normally reserved for distinguished caravan traders. Akida Amrani’s grandchildren maintain that he and his followers had initially come to the coast from the southern interior as free contract laborers; only later were they enslaved and forced to work on the sugar estates. Of course, this cannot be true, as long-distance migrant wage labor did not arise until sisal estates were established during the colonial era; the distortion probably stems from East Africans’ reluctance to acknowledge slave descent, especially to outsiders. But one should note that the modern Swahili word for “contract laborer” used by these informants is *kibarua*—a word that had very different usage in the nineteenth century. This testimony, then, might be taken literally: before being put

86. “Precis of Zanzibar news to 5 July 1873,” enclosure in Kirk to Political Resident, Aden, 4 July 1873, ZNA, AA 1/12/350.

87. Kirk, 29 Aug. 1873, FO 84/1375, 245–9.

88. Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 120–1. Weidner, *Hausklaverei*, categorically denies the existence of Swahili debt slavery. There was such a thing as pawnage, but this was most often practiced against non-Muslims of the hinterland: see New, *Life*, 494–5; “Bondei customs,” Pangani District Book, vol. III, TNA, MF 9, 30; Velten, *Safari*, 215.

to work on the sugar plantations, our forefathers were not *watumwa wa shamba*, *shamba* slaves, but were rather *vibarua* (or perhaps *mafundi*). It was the attempt to turn them into *watumwa wa shamba* that caused them to rebel.⁸⁹

Another detailed oral account states explicitly that the 1873 rebellion was provoked by the growing harshness of Pangani slavery. At first, slaves were allowed to build their own settlements at Mauya, where they were left to cultivate. The men were also sent upcountry to trade in ivory and slaves. (This elderly informant commented on the irony of slaves being sent to purchase their companions.) But as time went on, the informant recounts,

they became more and more oppressed. They were worked terribly hard. If a person said, "I'm tired," that was enough: she was beaten with a stick, or with a hippopotamus-hide whip . . . Day after day the harshness of their slavery increased.

Finally, they decided to run off. They had accumulated weapons from the profits of their trading safaris, and one of their leaders, Adi Mafaka, learned powerful witchcraft during a lengthy stay among the Shambaa—people who were important trading partners of Pangani merchants.⁹⁰ These details all strongly suggest that what motivated the rebels of 1873 was a rejection of attempts to change their status as independent clients who had once had the freedom to travel and trade.

The classic political ploy of the discontented client is to call in a more powerful patron; according to the oral accounts the rebels first sent messages to Zanzibar, seeking the intercession of Sultan Barghash. This is an apt reflection of the contradictory consciousness of the rebels. They had been pushed to reject the authority of their Omani overlords, yet they or their descendants sought to legitimize their actions by invoking the authority of the Omani state. Some informants even maintain that Barghash responded by smuggling them arms, but subsequent documented events make this unlikely, as does the fact that Barghash himself was one of the first and most important of the Mauya planters. These details seem an embellishment, common in many popular accounts of agrarian uprisings, by which a distant monarch is made to appear sympathetic to his oppressed subjects in an attempt to legitimize their grievances within the contours of a hegemonic ideology.

The rebels then took secret counsel (continue the oral accounts) and devised a plan. They asked their masters for permission to hold a dance, on a day deemed auspicious by the divinations of Adi Mafaka. It is most suggestive that the 1873 slave rebellion was launched with a public dance (as would the more widespread rebellion of 15 years later); as we shall see in subsequent chapters, dance rituals were important forums in which slaves and other members of the plebeian crowd claimed positions within the Shirazi communities. The dance lasted all day and into the night. Late that evening, after the planters who had come to watch had gone home to bed, the dancers made their escape. The oral traditions repeatedly describe how the

89. Heri bin Isa and Nusura bin Isa wa Amrani, Makorora, February 1986. There was in fact a dispute between the two informants as to whether the founders of Makorora had come to the coast as slaves or as free laborers; Nusura deferred to the authority of the elder Heri on the issue. This dispute itself lends support to my analysis.

90. Juma Omari, Mkwaja, February 1986. There is no gender distinction in Swahili personal pronouns; in the translated passage I have chosen the feminine form because this account of the brutality of Mauya slavery, like all the others, stresses the hardships borne by women. Mzee Juma obtained his information from a senior kinsman who was a participant in the rebellion.

male slaves protected their children and womenfolk; such clichés suggest that the defence of autonomous patriarchal relations was an important rebel motivation. The women, children and elderly were sent first into the bush, under the cover of darkness and the beating of the dancers' drums. The young men continued dancing until the small hours of the morning, then they too slipped away. Adi Mafaka advised the *watoro* to head south. Once again the women, children and elderly were sent ahead of the rest, while the younger men waited in ambush for the forces that would inevitably be sent in pursuit when the planters realized the next morning that their slaves had fled. The *watoro* defeated the hastily assembled Arab forces and then retreated about 25 miles to the south, where they built the settlement of Makorora.⁹¹

The planters made several more attempts to capture the slaves on their own before they finally sent a desperate appeal to the sultan. Barghash, his own interests being at stake, replied by sending a force of Arab mercenaries under the command of Mohammed bin Hamed, his kinsman and one of his closest advisors. The combined Arab forces numbered at least 3000 and included a cannon, yet they were unable to dislodge the 400 defenders of the heavily fortified *watoro* settlement. Disgraced by this humiliating defeat, Mohammed bin Hamed and the *liwali* of Pangani were arrested on their return to Zanzibar in December 1873 and put in irons in the sultan's prison.⁹² The revolt and its aftermath caused considerable disruption on the estates: Pangani's sugar exports fell by 60 percent during the year ending in August 1874.⁹³

Like many communities located in this insecure region ravaged by the slave and gun trades, Makorora was sited to be easily defended, hidden in a thicket of thorny bushes. The settlement had heavy fortifications three meters high, with loopholes on two levels.⁹⁴ It was an enticing asylum for fresh runaways, although, as Kirk pointed out, newcomers were ransomed back to their owners when it proved expedient.⁹⁵ Coastal Muslims from Mkwaja and Kipumbwi tried to reenslave the maroons, as did Zigua trading chiefs. When one of the latter was defeated by the *watoro*, the leaders of Makorora ensured the peace by forcing him to marry one of their daughters.⁹⁶ Here then were slave rebels who had succeeded in becoming autonomous patriarchs and participants in "big man" politics, cementing alliances through the deployment of their young women and the ransoming of captives.

Recurrent attempts by planters and others to reenslave the *watoro*, all unsuccessful, created constant tension in the region. In 1889, a German officer observed that Makorora was "a seat of permanent unrest," drawing villagers from the surrounding countryside into frequent clashes with the Pangani Arabs. Eventually Barghash felt compelled to acknowledge the *watoro*'s stubborn resistance. He sent them a proclamation, written on parchment, declaring Makorora to be under his protection. But even

91. The preceding description is based largely on the oral testimony of Juma Omari, Mkwaja; Heri Isa and Nusura Isa wa Amrani, Makorora; and Ndembo Maburuki, Pangani.

92. Kirk, 8–10 Dec. 1873, FO 84/1376, 167–8; oral testimony as above. For Mohammed bin Hamed, see also FO 84/1390, 23.

93. See figures in Glassman, "Social rebellion," Table 3.1.

94. Behr, *Kriegsbilder*, 216–17.

95. Significantly, this unromantic detail, which is confirmed by Kirk, is preserved not in the oral testimony of the rebels' descendants, but in the testimony of Ndembo Maburuki, whose father, a slave overseer and associate of Akida Amrani, refused to join the rebellion.

96. Oral testimony, Juma Omari, Mkwaja.

this extraordinary measure was insufficient to bring peace to the area. When the Pangani patricians and their allies rose against the Omani state in 1888, the *watoro* joined them. Makorora would only be fully vanquished by the force of German arms.⁹⁷

The descendants of the rebels take a keen pride in the parchment that they received from Barghash, and the language with which they recall its text is suggestive: "These people are free (*uhuru*); they are no one's slaves but my own."⁹⁸ This is a vivid illustration of the contradictory consciousness of the rebels. Slavery and freedom—*uhuru*—were not clearly discrete categories in most peoples' minds. *Uhuru* was not a status one was born with, but was rather a condition that was bestowed on a slave, by the master or by some other powerful patron.⁹⁹ When one was granted *uhuru*, one exchanged bonds with the master for a new type of bond with one's benefactor. "Even today things are this way," one of the Makorora elders told me: although we have received *uhuru* from colonialism, "are we not all slaves of the government?" The rebels of Makorora had not rejected the entire ideological edifice of slavery but had reinterpreted it and had forced their reinterpretation on the Sultan. Although they had fought bitterly against the forces of the Omani state for the right to establish their own autonomous Swahili community, they nevertheless took pride in the legitimacy that the Sultan's parchment bestowed on them.

Like communities established by runaway slaves in the New World, Makorora has developed a reputation for obstinate independence. But this is a sense of independence that was nurtured in the language of nineteenth-century social relations, in which *uhuru* was a matter of degree, the highest being that which flowed from the protection of the established order's most powerful patron. It is said that when activists were sent to Makorora in the 1950s by the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), the nationalist party agitating for independence from colonial rule, they were coolly received. "We don't need TANU's *uhuru*," the cadre were told scornfully, "we received our *uhuru* from Sultan Barghash." This anecdote is a pointed illustration of the pride taken by the villagers in their history of resistance. But perhaps of equal significance, it also expresses the lingering presence of nineteenth-century concepts of patronage and Arab hegemony, even among the descendants of rebels who had so decisively thwarted the control of the Arab state.¹⁰⁰

Like other members of the plebeian crowd, slaves struggled to participate in the institutions of the Shirazi community. True, they faced peculiar obstacles not

97. Behr, *Kriegsbilder*, 216–17; see also oral testimony, *loc. cit.*; Wissmann, 20 Nov. 1889, ZStA, RKA 743, 32–3; Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, *loc. cit.* The written sources variously call the settlement "Kikora" and "Kikowa," in addition to its proper name. Behr mistakenly calls it "Kikokwe"—the name of an entirely different settlement—and subsequent historians have repeated the error. See Glassman, "Bondsmen's new clothes," 310n.

98. Juma Omari, Mkwaja; Heri Isa wa Amrani, Makorora. The language of both informants was identical. Mzee Heri claims to have seen the parchment, which was once preserved by his family; it is not clear whether it still exists.

99. Sacleux, *Dictionnaire*. Krapf, who was perhaps more fully imbued with the abolitionist ideology than was Père Sacleux, notes this usage in his *Dictionary*, but does not specify it as part of his definition, as does Sacleux.

100. The anecdote is widely recalled in the area. The contradictions are all the more striking when one considers that TANU was eagerly accepted in the region specifically because it was seen as challenging the Arabs and patricians who had hitherto dominated coastal society; if anything, the descendants of slave rebels would have been expected to give TANU an especially warm welcome. Iliffe, *Modern History*, 528–9.

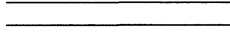
encountered by other parvenus, for their masters liked to think of them as perpetual outsiders, destined by birth to be always on the margins of the society in which they lived. But most patricians had neither the incentive nor the ability to force their slaves to play that role, and they usually accepted a compromise, however reluctantly. Thus slaves could be found participating aggressively in many aspects of Shirazi community life—as householders, Muslims, traders, and even office seekers.

Outright slave revolt was rare, typically occurring only when a planter class emerged that refused to speak the language of clientele with its slaves. Unlike the Shirazi patricians, the planters of Mauya possessed both the will and the strength to reduce their slaves to the level of chattel. The plantation regime not only choked off slaves' commercial opportunities and made it difficult for them to worship as proper Muslims, but it even prevented slaves from forming families. In trying to strip slaves of what the hegemonic ideologies of coastal society defined as the basic attributes of civilized humanity, the sugar planters pushed slaves to reject their bonds altogether. Yet even in this instance the rebels couched their grievances in the older language of the struggle for acceptance: They strove to play the role of autonomous Swahili clients and sought legitimacy by claiming the patronage of the region's highest Arab potentate.

Tensions on the sugar plantations were but one part of the heightened degree of plebeian discontent that resulted from the uneven advance of commodification in coastal society. The major combatants—planters and slaves, patricians and parvenus—were all motivated by a desire to turn commodity exchange to their advantage. Omani settlers dominated the plantation sector at Pangani, using their ties to Indian creditors and to the state to seize the patricians' best *shamba* land and to impose a harsh labor regime of gang slavery. On the central Mrima, Omanis and patricians also came to blows over control of the caravan trade. Patricians at Pangani managed to retain tenuous control over the "Maasai" trade, but they were able to do so only by cultivating strong relations of clientele with their subordinates. They were therefore in no position to deny the rising clamor of slaves and other outsiders to participate in the caravan trade and in other institutions of the Shirazi community, no matter how much they clung to the conviction that the common crowd were nothing but barbarians.

The patricians' continued domination of the Pangani caravan trade meant that parvenus there took a far keener interest in Shirazi community institutions than did their counterparts at other towns, notably Bagamoyo. This strengthened the patricians when they were facing the onslaught of the Omani state; hence, when Pangani's *majumbe* rose against the state to defend the autonomy of Shirazi community institutions, many of their slaves and other low-status clients rose with them. But this reliance on the plebeian crowd paralyzed the patricians when they were confronted by their clients' demands for a greater voice in community affairs. Plebeian support for the patricians at moments of political crisis should not be taken to signify that slaves accepted the domination of their masters or that newcomers accepted the patricians' view of them as barbarians. During the ten months in 1888–89 that the power of the state was neutralized by rebel patricians and their plebeian clients, a militant crowd repeatedly defied the decisions of the patriciate. And slaves stood in the forefront of that crowd.

PART II



STRUGGLES FOR CITIZENSHIP

Theft and Marriage

[An] Arab I know had a slave-boy from Manyema who taught himself to read & write—to use his master’s words. The boy stole the knowledge, & then his master felt compelled to teach the boy more. There are many of these slaves circumcized which they (the slaves) deem quite sufficient to convert a man from being an Mshenzi or pagan into an Mgwana.

Reverend W. Hutley, 1881.¹

The patricians prided themselves on their knowledge of Islam, their refined urban manners, and the other cultural attributes which they deemed those of civilization or *ustaarabu*. *Ustaarabu*, in their eyes, is what set them apart from their slaves and from the pagans of the hinterland; it was the quality that made them alone worthy of dominating the urban communities. They considered themselves the towns’ only true *wenyeji* or citizens; all others were *wageni* (sing., *mgeni*), “strangers” or “guests.”² But in the final decades of the century this cherished exclusiveness came under sustained attack, as the trade boom brought wave upon wave of newcomers to the coast. These *wageni* often sought to shape the new commercial opportunities to their advantage by securing or enhancing positions within Shirazi community institutions—institutions that were important in the coordination and control of urban commerce. As we have already begun to see, the newcomers were often successful in their insistent demands to share in the knowledge of *ustaarabu* and in the perquisites of Swahili citizenship.

The parvenus did not stop at demanding minor roles in urban life. Many had the audacity to claim patrician status. In the late 1880s, a European traveller observed that almost everyone who dwelled on the Tanga coast—many of whom, he wrote, were of Bondei or Zigua origin—preferred to be called “Shirazi.”³ A significant example of an outsider who “became” a Shirazi was Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari, author of a famous description of Swahili customs. Mtoro was born outside the Muslim community, at

1. W. Hutley, “Mohammedanism in Central Africa,” Urambo, August 1881, LMS, Central Africa, Box 4/2, D.
 2. For the distinction between *wenyeji* and *wageni* in Shirazi communities, see Lienhardt, “Introduction,” 13; Middleton, *World*, 83; Landberg, “Kinship and community,” *passim*.
 3. Baumann, *Usambara*, 5–6, 10.

Dunda in Uzaramo. As a young man, he moved to Bagamoyo and undertook short trading journeys in which he made use of his kinship ties to Zaramo chiefs. Mtoro maintained close contact with his Zaramo relatives; in an essay published in 1901 he displayed an intimate acquaintance with Zaramo culture.⁴ Yet, later in his life, he appended the *nisba* "al-Shirazii" to his name, much as members of the European bourgeoisie ennobled themselves by adding a preposition. The fiction apparently stuck, and a modern historian has described him as "a scion of an important Shirazi family."⁵

The patricians may well have resented outsiders' claims to citizenship as a form of theft. They were in an extremely tenuous position, with their exclusiveness and their domination of the urban communities threatened from two directions. From below they faced the demands of low-status outsiders: villagers from the pagan hinterland and deep interior who moved to town, converted to Islam, and became Swahili; slaves who struggled to win respect as Muslims, householders, and titleholders in the Shirazi dance societies. From above, patricians faced the growing presence of Arab state officials, who extracted tolls and enforced the mechanisms of debt. Such challenges from upcountry and from overseas were not new phenomena; centuries of similar influences are reflected in Swahili culture. But the peculiar political and economic conditions that characterized the eve of the colonial era—the rapid spread of commerce deep into the African interior and the growing hegemony of the British-backed Zanzibar state—made these challenges qualitatively different and highly disruptive.

The challenges that came from above are easily identified, for they emanated largely from the realm of the state. By their very nature, state politics are more or less divorced from other realms of community life. This was especially so in the case of the Omani state, an alien import by which the power and authority of Arab planters and Indian creditors were imposed on the local population. Patrician authority, by contrast, was exerted through community institutions structured by a language embedded in everyday life. To the extent that these community institutions retained some relevance in the lives of common people (more so at Pangani and Saadani, less so at Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam), patricians were able to tap them to mobilize popular support in their struggles against the state. The patricians' political concerns thus often resonated with those of their low-status clients, who joined them in defending the viability of community institutions threatened by Omani rule.

But this common purpose did not prevent members of the Swahili crowd from challenging Shirazi control of the very institutions that they helped to defend. These were the challenges—the challenges from below—that the patricians found most difficult to come to grips with, as does the modern historian.

Whereas the Omani state elite confined their actions to the battlefield of a discrete and largely alien political arena, members of the crowd waged a kind of hit-and-run guerilla warfare on the patricians' institutional home turf, demanding roles in many of the ritual arenas in which Shirazi authority was affirmed and validated. The voices in which they expressed these demands were maddeningly ambiguous, reflective of

4. "Khabari ya inchi ya Wazaramu na dasturi za Wazaramu," in Velten, *Safari*, 205–52.

5. Mtoro's biography can be pieced together from the following: Velten, *Safari*, 126–8, 137–8, 205, and Mtoro's essays in the volume, *passim*; Mtoro, *Customs*, ix; C.H. Becker, "Materials for the understanding of Islam in German East Africa," translated by B.G. Martin, *TNR* 68 (1968), 35 (fn); August Nimtz, *Islam and Politics in East Africa* (Minneapolis, 1980), 110. Mtoro's description of Swahili customs, which remains a basic source for Mrima culture, was originally published by Carl Velten in 1903.

what may be called (after the concepts discussed in the introduction to this book) their plebeian character. No matter how rebellious, members of the crowd generally respected patricians' claims to distant Middle Eastern origin and all that such claims implied regarding religious purity and cultural hegemony. They were even willing to offer public expressions of respect to the patricians, using the preferred ritual language of Shirazi culture. Yet their devotion was far from absolute. Like all relations of domination and subordination, those between Shirazi patrons and their plebeian clients were marked by constant negotiation, conflict, and struggle. Clients' expectations of their patrons could easily become demands; personal followers could become impertinent upstarts. The struggle over Swahili citizenship is a particularly pointed example of the contradictory nature of plebeian resistance: members of the crowd respected the prestige of Shirazi cultural identity so much that they were loath to allow it to be controlled solely by the Shirazi elite.

This chapter and the one that follows explore some of the cultural strategies used by outsiders in their efforts to become citizens and the ways in which such claims shaped the rituals of Shirazi community life. Such a discussion demands that we look beyond the hegemonic view of Swahili culture as reflected in the norms of the patriciate. The leading townsmen liked to think of themselves as living in splendid cultural isolation, a breed apart from their rural neighbors whom they scorned as irredeemable barbarians or *washenzi*. Yet at the same time parvenus were crowding through the town gates, converting to Islam, marrying into patrician families—in short, becoming Swahili. In the face of this influx of *wageni* from the countryside, many patricians managed to preserve some sense of exclusiveness by stressing their often mythical identity as people of Middle Eastern origins. As the power and prestige of the Omani sultans peaked in the final decades of their rule, the patricians indulged in a cultural fashion for “Arabization,” prizing behavior that they observed among high-status Arab immigrants and downplaying those aspects of Swahili culture, such as spirit possession, that too obviously resembled the practices of their pagan neighbors. This fashion continued to flourish under the pressures of colonial racial policy, which offered particular privileges to townspeople who could demonstrate status as “non-natives” (i.e., non-Africans). Thus from the mid-nineteenth through mid-twentieth centuries there was a steady rise in Swahili insularity, as patricians sought to sharpen the distinction between themselves and the newcomers from the hinterland.⁶

But such sharp distinctions were little more than an ideological fiction. The townspeople shared many close cultural affinities with their “barbarian” neighbors; in fact, the very ritual practices that defined “Shirazi” authority derived not from Persia but from the village cultures of the near hinterland.⁷ By constantly struggling for access to the urban Muslim communities, people from the non-Muslim hinterland have kept the boundaries of Swahili ethnic identity extremely fluid and situational. Today one commonly finds Swahili-speaking Muslims who in some situations claim Swahili identity, but in others claim to be members of hinterland ethnic groups such

6. J. de Vere Allen, “The Swahili world of Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari,” in Mtoro, *Customs*, 211–30. Pouwels links these “Arabizing” tendencies with the use of the new word *ustaarabu*, which implies the qualities of Arabic culture, to replace an older word, *uungwana*: *Horn and Crescent*, 72–4, 128–30.

7. Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari recognized this: *Customs*, ix, 1. These rituals will be discussed in chapter 5.

as Digo, Zaramo or Segeju.⁸ Similar struggles, as we've seen, blurred the line between slave and free, and scholars have documented many of the particular practices that slaves introduced to the communal rituals of the Muslim towns, especially during the surge of slave imports in the late nineteenth century.⁹

The puzzle for students of the nineteenth century, then, is to explain the mechanism by which more and more low-status *wageni*, both free and slave, managed to gain access to community institutions which patricians had guarded with a jealous exclusiveness. Ideally, membership in the community was granted according to two sets of values, both of which rejected newcomers from the interior *a priori*. One set was religious. These values defined the Shirazi town or village as the residence of proper Muslims: it was part of the *umma*, the community of the faithful, and as such was divorced from the impure peoples of the hinterland and the interior.¹⁰ Even when upcountry immigrants began to convert in great numbers at the end of the century, the orthodoxy of their Islam was severely questioned. These religious prejudices often meshed with racial beliefs: many patricians felt that, as descendants of Persians or Arabs, they were the only proper Muslims, with the possible exception of recent immigrants from Arabia.

The other set of values was based on kinship, and it defined not the community as a whole but the various strata within it. These strata included Arabs of immediate and recognizable Middle Eastern descent, urban Swahili-speaking patricians, and slaves, ex-slaves, or descendants of slaves. Membership in these strata was a matter of strictly ascribed status, attained by birth and kinship, and members of the patrician stratum practiced closely arranged, usually endogamous marriage. (That is, marriage within the stratum and often within the kin group.) And yet low-status outsiders, as we shall see, somehow managed to marry in.

This chapter will examine rituals associated with each of these sets of values, emphasizing how low-status immigrants manipulated them in their attempts to become citizens of the Muslim towns. Chapter 5 then discusses how ambitious newcomers, having gained access to community institutions, set about to enhance their power and prestige within them. In both instances, we shall see that the language of domestic and religious ritual meshed with that of political authority, and that rival claims to ritual competence thus posed potent threats to the patricians' already beleaguered control of the coastal communities.

Those Who are Deserted, Where are They to Go?

A most effective way for an ambitious male newcomer to stake a claim in urban society was to marry locally and thus establish a household in which he could preside over freeborn citizens. Patrician ideologies of exclusiveness, however, dictated strict marriage proscriptions, particularly concerning whom a patrician woman might marry. (Patrician men had considerably more leeway in choosing their mates. Many

8. David Parkin, "Swahili Mijikenda: facing both ways in Kenya," *Africa* 59 (1989), 161-75; Swantz, *Ritual and Symbol*, 64 and *passim*; Landberg, "Kinship and community."

9. Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*; Strobel, *Muslim Women*; Edward Alpers, "Dance and society in nineteenth century Mogadishu," in Thomas Labahn (ed.), *Proceedings of the Second International Congress of Somali Studies* (Hamburg, 1983), 127-44; Mirza and Strobel, *Three Swahili Women*, esp. 69ff.

10. Middleton, *World*, 161-2.

married their slaves, and others took wives from their trading partners in the interior.) But there were many cracks in this edifice, and they widened in the later nineteenth century. Among the most crucial components in this process was the presence of numerous widowed or divorced women in the towns. Such women were extremely vulnerable: lacking a firm tie to a father or husband, they lived on the margins of the dominant Shirazi community institutions.

The biography of Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari again provides an apt example. The young Mtoro lived at Bagamoyo with his widowed mother. In an account of his first short trading journey, Mtoro tells of his mother's reluctance to see him go. After many anxious queries, writes Mtoro, "she told me, 'Go then.' But there was no joy in her heart."¹¹ Here was a single woman, dependent on her son, who felt the fragility of her exposed social position. Similar anxieties were expressed in a traditional verse sung by divorced women:

My house is left desolate,
You have gone away, you do not want it.
Those who are deserted, where are they to go?¹²

The question posed by this song was a common one, and in seeking to answer it, divorced and widows were more likely than others to consent to marry low-status outsiders.

We must first ask how the norms of kinship regulated access to citizenship through marriage. Shirazi society differed from many of its neighbors in East and Central Africa in that closed unilineal kinship groups were not major factors in how the community was perceived. More important were loose arrangements of kin which ethnographers call "unrestricted cognatic descent groups;" the most common Swahili term was *ukoo* (pl., *koo*). The *ukoo* was a dispersed grouping of kin, in which membership could be traced through either the male or female lines. This meant that a person could choose to claim membership in any or several of the descent groups of his or her parents or grandparents. It also meant that if an outsider married into a local *ukoo*, the children would have full rights as members. Moreover, such rights accrued not only to the individual born into the descent group; they could also be claimed, to a greater or lesser degree of effectiveness, by a member's entire network of kin, including affines who had not themselves been born into the *ukoo*. This implied that an outsider who married into a local *ukoo* could expect to exercise some rights within it.¹³

The *ukoo* contained more restricted subunits called *milango* (sing., *mlango*), localized descent groups of limited depth in which membership was traced through the male line only. The *milango* once controlled *shamba* lands, but this control has been in steady decline for at least a century. In the 1950s, John Middleton analysed the land tenure system of three distinct regions of Zanzibar Island. He found that the *mlango*'s ability to restrict access to land eroded according to the degree of a region's commercialization. The more commercialized the region, the more outsiders tended to claim land rights as members of the *ukoo*, through private alienation of land, or as squatters.¹⁴

11. Velten, *Safari*, 126. Mtoro describes himself as a "kijana," a young man, when he undertook this journey. On page 131 he tells an upcountry host that his father is dead.

12. Jan Knappert, "Songs of the Swahili women," *Afrika und Übersee* 69 (1986), 107.

13. See Wijeyewardene, "Some aspects," esp. 107, 311–12; Caplan, *Choice and Constraint*, esp. 19–24, 39–40, 60–9; Landberg, "Kinship and community," esp. 7–8, 82–102; Middleton, *World*, 83–9.

14. Middleton, *Land Tenure*. For *milango*, see also Middleton, *World*, loc. cit.

In the 1960s, *milango* continued to control land in remote backwaters such as the northern tip of Mafia Island, but such control had completely disappeared in the Pangani area, where land ownership had long been dominated by large sisal and coconut estates.¹⁵

In other words, as the local economy became commercialized the *milango* began to relax their grip on agricultural resources. We have seen the pressures that brought about an increasing amount of land alienation in the latter part of the nineteenth century: the planting of cash crops such as coconut and sugar, and the increasing indebtedness of the Shirazi patriciate, which led to the mortgage and sale of their *shamba* lands to Arab settlers. In such a situation, the cohesiveness and social control of the descent groups was bound to erode. One might therefore speculate that marriage into the extensive *ukoo* became an increasingly viable strategem to be used for gaining access to the resources of the community.

But who would marry an outsider? The *mlango* not only controlled land; its members also jealously guarded and perpetuated the status of the descent group. First marriages were carefully arranged by the young couple's parents, often as soon as the daughter had completed her puberty rites, or even, in some cases, before the future bride and groom had been born. Preferred marriages were between kin, ideally between first cousins. But there was a great deal of flexibility. Membership in a common *ukoo* was usually a sufficiently close tie for an arranged first marriage, and given the widely dispersed nature of the *ukoo*, this allowed for intermarriage between citizens of different Swahili communities. If common descent could not be demonstrated it might be invented by reference to ties of marriage or even to residence in a common village or neighborhood. In short, ties of close cultural affinity could often override any rules of kin group endogamy in arranged marriages. But persons born outside the *umma*—that is, persons from the non-Muslim hinterland—were beyond the pale, excluded altogether from arranged marriages. The same goes for slaves ("outsiders" by definition) and for others who occupied the lowest rungs of the social ladder.¹⁶

These arranged marriages, however, rarely lasted long. Swahili society is characterized by an extremely high divorce rate—Middleton suggests that it is especially high in Shirazi communities—and evidence can be found to trace the phenomenon back at least to the turn of the century and, more impressionistically, even earlier. The reasons for the frequency of divorce are not clear, although it is probably misleading to search for the "causes" of such a long-term cultural practice.¹⁷ Subsequent marriages were not arranged, and divorced men and women often remarried outside their kin groups and status levels. Although shut out of arranged marriages, a low-status male immigrant who aspired to marry into the Shirazi community could realistically set his sights on becoming the second husband of the daughter of a local family.¹⁸

15. For Mafia, see Caplan, *Choice and Constraint*. For the Pangani area, Landberg, "Kinship and community," ch. 6.

16. The most extensive analysis of marriage patterns in Shirazi society is in Landberg, "Kinship and community," ch. 4. See also Middleton, *World*. Nineteenth-century sources for the above include Hans Zache, "Sitten und Gebräuche der Suaheli," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 31 (Berlin 1899), 77; Richard Niese, *Das Personen- und Familienrecht der Suaheli* (Berlin, 1902), 18.

17. Several factors suggest themselves, including husbands' frequent absence on caravan journeys and the age differentials of first marriages, in which women married younger than men. Such factors would undermine the stability of the union, as would senior wives' resistance to polygyny.

18. Pamela Landberg has advanced an argument similar to mine, based on fine-grained ethnographic data collected in the 1960s in a village ten miles north of Pangani: "Widows and divorced women in Swahili

The ethnographic literature records significant populations of divorced or widowed women in Swahili towns on many parts of the coast, and, once again, it is likely that this is a long-term pattern that existed in the nineteenth century as well.¹⁹ Such single women were in an ambiguous, highly vulnerable position, for they had no firm links to the male-dominated kinship groups (patriarchal household, *mlango*, *ukoo*) which hegemonic ideology recognized as the constituent units of society. Having married and moved out of their fathers' homes, these women enjoyed only loose ties to their parental descent groups. Ideally, divorcées stood under the legal protection of their fathers and brothers, but in practice they were often left to their own devices. (This would be especially so for women from poorer families, whose fathers had limited means to take daughters back into the home.) And being divorced, they lacked altogether the tie to a husband which is so highly valued in any patriarchal society.²⁰

Nevertheless, many divorced women were able to maintain themselves, albeit precariously. They were often householders, as can be seen in the divorcée's song quoted above. Women sometimes inherited houses, and in an arranged marriage the couple often lived in a house that was owned solely by the bride, whose father had given it to her as dowry.²¹ A divorcée's economic viability was enhanced by the fact that in marriage she had been able to hold property separately from her husband. The division of commonly held property upon divorce varied with the circumstances. If the husband demanded a divorce without stating a reason, or if the divorce were caused by wrongdoing on his part, all jointly held property—house, landed property, slaves—was to be divided evenly.²² Thus, between her share of the divided common property and the property that had belonged solely to her, an unmarried divorcée often possessed considerable economic independence.

But one should be careful not to accept these norms as indices of actual behavior. An account left by Amur bin Nasur al Omeiri, who grew up in Zanzibar and Pangani in the 1860s and 1870s, illustrates not only the pressures that bore on single women, but also how norms that were meant to ease such pressures often failed to do so.

society," in Betty Potash (ed.), *Widows in African Societies: Choices and Constraints* (Stanford, 1986), 107–30. For divorce and remarriage, see also Landberg, "Kinship and community"; Middleton, *World*, 85, 125–6; Mirza and Strobel, *Three Swahili Women*, 10–11; Strobel, *Muslim Women*; Janet M. Bujra, "An anthropological study of political action in a Bajuni village in Kenya," Ph.D. thesis (University of London, 1968), 105–6; Caplan, *Choice and Constraint*, 27–31; P.R. Curtin, "Laboratory," 870, 876; New, *Life*, 66–7; Krapf, 28 Feb. 1852, CMS CA5/016/177.

19. Strobel takes the pattern back to the early years of this century: "Muslim women in Mombasa, Kenya," Ph.D. dissertation (University of California-Los Angeles, 1975), 91–5. See also Landberg, "Widows"; Wijeyewardene, "Some aspects," 313–4; Bujra, "Anthropological study," 81–2. Tanner suggested that the high number of single women in the Pangani area was a twentieth-century development, and that the prevalence of polygynous marriage absorbed such "surplus" women in the past; Landberg disputes this, correctly emphasizing that polygyny was never common in Swahili society. Tanner, "Land rights," 16–7; D.F. Roberts and R.E.S. Tanner, "A demographic study in an area of low fertility in northeast Tanganyika," *Population Studies* 13 (1959–60), 61–80.
20. For men shirking responsibilities to their divorced kinswomen, see Landberg, "Kinship and community," 223–4. The ethnographic literature reflects male domination at all three levels of kinship unit (household, *mlango* and *ukoo*).
21. Nineteenth-century sources include New, *Life*, 67; Strobel, *Muslim women*, 92; Mirza and Strobel, *Three Swahili Women*, 10. See also Landberg, "Widows"; Bujra, "Anthropological study," 69–79; Middleton, *World*, 129, 133–4.
22. C. Velten, "Sitten und Gebräuche der Suaheli," *Mittheilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen, Afrikanische Studien* (Berlin) I, 1898: 26–30; Niese, *Personen und Familienrecht*, 23–6. See also Baumann, *Usambara*, 24. Although theoretically either party could initiate a dissolution of the marriage, the woman was heavily disadvantaged in the unequal distribution of divorce rights. See Landberg, "Kinship and community," 148; Middleton, *World*, 124–5; and the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden).

Amur's father, Nasur bin Amur, was a poor Arab immigrant who came to Zanzibar to find a wife. Nasur's brother Hamud, who had already established himself at Zanzibar, used his local contacts to arrange the match. An unmarried virgin was out of the question, not only because Nasur was an outsider, but also because he could not afford the large bridewealth payments such a marriage would entail.²³ Instead, Nasur's brother found a widow who had three children by her first husband—but who had also inherited two plantations of clove and coconut, a stone townhouse, and sixteen slaves. "My father didn't have a penny," wrote Amur bin Nasur, "but my mother married him anyway." Amur was born soon thereafter, in 1865.

The estrangement of Amur's parents began after the family's plantations were destroyed by the disastrous typhoon of 1872. Nasur decided to try his luck upcountry, on the central caravan routes. He left nothing behind for his family. Amur's mother turned to her brother-in-law Hamud, but he refused to help, even when the children were stricken with smallpox. She had to rely on money earned by a *fundi* slave belonging to her. Soon after returning from upcountry, Nasur decided to marry a slave girl belonging to his brother. Amur's mother objected to her husband taking a second wife, and many bitter quarrels ensued. Nasur then divorced Amur's mother, taking all of her property, including the townhouse and the slaves. Amur dwells bitterly on the fact that his father took even the slave who had sustained the family while Nasur was upcountry, a slave whom his mother had purchased expressly for Amur. This is one of several passages that reflect Amur's marginal position as the youngest son of a divorced wife, and his resentment of his father.

Nasur bin Amur then moved to Pangani, where, with his wealthier brother, he became one of Mauya's premier sugar planters.²⁴ (One wonders to what extent the start-up capital for his sugar plantation derived from the property he had confiscated from his wife.) He forced the young Amur to go with him, over the objections of Amur's mother, who was evidently dependent on her children. Amur's first marriage was arranged by his father at Pangani. It did not last; within a few years he divorced his young bride and remarried. Meanwhile, Amur had "run away" from his father, and he attempted to support his mother and himself by several failed attempts at business, both at Pangani and at Zanzibar. He eventually became a soldier in the Sultan's guard, and settled with his wife and his divorced mother in Ng'ambo, the *makuti* or mud-and-wattle section of Zanzibar Town that was separated by a creek from the wealthier "Stone Town" where his mother's townhouse had been located. The slide from "Stone Town" to the humble environs of Ng'ambo is expressive of the mother's loss of prosperity and status. By this time she was entirely dependent on Amur, her only surviving child.

Amur's story can be closed with an incident concerning another vulnerable woman in his life: his wife, Binti Said Khalfan, whom he had married after ending the marriage that had been arranged by his father. When Amur informed Binti Said that he intended to take yet another wife, she insisted that he divorce her first, as he "owned nothing." Amur refused. Such a refusal, in theory, violated a basic tenet of Islamic law that was meant to protect wives: the stipulation that a man might marry

23. Landberg, "Kinship and community," 139–40, and ch. 4 *passim*. Amur's narrative suggests that such considerations were uppermost in the minds of his father and uncle as they planned the marriage, although his account is no doubt colored by his hostility to his father.

24. Meinecke, *Aus dem Lande*, 133.

only so many wives (but no more than four) as he could afford to support reasonably and equitably. Amur bin Nasur, like his father before him, ignored his obligations to his wife. Binti Said went from qadi to qadi, seeking an order for Amur to divorce her; she even went to Amur's military commander, Lloyd Mathews, but could get no satisfaction. She tried to stir up trouble between Amur and his mother. No doubt there was rivalry between Binti Said and her mother-in-law; Binti Said probably feared that the financially strapped Amur would favor his mother, as well as his second wife, over her. Eventually she went mad, wrote Amur, and died of witchcraft.²⁵

Amur bin Nasur never tells us his mother's name, and he refers to his wife only by her patronym ("Binti Said Khalfan" merely means "Daughter of Said Khalfan"). This is emblematic of his way of thinking and that of many other townsmen: in a brief description of Zanzibar manners at the end of his autobiography, Amur states that it is customary to refer to women this way. The stories of Amur's wife and mother illustrate the vulnerability of women who did not enjoy firm ties to a male-dominated kin group. The mother's ties to her first husband had provided some concrete economic advantages, in the form of slaves, clove trees, and a stone townhouse. But after her first husband's death, her ties to his kin were not enough to protect this property from the counterclaims of her second husband. Her inability to get Nasur's brother to help her and her children reveals her tenuous position vis-a-vis her second husband's kin. And after the divorce, she had no say in where her son would live, or whom he would marry. The story of Binti Said Khalfan bears similar lessons. Her primary rights in Zanzibar society were mediated by her husband, and she feared that these rights would amount to little if the impoverished Amur's attentions were to be divided between her, her mother-in-law, and a younger co-wife. The domestic tensions described by Amur bin Nasur were common on the Mrima. The husband's desire to take a second wife was often a cause of divorce; divorcées were often denied by their former husbands the right to see or live with their children; even Binti Said's unsuccessful strategy for obtaining a divorce against her husband's will was common practise.²⁶

The fragility of the marriage bond—and what many women considered its disadvantages—induced many women to neglect their ties to affines and to cultivate instead ties to their female uterine kin, especially to their mother and sisters. Thus, women constructed autonomous networks of female kin that cut across the male-dominated domestic households and *milango*. The anthropologist Janet Bujra was told that in building these "female kin units" women looked for security in a "close-knit group of mother, sisters, grandmother and daughters." Their explanation was that although "a husband cannot be trusted, . . . one's mother or sister can always be relied upon."²⁷ At the center of such female kin units often stood a divorced or widowed house owner, presiding over a matrifocal household. Under the best of circumstances, a woman could tap the resources both of a female kin unit and of a domestic household dominated and subsidized by her husband. Single

25. "Khabari ya Amur bin Nasur," in C.G. Büttner (ed.), *Anthologie aus der Suaheli-Litteratur* (Berlin, 1894), Part One, 147–75; a German translation appears in Part Two, 157–90. Amur became Swahili tutor at the Berlin Seminar for Oriental Languages and later served the Germans as *liwali* of Bagamoyo. John Iliffe, *Tanganyika under German Rule* (Cambridge, 1969), 192–3.

26. See Landberg, "Widows," and some of the songs in Knappert, "Songs of the Swahili women," esp. 109–13 and 128–9.

27. Bujra, "Anthropological study," 79.

women, however, often had only the female kin unit to fall back on; in fact, in many cases the divorce may have been caused by her allegiance to her female uterine kin over her affines.²⁸

Hence, many divorced and widowed women utilized the resources of their female kin networks to construct independent matrifocal households. The material bases for such a household consisted of the house owned by one of its members, small trade and crafts, and prostitution. These means typically yielded only meager livelihoods, however, or demeaning ones. All single women could cultivate subsistence crops, as there was no shortage of *konde* land on the Mrima. But women rarely commanded rights to the tightly controlled *shamba* lands on which the most valuable cash crops were raised. In the few cases when a woman did in fact hold *shamba* land, she usually felt the need to have a male kinsman arrange the sale of the crop, because of norms that frowned on large-scale commercial activities by women. Remarriage thus offered an option by which a divorced woman could secure better access to the revenues of commercial agriculture or some other cash income.²⁹ Members of the matrifocal households therefore devoted energy to finding a man whom they might "inveigle" into marrying one of their number; their hope was that the new husband would contribute to the support of all the women in the household. Bujra's informants described this as "marrying for food."³⁰

Another reason for a single woman to consider remarriage was the "respectability" that it would bring, a quality bestowed by marriage in any society where a woman's full citizenship was mediated only through her ties to a man. This lesson was pressed on Swahili girls throughout their upbringing. They underwent a protracted initiation process that was meant to prepare them for their first marriage, marriage being the culminating ritual by which girls were transformed into adults. During the rites, the initiate was taught songs stressing the crucial change that marriage would bring to her life:

On the day that I lose my innocence,
I shall have no mother, I shall have no sister.
O mother, the things of the past!
O long chain, the things of the past!

The "long chain" in the last line refers to the penis.³¹ The initiate is being told that after marriage she will no longer be able to depend on mother or sisters; she will be alone in a patriarchal household, bound to her husband, and it will be useless to yearn

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28. Landberg, "Widows," 119 and *passim.*; *idem.* "Kinship and community," 195–224; Mirza and Strobel, *Three Swahili Women*, 11–2. For similar dynamics regarding divorce in another Islamic urban African society, see Mary F. Smith, *Baba of Karo: a Woman of the Muslim Hausa* (New Haven, 1981), esp. 13. We lack direct nineteenth-century evidence on the Swahili female kin unit; it is unlikely that such phenomena would have been noticed by most European observers of the time. But oblique evidence abounds. Amur bin Nasur's home in Ng'ambo and similar homes in which he lived as a child might properly be called matrifocal households, as could the home of the young Mtoro. Baumann described networks built around fictive ties of kin, all female (*Usambara*, 22), and many authors, including Burton, described the predominantly female composition of the towns' population.
29. Landberg, "Widows." Strobel writes that, because of the Islamic norms of female seclusion, even wealthy, elite women would feel the pressure to marry, so as to have a man who could manage her affairs "respectably." "Muslim women," 133–9.
30. Bujra, "Anthropological study," 80. Landberg found similar processes in matrifocal households on the Mrima: "Kinship and community," 195ff.
31. Zache, "Sitten und Gebräuche," 70–6; Zache's informants provided the gloss on "long chain."

for her former condition as a maiden tied intimately into the female kin unit. Other songs instructed initiates in their duty to provide sexual services to their husbands—"though I do not yet know who he may be," added one. Girls were taught that controlling their sexual and reproductive powers within the institution of marriage constituted the fullest expression of womanhood.³² Indeed, they were taught that pleasing their husbands would be essential to winning entry into Paradise.³³

Swahili speakers perceive marriage as something that can be actively performed only by men: the bride is always said "to be married," using the passive form of the verb. Through marriage, the husband bestowed social life on a woman, much as Islamic doctrine held that enslavement by a Muslim bestowed life on an unbeliever. This moral is the pointed lesson of a folktale in which a dead woman is restored to life by her husband, through the miraculous intervention of the Prophet Moses: when the resurrected woman denies her marriage bonds, she instantly returns to the grave.³⁴ The dominant morals of Shirazi society cast a harsh light on unwed women. When the young bride was being prepared for the consummation of her marriage, she was taught a song that ridiculed the disgrace of unwed women, always looking for a man:

She strays around into every hut,
She is like a captain without a sailor,
She is like a net, that lady,
For every fish to come in.³⁵

Marriage was essential to a woman's respectability, as was her general deference to men. She was expected to greet men in the same manner as slaves greeted the free-born and children their elders, and a woman who failed to do so was presumed to be an adultress or a prostitute.³⁶ Women who preferred to remain unmarried, living with their female kin in a matrifocal household, were often called *wahuni*—that is, vagabonds or layabouts.³⁷

So although many divorcées and widows cherished their independence, they nevertheless felt enormous pressures to remarry and were often willing to do so without strict regard to the status of their new husbands. Having already been married once, they were considered to be full adults, in control of their own sexual powers.³⁸ And because they were not under the firm control of any *mlango*, they enjoyed more autonomy than other women in deciding whom to marry. Some nineteenth-century informants put it explicitly: by accepting the bridewealth at the arranged first marriage, they said, the bride's father forfeited all paternal rights in his daughter; if the husband's rights were subsequently annulled by death or divorce, "the widow or

32. Middleton, *World*; Landberg, "Kinship and community." For initiation songs, see Mtoro, *Customs*, ch. 9; the quoted song is from page 57. I have slightly altered Allen's translation, in accordance with Velten's gloss in the original *Desturi*, 85.

33. This can be read in a famous mid-nineteenth-century poem from Pate, in which a patrician woman prescribes the ideal of feminine behavior for her daughter: "Utendi wa Mwana Kupona," in Allen, *Tendi*, 55–75.

34. "Wanawake watu gani," in Büttner, *Anthologie*, 92–5.

35. Mtoro, *Customs*, 72.

36. Baumann, *Usambara*, 17; Velten, "Sitten," 10–1.

37. Landberg, "Widows," 121. Again these practices were mirrored in Hausa society, where divorcées and widows who remained unmarried were scorned as *karuwai* or (roughly) "prostitutes." Smith, *Baba*, 25.

38. Middleton, *World*, 126–7, 151. A distinction should be made between control of the woman's sexuality, which was deemed to rest in her own hands even within marriage, and control of her reproductive powers, which was dominated by patriarchal kin groups.

divorcée became independent, and mistress of her fate." Frequently, such women exercised their newly found independence by marrying non-citizens (*wageni*) or others who would be utterly unacceptable in a first, arranged marriage.³⁹

For a Shirazi woman who had chafed under the constraints of her first marriage, there were certain attractions to taking a second husband who was not firmly rooted in the dominant kin groups of the local community. In any event, neither partner's *mlango* played much of a role in a woman's remarriage. A minimum of ritual was involved, and since little or no bridewealth was required (especially if the groom was poor), the woman was free of the financial claims that might be made by her new husband's kin should the marriage fail, as it was likely to do. A woman's second marriage was frequently solemnized in an *arusi ya siri* or "clandestine wedding," a rite in which the only kinsperson involved was typically the bride's mother—that is, a senior member of her female kin unit. Second marriages were often loose, temporary unions. At times, the new couple did not even live under the same roof; if the wife belonged to a well-established matrifocal household and the husband were an *mgeni*, the latter might play only a peripheral, transient role in domestic affairs.⁴⁰

In short, women on the margins of the dominant Shirazi kin groups—widows and divorcées—used remarriage to low-status outsiders as a tool in their struggles for survival and autonomy. As such, they were key actors in the influx of low-status outsiders into the ranks of citizenship. The children of a marriage between a male *mgeni* and a Shirazi woman would be accepted as full members of the community, and their father would be tied into local *koo* through them and through his wife.⁴¹ While the woman's male kin usually did nothing to block her marriage to an outsider (they were rarely in a position to exercise influence, anyhow), their fears reflect a paramount concern that neither the bride nor her children be lost to the coastal community. To that end, it was desirable that the husband be absorbed into Shirazi society. It was therefore necessary that he be at least nominally a Muslim, and that he not be a slave. These fears are reflected in a marriage contract signed at Bagamoyo in the mid-1880s, between a Muslim bridegroom from the deep interior and the brother of a locally born bride. The contract stipulated that the husband was not to take his wife upcountry to his homeland; any attempt to do so would be grounds for divorce. Furthermore, if someone appeared claiming that the husband was a slave, the marriage would be annulled. The latter fear was quite common, which suggests that in fact it was sometimes realized.⁴²

39. The quoted passage is from Zache, "Sitten," 77–8. Other sources include Velten, "Sitten," 23; "Land and land settlement," Pangani District Book, vol. II, TNA, MF/7; Landberg, "Widows"; Wijeyewardene, "Some aspects," 313–4.

40. Prins, *Swahili-Speaking Peoples*, 87–9; Middleton, *World*, 123–4; Landberg, "Kinship and community," 195–217; Baumann, *Usambara*, 23; Bujra, "Anthropological study," 80. Although Middleton discusses hypergamy in relation to *arusi za siri*, his emphasis is on ideal behavior among Lamu patrician families. By contrast, his own work shows that status was less strictly bounded on the Mrima than it was at Lamu. At any rate, the sources are plentiful for women marrying down upon their second marriage, especially on the Mrima.

41. Baker, *Report*, 94; Landberg, "Kinship and community," 165–75.

42. C.G. Büttner, *Suaheli-Schriftstücke in arabischer Schrift* (Berlin, 1892), 87–8. For fears that unknown bridegrooms would be revealed to be slaves, Velten, "Sitten," 25. (Marriages between slave men and free women were the only form of unequal marriage expressly forbidden in customary law.) In the early 1930s, informants at Pangani told the colonial officer E.C. Baker that they would prefer their womenfolk to live with outsiders as concubines rather than as their wives, so that their children would not run the risk of being taken upcountry (Baker, *Report*, 96). This suggests that the woman's "respectability" was of less importance to these informants (presumably senior males) than were her reproductive powers.

On rare occasions, a patrician might actively sponsor his daughter's marriage to a man from outside the community. This would happen if the suitor were particularly wealthy and thus offered the bride's father a chance to gain a powerful son-in-law.⁴³ When the bride was of high status and the groom was not, a special ceremony called the *kilili* wedding might be performed; a typical occasion was when the bride was the daughter of a *jumbe*. To be able to say that one's daughter had been married in a *kilili* wedding was a mark of enormous prestige. The ritual provided an unusual opportunity for the ostentation that was a hallmark of all the rituals through which authority was garnered in Shirazi society. It elevated the groom in the eyes of the community in an extremely dramatic manner; some informants say that it was even possible for a parvenu who had been wedded in this way to attain the rank of *jumbe*. At the same time, it publicly suggested the debt of clientele that the wealthy outsider owed to the father-in-law who sponsored his marriage into a patrician *ukoo*. Although the parvenu bridegroom may have been the one to provide the trade goods necessary for the elaborate ritual, *kilili* could not be performed without the consent of the high-born father-in-law.⁴⁴

Kilili, perhaps the most prestigious of Shirazi rituals, was not used exclusively at weddings, but was performed on various festive occasions when a powerful man wished to affirm or reaffirm his authority. Its most notable use was to mark a *jumbe*'s accession to rank. The ritual was closely tied up with symbols of communal authority: for example, it was one of the few occasions when the *ngoma kuu* were used, a special set of drums that could be played only in the presence of a *jumbe*. In the following chapter, we examine these symbols of chiefly authority and their use in festive ritual in more detail. But at this point it would be helpful to describe the *kilili* ritual as it was applied to weddings, for, like other rituals, it provides a concentrated expression of many convergent ideological phenomena.

Strictly speaking, the *kilili* was a bedstead or palanquin, covered with pillows and rich imported materials. In the most common, nonwedding version of the ritual, the celebrant mounted the *kilili* accompanied by a young slave woman who was decked out in lavish clothing and jewelry. The *kilili* was then carried through the streets of the town amid great fanfare, accompanied by drumming, music, and the firing of guns. The slave on the palanquin shielded her master with an umbrella, a symbol of the *majumbe*'s authority, as other richly adorned slave women followed in procession, ceremonially fanning the celebrant. It was stipulated that the *kilili* must be borne, for at least the first few steps, on the shoulders of patricians: this is perhaps the best indication of the degree of honor attached to the ceremony. The distribution of largess further enhanced the celebrant's reputation; we shall see that this aspect was shared by many other rituals of Shirazi authority.⁴⁵

43. Middleton's patrician informants told him of such behavior with regret and suggested that in olden times it never occurred (*World*, 185). Such nostalgia can perhaps be discounted; at any rate Middleton's account of patrician behavior is heavily weighted in favor of the Lamu experience, as opposed to the Mrima where social boundaries were more fluid.

44. Sheikh Ali bin Hemedi el-Buhuriy, "Habari za Mrima," *Mambo Leo*, nos. 141-7 (Dar es Salaam, 1934-35), esp. Dec. 1934, 193. Oral testimony: Abdallah Mahine, Bweni, 18 Oct. 1985; Hatibu Salim, Mwera, 29 Oct. 1985; Mwinchumu Ibrahim, Mwera, 28 Aug. 1990. Mzee Hatibu did not mention *kilili* per se, but rather spoke of how a patrician would marry his daughter to a powerful outsider for the purpose of sponsoring the latter for the post of *jumbe*. As we shall see in the following chapter, the *kilili* ritual was an essential part of the behavior by which a person claimed to be worthy of the rank of *jumbe*.

45. This description of *kilili* is based on Ali bin Hemedi, "Habari za Mrima"; Mtoro, *Customs*, 149; Saleh bin Fakihi, "Asili ya Shiraziy" (Tongoni, 4 June 1929), in Baker papers, Rhodes House, Micr. Afr. 403; Velten,

The only women to play an important public role in the *kilili* celebration were the *wapambe*, young slaves chosen for their beauty who were elaborately dressed and adorned for the occasion. As was the case in many public celebrations, slave women could dance with free-born men, and even with *majumbe*, but patrician women were expected to perform only indoors.⁴⁶ Such norms are not surprising in a society that valued the Islamic practice of female seclusion. Seclusion was a luxury that slaves were not expected to observe; in fact, it was possible only for women who could command their domestic slaves to perform such feminine tasks as cultivation and fetching water.⁴⁷ It would be dangerously humiliating for a patrician's wife or daughter to be seen dancing publicly, before a crowd that included slaves and others of low status. In many of the Shirazi dances in which men and women performed together, the women were in a clearly subordinate role, circling around the men or fanning them as in the *kilili* celebration. The slave woman who mounted the *kilili* palanquin along with the celebrant was elevated above the crowd only by virtue of her subordination to her master; the author of one nineteenth-century description went out of his way to emphasize that the luxury commodities with which she was adorned were not her property, but those of her master.⁴⁸ For a woman of high birth, such a demonstration of subordination might be acceptable indoors, before a select audience of her peers, but it would be undesirable in public.

When the *kilili* ritual was performed at a wedding, however, all this was turned on its head. The *kilili* wedding was one of the few public ceremonies in which a high-born woman played a major role. The woman who mounted the *kilili* at a wedding was the celebrant's wife, not his slave—in fact, she had been born to a higher ascriptive status than he. But, at the same time, one can assume that the ritual of the *kilili* wedding was similar to other forms of *kilili*: that is, that the woman on the palanquin—the high-born bride—expressed her subordination to the man in the same manner as did the slave girl in the regular version of *kilili*. This, then, was one of the central meanings of the *kilili* wedding ritual: it reaffirmed the dominance of the husband over his wife, despite his original inferiority in terms of ascribed status. It resolved an anxiety voiced by a wedding song recorded by Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari, which imagined the fate that might befall a groom whose bride drew greater public honor than he. "When you adorn the bride, the groom should adorn himself," warned the song. "If you do not, people will call you slave."⁴⁹

The *kilili* wedding marked an unusual example of the general phenomenon we are discussing. It provided a way by which a man from outside the ranks of the high-born Shirazi families—including an *mgeni*—might obtain, through marriage, some of the ritual authority of a patrician. Because the ceremony demanded huge expenditures of money and trade goods, the option of garnering prestige through *kilili* mar-

"Sitten," 41–2; and the oral testimony of Abdallah Mahine, Bweni and Idi Mwinyikombo, Mwembeni (Sept. and Oct. 1985).

46. Zache, "Sitten," 80–6; Velten, "Sitten," 35; Edward Steere, *Swahili Tales, as Told by Natives of Zanzibar* (London, 1870), xii. At a performance of the Shirazi *ngoma kuu* at Saadani in 1876, the only female dancers were a dozen *wapambe*: Roger Price, Zanzibar, 28 May 1876, LMS, Central Africa, Incoming Box 1/1, A. Mtoro does not make an explicit statement to this effect, but he provides several examples of dances in which freeborn women perform indoors, and others in which slave women perform in public (*Customs*, ch. 12). For the Kenya coast: Strobel, *Muslim Women*, 14.

47. Strobel, *Muslim Women*; de Vere Allen in Mtoro, *Customs*, 278 n.; Oral testimony: Saidi Omari, Bweni.

48. Velten, "Sitten."

49. Velten, *Desturi*, 108.



FIGURE 4.1. Concubines of the *liwali* of Lamu, 1902. The lavish adornments indicate that these are *wapambe* or ornamented slaves.

riage was open only to wealthy men who were significant players in the commercial economy. Outsiders of humbler means could attempt to gain access to some of the benefits of citizenship by a less elaborate marriage to a divorced or widowed member of the Shirazi community. In either case, no matter how foreign or despised his status, the parvenu bridegroom would ultimately be accepted into the community, to some degree, as the husband of a freeborn citizen.

This acceptance implies that there were some values that overrode all considerations of status and kin group exclusiveness, values that a male outsider might invoke in his efforts to be considered a citizen. We shall soon examine one of these values, the universal brotherhood of Islam, an ideal that was far from absolute in the minds of patricians. The values that are relevant here, however, were perhaps more fundamental. They were the values of patriarchy, which sanctioned the domination of seniors over juniors and of men over women. Most to the point, they were values that affirmed men's authority to dominate women's powers of sexual reproduction. Within marriage, these rights were exercised both by the individual husband and by



FIGURE 4.2. Concubines of the *liwali* of Lamu, dancing, 1902. *Wapambe's* performances in public dance rituals marked their master's power, wealth, and generosity.

members of his descent group. The rights held by the husband's *mlango* over the reproductive powers of the wife were expressed not only by bridewealth payments, but also by practices that ensured that any children would not be lost to the husband's kin. (These practices included not only the Islamic custom of *edda*, by which a widow or divorcée could not remarry for a specified period, but also the custom of levirate marriage, by which a dead man's brothers could claim the exclusive right to marry his widow.⁵⁰) Outside of marriage, a woman's reproductive powers were still, ideally, dominated by men. If she were an unmarried girl they were dominated by the *mlango* of her father and brothers; if she were a slave they were dominated by her master.

But these patriarchal controls were significantly weakened in the case of a free-born widow or divorcée, who had both the motivation and the ability to ignore the wishes of her male kin in deciding whom to marry. From her point of view, a low-status *mgeni* husband offered the security and respectability of marriage (as well, no doubt, as the pleasures of personal and sexual companionship) without demanding that she sacrifice too much of her autonomy, for such a husband did not have ties to a well-established local *mlango* that could back his exertions of authority. A few single women rejected heterosexual marriage altogether, establishing permanent matri-focal households built around a central relationship between two women.⁵¹ But this was highly unusual. No matter how independent, most women accepted the norms of male-dominated marriage as the ideal pattern, sanctioned by Islam, even if their

50. Described in Mtoro, *Customs*, 79–80. See also Landberg, "Kinship and community," 218–9; I.M. Lewis, "Introduction," in Lewis (ed.), *Islam in Tropical Africa* (London, 1966), 53–5.

51. For such relationships, and for an excellent analysis of gender in Swahili society, see Gill Shepherd, "Rank, gender, and homosexuality: Mombasa as a key to understanding sexual options," in Pat Caplan (ed.), *The Cultural Construction of Sexuality* (London, 1987), 240–70.

previous experience of it had been personally unsatisfying. By agreeing to remarry, single women can be said to have acquiesced in and to have helped reproduce the hegemonic norms of marriage. But they frequently did so in ways that enhanced their own personal choices at the expense of the status of their *koo*. Thus the defences of Shirazi exclusiveness were breached at their weakest points: where marginal members of patrician kin groups—divorced and widowed women—had little to gain by steadfastly guarding or maintaining them.

Shouts and Derision

Faith alone defines the community in Islamic doctrine, in which the ideal of *umma*—the community of the faithful—transcends all divisions of status, kinship or ethnicity. “Know that every Muslim is a Muslim’s brother,” enjoined the Prophet, “and that the Muslims are brethren.”⁵² Accordingly, historians have often stressed how the universal norms of Islam enabled otherwise fragmented and heterogeneous urban populations to form stable communities. The Islamic city was defined by its core religious institutions, which were said to belong to all Muslims residing in the town; thus those institutions were of paramount importance in integrating strangers into city life.⁵³ In his description of Swahili manners, Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari boldly expressed this integrative ideal of a universalist Islam. The Swahili have such respect for Islamic learning, he wrote, that if an educated stranger should arrive wishing to live in the community,

he will immediately be given a wife if he likes. Every father is glad that a learned person should marry his daughter, even if he is poor. If a man comes from a long distance to live in a place as a teacher, . . . but the people do not know him, they set him questions; and if he answers them, he is accepted as a genuine teacher.⁵⁴

But Mtoro, himself a proud Muslim from the non-Swahili hinterland, was overly confident of universalism’s sway over the minds of the patricians. The questioning of a newly arrived scholar could not have been as straightforward as he suggests; at the very least the answers would have had to conform to the particular theological viewpoint of the questioners. Far from being welcomed by the patricians as potential sons-in-law, Hadrami and Comoro scholars who emigrated to Lamu in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were often scorned.⁵⁵ Institutions such as the Friday mosque may have been idealized as belonging to the entire community, but in practice they were controlled by limited groups of people who jealously guarded their prerogatives. Appointment to one of the ritual offices associated with these institutions could be denied a man of superior qualifications if he came from the wrong quarter, let alone from another town or from upcountry.⁵⁶

52. Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge, MA., 1991), 147.

53. W.J. Fischel, “The city in Islam,” *Middle East Affairs* 7 (1956), 230; G.E. von Grunebaum, *Islam: essays in the nature and growth of a cultural tradition* (American Anthropologist Memoir 81: 1955), 147–8; Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*, 33, 63–4.

54. Mtoro, *Customs*, 32.

55. el Zein, *Sacred Meadows*.

56. Lienhardt, “Introduction,” 13.

Despite the ideals of Islamic universalism, many of the patricians believed that proper Islamic behavior was inseparable from urban Shirazi culture. It was their entire culture, not simply the profession of the faith, that marked the patricians as civilized (*wastaarabu*) and that set them apart from the impure peoples of the interior, whose cultural practices they believed to be the mark of barbarism and unbelief (*ushenzi*). Some patricians even distrusted newcomers who expressed an interest in conversion: this chapter began with Rev. Hutley's tale of the master who regarded his slave as having "stolen" the knowledge of literate Islam. A proper Muslim practiced Shirazi culture, and on those occasions when patricians sponsored the conversion of an *mgeni*, they expected the convert to eschew all behavior that did not accord with that of the Swahili townspeople.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, newcomers continually introduced upcountry practices into coastal culture and into coastal Islam. Moreover, patrician insularity did not prevent people in the interior from taking a keen interest in the faith of the towns, especially during the latter part of the nineteenth century. To be sure, few upcountry people converted in a way that would be accepted by most Swahili-speaking Muslims, who expect converts to practice at least the first three of the so-called "Five Pillars of Islam": profession of the faith ("there is no god but God, and Mohammed is His Prophet"), daily prayer, and fasting during the holy month of Ramadhan.⁵⁸ But such a definition of conversion is far too narrow for our purposes. It would be more useful to recognize that the impact of Islam manifested itself in a wide spectrum of behaviors, ranging from conventionally defined conversion at one end to passive curiosity at the other. Far more common than an embrace of the Pillars of the Faith was for upcountry folk to recruit Islamic elements into a diverse arsenal of ritual techniques. Manipulation of new ritual practices was especially important to the trading chiefs and others whose growing involvement with the commercial economy was drawing them out of the mainstream of village political life. Islam provided such men with an alternative form of legitimizing ritual, at the same time as it drew them closer to their Muslim trading and political partners.⁵⁹ Occasionally, such an individual would adopt so much Islamic ritual that he might begin to consider Islam as his defining faith, whether or not coastal Muslims (or European observers) regarded him as a proper believer.

Most Shirazi religious scholars would deem the selective use of Islamic ritual to be heterodox conversion at best; at worst, they would condemn it as *shirk*, the blasphemy of mixing the worship of many gods with the worship of the One God. But the very heterodoxy of conversion, and of the other ways in which Islamic ritual was adopted, bespeaks its sincerity. Converts rarely contented themselves with aping the behavior of their religious mentors. They approached the new religion as they had the old, picking and choosing (or from a patrician view, purloining) those versions and elements of it that best suited their personal needs.

Newcomers to Islam would most likely be attracted to elements of the coastal religion that complemented those of preexisting ritual. Thus, for example, Islamic

57. Trimingham, *Islam in East Africa*, 54-5.

58. The other two pillars are almsgiving (which is not formally organized in all Muslim communities) and the pilgrimage to Mecca (required at least once in life, but only of those who can afford it).

59. This process has been analysed most fully in studies of the hinterland of the Kenya coast: David Parkin, "Politics of ritual syncretism: Islam among the non-Muslim Giriama of Kenya," *Africa* 40:3 (1970), 217-33; Spear, *Kaya Complex*; R.L. Bunger, *Islamization among the Upper Pokomo*, Syracuse University East Africa Studies XI (1973).

styles of dress spread rapidly in the interior, far faster than did the core beliefs of Islam. Indulging a cynicism common when discussing someone else's faith, European observers often argued that Islamic preachers stressed the ritual importance of dress because it furthered their business interests.⁶⁰ But the causality of such an argument should be reversed. African converts, and others drawn by the teachings of Islam, made much of the acquisition of coastal clothing, partly because the wearing of imported cloth had been such an important marker of status in the absence of Islam. Similarly, many peoples of the immediate hinterland integrated Islamic circumcision rituals into their preexisting ceremonies of male initiation. Although these practices did not always involve formal conversion, the ceremonies were presided over by Muslim ritual experts, and they were an avenue for the introduction of other religious influences.⁶¹ Because the new cult of circumcision privileged males (as did Islam generally), it attracted Zaramo men who felt that the customs of Zaramo matrilineality inhibited their ritual authority and their control of material resources, particularly, one might imagine, their control of the new commercial opportunities.⁶²

The syncretic adaptation of a universal religion, at once imitative and creative, made nonsense of the idea of an absolute dichotomy between coastal Muslim on the one hand and upcountry pagan on the other. Such a dichotomy was an ideological fiction, believed by only the more insular-minded urban patricians. The increasing pace of interaction between coastal traders and hinterland peoples prompted a constant mixing and exchange of cultural elements. Some of the most telling examples came in the realm of healing practice, the efficacy of which had long been an important criterion by which people judged the validity of rituals. Town dwellers were willing to try upcountry remedies, and vice versa. Muslim merchants travelled the Saadani trade routes to the Nguru hills hoping to purchase not only agricultural surpluses but also some of the medicines for which Nguru was famous. Belief in the efficacy of amulets, both Islamic and pagan, was widespread. "In the old days," wrote Mtoro, "when the Swahili did not know how to read," they used amulets made from wild-tree roots, such as are used by rural pagans. Then they discovered the power of amulets made with written Koranic passages. "Nowadays people use both. . . . Some countryfolk want Koran amulets and some townfolk wild-tree amulets."⁶³

This kind of cultural and intellectual ferment was especially pronounced in the turbulent Pangani hinterland, where the rising power of trading chiefs and the growing dangers of warfare and enslavement led many to question the efficacy of

60. E.g., Becker, "Materials," 37.

61. This is the argument of Hans Cory. T.O. Beidelman questions the simple connection between the spread of circumcision and that of Islam in the Mrima hinterland, noting that circumcision is practiced even in cultures in which Islam has made virtually no headway. But it is not necessary that pervasive coastal and Muslim influence culminate in conversion. Neither Cory nor Beidelman offer a time frame for their theories, and evidence is thin for the era prior to 1890. See Hans Cory, "Jando," *J. of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 77 (1947) and 78 (1948); T.O. Beidelman, *The Matrilineal Peoples of Eastern Tanzania* (London, 1967). Alternatively, it is possible, as some argued early in this century, that circumcision was practiced independently of Islam, and that the non-Muslim version of the ritual was adapted by those feeling the influence of the coastal religion. See Becker, "Materials," 39–40. But this was not the case with the Zaramo, who had no circumcision ritual before the introduction of Islam: Mtoro, in Velten, *Safari*, 232–3; and Lloyd W. Swantz, *The Zaramo of Tanzania: an ethnographic study* (Dar es Salaam, n.d.), 39.

62. This is suggested in Swantz, *Ritual and Symbol*, 65, 101 and *passim*.

63. Mtoro, *Customs*, 61; for the purchase of Nguru medicines, J.T. Last, "The tribes on the road to Mpwapwa," *Church Missionary Intelligencer* 1879, 662. See also Baumann, *Usambara*, 33.

old ritual techniques and to search for new ones to complement or replace them.⁶⁴ Mwinyi Hatibu, a prince of the Kilindi dynasty who ruled in Bondei in the 1850s, is representative of behavior at one end of the spectrum of responses to the influence of Islam. He proudly identified himself as a Muslim. Not only did he maintain constant, direct contact with coastal Muslims, but he also fasted and prayed, as did many of his subjects. Yet he relied on a ritual healer from Nguru, and he saw no contradiction in this.⁶⁵ Near the opposite end of the spectrum of responses stood people of Shambaa and Bondei who, although having no intention of identifying themselves as converts, nevertheless respected the ritual power of the coastal Muslims who traded and prayed in their neighborhoods. Kimweri ye Nyumbai, the great Kilindi king of Shambaa and Mwinyi Hatibu's overlord, never declared himself for the faith. Yet he kept Muslim teachers about him at the royal capital and was a great user of Koranic amulets. When the missionary John Erhardt visited Kimweri in 1853, the king displayed a keen interest in theology and medicine, both Islamic and Christian, and spurred his Muslim courtiers to debate the visitor. Among the Muslim teachers at Kimweri's court was at least one man from Bweni, the caravan center that would later send regular networks of missionaries along the "Maasai" trade routes to the deep interior.⁶⁶

Such selective adaptation of ritual techniques marked a significant degree of Islamic influence in the interior, even though it usually fell far short of what a Shirazi patrician would deem orthodox conversion. By the 1870s, this influence was being felt along the full length of the central caravan routes, and many converts found their way to the towns. In the far west, to be sure, adaptation of coastal ritual was still extremely eclectic. People there rarely prayed or built mosques, but they often utilized the services of coastal ritual experts to perform healing rites or even circumcision. Islamization was more profound near the permanent Arab and Swahili trade centers of Unyamwezi. Nyamwezi porters, like their slave counterparts, often found that conversion to Islam enhanced their role in commerce. An Arab or Shirazi mentor would sponsor the convert's circumcision and his education in the rudiments of the faith. The mentor would then use the resulting tie of patronage and religious affinity in employing the convert—who now prided himself on being a Swahili *mwungwana*—as a trusted trading agent.⁶⁷ Bwana Heri bin Juma was perhaps the most successful person to combine proselytization and patronage along the central caravan routes. At Ndumi, six miles from Saadani, immigrants from the deep interior converted to Islam, built Swahili-style houses, and lived under Bwana Heri's protection and in his service.⁶⁸

Islam spread rapidly in the immediate hinterland of Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam during the decade prior to German conquest, in part because of the Hadrami Arabs who settled there, pursuing petty trade and proselytization. By 1876, the faith had made only recent, unsubstantial inroads; converts were mostly young men, who made a provocative show of their new religion by shaving their heads and refusing to

64. Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*, chap. 4.

65. Erhardt, 11 Oct. 1853, CMS, CA5/09/15; Krapf, *Travels*, 306–7.

66. Krapf, *Travels*, 318, 322 (and 306–7, for conversion in Bondei as early as 1844); Erhardt, 29–31 Oct. 1853, CMS, CA5/09/15; Baumann, *Usambara*, 91; Becker, "Materials," 41–2. The Bweni missionaries of the early 1880s are discussed in chapter 2.

67. Hutley, "Mohammedanism," LMS, *loc. cit.*

68. Roger Price, Zanzibar, 28 May 1876, LMS, Central Africa, Incoming, Box 1/1, A; A.J. Wookey, 18 June 1880, LMS, Central Africa, Journals, Box 3/22; Edwin Smith, "The earliest ox-wagons in Tanganyika," TNR 40 (1955), 1–14.

wear the braids prescribed by Zaramo tradition. But Islam was widespread a decade later, as were coastal modes of dress and house construction. By the turn of the century it was the non-Muslim traditionalists—people who resisted circumcision and smeared their bodies with ritual pigments—who were portrayed as exceptional and as troublemakers. (But their portrayer was Mtoro, himself a devout Zaramo Muslim.) It was becoming increasingly difficult to discern the boundary between a Zaramo pagan and an urban Muslim; one observer wrote that the Zaramo language was even in danger of being abandoned in favor of Swahili.⁶⁹

Despite this surge of interest in Islam among people who were not members of the town elite, patricians retained firm control of urban religious institutions. There were two broad categories of religious official. One were those appointed by the secular authority. Although Sultan Barghash took a more active interest in such matters than did his predecessors, he generally limited his intervention to naming the prayer leader of the Friday mosque. There was only one such authority at each town; his duties included solemnizing marriages and, if he were learned in jurisprudence, serving as *qadi* or judge. In appointing this official, the sultan was sensitive to the religious preferences of the leading townspeople. For example, although the Omanis were members of the small Ibadhi sect and were under no legal obligation to appoint officials of any sect other than their own, they knew that this would have been resented by the patricians, who followed the Shafii rite of the majority or Sunni branch of Islam. So the Busaid sultans always appointed Shafii judges and prayer leaders, as a concession to their African subjects.⁷⁰

The most common religious institutions were the neighborhood mosques and their attendant *madarasa* or Koranic classes where local children were educated. Typically, a group of prominent citizens from a particular quarter of the town would join together to sponsor the construction and upkeep of such a mosque, as well as to hire a man to serve as teacher and prayer leader. This official would be granted a house and perhaps some domestic slaves and would receive fees from each of his pupils. If an outsider should apply for the post, he would be carefully interrogated before receiving the appointment. The interviewers sought to uncover more than the applicant's opinions on points of Islamic learning. At Bweni, for example, it was necessary for a teacher to have made at least one caravan journey to the interior.⁷¹

Nonpatricians were largely excluded from these religious offices. In the second half of the nineteenth century a wave of immigrants arrived from Hadramaut, in southern Arabia. Many were religious scholars, and one might expect them to have been welcomed by the patricians; after all, many patricians traced their own

69. Holmwood, in Edward Hutchinson, "Progress of the Victoria Nyanza Expedition of the Church Missionary Society," *PRGS* 21:6 (1877), 501–2; Fritz Bley, *Deutsche Pionierarbeit in Ostafrika* (Berlin, 1891), 66–7; L.W. Swantz, *The Zaramo*, 33; Franz Stuhlmann, "Dr. F. Stuhlmanns Forschungsreisen in Usaramo," *Mittheilungen von Forschungs-reisenden und Gelehrten aus den Deutschen Schutzgebieten VII* (1894), 225–32; Mtoro, in Velten, *Safari*, 232–3. For changes in house styles and settlement patterns, see also Zelewski, *KPK* 1886 (vol. 2), 179. For the hegemony of the Swahili language and Islam in Uzaramo in the 1960s, see M.L. Swantz, *Ritual and Symbol*.

70. Velten, "Sitten," 20–2; Becker, "Materials," 34–5; Eduard Sachau, "Das Gutachten eines Muhammedanischen Juristen über die Muhammedanischen Rechtsverhältnisse in Ostafrika," *Mittheilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen: Afrikanische Studien I* (Berlin, 1898), 1–8. Sachau's informant, an eminent *qadi* of Zanzibar, told him that the Ya'arubi Omanis, who held nominal power on the coast before the arrival of the Busaids, appointed Ibadhi judges, which presumably aroused resentment. Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*, describes Barghash's interest in exerting greater control over religious offices.

71. Velten, "Sitten"; Oral testimony, Abdallah Mahine, Bweni, 25 Sept. 1985.

ancestry to Hadramaut, and the Islamic traditions of the Swahili coast reflected the long-standing influence of Hadrami Shafii scholarship. To be sure, several of the immigrant scholars won the patronage of Sultan Barghash, who hoped they would help in his hegemonizing project to make East African Islam less parochial and more attuned to the currents of literate scholarship emanating from the Middle East.⁷² But most were scorned by the Swahili-speaking patricians almost as much as were converts from the pagan interior. By trade, the new Hadrami immigrants tended to be manual laborers, peddlers and mercenaries, and their scholarship did little to enhance their menial status in the eyes of the patricians. It is indicative of the paradoxes of the Shirazi ethos that although many patricians prided themselves on their distant Hadrami ancestry, the epithet "Shihiri," which they used to refer to the Arabic-speaking Hadrami newcomers, became a term of abuse. (The epithet comes from the name of a Hadrami port city.) Also scorned, and for similar reasons, were Shafii scholars who immigrated at the same time from the Comoro Islands and the southern Somali coast, many of whom also traced Hadrami descent.⁷³

Many of the poor Shafii religious scholars who came from the Comoros, southern Somalia and Hadramaut in the later nineteenth century were proponents of Islamic mysticism, or Sufism. Many belonged to the Qadiri order of Sufism, which had a reputation for its egalitarian interpretation of Islam. In common with other Sufi orders, the Qadiriyya stressed each disciple's ability to share, through worship, some of the spiritual power of departed saints. Disciples inherited this power in an intellectual and spiritual genealogy stretching back to the original founder of the order (in this case, Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, a twelfth-century Baghdad saint). Sufi sheikhs at numerous points of the sequence attained particularly elevated levels of sanctity. During their lives, such men acted as masters to disciples within local branches of the order; upon their death, they became venerated as saints, and their graves became important centers of Sufi ritual. Sufi sodalities thus gave themselves to the creation of alternative local religious institutions. Unlike the established mosques, which were firmly controlled by patrician families, the sodalities consisted of flexible networks of clients constructed around the central figure of a charismatic Sufi sheikh, yet at the same time given a geographical focus by the grave of a local saint.⁷⁴ The Sufi orders were of enormous importance in bringing newcomers to Islam; their egalitarian flavor posed a great appeal to the recent migrants, upcountry converts, slaves and ex-slaves who had been routinely excluded from power in patrician religious institutions.⁷⁵

72. Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*.

73. The fullest account of the tensions between the patricians and the immigrant Hadrami scholars is el Zein's study of Lamu, *The Sacred Meadows*. For the Mirima see B.G. Martin, "Notes on some members of the learned classes of Zanzibar and East Africa in the nineteenth century," *African Historical Studies* 4:3 (1971), 525-45; Nimtz, *Islam and Politics*, esp. 26-8; Lienhardt, "Introduction"; Becker, "Materials"; St. Paul-Hillaire, "Ueber die Rechtsgewohnheiten der im Bezirk Tanga ansässigen Farbigen," *Mittheilungen von Forschungs-reisenden und Gelehrten aus den Deutschen Schutzgebieten VIII* (1895), 191-209. The works by Martin and Nimtz are sometimes confused by a failure to consistently distinguish the recent Hadrami immigrants from Swahili-speaking patricians who traced their ancestry to Hadramaut and in many respects were not Arabs at all.

74. François Constantin, "Le saint et le prince: sur les fondements de la dynamique confrérique en Afrique orientale," in F. Constantin (ed.), *Les Voies de l'Islam en Afrique Orientale* (Paris, 1987), 85-109. The Sufi sodalities were usually meant only to supplement—not to supplant or replace—the central institutions of religious life such as the Friday mosque.

75. The Qadiri Sufis eventually triumphed in the early twentieth century, breaking the religious monopoly of the Shirazi families. See Nimtz, *Islam and Politics*, and François Constantin, "Charisma and the crisis of power in East Africa," in Donal B. Cruise O'Brien & Christian Coulon (eds.), *Charisma and Brotherhood in*

Throughout its history, Sufism has frequently been a vehicle by which local cultural elements are introduced into the universal faith: saints' graves, for example, have often been the sites of pre-Islamic cults. In East Africa, as elsewhere, Sufis gained a reputation for tolerating many practices that were not allowed in the patrician view of Islam. Thus, for example, they allowed and to some extent encouraged the mixture of upcountry dance with Islamic devotion—a practice for which slaves had been scorned, as we have seen. This toleration has been described by A.H.M. el Zein in a study of the ritual of *maulid* at Lamu, on the northern Kenya coast. Innovations in *maulid* were among the most notable achievements of Lamu's Hadrami Sufis, and although the latter were not members of the Qadiriyya, much of what el Zein found has a direct bearing on our case, especially since the innovations he describes are now common practice everywhere on the Swahili coast, including the Mrima.

Maulid is a celebration of the birth of the Prophet Mohammed and, more specifically, a poem describing that event, which in many Muslim countries receives a dramatic performance as a form of devotion. At Lamu, the established form of *maulid* celebration, which predated the arrival of the Hadrami Sufis, was a subdued, private affair, recited in Arabic. It was performed only during the month commemorating the Prophet's birth and only in the homes of patricians. The new *maulid*, by contrast, was public and in the vernacular. It could be performed on any festive occasion, especially to celebrate such rites of passage as weddings, births, and circumcisions. It was characterized by public dancing in which slaves and other non-patricians were conspicuous participants. The new *maulid* was grafted onto the customs of the competitive dance societies (el Zein calls the new ritual "competitive *maulid*"), and eventually, as patricians lost their exclusive control of local institutions, many sought to garner prestige by sponsoring plebeian *maulid* groups in extravagant competitions.⁷⁶

Such practices challenged the narrowly exclusionary view of Islam that had held sway earlier at Lamu. Slaves and newcomers from the interior had created a new form of *maulid* celebration in which the performers integrated dance and music that had been important in non-Islamic ritual, including some dances associated with pagan spirit cults. The patricians at first deemed these practices dangerously heterodox, yet the Sufis endorsed them, at least tacitly. By dint of their learning and (in many cases) by dint of their status as *shurafa* or descendants of the Prophet, the Hadrami sheikhs bestowed an air of legitimacy on such rituals. The patricians might resent this bestowal of legitimacy, but because it was enunciated in the Arabocentric rhetoric characteristic of locally hegemonic concepts of *ustaarabu*, they could not easily ignore it.

The Qadiri Sufis championed similar practices. As at Lamu, *maulids* on the Mrima became vigorously competitive expressions of equality before God.⁷⁷ They were often

African Islam (Oxford, 1988), 67–90. For similar movements on the Kenya coast: el Zein, *Sacred Meadows*, and Peter Lienhardt, "The Mosque College of Lamu and its social background," *TNR* 53 (1959), 228–42. For Sufism generally: J.S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford, 1971); A.J. Arberry, *Sufism: an Account of the Mystics of Islam* (London, 1950); William Stoddart, *Sufism* (New York, 1985); and R.A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (London, 1963).

76. El Zein, *Sacred Meadows*, especially 40–3, 93ff, 313ff.

77. Nimtz, *Islam and Politics*, 98–9, 121, 130. As early as 1866, *maulids* were frequently performed on the northern Mrima and not simply restricted to the birth date of the Prophet: see Gaume, *Voyage*, 213–6; Zache, "Sitten," 67. For descriptions of the egalitarian and competitive aspects of *maulid* ritual on the twentieth-century Mrima: Wijeyewardene, "Some aspects," 150–6; Landberg, "Kinship and community," ch. 12.

combined with the distinctive Sufi ritual known as *zikri* (Arabic, *dhikr*).⁷⁸ *Zikri* involved a rhythmic chanting of the holy names of God, often accompanied by drumming or dancing. Its object, which Sufism shared with other forms of religious mysticism, was to decrease the spiritual distance between the worshipper and God. Worshipers often attained an ecstatic state, which (to an observer at any rate) resembled the elevated stage of pagan spirit possession. To Muslims with little formal learning, *zikri* seemed to offer an avenue to spiritual fulfillment that did not depend on the refinements of literary accomplishment. The core ritual of Sufi worship thus had an inherently egalitarian appeal to people who were newcomers to Islam and to other townspeople who had been relegated to the margins of established religious institutions.⁷⁹

By the mid-1880s the Qadiri version of *zikri* was a popular form of worship at Zanzibar and on the Mrima, especially among slaves.⁸⁰ Other Sufi orders may have predated the arrival of the Hadrami, Comoro and Somali teachers, but their adherents quickly went over to the more dynamic Qadiriyya,⁸¹ which by 1883 was instrumental in gaining new converts for Islam on the Mrima. Bwana Heri bin Juma of Saadani was said by some to have won many of his converts to Islam through sponsorship of the Sufi orders.⁸² The Qadiriyya achieved some of its earliest successes at Pangani. Sheikh Abdallah Mjana Heri, one of the most important of the early Qadiri leaders on the Swahili coast and apparently one of the first who was locally born, is credited by oral informants for bringing the order to Pangani. Comoroans, who were especially numerous at Pangani, seem to have played a major role there. Sheikh Hemedi bin Abdallah el-Buhriy, who was to be a close confidant of Bushiri bin Salim during his war against German conquest, is remembered by some for his participation in Sufism; he certainly engaged in many of the ritual practices associated with the Sufis.⁸³

The Sufi sodalities and the unruly practice of *zikri* subsided during the extremely repressive first decade of German rule and were not revived again until after 1900, es-

78. Oral testimony, Bomu Juma Kirimo, Saadani, 3/4 Nov. 1985; Hashim Abdallah, Bweni, 3 Sept. 1985; Mwinchumu Ibrahim, Mwera, 28 Aug. 1990. (*Zikri* is commonly heard on the northern Mrima in place of the standard Swahili form *dhikiri*.) *Zikri*, *maulid* and saint veneration were commonly combined in Sufism: Nimitz, *Islam and Politics*, 56. For these combinations in Lamu ritual, see Alan William Boyd, "To praise the prophet: a processual symbolic analysis of Maulidi, a Muslim ritual in Lamu, Kenya," Ph.D. dissertation (Indiana University, 1980).

79. Nicholson, *Mystics*; Arberry, *Sufism*; Trimmingham, *Sufi Orders*.

80. Karl Wilhelm Schmidt, *Sansibar, ein ostafrikanisches Kulturbild* (Leipzig, 1888), 29–30. This source is discussed in Glassman, "Social rebellion," 298.

81. B.G. Martin, "Muslim politics and resistance to colonial rule: Shaykh Uways bin Muhammad al-Barawi and the Qadiriya Brotherhood in East Africa," *J. Afr. Hist.* 10 (1969), 471–4. There is some suggestive (but hardly conclusive) evidence of the presence of Sufi orders at Pangani and Tongoni in the 1850s. See the discussion in Glassman, "social rebellion," 293–4n.

82. In addition to the oral testimony cited below, see Chande Maftaha, Saadani, Nov. 1985. (I discuss these sources in "Social rebellion," 304–5.) Although Nimitz's informants consider the sodalities to have been instrumental in spreading Islam in hinterland regions, they do not remember Bwana Heri as a Sufi. But Bwana Heri's role as a proselytizer is undisputed, and among his many converts was the father of a Sufi who introduced the Qadiriyya to Zigua villages in the early 1920s. Nimitz, *Islam and Politics*, 11, 67.

83. B.G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth Century Africa* (Cambridge, 1976), ch. 6; *idem.*, "Muslim politics"; *idem.*, "Notes on some members"; Nimitz, *Islam and Politics*, 57–8; Oral testimony: Hashim Abdallah, Bweni, 3 Sept. 1985; Idi Mwinyikombo, Mwembeni, 15 Sept. 1985. Oral informants say that the only "Arabs" to take part in the Sufi orders were from the Comoros and the southern Somali coast. Baumann (*Usambara*, 36–7) wrote of the large population of Comoroans at Pangani, the largest such community on the Mrima. It must be noted that Sheikh Hemedi's descendents apparently do not remember him as a Sufi: Abdin Noor Chande, "Islam, Islamic leadership and community development in Tanga, Tanzania," Ph.D. thesis (McGill University, 1991), 129.

pecially after the crushing of the Maji Maji rebellion of 1905–07.⁸⁴ Unfortunately, our earliest detailed descriptions of East African Sufism do not come until then, but it is possible to extrapolate some inferences concerning late nineteenth-century Sufism from those later documents. By 1908, the Sufi orders were well established on the coast and were being actively spread in the interior by networks of petty traders. (These were the same class of propertyless adventurers whom Hutley noted as “aggressive missionaries” for Islam in Unyamwezi in the early 1880s.⁸⁵) Many of the proselytisers were freed slaves or runaways, who called themselves “*waungwana*” rather than refer to their non-Muslim, upcountry origins. These *waungwana* preachers settled in villages, earning a meager living by petty trade and teaching local children a few words of Arabic; the more successful ones might persuade the community to build a mosque and employ a full-time Koranic scholar, usually someone from the coast.⁸⁶

The urban elite called these Sufi preachers “*shamba walimu*” or “rural teachers,” the word *shamba*, referring to the countryside, here having a scornful sense. The “*shamba walimu*” drew many of their converts from the plebeian population existing at the margins of colonial urban society: itinerant merchants, mercenaries, the so-called “boys” who specialized as servants for Europeans, and rural peoples whose lives had been most severely disrupted by the nineteenth-century expansion of trade and the brutal wars of colonial conquest that followed.⁸⁷ Their activities sparked heated conflicts in communities where an established Shirazi or Arab elite had controlled Muslim religious institutions. The old elite complained that the low-caste “*shamba walimu*” or “*waungwana*” preachers were winning respect beyond their proper station in life, whereas they, the Arabs and patricians, were losing their old religious prestige. In 1908, these complaints were recorded by a German official who had served earlier at Tabora, the Arab and Shirazi trade center on the central caravan routes:

The situation is the opposite of what had existed previously: before, the Arabs were the objects of the *waungwana*'s highest respect; only the Arabs and the better of the so-called Waswahili owned mosques and prayed, while the slaves and the other sorts of *waungwana* aped the more alluring habits of the Arabs and mastered a few Arabic words of prayer but otherwise were much too indifferent and lax to trouble themselves with regular prayer and so on.⁸⁸

The challenges posed by the upstart Sufi preachers and their plebeian supporters worried German administrators at Tabora, who depended on the authority of a co-opted Arab and Shirazi elite.⁸⁹

84. Rechenberg, 15 Feb. 1909, ZStA, RKA 701, 150–4; Martin, “Muslim politics,” 473–4.

85. “Mohammedanism in Central Africa,” LMS, *op. cit.*

86. For this and the following paragraphs, see Rechenberg, 15 Feb. 1909, ZStA, *op. cit.*; Herrmann, 5 Dec. 1908, ZStA, RKA 701, 137–9; Becker, “Materials,” 42.

87. Such rural peoples included those from Uhehe, Uzigua and Shambaai. Similar attributes were shared by those who supported radical Protestant sects in the years following the English Revolution and those who supported radical heresies during the crises of the later Middle Ages: see Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (Harmondsworth, 1975) and Bronislaw Geremek, “Mouvements hérétiques et déracinement social au Bas Moyen Age,” *Annales E.S.C.* 37:1 (1982), 186–92.

88. Herrmann, 5 Dec. 1908, ZStA, *op. cit.* He gives no dates for his experiences at Tabora. Those called “Arabs” at Tabora included members of Swahili-speaking families long established in East Africa: see Hutley, “Mohammedanism,” LMS, *op. cit.*

89. Iliffe, *German Rule*, 194ff.

The Sufi teachers described in 1908 had particular success with nonpatrician women. This is not surprising. Women had historically played only minor roles in the hegemonic Islamic religious institutions of the coast, and their religious marginalization seems to have increased after 1870.⁹⁰ Unlike boys, girls were usually not given religious instruction (in the 1890s, citizens of Dar es Salaam wrote that girls were instead taught household chores), and when seen from the viewpoint of established religious authorities, women's Islam tended to be more heterodox than men's. Women thus turned for spiritual fulfillment to the spirit-possession cults that were frowned on by more learned Muslims.⁹¹ A common occasion was to seek relief from the discomforts of an unhappy marriage: we have seen that local Islamic practice did little to protect women. The spirit cults banded women together in consororities and provided them with an organized outlet for religious expression that was denied them in dominant Muslim institutions.⁹² The Sufi orders did the same, and the practice of *zikri*, especially among women, often bore striking resemblance to spirit possession, with worshippers falling into trance-like states. Yet the Sufi orders had the advantage of being strictly Muslim institutions, linked to the universal faith espoused by the dominant religious institutions and given legitimacy by Islamic scholars, many of whom not only came from the Middle East but actually claimed direct descent from the Prophet himself.⁹³

Although these archival descriptions come twenty years after the first great surge in Sufi activity, they clearly describe the culmination of an ongoing process. We know that Sufi orders and *zikri* were present on the northern Mrima in the 1880s, but we have little indication of how strong they were. We know that twenty years later the orders were firmly established on the coast and were being spread upcountry by plebeians and uprooted rural people, including women. Let us assume, then, that these were among the first people to be drawn to the movement in the nineteenth century—and this holds well with what we know of Swahili society, in which women, slaves, freed slaves, and rural non-Shirazi were routinely excluded from established institutions of urban authority, including religious institutions.

Despite their doubts about the orthodoxy of *zikri* and of competitive maulids, many patricians found that the pressures of the politics of reputation made it expedient to sponsor Sufi-influenced prayer groups as a way of maintaining or building up a clientele of plebeian supporters. El Zein, writing of Lamu, suggests that this was especially the case with those patricians who found their power eclipsed by that of the expanding Omani state. The same process is likely to have occurred on the Mrima. Oral

90. Edward Alpers, " 'Ordinary household chores': ritual and power in a 19th century Swahili women's spirit possession cult," *IJAH* 17 (1984), 677–702.

91. Baumann, *Usambara*, 18–9, 30–1; Velten, "Sitten," 20; Werth, *Küstenland*, I, 294. Mtoro's description of spirit possession (*Customs*, 98–104ff) tacitly assumes that the principal participants were women.

92. For spirit possession: Alpers, "Ordinary household chores;" Linda Giles, "Possession cults on the Swahili coast: a re-examination of theories of marginality," *Africa* 57 (1987); Caplan, *Choice and Constraint*, 92–123; Wijeyewardene, "Some aspects," 211–2; P. Lienhardt, "A controversy over Islamic custom in Kilwa Kivinje, Tanzania," in I.M. Lewis (ed.), *Islam in Tropical Africa* (London, 1966); R.F. Gray, "The Shetani cult among the Segeju of Tanzania," in J. Beattie and J. Middleton (eds.), *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa* (London, 1969); Middleton, *World*, 170–8. Charles New (*Life*, 68–9) described as "typical" an example in which a woman's possession was sparked by marital difficulties. This was almost certainly the *marohani* cult described in the ethnographic literature.

93. For similar processes see G. Makris and Ahmad al-Safi, "The *tumbura* spirit possession cult of the Sudan," in I.M. Lewis, Ahmad al-Safi and Sayyid Hurreiz (eds.), *Women's Medicine: the Zar-Bori cult in Africa and Beyond* (Edinburgh, 1991), 118–36.

informants at Pangani state that although Arabs, the most powerful members of the nineteenth-century community, derided *zikri* as merely a dance rather than a form of worship, many of the politically weakened Shirazi eventually participated in the ritual. Today, with political power having passed almost entirely into the hands of the postcolonial state, wealthy Omani families commonly garner public prestige by sponsoring musical *maulids*. Loudspeakers broadcast the recital to all the neighbors, who know that the sponsors will donate money to the Shafii Koranic school whose students perform the rite. Yet as members of the austere Ibadhi sect, the Omani sponsors will themselves recite only the subdued, nonmusical version of *maulid*, in the privacy of their homes.⁹⁴

When a nineteenth-century Shirazi patrician or Omani Arab patronized a Sufi prayer group out of political expediency, his sponsorship did not necessarily connote agreement with the prayer group's views of Islamic participation. Upcountry converts and plebeians used the rites of *zikri* and *maulid* to assert their full membership in the community of the faithful, in ways that challenged the ritual authority of those who dominated urban religious institutions. Many of the plebeian Sufis laid great store by the egalitarian implications of the new rituals. Their selective integration of non-Shirazi, noncoastal practices into the Sufi rites went against the insular religious biases of the patricians and the Arabophilic tendencies of the established clerics.

Plebeian ritual practices even raised the eyebrows, and the ire, of several of the Sufi sheikhs themselves. The Qadiri leaders intended to win new converts to the faith and to intensify the religious devotion of people who hitherto had been marginal to established religious institutions. But once such people had been brought into the fold as active participants in the Sufi orders, they tended to alter Islamic rites in ways that the sheikhs had never intended. Some Sufi clerics complained that in the hands of women, slaves and urban newcomers, *zikri* had become dangerously disruptive of what they considered legitimate religious authority, including their own. Such complaints shed a great deal of light on the popular nature of Sufism in nineteenth-century East Africa, for they reveal a religious movement that challenged the authority of its ostensible leaders.

Particularly explicit is a Swahili poem composed by Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdul Ghany al-Amawy, a major figure in the introduction of the Qadiriyya to Zanzibar and the Mrima. Sheikh Abdulaziz served the Omani sultans in various clerical capacities during a career spanning over thirty-five years beginning in mid-century. He attained the pinnacle of his influence under Sultan Khalifa (r. 1888–1890). Having managed to become a figure in the religious establishment, he was not likely to sympathize with the popular components of East African Sufism, and in fact his poem, a fierce denunciation of what he considered the excesses of plebeian *zikri*, urges Sufis to be more respectful of the views of the established sheikhs.

The basic themes of his critique are announced in the poem's opening stanza, the first word of which is a form of the Swahili verb *kudhikiri*, to perform the rite of *zikri*, or, literally, to mention the names of God:

He who speaks the name of the Glorious One
does not leap and cough.

94. This description of *maulid* at Pangani is based on oral testimony (see especially Hashim Abdallah) and informal observation and conversation in 1985–86 and 1990. Landberg, "Kinship and community," gives a detailed analysis of *maulid* at a village near Pangani in the 1960s.

This is not the religion of the Prophet,
 but an innovation.
 It must be questioned;
 the views of the sheikhs must be sought.
 Where was it invented,
 this worship of coughing?

By "coughing" Abdulaziz indicates the practice of rhythmic breathing and hyperventilation used in more intense forms of *zikri*. By "leaping" he alludes to the vigorous dancing associated with popular rites. Proper Islamic devotion consists of behavior either prescribed by God in the Koran or exemplified in the life of the Prophet. But the extreme forms of popular *zikri*, the poet argues, are not true worship but the inventions of men and women. The rhetorical question at the end of the stanza is repeated as a refrain throughout the poem; this prosodic convention is used to stress the poet's core theological point.

Significantly, in denouncing the "harmful" elements of "this worship of coughing," Sheikh Abdulaziz points to the highly visible public role of women. This brings into focus one of the greatest paradoxes of Sufism's relationship with popular ideological currents at the time. Some of the Sufi sheikhs were bent on reforming an East African Islam that they deemed too parochial and too heterodox; two elements that they were particularly keen to purge were the indulgence of the spirit cults and the latitude given to female participation in religious ritual.⁹⁵ But East African women themselves, including women attracted to the rituals of spirit possession, made their own uses of Sufism, and in so doing they apparently found support among certain of the Sufi sheikhs, whom Abdulaziz bin Abdul Ghany excoriates. "I often see women carrying banners," the poet chides, referring to one of the most common emblems of the Sufi sodalities. "They drag their rosaries along the ground and shake their breasts." Such behavior is no different from spirit possession, and Sufi sheikhs have no business condoning it:

You sheikhs who study,
 opening the holy books:
 Your *zikri* is dancing
 and that's all it will ever be.
 It may as well be Lelemama
 or the Kimamvuwa exorcism.
 Where was it invented,
 this worship of coughing?

Lelemama was a competitive dance performed primarily by women; Kimamvuwa is identified by the poet as a *pepo*, one of the spirits of the possession cults. Abdulaziz derides such practices as a travesty of proper Sufism. When *zikri* was first brought to East Africa, he writes, "it was true religion, not playing and dancing. / So why in your hands is it competition, shouts and derision?" Then comes the most damning indictment: "Your provocation is to change the worship of God." Abdulaziz closes his poem by enjoining Muslims to perform proper *zikri* rather than "exorcise spirits and offer them food."⁹⁶

95. Alpers, "'Ordinary household chores'"; Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*.

96. The Swahili text of the poem, and information about the poet, can be found in Abdallah Salih Farsy, *The Shafi'i Ulama of East Africa, ca. 1830-1970: a hagiographic account*, edited and translated by Randall Pouwels (Madison, 1989), 43-6. Pouwels has published a separate translation in *Horn and Crescent*, 160-1. My translation differs slightly from both.

Village and plebeian Sufis accepted the premise that Islam was the mark of civilized life. They respected the authority conveyed by the credentials of a Sufi sheikh—credentials by which the sheikh was linked to the literate traditions of Islam, to the Arab world, and (in the case of *shurafa*) to the family of the Prophet. They revered the healing powers of written Koranic verses, wearing them as amulets and dissolving the ink in which they were written in a potion to be taken as medicine.⁹⁷ But even as they strove for acceptance into the community of the faithful, plebeians sought to recast the terms by which that community was ordered. Finding the patrician modes of worship unwelcoming, plebeians became adherents of the new Sufi orders. They used the charismatic authority of the Sufi sheikhs to give an Islamic imprimatur to ritual practices that the patricians believed put them outside the pale, and in so doing they often ignored the protests of the sheikhs themselves.

Organized in Sufi sodalities, plebeians, peasants and slaves intruded on the religious life of the Shirazi towns with what Sheikh Abdulaziz deplored as “shouts and derision.” Each village group had a hierarchy of offices, including sheikh (although it is doubtful whether many villages had a man who could claim such a venerated title), *khalifa* and *murshid*. On Fridays, and especially on holidays, the village groups would proceed to the nearest important coastal town—to Pangani, Bweni, Saadani, Bagamoyo—each marching behind a banner inscribed with Koranic verses. After praying at the patrician-controlled Friday mosque, the procession wound its way through the streets of the town to the home of an important authority, such as the *liwali* or a major Shirazi *jumbe*, or to the grave of a local Sufi saint. There the village Sufis recited a *maulid* and performed *zikri*, often continuing through the night.⁹⁸

One can easily imagine the tensions that may have accompanied such performances of *zikri* in the decade before German conquest. Villagers and others who had only marginal claims, at best, to urban citizenship, marched into town and gathered before the symbol of urban religious authority, the Friday mosque, or before the stone house of a secular authority. They then proclaimed their devotion to the faith and their spiritual equality with patricians in a manner too noisy and public for the respectable townspeople to ignore. Such behavior was provocative at Tabora twenty years later.⁹⁹ One can only assume that it was equally provocative on the religious festival of Idd al Hajj, in August 1888.

97. Mtoro, *Customs*.

98. Oral testimony as in preceding notes. For twentieth-century practices, see Swantz, *Ritual and Symbol*, and Landberg, “Kinship and community.”

99. It was also provocative at Zanzibar at the turn of the century. Pouwels records an incident in which Qadiri Sufis performed *zikri* as a provocation before the house of a powerful enemy: *Horn and Crescent*, 157 and 243n.

Feasts and Riot

At the time of German conquest, two systems of political authority vied for hegemony in the Mrima communities. One was the newly and as yet incompletely imposed system of state officials appointed by Zanzibar. Beneath those officials, and often in competition with them, were the Swahili-speaking notables who held locally sanctioned positions of rank. Whereas the institutions of the Omani state were restricted to the major commercial centers and were dominated by members of a non-African elite, those of Shirazi patrician authority were shared throughout the coastal countryside. During the boom years of the later nineteenth century, many villagers became closely involved in urban life, and some coastal villages grew into towns. But the cultural language by which Swahili-speaking townspeople asserted and acknowledged communal authority remained an adaptation of village culture.

In seeking to distinguish themselves from the pagans of the interior, the patricians elaborated myths that explained the origins of Shirazi chiefship in terms of alien conquest. Thus when speaking of town notables they often substituted Arabic words such as *diwani* for the common Bantu term *jumbe*,¹ and scholars and administrators of the colonial era, finding such myths agreeable with their own, described Shirazi political concepts as the vestiges of Persian rule. But, in fact, the rituals and ideologies of Shirazi communal authority were in many respects identical to parallel institutions among non-Muslims of the coastal hinterland.² The authority of the *majumbe*, like that of their counterparts in hinterland villages, was not imposed by discrete "political" institutions (as was the state authority of the Omani conquerors), but was instead asserted and accrued in multivalent ritual settings. These settings constituted what Mauss called "total social phenomena," within which it was impossible to disentangle secular communal authority from the patriarchal authority exerted by senior members of a kin group, the sacral authority exerted by leaders of a mosque or prayer group, or the commercial authority exerted by successful caravan merchants.

1. Other fashionable synonyms derived from Middle Eastern sources included *shomvi* and *shehe*. The word *jumbe* was widely used by non-Muslim hinterland peoples, as was its cognate *zumbe*. See Sacleux, *Dictionnaire*.
2. One such scholar was E.C. Baker, whose 1934 *Report* remains an important source for Shirazi customs. Descriptions of Zigua and Zaramo chiefship match, in many details, descriptions of Shirazi practices: Picarda, "Autour de Mandera," 297; Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari, "Khabari ya Inchi ya Wazaramu," in Velten, *Safari*, 207-11; Swantz, *Ritual and Symbol*.

We have already seen, in our examination of *kilili*, how a ritual of patrician authority was embedded within the general language of domination. The *kilili* ritual was primarily one by which a man gained the rank of *jumbe*, or by which an incumbent *jumbe* reaffirmed his authority. Yet the power of the ritual stemmed from its invocation of the everyday values of patriarchy and paternalism. It made the *jumbe*'s domination of the community appear to be morally identical to, and as "natural" as, a husband's domination of his wife, a father's of his children, a master's of his slave. This identity of public and domestic sources of authority offered an opening to low-status outsiders. Ideally, such individuals were excluded from high Shirazi ranks such as that of *jumbe*: they hadn't the requisite honor or prestige. But every Muslim male might accrue some prestige by presiding over a reproductive ritual such as a wedding or circumcision, by dominating a domestic kin group, or by travelling with a caravan to the interior. The prestige a man accrued in such endeavors might eventually qualify him to stake a public claim to a position of rank within community-wide structures—if not as *jumbe*, then as one of the *jumbe*'s subofficers in the so-called dance societies.

This chapter examines the chronic conflicts that arose over public claims to positions of Shirazi rank and prestige, conflicts that threatened the patricians' already embattled authority. The first section of the chapter briefly describes the broad political context of Shirazi decline: the expansion of the Omani state and the clash between state officials and local patricians. The positions of Shirazi rank and the ritual methods by which they were attained are then described. We will see that Shirazi authority was intimately linked with values of generosity, a quality that a man's clients demanded he display if he were to retain their allegiance and command their respect. Such demands were voiced most insistently during the boisterous feasts and theatrical rites that marked the accession to rank. Feasting is the subject of the final section of the chapter, in which we will see how the demands of clients could become transformed into challenges, often violent, to the very authority of the patriciate.

The Waning of Patrician Power

In the 1830s, Seyyid Said bin Sultan, the first of the Busaidi sultans of Zanzibar, consolidated his grip on his mainland possessions. From then until German conquest, the expansion of Zanzibari state power was an overarching political development on the coast. As Zanzibar's external trade in products of the mainland grew in importance, so also grew the efforts of Zanzibar Arabs to control the coastal city-states through which the island's economic lifeblood flowed. The Busaidi state imposed its rule of the towns by stationing military garrisons under commanders or *majemadari* (sing., *jemadari*), collectors of customs (usually Hindu merchants who farmed the office), and Omani governors or *maliwali* (sing., *liwali*). Other new settlers were allied with the officers of the state apparatus: Indian and Arab merchants with close ties to Zanzibar firms, and, at places such as Pangani and Malindi, Arab planters. The rising power of the state was accompanied by increasing friction between its agents and the Swahili-speaking patricians.³

3. For a concise account see Iliffe, *Modern History*, 42–4.

Because of its proximity to Zanzibar and the vital importance of its trade routes, the Mrima was more quickly subdued than was the Kenya coast.⁴ Seyyid Said often won the allegiance of the Mrima townspeople by helping them defy the hinterland rulers to whom they had been paying tribute. This was a particularly complicated process at the towns of the northern Mrima, which had been subject to the claims of Kimweri ye Nyumbai, the powerful ruler of the Shambaa kingdom. Said worked out an agreement whereby coastal officials north of the Pangani River would continue to seek Kimweri's approval at the royal capital of Vugha before going to Zanzibar to be recognized by the sultan. This arrangement applied to the Arab *liwali* as well as to the *majumbe*. The agreement recognized Seyyid Said as the "lord of the sea," Kimweri as lord of the mainland.⁵

This condominium arrangement was not free of tension, of course. The rival claims of Vugha and Zanzibar clashed most often at Pangani, where the two spheres of influence met. The settlements on the north shore of the river, Kumba and Pangani, were theoretically subject to Kimweri, while those on the south shore, Bweni and Bweni Ndogo, were under the nominal rule of Zanzibar. In mid-century, citizens on the north shore honored their old tributary relationship with Kimweri, despite the presence at Pangani of many of the organs of Omani state power. Kimweri's courtiers often tried to evade the commercial monopoly of the Muslim merchants, such as when they solicited the aid of a visiting European missionary in an attempt to establish direct contacts at Zanzibar. Their visits to Pangani every two or three years to collect tribute were tense occasions, as their unruly retainers ran roughshod over the townspeople. Sometimes rival Shambaa noblemen from the ruling Kilindi dynasty would make simultaneous claims to tribute, and it was never clear whether they had been sent by Kimweri or were acting on their own.⁶

The sultan's *liwali* was stationed at Bweni, on the south shore of the river, where supposedly he exercised exclusive authority. In fact, he was unable or unwilling to control the raiding and warfare of the Zigua chiefs of the immediate hinterland, whom the Bweni *majumbe* found it expedient to placate through the payment of tribute. The political and commercial representatives of Zanzibar patronized the stronger Zigua chiefs, providing them with arms and direct commercial contacts, in hopes of weakening both Kimweri and the commercial monopoly of the Shirazi townsmen.⁷

By mid-century there was a precarious three-way political draw on the northern Mrima, as Kimweri, the Omanis, and the Shirazi played one side against the others. But the Omanis were steadily gaining the advantage. By the 1850s, Pangani's *majumbe* had lost much of their power to the agents of the state, who already in-

4. The most powerful of the old ruling families had their strongholds on the Kenya coast, from which they led protracted movements of resistance to Busaidi control. See Ylvisaker, *Lamu*; Berg, "Mombasa"; P.L. Koffsky, "History of Takaungu, East Africa, 1830-1896," Ph.D. dissertation (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1977); T.H.R. Cashmore, "Sheikh Mbaruk bin Rashid bin Salim el Mazrui," in N.R. Bennett (ed.), *Leadership in Eastern Africa* (Boston, 1968), 109-37.

5. An exception to the Zanzibar-Vugha condominium was Tanga, which, despite its relative economic unimportance, was garrisoned and ruled by an Arab governor appointed solely by Said. J.M. Gray, "Zanzibar and the coastal belt, 1840-1884," in Roland Oliver and Gervase Mathew (eds.), *History of East Africa* (Oxford, 1963), vol. I, 247; Abdallah bin Hemedi, *The Kilindi*, 87; Krapf, 10 Aug. 1848, CMS, CA5/016/173; and *idem*. 9 Feb. 1850, CMS, CA5/016/175.

6. Krapf, 23 Feb. 1852, CMS, CA5/016/177; Krapf, *Travels*, 304-5, 328-9; Burton, *Zanzibar*, II, 136-8, 150-1.

7. In addition to the preceding citations, see Krapf, 2 and 20 March 1852, CMS, *loc. cit.*; Krapf, *Travels*, 100. Oral testimony, Abdallah Mahine, Bweni, 25 Sept. and 18 Oct. 1985.

cluded a *liwali*, a military commander and a collector of customs. The *liwali* at the time of Richard Burton's 1857 visit was Mwariko, a slave of the Sultan. But soon thereafter Mwariko was replaced by an Omani Arab, who assumed fuller control both of the military garrison and of the customs, and who had fewer intimate ties to the local populace. This reflects Zanzibar's growing interest in the Pangani district, especially as large numbers of Arab planters settled there in the late 1860s and 1870s.⁸

A milestone in the ascendancy of Omani power was the destruction of the condominium arrangement between Vugha and Zanzibar. This followed the death of Kimweri and the subsequent breakup of his kingdom in the late 1860s and the accession to the Zanzibar throne of the powerful British client, Barghash bin Said, in 1870. The collapse of Kimweri's kingdom was in large part a result of the commodification of the coastal hinterland and the rapid expansion of long-distance trade, which gave new Zigua and Shambaa chiefs the means by which to challenge the authority of the old Kilindi tributary princes. The new chiefs were supplied with imported weapons by the Omanis, who were not averse to fomenting insecurity in areas that they hoped to control. In the words of the Swahili proverb, a war of the grasshoppers meant a feast for the crows.⁹

But even at the height of Zanzibar's power, the sultan's authority in the Pangani hinterland was at best tenuous and indirect. It was exercised through uneven networks of patronage and alliance with political entrepreneurs whose loyalty to Zanzibar was questionable, such as the new Zigua chiefs or the Kilindi warlord Semboja of Mazinde. As the Omanis' games of divide-and-conquer exacerbated insecurity in the coastal hinterland, their troops became the only armed force to which Shirazi traders could turn for protection.¹⁰ Still, Omani military presence was slight outside of the towns. In the 1850s, Seyyid Said stationed a small garrison at Mount Tongwe, in Bondei, but by the 1870s the station had been abandoned. In 1886, a European commission interviewed the *liwali* of Pangani to determine the extent of the Sultanate's mainland authority, which at the time was being challenged by German colonial adventurers. Under such circumstances the *liwali* could be expected to have overstated his authority, yet in fact he claimed no more than the most tenuous influence in the interior.¹¹

As we saw in chapter 2, the Omanis maintained a far greater presence along the central than along the northern caravan routes, and they seized power more quickly and completely at Bagamoyo than at Pangani. Bagamoyo's *majumbe* had forged tributary ties with the Zaramo chiefs of the hinterland, the *mapazi* (sing., *pazi*), to whom they paid a share of the duties assessed on coastal trade. In the 1860s, Sultan Majid bin Said (r. 1856–70) sought to drive a wedge between the *majumbe* and the *mapazi*, but as

8. Burton, *Zanzibar*; Gaume, *Voyage*, 175–9; New to Buxton, 2 Sept. 1874, Rhodes House, Mss. Brit. Emp. S.22/G.7; "Summary of statements . . . by Liwali Salim bin Ali, Pangani, 25 Feb. 1886," FO 84/1798, 48–9; Oral testimony: Makata Kombo, Pangani, 21 July 1985; Idi Mwinyikombo, Mwembeni, 15 Sept. 1985. Two discrepant lists of Pangani's *maliwali* are consistent in naming Mwariko as the last non-Arab governor: "Habari za zamani za Pangani," in Velten, *Prosa*, 306–9; Elders of Pangani to P.C. Tanga, 21 May 1943, TNA Secretariat 679/35.

9. Baumann, *Usambara*, 71–2; Feirman, *Shambaa*; Krapf, 23 Feb. 1852, 2 and 20 March 1852, CMS, CA5/016/177; Burton, *Zanzibar*, II, 148.

10. A revealing incident is recounted by Abdallah bin Hemedi, *Kilindi*, 209–10.

11. Bennett, *Arab versus European*, 30, 63–4; New to Buxton, 2 Sept. 1874, Rhodes House, *loc. cit.*; Kirk to FO, 31 May 1873, FO 84/1374, 175–9; "Summary of statements," FO 84/1798, *loc. cit.*

the power of the Omani officials grew, especially during the reign of Majid's successor Barghash, the *majumbe* and the *mapazi* came to regard Zanzibar as a common enemy. Majid's highest official at Bagamoyo was the *jemadari* or military commander, whose loyalty to the sultan (like that of his counterparts elsewhere) was compromised by his ties to the local population. But in 1874 Barghash installed one of his most reliable courtiers, Nasr bin Suleiman al-Lemki, as a full-time *liwali*. Nasr vigorously expanded the local powers of the state, at the expense both of the *majumbe* and the Zaramo *mapazi*. Within a year of his appointment, Nasr had precipitated open confrontation with the *majumbe*, in which both the *jemadari* and the *mapazi* took sides against him. Throughout the remainder of Barghash's reign the Bagamoyo *majumbe* continued a losing battle for the restoration of their privileges.¹²

Saadani was the only important coastal settlement lacking an Omani-appointed *liwali* at the death of Seyyid Said in 1856.¹³ It was to remain so. The equivalent of a *jumbe* at Saadani was the *mwekambi* (pl., *wekambi*). Characteristically for this part of the Mrima, the *wekambi* were linked by kinship to Zigua chiefs, and Bwana Heri bin Juma, who ruled Saadani throughout the 1870s and 1880s, was said to have been of Zigua, Bajuni, Doe and Shirazi parentage. Bwana Heri's predecessor was executed by Majid as the result of a violent conflict with Ismael, Majid's slave and the governor of the nearby village of Winde.¹⁴ Bwana Heri came to be regarded as Barghash's representative on the Saadani coast, but unlike the *maliwali* who governed elsewhere, he exercised sufficient autonomy to openly defy the slave trade treaties without being removed from office. His influence in the hinterland was well known, especially with the Zigua trading chiefs, and Europeans often praised his usefulness in helping to arrange upcountry travel.¹⁵

Under Barghash (r. 1870–88) the power of the state was steadily strengthened all along the coast. By 1886 the *maliwali* were all Omani Arabs, with the exception of Bwana Heri. The positions varied in prestige and pay, and individual *maliwali* were rotated from post to post according to their performance, thus preventing them from establishing autonomous local power bases. (Again, a notable exception was Bwana Heri, who ruled at Saadani for at least two decades.) The *majumbe* ostensibly acted as mediators between the *liwali* and the local population. Their opinions concerning local law were respected, but a citizen could appeal any decision to the *liwali* or to the state-appointed Islamic judge (*qadi*) in the few towns where one had been appointed.

12. Brown, "Historical introduction", 71–3; *idem.*, "Politics of business," 635–43; *idem.*, "A pre-colonial history of Bagamoyo," Ph.D. dissertation (Boston University, 1971); Bennett, *Arab v. European*, 66–7. During the 1889 rebel siege of Bagamoyo, the *majumbe* were specific in demanding that their rights to customary payments be restored: see Taylor, 28 April 1889, ZNA, AA 1/64/202 (enclosure).

13. Iliffe, *Modern History*, 43.

14. In addition to the discussion in chapter 2, see the traditions recorded in the Bagamoyo District Book, vol. I, TNA MF/30, 55–8, 67ff; and Khalid Kirama, "Bwana Heri bin Juma (Mohammed bin Juma Mafaazii)," Swahili Mss. Collection, University of Dar es Salaam, Ms. 180/12–15 (n.d.). Bwana Heri's father had ruled during the reign of Seyyid Said: Official summary of statements of *liwali* Heri bin Juma, 24 Feb. 1886, FO 84/1798, 46–7.

15. Bennett gives the most detailed treatment of the career of this enigmatic personality in *Arab v. European*, 64–6. For the preceding comments, see Mackay to Kirk, 25 Feb. 1877, FO 84/1484, 181–2; Kirk, 6 Sept. and 15 Nov. 1876, FO 84/1454, 117–9, 227–8; Kirk, 8 Aug. 1873, ZNA AA 1/12; Hockin to Bateman, 28 July 1873, FO 84/1375, 186–8; *idem.*, 29 March 1875, FO 84/1416, 81–3; Roger Price, 28 May 1876, LMS, Central Africa, Incoming Box 1/1, A; A.J. Wookey, 14 June 1880, LMS, Central Africa, Journals Box 3/22. In these documents Bwana Heri is variously referred to as the "*diwan*," "native chief" and "headman," as well, occasionally, as "governor."

The *liwali* held regular courts, where much of his time was occupied with civil cases involving debt and other questions of property.¹⁶

The Sultanate also stationed military garrisons at the towns. The troops were mostly Arab mercenaries, persons of low status in the eyes of the ruling Omanis. Many, including most of the commanding *majemadari*, were the Omani-born children of impoverished Beluchi immigrants who had earned their living in Oman as menial laborers. Others were Hadramis, like the stevedores and contractors discussed earlier. The Arab mercenaries were popularly dubbed *viroboto* or "fleas" because of the athletic leaps with which they embellished their military drills. They tended to settle and marry locally, and their loyalties were often questionable, as we have seen in the case of the *jemadari* who sided with the Bagamoyo *majumbe* in 1875. Their unreliability was partly the result of their notoriously low pay: they were often obliged to sell their services to the *majumbe*, or undertake other endeavors, just to get by.¹⁷ The *viroboto*'s pay was stopped altogether during the crisis of 1888–89, and many deserted and took up openly with the rebels.

Forces composed entirely of locally settled mercenaries were singularly undependable, especially for the task of enlarging state power at the expense of local chiefs. John Kirk became concerned with this question in the mid-1870s, especially following unrest sparked by the anti-slave trade treaties signed by Barghash in 1873 and 1876. The Consul-General therefore initiated the formation and training of a professional army under the command of a young British Navy lieutenant, Lloyd Mathews. By 1880, Mathews had 1300 troops under his command and was still recruiting. The new force consisted of captured slaves and other non-Muslims from the interior, armed with modern weapons and answerable to no one but Barghash and his new British general. These "regular" troops (as opposed to the "irregulars" or *viroboto*) were stationed at Zanzibar, but they were used as a mobile force to exert the Sultan's authority on the mainland.¹⁸

Barghash's assertions of authority on the mainland differed qualitatively from anything attempted by his predecessors. They were largely instigated by Kirk, who, intent on furthering the rule of his client, sought to create a Western-style sovereignty where none had existed before. That goal was never attained, but the attempt engendered immense tensions. Barghash hoped that his troops might coerce the townspeople into accepting his authority, but he also sought to reduce the friction inherent in the relationship by lubricating the *majumbe* with a steady flow of gifts. Were this largess to cease, wrote one observer in 1886, the *majumbe* would seek other patrons.¹⁹ Even under the powerful Barghash, then, Omani rule on the Mrima was marked by ambiguous and shifting loyalties.

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16. Kitchener, 10 Feb. 1886, FO 84/1797, 158–65; A. Leue, "Dar es Salaam," *DKZ* 1889, 198; Höhnel, *Discovery*, I, 25–6; Oral testimony, Idi Mwinyikombo, Mwembeni, 15 Sept. 1985; Strandes, "Überschlag der bisherigen Kosten der Verwaltung der Küste," 11 Nov. 1887, ZNA AL2/58/1; also ZStA RKA 398, 50–1. These sources are discussed in Glassman, "Social rebellion," 322.
 17. Gaume *Voyage*, 87–8; Brown, "Bagamoyo" and "Politics"; Bagamoyo District Book, vol. I, 59–60, TNA MF/30; Krapf, *Dictionary*, 154; "Notes on Mkwaja," Pangani District Book, vol. III, TNA MF/9; LeRoy, "Dans l'Oukwéré," 127.
 18. Kirk, 6 May 1876, FO 84/1453, 250–5; Kirk, 17 Aug. 1877, FO 84/1486, 32–5; Robert Nunez Lyne, *An Apos-tle of Empire, being the life of Sir Lloyd William Mathews* (London, 1936), 45–51; Glassman, "Social rebellion," 324–5.
 19. Arendt to Bismarck, 3 March 1886, ZStA, RKA 396, 23–30.

These tensions are reflected in local traditions about Omani rule at Pangani, which dwell on conflict, often violent, between the patricians and the officials of the state. The Sultan and his *maliwali*, say informants, were often able to exert authority only by sowing discord between rival *majumbe*. The townspeople are remembered to have strenuously opposed the appointment of Pangani's first Arab governor, fearing that he would undermine the power of the *majumbe*. Oral traditions name Salim bin Ali as this first Omani *liwali*. This is an error, but a significant one. Salim bin Ali was in fact the last effective governor to rule Pangani under the Sultanate; he immediately preceded Abdulgawi bin Abdallah, the *liwali* who was humiliated by the Germans soon after Barghash's ill-fated successor took the throne in 1888. In similar fashion, oral informants speak of the entire era of Omani rule as "the reign of Barghash" (*enzi ya Baragashi*), thereby identifying the Sultanate with the transformations rendered by the last and most vigorous Omani sultan to rule the coast. By using these two men as emblems of Zanzibari rule, the oral traditions emphasize the expansion of the Arab state and the opposition it provoked.²⁰

A widely remembered incident occurred at Pangani in 1857, shortly before Burton's visit. Two slaves belonging to the Sultan, overseers named Muya and Ndaro, had been abusing the local populace. Kiluwasha, the most powerful of the *majumbe*, retaliated by cutting their throats.²¹ When news of this outrage reached Mwariko, the *liwali*, he hurried to his advisor, Salehe Mrambajini. A vivid oral account continues the tale.

"War! War! We must fight him! Kiluwasha has slit the throats of Ndaro and Muya as if he were slaughtering chickens!" But [Salehe] warned him: "Do not provoke Kiluwasha. We only have sixty soldiers in the garrison, while Kiluwasha has almost three hundred men under arms. Would we be able to defeat him? No, better merely to call him to be judged."

So Kiluwasha was served a summons and called before the court.

"Jumbe Kiluwasha!"

"Yes."

"Have you slit the throats of Ndaro and Muya?"

Kiluwasha replied, "I have."

"Are you aware that he who kills another must himself be killed?"

"I am well aware of that." But his armed men were massed behind him.

They had followed when he came to court, and at his back were close to three hundred loaded weapons.

Under these circumstances, Mwariko found it prudent to send Kiluwasha to Zanzibar, where the Sultan demanded only that he pay a fine, ostensibly in purchase of the slaughtered overseers and the properties that had been under their supervision.²²

The persistence of this tale is striking. It is told today to illustrate Kiluwasha's power, how his armed men could defy the forces of the state and how his wealth from

20. Oral testimony: Hatibu Salim, Mwera, 29 Oct. 1985; Idi Mwinyikombo, Mwembeni, 15 Sept. 1985; Makata Kombo, Pangani, 21 July 1985. Virtually all informants identify the sultanate with Barghash. Detailed lists of Pangani's *maliwali* are cited in note no. 8, above.

21. There is some confusion as to whether one man was killed or two. The oral accounts may telescope two similar but separate incidents, or conversely these may be two names for one individual. Burton records that "two months had passed since they had cut the throat of one Moyya, a slave belonging to the Sayyid of Zanzibar; and, as usual, the murder was left unpunished"; he vaguely attributes the crime to "inter-necine" war among the Zigua. *Zanzibar*, II, 148.

22. The quoted passage is from Idi Mwinyikombo, *loc. cit.* Also see the detailed account by Makata Kombo, *loc. cit.*

commerce could buy off any threat. While it would be unwise to accept such a colorful anecdote as a literal portrayal of affairs under Majid (although some details are verified by Burton's brief entry), it can be accepted as a suggestion of the type of conflict that simmered between the *majumbe* and the representatives of the Sultan. So long as the patricians could muster wealth and considerable armed support, the officials of the state had to yield them indulgence and a certain degree of respect.

By the closing decades of the century, however, such a state of affairs was but a fond memory. Citizens of Dar es Salaam recalled that the *majumbe* were once the highest authorities on the Mrima, respected even by their nominal overlord, the "Seyyid" (lord or sultan) of Zanzibar.

The Seyyid got on peacefully with the *majumbe*, and was very indulgent with them. If he learned that the *majumbe* had done something that was not good, he would summon them to Zanzibar. When the *majumbe* went to Zanzibar to meet with the Sultan, he would treat them with immense respect, and if he reproved them, he did so gently. . . .²³

But this account, from the 1890s, is already tinged with nostalgia. As the power of the state waxed, that of the *majumbe* waned. Ten years after he had defiantly executed the Sultan's men, *Jumbe Kiluwasha* was intriguing in Bondei on the losing side of a struggle against the allies of the new Arab *liwali*. By the 1880s he was merely described as "the elder of the Pangani natives, aged and infirm," and he often allowed himself to be sent upcountry as the *liwali*'s emissary.²⁴ Kiluwasha's decline is symptomatic of the fate of Shirazi power, although in the late 1880s there were younger, more vigorous townspeople who were prepared to defend the authority of the *majumbe*.

Patrician Ideologies of Rank: Generosity and Display

The authority of the Sultanate's officials grew alongside the economic power of the planters and Indian merchants who were their principal local allies. Meanwhile, the leading members of the Shirazi patriciate became ever more enfeebled by debt and were unable to resist the encroachments of the state, which itself was the main instrument by which the claims of creditors were enforced. In exceptional cases, such as that of *Jumbe Mambosasa* of Bweni, Barghash's officials were forced to recognize the continuing power of individual patricians. But as we have seen, the significance of Mambosasa's case was that he was a sugar planter; he derived his power from the same sources as did the Omani settlers, and thus was grudgingly admitted into the ranks of the Arab state elite.

By contrast, most other *majumbe* remained peripheral to state institutions or in conflict with them. As we have already begun to see, the patricians' authority was legitimated by concepts firmly rooted in local culture, concepts very different from those invoked by planters and state officials. Even their ability to participate in commerce was made possible only by their positions of command within embattled networks of patronage and clientele, and by the twinned ideologies of ostentation and

23. Velten, "Sitten und Gebräuche," 46.

24. Abdallah, *Kilindi*, 186–8; Kirk, 7 Jan. 1881 plus enclosures, FO 84/1599, 11–42; "Summary of statements," *op. cit.*, FO 84/1798.

generosity that undergirded their authority within those networks. It is to these ideologies that we now turn.

Chiefly Authority

The *majumbe* of the northern Mrima were grouped into loose regional confederations. The confederation in the area from Pangani south to Mkwaja was known as the *Viti Vitano* or "Five Chairs." Similar confederations existed near Tanga, where there were fifteen "chairs," and Bagamoyo, where there were twelve. Early descriptions of Pangani's "Five Chairs," such as that of the British administrator E.C. Baker, suggest that they represented five original Shirazi conquerors, each of whom ruled over subordinate chiefs. But while the Pangani area may once have been ruled by only five *majumbe*, who later proliferated into many, this proliferation had to have begun well before 1852, when twelve to sixteen *majumbe* were observed at Pangani alone. It is more likely, however, that Baker's depiction is partly the product of the colonial officer's obsession with finding neat hierarchies of paramount chiefs, and the reflection of a colonial worldview always willing to believe that political traditions were carried to Africa by light-skinned foreigners, in this case Persians.²⁵

The "Five Chairs" in fact refer to five localities or communities rather than to five *majumbe*; they were also called the "Five Fields" (*Viwanda Vitano*) or "Five Lands" (*Nchi Tano*). Within each of the five communities, appointments to positions of rank such as that of *jumbe* had to be approved by incumbent holders of that rank and by the general populace. Impending appointments within any of the constituent communities of a confederation first had to be announced to the other member communities and their citizens invited to the festivities. Ranked notables from each of the confederated communities would expect their share of the largess that was customarily distributed on such occasions, as we shall see.²⁶

Colonial administrators sometimes wrote of chiefly dynasties within each "chair" and of lost rules of dynastic succession to the position of *jumbe*. But once again this seems a product of the futile search for Persian conquerors.²⁷ In fact, no particular *mlango* in a given community had exclusive claims to the position of *jumbe*; at most, the position was reserved for members of a local *ukoo*, but since intermarriage was common and membership in any one *ukoo* easy to trace plausibly, this would have included almost all citizens. Some informants held that so long as a candidate was locally born, his kinship did not matter at all. They stressed that while an outsider was unlikely to attain the rank of *jumbe* (although it was not unheard of), his children would be entirely eligible if they had been born into a local *ukoo*. In short, the position of *jumbe* was a rank, not a restricted office, and there were few formal limitations on

25. E.C. Baker, "Notes on the Shirazi of East Africa," *TNR* 11 (1941), 1–10, and *Report*, 10; Krapf, 23 Feb. 1852, CMS, CA5/016/177. The following description of the *Viti Vitano* is also based on Ali bin Hemedi, "Habari za Mrima"; Saleh bin Fakihi, "Asili ya Shiraziy," Rhodes House *loc. cit.*; and oral testimony: Abdallah Mahine, Bweni, 25 Sept. and 18 Oct. 1985; Hatibu Salim, Mwera, 29 Oct. 1985. Pouwels synthesizes the present literature on the Shirazi confederations in *Horn and Crescent*, 32–3.

26. In addition to the sources cited above, see also the untitled file beginning "According to the custom of the chiefship of the Mrima," apparently the translation of a statement by a local informant, in the Baker papers, Rhodes House Micr. Afr. 403. Vestiges of these patterns of confederated villages can be found in Landberg's description of *maulid* festivities in the 1960s, in "Kinship and community."

27. For a fuller discussion see Glassman, "Social rebellion," 333–5.

the number of men who might claim it. If in the distant past the position was held only by the single most powerful or prestigious man within each community or "chair," by the nineteenth century it could be held by any powerful man in any town, village, or kin group. One Shirazi scholar wrote that over time the position became debased, as "even each *mlango* of each *ukoo*" demanded that one of its members be elevated to the rank of *jumbe*.²⁸

The *majumbe* collected customary duties and fees on many different occasions. The generic term for these payments was *ada*, although each one had a specific name. Most significant were the fees paid by citizens to validate all important rites of passage, such as marriages, funerals, or elevation to rank. Such *ada* were called "turban" (*kilemba*) or "sword" (*upanga*), two important symbols of chiefship in coastal ritual. The *majumbe* also levied *ada* on all caravans entering the community, although by the 1880s the Omani state had put an end to many of these commercial imposts. Hinterland people who came to the coast to fish had to secure the *majumbe's* permission and give them a portion of the catch. When cattle were slaughtered—an event that usually heralded a feast—choice parts were reserved for the local *jumbe*.²⁹

Each community within the Shirazi confederations kept a special set of drums, the *ngoma kuu* or "great drums," which served to link festive rites with chiefly authority. A similar instrument was the *siwa*, a large, ornately carved horn sometimes crafted from an elephant tusk. These instruments could be played only in the presence of a *jumbe*. They were used at feasts commemorating rites of passage within the *jumbe's* family, or at any feast at which a *jumbe* was a guest. The *ngoma kuu* were especially prominent on religious holidays, when they were played before the *jumbe's* house. Both instruments were treated with the same respect as was the *jumbe* himself: the *ngoma kuu*, for example, were elevated on a palanquin or *kilili*. Slaves and noncitizens were prohibited from playing the *ngoma kuu*, and the accompanying dance was the prerogative only of the *majumbe* and their immediate subordinates in the Shirazi hierarchy, the *maakida*.

Much of the language of communal authority can be read in chiefly rituals such as those surrounding the *ngoma kuu*. Celebrants in such rituals affirmed and enhanced their authority through the public display of luxury commodities. But the rituals were not mere demonstrations of wealth. The commodities were used as symbols, to be manipulated by celebrants within a ritual idiom expressive of chiefly authority. This ritual idiom derived much of its power from the fact that it was a variant of the language used to describe domestic authority within the household. Thus the public rituals that affirmed the *majumbe's* domination of the community echoed intimate patterns of paternal domination that most citizens experienced and conceded in their daily lives.

Ostentation in dress and adornment were prominent elements of chiefly ritual, just as sumptuary conventions were common markers of status in everyday life. The *jumbe* or *akida* who was privileged to perform the dance of the *ngoma kuu* appeared in attire made of the finest imported cloth, usually including a *kanzu*, the flowing white gown symbolic of the religious purity of a Muslim gentleman, over which he wore a richly embroidered jacket or *joho*. He might also wind a length of cloth around his prayer cap to form an ornate turban, a symbol of male authority that was also used to

28. Ali bin Hemedi, "Habari za Mrima," 174.

29. Baker, "Notes on the Shirazi"; Velten, "Sitten und Gebräuche," 42–7; Mtoro, *Customs*; Kirk, 1873, FO 84/1375, 220–8; Elton on Dar es Salaam, 1874, FO 84/1398, 211–2.



Figure 5.1. *Ngoma kuu* performed at Saadani. The main celebrants brandish swords and wear the garb of Shirazi patricians; each drum is shielded by an umbrella, a mark of chiefly power. The women in the background are Bwana Heri's concubines.

adorn the *siwa*. (In the latter instance, two commodities of the caravan trade that were also symbols of maleness—the turban and the elephant tusk—were combined to form a potent symbol of chiefly authority.) By contrast, unless they were themselves *majumbe*, the musicians playing the *ngoma kuu* were required to bare their heads and remove their shoes in deference to the “chiefly drums.” This injunction was resonant of the subordination of slaves, who were never allowed to wear shoes and were expected to remove their hats whenever in the presence of patricians. The ritual of the *ngoma kuu* thus expressed a parallel between the domination exerted by a master over his slaves and that exerted by a *jumbe* over the entire community.

Chiefly rituals also suggested that the *jumbe's* domination was on the same order as that of a male householder over his wives and children. The dance of the *ngoma kuu* was imbued with symbols of male authority: not only the turbans worn by some dancers, but also the swords they flourished overhead and the deferential manner of the *wapambe* slave women who fanned them as they performed. The patriarchal nature of the *jumbe's* authority was also suggested by the ritual uncovering of heads. Patricians valued the Islamic practice of veiling for women who ventured from the home. As in the case of the male patrician's *kanzu*, this expression of religious purity was combined with the display of imported cloth, most ostentatiously in the dramatic *shiraa* or *ramba*, an elaborate costume resembling a protective tent that could be worn only if supported by three or four female attendants. The *shiraa* was rare, however, and most Shirazi women wore instead the *utaji* or “second cloth,” a piece of brightly colored fabric that covered the head and shoulders. Yet when greeting a *jumbe*, all

women were expected to bare their heads. By removing her *utaji* in this way, a patrician woman ritually reduced herself to the level of the *jumbe's* wife, or to the level of a slave (slave women were prohibited from wearing the *utaji* or from veiling themselves in any way). During the rite by which the *jumbe* assumed his rank, the language of patriarchy was used explicitly to describe his authority. "You are the husband and this land is the wife," he was told, "and those who are in this land are your children."³⁰

The symbolism of dress and ritual uncovering became particularly powerful expressions of social inequality during the protracted ceremonies marking the death of a *jumbe*. The death was not publicly acknowledged until an elder ritually removed the turban from the head of the deceased. This turban, as well as the *jumbe's* umbrella—yet another imported commodity that served as a symbol of chiefly authority—was buried with the body, and more cloth and umbrellas were placed on top of the grave to mark its significance. Everyone went bareheaded during the mourning period, including women, and in at least one recorded case following the death of an especially revered *jumbe*, all the men shaved their heads. The social hierarchy was revealed in the amounts of clothing that men were allowed to wear during the mourning period. *Majumbe* removed their outer coats and wore only the *kanzu*. Holders of lesser ranks were not allowed to wear the *kanzu*, whereas untitled youths and male slaves were required to bare their chests, wearing only the loincloth or *kikoi*. Men who refused to remove their clothes could be fined or publicly beaten. The social ranking was again revealed by the order in which citizens were allowed to resume wearing these clothes following the *jumbe's* burial.³¹

All descriptions of Shirazi chiefly ritual stress not only ostentation but also the closely linked practice of generosity.³² The redistributive aspect of chiefship is not surprising in an institution that had emerged from village culture, where ideals of honor and paternal authority were inextricably linked with those of generosity. The good patron did not merely display his wealth; he gave it away. Thus, despite the variety of *ada* that came their way, Pangani's *majumbe* were described as poor; in the 1850s, one visitor wrote that the rewards of chiefship were "more honorary than pecuniary."³³ The *ada* collected by the *jumbe* were divided among the holders of lesser ranks, and when the fees came from the performance of a dance ritual such as the *ngoma kuu*, payments were demanded by the young men and

30. Mtoro described *ngoma kuu* and other chiefly rites in *Customs*, chs. 12 and 21, although several details emerge only in the original Swahili version, in Velten, *Desturi*. The preceding paragraphs are also based on Velten, "Sitten und Gebräuche"; Ali bin Hemedi, "Habari za Mrima"; Burton, *Zanzibar II*, 137–8; Oral testimony, Bweni: Saidi Omari, 27 June 1985; Abdallah Mahine, 25 Sept. 1985. For an eyewitness description of a *ngoma kuu* dance at Saadani in the 1870s: Roger Price, 28 May 1876, LMS Central Africa, Incoming Box 1/1/A. For veiling: Strobel, *Muslim Women*, 74–5. Middleton offers an insightful discussion of sumptuary conventions and the ritual use of imported commodities in *World*, 110, 195–7 and *passim*; a dance-song in Steere, *Swahili Tales*, 480–3, offers an eloquent nineteenth-century illustration of such practices.

31. Mtoro, *Customs*, 146; Velten, "Sitten und Gebräuche," 46–7; Baker, "Notes," 5–6; Ali bin Hemedi, "Habari." Oral testimony, Mwinchumu Ibrahim and Hatibu Salim, Mwera, 28 Aug. 1990. Old graves at Bweni Ndogo are adorned with stone devices which informants say represent chiefly turbans.

32. For a typical statement: "Tribal Government," Pangani District Book III, 1, TNA MF/9. Ibn Battuta observed these values at work during his visit to Kilwa in 1331, when the reigning sultan, Abu al-Mawahib or "the Father of Gifts," engaged in a contest of generosity with his son and heir-apparent. G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville, *The East African Coast: Select Documents* (London, 1975), 32. For a subtle analysis of the interplay of generosity, prestige and authority in the Mombasa hinterland, see David J. Parkin, *Palms, Wine, and Witnesses* (San Francisco, 1972).

33. Krapf, 23 Feb. 1852, CMS CA5/016/177; see also Erhardt, 6 Apr. 1854, CMS CA5/09/16.

wapambe slaves who assisted in the performance. The *majumbe* were also expected to set aside a portion of the *ada* for civic expenses. A *jumbe's* family continued to incur the costs of chiefship after his death: feasts and dances were expected at the funeral, and *ada* were demanded by the title holders whose presence validated the ceremony, by the representatives of the other federated communities who had come as witnesses, and by the musicians who played the chiefly instruments. But perhaps the greatest demands on the *jumbe's* generosity came when he claimed the position; as we shall see, debt and impoverishment were often the price of getting and maintaining rank.³⁴

The "Dance Societies" and Accession to Rank

The *maakida* came immediately beneath the *majumbe* in the Shirazi hierarchy of communal authority. Each *akida* in turn presided over a set of lesser title holders. Together the *akida* and the subordinate title holders who were personally loyal to him constituted a *chama* (pl., *vyama*), a guild or association, or, in the most common translation, a "dance society." *Chama* members assisted a patron *jumbe* in the performance of community rituals, for which they received a prescribed portion of the *ada* collected. The subordinate members of the *chama* were often called *vijana*, "the youths," or *vijana arobaini*, "the numerous youth" (or "common youth"), even though many were not young at all.³⁵ Such labels may reflect the *chama's* origins as an institution charged with maintaining discipline among the young people of the community, but more significantly they suggest the language of paternalism and seniority with which its subordination to the *majumbe* was perceived. Women sometimes formed separate *vyama*, but their members, mostly of low status, did not play an authoritative role in community affairs;³⁶ as we have seen, rituals of chiefly authority usually cast female dancers in decidedly submissive roles. Men's *vyama*, by contrast, performed the key rites of communal authority, in addition to providing an organizational framework for caravans plying the northern trade routes.³⁷

34. Velten, "Sitten und Gebräuche," 44–7; Ali bin Hemedi, "Habari za Mrima"; Baker, "Notes on the Shirazi"; Oral testimony as above, plus Idi Mwinyikombo, Mwembeni, 18 Sept. 1985; Akida Karimu, Mkwaja, 13 Feb. 1986.

35. For this usage: Lyndon Harries (ed.), *Utenzi wa Mkunumbi* (Dar es Salaam, 1967), 64; Velten, "Sitten und Gebräuche." *Vijana arobaini* literally means "the forty youths." For the figurative sense of the number forty see Ibrahim Noor Shariff, "Forty: the language of symbol," *BaShiru* 13:1 (1987), 1–10.

36. Female *vyama* members are mentioned in "Dasturi na kawaida zilizoanza tangu zamani" [1932?], Baker papers, Rhodes House Micr. Afr. 403; and Baker, "Notes on the Shirazi," 4. But nineteenth-century sources for female *vyama* are thin, and Strobel suggests that at Mombasa women's competitive dance societies became prominent only after World War I. At any rate, the most powerful and prestigious members of the Shirazi communities were invariably drawn from the ranks of the men's *vyama*. Moreover the ideals of seclusion implied that few patrician women would become prominent in *vyama*, except perhaps as behind-the-scenes patrons. Significantly, the rise of competitive women's dance societies at Mombasa coincided with a loosening both of *purdah* and of other markers of patrician status during the colonial era. Prior to conquest, while patrician-controlled *vyama* were still hegemonic institutions in the Swahili communities, it is most likely that dissatisfied women who hoped "to experience in play the public power they lack[ed] in reality" (Strobel, *Muslim Women*, 165) would have turned instead to the spirit cults and Sufi orders, where they enjoyed greater chances of achieving positions of prominence. Landberg suggests that women became more prominent in the *vyama* as the dance societies became marginal to political power and authority during the colonial period ("Kinship and community," 508).

37. "Dasturi na kawaida," Rhodes House *loc. cit.*; Ali bin Hemedi, "Habari za Mrima"; Baker, "Notes on the Shirazi," 3–4; Baker, *Report*, 23; "Tribal government," Pangani District Book, vol. III, TNA MF/9; Oral testimony: Akida Karimu, Mkwaja, 13 Feb. 1986; Idi Mwinyikombo, Mwembeni, 18 Sept. 1985.

The rank of *akida* bestowed enormous prestige on a male *chama* member and was a major step on the road toward becoming a *jumbe*. Ideally only youths born into local patrician families could become *maakida*. But such exclusiveness, if it ever existed in fact, was not effectively guarded, and the rank often went to anyone, including outsiders, who could pay for the costly rites necessary to claim it.³⁸ There is evidence that this erosion of exclusiveness was already occurring in the 1880s: we have already encountered upcountry-born *maakida*, probably trading slaves, commanding Pangani caravans, and among the leaders of the 1873 Mauya slave revolt were two slaves who had attained the rank of *akida*. Local customs provided for such eventualities: if a slave ran away and subsequently succeeded in attaining the rank of *jumbe*, his master lost all claims on him.³⁹ Such an occurrence could not have been common, but the provision tells us that it was not impossible for a parvenu of doubtful background to become a *jumbe*, much less an *akida*.

The accession to office of an *akida* and his subordinates was an elaborate and costly process, each step of which had to be validated by the payment of a specified form of *ada*. The first step came when a group of kin decided to nominate one of their own to become an *akida*. They collected a large amount of money and then went to the local *majumbe* to announce their decision. The *majumbe* considered the nominee's character, and inspected the money that had been gathered to determine whether he was a man of sufficient substance. After deliberation, they signaled their assent by accepting the *ada* known as *chungulia*, "the inspection." Six young men (or more, if the nominee was unusually prominent) were then chosen to serve as the new *akida*'s subordinates in the *chama*. All seven then gathered additional money and together set the day for the rite of elevation. Incumbent *maakida* sent announcements to the confederated communities of the Five Chairs; the nominee sent *ada* to the *majumbe* and *maakida* of each of the Five. At the culminating celebration, the nominee distributed gifts to all the inhabitants of the community, and visitors from the confederated communities each received a small fee known as *ushahidi*, "the witness."⁴⁰

Like all rites of passage, the elaborate installation ceremony transformed the person of the celebrant. Criers were sent through the community in advance of the rite, announcing that henceforth the nominees were to be known only by their new titles and warning that a fine would be imposed on anyone who continued to call them by their old names. It is significant that the titles of the *vyama* ranks—such as *waziri*, *khatibu*, *makata*—are all common Swahili names; hence, someone born with a distinctly non-Swahili name might, through elevation to minor rank, lose the most obvious marker of his identity as an *mgeni*. The nominees were adorned with ostrich feathers, and silver chains were placed around their ankles. Once again we see luxury commodities used in displays of authority; the former was a particularly pointed reminder that service on caravans to the interior, to the source of ostrich feathers, was central to the acquisition of prestige.

The affixing of these ornaments marked the beginning of the liminal stage of the rite: like the initiates in a puberty rite, the nominees were then placed in seclusion,

38. Ali bin Hemedi, "Habari," 174, 192; Baker, "Notes on the Shirazi" and *Report*.

39. Velten, "Sitten und Gebräuche," 37.

40. For this and the following paragraphs, see "Maelezo ya mapato ya akida" and "Dasturi na kawaida," Rhodes House Micr. Afr. 403; Oral testimony: Abdallah Mahine, 25 Sept. 1985; Akida Karimu, 13 Feb. 1986; Hashim Abdallah, 27 June 1985; Idi Mwinyikombo, 18 Sept. 1985. Landberg offers a detailed account of the installation of *maakida* in "Kinship and community," 508–17.

where they remained during a week of feasting and dance. When they emerged, they were paraded about the community, and in a final ritual, the unwieldy ostrich feathers were removed. The anklets were worn much longer, however, and could be removed only after yet another feast and the payment of yet more *ada*. This usually occurred only months or even years after the initial festivities and was often combined with a ritual bath in the sea, a purification rite that also figured in the communal holiday of the Solar New Year.⁴¹

A powerful man could affirm and enhance his own prestige by sponsoring the claims of junior kin to a *chama* title. Eminent patricians often felt pressured to prove themselves this way, and many became financially overextended by sponsoring extravagant feasts and largess. The pressures were colorfully described by an informant who was raised in the late nineteenth century:

This is how people lost their wealth. It took enormous expense to nominate a person to the post of *akida*. . . . If your child wants to be nominated *akida* and he doesn't own a thing, you have to put up the money yourself. You call yourself a gentleman? And you wish your child to become an *akida*, a *waziri*, or *khatibu*? Then put up your money!

The sponsor might be the nominee's father-in-law. This would be a likely option for an outsider who had managed to marry locally. In such a case, a *kilili* marriage might have served to elevate the nominee sufficiently in the public eye so that his elevation to a local rank would not be unseemly.⁴²

The celebrations upon accession to the rank of *jumbe* were similar to those for the accession of an *akida*, although of course they were more costly and elaborate. The nominee would not be installed until after he had sponsored a long procession of feasts and had paid enormous sums in *ada* and gifts to the local citizenry and to visiting title holders from the confederated communities. The rite of installation took place at the graves of local ancestors; thus, despite the rhetoric of Persian origin, the *jumbe's* authority was closely linked to the practice of ancestor veneration common throughout the village cultures of the coast and hinterland. Once again, the ritual language by which a man was transformed into a *jumbe* mirrored the everyday ritual language by which a child was transformed into an adult. The incumbent *majumbe* who performed the installation rite (for which they each received a huge fee, including a female slave) were called *makungwi*, a word that in ordinary parlance designates those who instruct initiates in the puberty rites. The relationship between senior and junior *majumbe*, or between a *jumbe* and men of lesser ranks, was said to be like that of a husband and his wives.⁴³

After the installation rite, the celebrant went into seclusion for seven days, while the entire community, and its guests, feasted at his expense. The climax of the celebration came at the end of this week, when the new *jumbe* emerged from seclusion clothed in the full regalia of his office: turban, sword, umbrella, and embroidered

41. For the ritual bath as part of the rite of removing the anklets, see Baker, "Notes," 7-8.

42. Quote is from Idi Mwinikombo, 15 Sept. 1985. (Mzee Idi claimed to have been born in 1876; he served as a minor functionary during the German period.) See also Hatibu Salim, Mwera, 29 Oct. 1985.

43. For this and the following paragraph, see Mtoro, *Customs*, 148-9; "Asili ya Shiraziy" and "According to the custom of the chiefship," Rhodes House Micr. Afr. 403; Baker, "Notes on the Shirazi," 4-5; Velten, "Sitten und Gebräuche," 40-2; Ali bin Hemedi, "Habari za Mrima"; Oral testimony as above, on accession to rank.

clothing made of the finest imported materials. His subordinates within the *vyama* appraised his appearance, and if he did not measure up to their expectations they could fine him. Citizens greeted him by removing their hats and addressing him by his new name, of which criers had informed them during the previous week's festivities.

Then, to the beat of the chiefly *ngoma kuu*, the celebrant mounted the *kilili* and was paraded through the community. This was the most elaborate of the rituals surrounding accession to rank and the one on which the new *jumbe* distributed the most lavish largess. Ranked citizens could stop the *kilili* on its rounds and demand that the celebrant pay them a fee called *nzuia*, "the interception" or "the stopping." If a *jumbe* was installed without having mounted the *kilili*, his authority was especially vulnerable to public challenge. Newly appointed *majumbe* sometimes delayed mounting the *kilili* because of the enormous expense involved. But in such cases, when the *jumbe* eventually did carry out the ritual, he would be expected to dispense even larger amounts of wealth than if he had mounted the *kilili* at the time of his installation.

Festive Ritual and Challenges to Patrician Authority

All important ritual occasions in the Mrima communities were marked by festive dances or *ngoma* such as those we have been describing. The word *ngoma* (sing. and pl.) means both drum and dance, but the concept is even greater than the sum of these two semantic parts. *Ngoma*, writes James de Vere Allen, "mark every important moment in the traditional Swahili life: every rite of passage, every occasion for happiness or sorrow." An *ngoma* is a celebration, a ritual, and often a feast.⁴⁴ *Ngoma* were total social phenomena, and as such were expressive of many different kinds of authority. Hence, the *vyama*, the institutions that organized much *ngoma* ritual, played far more important roles in the village and small-town communities of precolonial East Africa than the common translation "dance society" would suggest.⁴⁵ With the growth of the colonial state, recreational dance was the one aspect of the old Shirazi community institutions that best survived the overthrow of the power of the *majumbe* and their subordinates within the *vyama*. But earlier, when dance was a major expression of community authority, *ngoma* were important sites for the contestation of power.

The political significance of *ngoma* ritual is reflected in the Swahili poetic tradition of political oratory, which in turn is closely tied to traditions of public performance and competitive dance. Many poems and songs were composed to debate important community issues, including resistance to Omani and, later, German rule. One time-honored literary form was the dialogue poem, in which two sides of a question were debated in alternate verses, each composed by a rival poet. These dialogue songs were tied to the performance traditions of the *vyama*, which took the distinctive form of dance contests between rival groups, sometimes from different neighborhoods. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, these traditions of competitive dance and composition were merged with those of the *maulid* prayer groups.⁴⁶

44. J. de Vere Allen, "Ngoma: music and dance," in Mtoro, *Customs*, 233–46.

45. This has been forcefully argued by Ranger, *Dance and Society*. See also Baker, "Notes on the Shirazi."

46. Abdulaziz, *Muyaka*; Lyndon Harries, "The Swahili quatrain," *Afrika und Übersee* 41:1/2 (1957); *idem.*, "Dialogue verse in Swahili," *Africa* 24:2 (1954); *idem.*, Introduction to *Utenzi wa Mkunumbi*; William Hichens, "Khabar al-Lamu: chronicle of Lamu by Shaibu Faraji bin Hamed al Bakariy al Lamuy," *Bantu Studies* 12 (1938); Charles Pike, "History and imagination: Swahili literature and resistance to German language

Each *chama* was typically tied to a *jumbe* or some other powerful patron. Ideally, the relationship was mutually beneficial. The patron not only helped subsidize the rituals by which the *akida* and other title holders claimed their ranks, but if he were a *jumbe*, his presence and that of the chiefly *ngoma kuu* enhanced the prestige of any rite at which the *chama* performed—say, at the wedding of one of its members, or the circumcision of a member's child. In return, the patron could rely on a devoted personal following of "youths" who served him in a variety of ways. Their most common service was to assist in the public ceremonies by which the patron's communal authority was affirmed and enhanced. Male "youths" might also serve the patron as caravan personnel, and if necessary take up arms to impose his authority by force or to battle a political enemy. Joining a *chama* was a particularly attractive method by which women, slaves and low-status *wageni* might find powerful patrons to sponsor their participation in the ritual life of the Shirazi community. The ranks of the *vyama* thus were filled overwhelmingly by persons of low status, and *vyama* performances were heavily influenced by dance forms brought by immigrants from the interior.⁴⁷

Many published descriptions emphasize the ways in which the dance groups functioned to smoothly integrate newcomers into the coastal communities, and how the formalized competition between the *vyama*, each tied to a patrician family, served to channel, mediate and hence resolve potentially explosive social tensions.⁴⁸ Such interpretations, however, tend to assume that all participants in a ritual accepted without question the dominant interpretation of that ritual's meaning. Thus, if a Shirazi *jumbe* or a powerful *akida* reckoned a given dance ritual to be expressive of his authority and the ascendancy of his kinship group, then any *chama* dancer is assumed to have accepted patrician domination of the community. In fact, however, the authority of the patricians was never blindly accepted, and the rhetoric of Shirazi ritual could be used as a tool with which to question the quality of a particular patrician's patronage or his fitness to be obeyed. We have seen that members of a *chama* might challenge a newly elevated *jumbe* or *akida* for failing to appear in the requisite regalia or for failing to distribute the requisite largess and that such public humiliation was especially likely for a *jumbe* who had never performed the costly rite of *kilili*.

Moreover, the *vyama* members themselves, no matter what their origin, aspired to climb the ladder of rank, and this led to conflict over the meaning of *ngoma* ritual. In the rituals we have described, imported luxury commodities—swords, ornaments, and above all cloth—were manipulated in ways symbolic of the honor and ritual purity (*heshima* and *usafi*) of the leading celebrants, who were supposedly distinguished by their Shirazi ancestry. But as the trade boom made such symbols more widely available, ever more parvenus were able to use them to bolster their claims to patrician status. The resulting tensions are reflected in the comments of patricians who scorned such claims as nothing but the vulgar displays of wealth by *nouveaux riches*. Such complaints, however, were of no avail. As ambitious parvenus flooded the

imperialism in Tanzania," *IJAHS* 19:2 (1986), 201–33; R.R.F.H. Skene, "Arab and Swahili dances and ceremonies," *J. Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 47 (1917). Additional sources are discussed in Glassman, "Social rebellion," 355.

47. Skene, "Arab and Swahili dances;" Ranger, *Dance*, 19–20; James de Vere Allen, "Traditional history and African literature: the Swahili case," *JAH* 23 (1982); Strobel, *Muslim Women*; Oral testimony, Ndembo Maburuki, Pangani, 17 June 1985.

48. E.g., Lienhardt, "Introduction," 19–20; Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*, 33–4.

coastal communities, and as long-established Shirazi families became ever more weakened by the rising power of the state and of Indian creditors, the patricians soon lost exclusive control of the dance rituals which were so important to the public affirmation and enhancement of their authority.⁴⁹

As a result, far from serving as mechanisms for the mediation and resolution of conflicts, festive rituals became impregnated with tension, and often turned violent. Violence, at any rate, usually bubbled just beneath the surface of the formalized *vyama* competitions. We have seen that a common gesture of authority was to dance with a weapon in hand, and many of the *vyama* dances actually involved ritualized fighting. This added to the potential for violence should a dispute arise over a dancer's worthiness to claim the ritual perquisites of a particular rank. We know of at least one incident from the 1880s, for example, when a dance at Dar es Salaam, involving the firing of guns, erupted in violence when a dancer's turban was torn off his head and derisively shot at. Unfortunately we can only speculate as to the precise conflict that gave rise to this fracas.⁵⁰

As Mrima society became increasingly commodified and urbanized, the *vyama*, which had originated as village youth groups, were adapted to serve novel purposes. There are striking parallels between the Swahili *vyama* and the youth groups that were common in the towns of early modern Europe.⁵¹ In French village society, where as in East Africa a major social division had been between juniors and seniors, the youth groups served as institutions for the organization and control of the young. But in the towns, where other divisions were more significant, members adapted the symbolic rhetoric of the youth groups in ways that made the institutions useful in very different social settings. As with the *vyama* whose members were called, ceremonially, *vijana* or "young people," the French "Youth Abbeys" retained some youth specificity in the names of certain of their offices. But neither the *vyama* nor the French groups remained restricted to youth; instead, they became institutions in which newcomers to the towns, and others of low status, could exercise some social clout.

When the offices of the French youth groups were adapted to urban settings, they took on titles tinged with literary pretension, as if in parody of their superiors. The village youth groups became "Abbeys," their officers "clerics" of various grades. Just so in the towns of the nineteenth-century Mrima, which under Omani rule was experiencing the steady growth of Arab cultural hegemony. The older Bantu-language *chama* titles (such as *mkuu*, *mwinyi*, *kijumbe*) became supplanted by Arabic titles such as *khatibu*, "clerk," *shaha*, "sheikh," and *waziri*, "vizier." By the turn of the century, the most prestigious cultural influences came from Europe, and the *vyama* altered their style accordingly; Terence Ranger has shown how they adopted the style of European brass bands and military drill. Thus transformed into *beni* (from English "bands"), the

49. The patrician view is described in Middleton, *World*, 195-7. Also see Allen, "Ngoma," 244-5.

50. The incident is recounted in John Anderson Dougherty, *The East Indies Station, or the Cruise of the HMS "Garnet"* (Malta, [1892]), 34. For violent dances at the funeral of the nineteenth-century *jumbe* Gosi la Tembo of Bweni, see Ali bin Hemedi, "Habari," 6. See also oral testimony: Ndembo Maburuki, 17 June 1985; Hashim Abdallah, 27 June 1985. Violent incidents are also recounted, although for much later dates, by el Zein, *Sacred Meadows*, and Nimitz, *Islam and Politics*.

51. Strobel was perhaps the first to suggest the parallel. The following analysis is based largely on a seminal article by Natalie Zemon Davis, "The reasons of misrule," *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975), ch. 4. See also E.P. Thompson, "Rough Music, le Charivari anglais," *Annales: E.S.C.* 27:2 (1972), 285-312; and Martin Ingram, "Ridings, rough music and the 'reform of popular culture' in early modern England," *Past and Present* 105 (1984), 79-113.

vyama spread throughout East and Central Africa as ambiguous manifestations of struggle against colonial domination in everyday life.⁵²

In the countryside, villagers often united to defend the authority of *majumbe* or *chama* officers against threats that they perceived as coming from outside the community, such as from Omanis or Europeans. But in more urbanized settings, the rhetoric of Shirazi political authority was just as often used against one's enemies within the community. (Once again, the analogy with the youth groups of early modern Europe is almost exact.) Rebellious plebeians invoked the values of redistribution and generosity that permeated the rituals of Shirazi office. These values were no longer shared by those who were most powerful in the community; they more served the interests of the weak in a society increasingly divided between rich and poor, creditor and debtor, planter and slave. They might be utilized by the indebted caravan trader and enfeebled Shirazi *jumbe* to build up a following of political clients, but those clients, in turn, invoked them to make increasingly disruptive demands of their patrons, who had been placed in an exposed position by the expansion of the commercial economy and the growth of the Omani state.

The most striking element of the village youth groups that survived when they were adapted to the urbanizing society of early modern France was what their leading historian calls the "carnival license to deride." On certain festive occasions, all social restraints were loosened, and members of the youth groups took the opportunity to engage in public and uninhibited mockery of authority. Such carnival behavior, in which the social world was ritually "turned upside down," has often been interpreted as a safety valve, as a way by which the disruptive energy of plebeian discontent could be released in ways that did not threaten constituted authority. According to the safety valve interpretation, the net result of such rituals of rebellion was the renewal and reaffirmation of the dominant social order.⁵³ But it would be mistaken to attribute a single, homeostatic function to carnival or any other kind of ritual. A more fruitful approach would be to regard carnival as comprising elements of a ritual language that were selected and applied in changing settings and with various meanings. In a book on how Christian ritual was used to express dissent in colonial central Africa, Karen Fields urges scholars not to confuse human rituals with the habits of bees. "The rituals of bees are automatically and inevitably conservative," she writes. "Human rituals need not be." On certain occasions, the dominant members of society might lose control of ritual processes, and carnival rites might spill over the bounds which they deem proper. Rituals of rebellion, far from reaffirming the social order, could then become "blueprints of rebellion."⁵⁴

While perhaps unusual, such incidents are significant, for they illustrate how dissidents might use the rhetoric of tradition to articulate innovative visions of an alternative social order. Historians of Europe have suggested that these incidents were

52. Ranger, *Dance and Society*.

53. Many historians of carnival ritual have drawn their inspiration from the work of Africanist anthropologists working within the structural-functionalist tradition, particularly Max Gluckman, "Rituals of rebellion in Southeast Africa," reprinted in *Order and Rebellion*. V.W. Turner's widely read work takes a somewhat different tack, attributing "rituals of status reversal" to a universally felt need to enunciate the values of what he calls *communitas*. Nevertheless, the end result is inherently conservative; such rituals "not only . . . reaffirm the order of structure; they also restore relations between the actual historical individuals who occupy positions in that structure." *The Ritual Process* (Chicago, 1969), 177.

54. Karen Fields, *Revival and Rebellion in Colonial Central Africa* (Princeton, 1985), 159.

most likely to occur at times of rapid social transformation, when no constituted authority could exert firm control over the ritual processes that defined the core relationships of community institutions: during the burgeoning of capitalism in sixteenth-century France, for example, or in the aftermath of the English Revolution.⁵⁵ Or, as we shall see, when a political crisis came at the height of the process of commercialization that was revolutionizing East African society.

Competitive Feasting and Debt

With the boom in the commercial economy, more and more young men, hitherto marginal to Shirazi community institutions, were able to accrue the wealth necessary to claim elevated titles within the *vyama*. This posed a challenge to patrician exclusiveness. Ideally, candidates for the highest titles were supposed to be locally born, but there were no stipulations that they had to be members of Shirazi families. As we have seen, this left plenty of room for leeway, and many parvenus were able to accumulate prestige by participating in an urban religious group, marrying locally, or finding well-connected local men (perhaps a father-in-law) to sponsor their nomination to a position of rank. Wealth, which had always been a prime criterion for claiming rank, increasingly became the sole criterion, and the number of claimants mushroomed.⁵⁶

This situation was accompanied by rising competitiveness, as title holders, both nominees and incumbents, faced mounting pressures to prove their worth by bestowing ever more lavish largess and by sponsoring ever more extravagant feasts. Members of old patrician families, beleaguered by debt and by the political incursions of the Omani state, must have felt these pressures more keenly than most. Their concepts of honor and prestige were intimately tied to the practice of feasting; this is evident in the very word for feast, *karamu*, which is derived from the almost identical word *karama*, meaning an honor, an act of graciousness or generosity. Patricians lost considerable sums in feasting and dance, which often led to bankruptcy and to the mortgaging of landed property. Feasting debts, in particular those incurred at weddings, funerals and circumcisions, were said to have been among the primary causes of the loss of lands to Arab settlers.⁵⁷

The values of competitive generosity thus combined with the pressures of debt to heighten the tensions inherent in Mrima festive ritual. And because hegemonic norms demanded that a man of rank display his generosity constantly and repeatedly, all festivities, not simply those celebrating elevation to rank, became racked with conflict. Each of the major life cycle rites had a variety of forms distinguished by

55. Ladurie, *Carnival in Romans*; Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*.

56. In 1852 there were between twelve and sixteen *majumbe* at Pangani and Bweni; by late in the century, over thirty-six men claimed the rank: Krapf, 23 Feb 1852, CMS, *loc. cit.*; "Notes on Tribal Government," Pangani District Book, vol. III, TNA MF/9. (The latter document is based on the statement of a man born in 1878.) Also see: Ali bin Hemedi, "Habari za Mrima," 174, 192; Baker, "Notes on the Shirazi"; *idem.*, *Report*, 10; Velten, "Sitten," 40; Allen, "Swahili world," 219. Mtoro wrote of the increase in the number of claimants to the rank of *pazi*, the Zaramo equivalent of *jumbe* (Velten, *Safari*, 207).

57. Baker, *Report*, 34, 98; Landberg, "Kinship and community," 518-9; Oral testimony: Akida Karimu, 13 Feb. 1986; Abdallah Mahine, 25 Sept. and 18 Oct. 1985; Hashim Abdallah, 27 June 1985; Idi Mwinjikombo, 18 Sept. 1985; Makata Kombo, 21 July 1985. Islamic scholars at Mombasa, supported by the colonial state, expressed their alarm over such behavior in the 1930s: Mirza and Strobel, *Three Swahili Women*, 93.

different levels of expense and by the corresponding prestige that accrued to the sponsor. Thus they served as public affirmations of one's social rank and were essential tools by which a powerful man exerted his authority. We have already seen how an ambitious man might use the *kilili* wedding to elevate his status, either as groom or as father-in-law, and how a *jumbe's* survivors maintained the prestige of their kin group by sponsoring an extravagant funeral. The lavish circumcision feasts hosted by *Jumbe Kiluwasha*, to take another example, did much to enhance his fame and prestige.⁵⁸

Feasting frequently took an openly competitive form, as rival patrons sought to humiliate one another through aggressive exchanges of hospitality, egged on, one might easily imagine, by their clientele. As a result, feasts could be enormously disruptive, often erupting in outright violence. This emerges most clearly in a description written by Sheikh Ali bin Hemedi el-Buhuriy, an important religious scholar who was born near Tanga in 1891, the son of Bushiri's confidant, Hemedi bin Abdallah. Sheikh Ali asserted that most quarrels in Mrima society could be traced to the competition at feasts to assert one's honor and that of one's kin group. If a person well known for his extravagant feasts arrives at the feast of a rival, wrote Sheikh Ali, "he will demand this or that, whatever he wishes, in an attempt to humiliate his host." Or he might look around and declare sarcastically that he sees no indication of a feast being given. Such words would goad the host into giving away some extra form of wealth so as not to lose face, thus upping the ante of generosity. "This in fact is what induces the people of the Mrima to throw away their wealth at feasts," wrote Sheikh Ali, "so they might have the prestige to say whatever they wish at these important gatherings, in the presence of their neighbors and acquaintances."

Guests incurred a debt of honor when they accepted their host's generosity. Most were expected to repay the debt simply through deference to the man whose feast had publicly established or reaffirmed his authority. But if a guest were himself a prominent citizen, the host might trumpet the relationship of debt by dramatically presenting him with particularly valuable gifts, usually luxury commodities such as cloth or ornaments. Should the guest not wish to remain subordinate to his host in the eyes of the community, the debt incurred by acceptance of the gifts had to be cancelled at a feast of his own. This was the case whether the guest had provoked his host's generosity in the ways described above, or whether gifts had been forced on him:

Sometimes [wrote Sheikh Ali], if one of the guests is a well-known person who has not himself sponsored a large feast, the host will take a bowl of curry . . . and pour it over the guest, openly, intending for all to see. He will empty the entire bowl, ruining the guest's clothes, and then will present the guest with a suit of beautiful new clothes.

Now the guest will take those clothes which had been ruined with curry and will keep them until the day that he gives a feast of his own. And on that day he will make his entrance at the feast wearing those clothes and praising himself. He will search out the one who had soiled his clothes, so that he can repay him and show that "I'm as great a man as you." And he will treat that man as he himself was treated, or more so, and sometimes will spend twice as much money on him. As a result he will earn a great reputation. . . .

58. The various forms of rites of passage are described in Ali bin Hemedi, "Habari," *passim.*; for Kiluwasha's circumcision feasts, see page 22.

It is not difficult to understand Sheikh Ali's contention that such festivities often led to violence.⁵⁹

Competitive feasting, in which hosts and guests were provoked and humiliated to outdo one another in aggressive displays of generosity, was a widespread feature throughout Swahili society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; muted traces of the custom can still be found in practices such as the public *maulid* feasts often hosted by well-to-do families. One of the first Western scholars to call attention to the phenomenon was Lyndon Harries, in his introduction to an early twentieth-century poem from Lamu, *Utenzi wa Mkunumbi*. Harries quoted extensively from Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari's description of Mrima *chama* dance competitions, which, as Harries pointed out, were not competitions of dance at all, but competitions of feasting. The *vyama* spent great deals of money, wrote Mtoro, "because if one *chama* killed two goats, the other would kill four."⁶⁰ This would lead to a spiral of ever-increasing conspicuous consumption, as each side tried to outdo the other in the number of beasts slaughtered for public feasts. Sheikh Ali's description was similar:

Sometimes the host will take the knife used for slaughtering and will say: "Who wants to do the slaughtering? Who is a man of accomplishment? Let him come up and he will be given whatever he wishes." At once some eminent person will rise, take the knife and slaughter the animals. Even if it were only one man, he will be given all the meat, and everyone will witness. But then on the day that he is the host, he will give away twice as much. . . .

Goats and cattle had to be purchased from hinterland peoples; like the other gifts that were given away at feasts, meat was a luxury commodity. Rivals also competed in the consumption and dispensation of sacks of rice, another luxury food that was largely imported.⁶¹

The phenomena of competitive gift exchange and competitive feasting are familiar in ethnographic literature, particularly in settings where large quantities of luxury commodities were spreading rapidly through newly introduced international market networks.⁶² In Swahili competitive feasts, as in those of other cultures, hosts asserted their authority through the ostentatious distribution of largess. Feasts might be given on any occasion, the most common being a rite of passage, and they often coincided with the claiming of a ranked title by the host or his client; by attending the feast, guests publicly acknowledged the celebrant's new rank. Successful feasts required

59. Ali bin Hemedi, "Habari za Mrima," 40–2. Ali bin Hemedi was a major figure in East African Islam; for a valuable discussion see Chande, "Islam," 129–34.

60. Harries, Introduction to *Utenzi wa Mkunumbi*. The quote is from Mtoro, *Customs*, 84; Allen translates *chama* as "society." (Cf. Velten, *Desturi*, 125.)

61. Quoted passage is from Ali bin Hemedi, "Habari," *loc. cit.*; for rice, see the life history of Kaje wa Mwenye Matano in Mirza and Strobel, *Three Swahili Women*, 46. Competitive feasting also appears in Skene's account of *vyama* dances in "Arab and Swahili dances."

62. The classic example is the Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch of nineteenth-century coastal British Columbia, for which see Helen Codere, *Fighting with Property, a Study of Kwakiutl Potlatching and Warfare, 1792–1930* (Seattle, 1950); John W. Adams, "Recent ethnology of the northwest coast," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 10 (1981); and the articles by Wayne Suttles and Douglas Cole in Aldona Jonaitis (ed.), *Chiefly Feasts: the Enduring Kwakiutl Potlatch* (New York, 1991). Other discussions of competitive feasting that have influenced these paragraphs include James W. Fernandez, *Bwiti: an Ethnography of the Religious Imagination in Africa* (Princeton, 1982), 127–49; Pierre Alexandre and Jacques Binet, *Le Groupe dit Pahouin* (Paris, 1958), 33–4, 60–1, 80–1; Jan Vansina, "The peoples of the forest," in David Birmingham and Phyllis Martin (eds.), *History of Central Africa* (London, 1983), I, 87–8; Parkin, *Palms*, ch. 7. None of these examples are exactly analogous with the Swahili case; for further discussion see the notes to Glassman, "Social rebellion," 369–73.

that the patron be capable of mobilizing networks of clientele that transcended the relatively limited boundaries of the kinship group; hence the importance of securing the support of the *vyama*. Hosts were particularly reliant on female clients, who were instrumental in coordinating the labor necessary for feeding large numbers of townspeople. Thus, although feasts created and reaffirmed ties of loyalty and deference to the men who hosted them, they could also be occasions on which the humbler members of the *vyama*, both male and female, might make effective demands for what they considered the obligations of patronage.⁶³

Competitive feasting has often been interpreted as a credit mechanism, especially in situations where the expansion of market relations was uneven. We have seen that although Indian financial institutions were highly developed at Zanzibar and on the Mrima, their impact on Shirazi-dominated caravan enterprises was incomplete, especially on the northern "Maasai" routes. Shirazi caravan leaders relied on their authority as *majumbe* or *maakida* to command the labor of *chama* members who served as porters, and that authority, in turn, was based on the caravan leader's willingness and ability to redistribute his commercial wealth at feasts. Some hosts, then, might have regarded feasting as a form of investment, for it bolstered relations of authority that might prove crucial to the organization of a long-distance trading enterprise.

Yet like many investments, feasts were attended by substantial risks. The redistributive values of Shirazi authority—values that were constantly invoked at feasts, both by the generous host and his clamorous guests—constrained the individual accumulation of wealth from trade. This did not mean, as is sometimes implied in literature on similar customs in North America and Central Africa, that competitive feasting served to smooth over conflicts engendered by international commerce and to restore the equilibrium of "traditional" society. The values of redistribution clashed with the imperatives of the international market, and the forum for this clash was the feast, where those seeking to gain prestige through the dispensation of largess found the demands of creditors, clients and competitors increasingly difficult to satisfy. These demands escalated as ever greater amounts of wealth circulated in the form of cash and trade goods. Although much of this new wealth passed through the hands of the trading patricians, it rarely belonged unequivocally to them, for they were deeply in debt. The patricians in fact were pressed by two types of debt: the mercantile debts owed to Indian financiers and the social debts owed their clients. It was becoming almost impossible to repay them both.⁶⁴

As the competitiveness of the old festive ceremonies became ratcheted tighter and tighter in the boom towns of the coast, the ritualized display and redistribution of wealth often turned into the spectacular destruction of wealth, somewhat resembling the famous potlatches of coastal British Columbia. Parvenus of low ascribed sta-

63. For a similar argument regarding women's power see Carolyn Clark, "Land and food, women and power, in nineteenth century Kikuyu," *Africa* 50 (1980), 357–69. The poet of the *Utenzi wa Mkunumbi* devotes several stanzas praising the women who made the feasts possible (v. 126–131). Women may have sponsored feasts on occasion, but this was rare even in the twentieth century when their role in the *vyama* competitions became more pronounced (Landberg, "Kinship and community," 518–9). The dominant attitude toward such efforts is suggested by an incident in the *Utenzi wa Mkunumbi* in which the losing *chama*, in desperation, turns to a woman for patronage; she turns out to be nothing but talk.

64. For similar situations see the analysis of 1880s Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch in Codere, *Fighting*, and of Fang *bilaba* in Alexandre and Binet, *Le Groupe*. A functionalist or homeostatic interpretation of *bilaba* can be found in Georges Balandier, "Phénomènes sociaux totaux et dynamique sociale," *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 30 (1961), 23–34.

tus, who had managed to accumulate some wealth through the new commercial opportunities, invoked the values of generosity and redistribution to publicly humiliate the Shirazi patricians and to force an entry into the ranks of the urban elite. The patricians tried to maintain their old level of prestige and authority at feasts of their own, but the cost was becoming hopelessly inflated. In striving to outdo the parvenus who were threatening their exclusive domination of community rituals, and in striving to satisfy their clients' mounting demands for largess, the patricians allowed themselves to be pulled ever deeper into a spiral of debt.

Many of these themes are illustrated in the most extensive account we have of a particular Swahili feasting competition, the *Utenzi wa Mkunumbi*. This long narrative poem from early in the colonial period describes how two rival patrons led their *vyama* in the competitive slaughtering of livestock. Some of the most suggestive verses are sung by the leader of the vanquished *chama*. "I have lost wealth in order to seek prestige," he laments, but all it has brought is humiliation:

Slaves male and female
and young people at school
If they see me on the roadway
speak impertinently to me.

The singer then praises his victorious rival, Simba, emphasizing that the victory was made possible only by Simba's personal following of under-officers in the dance society, the *vijana* or "youths":

Simba has *vijana*,
ambitious *waungwana*,
Men of established reputation,
that is why he could do these things.

We have seen that words such as *vijana* and *waungwana* had ambiguous and contested meanings. The *vijana* who constituted the main membership of the dance societies were often of low ascribed status; in this particular case, we are told that some undertook wage labor digging wells to earn the funds to continue with their feasting. But their victory in the *chama* competition helped them realize the ambition to be accepted as worthy members of the patrician-dominated community—that is, as *waungwana*. The poet compares their feasts to those of the highest born patricians: "Even the feasts of the nobility do not match these things."

The singer praises his rival's wealth in rupees: although Simba devotes vast sums of cash on dances and slaves, we are told, he has plenty left over. This is but one of many details emphasizing the commercial nature of the contestants' wealth and the fact that the goods that are competitively consumed, including the slaughtered cattle themselves, are commodities. Nor is the theme of indebtedness omitted, although it is subtly veiled:

They came out to eat the meat,
the Indians were delighted
Because of the endless profit
coming to their shops. . . .

My brethren, let me give you the facts,
the Indians were happy

And they made a profit,
the profit was very substantial.

The poet describes the huge amounts of cloth and other personal ornaments that were consumed in the course of the competition and notes that shops quickly sold out of tobacco—all of these items being the type of luxury goods that would have been bestowed upon guests. This is followed by a description of the conspicuous waste that marked the competition:

Even the hawk and the eagle
have moved their place of abode.
They eat and drink water
because of the meat which is wasted.

We can only speculate as to the precise meaning of these last lines. Can the hawks and eagles be the high-born patricians of coastal society, reduced to the level of commoners by the spectacle of Simba's victory?⁶⁵

Holiday Ritual: Festival and Conflict

We have seen that luxury commodities were essential symbols in the rituals by which key relationships of domination and subordination were affirmed and contested in the towns and villages of the Mrima. Thus, market exchange, although widespread, was not the only mechanism by which trade goods were disseminated throughout the region; commodities were also displayed and circulated in complex rituals that had little to do with buying cheap and selling dear. Competitive feasting and gift exchange in fact served as the models for Marcel Mauss's concept of the "total social phenomenon," in which many different kinds of social transactions were combined in a single, highly concentrated ritual. Thus a Swahili funeral or circumcision was often far more than a rite of passage in the life cycle of an individual. Swahili speakers themselves rarely tried to disentangle the many meanings of such rites: the sources usually conflate drumming, dancing and political oratory with the practices of feasting and festival. In a similar fashion, it was common for other peoples who practiced competitive feasting to call their complex rites simply "dances" or "festivities." In such a ritual setting, where reproductive rites, economic transactions and political rivalry were melded into theatrical assertions of domestic and community authority, festival and conflict often coincided.⁶⁶

Major holidays, when the entire Swahili community engaged in feasting and public ritual at the same time, could therefore be extremely tense occasions. The most prominent revellers were persons of low status. (By contrast, powerful Arabs, whose authority did not rely on the ritual practices of Shirazi festival, generally stayed out of holiday rituals altogether, except as occasional patrons.⁶⁷) During the major religious festivals, as we have seen, village Sufi groups would parade into town and con-

65. *Utenzi wa Mkunumbi*, verses 95–114. In the dialect used by the poet, the *vyama* are called *mikao*, and the variant *zijana* is used for *vijana*.

66. Mauss, *The Gift*; also see the literature on Kwakwaka'wakw and Central African gift exchange cited above, especially Fernandez, *Bwiti*, ch. 6; Codere, *Fighting*; and Balandier, "Phénomènes."

67. See the comment in Schmidt, *Sansibar*, 29–30.

gregate before the Friday mosque or before the home of a secular authority, and the streets would fill with the sounds of *maulids* and *zikri*. Holidays were occasions for the chiefly *ngoma kuu* and *siwa* to be played and for public dances to be held before the homes of *majumbe*. The *majumbe* were expected to display their generosity by distributing holiday largesse to their constituents.⁶⁸

The two main religious festivals were Idd al-Hajj, so called because it came during the month of the Hajj or pilgrimage, and Idd al-Fitr, which closed the holy month of Ramadhan. Both were celebrated with a great deal of revelry, although Idd al-Hajj, known as the "major feast," perhaps had more solemn religious observances. On Idd al-Fitr, the end of the month of fasting and abstinence was marked (then as now) by excess and even licentiousness. People paraded in their finery and performed public dances, which had been frowned on during the holy month. Each night during Ramadhan dance groups had circulated through the streets of the town just before dawn, wakening those who wished to take a last meal before resuming the fast at sunup; these dancers now reappeared in fantastic costumes, performing their satirical songs and noisily demanding *ada*. Similar activities took place on Idd al-Hajj. On the latter holiday people followed the common Islamic observance of slaughtering goats or sheep and giving them as gifts, in commemoration of the sacrifice offered by Abraham in lieu of his son. The *vyama* celebrated Idd al-Hajj by the performance of competitive dances, including the often violent *kiumbizi*.⁶⁹

Some of the more boisterous aspects of Swahili festive behavior might be expected to have been held in check by religious sensibilities on the sacred holidays of Idd al-Hajj and Idd al-Fitr. The same could not be said about the notorious carnival celebration of the Solar New Year, which was unconnected in any way with the lunar calendar of Muslim ritual. The holiday was sometimes referred to by the Persian word *Nairuz*, particularly in documents written by colonial administrators or patrician elites who for their own ideological reasons wished to emphasize links between Shirazi culture and the Middle East.⁷⁰ But it was most commonly known as *Kuoga Mwaka*, "to wash the New Year," after its most distinctive ritual, or simply as *Siku ya Mwaka*, New Year's Day. In the nineteenth century the New Year festival was more widely observed than were the religious festivals, especially by villagers and others of low status. Whereas the religious festivals were closely tied to the established Islamic institutions of the towns, the New Year rites were connected to village spirit cults and ancestor veneration. An important role was played by the *myvale*, the female ritual expert who also presided over the agricultural cycle. One of the most striking of the New Year rites was the circulation of the bull, a scapegoat or (more precisely) carrier ritual, which, like the ritual bathing in the sea that gave the holiday its name, was meant to cleanse the community of evil spirits.⁷¹

68. Velten, "Sitten," 42; Oral testimony, Abdallah Mahine, 25 Sept. 1985, 17 Aug. 1990.

69. Guillaing, *Documents*, II:1, 106-7, 7-8; Mtoro, *Customs*, 192-3, and for *kiumbizi* violence, 87; Sacleux, *Dictionnaire*, 294. Information on the *daku* singers of Ramadhan is culled from conversation and observation at Zanzibar and Pangani, where the practice continues in attenuated form (as does that of sending gifts of food on Idd al-Hajj); also see Lienhardt, "Introduction," 41-3.

70. Glassman, "Social rebellion," 379-80.

71. For *Siku ya Mwaka*, see John Gray, "Nairuzi or Siku ya Mwaka," *TNR* 38 (1955), 1-22; *idem.*, "Nairuzi: some additional notes," *TNR* 41 (1955), 69-72 (and an addendum by W. Wenban-Smith on page 74); Strobel, *Muslim Women*, 81-4; E.C. Baker, "Tribal calendars," *TNR* 33 (1952), 33; Krapf, *Dictionary*, 338; Horner to Gaume, in *Missions Catholiques* III (1870), 270; Baumann, *Usambara*, 30; Werth, *Küstenland* I, 299; Mtoro,

Like calendrical rites found elsewhere in tropical Africa, *Siku ya Mwaka* contained practices of status reversal. The holiday resembled what historians of early modern Europe have called "festivals of misrule," when subordinate citizens were given license to flout conventional restraints, defy authority, and, if only for a day, control the ritual proceedings of the community. Accordingly, women played a dominant role in *Siku ya Mwaka* festivities, often overstepping the confines of everyday propriety. The carnival rites blurred all boundaries of status, rank and even gender: cross-dressing was sometimes observed.⁷² The day immediately preceding the holiday abounded in danger, as all the evil spirits of the preceding year were said to be uncontrollable, and mysterious mishaps were likely to occur. On the holiday itself, brawls routinely broke out and vengeance was reaped without fear of punishment. Creditors were a common target, particularly Indian merchants. At Pangani and Zanzibar, the ritual bath sometimes took a sinister tone, as people were hurled against their wills into the harbor. As on other holidays, this was an occasion for feasts, wrestling matches and competitive dances, which, given the prevailing tone of the day, were more likely to turn violent than on other days.⁷³

Another occasion for communal festivities was the return of a caravan from the deep interior. These were particularly auspicious events for the Shirazi patricians, whose prestige and social position largely depended on their continued involvement in the caravan trade. They were also prime occasions for the young men who had served as porters to declare their standing within the community. When the returning caravan reached a spot several hours from town, camp was pitched and a messenger sent ahead to inform the townspeople that the caravan was approaching. The townswomen, who during the men's absence had been expected to dress and act as if in mourning, now put on their most festive costumes and prepared for elaborate feasts.⁷⁴

After a dramatic delay of several days, the caravan entered the town in triumph. A returning *jumbe* might make his entrance carried upon the *kilili*, dispensing the

Customs, 192-3; Guillain, *Documents* II:1, 107; Mirza and Strobel, *Three Swahili Women*, 45-6; Middleton, *World*, 74, 181; Landberg, "Kinship and community," 414-7. Oral testimony: Abdallah Mahine, 17 Aug. 1990; Ali Waziri, 12 Sept. 1985; Hashim Abdallah, 27 June 1985; Ndembo Maburuki, 17 June 1985. For the bull circulation, see also el Zein, *Sacred Meadows*; Wijeyewardene, "Some aspects"; and Lienhardt, "A controversy over Islamic custom," 374-86. For the distinction between scapegoats and carriers, see Derek Wright, "Scapegoats and carriers: new year festivals in history and literature," *Journal of African Studies* 14:4 (1987/88), 183-9.

72. Margaret Strobel was the first to highlight the parallel with European "Misrule" festivals. In addition to the above citations, see Burton's comment on the behavior of women in Swahili holiday celebrations generally: *Lake Regions*, 30. In 1861, Decken observed cross-dressing during the holiday at Mombasa (cited in Gray, "Additional notes"). I witnessed cross-dressing at Pangani in 1985 as part of the mumming and carnival festivities that now mark Idd al-Fitr; Middleton argues plausibly (in *World*, 181) that Idd al-Fitr, which most Swahili-speaking coastal Muslims now celebrate as the first day of the ritual calendar, has absorbed many of the old new year carnival rites in places (like Pangani) where *Siku ya Mwaka* is no longer observed.

73. In addition to the above sources, see John Gray's suggestive comment in "Memoirs of an Arabian Princess," *TNR* 37 (1954), 52. For wrestling: Oral testimony, Mwinchumu Ibrahim and Hatibu Salim, Mwera, 28 Aug. 1990.

74. For this and the following two paragraphs see especially Ali bin Hemedi, "Habari," 193; Elton, "Report on Dar es Salaam," 7 Jan. 1874, FO 84/1398, 214; Eugen Krenzler, *Ein Jahr in Ostafrika* (Ulm, 1888), 71; Krapf, *Travels*, 338-9; Suleiman bin Mwinyi Chande, "Safari yangu ya barra Afrika," in Velten, *Safari*, 48; Stokes to Macdonald, 13 Sept. 1887, ZNA AA 2/44; F.R. Hodgson, "A journey from Zanzibar to Magila," May 1881, UMCA Box A1 (IV) A, 19-20; Zache, "Sitten und Gebräuche," 67; and the following oral testimony, 1985: Abdallah Mahine, 25 Sept. and 18 Oct.; Hashim Abdallah, 27 June; Idi Mwinyikombo, 18 Sept.; Saidi Omari, 27 June.

largess essential to the ritual. The *ngoma kuu* and *siwa* were played, *maulids* and competitive dances performed, and enormous wealth expended on food, drink, and largess. In Pangani, wrote one observer, "there was no end to the carousals. . . . Amusements were set up in boats on the waterfront, fireworks were set off at night, and a large portion of the often considerable profits was dissipated in a short time."⁷⁵ The whole of the journey's profits might be lost on gambling and prostitutes. Indian merchants complained of disorders caused by drunkenness, and European observers were often startled by the shooting of firearms with which the caravaners celebrated their return.

In such a carnival atmosphere, a young man, flush with the success of his arduous journey, would be eager to enhance his prestige in the eyes of his neighbors. If he had earned enough on the journey to pay off his Indian creditor and still show a profit, the pressures would be great to prove himself publicly—to expend his new wealth on the feasts at which he might claim a higher rank within the *vyama*, or perhaps even the rank of *jumbe*. "And this was how wealth was lost," declared an exceptionally knowledgeable elderly informant, "this was how money was eaten up!"

The profits which you had gone upcountry to earn were now used up. You've used up all of your profits so that you can be nominated to the rank of *akida*, you've borrowed money from people and now you cannot pay up. Well then: you've got to sell your lands!⁷⁶

At such moments, the temptation to affirm or enhance one's status coincided with the temporary possession of relatively huge amounts of cash or trade goods. The result was extravagant feasting and, at times, the ostentatious destruction of wealth, as money and valuables were thrown into the Pangani River.⁷⁷

These celebrations were extremely festive; they were also taut with suppressed violence. The returning trader was expected to settle the financial debts owed his Indian creditors, and more often than not, this left him with little or nothing to show for the journey. But on top of that, if he were to claim any stature within the community he would have to pay the debts of largess that accrued to a man of rank. The caravan trader thus found himself torn by the demands of two opposing systems of authority: the demands of generosity that were voiced by the clients of any man who aspired to exert control over Shirazi community institutions, and the demands of Indian creditors and their protector, the Omani state. On these occasions, as on many others in the ritual life of the Mrima, festival, debt and affirmation of status came together in a mix that was dangerously combustible.

Most townspeople perceived community authority in terms rooted in the values of village society, values at odds with many of those by which the Omani state elites and their allies justified their power. Whereas the state was imposed from above by a largely foreign administrative and military elite, the Shirazi patricians derived their authority from the participatory rituals of everyday life. Omani hegemony was reinforced by ideologies of merchant capital and commodity exchange, in which power accrued to whoever dominated the production and marketing of exchange values.

75. Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 120.

76. Idi Mwinyikombo, *loc. cit.*

77. Abdallah Mahine, *loc. cit.*

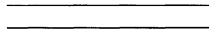
According to that scheme of things, the merchant who financed a safari won more benefits than did the caravan leader who actually performed the journey, and the planter might treat his personal dependents as little more than chattel. But such notions had little resonance in the minds of most townspeople, not even among caravan specialists who devoted their lives to long-distance trade and international commerce. Service on a caravan brought prestige in and of itself, and any material profits from the journey were useful only if they might be given away as largess or otherwise transformed into symbols of family honor and ritual purity.

Shirazi ritual always had the potential to disrupt social order, especially during festivals when the entire community engaged in noisy public discourse about the shape of its core institutions. Threats that public ritual might get out of control became even more acute during the second half of the century, as the patricians were weakened by the expansion of the Omani state and the pressures of debt, and as more and more parvenus—slaves, villagers, newcomers from upcountry—sought to claim citizenship and status within the towns. Holiday ritual was usually kept within bounds despite these intensifying pressures, and the established order normally survived even the raucous New Year's carnival. But some years were exceptional. At certain historical junctures, as the relative power of various social forces changed rapidly, the potential for violence grew accordingly. Conflicting citizens (or would-be citizens) had always utilized ritual to articulate and contest their conflicting demands. By the closing decades of the nineteenth century, they found that their differences over the meanings of ritual had become so sharp that the rituals themselves were more likely than usual to lead to blows.

In mid-August 1888, three major Swahili festivals coincided. The German East Africa Company took up its administrative duties on the carnival of the Solar New Year, when villagers, slaves, women, and others of low social rank engaged in disorderly celebrations of misrule. The following day was the religious festival of Idd al-Hajj, and the narrow streets of the towns filled with village Sufi groups, coming in from rural areas to perform their devotions as a kind of challenge to the religious hegemony of urban Muslims. And all during the initial weeks of the crisis, returning caravan personnel streamed into the towns. The leaders of the caravans were eager to flaunt their prestige and power after a long and strenuous journey; their followers were sure to demand that they fulfill the obligations incumbent on their status as powerful patrons; and their creditors, backed by the power of the state, were ready to call in their debts.

These were the circumstances in which the German officers, in the name of the Sultan of Zanzibar, rashly humiliated the local elites and desecrated the Islamic institutions that they were charged to preserve. In such a setting, the potential for violence was enormous.

PART III:



THE RESPONSE TO GERMAN CONQUEST

Big Men and Impudent Children

You Germans came unarmed and without soldiers, carrying only a letter from the sultan, which to our ears had a hollow ring. To one place came two, to another three or at most four officers. Had these few come in friendship, had they restricted themselves to the tolls and done all they could to win us, the ruling party of Arabs, over to their side, we would now be sitting peacefully together in the coast towns. But no: despite their powerlessness, these defenseless people . . . issued commands and orders, and behaved as if they were the lords of the land and we their slaves. We watched all this for a while, and then we simply chased the whites away as one sends insolent children from the room. Now the English are another matter, they are a rich and powerful nation, but the Germans seem to be merely wadogodogo, puny people.

Bushiri bin Salim, October 1888¹

A quarter-century of turbulent change had produced much combustible material in coastal society, requiring only the spark of German intrusion to ignite it. Yet in 1888–89, German officials and colonial enthusiasts depicted ordinary East Africans as mired in tradition, deferential to their superiors and likely to participate in political action only if duped into it. The upheaval was thus portrayed as an “Arab revolt” rather than as a deeply rooted social movement. Modern authors have taken a somewhat different tack, focusing on the provocations caused by agents of the German East Africa Company (*Deutsch Ostafrikanische Gesellschaft*, or DOAG) during the brief period before the uprising. Inspired by the political triumphs of African nationalism which were still fresh when they wrote, these authors argued that foreign intrusion provoked a broad alliance of Africans to unite behind their leaders in defense of threatened political traditions.²

1. Baumann, *In Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 139.

2. The most notable of these works are Müller, *Deutschland*; Jackson, “Resistance to the German invasion”; Kieran, “Abushiri and the Germans.”

Readers who have persisted this far will easily recognize the shortcomings of these interpretations, having seen not only the volatility of coastal society but also the intensely contested nature of the traditions that structured the Muslim communities. Plebeians and slaves may have respected the prestige of Islam, commerce and Shirazi rank, but such respect hardly implied deference toward Arab elites, Indian merchants, or Shirazi patricians. Cultural conservatism, the type of outlook that might have inspired a determined defense of "tradition," was hard to find in the turbulent 1880s. Many of the region's leading cultural innovators, including warlords and trading chiefs who had derived their social status through the manipulation of European commodities, would take up arms against the Germans. Semboja's notorious thirst for European liquor and other imports did not prevent him from sending warriors to the coast during the opening weeks of the crisis, and Bwana Heri of Saadani, although well known as a friend of European missionaries and as the leading "Arabizer" of his part of the Mrima, became perhaps the most implacable foe of both the Germans and the Sultanate. But perhaps most significant is the simple consideration that among the Germans' fiercest enemies in 1888 were people who had been some of their earliest collaborators in 1885 and 1886, when Company agents were intent on undermining the authority of traditional political elites. This fact alone belies any motivation based on a deep-seated fear of foreign influence.

An explanation of the uprising that focuses primarily on German provocation cannot hold up to a careful examination of the DOAG stations during their brief existence from March 1886 to the outbreak of rebellion. Although German activities were most concentrated in the hinterlands of Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam, that was neither where the rebellion first broke out nor where it sustained itself the longest. The Company's activities were remarkably superficial at any rate. Only the most gullible of colonial enthusiasts believed the glowing reports published by Company agents in the German press; observers such as the German consul-general knew those reports to be almost sheer fabrication, intended to encourage investment in the financially shaky DOAG.³ The economic impact of the German stations was negligible, and the political impact ambiguous. Upon their arrival, the Company agents were seen not as challengers to the prevailing system of big man politics but rather as players in the same game. Their African neighbors regarded them as yet another set of potential patrons and trading warlords, although it soon became clear that for all their bluster they were in fact only ineffectual *wadogodogo*, little people.

But while the Germans were only a sporadic and superficial presence before 1888, it would be a mistake to ignore their extraordinarily rash behavior, which crystallized many of the conflicts that have been described in the preceding chapters. During the first phase of their activity—the subject of this chapter—DOAG agents sought to challenge the sultan's authority in the hinterland by collecting treaties in which local chiefs supposedly ceded sovereignty to the Company, and, beginning in 1886, by building Company stations at strategic points along the caravan routes. Company officers intended these challenges to be heard primarily by a European audience, particularly

3. See reports by Arendt and Michahelles from 1886–87, in ZStA, RKA 386; also Michahelles to Bismarck, 26 Sept. 1887, ZNA, AL2/107/273–7. Michahelles was more favorably inclined toward the DOAG's endeavors than was his predecessor, yet even he wrote that he had stopped giving credence to the DOAG agents' reports, which were full of "*Schönfärberei*."

by the diplomats who were jockeying for position in the preemptive partition of Africa which had begun officially at the Berlin Conference of 1884–85. Barghash could not help but feel pressured to respond, and, given disingenuous encouragement by British consuls, he set about responding to the German moves by claiming a formal "sphere of influence" in mainland territories where his influence had never been more than informal. These moves and countermoves heated up the long-smoldering tensions within the towns and their hinterlands concerning the boundaries of the Muslim communities and the nature of Arab and Shirazi hegemony.

Those tensions reached a white-hot pitch during the short-lived second phase of Company activity, which began in mid-1888 after the sultan signed treaties awarding the Company the right to administer the coast towns in his name. The treaties shifted the terms of the conflict: whereas the Germans had initially been seen as the sultan's rivals, by September 1888 many Africans perceived them as the sultan's clients. During both phases the Company agents' unusual arrogance and brutality provoked hostile responses. But the patterns taken by those responses were conditioned by where a particular person stood in relation to the underlying historical processes of the time, especially the expansion of the Omani state and the commodification of social relationships. These were processes which the Company agents themselves did little to alter.

"Conquistadors" and German Colonial Interests

We must first ask what the Company agents hoped to accomplish in East Africa, and seek an explanation (if one is possible) for their often brutal behavior. It is one of the great ironies of the history of German East Africa that the Company was wholly peripheral to the main thrust of German imperial expansion. This fact helps explain the rashness with which its employees sparked the uprising, an uprising that in turn pulled the Imperial Government reluctantly into East Africa.

The agents of the DOAG were rank interlopers in East African affairs. Hamburg merchants had been active at Zanzibar since mid-century, but much of their business, such as finance and shipping, had no direct connection with the mainland, and like all Europeans at Zanzibar, they were utterly dependent on well-cultivated ties to the island's Indian businessmen and to the Indians' Omani protectors. Established German merchants, then, were closely tied to the fortunes of the mercantile state of Zanzibar, and consequently were hostile to any colonial adventure that might threaten the stability of the Sultanate or their smooth relations with it.⁴ Bismarck, like his counterparts in London and Paris, tended toward a similar view.⁵

4. See especially the correspondence of the leading German importer at Zanzibar, Albrecht O'Swald (HStA 621–2, *passim*), who, recognizing his reliance on the Indians and their patron, would become a staunch defender of the Sultan against the claims of the DOAG. Also see Helmut Washausen, *Hamburg und die Kolonialpolitik des deutschen Reiches, 1880 bis 1890* (Hamburg, 1968), 84–5, 92–3; Glassman, "Social rebellion," 397–400.

5. For a concise statement see Ronald Robinson, "The conference in Berlin and the future in Africa, 1884–85," in Stig Förster, Wolfgang Mommsen and R. Robinson (eds.), *Bismarck, Europe and Africa: the Berlin Africa Conference 1884–85 and the Onset of Partition* (London, 1988), 1–32. This and the next several paragraphs are based largely on Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Bismarck und der Imperialismus* (Cologne, 1969); Müller, *Deutschland*; Kurt Büttner, *Die Anfänge der deutschen Kolonialpolitik in Ostafrika* (Berlin, 1959); Washausen, *Hamburg*.

But the DOAG did not represent the interests of the Hamburg merchants. Its founder was an unstable young anglophile named Carl Peters, an apparent sadist and a patent fraud, who in the following century would be elevated to the status of a minor god in the pantheon of the Thousand Year Reich. After taking a doctorate in history but failing to secure a university position, Peters succumbed to the chauvinist *Kolonialrausch* or "colonial fever" that gripped the imaginations of many Germans in the early 1880s. He first dreamt of creating a private domain in southern Africa after the model of Cecil Rhodes, and, seeking funds, he approached the *Kolonialverein* (KV), the main organization of the German colonial movement. But Peters's schemes were too wild even for the visionary KV, which believed it necessary to solidify political and financial support at home before proceeding with colonial adventures abroad. Contemptuous of such "theorizing" and eager to get on with the "practical" work of creating a German overseas empire, Peters established a rival organization, the *Gesellschaft für deutsche Kolonisation* (GfdK), in early 1884.⁶

Most of Peters's colleagues in the GfdK were drawn from the ranks of impoverished Junkers, idle military officers and ruined petit-bourgeois, who hoped that overseas they might find the glory and riches denied them in the rapidly industrializing world of Bismarck's Germany. Their aim was to create private ventures modeled on the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Companies of Adventurers (Peters used the English term), and then to obtain governmental letters of protection, akin to the old royal charters. By late 1884, inspired in part by the writings of Henry Morton Stanley, they had decided on the Zanzibari mainland as the field for their exploits, and, having established the DOAG as the first of their subsidiary corporations, four of them set out in November, their heads full of visions of Cortez conquering the Aztecs. In diplomatic and colonialist circles their schemes were regarded as dangerous folly—Bismarck referred to them sarcastically as "the Conquistadors"—and they felt compelled to travel incognito.

The poorly equipped expedition lasted only three weeks (Fritz-Ferdinand Müller has written that the party carried whips in lieu of the proper equipment), yet upon his return to Germany, Peters produced a dozen treaties in which village elders ceded full "sovereignty" to over 140,000 square kilometers of land—land that in fact belonged to the elders' neighbors, enemies, and distant strangers. Informed German observers, Bismarck among them, recognized these treaties as fraudulent and lacking any legal basis. Peters admitted as much, and in any case DOAG's resources were far from sufficient for the assumption of "sovereign rights." But the Company's true purpose in gathering the treaties was to prod the German government into backing colonial enterprises. Bismarck scorned Peters and opposed his plans to form a German settler colony. But the Chancellor had already begun to toy with colonialism as a minor but useful instrument in his political and diplomatic tool kit, and, in a typically cynical set of calculations that had everything to do with domestic and European power politics and nothing to do with a serious interest in colonies, he decided to give the German colonial movement the encouragement it sought. In February 1885, on the day that the Berlin Conference adjourned, Bismarck granted the DOAG's request for an imperial protectionary charter.

6. For the German colonial movement, also see Klaus J. Bade, "Imperial Germany and West Africa: colonial movement, business interests, and Bismarck's 'colonial policies,'" in Förster *et al.*, *Bismarck, Europe*, 121–47.

We need not concern ourselves with the century-long debate over what spurred Bismarck's sudden decision to support colonial ventures and over just how sudden it was.⁷ Yet it must be noted that Bismarck never intended to undertake active colonial administration in East Africa; the colony was to remain a private venture operating as a concession from the Sultan of Zanzibar, and Bismarck was forced to change his plans only by the need to suppress the rising of 1888–89.⁸ Even after he had issued the protectionary charter, Bismarck's vision of German colonialism resembled the limited one of the Hamburg merchants rather than Peters's grandiose schemes of settlement and rule. His highest hopes were that DOAG administration, protected by a still-sovereign Sultanate, would assist in expanding Germany's share of free trade in the region—although by mid-1886 he had abandoned even these modest hopes and could serenely contemplate the Company's collapse.⁹ By contrast, the conquistadors had no interest in free trade. Like their sixteenth-century namesakes, they meant to intrude, by the parasitic extraction of tolls, taxes and enforced trading monopolies, on a commercial system in which they had no established stakes. This led to repeated clashes with the Hamburg merchants whom Bismarck had intended to help.¹⁰

In 1886 and 1887 the DOAG underwent a transformation: it drew serious investments (including a large one from the Kaiser), a more financially responsible board of directors, and in 1887 its parent company, the "radical" GfdK, merged with the respectable KV. The reorganized DOAG proposed to focus not on the collection of tolls, but on establishing subsidiary firms that would undertake serious business ventures on the East African mainland. Prevailing German interests still lay with the Hamburg merchants, and they still had to work in collaboration with the Sultanate and its subjects. Bismarck sought to strengthen that collaboration, using gunboats, when necessary, to pry the sultan away from his unseemly independence or (even worse) away from his British patrons. For the most part, the Hamburg merchants were comfortable with this policy, for it promised them tangible benefits without risking disruption on the politically sensitive mainland trade routes.

But Peters and his cronies had not disappeared: although eventually ousted from the DOAG board of directors (by Jewish conspirators, they muttered¹¹), they were sent to East Africa as the Company's agents. They carried their vision with them but little else, for the DOAG, while reorganized, had failed to provide them with adequate funds. So the conquistadors resorted to the same methods they had always espoused. Extraneous to East African society and commerce, extraneous to established German interests in the region, and increasingly extraneous even to the very company that employed them, the conquistadors felt they had little to lose by undermining the status

7. In addition to the works already cited, see Prosser Gifford and Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *Britain and Germany in Africa* (New Haven, 1967), especially the essays by Louis, H.A. Turner Jr., and H. Pogge von Strandmann and Alison Smith; also Strandmann, "Consequences of the foundation of the German Empire: colonial expansion and the process of political-economic rationalization," in Förster *et al.*, *Bismarck, Europe and Africa*, 105–20.

8. As late as October 1888, Bismarck expressed his agreement with a Hamburg merchant who had argued that the optimal arrangement would have been for the DOAG to work under the protection of the Sultanate. "This has always been my goal," wrote Bismarck, "that is, to buy the Sultan over to the side of German interests, but it has been brought to ruin by the flag-hoistings and the playing at Cortez." Quoted in Washausen, *Hamburg*, 89.

9. Fritz Stern, *Gold and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichröder and the Building of the German Empire* (New York, 1977), 414.

10. Glassman, "Social rebellion," 403–4.

11. Müller, *Deutschland*, 174–6.

quo. For most of the three years preceding the uprising they had no scruples about challenging the authority of the Britons' client, and the Hamburg merchants' protector, Seyyid Barghash.

Rivalry with Barghash: Treaty Politics, 1885–86

Having received their protectionary charter from the Imperial Government, the conquistadors returned to East Africa in 1885 and 1886 to expand the Company's holdings in a string of eighteen additional treaty-gathering expeditions along the central and northern caravan routes. The treaties signed on these expeditions were just as preposterous as the initial dozen, but the agents who drew them up thought less of their binding powers on the local population than they did of their effectiveness as checks on the claims of other outside powers, above all the sultan.¹² Barghash objected loudly to these expeditions and appealed to his patrons in London. But the British Foreign Office attached little significance to the sultan's claims in the interior, which had never been more than loose and informal, and the only assistance it offered was to request that Berlin make no claims on the sultan's island domains. Bismarck readily agreed: like the Hamburg merchants, he valued the Sultanate as a useful tool for regulating trade at the coast and had no intention of destroying it.

But while London prepared to wash its hands of the matter, John Kirk and Lloyd Mathews urged the sultan to take vigorous action to assert his authority in the regions claimed by the German treaty gatherers. Accordingly, in 1885 Barghash hastened to reinforce his military presence along the caravan routes. During these tense months, Kirk and Barghash made many misleading statements about the depth and long standing of the Sultanate's authority upcountry. These statements were repeated by the sultan's European partisans, including the many missionaries and diplomats who were hostile to the DOAG, and, unfortunately, by subsequent historians. But in fact, Barghash's military presence in the interior before 1885 had been slight and unreliable, and he had never claimed anything remotely resembling sovereignty.¹³ The sudden attention he paid to the inland garrisons in 1885 elicited counterprotests from the DOAG agents, who saw his moves (correctly) as belated attempts to claim sovereign rights in regions that had supposedly been ceded to the Company in its treaties.¹⁴

The sultan felt especially exposed on the "Maasai" caravan routes, where there had never been much of an Omani presence. Accordingly, in May 1885 he and the DOAG engaged in a race for Kilimanjaro up the Pangani caravan routes. Leading a troop of his "regulars," Mathews distributed the sultan's flag and obtained oaths of allegiance from Semboja and other chiefs; the conquistador Karl Jühlke was hot on his trail, collecting treaties from many of the very same men. Mathews was assisted by

12. Brix Förster, *Deutsch-Ostafrika, Geographie und Geschichte der Colonie* (Leipzig, 1890), 11–13, 18–19; Büttner, *Anfänge*, 83–5. The Company's view is enunciated in "Kurze Darstellung der Entwicklung und Lage der DOAG," Berlin, 1886, p. 4, DOAG records, HWWA Firmenarchiv, Film A10/D304.

13. Glassman, "Social rebellion," 408–9, 470ff. An example of Barghash's exaggerated claims during this period was his statement in 1885 that regions along the Saadani and Bagamoyo routes had been under Omani sovereignty "from time immemorial," and that Omani law and magistrates were "firmly established" throughout the territory: Barghash to Rohlf's (n.d.), ZStA, RKA 391, 69.

14. For a detailed narrative of this diplomatic rivalry see Bennett, *Arab versus European*, 129–43.

several Shirazi notables, who made use of their well-developed ties among the most powerful trading chiefs of Usambara, Kilimanjaro and Arusha. Most decisive was the support of *Jumbe* Kimemeta, who preceded Mathews speaking as an emissary of the *liwali* of Pangani. But Kimemeta's militancy on this occasion did not spring from any deep allegiance to the Omani Sultanate. On the contrary, his relations with the Omanis were strained, as we saw in Chapter 2. The *jumbe* was concerned not with the well-being of the Sultanate but with continued Shirazi domination of the "Maasai" routes. That domination had been possible precisely because the Omanis had been kept at bay; hence, when the Germans seemed to pose a threat to the northern caravan trade in 1885–87, patricians were willing to invoke the sultan's authority as a tool in its defense. But in 1888–89, patricians like Kimemeta would readily part company with the representatives of the sultan.¹⁵

Rivalry between the sultan and the DOAG continued to intensify into the early months of 1886, when the major European powers appointed a commission to investigate and delimit the extent of the sultan's mainland domains. This was in accord with the prevailing consensus of the Scramble, in which European diplomats aimed to prevent or reduce tensions through an orderly partition of informal "spheres of influence." Characteristically, Barghash himself was ignored, and his unofficial representatives, the British members of the commission, abandoned all his claims in the interior by consenting to a German proposal that his dominion be given a minimal definition: a coastal strip extending no more than ten miles inland.¹⁶ But none of the commissioners intended to challenge the sultan's rule of the coast itself. Their motivations were conservative and "anti-colonial," insofar as they preferred that European commercial interests be protected by indigenous client states whenever possible, rather than by any undue extension of formal European administration.¹⁷ Accordingly, DOAG agents were instructed to keep a low profile during the commission's inspection tours along the coast. Conquistadors who ignored these instructions (including the irresponsible Emil von Zelewski) were reprimanded by their superiors and by the German consul.¹⁸

Although German diplomats thought it prudent to recognize the sultan's sovereignty along the coast, the Company was concerned lest its new inland possessions be rendered worthless by the lack of port facilities. It therefore demanded an exemption from the regulation prohibiting all but the sultan's subjects from conducting trade at the mainland ports. In 1885 German gunboats won the Company a partial exemption, persuading Barghash to allow German vessels to trade at Dar es Salaam. Dar was a terminus of the central caravan routes, but only a minor one. The Company did better during the heated diplomatic exchanges of the following year, when further German threats induced Barghash to allow the DOAG to trade at Pangani. Pangani was the foremost terminus of the northern routes, and this concession reflects Barghash's lesser interest in those routes.

Yet German threats won the Company still more. In 1887 Barghash agreed to farm the Dar and Pangani customs to the DOAG, much as he and his predecessors

15. Glassman, "Social rebellion," 409–11. For detailed narratives of the race for Kilimanjaro see Reginald Coupland, *The Exploitation of East Africa, 1856–1890*, 2nd ed. (London, 1968), and Bennett, *Arab*.

16. Coupland, *Exploitation*; Lyne, *Apostle*.

17. Robinson, "Conference in Berlin."

18. Glassman, "Social rebellion," 411–2.

had to Indian merchant houses. This was the last step down a slippery slope for Barghash, who, wearied by the pressures of his impossible position as a pawn of the European powers, was entering the final year of his life and the final years of his kingdom. Pressed by Frederick Holmwood, the new British consul, Barghash agreed in principle to grant the DOAG a contract to administer the customs of the entire Mrima coast, on terms similar to those granted the Imperial British East Africa Company on the Kenya coast. Holmwood also persuaded Barghash that it was in his best interests to improve relations with the arrogant Peters. Accordingly, Peters was given the use of the sultan's steamship *Barawa*—a widely recognized symbol of Barghash's authority and prestige—in which, accompanied by some of the sultan's Omani courtiers, he cruised the length of the Mrima informing the *maliwali* about the impending changes. Barghash died in March 1888 before the final agreement could be signed, but his weak and pliable successor, Khalifa, was quickly made to recognize his duty to his European protectors, and the coastal concessions were signed in April.¹⁹

In his published accounts of the treaty-gathering expeditions, Peters made little attempt to conceal the fraud involved in getting the chiefs to sign. As he approached a new village (he wrote), he took elaborate measures to get "the riff-raff" to believe him a powerful man; this included sporting a shaven head, which he apparently believed gave him the aura of "an elder worthy of respect." Peters would lubricate the village chief with liquor and gifts, and perhaps make blood brotherhood. He would then produce a treaty in which the Company was ceded all lands, houses, roads, and mineral rights. The chief affixed his mark, the treaty was read (in German) to the assembled villagers, and flags were hoisted. In a final display of power, the Germans closed the proceedings with salvos to honor the Kaiser. Peters boasted that such methods enabled him to "conquer" an area the size of southern Germany at a cost of only 2000 marks.²⁰ Few of the African signatories could have understood the full meaning of such treaties even had they been properly translated into a local language, which they were not. Franz Stuhlmann, a perceptive traveller who was in Uzigua during the opening weeks of the revolt, observed that most of the Zigua chiefs who appear in the treaties as "sultans" were in fact minor village elders, unknown only a few hours from their tiny hamlets. Stuhlmann himself was approached by one such elder, a feeble man who insisted that he could grant Stuhlmann sovereign rights to all of Uzigua in exchange for a few paltry gifts.²¹

Yet even acknowledging German chicanery, one must ask what induced Africans to cooperate with the Company agents. Simple pecuniary interests no doubt played a role, although the few surplus military jackets and bottles of liquor distributed by the Germans could not have made much of an impression.²² The conquistadors' own explanation was couched in their chauvinist ideology, which was anti-Arab and anti-

19. Förster, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 32–3; Bennett, *Arab*, 141–3. The diplomatic pressures brought to bear on Barghash and Khalifa are quite transparent in the FO 84 files, as well as in the printed documents in "Further correspondence respecting Germany and Zanzibar," PP 1888, vol. 74, c. 5603, *passim*.

20. Büttner, *Anfänge*, 47–8; Müller, *Deutschland*, 120–9; Förster, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 9–10. The quotes from Peters are from *Wie Deutsch-Ostafrika entstand* (Leipzig, 1940), 40.

21. Stuhlmann, "Bericht über eine Reise," 152–3. Stuhlmann's criticism of the DOAG treaties was scathing. He observed, for example, that many of the signatory chiefs spoke only Kizigua and could have had no idea of the treaties' contents.

22. Hunger may have played a role on the 1884 expedition, as there was serious famine in many of the areas of Uzaramo and Usagara through which Peters and his comrades travelled. But the famine had abated by the time of the 1885 expeditions. Glassman, "Social rebellion," 417.

British. A theme running throughout their narratives of the expeditions, and surfacing in the texts of many of the treaties themselves, was what one of their propagandists called “the eternal *status belli* reigning between Negro and Arab,” which supposedly caused the signatory chiefs to welcome the Germans as powerful allies in their ongoing battle against the Omanis (and, by implication, against the Omanis’ British protectors).²³ Of course we should be wary of such embellished accounts, especially when Company agents went so far as to say that some of the signatories had never even heard of the the Sultan of Zanzibar.²⁴ But in areas where tensions between Omanis and Africans had been most acute, such as along the central caravan routes, there is probably a kernel of truth to the contention that anti-Arab sentiment helped the Germans. In such cases, the signatory chiefs no doubt perceived the treaties much as did the Company agents themselves: that is, not as tools by which they bound themselves to the paltry handful of Germans who had appeared in their villages, but rather as potential checks on the claims of the Omanis.

German fraud was probably more straightforward in the Pangani hinterland, where the influence of the Sultanate had never been onerous. In Jühlke’s highly colored account of the 1885 race for Kilimanjaro, for example, Mandara of Moshi declares his love for the Germans and his hatred of the British and Omanis in a flowery language suspiciously similar to that supposedly used by signatory chiefs in Usagara and Uzaramo. But just as fanciful are pro-Zanzibari accounts written by British partisans such as the missionary J.P. Farler, who argued that Mandara and the other chiefs in the region were firmly loyal to Barghash. Mandara was a wily diplomat who had long mastered the art of playing one outside power against another. In 1885 alone, he sought to please the Germans by signing Jühlke’s treaties, to please the British by allowing the Church Missionary Society to establish a station at Moshi, and to please Barghash by agreeing to hoist the Zanzibar flag in Lloyd Mathews’s presence. The idea that he ceded all of Kilimanjaro to the DOAG was patently absurd, but the fraud may not have been entirely Jühlke’s; Mandara had long duped European visitors into believing him the most powerful or indeed the only chief on the mountain.²⁵

Mandara’s attitude appears most clearly in a letter written by J. Alfred Wray, one of the missionaries whom he had welcomed in 1885. Mandara admitted that he had made blood brotherhood with Jühlke and had agreed to allow the latter to settle and trade at Moshi. But, he told Wray, he had refused to cede sovereignty to the Germans and had stipulated that they would have to pay the same tribute as anyone else. He did this not out of any loyalty to the sultan but rather the opposite: he feared that Barghash might be tricked into giving away land that had never belonged to him. “They have already robbed the Sayidi of country,” he said, “and now they want to deceive him about my country.” Mandara told Jühlke, and repeated to Wray, that he had accepted the flag given him by Mathews not as a symbol of the sultan’s

23. E.g., Braun’s report on Uzaramo, 4 April 1886, ZStA, RKA 396, 66–8. Many similar reports appeared in *Kolonial-Politische Korrespondenz* in 1886; the quoted passage is from p. 49.

24. Treaty with Magungo of Msovero, 29 Nov. 1884, in Holmwood, FO 84/1730, 205–8.

25. For Mandara or Rindi see Stahl, *History*, ch. 11. Even conceding the doubts expressed here, one is convinced by Farler’s critique of the DOAG treaties: Memorandum to the German consul, Nov. 1885, ZNA, AL2/25/2, 207–8; also see Mathews to Farler, 17 Oct. 1885, FO 84/1799, 228. In Lloyd Mathew’s reports on the race for Kilimanjaro, it is clear that what he described as acceptance of the Sultan’s sovereignty was in fact little more than a chief’s willingness to hoist the Zanzibar flag in his presence: ZNA, AA2/41, *passim*.

overrule, but as a mark of prestige and friendship: the red flag of Zanzibar, he said, is "our ornament."²⁶

Like many of the most powerful men of the region, Mandara had based his political career on manipulation of the new sources of power that emanated from the coast and, ultimately, from Europe. He admired Europeans and respected their power—especially that of the "Balozi," John Kirk—and he had a keen passion for the manufactured commodities that bestowed prestige, including guns.²⁷ Wray's explanation of Mandara's behavior accords well with what we know of such trading chiefs. "After all," wrote the missionary, "I believe Mandara is playing on two strings to see whom he can get the most out of," adding that Mandara was building a large new house for which he "wants a lot of furniture."²⁸ If Jühlke made good his promises to settle in the area he might prove useful as a source of armaments and other commodities, and Mandara had no wish to alienate him. Mandara initially viewed the Germans as he had others who had come from the coast: that is, as potentially powerful allies. But he was not about to throw off the easy patronage of the Sultan of Zanzibar, and thus alienate his Muslim advisors and trade contacts, for uncertain promises from an unknown newcomer.

Similar considerations would explain the reception Jühlke received from other strongmen along the northern routes. Kibanga, the Kilindi chief who dominated much of Bondei, already enjoyed an intimate and lucrative relationship with the Anglican missionaries of Magila and Mkuzi, led by the passionately anti-German Farler. When the Germans arrived in Bondei, ill and cutting a poor figure (they had shot one of their porters, causing most of the others to flee), Kibanga firmly rejected their advances. Kibanga's rival Semboja was more ambivalent, telling the Germans that they might settle in his domain, but only with the express permission of the sultan and only if they brought him sufficiently opulent tribute. This attitude resembled Mandara's, and no doubt sprang from similar considerations.²⁹ All three potentates had derived substantial benefits from their connections with the sultan's subjects, but none had yet been pressed by the direct presence of the Arab state. This contrasted with the situation along the central caravan routes, where many had been alienated by Arab dominance. In 1885–87, trading chiefs along the northern routes—and Shirazi *majumbe* like Kimemeta—calculated that flying the red flag of Zanzibar could help preserve their autonomy, at least for the time being.

The conquistadors' strident anti-Zanzibari rhetoric ensured that before 1888 their collaborators would come only from among those who had no stake in the existing state of affairs, such as the impoverished petty elders who signed treaties in Uzigua, or from individuals with an active enmity for the sultan.³⁰ During the most intense period of Omani-German rivalry, in 1885–86, Barghash placed obstacles in the way of

26. Wray to Kirk, 13 Dec. 1885, FO 84/1772, 18–22.

27. In addition to the discussion in Ch. 1, see Stahl, *History*, and Johnston, *Kilima-Njaro Expedition*, 100ff.

28. Wray, *loc. cit.* This assessment was echoed by Wray's partner at Moshi: Fitch to Kirk, 13 Dec. 1885, FO 84/1772, 24–5.

29. For Kibanga, Semboja and Jühlke, see Farler's Nov. 1885 memoranda in ZNA, AL2/25/2, 205–10, and in FO 84/1729, 148–55. Also see Farler in *The Times*, 13 Nov. 1885, in FO 84/1799, 228; Höhnel, *Discovery I*, 72–3, and for Farler's relationship with Kibanga, Feierman, *Shambaa*, 192ff.

30. By mid-1886 the DOAG station at Zanzibar had become a center for political dissent, and the Germans were repeatedly approached by Barghash's patrician and Arab enemies on the Kenya coast. Müller, *Deutschland*, 234–6 and ch. 9.

DOAG's recruitment of porters.³¹ In such a highly charged atmosphere, the people who were most willing to take employment with the Company were those, like the much-despised Hadramis, who felt little love for the Omanis and their state. The Germans were especially wary about whom they might trust with arms and military training, so they carefully recruited their soldiers among the Comoroan community, which was noted for its "direct hostility" to the sultan.³²

But the situation was to change rapidly, especially after the Company's brief attempts in 1887 to take up the limited concessions that Barghash had granted at Pangani and Dar es Salaam, and after Khalifa's signing of the broader concessions in April 1888. The period of rivalry with the sultan would then give way to one in which the Germans were perceived as his agents and clients. The sultan's Hadrami and Comoroan enemies, many of whom had aligned themselves with the Germans, would then turn against their erstwhile employers and become among the staunchest proponents of a rebellion that they perceived as anti-Omani.

The Germans as Big Men: Station Politics, 1886–88

In 1886 and 1887 the DOAG made fitful attempts to establish stations in the hinterland territories it had won. It was during this period of "station politics"³³ that the Company agents first came into sustained contact with the villagers and caravan traders who would later rise against them. But the Germans were never more than few in number,³⁴ and their commercial activities were far too insubstantial to have a direct impact on more than a handful of Africans. The stations' African neighbors viewed the Germans not so much as a new social or cultural force, but rather as big men on the same order as the trading chiefs and coastal merchants who had dominated local politics since at least the middle of the century.

If the Company agents differed from other big men or trading chiefs in any significant respect, it was in their exceptional brutality. Such behavior only made them all the more ineffectual: it probably contributed more to their difficulties in hiring servants, for example, than did any subterfuge on the part of the sultan. Stories circulated about how they shot at porters who tried to run away, how refractory porters were forced to march in chains, and how, if a porter absconded during the night, another would be chosen arbitrarily and beaten senseless as an example.³⁵ The Company agents were an embarrassment to their compatriots at Zanzibar. The German admiral refused to allow them to eat at his officers' mess, and even colonial enthusiasts felt

31. Glassman, "Social rebellion," 423–5.

32. Zelewski, enclosed in Peters to Bismarck, 8 March 1886, ZStA, RKA 395, 82–3; Lucas to Arendt and Arendt to Barghash, 6 March 1886, ZNA, AL2/87, 201–9. Lucas and Arendt write that those to whom the DOAG are giving military training are Comoroans; their porters include Comoroans and "Arabs from Arabia." The latter is a probable reference to Hadramis.

33. The phrase is Büttner's, *Anfänge*.

34. At the height of DOAG activity in 1886–87 there were approximately fifty Company officers in East Africa; one-third of these were at Zanzibar, another at the coastal towns, and only the remaining third at the inland stations. Müller, *Deutschland*, 241.

35. Kirk, 11 March and 5 Apr. 1886, FO 84/1773, 17–22, 104–6; Michahelles to Bismarck, "Mißhandlungen der Neger durch Beamte der deutschen Colonialgesellschaften," 26 Sept. 1887, ZNA, AL2/107, 273–7.

obliged to admit that the tropical heat occasionally went to the heads of the station chiefs and turned them into petty tyrants.³⁶ One of the most damning indictments was written in 1887 by the German consul Gustav Michahelles, who observed that the “young masters” of the Company prided themselves on their brutality, which they deemed a sign of “energy.” Michahelles’s most detailed charges were against one Friedrich Schroeder, an agronomist who would later earn the nickname *Magongo*, “Bludgeons.” Kept awake one night by the plentiful mosquitoes at the Company’s Korogwe station, Schroeder found the night-watchman asleep. He beat the unfortunate servant senseless and then left him where he lay, bound, the entire night. This and other acts of cruelty gave the Korogwe station such a bad reputation that it could hire no workers, and the conquistadors suffered the ignominy of having to hew firewood and haul water themselves.³⁷

The Pangani Hinterland

The Korogwe station, on the Pangani River about forty-five miles from the coast, had a brief and unhappy history. It was founded in March 1886 by a pair of Company agents who were too weak with dysentery to explore the area around, or even to go through the motions of collecting treaties. They sited the station so as to straddle the Pangani trade routes and hoped to erect a tollhouse from which to exact payments from passing caravans. The area was highly commercialized: Swahili was spoken as commonly as Kizigua, and every five days a bustling market at a nearby village attracted peasants from a wide radius who came to sell livestock and agricultural surpluses in exchange for the imports offered by coastal caravan merchants. The DOAG agents depended on this market for all their provisions, but they harbored plans to seize control of it by forcing it to move to the station.³⁸

The new station was abandoned within weeks, its founders too ill to continue their conflicts with the local people. They left the half-built station in the care of two servants. A few days later *Jumbe* Kimemeta appeared, claiming to have been sent by the *liwali* of Pangani. Before a large crowd, Kimemeta announced that the Germans had no permission to settle in the area, and his soldiers burned down the station. Such a forceful demonstration of the sultan’s authority was relatively novel in the area, and even though it occurred during a time when the Company was prone to blame all its troubles on the sultan, even DOAG officials felt obliged to concede that Kimemeta may well have acted on his own.³⁹ Certainly Shirazi *majumbe* such as Kimemeta would have been far more alarmed by Company threats to the “Maasai” routes than would the *liwali* or any other member of Pangani’s Omani community.

36. Deinhard, 18 Sept. 1888, ZStA, RKA 690, 46–7; Baumann, *Usambara*, 60–1 (Godfredsen’s translation of this passage should be read against pages 93–4 of the original German text).

37. Michahelles, “Mißhandlungen”; also see Wiener, in *Auswärtiges Amt to Michahelles*, 3 Nov. 1887, ZNA, AL2/58/2, 172–5. For Schroeder’s nickname and more on his sadism: Dale to Bishop, 3 May 1894, UMCA, Box A 1 viii. Many of Michahelles’s comments were based on the observations of the naturalist Hans Meyer.

38. Stuhlmann, “Bericht,” 172; Hörnecke and Gravenreuth, 3 Apr. 1886, ZStA, RKA 396, 52–5; *KPK* 1886, 107; Farler to Kirk, 22 Mar. 1886, FO 84/1773, 108–9.

39. Farler to Kirk, 22 Mar. 1886, *loc. cit.*; Lucas to Arendt, 16 Apr. 1886, ZNA, AL2/87, 244–8.

Company agents returned to Korogwe a year later, but their presence remained slight and embattled. Their unrealistic plans to manipulate local markets, and to exact tolls from the heavily armed Shirazi caravans, bespeak the shallowness of the station's commercial impact. The glowing descriptions of building and cultivation published in the colonialist press were sheer fantasy; station officers were constantly frustrated by their inability to secure and keep labor in an area where peasants could find plenty of better ways to earn cash or commodities. The Germans were barely tolerated by their neighbors, and after several armed clashes, the local people brought the station to its knees simply by refusing to trade with it.⁴⁰

Meanwhile the ill-tempered Schroeder was in Bondei; a DOAG subsidiary had sent him to establish a tobacco plantation near Lewa, an important rest stop on the Pangani caravan routes. By the time of his arrival in August 1887, the people of Lewa had ample cause to be wary. In March 1886 Kimemeta had warned them of the Germans while passing through on his way to destroy the Korogwe station, and in early 1887 an independent German traveller had bullied a local chief into providing porters.⁴¹ As at Korogwe, the German settlers dreamt of forcing a large nearby market to move to the Lewa plantation. Their hope was that rising demands for the commodities they would sell at the plantation store would both stabilize labor supplies and help them recoup the wages they paid. But a year later, the Germans had made little headway toward either goal. The handful of workers they managed to hire worked just long enough to earn the price of a prized article of clothing, which they preferred to purchase from coastal merchants.⁴²

At first Schroeder attempted to solve the labor problem by hiring *vibarua* slaves from coastal contractors. But these *vibarua* found themselves treated as harshly as any *shamba* slave on the Mauya sugar plantations, and they fled. Their masters brought some of them to the German consulate at Zanzibar, to show Michahelles the scars from their beatings. Schroeder then renewed his attempts to secure a local work force. His methods included brandishing his magazine rifles and threatening to burn down villages that refused to provide labor. In an echo of *vibarua* slavery, he paid chiefs the wages of any clients whom they sent to labor on the plantation; he also supplied armed assistance against those chiefs' local enemies. Chiefs who refused Schroeder's offers were beaten.⁴³

Such methods immediately aroused concerted opposition, and the plantation withstood several armed attacks within its first few months of operation. Work proceeded fitfully until February 1888, when laborers stopped coming altogether. The long rains were approaching, and it was time for peasants to prepare their own gardens. Neighboring villagers complained that the planned extension of the tobacco plantation encroached on their own fields, and to dramatize their objections they

40. Höhnel, *Discovery*, I, 58–60; Hörnecke to Arendt, 6 March 1887, ZNA, AL2/107, 146–8.

41. Höhnel, *Discovery*, I, 46–51; Lucas to Arendt, 7 May 1886, ZNA, AL2/107, 1–2. Lucas writes that the *liwali* of Pangani appeared in Lewa in March 1886; this is almost surely incorrect.

42. Friedrich Schroeder, "Einiges über Arbeiterverhältnisse in Usambara," *DKZ* 1888 (n.s. I), 220–2; Stuhlmann in *DKZ* 1888, 387; Förster, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 28–9. The entire story of the Lewa plantation is told in Müller, *Deutschland*, 241–4.

43. Michahelles, "Mißhandlungen"; Schroeder to Parizot, 27 Feb. 1888, in Auswärtiges Amt to Michahelles, 18 Apr. 1888, ZNA, AL2/59, 77–81; Schroeder, "Einiges"; Müller, *Deutschland*, 243; also see Dale to Bishop, UMCA *loc. cit.* As late as February 1888, Schroeder was still embroiled in legal wrangles with Pangani slave masters over their slaves' failure to work on the Lewa plantation the preceding September.

cleared land directly adjoining the plantation, land that Schroeder had intended to enclose. Schroeder was outraged, and he ranted that the villagers ought to respect his "sphere of interest." Tensions mounted, and at the end of the month he narrowly escaped an attempt on his life.⁴⁴ This incident proved the final straw for Schroeder's employers, and he was recalled to Berlin. Work on the plantation apparently proceeded more smoothly during the six months that remained before it was destroyed by the rebels in September; even the skeptical Stuhlmann wrote that as many as several hundred workers came to work on the plantation. No doubt the increased calm owed something to the presence of a larger number of Europeans than before, wielding a larger number of rifles, as well as to the fact that during these months fewer demands are made by the agricultural cycle of local food crops. But Schroeder's successors also seem to have acted with more sensitivity to local conditions, winning the armed support of Kibanga, for example, against threats from his rival Semboja.⁴⁵

The history of the Lewa plantation suggests that villagers in the Pangani hinterland had no inherent hostility to European settlement nor even to the idea of working for a wage. The people of Bondei were deeply involved in a commercialized economy long before the arrival of the Germans, and many were eager to earn the cash necessary for the purchase of commodities. But they would not allow themselves to be fully proletarianized; that is, they would not allow their work on the plantations to interfere with their autonomy as peasants. Villagers made this abundantly clear in February 1888, when, defying Schroeder (or perhaps more exactly, ignoring him), they prepared their gardens in anticipation of the rains. The people of Lewa still had the power to agree to wage labor only on terms that suited them. This would change after the suppression of the uprising, when Schroeder would return to Lewa as one of the earliest proponents of forced labor in German East Africa.

"Truly a German River"

Most DOAG station-building activity was not in the Pangani hinterland but on the central caravan routes behind Bagamoyo, in the core of the area originally "conquered" in the Company's treaty-gathering expeditions of 1884 and 1885. Emil von Zelewski, sent to establish one of several stations along the Kingani River in 1886, spoke of the Kingani as "truly a German river." But this was empty rhetoric. None of the stations ever became commercially viable, and in the few instances when Company agents attempted any serious economic endeavor, they stumbled over the intractable problems of securing and controlling labor. To exist at all, the stations had to commit themselves to alliances with neighboring chiefs, and that inevitably embroiled them in local political feuds. Often several chiefs clamored for German patronage simultaneously. But since the station officers' resources were too meager to please all comers, they were forced to choose their allies. Given the fragmented nature of political authority in the region, the choice of a friend inescapably meant the choice of an enemy as well. Almost as soon as the Company agents arrived in the Kingani

44. Schroeder to Parizot, 27 Feb. 1888, ZNA *loc. cit.* For chronic confrontations at the Lewa station during its first five months of operation see Glassman, "Social rebellion," 437–8.

45. Michahelles to Bismarck, 28 June 1888, ZNA, AL2/59, 87–8; Stuhlmann, in DKZ 1888, 387; Gravenreuth, [n.d.] Dec. 1888, ZStA, RKA 404, 18.

Valley, they were manipulated into assisting their new friends in destructive raids on rival chiefs.⁴⁶

The most highly touted of the Kingani River stations was at Dunda, a major marketing center about twelve miles inland from Bagamoyo. As was common along the highly polarized central caravan routes, the area was plagued by insecurity, and when the DOAG agent Eugen Krenzler arrived in March 1886 he found the local Zaramo chiefs, or *mapazi*, suspicious and hostile. But after making a pointed display of his modern weapons, Krenzler was able to skillfully exploit the tensions between rival *mapazi*, promising armed help to the weaker ones and threatening war against their enemies. Within weeks, over half a dozen chiefs had been persuaded to sign treaties with the Company. On March 22 these *mapazi* witnessed the raising of the Company flag and salvos fired in honor of the Kaiser's birthday.⁴⁷

This flag raising, undertaken so close to the single most important center of the sultan's mainland authority and during the deliberations of the Delimitation Commission, was bound to provoke Omani officials at Bagamoyo. Within days, the *liwali* marched out to Dunda with a large force of his *viroboto* mercenaries in an attempt to intimidate the Germans. He told Krenzler that he would have it announced in Bagamoyo's mosques that it was forbidden to assist the DOAG station in any way, including business dealings or taking employment as porters.⁴⁸ Most alarming were the Germans' military activities, which occupied them far more than did any commercial pursuit; by May 1886 they were calling their station "Fort Dunda." Krenzler had chosen a site that commanded the trade routes at the point where they crossed the Kingani River, and the fortifications, cannons, and military drilling of his African dependents soon led many to fear that Krenzler intended to collect tolls or duties on passing caravans. This was intolerable; the sultan was not prepared to have an area so close to Bagamoyo be declared outside of his domains, nor would he concede to such flagrant interference in the trade of the Omani-dominated central routes. In May, he lodged a formal complaint with the German consul, who renounced Krenzler's actions. Barghash also sent agents to Dunda to interrogate the *mapazi* about the treaties they had signed with Krenzler.⁴⁹

Convinced by these assertions of Omani authority and no doubt alarmed by the Germans' aggressive behavior, the Dunda *mapazi* sent Barghash a formal declaration of allegiance on June 1st. The elegantly phrased document was written, and perhaps composed, by Bwana Heri of Saadani. The *mapazi* denied ever having ceded sovereignty to the Germans. They said that they had allowed the Germans to settle only because the latter had come with letters of friendship from the Lord of Zanzibar. No doubt much of the rhetoric in this statement was political posturing inspired by the astute Bwana Heri, who at the time was travelling through the region invoking the sultan's authority as a tool with which to mobilize resistance to the German interlopers. But it is also probable that the Germans were sometimes

46. O'Swald, 27 Sept. 1887, HStA 621–2, 4 Bd. 38; Reports by Braun, Zelewski, Hermes, Carl Schmidt, and others, KPK 1886, 125–6, 179, 238, 226–8, and 252; Glassman, "Social rebellion," 451–4.

47. Eugen Krenzler, *Ein Jahr in Ostafrika* (Ulm, 1888), 79–94; Glassman, "Social rebellion," 441–2. Insecurity in the area was evidenced by the hiding of villages within protective thickets. Gaume, *Voyage*, 89; Suleiman bin Mwinyi Chande, "Safari yangu," in Velten, *Safari*, 48.

48. Krenzler, *Ein Jahr*, 96–7.

49. Arendt to Bismarck, 5 June 1886, and Barghash to Arendt, 13 Shaaban 1303 (18 May 1886), ZNA, AL2/107, 8–12; KPK 1886, 106–7, 139, 252–3; Kirk, 5 June and 1 July 1886, FO 84/1774, 23–8, 107–9.

perceived to have come with the sultan's blessings: after all, they were the first Europeans whom he had ever allowed to trade on the mainland. This would become the prevailing view after April 1888, when the new sultan would hand the Mrima to the Germans as a concession.⁵⁰

But despite these diplomatic threats and counterthreats, the most significant conflicts engendered by the Dunda station were fought among local Africans rather than between Arabs and Europeans, and they were closely bound up with the issues of citizenship and community discussed in previous chapters. In the months following the *liwali's* announcement that he would not tolerate anyone assisting the Germans, Krenzler and his colleagues often complained that the sultan's officials prevented them from recruiting porters and laborers.⁵¹ Shirazi citizens refused to work for the Company; hence, besides a few *waungwana* slave porters hired at Zanzibar, the Germans could recruit only Zaramo laborers and Nyamwezi porters, the latter available in great numbers at Bagamoyo, where, as we have seen, they loitered while waiting for employment on a caravan with which to return upcountry. These employees were all *wageni*, people whom respectable Shirazi considered to exist only at the margins of civilization, and according to DOAG dispatches they were constantly intimidated and even publicly beaten for the offence of having consented to work for the Germans.⁵²

Open violence finally flared in late May, and as was so often the case in Shirazi society, the occasion was a public *ngoma*. Reckoned on the Islamic calendar, the incident occurred well into the month of Shaaban, which precedes the holy month of Ramadhan. Shaaban is traditionally a time of frequent dance competitions and, especially in the final days before the fast, of carnivalesque licence. During this festive and hence tension-ridden time, some employees of the Dunda station took guns from the station storeroom and went to Bagamoyo to perform a dance. The Bagamoyo citizens must have considered this a pointed provocation. The dancers were not Shirazi, nor even Muslim, and at least one appears to have been a Christian *mateka*, a trade slave who had been freed by British cruisers.⁵³ Yet they walked twelve miles to Bagamoyo to perform a dance with weapons, a ritual considered the particular prerogative of Shirazi gentlemen. One of the dancers later stated that their performance was interrupted when a crowd led by Shirazi elites protested that they were "making too much noise and were overproud to be serving the whites." A brawl ensued in which the dancers used their weapons, critically wounding five coastal people. The dancers then fled to Dunda, where they took refuge at the DOAG station.⁵⁴

50. Barghash to Arendt, 2 Ramadhan 1303 (5 June 1886), and Envoys of the Mapanzi of Dunda to Sultan Barghash, 27 Shaaban 1303 (1 June 1886), ZNA, AL2/107, 36–40. For "Kheri bin Juma bin Ahmed el Mafazii" (i.e., Bwana Heri of Saadani) as the scribe of the latter document, see the English translation in FO 84/1774, 32–3.

51. Barghash denied the charge. Lucas to Arendt, and Barghash to Arendt, 7 Apr. 1886, ZNA, AL2/87, 240–3.

52. Krenzler to Arendt, 10 June 1886, ZNA, AL2/87, 268–9; Lucas to Arendt, 25 May 1886, ZNA, AL2/107, 14–21; Krenzler, *Ein Jahr*, 100–1.

53. This is suggested by his name, Andreas Balozi. See Chap. 3.

54. This account is based on statements by the Sultan, a German naval officer, French missionaries at Bagamoyo, and one of the dancers, Andreas Balozi, all in ZNA, AL2/107, 8–10, 30–35. Balozi identified some of the people who interrupted the dance as "Arabs." This was often a blanket term for any elite Muslim, and it is unlikely that Omanis would have had such vigorous objections to non-Shirazi performing a weapons dance.

This incident, like others generated by German activities, can be understood only within the broader context of Shirazi society at the time, including the contrasting structures of the northern and central caravan trades. Pangani's patricians had the most to lose should the Germans at Lewa and Korogwe make good their threats to the northern routes; Omani Arabs, as we have seen, had kept out of the "Maasai" trade. Hence the lead in defending those routes was taken by *majumbe* like Kimemeta. The Germans framed their challenges within the rhetoric of rivalry with the Sultanate, telling the world that Omani oppression would induce most East Africans to support them. But the authority of the Omani state posed minimal dangers to the autonomy and commercial well-being of potentates along the northern routes. Moreover, interests in the caravan trade were spread more evenly in the Pangani hinterland than at Bagamoyo. Hence when Kimemeta and others defended the northern routes by invoking the authority of the Sultanate, they received broad support, and the Germans failed to gain a firm footing.

But in the Bagamoyo hinterland, where the caravan trade was more polarized and Omani commercial and political dominance more onerous, the Germans could find many potential clients among those alienated from the dominant state of affairs. Independent Nyamwezi caravaners faced stiff competition and were forced to pay steep differential duties to Arab state officials and *ada* to the Shirazi *majumbe*; the so-called *waungwana* porters who served on Arab caravans had few interests in the trading enterprises besides their wages; and hinterland people such as the villagers of Dunda had been excluded from long-distance commerce altogether. It is not surprising, then, that such people would have felt few qualms about offering their services to the Germans; they had less to lose than had their counterparts at Pangani. Indeed, the Company's Dunda employees apparently felt that in the Germans they had found powerful new patrons who might sponsor their claims to status within Shirazi society; claims that they made, in this particular instance, by performing an *ngoma* in which they usurped the patrician privilege of dancing with arms. The Germans even contributed (albeit unknowingly) potent ritual instruments in the form of modern weapons—the very status symbol that so piqued the appetite of powerful trading chiefs such as Mandara and Semboja. No wonder the patricians charged the Dunda employees with being "overproud." German activities catalyzed sharp divisions at Bagamoyo, divisions that would be fully exploited by German military officers at the time of conquest.

Bwana Heri and the Saadani Routes

As we have seen, much of the hostility encountered by DOAG agents along the central caravan routes was aroused simply by their patronage of one local rival over another. But some of the Germans' early opponents took a broader view, placing Company activities in the context of overall coastal politics. Most notable was Bwana Heri of Saadani, who was attempting to orchestrate resistance to the Germans as early as 1885, especially along the trade routes that went through Morogoro and Mamboia. Yet Bwana Heri had no principled opposition to foreign influence. On the contrary, European travellers had long praised him for his hospitality, and it was largely due to him that the Saadani routes became favored by missionaries and geographers in the

1870s and 1880s. That in fact is why Peters and his party chose Saadani as the spot from which to embark on their first treaty-gathering expedition.⁵⁵

During the initial phase of intense Omani-German rivalry in 1885, Bwana Heri kept a watchful eye on Company activities along the central caravan routes, travelling to confer with his upcountry allies such as Simbamwene of Morogoro and Mwinyi Usagara. (The latter was one of the first to sign a treaty with the Company, which he later repudiated.) Europeans were told that Heri had undertaken these journeys at the sultan's request, and the Germans subsequently blamed an omniscient Barghash for every hostile incident they encountered on the Saadani routes. But Bwana Heri had long coordinated control of the Saadani routes in concert with Simbamwene and other upcountry rulers, and his relationship with Zanzibar had always been marked by a high degree of independence. He and his upcountry partners had plenty of their own reasons to be wary of the Germans. Like Kimemeta on the Pangani routes, Bwana Heri distributed the sultan's flag as a way of defending his own autonomy within the political climate created by German claims against Barghash; his allies accepted the flag for reasons similar to those of Mandara or Semboja.⁵⁶

When Company agents attempted to establish a station on the Saadani routes in August 1886, at Mbuzini in the Nguru hills, they encountered immediate resistance, which (they reported) the sultan had instigated via Bwana Heri. But Bwana Heri's mobilization of opposition to the Germans probably had little to do with his or anyone else's loyalty to Barghash; in fact, local perceptions of the sultan's relationship with the Germans were already highly ambivalent. When a notoriously ill-tempered DOAG agent provoked a quarrel in the area less than a year earlier, the sultan's small Mamboia garrison helped the Germans burn down the offending village, killing several of its inhabitants. And when Bwana Heri journeyed through the area in 1886 seeking to coordinate a response to the Germans—this time accompanied by Ismael of Winde, the Mrima's only other non-Arab *liwali* and one who like Heri was known for his autonomy from Zanzibar—Omanis along the central routes gave him a cold reception.⁵⁷ In short, the Omanis were not regarded unequivocally as the Germans' rivals, nor was Bwana Heri regarded unequivocally as the sultan's client. In early 1888, well after Barghash had ceased to contest the Company's claims in the region, Bwana Heri was still harrasing the Germans: his men disrupted work at the Mbuzini station and showed the Zanzibari flag. But Barghash had never authorized these acts, and he ordered that they cease.⁵⁸

Bwana Heri had no qualms against accepting European trade contacts or even European settlement, so long as those influences could be made to work in his own interest, as they always had. But when German activities began to take a different hue, and when it became clear that they were threatening his position on the caravan routes, the old friend of the Europeans became one of their most unrelenting enemies. Similarly, the man who was known as the sultan's leading representative on the Mkwaja-Saadani coast and in Uzigua would become Khalifa's enemy when he be-

55. Alexander Mackay, in *Church Missionary Intelligencer* (1877), 397, (1878), 218–9, and *passim*; Price, *Report*, 27 and *passim*.

56. Kirk, 5 and 30 June 1885, FO 84/1726, 54–7, 261–4; Kleist to Rohlf, 17 July 1885, Sohngé to Travers, 6 Aug. 1885, Barghash to Travers, 10 Sept. 1885, Kleist, 25 Sept. 1885, all in ZStA, RKA 382, 36, 42–5, 51–8.

57. Kieran, "Abushiri and the Germans," 161–2; Glassman, "Social rebellion," 457–9.

58. Bennett, *Arab*, 134; Gravenreuth, Michahelles and Barghash, various documents, 20–27 Jan. 1888, ZNA, AL2/58, 256–9.

lieved the latter to have overstepped his prerogatives by ceding the Mrima to the Germans. Indeed, Heri was at odds with Barghash as early as January 1888 over how to deal with the Germans. This stubborn independence made Bwana Heri sorely disliked by the British consuls, despite his hospitality to English missionaries. Bwana Heri's early opposition to German activities was perhaps more broad-minded than most, but its mainsprings can be found in specific fears of German intrusion on the caravan trade, a trade that he and his followers had long been struggling to preserve from Arab domination.

The Dar Es Salaam Concession, May–June 1887

In May 1887, Peters and his colleagues attempted to undertake the collection of the customs that Barghash had granted them at Dar es Salaam and Pangani. This was to result in the first pointed German threat to the coast towns themselves as opposed to regions in the hinterland. For the time being, the Germans decided to set up shop only at Dar es Salaam: unlike Pangani, Dar was a terminus of the central caravan routes along which they had concentrated their efforts, and it possessed a good harbor. This decision was largely forced on the Germans by their limited resources, which were far from adequate for administering the trade of one town, let alone two. But with a letter from Barghash instructing his *liwali* to cooperate, and accompanied by some of the sultan's *viroboto* mercenaries, the conquistadors believed that they could intimidate Dar es Salaam's Omani elite into yielding control of the town.

On the evening of May 24, a German naval vessel anchored off Dar es Salaam with a handful of Germans and two dozen *viroboto*. The party was led by Peters and August Leue, the latter a noted chauvinist even by DOAG standards, whose colleagues respected him as a "poet." (The German consul, on the other hand, mistrusted him as a "wild fellow.") It was the last day of Shaaban: pious citizens were awaiting the appearance of the new moon that would herald the beginning of Ramadhan, and many less respectable townspeople were no doubt indulging in the festivities that would be prohibited during the holy month. Like the provocations that would later spark the carnival riots of August and September 1888, German outrages on this occasion coincided with a major religious observance. The German party landed the following morning, the first day of the fast. They were "armed to the teeth" (wrote Leue), and while presenting the sultan's letter they had their mercenaries surround the *liwali*'s residence. The letter ordered only that the Germans be given possession of the customs house, but Peters demanded that the *liwali* relinquish control over the entire town. When the *liwali* refused, Peters and Leue sought out the *majumbe* of two outlying villages, and putting guns to their heads pressed them into "selling" all the land from Dar es Salaam to Msasani (about five miles to the north) for a price of fifteen rupees each. They continued to bully the local people for several days, as a German gunboat lay outside the town.⁵⁹

59. O'Swald, 6 June 1887, HStA 621–1, 4 Bd. 38; Holmwood, 23 May and 6 June 1887, FO 84/1852, 213–6, 280–6; August Leue, *Dar-es-Salaam, Bilder aus dem Kolonialleben* (Berlin, 1903), 1–5; Peters to Arendt, 19 and 31 May 1887, ZStA, RKA 388, 7–9; "Habari za zamani za Daressalama," in Velten, *Prosa*, 292–3; Liwali to Barghash, incl. in Barghash to Arendt, 7 Ramadhan 1304 (31 May 1887), and Steifensand, 20 June 1887, ZStA, RKA 388, 12–3, 28–32. For Leue, see Arendt, 5 June 1887, ZStA, RKA 388, 14–5. Müller, *Deutschland*, mistakenly places these incidents at Pangani as well as at Dar es Salaam; see Glassman, "Social rebellion," 464n.

German diplomats were deeply embarrassed by this incident, and they ordered the Company to withdraw all its soldiers from Dar es Salaam and scale down its activities there. Tensions quickly abated. Within a few weeks of their arrival, six of the eight Company agents at Dar had been evacuated with malaria. Leue remained as the chief of the station, but his activities were mostly restricted to hunting trips. In December he established a station at Pugu, a few miles inland, where he spent most of his time until July 1888, coming to Dar es Salaam only on weekends. The Pugu station was soon complemented by the presence of German Benedictine missionaries, as well as a few Austrian settlers who had purchased land from the Company.⁶⁰ Together with Dunda, Pugu was the most substantial German settlement in the coastal region. Yet it was not attacked until January 1889, well after rebellion had broken out elsewhere, and its attackers came from outside of coastal society altogether.

From Big Men to Impudent Children

Townsppeople would remember the aborted attempt to seize control of Dar es Salaam as one of the events that sparked rebellion there over a year later.⁶¹ But despite this early provocation, Dar es Salaam remained quiet long after the other Mrima towns had risen against the Germans in 1888, and the uprising there never approached that of Pangani or even Bagamoyo in the breadth of its social base and the depth of its popular participation. Similarly, German station-building activities were most concentrated along the central caravan routes behind Dar es Salaam and Bagamoyo, less so along the Saadani and Pangani routes. Yet, comparing these same regions, the intensity of the rising of 1888–89 was inversely proportional to the degree of early German presence: most intense at Pangani and Saadani, least at Dar es Salaam and Bagamoyo. Clearly then the outbreak of rebellion cannot be explained simply in terms of the level of German provocation.

By 1888 the DOAG claimed to have established eighteen stations, but in fact these existed largely on paper, the fabrications of unscrupulous propagandists and swindlers like Peters. Schemes for plantation agriculture came to nothing. Few private settlers made the journey to East Africa, and most who did turned back in disgust after taking one look at the lands that they had been bilked into “buying” from the Company.⁶² Station officials tried to rely on petty trade, but they were in no position to break the dominance of coastal merchants, and the few stations that continued to operate for more than a few weeks remained financial drains. Rather than pose any real threat to their neighbors, the stations were utterly reliant on their neighbors’ good will. By the time the coastal concessions were signed in April 1888, there was little left of the inland stations, and the new DOAG director intended to abandon them altogether and concentrate operations in the coast towns.⁶³

60. Leue, *Dar-es-Salaam*, 9–18.

61. “Habari za zamani,” in Velten, *Prosa*, telescopes the events of May 1887 and the outbreak of rebellion at Dar es Salaam in late 1888.

62. For the Company’s land swindles, see Büttner, *Anfänge*, 37–9, 88–9; Glassman, “Social rebellion,” 467n.

63. Büttner, *Anfänge*, 92–3; Müller, *Deutschland*, 229–31; Euan-Smith, 1 June 1888, FO 84/1907, 159–69. For a scathing assessment of the stations’ prospects by a well-informed Hamburg merchant, see O’Swald, 7 May 1888, HStA, 621–2, 4 Bd. 39.

Neither the Germans nor German-manufactured goods were particularly well known in East Africa; they certainly lacked the prestige of the British, a fact with which Bushiri needled his German captives in the comments quoted at the start of this chapter. Yet as Europeans they enjoyed at least a vague reputation as a potential source of valued commodities, a reputation that the conquistadors did what they could to encourage. To many Africans—and especially to those who had not yet found more established patrons—the Company agents seemed to promise largess and protection; they seemed very much like the big men or trading chiefs who dominated regional politics. When a village chief signed a treaty with the DOAG he accepted the role of client, and as in all patron-client relationships, he expected to be rewarded with a steady flow of gifts and services. But should this flow be for any reason interrupted—should the Germans prove themselves unable to fulfill the role of patron—the relationship would be abruptly terminated. As early as March 1886 this danger was clear to the German consul, and it would become understood even by colonial propagandists once the Company was unceremoniously kicked out of East Africa in late 1888.⁶⁴

In the absence of any clear indication that the Germans were anything more than trading chiefs of middling effectiveness (at best), responses to them were heavily influenced by attitudes toward their rivalry with the sultan. People on the northern caravan routes still felt that their interests were best served by maintaining cordial relations with coastal Muslims; hence they were less likely to risk alienating the sultan by cooperating with the Germans. On the more polarized central routes, by contrast, many who felt threatened or misused by the Omanis turned to the Germans as potential counterweights to the Sultanate. This made it easier for the Company to operate in the hinterland of Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam than in areas further north.

But although Germans in the north often found themselves opposed by people who claimed to be acting on behalf of the sultan, the animosity directed against them was not motivated by any deep-seated devotion to Omani sovereignty. On the contrary, it was the very remoteness of the sultan's government that allowed people in the northern hinterland to believe him a just and benevolent ruler whose patronage was to be valued. Shirazi elites like Kimemeta and Bwana Heri were willing to encourage such perceptions, despite their own histories of tension with the Sultanate, because their autonomy on the Pangani and Saadani caravan routes had never been threatened by Omani commercial competition. Thus they were still able to control the circumstances in which the sultan's authority would be asserted. Claiming to be subjects of Zanzibar promised to carry diplomatic weight against German threats without at the same time carrying any danger that the sultan's rule might actually be imposed. But this state of affairs seemed to be changing by the time that Barghash agreed to farm the customs to the German Company in 1887. And after August 1888, when it appeared to some that the new sultan hoped to use the German Company as a tool with which to strengthen his rule, chiefs like Kimemeta and Bwana Heri would reject Zanzibar altogether.

During the brief period of their activities, the Company agents acted with cruelty and arrogance and provoked resentment almost everywhere they went. Yet the response to such behavior was limited; as Bushiri bin Salim later remarked, it was the

64. Arendt, 3 March 1886, ZStA, RKA 396, 23–30; Förster, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 9–10.

simple act, on the part of the coastal elite, of a parent chasing away an insolent child. It was not the stuff to generate deep-seated social upheaval.⁶⁵ But like so many others of his social position, Bushiri was blinkered by insular elitism. He deluded himself into thinking that the forces that expelled the Germans were solely Arab and patrician, or rather that the voices of Arabs and patricians were the only ones that mattered. He had difficulty hearing the nonpatricians who participated in the expulsion of the Germans, people whose motives differed sharply from those of the elites. Yet once those popular forces were mobilized, Bushiri found himself confronted with a social rebellion, something far more difficult to deal with than the failed big men of the German East Africa Company.

65. Müller recognizes this (*Deutschland*, 239–40) but does not fully consider the implications.

The Festival Riots of August and September, 1888

It is well known that the Swahili-negroes are altogether unwarlike and cowardly. . . . They have always seemed to me like faithful dogs.

Carl Peters, April 1886¹

Carl Peters was often at odds with other members of Zanzibar's European community, but on this they agreed: the sudden rising against the German concessions could not have been foreseen. One American merchant who had been scathing in his criticism of the Company was nevertheless taken aback by the violent response its agents had aroused, for (he wrote) the "Coast natives" had always been "reported not to be very *kali*" (fierce).² Elite Arabs evidently shared his view of the "natives'" temperament, for they expected the disparate rebel mass to defer instinctively to their will. Indeed, we have seen that much of the earliest concerted hostility to the Germans seemed to have been instigated by agents of the Omani state. But that was relatively mild stuff. By contrast, the coastal elite neither expected nor desired the upheaval of August and September 1888, and they themselves soon became its targets.

European observers found the broad dimensions of the movement doubly surprising inasmuch as they knew that German presence on the mainland had been brief and superficial. But the uprising was anti-German only incidentally. Nor was it instigated solely by the intrigues of Arab aristocrats and Shirazi patricians; the slaves and peasants of the mainland were not thoughtless, faithful dogs. The hapless Germans (if such an adjective could be used to describe individuals of their arrogance and brutality) blundered into an explosive situation not of their own making. At the root of the uprising lay not so much resentment of the German Company but deep internal tensions that had been mounting for decades: the indebtedness of the patricians and

1. *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 8/9 Apr. 1886; quoted in Müller, *Deutschland*, 122n.

2. Ropes, *Zanzibar Letters*, 105 (21 Oct. 1888).

their political marginalization at the hands of the Omani Sultanate; conflicts over the status of slaves; the insistent demands of villagers and upcountry folk for more active roles within the urban communities. Debt and plantation slavery were enforced by organs of the state, so it is not surprising that much of the unrest was directed against Zanzibar, despite persistent rumors that Khalifa had orchestrated every rebellious incident.³

These tensions were heightened to an acute degree by the multiple festivals of August and September 1888, when patricians and their clients engaged in boisterous debates over how the Shirazi communities ought to be constituted. That was the moment when the Germans intruded, and, acting in the name of a new and largely unknown sultan, threatened to expand the powers of the state in an unprecedented manner. The resulting eruption expelled them almost immediately. In the following weeks, an aroused plebeian crowd undermined Omani authority altogether, as the towns came under the control of armed bands of villagers, slaves, runaways and upcountry warriors.

The crisis was most acute at Pangani, where the Omanis and their patrician allies were able to control the crowd only by mobilizing superior force of arms. At other times they had to compromise with the plebeian rebels, who used the forum of participatory dance to intrude on community affairs which the urban elite believed should be of no concern to them. The largest landowners soon decided that the sustained threat of the armed bands was a greater price than they were willing to pay. Splitting with most of the Shirazi *majumbe*, they formed a capitulationist party which sought the restoration of the sultan's authority at any cost, even if it meant that the Germans would have to exercise that authority on his behalf.

DOAG Prepares to Appropriate the Sultan's Authority

At the end of July 1888, Ernst Vohsen, the DOAG's chief officer at Zanzibar, sent announcements of the impending changes of administration to the *maliwali* of the Mrima towns. The announcements were issued in the name of the sultan and were supplemented by letters from Khalifa himself, in which he instructed his officials to obey Vohsen as his representative. Simultaneously, the master of the sultan's customs at Zanzibar, a close business associate of one of the major Hamburg merchant houses, ordered his subordinates on the Mrima to serve the DOAG.⁴

Khalifa's officials, to whom the new sultan was as much of an unknown quantity as was the German company, must have been bewildered by these instructions. The sultan said that the DOAG was only to take over collection of the customs, yet at the same time he instructed all his officials, civil and military, to obey the Germans. In fact, although Khalifa was apparently not fully aware of it, the treaty he had signed with Peters in April 1888 had granted the Company virtually all administrative powers on the coast. Non-Muslim outsiders had long been put in charge of the sultan's

3. "To accuse the Sultan himself as the instigator . . . is incorrect, since the movement is directed against him as much as against the Germans." Baumann, 4 Jan. 1889, RKA 695, 9; printed in Müller, *Deutschland*, 549.

4. This and the following paragraphs are based on ZStA, RKA 406, 3-17, including correspondence of Vohsen, the Sultan, and Nasor Lilany, the master of the customs. For Nasor Lilany and the Hamburg firm of O'Swald, see HStA, O'Swald papers, *passim*.

customs houses without ever having been given authority over other aspects of government, and some townspeople may have assumed that this was all that Khalifa had done in this instance. (In subsequent months many observers would comment that all might have remained peaceful had the Germans' authority been restricted as had that of their Hindu predecessors.) In a well-known poetic account composed by Hemedi bin Abdallah el-Buhriy, a confidant of Bushiri bin Salim, the sultan is imagined to have told his subjects: "I have given him [the German] no more than control over the shipping. If he does anything else do not consent." This misperception was probably propagated by the more moderate patrician rebels, as part of their project to legitimize the rising as having been undertaken with the sultan's blessing.⁵

The *maliwali* were further informed that henceforth they were to be employees of the German company. They and their military personnel were to be paid salaries that were insultingly low compared to what they had received under Barghash. No doubt the earlier salaries had been intended not merely for the sustenance of the *maliwali* but also for the maintenance of their personal retinues and the dispensation of largess so necessary to maintaining authority in coastal society. The Germans were heedless of such niceties. When they arrived in the coast towns in mid-August, they made it clear that they expected the *maliwali* to act as petty bureaucrats. In return for their paltry salaries, the *maliwali* were to report punctually to the DOAG office four times daily, where they were to receive their orders from a German clerk.⁶

In addition to these insults, the Germans brought what Müller has called "a Pandora's box" of noxious decrees, most of them petty taxes meant to fill the Company's depleted coffers.⁷ They included small levies on burials and on the export even of personal effects, the necessity of obtaining a permit (available from 8:00 to 9:00 A.M.) before undertaking any sea voyage, and other annoyances. Many European sources dwell on "Ordinance No. 3," which the Hamburg merchant Alfred O'Swald described as the greatest of the stupidities dreamed up by the Company's board of directors.⁸ The April treaty had given the Company rights to all unoccupied lands in the coastal strip. In pursuit of these rights, the Company intended to decree that all property holders produce proof of ownership and have the boundaries of their property entered in a register. After six months, any land not so registered would revert to public ownership—that is, to the Company. Even the German Consul-General recognized the preposterousness of this decree in a society where title deeds were practically unknown (as in fact was ownership of land in fee simple), and he strenuously objected.

A year after the outbreak of violence, Consul-General Michahelles speculated that the land registration decree had prompted many large landowners to join the early stages of the rebellion. But this is unlikely. Company officials were not present in the towns long enough to promulgate many of their decrees or to act on any of

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5. In addition to the sources already cited, see Khalifa's confused instructions of 6 al-Hajj 1305 (15 Aug. 1888), ZStA, RKA 406, 17. Khalifa had retained the power to appoint qadis. For the terms of the coastal treaty see Müller, *Deutschland*, 285–6; for Khalifa's confusion as to its contents, Euan-Smith, 26 July 1888, FO 84/1908, 87–90. The quotation is from Hemedi bin Abdallah el-Buhriy, *Utenzi wa Vita vya Wadachi Kutamalaki Mrima, 1307 A.H.*, transl. and notes by J.W.T. Allen (Dar es Salaam, 1960), verses 226–30.
 6. For the new salaries, see Vohsen to Michahelles and Vohsen to station chiefs, 3 Aug. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406. Compare them to those received under Barghash, in Justus Strandes, "Überschlag der bisherigen Kosten der Verwaltung der Küste," 11 Nov. 1887, ZNA, AL2/58/96–8. See also Farler, "Misdoings of the Germans," 1888 (n.d.), UMCA, A1(v)A, 176.
 7. Müller, *Deutschland*, 361–2.
 8. O'Swald, 22 Oct. 1888, ZStA, RKA 693, 112. O'Swald's report also gives details of other decrees and taxes.

them. At Pangani, even the notoriously imprudent Zelewski thought it best to postpone announcing Ordinance No. 3; as things turned out, he never got a chance. The land registration appears only in complaints from observers at Zanzibar, and never in the protests of the rebels themselves.⁹ Until the DOAG agents actually took up their duties in mid-August, the townspeople were for the most part unaware of the details of the treaties or of the Company's aims, and even then, people only a short distance from the coast remained unaware of the impending German "administration."¹⁰ Upon their arrival in the towns, the DOAG agents were for the most part ignored or considered petty annoyances. A typical response was given to the officious von Bülow at the southern port of Mikindani. He could not even obtain a stone house in which to live, and had to camp in the mud-and-wattle hut that served as the customs house.¹¹ Nothing could have been more emblematic of his inconsequence in the eyes of the townspeople.

Vohsen issued specific instructions for the ceremony by which the Company would inaugurate its administration. At noon on August 16, DOAG agents would hoist the sultan's flag and beneath it the flag of the Company. Khalifa resisted allowing the use of his flag, but Vohsen insisted and the British and German Consuls-General pressured him to give in. Khalifa especially resented the use of his flagstaff, which, standing before the *liwali's* residence at each of the major towns, was considered a symbol of Busaid authority. It was a symbol that Vohsen intended to appropriate for the Company. When Vohsen informed the *maliwali* of the ceremony two weeks before it was to occur, he warned them that after the sixteenth only the DOAG station chief, the *bwana mkubwa* or "great master," would have the authority to hoist the red flag of the Sultanate. The German company was to be the exclusive representative of the sovereign power on the Mrima.¹²

Vohsen could not have chosen a more concise expression of his aims. In the course of the preceding four years, the flag of Zanzibar had become a symbol in the diplomatic rivalry between the sultan and the Company. Subsequent conflicts over the flying of the flag suggest the degree to which the Omanis had come to accept the political language of the Scramble for Africa, a language dominated by European concepts of national sovereignty. Previously the red banner had represented the prestige of the Busaid dynasty and the personal patronage of the sultan. It was flown on Fridays and holidays to proclaim that the coast towns were protected by a Muslim power, and it was hoisted whenever a large trading vessel approached the town, as if to express the link between commercial prosperity and Busaid hegemony. In the coastal hinterland the sultan's flag was a symbol to be manipulated as each political actor saw fit. Chiefs flew it on important occasions to demonstrate their friendship

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9. For the land-registration ordinance see Müller, *Deutschland*, 362–4; Michahelles, 23 July 1889, ZNA, AL2/32, 203–6; enclosure in Euan-Smith, 30 July 1888, FO 84/1908, 187–8. Indian merchants at Zanzibar complained as early as September 1888, as did the Sultan himself: see Indian petitioners to Euan-Smith, Zanzibar, 15 Sept. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406, 145; and Khalifa's complaints printed in Müller, *Deutschland*, appendices nos. 40 and 44. The German Admiral wrote that the DOAG agents never undertook any surveys of the lands around their stations, or even produced sketch maps: Deinhard, 3 Nov. 1888, ZStA, RKA 693, 84. For Zelewski at Pangani: Zelewski, 24 Aug. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406, 195.
 10. Stuhlmann, "Bericht über eine Reise," 153; Dougherty, *East Indies Station*, 42.
 11. Müller tells Bülow's story with biting sarcasm in *Deutschland*, 387–8. For Bülow's *makuti* customs-house, see O'Swald, 22 Oct. 1888, ZStA, RKA 693, 107–17.
 12. O'Swald, *ibid.*; Vohsen to Michahelles, 3 Aug. 1888, and to *maliwali* 2 Aug. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406; Euan-Smith, 18 Aug. 1888, FO 84/1908, 247–51.

with coastal traders and their alliance with the Omani state. Most regarded it as a flag of convenience; it was, as Mandara had said, "our ornament." But for the Europeans who squabbled over the extent of the sultan's authority, the flag stood for European-style sovereignty or it stood for nothing.¹³

As we have seen in the preceding chapter, the Company's earliest opponents seized the Busaid flag as a defence against German claims. Now the Germans took the flag back again, and, coupling it with a Company flag that bore striking resemblance to the flag of the German Empire¹⁴—a flag that could be seen flying on the gunboats of the Imperial Navy—they made it the central symbol of their new administration. During the opening days of attempted Company rule, those who would invoke the sultan's authority scuffled over the right to fly his red banner. On one side stood the Germans, and on the other stood the Arab elite who had been tied to the Omani state. But the latter faction quickly went over to the side of the Germans, leaving the field open for those who rebelled against the very rule of Zanzibar and who rejected the language of flags altogether.

Bagamoyo: Humbug and Tragedy

The Germans were to assume their official duties two days after the August 16 flag-raising ceremony. The date, of course, is significant: August 18 that year coincided with the disruptive carnival of *Siku ya Mwaka* or the Solar New Year, and August 19 coincided with the feast of Idd al-Hajj. The Company's fumbled first attempts to rule the towns were witnessed by slaves and villagers who had come from the countryside to celebrate the day of misrule and the religious holiday that followed it. It was also the end of the caravan season, and Bagamoyo was beginning to become encircled by the camps of newly arrived "Nyamwezi" caravan personnel.

The Company attached the greatest importance to Bagamoyo, where Vohsen himself was to preside over the flag-raising ceremony.¹⁵ He arrived one day early, accompanied by the sultan's personal envoy and bearing written instructions in which Khalifa ordered his officials to cooperate with the Germans. The *liwali*, Amir bin Suleiman al-Lemki, placed himself and his soldiers at the Company's disposal. But without an express order from Khalifa, he would not allow the Zanzibari flag to be removed from the flagstaff in front of his residence. This disagreement had been brewing for several weeks: in July, the owner of the *liwali*'s residence, the Zanzibar merchant Sewa Haji, had agreed to lease it to the German company, but Amir bin Suleiman had refused to vacate. Vohsen had to secure a house on the other side of the town, and now he wanted to see the sultan's flag flying there. After a long argument the *liwali* offered a compromise: he gave the Germans a second flag, to hoist at

13. Perceptions of the significance of the sultan's flag emerge from the many documents on the diplomatic rivalry described in chapter 6. See ZStA, RKA 382, *passim*; some notable examples from this file include Kleist, 25 Sept. 1885 (55–8) and Sohngé, 6 Aug. 1885 (43). Also see Zelewski, 12 Aug. 1888, and Juma bin Khamis, 29 Sept. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406, pp. 25, 171. For Semboja's use of the Sultan's flag, see Fischer, "Bericht," 96–7.

14. Several observers noted this, including the German Admiral, Deinhard, 18 Sept. 1888, ZStA, RKA 690, 47–8.

15. For general narratives of the initial conflicts at Bagamoyo, see Euan-Smith, 25 Aug. 1888, PP 1888, vol. 74, c. 5603, no. 66; Michahelles, 26 Aug. 1888, DKZ 1888 (n.s. 1), 415–6; Müller, *Deutschland*, 376–9.

their headquarters. Thus, the red banner would fly at two places simultaneously. This was not to Vohsen's liking; he wanted the exclusive right to fly the sultan's flag, so there would be no doubt that he alone was the sultan's representative at Bagamoyo. But he thought it prudent to postpone further protest until he could enlist the support of the German and British consuls at Zanzibar, and through them the support of Khalifa. The ceremony went off smoothly on August 16, attended by the *liwali*, marines from a German gunboat, and several hundred newly arrived caravan personnel.¹⁶

While the *liwali* was thus jockeying to preserve his status, the local *majumbe* had other concerns, and several of them called on Amir bin Suleiman to register their complaints. In the past, they told Amir, the sultan had treated them more as friends than as subjects; as such, they should at least have been notified of the German treaties when they were signed in April, rather than be surprised with them now. But instead, Khalifa failed to accord them the respect due to citizens and patriarchs; one of the *majumbe*, Makanda bin Mwinyi Mkuu, later wrote that the sultan "treated us like women, not even consulting us." The delegation warned Amir that the Germans had better leave town quickly if they wished to avoid trouble, for they, the *majumbe*, had decided on war. Makanda described the *liwali*'s withering reply:

Amir [bin Suleiman] listened to what they had to say, and then called them back. . . ."Cease your arrogance, stop being trouble-makers. . . . We should all be thankful for the lot which God has granted us, but it seems as if Satan has gotten the better of you. Which of you beggars is capable of making war? Which of you, who haven't a dollar to your names, whose only possessions are insolence and unbounded mischievousness?"

The *majumbe* endured this humiliation in silence (wrote Makanda), keeping their bitterness in their hearts.¹⁷

The *majumbe* were to constitute the core of the rising at Bagamoyo, and Makanda would be one of their most prominent leaders. It is notable, then, that their protests contain no reference to flags; on the contrary, from the very beginning they regarded the main protagonist in the flag dispute, Amir bin Suleiman, as their enemy. Rather than defend the local officers of the Sultanate, they feared that Omani officials would ally with the Germans in an attempt to radically advance the process by which Shirazi perquisites, in particular the collection of *ada*, had been steadily arrogated to the state.¹⁸

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16. Khalifa to Michahelles, 28 July 1888, Michahelles to Khalifa, 28 July 1888, Vohsen to Michahelles, 1 Aug. 1888, in ZNA, AL2/89, 69–75; Vohsen, 17 Aug. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406, 19–20; Vohsen, 25 Aug. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406, 44–68; Euan-Smith, 25 Aug. 1888, FO 84/1908, 320–35; Stuhlmann, "Bericht über eine Reise," 145. While these sources all mention crowds of caravan personnel, the experienced Stuhlmann wrote that the town was relatively empty compared to other occasions he had witnessed. So the "thousands" of caravan personnel who crowded into the town during the opening weeks of the rebellion had apparently only just begun to arrive.
 17. Makanda bin Mwinyi Mkuu, "Vita vya Bagamoyo," in Carl Velten, *Suaheli-Gedichte* (Berlin, 1918), 13–20; Protocol of negotiations between Gravenreuth and representatives of the Bagamoyo *majumbe*, 12 Oct. 1888, ZStA, RKA 407, 37; Schmidt, *Geschichte*, 27–8.
 18. This interpretation appears in many documents and is borne out by subsequent events. An explicit statement can be found in a private letter written by Franz Stuhlmann, an exceptionally well-informed traveller who was acutely critical of the Company and who had personal experience of the rebels: "Bericht über die augenblicklichen politischen Verhältnisse an der Ost-Afrikanischen Küste" [20 Oct. 1888], ZStA, RKA 693, 41–51.

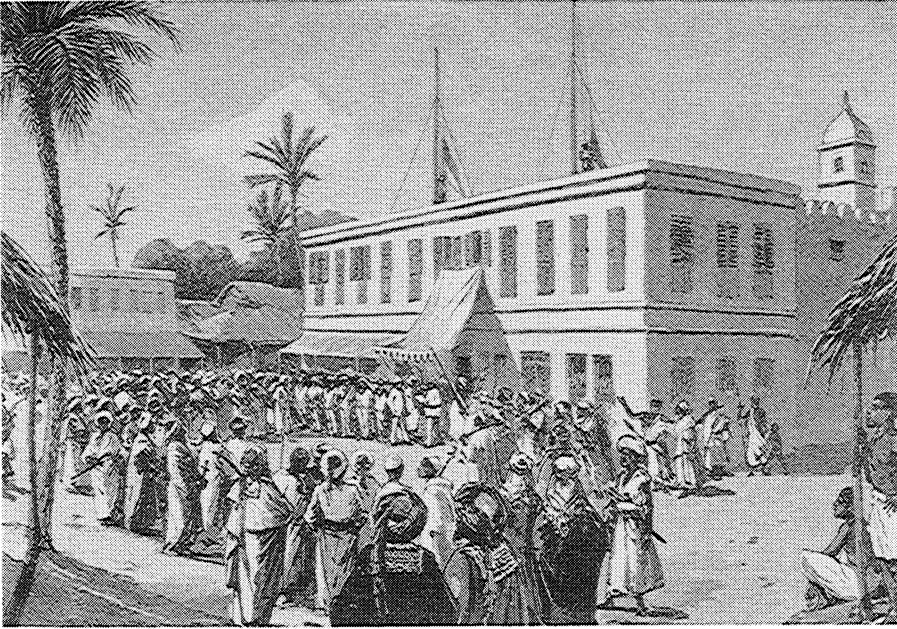


FIGURE 7.1. Bagamoyo, 16 August 1888: Reading of the proclamation by which the German East Africa Company assumed administration of the coast. The ceremony's intended audience consists of people whose clothes mark them as Arab and patrician elites, but slaves observe, unbidden, from the sidelines. This print inadvertently captures much of the dramaturgy of the riots that would engulf the town several days later.

The *majumbe* no doubt remembered when Barghash's *liwali* had provoked them and their predecessors to rebellion in 1875 by riding roughshod over what they perceived as their customary rights. The *liwali* then was Nasr bin Suleiman al-Lemki, a kinsman of the present *liwali* (perhaps his brother), and father of Suleiman bin Nasr al-Lemki, the young Pangani sugar planter who had already begun to play the role of Vohsen's most influential collaborator. One of Nasr bin Suleiman's major allies in expanding the power of the Sultanate in the 1870s was Said Magram, an Arab settler who was still active at Bagamoyo in 1888 and who would join the al-Lemkis as one of the Germans' most trusted collaborators after the flag crisis was finally resolved.¹⁹ The *majumbe* now saw their old enemies cooperating with the Germans in yet another attempt to enlarge the powers of the Sultanate at their expense.

19. For Amir bin Suleiman and Said Magram and their loyal services to the Germans, see Schmidt, *Geschichte*, 23–4. For Suleiman bin Nasr's services to the Germans on the present occasion see Vohsen, 25 Aug. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406, 50–60. The 1875 incident has been mentioned in chapter 5; the bone of contention then, as again in 1888, was the granting of extraordinary privileges to Europeans (on the former occasion French missionaries). For a more detailed description, including the involvement of Said Magram, see Brown, "Historical introduction."

The sources leave no doubt that the Bagamoyo *majumbe* regarded the *liwali* and the sultan as their enemies; in Makanda's account the sultan is imagined to have sold the Mrima to the Germans on friendly terms and at an enormous profit. Yet in protesting the transaction the *majumbe* framed their complaints in terms of an ideal of Omani rule, an ideal that they claimed had been violated. Their representation of the past (which they repeated to the Germans), in which the sultan treated them more as friends than as subjects, tactfully ignored the long history of conflict such as that which erupted in 1875. Some of this distortion might be attributed to diplomacy. But it is also probable that, like the *watoro* of Makorora, the rebel *majumbe* had internalized a mythical image of the benign sultan, an image to which the newly enthroned Khalifa failed to measure up. By enunciating their demands in the language of Arab hegemony, the *majumbe* encouraged European observers, and even Amir bin Suleiman himself, to imagine that the rebels were fighting to defend the authority of the Sultanate.

Nevertheless, Amir's confrontation with the *majumbe* must have suggested to him that opposing the Germans too strenuously over the flag might arouse popular resentments that had best remain suppressed. And indeed, although the first major crisis ostensibly concerned the flag dispute, it was in fact provoked by the threats of unruly festival crowds. Bagamoyo merchants had been doing a brisk business in fire-arms and gunpowder throughout the opening days of the Company's administration: this was common on holidays and on the return of caravans, and many customers were no doubt spending the earnings of a recently completed safari. The carousing caravan personnel wandered the streets of the town shooting their guns in the air, and some spoke menacingly of looting the Indians' shops. Such talk was often heard during the carnival of the Solar New Year, but on this occasion it seemed particularly alarming. A delegation of the town's Muslim Indians told the *liwali* of their alarm the next morning while paying their customary visit in honor of Idd al-Hajj. Amir bin Suleiman replied by informing the merchants of his earlier meeting with Makanda and the other *majumbe*. He said that the local Swahili-speakers and people from upcountry ("the *wamrima* and *washenzi*") had threatened to sack the town if the Germans were to remove the sultan's flag from his residence. In such an event, he added ominously, he could do nothing to protect the merchants, as he had not sufficient soldiers to prevent violence.

The *liwali's* warning was misleading, for he made it seem as if the rebels' main concern were that he continue to be the sultan's sole local representative. Nevertheless even Amir recognized that the *majumbe* and their clientele could not be expected to accept Omani authority without qualification; the Sultanate, he admitted, could not command the loyalty of the plebeian crowd. And even if Amir managed to muster enough military force to control the town, the *majumbe* and their followers could simply withdraw to their villages in the hinterland, where the power of Zanzibar had never been more than minimal. As the Indian delegation returned home from this troubling interview, they overheard "two leading men of the Mrima people talking on the road that they would set fire to the town and go away." More alarmed than ever, the merchants bolted up their shops, and twenty-three of them, Hindu as well as Muslim, sent a joint petition to their official protector, British Consul-General Euan-Smith. They wrote that an atmosphere of "terror" was being created in the town; "the leading Mrima people . . . take a prominent part," they reported, "and we hear that

the Shenzi people have also arrived." The latter part of this statement no doubt refers to the continual arrival of upcountry caravan personnel as well as villagers from the town's more remote hinterland.²⁰

When Euan-Smith received this letter on August 20, he immediately showed it to his German colleague Michahelles and demanded that something be done to protect British Indian interests. The Germans were eager to comply, hoping to use the opportunity to make a forceful show of authority. Vohsen was still smarting from the compromise to which he had been forced on the flag issue, and he saw the Indian petition as evidence that the *liwali* was attempting to use the unrest for his own ends. This may have been so, yet if Amir bin Suleiman hoped at first to turn the rebelliousness of the *majumbe* and the crowd to his advantage in the tussle over the exercise of the sultan's authority, it was only because he recognized his inability to control or suppress it. But the Germans, believing that elite Arabs were the only individuals capable of orchestrating a political movement, portrayed the tensions at Bagamoyo as being solely concerned with who would rule on the sultan's behalf.

On August 21 Vohsen got his chance to chasten the *liwali* and appropriate the exclusive use of the sultan's flag. The German gunboat *Möwe* was sent to Bagamoyo in response to Euan-Smith's request; forty-two marines landed and surrounded the *liwali*'s house. Gravenreuth, the DOAG station chief, then demanded that Amir bin Suleiman lower the sultan's flag with his own hands. After the flag was hauled down (whether by the Germans or the bullied Amir we do not know), Gravenreuth chopped down the flagstaff to prevent another flag from being hoisted at the *liwali*'s residence. A few hours later, Vohsen arrived on a second German gunboat, bearing a last-minute letter from Khalifa which was meant to have prevented such an altercation. The sultan ordered Amir to vacate his residence and hand it and its flagstaff over to the Germans. The marines carried the DOAG flagstaff from the other side of town to the site of the one they had just chopped down, and the humiliated *liwali* was then forced to rehoist the sultan's flag and acknowledge German authority. The entire spectacle was witnessed by huge crowds of villagers, townspeople and caravan personnel; Gravenreuth wrote that thousands of upcountry caravaners were encamped outside the town. Although the violence of which Amir had warned did not break out until a month later, the significance of the event could not have been lost on the onlookers. Henceforth the Germans and not the *liwali* were to rule in the name of the sultan.²¹

Vohsen and Michahelles gloated over the events of August 21. They said that the unrest had not been caused by popular protest against the Germans, but was merely the result of scheming by the *liwali*. In fact there had been no protest at all, they maintained, but merely the festivities connected with the holidays. The Indian merchants had "foolishly" allowed themselves to be frightened by the revelries of Zaramo and Swahili villagers and upcountry caravaners, who had brandished weapons simply as part of their merrymaking. The merchants themselves had provided the weapons, and

20. For these and the following paragraphs: Vohsen to Michahelles, 22 Aug. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406, 34–5; Michahelles to Euan-Smith, 26 Aug. 1888, ZNA, AA2/47/482–9; Petition of Indian inhabitants of Bagamoyo, 19 Aug. 1888, and Michahelles to Euan-Smith and to Sultan, 22 Aug. 1888, in ZNA, AA1/61/236; *National-Zeitung*, 24 Sept. 1888, in ZStA, RKA 687, 78. The petition of the Indian merchants reads "Mari-maje" for *wamrima* and "Chenji" for *shenzi*.

21. Euan-Smith, 25 Aug. 1888 (and enclosures), FO 84/1908, 320–40; Gravenreuth, 22 Aug. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406, 42.

Michahelles lodged a formal protest at the British Consulate over their "frivolous" petition of complaint.²²

But the Germans' optimism was premature and displayed a failure to understand the links between festival and conflict in coastal culture. It is indicative of their ignorance that they did not in fact recognize the concurrence of multiple holidays, but conflated *Siku ya Mwaka* and Idd al-Hajj as one, that of the "Mohammedan New Year." (There is no such holiday: *Siku ya Mwaka* is not Islamic, and coastal Muslims reckon Idd al-Hajj as coming in the third month of the Islamic ritual calendar.²³) The tensions of the multiple festivals spoiled the flag-raising ceremonies elsewhere in the Germans' new coastal domains, including Pangani, and gave the outbreak of resistance an appearance of broad coordination which puzzled contemporary observers as much as it has continued to puzzle modern historians.²⁴

At the southern port of Lindi, for example, the Company station chief was baffled by the universal ridicule with which his orders were greeted. On August 18, wanting to promulgate the first of his decrees concerning tolls and taxes, the German sought out the town crier, a slave called Manga. Rather, that is the name that the Germans were told: given the pervasive carnival atmosphere of *Siku ya Mwaka*, in which authority was mocked and relations of ritual power inverted, we cannot be sure of even a name. *Manga* means an Omani Arab, and it is easy to imagine the following exchange:

European (imperiously): "Who are you?"

Slave (mockingly): "I'm an Omani."

Manga's subsequent behavior is the very picture of the burlesques that characterize festivals of misrule. Accompanied by a large crowd, he went through the streets of the town proclaiming his interpretation of the German decrees:

Hear ye! Hear ye! The Germans have come! Hitherto only one flag flew here; now there are two! Anyone who wishes to bring goods to town, whether taxable or not, must take them first to the customs house. Anyone who wishes to lie with his wife, be he Arab, Hindu or African, must first take her to be inspected by the Europeans. Anyone who fails to obey will have everything taken from him: house and rafters, bed and cooking pots, and the grass growing in his backyard. This all will be sent to Germany, and he himself imprisoned.

Manga was arrested and sent in chains to Zanzibar, where he was thrown in the sultan's dungeon.²⁵

The significance of Manga's stunt went beyond the ridicule it heaped on the plague of petty taxes and ordinances announced by the German Company. It also mocked the weakness and complicity of the Omani state officials and the irrelevance of their squabbles over the flag. "Whoever has a complaint can take it to the *liwali*," cried Manga, "who perhaps will send him to the Europeans." The Germans were said

22. Vohsen, 22 Aug. 1888, ZStA, *loc. cit.*; Michahelles 22 and 26 Aug. 1888, ZNA, *loc. cit.*

23. That is, *mfunguo wa tatu*, the third month after breaking the fast of Ramadhan. Elsewhere in the Muslim world Idd al-Hajj is considered to come in the eighth month of the calendar.

24. See Iliffe's comment in *Modern History*, 92n.

25. Eberstein, 22 Aug. 1888, ZNA AL2/89/112-4.

to covet not only the authority of the state, but also the authority exerted by every male householder over hearth, home and female dependents. Patriarchal authority was considered the prerogative of all but the most abject *shamba* slaves, yet now the *liwali* stood idly by (suggested Manga) as the Germans took it even from the urban elite. Similar fears were expressed elsewhere during the course of the rebellion.²⁶ We have seen that the prestige of patriarchy was especially prized by men of low status, for it gave them an element of authority that they might manipulate to enhance their positions within the Shirazi towns. Manga's sarcasm thus highlights the apprehensions felt by men of low status.

The Omanis focused their protests on the use of the flag, which symbolized their continued control of the state apparatus. And the officials of the German Empire, Consul-General Michahelles and Admiral Deinhard, sympathised with them; so far as they were concerned, the Arabs were in a far better position to control the local population than were the employees of the DOAG. Both men were annoyed with Vohsen for having instigated the flag incident, which they believed to be an unnecessary affront that was likely to lose them the vital cooperation of the Arab elite. Bismarck went further: he considered the entire flag affair a "humbug," and he excoriated Michahelles for authorizing German naval forces to assist the Company.²⁷ The consul, the admiral and especially the *Reichskanzler* still labored under the illusion that German East Africa could exist as a private enterprise, protected by Omani sovereignty.

But the authority of the Sultanate had become extremely fragile in the wake of these embarrassments, and within a month of the flag incident it had been defied at all the major Mrima towns with the exception of Dar es Salaam. Amir bin Suleiman's warning that the coastal people would rebel, and that he could do nothing about it, was repeated by Omani officials elsewhere. At Lindi the *liwali* had given the Company every support, but by the time of Manga's burlesque he made it clear that he was powerless to stop the local people from rebelling; he could not even command the loyalty of his *viroboto* garrison.²⁸ In September, rebels prevented Nasr bin Suleiman al-Lemki from landing at Kilwa, where Khalifa had sent him to negotiate a settlement. They told Nasr that the sultan no longer ruled there; that the people of the mainland, who had previously owned the coast, had now reclaimed their territory from the Omanis.²⁹

Informed observers could not have been surprised by any of this. Even Euan-Smith, despite diplomatic rhetoric maintaining that the sultan enjoyed complete sovereignty on the coast, recognized as early as July 1888 that any attempt to use force to impose the treaty concessions would result in the collapse of Omani authority. The Africans of the coast "assert that the concession was not binding on them," he wrote, "having been made without their consent."³⁰ The same point was made by Hemedi bin Abdallah in his epic poem about the rebellion. The Shirazi poet imagines an interview in which Khalifa tells the Germans that he is unable to prevent the coastal people from rejecting Zanzibari overrule. "The people of the Mrima are not my

26. E.g., Mathews, 14 Sept. 1888, ZNA AA 1/61/265, encl. (Pangani); Pruen, 24 Nov. 1888, FO 84/1911, 3-4 (Saadani). Given what we know of the behavior of individual German agents, these fears seem well founded.

27. Michahelles to Vohsen, 15 Sept. 1888, ZStA RKA 406, 106; Deinhard, 18 Sept. 1888, ZStA, RKA 690, 47-8 (including margin note by Herbert von Bismarck); Bismarck to Michahelles, 6 Oct. 1888, DKZ n.s. I (1888), 416; Müller, *Deutschland*, 376.

28. Vohsen, 25 Aug. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406, 60-1.

29. Michahelles, 3 Oct. 1888, ZStA, RKA 692, 18-25.

30. Euan-Smith, 21 July 1888, PP 1888, vol. 74, c 5603, no. 69.

slaves," says the sultan. "They have freely agreed to join me and to accept my sovereignty. If they now wish otherwise, I am no longer their king."³¹

In mid-September, Bagamoyo's leading Arabs and Indians petitioned the Germans to take vigorous action at Pangani, where the direst crisis had erupted. If state authority were not restored there and anti-Omani dissidents not punished, they warned, violence would spread. It was later said that rebels at Pangani, Saadani and Winde had sent reinforcements to Bagamoyo's rebel *majumbe* by this time.³² Gravenreuth and his colleagues, already made skittish by the grim news coming in from other towns, were further alarmed by the steady arrival of larger and larger crowds of caravan personnel. By the third week of September as many as eight thousand caravanners were in and around Bagamoyo. Such a situation exposed deep tensions in even the most settled of times, and Gravenreuth prudently requested that a German gunboat be present in case of violence. On September 20, the frigate *Leipzig* appeared in the roadstead. For two days its presence dominated the town. Then, early on the morning of September 22, Amir bin Suleiman warned the Germans of impending trouble and cautioned them to remain indoors for the day. Villagers along the Kingani River had apparently mistaken a heavily armed German hunting party for a military attack; this prompted their *majumbe* to lead them to town, where, joined by some of the sojourning caravan personnel, they headed for the DOAG station.

What happened next is unclear. Company officials said they were fired upon by caravan porters just entering the town and that this led to a general attack by the hostile crowd. Euan-Smith doubted this; it would have been folly for the poorly armed Africans to attack while the *Leipzig* stood clearly off the town, and he suspected that the Germans had panicked at the festive behavior of the caravan personnel, who were merely "firing in the air after the manner of their kind."³³ His doubts seem justified. Whatever the cause of their fright, the Germans withdrew to the roof of the station house, a massive building on the southern edge of Bagamoyo's stone-built quarter, and opened fire on the surrounding crowd.³⁴

A month earlier, the Indian merchants' panic at holiday revelry had resulted only in farce and humbug; this time, German panic resulted in grim tragedy. Gravenreuth's cannon fire and distress signals summoned eight boatloads of marines from the *Leipzig*. According to official German reports, the "rebels" were massed on the beach and consisted mostly of the "riffraff" of the caravans ("*Karawanen-gesindel*"); we know that upcountry caravan personnel routinely camped on the beach while staying at Bagamoyo. These crowds, armed mostly with machetes and bows, were met by Gatling guns mounted on the prows of the approaching boats of the *Leipzig*. Two hundred marines then landed and overran the narrow streets of the town, shooting indiscriminately at any African they saw. Official reports attempted to gloss over the

31. Hemedi, *Utenzi wa Vita*, verses 266–9. (Allen's translation has been slightly modified.)

32. ZStA: Gravenreuth, 12 Sept. 1888, RKA 406, 109; Strandes, 24 Sept. 1888, and Michahelles, 4 Oct. 1888, RKA 692, 12, 34–5; Stuhlmann, 20 Oct. 1888, RKA 693, 48–50. Also Churchill to Euan-Smith, 25 Sept. 1888, PP 1888, vol. 74, c. 5603, no. 97, incl. 1.

33. Euan-Smith, 25 Sept. 1888, FO 84/1909, 206–16.

34. The contradictory sources for the massacre of September 22 are discussed in Glassman, "Social rebellion," 511ff. They include German consular, naval and Company dispatches in RKA 691 (11–3, 58–62), RKA 406 (147–8, 159), and RKA 692 (93–7); British consular and naval dispatches in FO 84/1909 (206–28); Albrecht O'Swald, 24 Sept. 1888, HStA 621–2, 4 Bd. 39; and Makanda, "Vita vya Bagamoyo," verses 34ff. Also see "The Outbreak in Zanzibar," *The Advocate of India* (Bombay), 20 Oct. 1888, in RKA 692, 102–4; and de Courmont, 4 Oct. 1888, *Miss. Cath.* xxi (1889), 26.

undisputed carnage by labeling the whole thing a "battle;" in reality it was a massacre. Over one hundred Africans were killed, plus two Indians, shot in their house. On the German side, reported a Hamburg merchant, losses were "restricted only to blacks." Six of their servants were killed, probably shot down by the marines themselves.³⁵

The Germans burned down the *makuti* neighborhood immediately adjacent to the Company house and mounted their large guns on the roof. They were finally the masters of Bagamoyo—but they were the masters of a deserted town. Most of the African population had fled to the outlying villages, and the Indians who had hoped to purchase ivory from the incoming caravans had returned to Zanzibar. Following the advice of Amir bin Suleiman, Gravenreuth assembled a force of about eighty-five men and undertook a mopping-up operation in the surrounding countryside. The heavily armed troops terrorized the countryside, destroying villages, burning the boats by which travellers crossed the Kingani River, and, according to Michahelles, killing "a considerable number of natives."³⁶

By the time of this crisis, the Company and the Omanis had become fully aware of their need for one another: Gravenreuth's soldiers consisted largely of mercenaries provided by the *liwali* and armed slaves provided by Said Magram and other Arab settlers. In August some Omani officials may have thought that their interests would best be served by confronting the Germans on issues such as the deployment of the sultan's flag. But when the authority of the Sultanate began to crumble altogether a month later—when, as one observer put it, the rebellion began to "grow over the heads" of the Arab elite—the Omanis quickly went over to the Germans, who alone had the power to restore state authority. For the most part, property-owning Arabs either remained aloof from the revolt, abandoning the town along with the Indian merchants to wait out events at Zanzibar, or, like Said Magram and Amir bin Suleiman, they actively aided the Germans. The only Arab state employees who sided with the rebels were the *viroboto*, the low-status mercenaries who often developed ties of kinship and clientage among the local population. Within a month of the September massacre, Amir bin Suleiman was being threatened by his *viroboto*, who resented his cooperation with the Germans.³⁷

The targets of Gravenreuth's military operations were the *majumbe* whom Amir bin Suleiman had insulted in August, particularly those whose villages lay along the lower Kingani River in Bagamoyo's immediate hinterland, as well as some Zaramo *mapazi* from the Dunda area who were allied with them. By contrast, *mapazi* from further inland, and especially those near the Madimola and Uzungula DOAG stations (abandoned soon after the September massacre), refused to join the rebels.³⁸ Neither of these groups of village chiefs was particularly sympathetic to Omani rule, but only

35. ZStA: Deinhard, 24 Sept. 1888, RKA 691, 59; Stuhlmann, 20 Oct. 1888, RKA 693, 47; the quote is from Strandes, 24 Sept. 1888, RKA 692, 12–3. For Gatling guns and German "friendly fire" see Glassman, "Social rebellion," 513–4. Unlike other sources, de Courmont, at Zanzibar, put the death toll at between forty and sixty: 4 Oct. 1888, *loc. cit.*

36. Euan-Smith, 28 Sept. and 4 Oct. 1888, FO 84/1909, 237–42, 347–51 (Michahelles is quoted in the former of these dispatches); Gravenreuth, 28 Sept. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406, 159–61; Makanda, "Vita vya Bagamoyo," verses 41ff; Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 132; Churchill and Arbutnot, 25 Sept. 1888, FO 84/1909, 218–28; DOAG report, DKZ n.s. I (1888), 359; Stuhlmann, 20 Oct. 1888, ZStA, *loc. cit.*

37. Stuhlmann, 20 Oct. 1888, ZStA, RKA 693, 47–50; Behr, *Kriegsbilder*, 132; Schmidt, *Geschichte*, 23–4, 27–8; Michahelles, 22 Oct. 1888, ZStA, RKA 692, 17. Ismael of Winde and Bwana Heri were the only *maliwali* who were exceptions to this generalization. Neither was Arab, and both had been noted for their unusual degree of autonomy from Zanzibar. Ismael was not, strictly speaking, a *liwali* at all.

38. In addition to sources already cited, see Bley, *Deutsche Pionierarbeit*, 123–40.



FIGURE 7.2. Site of the massacre of 22 September 1888, in a photograph taken soon after the event. German fire razed the entire *makuti* neighborhood adjacent to the Company house.

the former, who had long exercised a voice in urban community institutions, could entertain any realistic hopes of gaining power should the Sultanate collapse. Chiefs from Bagamoyo's more remote hinterland, who had received little from the townspeople except the rude impositions of passing caravans, had no interest in defending the *majumbe's* power to exact *ada*. Indeed, *mapazi* who lived near the DOAG stations had probably gotten their fullest taste of the fruits of coastal commerce from the Germans who had sought them out as allies during the four years prior to the September crisis. This was more than they had ever received from Bagamoyo's townspeople, whether Omani or Shirazi.

While the motivations of Bagamoyo's *majumbe* are fairly clear, those of their followers are less so. Unfortunately we know little about individual rebel *majumbe* other than their names, but it seems clear that their primary bases of support were among village agriculturalists. Makanda bin Mwinyi Mkuu, although young, had already built up a loyal following among Zaramo and Swahili-speaking villagers. Other leaders were Simba Mbili, an elderly chief from the hinterland of Winde, and two Shirazi *majumbe* with estates along the lower Kingani River, Salim Abdallah and Kisoka. Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari wrote that Kisoka was notorious for cultivating unusually close ties to his slaves: in the early or mid-1880s he caused a scandal by allowing his

female slaves to wear garb normally reserved for Shirazi patricians, most notably the *shiraa*, the tent-like veil that required its wearer to be attended by servants. This implies that Kisoka's concubines enjoyed a higher position than usually fell to those of their status. Mtoro writes of another Bagamoyo *jumbe* who allowed both his male and female slaves to use such insignia of rank as veils and umbrellas. The dissension caused by such behavior, between younger *majumbe* who did not object³⁹ and their older colleagues who did, suggests that these were not isolated examples. Permissive *majumbe* such as Kisoka would be viewed as attractive patrons by slaves and others of low status who sought to enhance their positions in urban society. It is not surprising to read that Kisoka was particularly feared for his loyal clientele. Significantly, during the siege of Bagamoyo he and other rebel *majumbe* would attract large followings of runaway slaves.⁴⁰

It appears, then, that the rebel *majumbe* built up strong personal followings by sponsoring their clients' participation in the community life of the Shirazi towns. This in turn suggests that members of Bagamoyo's plebeian crowd aggressively demanded the perquisites of clientele: if they defended the traditional prerogatives of their Shirazi patrons, they no doubt expected those patrons to reciprocate. The festive context surrounding the events of August thus helps illuminate the motivations of the crowd. Shirazi festival was an occasion when patricians competed for clientele, and when plebeians used that opportunity to demand a greater price for their support, often overstepping what their patrons deemed the bounds of proper deference. Such tensions were no doubt important factors when villagers streamed into Bagamoyo to celebrate the double holiday, ridiculing the elite conflict over the flag, threatening to disrupt commercial order, and thereby precipitating the first crisis.

The motivations of the crowd are less clear for the events of September 22. Most of those killed in the massacre were caravan personnel, mowed down on the beach by German fire. But massacres by their very nature claim victims who are not central to the conflicts that produce them. All the sources, Swahili, Indian and European, agree that the unrest at Bagamoyo was led by *majumbe* and local villagers, not Nyamwezi porters. It is most likely that the rambunctious caravan personnel, in a sense like the Germans themselves, stumbled into a conflict that had been brewing in their absence. They too had ample reason to resent Omani rule, which had been disastrous to their interests. The Shirazi had always arranged matters for upcountry caravaners during their sojourn on the coast, and no doubt the rebel *majumbe* made use of these connections in mobilizing some Nyamwezi support. But relations between Nyamwezi caravaners and their Shirazi patrons had always been uneasy; indeed, the revelry that characterized the arrival of a caravan was often riven by tensions between the coastal people and the despised "*washenzi*." Perhaps this helps explain what Euan-Smith found so puzzling: why the *majumbe* decided to attack while the *Leipzig* was still in the

39. Mtoro suggests a generational aspect to this conflict, although in 1888 Kisoka was described as being about 100 years old (Stuhlmann, 20 Oct. 1888, ZStA *loc. cit.*). It is possible that the invocation of generational differences is a metaphor, such as that observed by Parkin in his research on accumulation and ritual innovation in the Mombasa hinterland, where "arguments about age differences and ritual privilege . . . are arguments about emerging wealth differences" (*Palms*, 4).

40. Schmidt, *Geschichte*, 27–8; Gravenreuth, 24 and 29 Oct. 1888, ZStA, RKA 407, 6–8; Baur, "Dans l'Oudoé," 19; Mtoro, *Customs*, 173–4; Gravenreuth, 28 Sept. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406, 160; Stuhlmann, 20 Oct. 1888, and Deinhard, 3 Nov. 1888, ZStA, RKA 693, 47–8, 90.

roadstead. It is most likely that the *majumbe* had not decided to attack at all but had simply lost control of their unruly allies.

In subsequent months, the support of Nyamwezi⁴¹ caravaners would become an issue of overriding importance at Bagamoyo, and one in which the Germans would gain the upper hand. This was largely because of the structures of the caravan trade. We have seen that the interests of Nyamwezi caravaners and those of Bagamoyo's *majumbe* had become acutely polarized. The Bagamoyo *majumbe* were brokers, interested mainly in the full restoration of their *ada* and other fees. The Germans made it clear that they intended to complete the abolition of these fees (something that the Omanis had never succeeded in doing), and so long as they held the town, they encouraged incoming caravans to bypass the *majumbe* altogether. Nyamwezi caravaners, far from home and anxious to get the best and quickest deal for their cargo, were only too glad to cooperate, and they resented the attempts by rebel *majumbe* to divert their caravans south to rebel-held ports such as Kilwa. Gravenreuth, perhaps the most astute of the Company's agents, was quick to grasp the significance of those resentments. He was patronizing Nyamwezi caravaners as early as October, employing them as messengers to friendly villagers and providing armed guards to escort them through the inland blockade thrown up by the rebels who were besieging the town.⁴²

Such conflicts would cripple the movement at Bagamoyo, especially after December when the siege of the town was taken over by Bushiri bin Salim, a man who had made his fortune competing with the Nyamwezi on the central routes and was not above pillaging their incoming caravans.⁴³ But matters were far different where commerce remained under the control of the Shirazi rebels, who were eager for the wealth brought by Nyamwezi caravans. This was especially so at ports where upcountry caravaners had enjoyed smoother relations with the townspeople than at Bagamoyo. At Saadani, for example, Bwana Heri made ample use of his Nyamwezi allies, recruiting them in his prolonged guerilla war against German conquest. Similar conditions prevailed at Pangani, as we shall see. But they were missing at Bagamoyo, where upcountry folk had long been excluded from the full benefits of the commercial boom and the institutions of town life. Thus they saw little reason to ally themselves with the rebel *majumbe*.

Pangani: Prayers and Gunpowder

Questions of citizenship and of Shirazi authority were more delicate at Pangani than at any other town on the Mrima. Although squabbles over the sultan's flag arose there as well as at Bagamoyo, they did not figure as prominently, and the rebellion

41. It must be stressed that the term *Nyamwezi* is used very loosely here, as it is in the sources, to refer to the commercially active people who came from the central and north central regions of modern-day Tanzania. It includes Sukuma caravaners, who were among Gravenreuth's earliest allies.

42. For some of the earliest instances of these alignments, see Bley, *Pionierarbeit*, 126; Schmidt, *Geschichte*, 28–9; Gravenreuth, 20 Nov. 1888, ZStA, RKA 407, 101–2.

43. For examples of tensions between Nyamwezi caravaners and the town's besiegers see de Courmont, letter of 18 Dec. 1888, *Miss. Cath.* 21 (1889), 39–40; Gommenginger, letter of 6 May 1889, *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi* 61 (1889), 333–53.

was sustained by issues other than who would exert authority in the name of the sultan. These other issues included debt, the prerogatives and obligations of the Shirazi *majumbe*, the influence of upcountry trade personnel, and the patriarchal control of slaves and women—in short, the issues that were likely to matter most to plebeians intent on enhancing their prestige within the Shirazi communities. Many observers noted a religious motivation at Pangani that was lacking elsewhere, and in fact it was a religious issue that sparked the first unrest: the sanctity of Islamic institutions which, in theory at least, insured for all believers a role in urban life.

The Double Holiday and the Desecration of the Mosque

As at Bagamoyo, the Germans began their aborted rule of Pangani by needlessly humiliating the Omani officials. Emil von Zelewski arrived on August 6 and immediately set about cultivating the town's most prominent Arabs and Indians.⁴⁴ On August 12, he and a colleague called on the *liwali*, Abdulgawi bin Abdallah, to inform him of his duties. The two Germans warned Abdulgawi that if he failed to obey their orders the Company would withhold the pitifully small salary it intended to pay him. Astonished by this impudence, Abdulgawi replied that he could cooperate only if shown written instructions from the sultan, but all Zelewski could produce was a copy of a letter from Khalifa to Michahelles. As to the proposed flag-raising ceremony, the *liwali* said that he had orders from the sultan to fly the flag only on holidays and when a large ship entered the harbor. "I have received no other instructions, therefore no other flag can be hoisted."⁴⁵

News of the Germans' insults spread instantly, and tensions in the town grew so palpable that Zelewski felt it would be wisest to postpone the flag-raising ceremony until things calmed down. That same day Zelewski wrote to Vohsen and Michahelles, asking them to arrange a show of force and to secure a letter from Khalifa ordering Abdulgawi's obedience. Zelewski also proposed that Khalifa be persuaded to appoint a more cooperative *liwali*; he had in mind some prominent Arabs whom he considered suitable, including several sugar planters and a former *liwali* who had already befriended the Company.⁴⁶ Khalifa wrote the letter of instruction, which was dispatched on board the German gunboat *Möwe*, and Michahelles granted Zelewski permission to request a landing of marines to arrest Abdulgawi should this become necessary.⁴⁷

The *Möwe* arrived off Pangani late on August 17 and remained anchored in the harbor through the night. This was the eve of *Siku ya Mwaka*, a time of ritual danger when evil spirits roamed freely. German marines landed the next morning, and, led by Zelewski, they presented the *liwali* with Khalifa's written orders. Zelewski and his soldiers then bullied Abdulgawi and the *viroboto* into allowing the flag ceremony to

44. Zelewski, 11 Aug. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406, 186.

45. Zelewski, 12 Aug. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406, 24–6.

46. *Ibid.*; also Zelewski, 12 Aug 1888, ZStA, RKA 406, 26–7; J.P. Farler, "England and Germany in East Africa," *Fortnightly Review* 51 (1889), 346; Glassman, "Social rebellion," 527n.

47. Michahelles to Vohsen, 15 Aug. 1888, and Khalifa to *liwali* of Pangani, 6 al Hajj 1305 (15 Aug. 1888), ZStA, RKA 406, 23–4. For this and the following several paragraphs see also Michahelles, 25 Aug. 1888, DKZ n.s. I (1888), 415.

proceed, threatening them with deportation aboard the *Möwe*. Zelewski told Abdulgawi that henceforth he would consider control of the prison and the customs house emblems of the Company's supreme authority in Pangani, and he commanded the *viroboto* to perform drill exercises twice daily.⁴⁸

The *Möwe* and its marines departed that afternoon, and Zelewski, confident that the show of force had successfully cowed the local populace into submission, tried to exert his newly won authority. He demanded the keys to the jail. Abdulgawi refused. Zelewski then turned to the *viroboto*, who up to that point had obeyed him. But their obedience had vanished with the guns of the *Möwe*, and Zelewski found himself confronted by hostile crowds of soldiers and other armed townspeople. Prudently, he withdrew. The crowds undoubtedly included villagers who had come to town to celebrate the festival of the Solar New Year. As at Bagamoyo that same day, Pangani's Indian merchants took fright at the threats of holiday crowds, and as tensions mounted some called on Zelewski to ask that he summon more force to protect their property.⁴⁹

That evening the German cruiser *Carola* appeared in the harbor; the ship had been patrolling the northern coast for several days in case of just such trouble.⁵⁰ Zelewski sent a colleague on board to request that marines be landed to arrest Abdulgawi and the mutinous *viroboto*; he still imagined that the *liwali* must have orchestrated the hostility of the holiday crowds. Over a hundred heavily armed Germans occupied Pangani the next morning, the morning of Idd al-Hajj, the Feast of the Sacrifice. They forced their way into the *liwali*'s residence, violating the seclusion of his female dependents. Abdulgawi was not at home; he was said to be in a neighboring mosque. Zelewski and his soldiers then stormed into the mosque, where the town's leading male citizens were beginning to congregate. The Germans did not bother to remove their shoes and in the confusion one of Zelewski's hunting dogs slipped in with them. Abdulgawi was not found, but the mosque was defiled. The Germans then broke down the doors of a house in which the *viroboto* had barricaded themselves, disarmed the mercenaries and beat them. Now firmly in control, Zelewski turned to destroy a key symbol of the *liwali*'s authority: he broke down the doors of the jail and released its prisoners.⁵¹

Pangani remained under the *Carola*'s guns for another three days, during which time the two DOAG agents, assisted by ten marines, rode roughshod over the townspeople. With the ship in the harbor, wrote Hemedi bin Abdallah, "the whole town was humbled and the Europeans strode the streets. The town was silent; there was no one to say a word; there was no patrician to speak for the *waungwana*." (Hemedi's definition of "silence," in which no patrician speaks on behalf of the civilized townspeople,

48. Zelewski to Vohsen, ZStA, RKA 406, 78–80. This letter is dated 17 Aug. 1888, but as it describes events that occurred on August 18, it must have been begun on August 17 and completed afterwards. Much of the following account also relies on the oral statement of the rebel *majumbe* recorded in Mathews to Euan-Smith, 14 Sept. 1888, ZNA, AA1/61/265, and their written petition of 6 Moharam 1306 (13 Sept. 1888) in the same file. The latter document will henceforth be cited as the Pangani Petition; it can be found transliterated and translated, and variant printed translations discussed, in Glassman, "Social rebellion," 642–56.

49. Zelewski, 20 Aug. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406, 30–2. Zelewski does not mention *Siku ya Mwaka*, but other sources do, including the Pangani Petition. The festival was particularly well observed at Pangani, where it continued to be celebrated well into the twentieth century, long after it had been abandoned elsewhere on the Mrima.

50. Michahelles and Deinhard had dispatched two vessels for this purpose: ZStA, RKA 406, 11–3.

51. Sources as for the previous paragraphs. African accounts of the desecration of the mosque include the Pangani Petition; Hemedi, *Uitenzi wa Vita*, verses 243–4; and the statement of a Pangani man in *The World*, 14 Apr. 1889, quoted in Bennett, *Arab versus European*, 147.

reflects the hegemonic discourse of Shirazi politics.)⁵² On August 20, declaring that “we are now the true rulers of Pangani,” Zelewski chopped down the flagstaff in front of the *liwali*’s residence. He put a price on Abdulgawi’s head and proclaimed that anyone caught harboring him would be hanged; Abdulgawi nevertheless managed to flee to Zanzibar. Zelewski told the townspeople that Khalifa had sold the mainland to the Germans, who had taken the sultan’s place, and anyone who doubted it was threatened with the guns and soldiers of the *Carola*. He instructed his men to shoot down anyone who resisted their commands. People were seized off the streets and forced to do manual labor. In a petition of complaint written a month later, the *majumbe* charged the twelve Germans with raping local women; when confronted over their behavior the Germans supposedly replied, “that’s how things are done in Europe.”⁵³

By the time the *Carola* took away its marines on August 23, the town was virtually deserted. During his remaining ten days of nominal power, Zelewski busied himself issuing decrees on minor civil matters and announcing petty restrictions on commerce that he had no power to enforce. For obvious reasons he paid particular attention to the arms trade. He proclaimed his intention to prohibit all but the most closely controlled sales of arms and ammunition and to confiscate any weapon carried publicly. This was to prove a most sensitive issue. Arms were not only a necessity of the caravan trade, both for protection and as high-value trade goods, but they were also essential components of Shirazi political ritual. Zelewski’s proclamations alarmed the Shirazi caravan specialists, as well as the upcountry warlords and trading chiefs whose political authority was closely tied to coastal arms markets.

Zelewski, however, paid no heed to the concerns of the Shirazi or the upcountry chiefs. He sought instead to win support from the town’s Arab planters, whose interests extended no further inland than Mauya. So although he did not hesitate alarming the *majumbe* who relied on the arms trade, he decided against promulgating the land registration decree. He was largely successful in this regard; perhaps the threat of the holiday crowds had convinced the Omanis to overlook his earlier insults. The Company’s main local liaison was Salim bin Ali, an influential settler who had preceded Abdulgawi as *liwali*. Other prominent Arabs, as well as the town’s leading Indian merchants, also gave Zelewski their active support, assisting, for example, in the compilation of an inventory of local arms caches.⁵⁴

But the events of the week following *Siku ya Mwaka* had taken a devastating toll on the authority of the Omani state elite. Most of the prisoners freed when Zelewski broke down the doors of the jail were debtors and refractory slaves, including runaways.⁵⁵ Thus he unwittingly sent a signal that the Omanis were no longer capable of enforcing relations of debt and enslavement, two of the cornerstones of Arab hegemony. By crippling Omani authority so brazenly, Zelewski unintentionally galvanized anti-Zanzibari forces whose chief components included

52. *Utenzi wa Vita*, verses 273–4. Later in the poem, an identical sentiment is put into the mouth of Bushiri bin Salim (verse 287). Allen’s translation has been modified. The word translated as “patrician” is *mwinyi*, as per common Mrima usage.

53. This and other details are from the Pangani Petition; Michahelles and Deinhard later confirmed many of them. ZStA: Zelewski, 20 Aug. 1888, RKA 406, 30–2; Michahelles, 18 Sept. 1888, RKA 690, 15–26; Deinhard, 18 Sept. 1888, RKA 690, 46–8; Vohsen, 24 Aug. 1888, RKA 406, 36–7. Also: Michahelles, 25 Aug. 1888, DKZ n.s. I (1888), 415; Farler, “Misdoings,” UMCA, *loc. cit.*; Halliday to Euan-Smith, 31 Aug. 1888, ZNA, AA2/47/499.

54. Glassman, “Social rebellion,” 533–4.

55. Pangani Petition.

those who had most often filled the Omani jail: chronically indebted *majumbe* (such as Kimemeta, who himself had been imprisoned for debt only a short time before) and slaves such as those who had established the maroon community of Makorora.

Moreover, the events of Idd al-Hajj had demonstrated as dramatically as possible the Omanis' inability to fulfill an obligation incumbent on any Muslim government: the protection of religious institutions. The desecration of the mosque took place on one of the holiest days in the calendar. Accounts by Africans, Indians and the sultan concur that it had occurred during the holiday prayers or as the worshippers were gathering. Only Zelewski himself denied this—but he also failed to recognize that the day was a holiday. Zelewski's compatriots had long noted his tendency to fantasize, and much of his defense, made when embarrassed German officials demanded an explanation of his behavior, rings hollow.⁵⁶ Zelewski's acute insensitivity not only sparked the crisis, it also leaves us in the dark as to its details. A man who did not notice the celebration of a major religious festival cannot be expected to tell us (for example) whether the mosque that he defiled was the Friday mosque of the Sunni majority, or (which in some respects seems more likely) the Ibadhi mosque where Omanis would pray. But in any case it is clear that all Muslims in the region considered the action an affront.

News of the defilement was discussed all along the coast and made a sharp impression on Muslims who heard it; it even gave rise to talk of *jihad*.⁵⁷ In early October, Admiral Deinhard contrasted the religious concerns of the Pangani rebels with the more secular concerns of those at Bagamoyo, and in March, Indian merchants declared in a memorandum to Euan-Smith that it was "well known" that religious grievances had triggered the Pangani uprising.⁵⁸ The wide currency of the tale indicates the importance of the religious provocation. While there is a slight possibility that the more colorful details are embellishments (although Zelewski confessed some of them, including the dog), even so as embellishments arising immediately after the incident they speak eloquently of local perceptions.

There is no certain evidence that village Sufis were present to witness the desecration of the mosque on Idd al-Hajj. But we have seen that Sufi groups routinely converged on Pangani to recite *zikri* on holidays, usually before the Friday mosque or in the presence of the *liwali*. There is no reason to believe that this occasion was any different. Idd al-Hajj was also a day customarily given over to competitive feasting and to the rivalries of the *vyama* or "dance societies." So too was *Siku ya Mwaka*, a day when town life was disrupted by the revelries of slaves, villagers and others of low status. It is reasonable, then, to assume that the humiliation of the Omani officials, and the violation of the religious institutions that they were charged to preserve, was witnessed by crowds of peasants and plebeians who were eager to proclaim their spiritual and moral equality with the urban elite.

56. The sources are discussed in Glassman, "Social rebellion," 535–7.

57. Strandes to Ottens, 30 Sept. 1888, ZStA, RKA 692, 51–6. Hemedi bin Abdallah recounts the impression the news made at the village of Tongoni, near Tanga: *Utenzi wa Vita*, verses 243–4.

58. Petition of British Indian Subjects, 10 March 1889, ZNA, AA1/67/181 (enclosure). Other sources for the religious provocation include Khalifa to Bismarck, 2 June 1889, printed as an appendix in Müller, *Deutschland*, 550–1; Meinecke, *Aus dem Lande*, 53; and ZStA: Michahelles, 24 Sept. 1888, and Deinhard, 24 Sept. 1888, RKA 691, 30–1, 60–1; Deinhard, 3 Oct. 1888, RKA 692, 67. Anglican missionaries in the Pangani hinterland denied the religious aspect, asserting that it was an invention of German propaganda; their assertions cannot be accepted, for reasons explained in Glassman, "Social rebellion," 537–8n.

The September Crisis

The initial response to these events was withdrawal to the countryside. The *majumbe* retired to their villages, and, while the *Carola* still stood in the harbor, armed insurgents began gathering at Bushiri bin Salim's estate at Mundo, immediately west of the town.⁵⁹ Zelewski sent messengers ordering the *majumbe* to return to town; the latter proudly refused, saying that such orders had no basis in Islamic law. In vain, Zelewski blustered and threatened.⁶⁰ After the *Carola's* departure, he and his two colleagues had only a handful of armed servants with which to enforce their nominal rule. Within a week Zelewski requested that the sultan send soldiers to replace those who had refused to obey him on the Solar New Year. He told Michahelles that he needed the troops to police Pangani's suburbs; he apparently hoped that they would force the *majumbe* to return to town and acknowledge his authority.⁶¹

Khalifa responded on August 31 by sending fifty of his unreliable *viroboto*. When the *majumbe* heard of this, they and their followers returned to town expecting that Khalifa had sent the soldiers to reassert his control. The *viroboto* entered Pangani singing and dancing, like a caravan party returning from the interior, and they congregated before the home of Salim bin Ali, the former *liwali* who had befriended the Germans and who lived next door to the Company station house. The dancing soldiers were joined by a large crowd of townspeople and villagers, many of them armed. Zelewski's dispatches offer few details about the ensuing *ngoma*, but we have already seen something of the political aspirations implied when a person of low status, such as a villager or Hadrami *kiroboto*, danced with weapons before the house of a powerful Omani. Zelewski disrupted the revelries when he told the dancers they were violating his recent prohibitions against publicly bearing arms, and he ordered them to return home. Zelewski expected the crowd to comply like chastened children; when one African jeered him in a mixture of Swahili and broken English, Zelewski informed the man he was under arrest. But with a hostile crowd looking on and mercenaries who were indifferent at best, Zelewski was powerless.⁶²

Zelewski was finding the soldiers more menacing than helpful, and the day after their arrival he wrote to Zanzibar asking they be withdrawn. The low-status *viroboto* had always tended to develop close ties within the Swahili communities, and Zelewski had not helped matters by treating his new soldiers as arrogantly as he had the townspeople. When the *majumbe* and their plebeian clientele appeared in town to dance with the newly arrived *viroboto*, Zelewski ordered their arrest for having refused to appear the week before. The *viroboto* defied the command. They told Zelewski that although they would protect the Germans from violence as Khalifa had ordered, they would refuse any command contrary to the laws of Islam. At this, Zelewski went through the motions of dismissing the soldiers from his service, although even he recognized that the gesture was meaningless.

59. Zelewski, 21 Aug. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406, 192-3.

60. Pangani Petition.

61. It is not clear how many Germans were in Pangani from 23 Aug. to 11 Sept.; there is a slight possibility that a handful of marines were left ashore when the *Carola* departed. Glassman, "Social rebellion," 541n.

62. These incidents are recounted in the Pangani Petition; Zelewski, 1 and 2 Sept. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406, 198-200; Michahelles, 18 Sept. 1888, ZStA, RKA 690, 15-26.

Meanwhile thousands of warriors were appearing in the surrounding countryside, adding yet another dimension to an already tense situation. Many of these men were caravan personnel, either just arriving from the interior or hurriedly turning back from recently departed safaris.⁶³ Others had been dispatched by Semboja and other chiefs in Usambara and Bondei who had received reports of the previous week's events. Whereas the *viroboto* and many of the townspeople still displayed some willingness to uphold the rule of Zanzibar, the warriors from upcountry reinforced the more militant elements. As at the southern ports, news reached Pangani that hinterland powers such as the Kilindi believed the sultan had had no right to cede the coast to the Germans, and that by so doing he had forfeited all authority. The more conciliatory of the Pangani rebels, including the townsmen who penned the September petition, subsequently blamed the upcountry warriors for the uprising's more radical, anti-Zanzibari tone.⁶⁴

Pangani at this moment might be likened to a powderkeg; ironically, the issue that provoked the expulsion of the Germans was an incoming shipment of over 1000 kegs of gunpowder, intended for upcountry caravans. The shipment arrived on September 3; Zelewski impounded the cargo and ordered that the dhow return with it to Zanzibar the following day. He and his colleagues still imagined that they could control events and were apparently unaware of the acute resentments aroused by their attempts to restrict the trade in ammunition. That night, masses of warriors streamed in from the outskirts of town. They seized the powder and distributed it among themselves. Some of the upcountry men wanted to kill the Germans, but this was prevented by the more moderate townsmen, who locked the Germans and their servants in the customs house. The moderates stationed a regular armed guard around the house, as much to protect the Germans as to prevent their escape. Now prisoners, the Germans watched helplessly as the Company flag was hauled down and torn to shreds.⁶⁵

Violence broke out almost simultaneously at Tanga, occasioned by the sudden appearance of a German gunboat on September 5.⁶⁶ The two Company officials there had experienced few difficulties during their stay. *Liwali* Zahoro bin Swedi had been cooperative, placing his *viroboto* at the Company's service for the flag-raising ceremony. He later changed his mind, perhaps pressured by the *viroboto* themselves, who would become the backbone of the movement at Tanga. But for the most part the two Germans, one of them a notorious drunkard, were left to enjoy their bottles in peace. On the evening of September 5, the boats of the *Möwe* were fired on as they attempted to land to collect information. Comfortably drunk and not about to look for trouble, the DOAG agents ignored the sounds of gunfire; they had become accustomed to such annoyances from the revels of arriving caravans. Within the following few days the *Möwe* retaliated with bombardments and two separate landings of marines, resulting

63. See the Transcript of Interview with Said Betcha (Said Abeja), 6 Sept. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406, 85–6, who said that the newly arrived rebels had left thousands of dollars of trade goods on the routes.

64. Michahelles, 18 Sept. 1888, ZStA, *loc. cit.*

65. Sources as for preceding paragraphs; also see Vohsen to DOAG (n.d.), ZStA, RKA 406, 88; Mathews, 14 Sept. 1888, ZNA, AA1/61/265, enclosure; Hemedi, *Utenzi wa Vita*, verses 245, 305–14. For the link between the attempted control of armaments and the grievances of caravan traders, see also extract from Portuguese Consul to Lisbon, 1 Sept. 1888, ZStA, RKA 691, 28–9.

66. Coordination cannot be ruled out. News travelled quickly between the two towns, and Pangani rebels knew as early as September 6 that there was active resistance at Tanga. Interview with Said Betcha, ZStA, *loc. cit.*

in the destruction of much of the town and the flight of its inhabitants. Oblivious to the danger they were in, the DOAG agents had to be ordered to come away.⁶⁷

As at Bagamoyo and Pangani, the initial stages of unrest at Tanga were led by the *liwali* and his *viroboto*, state functionaries who feared that German administration would jeopardize their positions. But at all three places, Omani leadership quickly vanished or became irrelevant. Tanga's rebellious *liwali* was forced to flee and was later arrested at Zanzibar and imprisoned by the sultan;⁶⁸ Amir bin Suleiman al-Lemki, after losing the quarrel over the sultan's flag at Bagamoyo, became the Germans' most useful ally there; and Abdulgawi's replacement as *liwali* of Pangani, Suleiman bin Nasr al-Lemki, was perhaps the Germans' closest collaborator on the entire coast. At Bagamoyo and Pangani, rebel leadership passed into the hands of village *majumbe* and hinterland chiefs, who seized the moment as an opportunity to claim greater control over those thriving centers of international trade. As a result the rebellion was sustained at those towns long after the Omani elite had joined the German side; this was particularly the case at Pangani, where any meaningful reimposition of Zanzibari authority was repelled for months following the expulsion of the Germans.

On September 5, the same day as the initial disturbance at Tanga, Vohsen proceeded to Pangani on board the sultan's steamer *Barawa*, hoping to retrieve the hostages. The vessel anchored toward sunset and lowered a boat carrying Vohsen, a German naval officer, and three translators. They were watched by armed patrols whom the rebels had stationed on both arms of the bay. The tide was ebbing and Vohsen's oarsmen struggled for half an hour to enter the river mouth, during which time crowds of warriors gathered on both shores, repeatedly hailing the boat and asking the name of the vessel to which it belonged. When the boat was finally about ten yards from a landing place it was confronted by forty or fifty well-armed men, who ordered it not to land. The insurgents again demanded to know the name of the vessel anchored in the bay, and again were told that it was the *Barawa* and belonged to the sultan. "To which sultan?" To Khalifa, the Sultan of Zanzibar. The astonished Vohsen, who had hoped that Khalifa's authority would secure him access to the town, was then told that the Sultan of Zanzibar no longer ruled at Pangani. The rebels waded into the river, firing, and Vohsen made a frantic escape.⁶⁹

This incident was the first act of open rebellion against the sultan to occur in the anti-German movement, and subsequent reactions to it reveal an important division within the rebel ranks over the issue of Zanzibari authority.⁷⁰ The division appears in an interview that occurred the following morning, when a rebel envoy visited

67. Hemedi, *Utenzi wa Vita*, verses 249ff; Michahelles, 18 Sept. 1888, DKZ n.s. I (1888), 417-8; and ZStA: von Frankenberg and Klenze, 30/31 Aug. and 10 Sept. 1888, RKA 406, 102-4; Deinhard, Erhardt and Ferber, reports on landings at Tanga, 6, 8 and 9 Sept. 1888, RKA 689, 43-61; Strandes to Hansing & Co., 9 Sept. 1888, RKA 689, 95-6. Müller tells the story with biting sarcasm in *Deutschland*, 387.

68. Michahelles, in DKZ n.s. II (1889), 20; *idem.*, 16 Nov. 1888, ZStA, RKA 694, 38-9.

69. The following are the most important sources for the attack on the *Barawa*'s boat and the subsequent interview with Said Abeja: Albrecht O'Swald, 7 Sept. 1888, HStA 621-2, 4 Bd. 39; Michahelles, 18 Sept. 1888, DKZ n.s. I (1888), 416-7; Pangani Petition; Vohsen *et al.*, 5 Sept. 1888 (the signatories include the three translators), and Transcript of Interview with Said Betcha, 6 Sept. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406, 84-6. An extract from this last document printed in Müller, *Deutschland*, 546-7, omits some significant passages.

70. Inaccuracies in Hemedi's *Utenzi wa Vita* as well as in the oral accounts highlight the aspect of anti-Zanzibari rebellion. See Glassman, "Social rebellion," 550n.

Vohsen on board the *Barawa*. The envoy, Said Abeja, would later prove one of Bushiri bin Salim's most influential rivals at Pangani. He was a member of the town's large Comoroan community, people who had come to the Mrima as petty merchants and Sufi scholars, and who had earned a reputation for rebelliousness during the reign of Barghash. After Bushiri left in November to command the siege of Bagamoyo, Said Abeja would emerge as a leader of Pangani's radical faction, which rejected the reimposition of Omani rule. But on this occasion he appeared aboard the *Barawa* speaking for the more moderate townsmen, including Shirazi caravan traders. He said that although the rebels wanted to obey the sultan, they could not agree to subject themselves to the Germans. The rebels had sworn not to allow any European to land, he said, but they would not interfere with vessels of the sultan. When asked why the boat of the well-known *Barawa* had nevertheless been fired upon, and why the attackers had repudiated the sultan, Said Abeja was evasive. "The people who fired did so out of ignorance," he said. "They are people who know nothing and who understand nothing."⁷¹

This reply is telling. We have only a German translation of the interview, but we know that words denoting ignorance, such as *wajinga* or *washenzi*, were often used to refer to people of degraded status, including unskilled slaves and others of upcountry origin. Those were the people who had provoked Zelewski's imprisonment and who in later incidents would take the most aggressive stand against Europeans and against the representatives of the Sultanate. At any rate, Said Abeja's evasiveness when asked why the boats of the *Barawa* were fired upon indicates serious dissension within the ranks of the town's defenders. Similar evasiveness appears in the petition that Pangani rebels presented to Khalifa and Michahelles one week later. The latter document expresses the views of the leading *majumbe*, although clearly it was hammered out by a diverse group of non-Omani townsmen.⁷² According to the petition, when those on shore learned that the boat belonged to the sultan, they told it to land, but the Germans refused. This contradicts the German accounts as well as the statement made by Said Abeja immediately after the event. It also contradicts later passages in the petition itself, which suggest that the entire affair was a simple misunderstanding that would have been avoided had the *Barawa's* identity not been obscured by the fading light of dusk. The voice we hear in the petition is that of patricians and Arab aristocrats attempting to convey the impression that they were firmly in control of a supposedly unified movement that was, in fact, splintered, diverse, and largely uncontrollable. We shall hear similar voices at other moments in the course of the rebellion.

The rebels who rejected Omani sovereignty also rejected the political language of flags. On September 7, alarmed by the news from Pangani, Euan-Smith dispatched his vice-consul to inquire about the safety of British Indians there. The vice-consul thought it best that his interpreter go ashore, not he. But the interpreter's boat was

71. Interview with Said Betcha, ZStA, *loc. cit.* The printed version of Michahelles' report in DKZ 1888, 417 (*op. cit.*), gives Said Abeja's first name incorrectly as Ali. For Said Abeja and other Comoroans during the Pangani rebellion, see Baumann, *Usambara*, 36-7, 72-3.

72. This can be inferred from a close reading of the text, as well as from statements by the envoys who presented the petition, as reported by Michahelles and Mathews. The envoys included at least two *majumbe*, an "Arab" and a "Swahili" chief (we have seen that both words are difficult to decode in documents of the day), and Said Abeja. Michahelles, ZStA, RKA 690, 15-26; Mathews, ZNA, AA1/61/265, enclosure; Vohsen, 18 Sept. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406, 99.

fired on as it entered the harbor and he had to land outside the river mouth, about a mile from the town. There he found the beach thronged with a hostile crowd of "Arabs and natives." The meaning of such words is ambiguous; the first could refer to anyone wearing the garb of an urban Muslim gentleman, the second to any other African. Some *viroboto* were present, and they worked to restrain the "excited" crowd. Pointing to the Union Jack on his boat, the interpreter protested that he served the English, not the Germans. "[B]ut the natives said . . . that they knew and cared nothing about flags, that all white men were the same, and only came to seize the country and rob the natives." The crowd's apparent ringleader drew his sword (he was a Comoroan, like Said Abeja), and was only prevented from attacking the interpreter by the intervention of a *kiroboto* officer. The interpreter quickly returned to the vice-consul's ship anchored in the bay.⁷³

The account quoted above was written by Vice-Consul Berkeley. Its very language makes it difficult to decode: words like "excited natives" convey the picture of a mob of childlike creatures, who act not from any rational motive but only as they are stimulated by unthinking passion. Yet we should not accept Berkeley's perspective as our own. Although the utterances of this crowd seemed crude to European diplomats, they conveyed a fine point not present in the measured statements of more moderate rebels. The British, and less obstinate Germans such as Michahelles and the Hamburg merchants, may have been content with strengthening the Sultanate as an alternative to imposing direct European rule. But members of the crowd recognized that such a compromise would protect the interests of only a narrow stratum at the top of coastal society. Indeed, strengthening the Omani state would be a blow to the interests of those who had not shared in the benefits of Omani rule. Thus, in their rejection of the political language of flags, the rebels on the beach denied that they had any obligation to respect treaties signed by the sultan. That rejection sharply distinguished them from the *maliwali* who led the initial unrest. The experience of Berkeley's interpreter also suggests a division of opinion between the rebellious *viroboto*, who nominally still served the sultan, and others in the crowd.

Vohsen lost his nerve as a result of the Pangani crisis, and in desperation he urged Michahelles and Admiral Deinhard to bombard the town. But the officers of the German Empire were still reluctant to embroil government forces in a colonial undertaking, and eminent Hamburg merchants warned that such action would destroy trade.⁷⁴ Instead, Michahelles and Euan-Smith prevailed upon Khalifa to send General Mathews and a force of his "regulars"—supposedly more reliable than the *viroboto*—to calm the situation. When Mathews arrived at Pangani on September 8, the moderate forces that had sent Said Abeja on board the *Barawa* two days earlier welcomed him as a well-known and respected servant of Zanzibar. They were relieved to hand the German hostages over to Mathews; as they later wrote, "we feared the actions of our upcountry warriors," who threatened to kill the prisoners and thus incur Khalifa's wrath and the fire of German gunboats.

73. Berkeley to Euan-Smith, 8 Sept. 1888, ZStA, RKA 406, 89; a version of this letter can be found in PP 1888, v. 74, c. 5603, no. 95, encl. 1.

74. Euan-Smith, 21 Sept. 1888, ZNA, AA1/61/265 (in which Vohsen "seems to have lost his head"); Albrecht O'Swald to O'Swald & Co., 18 Sept. 1888, ZStA, RKA 690, 62-4; Michahelles, 18 Sept. 1888, ZNA, AL2/30, 210-3. Strandes, who represented O'Swald's major Hamburg competitor, took an opposite view, joining Vohsen in the calls for drastic German action.

When the Germans emerged from the customs house escorted by Mathews's soldiers, wrote Hemedi bin Abdallah, the townspeople called for their blood. During the previous week the moderates had managed to protect their prisoners from any harm, although the low-status men and women who peddled foodstuffs refused to sell any to feed the Germans. Oral traditions say that Zelewski had to eat salted kingfish, an inelegant and much despised food. Africans who assisted the Germans had been constantly harassed and one was beaten and robbed of his clothes. The latter detail recalls the melee at Bagamoyo in May 1886, when servants of the Company's Dunda station were accused of being "overproud" when they violated Shirazi sump-tuary conventions.⁷⁵

Mathews stayed in Pangani for several days and persuaded the moderates who cooperated with him to send a delegation to the sultan and the German Consul. Five delegates, including Said Abeja and at least two *majumbe*, accompanied Mathews to Zanzibar on September 11, bringing the petition that has been cited several times in the preceding pages. Both the petition and the envoys' oral deposition took pains to portray the rebels as loyal to the sultan. At the same time, they protested that Khalifa had not treated the *majumbe* with proper consideration: the petition's opening passage complains that only *wageni* or "strangers"—Omanis, Hadramis, Indians and Comoroans—had been informed of Khalifa's instructions regarding the Germans. But blame for rebellious acts such as the attack on the boats of the *Barawa* was shifted squarely onto the shoulders of the upcountry warriors, who were disparaged as "*washenzi*" or barbarians. "*Nakiri si murua,*" the petitioners wrote, "mimicry does not make proper manners"; thus they expressed their disdain and distrust of rural folk who would play at being gentlemen. The petitioners sought to make it clear that they had matters well in hand and that, so long as the Germans were willing to use Indian customs agents and not send their own men to the coast, all would remain peaceful and the sultan's authority would be upheld.

But the situation changed rapidly, and by the time Mathews escorted the envoys back to Pangani, the moderates had begun to lose control of the town. In addition to a new *liwali* to replace Abdulgawi, Mathews brought news of a compromise that had been agreed upon by Khalifa, Michahelles and Euan-Smith. The compromise stipulated that the Germans would appoint only non-European customs agents and would operate only under the flag of the sultan; in return, they were to be admitted back in the town within a month. These were essentially the terms proposed by the moderates. Mathews arrived on Thursday, September 20 with 120 soldiers, and he was well received. But the next day the insurgents held a large public council, where it was decided that Mathews must leave. It was Friday; thus there is a strong possibility that village Sufis were in town to perform *zikri*. A deputation politely told Mathews that, as a European and a Christian, his intervention was not wanted. The rebels swore to protect the lives and property of the Indian merchants and to obey the *liwali* whom Mathews had brought, Suleiman bin Nasr al-Lemki.

Things continued to heat up on Saturday (perhaps early reports reached Pangani of the massacre at Bagamoyo that day), and on Sunday Mathews awoke to find his

75. Oral testimony, Abdallah Mahine, Bweni, 25 Sept. 1985; Euan-Smith, 21 Sept. 1888, FO 84/1909, 98–114; Michahelles, 18 Sept. 1888, ZStA, *loc. cit.*; Pangani Petition; Koch, Grothe *et al.*, 8 Oct. 1888, DKZ n.s. I (1888), 386; Hemedi, *Utenzi wa Vita*, verses 325–36. The latter source telescopes various incidents, including the ransom of Meyer and Baumann one month later.

house surrounded by about 2000 armed Africans. This time the insurgents' tone was less respectful. If Khalifa insisted that the townspeople receive German agents within a month, they would repudiate Zanzibari authority altogether. Mathews's life was threatened, and he discovered that his own troops could not be trusted to protect him. During Mathews's first visit to Pangani the week before, Zelewski had observed that the much-vaunted "regulars" fraternized with the rebels; now they were even selling them their weapons. Mathews returned to Zanzibar immediately, much dejected. Suleiman bin Nasr wanted to return with him, but the rebels forced him to stay behind.⁷⁶ The sultan's chosen *liwali* thus remained at Pangani, and his flag continued to fly there. But the *liwali*'s position was ambiguous, the rule of Zanzibar a fiction, and the red flag but an ornament.

76. Euan-Smith, 25 Sept. 1888, FO 84/1909, 206-16; Farler, CA, Nov. 1888, 150; O'Swald, 24 Sept. 1888, HStA 621-2, 4 Bd. 39; Stuhlmann, 20 Oct 1888, ZStA, RKA 693, 46. For the "regular" troops' fraternization with the rebels, also see Glassman, "Social rebellion," 561n.

Pangani Under Rebel Rule

The East African coastal Negro emulates the Arab in everything, in housing, dress and manners; he is the willing follower of the Arab, who rules him unconditionally. . . . The Negro has an ultraconservative character and is terrified by innovation.

Georg Maercker, German military officer¹

One hears things that can scarcely be believed, despite long East African experience . . . In their uprising the indolent Negroes have displayed an intensity of which we had thought them incapable.

Justus Strandes, German merchant, September 30, 1888²

The power of the state was not restored at Pangani until the Germans returned to conquer the town in July, assisted by the full might of the Imperial war machine. During the intervening months, three groups vied for control of Pangani, groups that already could be discerned at the time of Zelewski's expulsion. The first, led by Suleiman bin Nasr al-Lemki, consisted mostly of Arab planters and other wealthy townsmen who worked for a cessation of hostilities and the restoration of the Sultanate; this group would later form the core of the so-called peace party that would negotiate covertly with the Germans. The second group were those we have been calling "moderates": rebels who would accept only a restricted form of Omani rule, and who, unlike the peace party, were actively opposed to the Germans. The leaders of the moderates were urban patricians and prominent village *majumbe*, as well as a handful of elite Arabs; their point of view is well expressed in the petition of September 13. Finally there were the radicals or militants, largely people from the margins of coastal society, who expressed a deep-seated hostility to the Omani state in any form. Although this third group, unlike the first two, rarely finds its voice in contemporary documents, its influence was unmistakable.

The observations made by some Germans who passed through Pangani shortly after Mathews's departure suggest that the moderates' acceptance of a new *liwali* had

1. Georg Maercker, *Unsere Schutztruppe in Ostafrika* (Berlin, 1893), 157–8.

2. Strandes to Ottens, 30 Sept. 1888, ZStA RKA 692, 51–6.

done little to enhance the authority of the Sultanate. On September 21 the German planters of Lewa—whose workers had all fled within days of Zelewski's imprisonment—received a letter from Mathews at Pangani. He would arrive within a day or two, he wrote, bringing 4000 rupees that the Company had asked him to deliver. But neither Mathews's troops nor his authority as the sultan's military commander were sufficient to enable him to overcome rebel objections to this mission. After waiting in vain for further word from Mathews, on September 24 the Lewa planters sent Bruno Grothe to Pangani to investigate.

Grothe saw a town that the Omani elite could control only by mustering extraordinary amounts of armed force. The entire hinterland seemed mobilized: Grothe found men under arms at each village he passed on the way to the coast. At the last village, one of many scattered among the coconut groves surrounding Pangani, he was stopped and given a message from Suleiman bin Nasr warning him to proceed no further until he, the *liwali*, could arrange for his protection from the aroused townspeople. The next morning a guard of six soldiers came to escort Grothe into town; to further protect the German, the path to the *liwali*'s residence was lined by several hundred armed men. Suleiman bin Nasr and his Arab courtiers greeted Grothe politely, informing him that Mathews, with the 4000 rupees, had been turned back to Zanzibar. Everyone present was astonished that Grothe wished to return to Lewa, but he was not hindered.

Within a week of Grothe's visit, the Lewa planters learned that Suleiman's authority was rivalled by that of the rebel leader Bushiri bin Salim, who sent messages ordering that they pay a sum of 3000 rupees or leave the area immediately. Suleiman bin Nasr wrote a few days later, warning that he could no longer guarantee their safety and advising them to obey Bushiri's instructions. Reluctantly, the Germans decided to abandon Lewa. On October 5, they marched to the river at Chogwe and then went by boat to Pangani. When they arrived at the town that night, they were awaited at the landing. Slaves carried them ashore, and a detachment of several dozen *viroboto* escorted them to the *liwali*'s residence, protecting them from the angry crowds lining the route. Suleiman bin Nasr placed a secure house at their disposal, sent them food, and had some soldiers guard the dhow on which their property was loaded. But despite these precautions many German goods were stolen, particularly arms. Late that night, one of the Germans, escorted by two soldiers, went down to the waterfront to inspect the dhow that Suleiman had arranged to take them to Zanzibar the following day. What he saw disturbed him. The entire town was armed and watching, he wrote, and he repeatedly glimpsed, "over a wall or in a window, a face next to a rifle barrel."³

The sultan and his European patrons had hoped that Suleiman bin Nasr would be able to reassert Zanzibari authority. But the Lewa planters observed that Suleiman's success was partial at best. They noted that while he and the other prominent Arabs were well disposed toward the Germans, they were not strong enough to prevail over the rebels, particularly over the faction led by Bushiri. "Although the *liwali* behaved very well," they wrote, "he has no power." That Suleiman exerted any influence at all can be attributed to the fact that the rebels who controlled the

3. Koch, Grothe *et al.*, 8 Oct. 1888, and Stuhlmann, 19 Oct. 1888, *DKZ* n.s. I (1888), 386, 388; Stuhlmann, "Berichte," 20 Oct. 1888, *ZStA RKA* 693, 46. Stuhlmann, who had been travelling in the interior, accompanied the Lewa planters to Pangani and Zanzibar.

town were largely moderates—that is, rebels who still accepted, if only nominally, the hegemony of the Sultanate. When combined with the armed force of his *viroboto* mercenaries, Suleiman was able to use his authority as *liwali* to protect the German planters and have them served by slaves. He even had salvos fired in their honor as their dhow left the harbor the following day. But the Germans noted that as many shots were sent in their direction as were fired in the air. Suleiman's influence was uneasy and the moderates' control uncertain. This could only be expected in a town patrolled by popular armed militias.⁴

As at Bagamoyo, Pangani's major property owners were eager to restore state authority, and if some Omani had initially fanned the fires of unrest, in general they now strove to dampen them.⁵ But this task became ever more difficult with the influx of thousands of warriors dispatched by Kilindi warlords and other upcountry potentates, people who had long perceived their interests as contrary to those of the Omani state elite. By the time that Mathews was driven out of Pangani, there were as many as seven or eight thousand upcountry warriors in the area, with fresh reinforcements expected daily. European diplomats hoped that Omani officials might be able to persuade these warriors to return to their homes, but they recognized that such persuasion could be accomplished only by negotiation, not by force.⁶

The ineffectiveness of Omani authority only increased Europeans' astonishment at the level of rebel discipline. Rifle pits had been dug and elaborate fortifications constructed along the riverbanks. Twenty-four hour watches were kept on all approaches to the town. The rebels feared a sea attack above all; their defenses were constructed so that any ship entering the river could be raked with rifle fire from three directions.⁷ Another sign of discipline was the virtual lack of looting. Indian merchants had fled from most of the Mrima towns at the first signs of unrest—they had even left Dar es Salaam, where a concerted movement had yet to manifest itself. Yet the rebels would not permit them to leave Pangani, insisting that they stay and continue to trade. This insistence indicates the important role played by Pangani's Shirazi caravan specialists, who tried to pursue business as usual during the ensuing months. "How can we possibly equip caravans without credit?" Bushiri asked a visitor. "No one helped us, so we helped ourselves." But because of unsure conditions (including the ever-present threat of German bombardment), credit dried up at Zanzibar and the caravan trade slackened.⁸

Such determination stunned observers such as the Hamburg merchant Justus Strandes; the commercial urban centers of the coast, they thought, had been created by Arab rule, without which Africans must remain mired in stasis and passivity. We may reject Strandes's assumptions, but the nature of the sources, most of which were generated by Europeans of his point of view, compels us to share some of his bewil-

4. In addition to the above sources, see Michahelles, 24 Sept. 1888, ZStA RKA 691, 18; *idem.*, 4 Oct. 1888, ZStA RKA 692, 29.

5. See, for example, Michahelles, 3 Oct. 1888, ZStA RKA 692, 18–25.

6. Euan-Smith, 21 Sept. 1888, FO 84/1909, 98–114; Deinhard, 18 Sept. 1888, ZStA RKA 690, 47; Strandes, 24 Sept. 1888, ZStA RKA 692, 11; Michahelles, 17 Sept. 1888, ZStA RKA 687, 52.

7. Euan-Smith, 21 Sept. 1888, FO 84, *loc. cit.*; Michahelles, 18 Sept. 1888, ZStA RKA 690, 15–26; *idem.* 24 Sept. 1888, ZStA RKA 691, 18; Strandes to Ottens, 30 Sept. 1888, ZStA RKA 692, 53.

8. Strandes, 24 Sept. 1888, ZStA RKA 692, 11; O'Swald, 17 Dec. 1888, HStA 621–2, 4 Bd. 39; Euan-Smith, 28 Sept. 1888, PP 1888, v. 74, c. 5603, no. 103; *idem.*, 25 Sept. 1888, ZNA, AA1/61/280. Bushiri is quoted in Hans Meyer, "Über seine letzte Expedition in Deutsch-Ostafrika," *Verhandlungen der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin* 16 (1889), 88–9.

derment. Given the near-total breakdown of Omani authority, one is puzzled to determine how discipline was maintained and rebel decisions made. The events of September suggest—as later incidents will confirm—that decisions were taken at several different levels; that Omanis and patrician moderates might decide on certain actions only to be subsequently outvoted or outmanoeuvred by more popular forces. At first, the moderates and the militants seemed to be at an uneasy state of parity: the rebels who fired on Vohsen's boat on September 5 openly scorned the sultan's authority, whereas those who came aboard the *Barawa* the following day were careful to avoid giving Khalifa any cause to take offence. But the moderates' position had begun to weaken by the time of Mathews's second visit, when the respectful reception initially given him and his proposed compromise was rudely overturned by the decision of a popular forum.

These internal tensions gave the rebellion an appearance of confusion, despite the discipline that so impressed European onlookers. Euan-Smith, like many Europeans at Zanzibar, assumed that the Shirazi patricians and Arab aristocrats who led the moderate faction were in complete control; the slaves, villagers and other rabble were, as usual, being manipulated by their betters. A corollary to this assumption was that the rebels fought simply to defend the status quo. The British Consul was therefore baffled by the rebels' ambivalent attitude towards Omani rule, especially after they had turned away an envoy sent by Khalifa one week after Mathews's departure. "The action of the insurgents in this matter is very inconsistent," wrote Euan-Smith. "They are living under the Sultan's flag and under the rule of a Governor recently appointed by the Sultan. They partially obey this man, but they will not let him leave Pangani, and they have . . . refused to acknowledge the authority of a Special Commissioner deputed by the Sultan."⁹

The "inconsistency" decried by Euan-Smith was largely a result of ongoing debates within the rebel ranks over the extent and nature of Omani authority. Yet it also no doubt arose from an ambivalence within the minds of many rebels. To townspeople accustomed to thinking about urban government in terms of Arab hegemony, the flying of the Busaidi flag and the presence of the new *liwali* denoted political legitimacy. But that did not mean that the moderates were willing to relinquish all control to a *liwali* whose family had long displayed an enmity to Shirazi interests. The flag and the *liwali* were symbols, which the rebels' present mobilization empowered them to manipulate more or less as they saw fit. Furthermore, moderates and militants were far from unified on precisely what those symbols implied regarding political action. Patrician rebels were reluctant to unduly alienate the sultan or his deputies, not only from fear of reprisal (both military and commercial), but also from their dedication to an ideal of Arab rule. The more militant members of the plebeian crowd had no such scruples, however—as Mathews learned when he was run out of town.

But if the rebels occasionally debated the merits of red flags and Arab governors, for the most part they operated within alternative political idioms that made reference to neither. Euan-Smith, Strandes and the other European observers had all assumed Arab sovereignty to be the only political structure capable of providing effective leadership in coastal society. They ignored Shirazi structures of communal authority such as those of chiefship, rank and the "dance societies"—structures that had always

9. Euan-Smith, 28 Sept. 1888, PP 1888, *loc. cit.*

existed alongside the Omani state (though subjugated to it) and that were shaped by a language with which villagers and upcountry folk could express their particular concerns. For decades, Pangani's *majumbe* had used the Shirazi rhetoric of reciprocity to recruit clientele in their struggles to check the expansion of Omani power. Now, when the Germans, ostensibly working as agents of the sultan, threatened to exclude the *majumbe* from power altogether, the latter were able to gather around them those elements who were hostile to the Omani regime for reasons of their own, such as *watoro* and *shamba* slaves, Comoroan peddlers and religious scholars, disaffected *viroboto*, and agents of Kilindi warlords.¹⁰

Institutions of Shirazi authority retained their relevance at Pangani largely because they still played a major role in the organization of that town's booming caravan trade. At Bagamoyo, as we have seen, the extremely polarized nature of the central trade routes meant that upcountry caravaners perceived little reason to ally themselves with the Shirazi, who had often behaved just as inimically to their interests as had the Omanis. By contrast, the undercapitalized Pangani routes had been kept viable by a high degree of autonomous participation by caravan laborers and upcountry entrepreneurs, and by well-maintained bonds of reciprocity between plebeian *vyama* members and their patrician patrons. Pangani's Arab planters took little interest in the caravan trade and did not much care when the Company's meddling threatened the northern routes. But the town's *majumbe* continued to dominate the "Maasai" routes and they were in a strong position to command support from the clients who served them as porters and from their upcountry trading partners. Thus the divisions that so crippled the resistance movement at Bagamoyo—divisions that enabled the Germans to recruit Nyamwezi caravaners despite the massacre of September 22—were much less of a problem at Pangani.

But the identity of interests between the rebel *majumbe* and their plebeian foot-soldiers was not absolute; if the patricians used the idiom of Shirazi authority to recruit clientele, plebeians used that very idiom to challenge their patrons. All the sources point to constant tensions between the patricians and the young men (and, in a few recorded instances, women) who constituted the most militant members of the rebel crowd. This picture is even suggested by the September Pangani petition, whose moderate authors went so out of their way to give the impression of being firmly in control. The militants were people on the margins of Shirazi society, petty clients such as those who performed porter labor on caravans dominated by *majumbe*. We have seen that on caravans they organized themselves by assuming titles of Shirazi rank, and that they often used the rituals associated with those titles to demand fuller participation in Shirazi community institutions. Such demands were made most audibly at public dances. It therefore stands to reason that the most acute crises of the rebellion, when neither Omani nor Shirazi authority was able to control events, arose in the context of festive ritual.

Armed dancers repeatedly challenged Omani and patrician control of Pangani during the weeks following Mathews's expulsion in late September. The authority of the Sultanate had been neutralized by the double impact of German humiliation and plebeian riot, but no new structure of authority had arisen that could impose order on Pangani's fragmented social fabric. When the Lewa planters passed through in early

10. For slaves and runaways: Behr, *Kriegsbilder*, 216–7. For Comoroans: Baumann, *Usambara*, 36–7.

October, the moderates held the balance of power, exerting their hegemony in alliance with some of the town's wealthiest Arabs, who had not yet begun their collaboration with the Germans. The patricians thus found themselves in a position of power vis-à-vis the Omani state elite such as they had not enjoyed since Kiluwasha made bold to murder Muya and Ndaro thirty years earlier. But that position was precarious, for it depended on the active support of an armed and mobilized plebeian crowd, a crowd whose demands grew ever more insistent and disruptive.

This uneasy alliance was held together through October largely by Bushiri bin Salim, whose political effectiveness, as we shall see, arose from his ability to straddle all three factions. He might best be characterized as a member of the rebellion's moderate wing: although he was personally estranged from the ruling dynasty at Zanzibar, he nevertheless believed that coastal society should be ruled by Arab aristocrats, such as he perceived himself to be. At the same time, he exerted a charismatic influence over the plebeian crowd. In November, Bushiri left Pangani to concentrate his considerable energies on the siege of Bagamoyo, a place that he, like the Germans, regarded as an essential stronghold for anyone who would control the Mrima. His departure clarified the conflict at Pangani, for it left no significant Arab or patrician voice to speak for the rebels; henceforth the Arab planters were unequivocally behind the collaborationist group, and without their support, the moderate wing became ever more susceptible to the pressures of the crowd.

The collaborationists never succeeded in defeating the rebels and arriving at a negotiated settlement with the Germans and the Sultanate. The period from October 1888 to July 1889 is therefore of extraordinary interest to the historian of popular consciousness, for during these months Pangani remained under the sway of a plebeian crowd that was relatively unchecked by patrician patrons or by the state. Unfortunately, it is also a period for which documentation is maddeningly thin. Rebel documents like the September petition, which were shaped neither by artistic convention nor by the vagaries of memory, do not exist from this period. Literary accounts such as Hemedi bin Abdallah's *Utenzi wa Vita vya Wadachi* are of little use; since Swahili historiography is chiefly concerned with the activities of "big men" (making it no different from its conventional Western counterpart), Hemedi and the other poets follow Bushiri to Bagamoyo. Oral traditions do likewise; in fact, most are based on a reading of Hemedi's well-known epic. We must therefore rely on documents generated by Europeans, but Europeans were not welcome in rebel-held Pangani.

As a result, we have almost no information on Pangani during the crucial months when militant crowds held the balance of power. We can, however, glean some data from the weeks just prior to Bushiri's departure. We must rely on momentary glimpses, caught in the records of two brief visits by Europeans: the first in mid-October, the second in early November. These records will yield insights into popular consciousness only if read very closely. This should come as no surprise; previous chapters have all suggested the extra digging necessary to uncover the protest of those at the lowest levels of Swahili society.

October 1888: Bushiri Bin Salim and his Rivals

In late September, the naturalists Hans Meyer and Oscar Baumann were in Pare, awaiting the arrival of their main force of about two hundred porters, whom they had

left at Lewa. But they received word that the entire caravan had deserted as it passed Mazinde, Semboja's main settlement. Semboja supposedly had received a letter from the governor of Pangani forbidding anyone to assist the Germans. (In fact the letter had come from Bushiri bin Salim; this suggests that the rebels were attempting to utilize Omani authority to serve their own ends.) Abandoning plans to explore Kili-manjaro, the two naturalists turned back toward the coast with their remaining sixty porters. To their dismay, all but seven of these also deserted before they reached Mazinde. Semboja refused to secure them additional porters. Meyer and Baumann had no idea of the uprising that had erupted at the coast, and when they loftily informed Semboja that his domain was now part of a German protectorate, the Kilindi chief laughed contemptuously and told them not to bother him with such nonsense.¹¹

With their handful of porters Baumann and Meyer continued toward Pangani. As they entered Bondei on October 14, they were suddenly joined by about thirty well-armed young men, who told them they had been sent by the *liwali* as an escort. Baumann later wrote that the "wild youths" aroused his suspicions immediately. They were excessively friendly, even obsequious, and brought the Germans fresh fruit which they pilfered from fields along the way. Many wore military uniforms which seemed to have been stolen from Europeans or purchased from the armed servants who had deserted the naturalists' own caravan. Their weapons appeared stolen as well; most were modern Mauser rifles, unavailable in local arms markets.

The leader of this band was Jahazi, a Comoroan who spoke to the Germans in a patois that Baumann recognized as West African English. Jahazi had served a year in the Congo under Stanley, where he had acquired a knowledge of ordnance; that knowledge and his fluency in English would later prove a great boon to Bushiri.¹² Like many of the Comoroans who took a leading role in the rebellion, Jahazi had specialized in working for Europeans and acting as a cultural broker. His little band behaved like freebooters. Although Baumann described them as "Swahili," they appear to have had few or only tenuous links to the Mrima communities; some were Nyamwezi who made no attempt to adopt coastal customs of dress or behavior. When they reached the village of Lewa, near the deserted tobacco plantation, they treated the local people imperiously.

The Germans had arranged to get a boat at Pombwe, in Mauya, to take them to Pangani. When no boat appeared, Jahazi insisted that they walk to Bushiri bin Salim's estate of Mundo, which was located several miles downriver, close to town. Meyer and Baumann consented; they did not fully believe that Jahazi had been sent by the *liwali*, but they were powerless to object and were still unaware of the full extent of the uprising. Their route from Pombwe went along heights overlooking the sugar plantations, past the villages of Mauya's *shamba* slaves, and as they neared the coast Jahazi's band grew steadily larger, picking up a crowd of onlookers. At Mundo the Germans were courteously received by the steward of the estate, an elderly slave; the steward's wife served them rice and curried fish, food worthy of honored guests.

Then, without warning, Baumann and Meyer were seized and bound. The steward assured them that they would not be harmed, and he prevented Jahazi's men from

11. Baumann, *In Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 93-7, 113-4; Hans Meyer and Oscar Baumann, "Dr. Hans Meyer's Usambara-Expedition," *Mittheilungen von Forschungsreisenden und Gelehrten aus den Deutschen Schutzgebieten* I (1888), 199-205.

12. Baumann, *In Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 121-4; Schmidt, *Geschichte*, 29-30; von Hacked and Schroeder, n.d. (copy dated 12 March 1891), ZStA RKA 404, 28.

beating them. Nevertheless, Baumann and Meyer were ignominiously placed in chains and heavy yokes, like disobedient slaves on the Mauya sugar estates. Later, the chained Germans were mocked by women who had come to marvel at the sight. "They said, they no longer need to carry water and cut wood," wrote Baumann, "for this will be our business."¹³

These jeering women were undoubtedly slaves, as were most of the crowd who had seized and bound the two naturalists.¹⁴ The chaining of Europeans must have seemed to them like the world turned upside down, like an inversion of the pyramid of power and prestige that had structured the political economy of the Mrima. When revisiting Pangani a few years later, Baumann discovered that the memory of his and Meyer's bondage had been kept alive in a song sung mostly by plantation slaves:

The people of Pangani are indeed bold,
they shut *Nyundo* in his room.
They put Dr. Meyer in fetters,
which is indeed a European custom.¹⁵

Nyundo, "hammer," was the name given to Zelewski, whose exceptional brutality during the wars of conquest had become notorious by the time of Baumann's return visit. After the event it was said that Bushiri had ordered the chaining of the prisoners in retaliation for reports that at Bagamoyo the Germans had chained a captured rebel to the funnel of one of their steamships.¹⁶ This might account for the line in the song about "European custom," or the reference might simply be to the DOAG agents' notoriety for forcing their porters to march in chains.

Baumann and Meyer spent two uncomfortable nights chained in a guarded hut, although they were otherwise well treated by the steward and his wife. The crowds that had taken such pleasure in their humiliation had gone into town, and the plantation was strikingly quiet. Then, just before dawn on the second night, they were awakened by the sudden appearance of Bushiri, who arrived shouting orders to his servants. The prisoners asked if their chains might be removed, to which Bushiri curtly replied, "*Insha'allah*," "God willing"; he then abruptly left the two alone with his business agent and creditor, the Indian merchant Abdul Karim. Abdul Karim tried to frighten the captives by telling them that Bushiri wanted their lives, but that a ransom of 10,000 rupees might slake his thirst for blood. Meyer agreed to the ransom, and at the merchant's suggestion he wrote a bill of credit for the amount, payable at Zanzibar through the well-known Hamburg firm of Hansing. The Germans' chains were then removed.

Bushiri now reappeared and courteously offered the Germans his hand, which had been unsullied by such sordid pecuniary matters. The gesture was characteristic of the aristocratic bearing that so impressed the two naturalists and, in fact, impressed all Europeans who came in contact with Bushiri over the course of the rebellion. In the ensuing interview, Bushiri apologized to Baumann and Meyer for the inconveniences caused by his war with the Germans. Speaking "fluent, very clear Swahili," he said that he had not wished to harm the two in any way, but

13. Baumann, *In Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 126–30.

14. The steward's wife told Baumann that many of Jahazi's men were Bushiri's slaves: *ibid.*, 132.

15. Baumann, *Usambara*, 27–8.

16. Smythies to Euan-Smith, Pangani, 15 Nov. 1888, FO 84/1910, 267–8.



FIGURE 8.1. *Left to right.* Makanda bin Mwinyi Mkuu, rebel *jumbe* of Bagamoyo; Bushiri bin Salim; Jahazi.

only to render them powerless and to have them removed from the mainland. Baumann reproached him, saying "that the whole procedure of our imprisonment seemed vulgar and unworthy of an eminent Arab and Muslim." To this Bushiri replied that the fault lay entirely with the "black slaves" who had seized them, and that he had chastised Jahazi and his men. He allowed that their behavior

was indeed objectionable, but he reasoned that "it should convey as little offense as the bite of a dog."¹⁷

Such a turn of phrase would have suited Carl Peters, who also likened Africans to dogs. It revealed an attitude resembling that of Said Abeja, who a month earlier had dismissed those who shot at Vohsen's boat as ignorant rabble. Bushiri's disdain for those under his command, whom he considered Africans and not, like himself, Arabs, showed itself in action as well as words. At one point during a later interview, Jahazi and some of his men burst into the room to make a report. Bushiri, annoyed by the interruption, lashed out at Jahazi with a hippopotamus-hide whip.¹⁸ Such imperiousness reflected the world view of an aristocrat, of a man accustomed to being obeyed. As we have seen, to be an aristocrat on the Mrima was to be an Arab, or to play at being one. Bushiri so identified himself, and during his conversation with the Germans he gave concise expression to the ideology of Arab power and prestige. When he asked his captives what it was that the Germans wanted in East Africa, Baumann and Meyer replied with a question of their own: What did your Arab forefathers want when they came? The bluntness of the reply caught Bushiri offguard, and he laughed. "That is correct," he said, "my forefathers also sought to conquer East Africa." But they went about it differently, he explained. You Germans came only in twos and threes, and despite your impotence you acted the lords. The Arabs, on the other hand, "came in the thousands from Arabia, conquered the land in bloody wars and settled themselves in it."¹⁹

Bushiri's account of Arab conquest is a myth; it has nothing to do with the historical reality of how Arabs came to trade and settle on the Swahili coast over the course of many centuries. Yet the myth perfectly captures the world view of the elite strata of Pangani society, Shirazi as well as Omani, who used images of Arab conquest and descent to bolster their authority. Bushiri described himself to Europeans as a gentleman-warrior, after the manner of an Arab prince.²⁰ And such descriptions meshed perfectly with the biases of his European acquaintances. It was characteristic of Europeans to conflate race and culture: any urban Muslim of aristocratic bearing was considered an Arab, not an African, and the Arab element of coastal society was assumed to control the rest. Thus the imprisoned Baumann took comfort in the thought that a powerful Arab was in charge, for Arabs, unlike Jahazi's African rabble, are, "in a word, human."²¹ By the same reckoning, Meyer held that Bushiri, the Arab gentleman, was the heart and soul of the rebellion, which must collapse in his absence.²² In fact the rebellion did not collapse but in many ways intensified after Bushiri left Pangani. Bwana Heri of Saadani, an African, fought on long after Bushiri was hanged; yet an official German historian wrote that Bushiri had incited him to it.²³

17. Baumann, *In Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 136–8.

18. *Ibid.*, 143.

19. *Ibid.*, 139.

20. "Eine Unterredung über Deutsch-Ostafrika mit dem französischen Bischof de Courmont," *Kölnische Zeitung*, 27 Apr. 1889, ZStA RKA 697, 61.

21. *In Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 131–2.

22. Michahelles, 22 Oct. 1888, ZStA RKA 693, 20.

23. Schmidt, *Geschichte*, 29. These arguments may have been made in part to justify the differential treatment meted out to the two rebels after conquest: whereas Bushiri was hanged like a common criminal, the Germans found it expedient to come to a negotiated surrender with Bwana Heri.

Bushiri bin Salim considered himself an Arab; he owned an estate on the outskirts of town and regarded slaves and other non-Arabs as his inferiors and subordinates. Thus he was able to assume the role of spokesman for those elite Arabs who joined the rebellion in its early stages hoping to defend their privileges. But the Arab planter class was the smallest and least significant of the many social groups whose members propelled the uprising at Pangani. Bushiri's leadership stemmed in large part from his sensitivity to the interests and political language of those non-Arab groups. In fact, in terms of language, culture, and socioeconomic interests, Bushiri had as much in common with the Shirazi caravan traders as he had with the Omani planters.

This assessment emerges from what we know of his biography. Bushiri bin Salim was born in East Africa in the 1830s. His father was probably a member of the al-Harthi clan, although there is some doubt about this.²⁴ The al-Harthi, along with the Mazrui and Nabahani of the Kenya coast, were among the earliest Omani families to settle in East Africa, and they had a keen regard for what they considered as their prerogatives within the political framework of the Zanzibar Sultanate. Unlike the ruling Busaid dynasty, they had long become fully assimilated to Swahili culture. Their stronghold was Zanzibar, where they and their armed retainers had often played disruptive roles in elite politics. Bushiri's father may have been the powerful Sheikh Salim bin Bushiri al-Harthi, who owed his influence in part to his friendship with Seyyid Said bin Sultan, founder of the Sultanate. The al-Harthis fell out of favor under Seyyid Said's successor Majid, who seized Sheikh Salim's Zanzibar mansion and rented it out to British missionaries and consuls-general.²⁵

Bushiri bin Salim's mother was an African, probably a slave. Thus, in Admiral Deinhard's words, Bushiri was "not a white Arab, but rather a mixed blood," what other Europeans of the time called a "black Arab."²⁶ As a young man he had made his fortune leading caravans on the central routes, and the alliances he established up-country would serve him well during and after the siege of Bagamoyo. It is not known when he invested in his estate at Pangani, although it was probably no later than 1872. The estrangement between Majid and the al-Harthis of Zanzibar did not seem to affect him deeply, and during Majid's reign he served with distinction as a leader of Zanzibari troops in campaigns against the Nyamwezi warlord Mirambo, an experience of which he remained proud. But he came into violent conflict with the Sultanate soon after Barghash's enthronement in 1870. The circumstances are unclear: some documents refer to an unspecified offence that caused Bushiri to flee imprisonment at Zanzibar; others say that Barghash had sent troops to Pangani to apprehend Bushiri for debt. The troops failed to capture him, and Bushiri never again dared show his face in Zanzibar.²⁷

24. Oral accounts and Khalid Kirama, SwMss 180/7–11, state variously that Bushiri's clan was al-Harth, al-Ghafir, and/or al-Mazrui. The latter is almost certainly incorrect: see Glassman, "Social rebellion," 587n. By contrast, German officers wrote that Bushiri's father came from Yemen, not Oman: Perbandt *et al.*, *Hermann von Wissmann*, 205–6.
25. For the al-Harthi's role in Zanzibar politics see John Gray, *History of Zanzibar from the Middle Ages to 1856* (London, 1962) and "Zanzibar and the coastal belt." Also see the Rigby papers in ZNA, AA12/2, *passim*. For Salim bin Bushiri, see Abdulla Saleh Farsy, *Seyyid Said bin Sultan* (Zanzibar, n.d. [1942]), 49–50.
26. Deinhard, 12 March 1889, ZStA RKA 697, 41.
27. These and other biographical details are culled from the interview in Baumann, *In Deutsch-Ostafrika*; Keith Johnston, in PRGS n.s. I (1879), 329; Meyer, "Über seine letzte Expedition," 83–95; Behr, *Kriegsbilder*, 334–5; Richelmann, in Perbandt *et al.*, *Hermann von Wissmann*, 205–6; Schmidt, *Geschichte*, 29; Deinhard, 12 March 1889, ZStA *loc. cit.*; de Courmont, "Eine Unterredung," ZStA RKA 697, 61; and Khalid Kirama, n.d., SwMss 180.

In 1888 Bushiri was about 55 years old, heavy-set but energetic, with proven military skill and a charismatic personality. He had a fierce disdain for the sultan; this is why the Europeans considered him a "radical" even though he displayed no desire to overturn the Arab-dominated order. When he boasted to Baumann and Meyer that he had forced Mathews to leave Pangani in September, they expressed surprise that he would dare show such disrespect to the sultan's military commander.

"What do I care about the sultan," he said with contempt. "I hate him and have not entered his city of Zanzibar for [eighteen] years, since I would be beheaded immediately. Now I acknowledge him still less, since he is not ashamed to sell our land to foreigners."²⁸

This deep hostility to Barghash and his successor, based partly on personal considerations, was one reason Bushiri was made a leader of the rebellion.²⁹ But it also divided him from the loyal Arab planter class, of which he liked to consider himself a member. Bushiri was by no means typical of this class: he was a *Mwaarabu*, a Swahili-speaking "Arab" born on the coast, rather than an *Mmanga*, an Arabic-speaker born in Oman. Baumann and Meyer witnessed a heated debate among Bushiri and his associates; they were not sure of the topic, since many of those present were Omanis and spoke in Arabic, which the two naturalists did not understand. Bushiri tried to keep up, but his Arabic was not good enough and he repeatedly lapsed into Swahili, his primary language.³⁰

Yet more than language and culture separated Bushiri from the planter class. After all, some of the most important sugar planters were not Omanis. Said Hemedi was a Yemeni, for example, and Mambosasa a Shirazi *jumbe*, and both would join the Omani-dominated "peace party." But unlike any of Pangani's dominant planters, Omani or otherwise, Bushiri bin Salim did not cultivate sugarcane on a large scale. The main sugar-producing zone began at Jasini, a quarter of an hour's boat journey upriver from Mundo. The alluvial flatlands characteristic of the Mauya plantations are not present at Mundo, where corraline hills come almost straight down to the riverbank. The river water, essential for the system of irrigation ditches, is still too salty at Mundo for cane.³¹ So although Bushiri owned a large plantation, he did not owe his wealth to the production of sugar. This fact divided Bushiri from the Arab planter class perhaps more than did anything else, for it meant that his relations with his slaves were not riven by the acute tensions characteristic of sugar production. Despite his imperiousness, his ties to his slaves probably came closer to the ideal of patronage than did those of the Omani sugar planters.

Bushiri's background bridged some of the most significant divisions in Pangani society and enabled him to exert influence over the broad coalition of elements that had participated in the expulsion of the Germans. At the same time, his ties with those varied elements were often tenuous. As a planter and scion of a high-born Arab family, he could speak plausibly for the landlords of Mauya. But he could not speak

28. Baumann, *In Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 138. Meyer's account of the interview ("Über seine letzte Expedition," 88-9) puts the interval as eighteen years, Baumann's as twenty. Meyer is probably correct; Bushiri probably said that he had not returned to Zanzibar since the accession of Barghash.

29. Bushiri made this point explicitly. Meyer, *loc. cit.*

30. Baumann, *In Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 143.

31. Meinecke, *Aus dem Lande*, 119; Glassman, "Social rebellion," 592n.

Arabic, nor had he participated in the development of sugar production and the transformation of master-slave relations that had been such an important defining characteristic of Pangani's Arab elite. As a distinguished Swahili-speaking caravan leader, he could command the loyalty of many of the Shirazi rebels; in fact, the grievances that he outlined to Meyer and Baumann largely reflect the fears of caravan traders and display a keen concern for the problems of obtaining credit.³² But his caravan experience had been entirely on the Arab-dominated central routes, not on the northern routes dominated by Pangani's Shirazi *majumbe*, and his relations to hinterland chiefs such as Semboja were strained from the beginning. He was no *jumbe*, and the concept of a ruling Arab dynasty was not distasteful to him, especially if his membership in the eminent al-Harthi clan might somehow be fitted into such a scheme.³³

Bushiri's influence can therefore be attributed to his ability to address Shirazi concerns in the legitimizing voice of an Arab aristocrat. But this double game only exacerbated the mistrust of the Omani planters who did not consider him one of their kind.³⁴ The planters feared for their property and were quickly becoming apprehensive that the uprising risked overturning all state authority. Their leader, and Bushiri's main rival at Pangani, was the new *liwali*, Suleiman bin Nasr al-Lemki. Suleiman owned one of Mauya's largest estates (it boasted a rare steam-powered mill), leased others from the sultan, and by 1894 was considered among the most experienced of the sugar planters. He was working for the Germans as early as August 1888, and after September they regarded him as their "direct agent" at Pangani. Over the following two decades he would become well known for his loyalty to the colonial regime, serving the Germans as *liwali* of Pangani, Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam.³⁵

The German military commander who finally conquered the Mrima described Suleiman as ambitious and wily; Baumann called him "slippery as an eel."³⁶ These attributes served Suleiman well after he was forced to stay behind in rebel-held Pangani. By the time of Baumann and Meyer's visit, Suleiman had succeeded in organizing the town's leading property owners into a collaborationist "peace party" whose primary goal was the restoration of Omani rule. Suleiman preferred to call his group the "sultan's party" (although he later fell out with Khalifa³⁷), and he described its members as

for the most part wealthy merchants and the proprietors of large estates, some of whom possess sugar mills and occupy important positions in the

32. See especially Meyer, "Über seine letzte Expedition," 88–9. During the siege of Bagamoyo one of Bushiri's demands would be for the *majumbe* "to retain their old privileges," including *ada* from incoming caravans. On the other hand, he also demanded that he be made *liwali* of Bagamoyo. Taylor to Euan-Smith, 28 Apr. 1889, ZNA, AA1/64/202.

33. In October 1888 he was likening himself to the Swahili-speaking merchant and empire builder Tippu Tip, and was expressing his intention to set up an independent state under his autocratic rule. Michahelles, 22 Oct. 1888, ZStA RKA 693, 19–20. He took similar positions in later proposals to Khalifa and the Germans, even suggesting that he be made governor of the entire Mrima.

34. Wissmann, in Perbandt *et al.*, *Hermann von Wissmann*, 205–6.

35. Auswärtiges Amt to Hardenberg, plus enclosure, 10 Apr. 1902, ZNA AL2/37, 22–5; Meinecke, *Aus dem Lande*, 108–9, 114; Vohsen, 25 Aug. 1888, ZStA RKA 406, 50–60; Selim Michalla, "Rapport confidentiel," 27 June 1889, ZStA RKA 698, 25–7; Wissmann, 27 July 1889, ZStA RKA 740, 20. For Suleiman's property arrangements, see TNA G1/14, 30, and TNA G46/13; for his colonial career, see Iliffe, *German Rule*, 192.

36. Wissmann, 23 June 1889, ZStA RKA 739, 53; Baumann, *Usambara*, 74. For more on Suleiman's personality: Glassman, "Social rebellion," 596n.

37. In early 1889 the al-Lemkis plotted with other Omani courtiers and the British Consul-General to replace Khalifa with his brother in a palace coup. See the Epilogue.



FIGURE 8.2. Suleiman bin Nasr al-Lemki.

service of the state. They, and above all the latter, have been persuaded that the insurrection will ruin them and that it is in their interest to put an end to the hostilities.³⁸

These people included the “true Arabs” (in the words of a German military officer), rather than Swahili-speakers such as Bushiri and the *majumbe*.³⁹ Suleiman’s faction managed to preserve a veneer of Omani authority, as we saw when they protected the

38. Selim Michalla, “Rapport confidentiel,” 27 June 1889, ZStA RKA 698, 25–7. This is the consular translator’s account of an interview with Suleiman.

39. Behr, *Kriegsbilder*, 216–7. In contrast to Suleiman, Bushiri was said by Behr to have commanded a large “Negro” following.

Lewa planters in early October. But on important issues, he was forced to yield to the rebel leader and his large African following. Meyer said that when Bushiri came into town from his estate “the people acclaimed him” and Suleiman and his supporters vanished from sight.⁴⁰ Stuhlmann observed similar tensions when he and the Lewa planters passed through Pangani, and he described how Suleiman and the wealthy Arabs were forced to acknowledge Bushiri’s popular authority.⁴¹

But Bushiri was playing a dangerous game: his control of the crowd was tenuous, and the crowd, not he, commanded Pangani. On the evening of their interview at Mundo, Bushiri took Meyer and Baumann to Pangani by boat; the oarsmen sang of Zelewski’s imprisonment. They arrived at dusk and were met at the landing by a large crowd of armed people, who greeted Bushiri respectfully but made no effort to conceal their hatred of his guests. Baumann observed a town in which the state no longer held the balance of military power, and where plebeians openly flouted Shirazi sumptuary conventions:

Whereas the city was empty and deserted when last we were there [i.e. in late August, when it was under Zelewski’s nominal rule], it now offered a picture of wild, turbulent life. Fantastically dressed Arabs and Negroes appeared everywhere, bristling with arms; rifles and swords glittered in all the shops, and rebel bands passed through the narrow streets with loud war-songs and the crack of rifle fire.

Meyer told Michahelles that “the rabble and slaves of the entire region” filled the streets, and that the sultan’s authority was acknowledged only insofar as the rebels wished it. The German Consul, who had clung to the hope that the Sultan of Zanzibar would protect the Company’s colonial experiment, now fretted privately that “the Sultan’s authority is so much destroyed that he is no longer of any use to us.” Michahelles had been urging caution and resisting the Company’s calls for concerted German military action, yet now even he recognized that order could be restored at Pangani only with “bloody chastisement.”⁴²

November 1888: The Bishop and the Dancers

With the expulsion of the Lewa tobacco planters, the only Europeans remaining in the Pangani hinterland were Anglican missionaries at Magila and Mkuzi, in Bondei. Diplomats at Zanzibar were concerned for their safety. Although rebel leaders had shown a readiness to distinguish between Germans and other Europeans, the rank-and-file were not always of a like mind—a lesson that Vice-Consul Berkeley’s translator had learned on the beach in early September and that Mathews had learned later that month. The missionaries’ employees had been harassed when passing through Pangani, and the rebels threatened to avenge any bombardment with attacks on the missions.⁴³

40. Michahelles, 22 Oct. 1888, ZStA RKA 693, 20.

41. Stuhlmann, 20 Oct. 1888, ZStA RKA 693, 46; Stuhlmann, “Bericht über eine Reise,” 175.

42. Baumann, *In Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 141–2; Michahelles, 22 Oct. 1888, ZStA RKA 693, 20–3.

43. Goodyear, Mkuzi, 2 Oct. 1888, UMCA Box A1(vi)B, 1541a.

On September 26, a few days after Mathews's expulsion, Khalifa sent an Arab envoy to evacuate any of the missionaries who might wish to leave. The envoy's arrival at Pangani took a familiar turn: he was first fired on as he entered the harbor but was subsequently permitted to land. Suleiman bin Nasr tried to expedite the envoy's mission but could not overcome rebel objections. The envoy then turned to Bushiri, asking him to write a letter to the British Consul guaranteeing the missionaries' safety. In his letter, Bushiri assured Euan-Smith that the rebels felt hostility neither towards the Anglican missionaries nor towards the British Indian subjects resident at Pangani. "Those who are your friends are also friends of ours," he wrote, and if the missionaries wish to leave, we will escort them ourselves. Bushiri hoped to win Euan-Smith's friendship, or at least his neutrality. Pointedly, he assured the Consul-General that "there is no need of sending a man-of-war."⁴⁴

The treatment of the Bondei missions was to remain a subject of discord for many months, revealing some of the most important divisions within the rebel ranks. It was an issue on which Bushiri and the other moderates sided with the sultan's group against the militants. Bushiri's letter to Euan-Smith referred to Khalifa and his envoy in respectful terms, and when Omani and British officials wished to correspond with the missionaries, their letters were delivered by Shirazi messengers, including the powerful *jumbe* Kaskazi. On this particular issue the moderates no doubt grappled to make the best of an awkward situation that was beyond their control. As we shall see, those who prevented the sultan's envoy from proceeding to Bondei were the same plebeian militants who on previous occasions had rejected Arab authority altogether, including younger local men and warriors from upcountry.

A particular difficulty in interpreting these disputes is identifying the upcountry warriors who were an important part of the militant faction. No doubt they included men from many parts of the Pangani hinterland, including the clients of Zigua trading chiefs and Kilindi warlords who participated for a variety of reasons. Our two principal Swahili documents, the September petition and Hemedi bin Abdallah's *Utenzi wa Vita*, describe them ambiguously as *washenzi* ("barbarians"). This imprecise word was principally a term of abuse, used by townspeople to describe outsiders of whom they disapproved. It usually referred to pagans—that is, non-Muslims—or to upcountry converts whose Islamic credentials were doubted by those describing them.⁴⁵ It was also commonly used to designate newly imported "raw" slaves, who, as we have seen, were often placed on the sugar estates and were most prone to run away. Runaway slaves, including those of the maroon settlement of Makorora, were vocal members of Pangani's militant crowd. A German officer who participated in the reconquest of Pangani wrote that the rebel forces were divided by endless conflicts between the runaways, the villagers who harbored them as their clients, and the planters who wanted to recover them.⁴⁶

In addition to its more ambiguous meanings, the word *washenzi* was often used to signify the people of Bondei. Use of the pejorative term may have stemmed from the fact that most of Bondei had been subjected to the rule of the Kilindi princes of

44. *Ibid.*; Euan-Smith, 28 Sept. 1888, and Bushiri bin Salim to Euan-Smith, 19 Moharrum 1306, ZNA, AA1/61/285.

45. Thus Burton, referring to non-Muslims from Pangani's hinterland, wrote of "Wasegura [i.e., Zigua] and other Washenzi." *Zanzibar II*, 145.

46. Behr, *Kriegsbilder*, 216–7; Glassman, "Social rebellion," 603–4n.

Shambaa, a rule that became bitterly embattled in the 1870s and 80s.⁴⁷ The head of the Anglican mission, J.P. Farler, cultivated ties with Kibanga, the Kilindi chief who was attempting to extend his rule over the region; Farler actively assisted Kibanga in his rivalry with Semboja and helped protect villages from the raids of Semboja's clients. But while such activities earned Farler the goodwill of some of his neighbors, his penchant for political machinations endeared him neither to Semboja nor to the many villagers who resented the Kilindi altogether. Those in Bondei who enjoyed direct ties to coastal merchants viewed the missionaries as rivals rather than protectors. Such villagers were agitating against the missionaries as early as May, when they argued that the Christians were responsible for the concessions that the sultan had granted the DOAG.⁴⁸

Thus it is likely that some of the "*washenzi*" who played a militant role in conflicts over the Anglican missions were villagers from Bondei, especially those who maintained regular contacts with Shirazi merchants. One Bondei district with particularly close ties to the coast was Makumba, about six hours from Pangani. We have seen in chapter 3 that the people of Makumba were openly hostile both to Kibanga and to Farler. They were also in constant conflict with the Mauya planters, who found them especially noxious for their role in harboring runaway slaves. So the people of Makumba were "*washenzi*" according to one usage—meaning residents of Bondei—and their runaway-slave clients were "*washenzi*" according to another. Together, they were hostile both to the missionaries and to the Omani Arabs of Pangani.

Other likely candidates for the role of militant "*washenzi*" were Maasai herdsmen, whom townspeople would have regarded as the quintessential "barbarians."⁴⁹ By definition, Maasai shunned both town life and settled agriculture (if they succumbed to either they were no longer thought of as "Maasai"), and they were stubbornly resistant to Islam and other cultural influences from the coast. Yet they were major participants in the Pangani caravan trade, as we have seen. Shirazi entrepreneurs spoke their language, intermarried with them and were initiated into their age sets. So did trading warlords like Mandara and Semboja, both of whom were feared for their Maasai warrior clients. In the months of August, September and October, when their own grazing lands were parched, Maasai regularly drove their herds toward the coast in search of better pasturage, raiding settlements as close to Pangani as the Mauya estates. To protect their interests at such times, merchants and warlords in the coastal hinterland forged alliances with the herders.⁵⁰

In August and September 1888, an unusually harsh dry season in the Maasai country brought large numbers of herdsmen toward the coast, some raiding as far south as Mamboia, where they threatened the Saadani caravan routes.⁵¹ Many had particular reason to ally themselves with the coastal militants against the Anglican

47. Sources for this usage include Krapf, *Dictionary*, 155; Fischer, "Bericht über die im Auftrage," 97; Erhardt, 8–9 Apr. and 2 June 1854, CMS, CA5/09/16; Gebhard Schneider, *Die Katholische Mission von Zanguebar* (Regensburg, 1877), 14.

48. Farler to Penney, 7 May and Trinity Sunday 1888, UMCA Box A1(vi)A, 579 and 583. The hostility of villagers who maintained ties to coastal merchants is documented throughout the UMCA files on Mkuzi and Magila.

49. In July 1889 a Tanga resident told the Germans explicitly that Maasai warriors formed the backbone of the radical faction there. Deinhard, 11 July 1889, RKA 739, 102–3.

50. Fischer, "Bericht über die im Auftrage," 70, 96–7; Glassman, "Social rebellion," 606–7.

51. Stuhlmann, "Bericht über eine Reise," 165; Stokes, Saadani, 7 Aug. 1888, ZNA AA1/61/214.

missions. Earlier in the year Semboja had recruited a force of some four hundred Maasai to attack Kibanga. Farler feared that Semboja would be unable to control his Maasai warriors, and he felt so threatened that he evacuated the women and children from Magila to the mission at Mkuzi, which was nearer the coast. Kibanga defeated his attackers, killing some two dozen Maasai warriors. Semboja and his sons blamed Farler for the debacle and vowed vengeance. They and their Maasai allies continued threatening the Magila mission as late as July 1888.⁵²

Those whom we have considered for the role of militant “*washenzi*”—*shamba* slaves and runaway slaves, Bondei villagers, Maasai allied with Semboja and Semboja’s other clients—all took an interest in the affairs of the Muslim towns. And although this list is diverse, it is probably far from exhaustive; the politics and commerce of the Shirazi-dominated northern routes had always depended on the active cooperation of upcountry entrepreneurs. These allies and trading partners were even less keen to preserve Omani rule than were the Shirazi *majumbe*—and it was the Omani rulers who had proclaimed themselves the protectors of the Anglican missions. To be sure, Semboja also had extensive connections with Pangani Arabs, and although he resented Farler’s sponsorship of his rival Kibanga, he could be prodded to take a moderate stance by elite politicians such as the *liwali* of Tanga, whose intervention averted Semboja’s threats to Farler in June and July. But Semboja exercised only loose influence over clients such as his Maasai warriors, and he could not be relied on to control them, especially once they had gone to fight at the coast.

Moreover, coastal politicians such as Bushiri were more than willing to sacrifice Semboja’s interests for their own ends, such as securing the friendship or neutrality of the British. The elaborate coordination that led to the capture of Baumann and Meyer indicates that Bushiri and Semboja were in constant communication. Yet the two were acutely suspicious of one another. Bushiri anxiously questioned the naturalists about what they had seen at Mazinde: how many weapons Semboja had, the strategic placement of his settlement.⁵³ As the most powerful of the Kilindi, Semboja laid claim to the whole of the coast, a claim that Bushiri resented. The resentment was mutual—Gravenreuth wrote that Semboja “hates Bushiri more than he hates us”—and it grew as the warriors whom Semboja had sent to Pangani transferred their loyalties to the charismatic Swahili leader.⁵⁴

Despite Bushiri’s promises, harassment of the Magila mission continued through October, the rebels often holding up supplies passing through Pangani. In part this was an expression of anger at the British Consul. It was widely known that Meyer and Baumann had left the cash for their ransom in Euan-Smith’s hands but that the latter refused to allow the payment to be made.⁵⁵ In early November, the Anglican Bishop of Central Africa, Charles Alan Smythies, decided to go to Magila himself, to negotiate an agreement with the rebels and to evacuate the mission’s women and children to Zanzibar. He left Zanzibar expressing great bitterness toward Euan-Smith and the

52. ZNA: MacDonald, 12 March 1888, and Farler, 5 March 1888, AA1/60/27; Gravenreuth, 6 Apr. 1888, and Michahelles, 12 March 1888, AL2/58/282–4; Euan-Smith, 2 July 1888, AA1/61/164; Farler, 25 June 1888, AA2/46. Also: Farler, 23 July 1888, FO 84/1908, 106–7; *idem*. 7 May and 3 March 1888, UMCA Box A1(vi)A, 579 and 586.

53. Baumann, *In Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 140–1.

54. Gravenreuth, Dec. 1888 (no specific date), ZStA RKA 404, 18–9; Müller, *Deutschland*, 386–7.

55. The refusal to honor Meyer’s check created a great deal of discord among the rebels. See Glassman, “Social rebellion,” 610n.; Bennett, *Arab versus European*, 158ff.

British government.⁵⁶ Khalifa provided Smythies with a vessel and arranged for him to be escorted by the eminent Nasr bin Suleiman al-Lemki, father of Pangani's *liwali*. As they entered the Pangani River on November 12, Nasr asked Smythies to go below, since it was known that the rebels fired on any European who came near. Nasr otherwise assumed that the rebels would not fire on a vessel flying the sultan's flag. But neither precaution helped; the large crowds on the banks of the river fired anyway.⁵⁷

The gunfire soon stopped and Nasr was allowed to go ashore. After lengthy negotiation he returned to the vessel with Bushiri. In the ensuing conversation, Bushiri told the Bishop that while Pangani's citizens had no objection to his going to Magila, the major obstacle came from the "great many people from the neighbouring tribes" who were present in the town. It was not safe for Smythies to land at that moment, he said, because the upcountry folk refused to distinguish between Germans and other Europeans. These statements amounted to an admission of Bushiri's inability to control his upcountry warriors.

But the message that Smythies received later that evening suggested that Bushiri could not dictate policy to the more moderate Shirazi rebels either, much as he liked to give that impression. Bushiri and "the leading Arabs" now told Smythies that although they were willing to allow him to go to Magila, the *majumbe*, whom they described as "native petty chiefs . . . who have always been allowed a share in managing the affairs of Pangani," had not yet agreed to it. The description is telling: although the words are Smythies's, they no doubt reflect the point of view conveyed by Bushiri and "the leading Arabs," who liked to think that the *majumbe* exercised their privileges only on Arab sufferance. The *majumbe* evidently thought otherwise; they were demanding a portion of the ransom that Meyer had promised Bushiri. Smythies gave Nasr 1000 rupees to pass on to them. This cash seemed to do the trick: Smythies was allowed to land, and the *majumbe* told him that they would prepare for his departure for Magila the following day.

In fact, Smythies had to wait several days at Pangani while Bushiri and the prominent Omanis worked to mollify the various rebel factions, and while plebeian crowds held dances to debate what to do with the Bishop and to demand that the *majumbe* fulfill the obligations of patronage. During his wait it became obvious to Smythies that "everyone expected, somehow or other, to have a share" of the Meyer ransom. He was finally told to be ready to leave for Bondei on the morning of November 15. But at dawn that day, Nasr bin Suleiman called with distressing news. The previous night, wrote Smythies, as Nasr shuttled back and forth making arrangements and distributing money to the *majumbe*,

a large number of the young men had had a dance and had agreed that they would not let me go. They said that the jumbes and others had received money from the Sultan [meaning from Nasr, the Sultan's representative]; . . . that if any money was distributed why should not they, who had all the trouble, and went down every day and watched on the shore, have their share of it?

"I must say," commented the Bishop, "I rather sympathized with them."⁵⁸

56. Smythies to Euan-Smith, 10 Nov. 1888, ZNA, AA1/62/324 (enclosure).

57. The following account of Smythies' experiences at Pangani is drawn principally from his letters, printed in G[ertrude] W[ard], *The Life of Charles Alan Smythies*, edited by E.F. Russell (London, 1898), 127–34; *Central Africa*, February 1889, 17–32; and Smythies to Euan-Smith, 15–6 Nov. 1888, FO 84/1910, 267–9.

58. Ward, *Life*, 131.

Later that morning a large crowd of hostile “young men” suddenly surrounded the house where Smythies was staying. The crowd’s spokesmen expressed their intention “to fight with the Arabs” to prevent Smythies from travelling to Bondei, and they threatened to break down the doors of the house and kill him. Bushiri intervened, along with his friend and confidant Mohammed bin Aziz, a sugar planter and another member of the rebellion’s moderate wing.⁵⁹ The two stood in the doorway and bravely held off the crowd until the *liwali* and other Arabs came with their soldiers. Suleiman bin Nasr told the militants that if they wanted to prevent Smythies’s journey they would have to fight. The crowd retreated, but not before some of its members had fired three shots at Bushiri, unsuccessfully.

This incident reveals the limits of Bushiri’s authority. On this occasion he stood clearly with the moderates and with the forces of the Sultanate, despite the fact that contemporary European sources often described him as a “radical.” While it would be a mistake to underestimate the power of Bushiri’s personal authority, it was not sufficient to control the crowd, and he had to rely on the armed retainers of the *liwali* and of other Arab settlers to impose his will regarding Bishop Smythies. Yet even this show of force was not enough. Further negotiations with the militants’ leaders were necessary, and matters did not quiet down until three of them were imprisoned and additional money distributed.⁶⁰

As Smythies finally departed for Magila the following day, he was accompanied for the first few miles by Bushiri, Suleiman bin Nasr, and some other wealthy Arabs and *majumbe*. As they walked, they told Smythies that they were loyal to the sultan, whose commands they would enforce so long as “they believed they were not really contrary to the interests of himself and his people.” Such posturing suggests that the moderates and the loyal Omanis, still at this point in an uneasy alliance, were anxiously trying to convey the impression that they were in full control of the situation—much as, the previous month, Bushiri had tried to display his complete mastery by whipping Jahazi in front of Baumann and Meyer. Yet this control was largely illusory. Within a few weeks, perhaps after Bushiri and Mohammed bin Aziz had left for Bagamoyo, the Magila mission’s goods were once again being seized by the rebels at Pangani, and Suleiman bin Nasr was powerless to stop it.⁶¹

But if Bushiri did not speak for the militants, who did? How did they arrive at their decisions? And what prompted their discontent? The plebeian crowd is difficult enough to understand in situations where the historian has the benefit of copious written records. The reader will therefore excuse the many details that burden the foregoing discussion of Smythies’ visit, for it is only from such details that we can infer evidence bearing on the motivations of the rebellion’s militant wing. The rebels who had challenged Omani and Shirazi authority were described as “young men” or *vijana*; they had arrived at their militant demands at a public dance or *ngoma*. The gist of their complaint was that the patricians had neglected the duties of reciprocity; that they had excluded the “young men” from the arrangements struck with the Omanis regarding the naturalists and the Bishop. The dancers considered themselves the

59. For Mohammed bin Aziz, who accompanied Bushiri to besiege Bagamoyo, see the oral testimony of Ndembo Maburuki, Pangani; also Meinecke, *Aus dem Lande*, 119, 133–5; and Bushiri bin Salim to Salim bin Ali, 4 Jemadi 1306 (4 or 5 Feb. 1889), ZStA RKA 740, 116.

60. *Central Africa*, Feb. 1889, 19; Smythies, 16 Nov. 1888, FO 84 *loc. cit.*; Euan-Smith, 27 Feb. 1889, ZNA AA1/67/109.

61. *Central Africa*, Feb. 1889, 32.

majumbe's clients and many no doubt were warriors from the coastal hinterland. It is not unreasonable, then, to speculate that their spokesmen included men who aspired to ranks within the *vyama* or festival guilds. The *vyama* were more open to outsiders than were other Shirazi institutions, and the competitive dances organized by them had long been the platforms from which young men of low ascribed status demanded more active roles within the urban community.

A few days after he had faced down the crowd at the Bishop's door, Bushiri left Pangani to stay on his estate, feeling that his authority was threatened and that he had best keep a low profile for a while. Suleiman bin Nasr told the German Consul that Bushiri had aroused some hostility by seizing the property of an Indian merchant; the merchant may well have been Abdul Karim, who later complained that Bushiri appropriated merchandise from him as payment against Meyer's check. But it is also possible that popular disenchantment with Bushiri had arisen from his vigorous championing of Smythies; Bushiri in fact later dwelled bitterly on the risks he had taken defending the Briton. When Bushiri returned to town later in the month, he announced his intention to march south to mount a coordinated siege of the Germans at Bagamoyo. He left on November 20, leading a force of several hundred poorly armed men.⁶²

Bushiri's departure strengthened the hand of Suleiman bin Nasr and the "peace party," for the rebels had now lost their most effective spokesman.⁶³ Almost immediately, efforts of the Pangani Arabs to bring about a negotiated return of Omani and German administration shifted into high gear. Suleiman bin Nasr—no longer a prisoner of the Pangani rebels—paid a personal visit to Michahelles in Zanzibar. He told the Consul that if a suitable mediator were to be found (Suleiman undoubtedly meant himself), the Arabs could be brought to a settlement which agreed to all the provisions of the treaty concessions of April 1888. Such a settlement was now possible, he said, because although "bands of countrypeople still stream in to the city now and then, the earlier massive gatherings of people have ceased." Furthermore, he added, the patricians themselves were beginning to tire of the unrest, particularly since it had interrupted the caravan trade.⁶⁴

Bishop Smythies, who stayed at Magila for several months, made similar observations. Insofar as Suleiman was able to reassert the authority of the Sultanate, wrote Smythies, the mission's communications with the coast improved and more of their goods passed through to Bondei. As perceptive as ever, Smythies suggested in early March that the reason for these improvements had something to do with the fact that "a great many of the young men who swarmed at Pangani have gone up to the Masai country with caravans which seem to start at this time of the year."⁶⁵ In other words, the dancers who had obstructed the Bishop's journey in November also served as porters in the northern caravan trade.

62. Michahelles, 19 Nov. and 2 Dec. 1888, ZStA RKA 694, 45–50, 78–83; Abdul Kerim, enclosure to Portal, 27 Aug. 1889, ZNA AA1/68/318. For Bushiri's bitterness after the British had abandoned their neutrality, see de Courmont's dispatch of 11 Jan. 1889, *Miss. Cath.* 21 (1889), 110.

63. Deinhard, 3 Jan. 1889, ZStA RKA 695, 91.

64. Michahelles, 19 Nov. 1888, ZStA *loc. cit.*; *idem.*, 3 Dec. 1888, and Vohsen, 13 Nov. 1888, *DKZ* n.s. 2 (1889), 21.

65. Smythies to Euan-Smith, Magila, 3 March 1889, ZNA AA1/67/142. Also see Goodyear to Penney, 28 Feb. 1889, UMCA Box A1(vi)B, 1583.

But even with these improvements in his position, Suleiman still could not control events, and the Anglican mission's people continued to be harassed at Pangani. Hostility toward the missionaries increased after December, when the British joined the Germans in a blockade of the coast, thus confirming the militants in their conviction that differences in the Europeans' flags meant nothing. The Pangani militants suspected Smythies and his colleagues of plotting a rearguard action against them. In April, acknowledging his inability to protect Magila, Suleiman bin Nasr recommended that the missionaries be withdrawn.⁶⁶

Indulging in some improbable rhetoric, spokesmen for Suleiman's faction told Michahelles in November that "the Arabs are conscious of the fact that they hold the entire uprising in their hands, and that it's solely dependent on them to settle the affair."⁶⁷ This was either wishful thinking or deliberate deception. The representatives of the Sultanate had depended on Bushiri to maintain a modicum of control over the plebeian crowd, and his departure must have seemed to them a mixed blessing. Bushiri was an aristocrat with important ties, no matter how strained, to the Omani power structure, and as such he could be relied on to exert a moderating influence on the crowd. By contrast, the popular leaders who came forward in his absence included people with little commitment to the established order. Among these was Bushiri's rival Said Abeja, whom Suleiman bin Nasr hoped might be brought over to the Omani faction: after all, during the opening weeks of the rebellion Said Abeja had worked with the moderates. But Suleiman's hopes were not to pan out. Like many of Pangani's Comoroan and Hadrami petty traders, Said Abeja had ties to the slaves and runaways who formed much of the core of the plebeian crowd. He was killed in July 1889, leading the final resistance to German reconquest.⁶⁸

The voices of the plebeian militants were later suppressed by German propagandists who were intent on portraying the movement as an "Arab revolt," staged by planters and slave traders in defense of an oppressive status quo. The propagandists were assisted in their task by the Arab aristocrats themselves. A pointed example comes from January 1889, when some Omani slave traders at Zanzibar took advantage of the unsettled conditions on the coast and attacked the Benedictine mission at Pugu, near Dar es Salaam, with the plain purpose of seizing emancipated slaves who had been settled there. These opportunists then portrayed themselves as rebel leaders. They told Euan-Smith, "with a certain amount of boasting,"

that notwithstanding the hundreds of natives that have been slaughtered by German fire no Arab of prominence has hitherto been killed or wounded. All the ringleaders against the Germans are, as they declare, prosperous, rich and flourishing. . . .⁶⁹

This is simply a more arrogant version of the voice we have heard so many times in the preceding pages, the voice of powerful Arabs pretending to be in control of a movement that was in fact directed against them.

66. ZNA: Euan-Smith, 26 Feb. 1889, AA1/63/99; *idem.*, 1 Apr. 1889, and Hawes, 22 Apr. 1889, AA1/67/178 and 197; Hawes, 18 Apr. 1889, AA2/48/204; Smythies, 18 Apr. 1889, AA2/49/187.

67. Vohsen, 13 Nov. 1888, DKZ n.s. 2 (1889), 21.

68. Baumann, *Usambara*, 72–3; Behr, *Kriegsbilder*, 217; Wissmann, 2 July 1889, ZStA RKA 739, 67.

69. Euan-Smith, 1 Feb. 1889, ZNA AA1/63/48.

Arrogance, however, can give a voice an edge that makes it heard above others. The most important “ringleaders” were neither Arab nor prosperous but were, instead, the indebted village *majumbe* who had for decades resisted Omani encroachments. The *majumbe*’s voices, and the voices of the clients, slaves and upcountry allies who stood with them and at times against them, had quite different timbres. The songs they sang were the songs of the dance and the songs of Shirazi festive ritual. Such songs played a central role in the crises we have described: in the Solar New Year celebrations surrounding the raising of the DOAG flag; in the dancing of the *viroboto* and of the villagers who welcomed them to Pangani in the days preceding Zelewski’s imprisonment in September; in the noisy revelry of the caravan personnel, entering the towns to find the opportunities of prestige alongside the dangers of debt; and in the devotions of the faithful, who saw their religious institutions desecrated on the holiday of Idd al-Hajj.

A few weeks before the Pugu incident, Euan-Smith complained that none of the Arabs who were left on the coast were powerful enough to enforce the terms of any peace agreement that might be negotiated, and he despaired of ever being able to deal with a rebel leadership that was splintered, marginal, and nonaristocratic.⁷⁰ The historian might voice similar frustrations. Euan-Smith had hoped to negotiate with powerful elites, preferably Arab, who could speak with a single voice; but all he heard was a discordant, many-colored chorus of petty African chiefs and trouble-makers, none of whom had a voice sufficiently strong to merit his attention. We must listen more carefully than he.

70. Euan-Smith, 31 Dec. 1888 (draft), ZNA AA1/62/397.

Epilogue: The Ambiguities of Conquest

Within this brief period of less than a year, a change, amounting almost to a revolution, had taken place. . . . The old negro air of humility and respect was gone, and had given place to impudence and swagger.

Hans Meyer, describing Zanzibar in July 1889¹

The people of old had a saying: "If a child cries for a razor, give it to him to play with." The people of the Mrima wanted to play with power. And this is what they got.

A Swahili history of German conquest, ca. 1895²

I

In 1852 one of the first European travellers in the Pangani hinterland, the missionary Ludwig Krapf, predicted that insecurity engendered by the spread of international commerce would one day prompt Europeans to impose political order on the region.³ His prediction came true thirty-six years later, when the collapse of Omani authority convinced the German and British Consuls-General and even the cautious Hamburg merchants of the necessity of formal colonial intervention.⁴ In 1886 an Anglo-German agreement had delimited informal "spheres of influence" on the mainland; further

1. Hans Meyer, *Across East African Glaciers*, transl. E.H.S. Calder (London, 1891), 35.

2. "Hiki kissa cha zamani za Bagamoyo," in Velten, *Prosa und Poesie*, 305.

3. Krapf, 2 March 1852, CMS, CA5/016/177. Krapf wrote specifically of the rise of trading warlords.

4. E.g., Michahelles, 22 Oct. 1888, ZStA RKA 693, 22-3; Euan-Smith, 25 Feb. 1889, FO 84/1977, 61-73. Thus the conquest of German East Africa was propelled by internal factors similar to those which led to conquest elsewhere on the continent: A.G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (London, 1973), ch. 4.

treaties in 1890 formalized this division and disposed of the sultan's island dominions as well, placing the last rump of the Sultanate under British "protection."

Bismarck's government finally committed substantial resources to conquering the new colony at the end of 1888, and once the full might of the German war machine was trained on the problem, the military subjugation of the coast was but a matter of time. Hermann von Wissmann, a young protégé of the Kaiser and a noted African traveller—he had been Bwana Heri's guest only a few years earlier—was sent to East Africa commanding a handful of German officers and some of the industrial world's most innovative death tools. The expedition was one of the first occasions on which Europeans used the fully automatic Maxim machine gun, a weapon later celebrated as the essential tool of imperial conquest. Wissmann wrote glowing letters informing his royal mentor of the "effectiveness" with which the Maxims mowed down hundreds of fleeing warriors.⁵

As in other tales of colonial conquest, the actual fighting was done largely by Africans, whose motivations must be sought in preexisting conflicts. On his way to East Africa, Wissmann stopped in Egypt to recruit several hundred Sudanese mercenaries, the remnants of the army defeated by the Mahdi several years earlier. These soldiers had been idling threateningly at Cairo and Alexandria, not daring to return to their homeland, and British administrators were only too glad to have them taken off their hands. Meanwhile one of Wissmann's lieutenants had gone to Mozambique, where he recruited warriors from the hinterland of Delagoa Bay. Decades of endemic warfare in the region had given these so-called Shangaans a fearsome reputation for military prowess, and the spread of international commerce had made them particularly willing to leave their homes for protracted periods in exchange for cash inducements. In their struggles to loosen clan elders' control over women and labor, young men in the region had insisted on paying bridewealth with cash and commodities secured through external markets. Elders responded by inflating the price of bridewealth, thus making young "Shangaan" men who aspired to marry and establish a homestead ever more acutely dependent on commerce and migrant labor.⁶

A smaller but significant portion of Wissmann's troops came from within East Africa. Not surprisingly, most were so-called Nyamwezi caravan personnel from the western plateau. The brittle relationship between Nyamwezi caravaners and the Muslim townsmen of the central Mrima could not withstand the tensions aroused by the rebel siege of Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam. Nyamwezi caravans coming to those towns in late 1888 found that they had to battle their way through an inland blockade by which Bushiri and his allies tried to force caravans south to Kilwa and other rebel-held ports. The caravaners then placed themselves under the protection of German officers in the towns, who armed them, provided them with secure housing, and took care to employ them on better terms than they had ever gotten from

5. E.g., Wissmann to Kaiser, 28 Nov. 1889 and *idem*. 15 June 1889, ZStA, RKA 743, 53–62, and RKA 739, 48. Imperial propagandists made much of the Maxim's effectiveness during the coastal campaign: e.g., Kurt Blümcke, *Der Aufstand in Deutsch-Ostafrika und seine Niederwerfung im nördlichen Theil* (Berlin, 1890), 21–3, 27–8. Wissmann had ended his transcontinental trek of 1883 as Heri's guest at Ndumi: *Unter Deutscher Flagge*, 309–10.

6. Müller, *Deutschland*, 430–2; Blümcke, *Der Aufstand*, 13; Patrick Harries, "Kinship, ideology and the nature of pre-colonial labour migration: labour migration from the Delagoa Bay hinterland to South Africa, up to 1895," in Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone (eds.), *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa* (London, 1982), 142–66. The "Shangaan" mercenaries were also known, misleadingly, as "Zulus."

Shirazi patrons, Arab state officials, or Indian merchants. Their service to the Germans as laborers and soldiers only intensified the enmity of the rebels, and they quickly became prime rebel targets.⁷

While Wissmann prepared his land forces, the German navy softened up the enemy by imposing an embargo on munitions, with British assistance. Although never entirely effective, the embargo posed a particular threat to the caravan traders and did much to turn popular opinion against the British as well as the Germans.⁸ But the political situation changed in the new year when the embargo was tightened up and extended to include all goods, including foodstuffs. Urban food supplies had long been dependent on commerce, and the embargo, combined with the disruption of trade in the coastal hinterland due to the effects of warfare, exacerbated food shortages. The besiegers of Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam took to plundering the local peasantry, prompting many villagers to regard the Germans as the lesser of two evils. This development strengthened the Omani-dominated "peace parties" at both towns.⁹

Yet despite the embargo, and despite the selective bombardment of coastal settlements, the Germans still suffered the reputation of being "puny people." They did not really rule at Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam: they held only the Company's station houses, and any other control vanished at night, when rebel forces overran the towns. In any case there was little left to rule. By December, Bagamoyo had been virtually destroyed by the desultory fighting and by the extensive plunder committed by both Germans and rebels. The immediate hinterlands were in a state of turmoil, beset by rebel bands who increasingly resembled bandits. The Catholic mission at Bagamoyo, whose French and Alsatian fathers maintained cordial relations with all sides, was soon crowded by thousands of refugees.¹⁰

Bushiri's methods during the siege of Bagamoyo were decidedly autocratic, and included the kind of behavior that had gotten him in trouble with the plebeian crowd at Pangani. We have seen that the earliest resistance at Bagamoyo had been led by village *majumbe* and their clients. Yet when Bushiri arrived, he pushed such leadership aside and proclaimed himself the Arab commander whose destiny it was to defeat the Germans. Despite the straitened conditions at his encampment, he lived ostentatiously, keeping himself expensively groomed and maintaining a large harem.¹¹ Although his demands for lifting the siege included the restoration of the *majumbe's* prerogatives, they also specified that he be made *liwali*.¹²

Bushiri might have tapped the support of sympathetic villagers throughout Bagamoyo's hinterland, who had long chafed under Omani domination; runaway slave communities hidden in the marshlands along the lower Kingani River had been

7. Euan-Smith, 14 Dec. 1888, PP 1889, v. 56, c. 5822, no. 34; Blümcke, *Der Aufstand*, 10–1, 14–5; Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 126–7; Roscoe, 18 March 1889, FO 84/1978, 96–8; Michahelles, 2 Feb. 1889, ZStA, RKA 696, 43–4; Charles Gommenginger, in *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, 61 (1889), 333–53.

8. We have begun to see this in the narrative in Chs. 7 and 8; see also Stuhlmann, 20 Nov. 1888, ZStA RKA 694, 75; Euan-Smith, 3 Jan. 1889, FO 84/1975, 91–2. For the ineffectualness of the arms blockade: Free-mantle, 10 and 21 Jan. 1889, ZNA AA 2/49/14 and 21.

9. Müller, *Deutschland*, 434–5.

10. Deinhard, 3 Jan. 1889, ZStA, RKA 695, 86–9; Raoul de Courmont, "L'Allemagne au Zanguebar" *Miss. Cath.* 21 (1889); O'Swald, 17 Dec. 1888, HStA 621–2; Petition of British Indians, 10 March 1889, ZNA AA 1/67/181; Behr, *Kriegsbilder*, 99–104, 132, 172–3. For a poignant description of Bagamoyo in January, see Gommenginger in *Annales*, 352–3. For the Bagamoyo mission: John A. P. Kieran, "The Holy Ghost Fathers in East Africa, 1863 to 1914," Ph.D. thesis (University of London, 1966).

11. De Courmont, 18 Dec. 1888, *Miss. Cath.* 21 (1889), 39.

12. Taylor, 28 Apr. 1889, ZNA, AA1/64/202.



FIGURE 9.1. The siege of Bagamoyo: refugees at the Catholic mission.

especially important centers of unrest.¹³ Yet he and his closest confederates (mostly Arabs) pinned their hopes on a single, heavily fortified stronghold, about an hour southwest of the town. Military decisions at the stronghold were the prerogative of the high-born. This elitism is suggested by a passage in Hemedi's *Utenzi* describing the final German assault in May: there was such havoc, wrote the poet, that "the people were all mixed together, slaves and *waungwana*; we could not consult together in the confusion." The implication, of course, is that decisions could be made only by *waungwana* acting alone.¹⁴ Such attitudes soon took a toll on the quality of Bushiri's support. By January many of the slaves who had been pressed into service had begun to desert, and by March there was open friction between Bushiri and his Arab allies; there is even evidence of an attempt on his life.¹⁵

The stalemate embarrassed the Germans at Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam, and Bushiri fueled their humiliation by sending derisive messages charged with the animal imagery characteristic of Swahili political oratory. "You Germans are cowardly

13. Behr, *Kriegsbilder*, 104–5, 114, 172–3. The lower Kingani had long been a haven for *watoro* communities: Burton, *Lake Regions*, 86.

14. Hemedi, *Utenzi wa Vita*, verse 535.

15. Michalhes, 14 Jan. 1889, ZStA, RKA 696, 15; ZStA, RKA 697, *passim*; Euan-Smith, 9 March 1889, ZNA AA1/67/131.

jackals," he taunted, "you hide yourselves in your holes and fear the great lion."¹⁶ The Germans were not willing to countenance the impression of having given in to mere "natives," and they gave a harsh rebuff to *majumbe* who tried to negotiate an end to the standoff. The Company station chief at Dar es Salaam, August Leue, wrote that when one of the rebel *majumbe* proposed negotiation, "I became so furious that I pounded my fist on the table and told him that I am now the highest authority here and would remain so. . . . If his people would make war, I would shoot them down as sick dogs, and him first."¹⁷ Similarly, when Bushiri tried to open talks through the Catholic missionaries in late March, Wissmann made it clear that he was not interested. Admiral Deinhard had negotiated a cease-fire shortly before Wissmann's arrival, but the latter had no intention of observing it.¹⁸

Wissmann's troops arrived at the coast in April; by May he felt they were ready for action, and he wanted only a pretext for violating the cease-fire. He got it early that month when the rebels captured a stonemason employed by the Company: Bushiri had the *fundis*'s hands hacked off and sent him back to Bagamoyo with a defiant message.¹⁹ The Germans attacked at dawn on May 8. In keeping with his self-perception as a warrior-prince, Bushiri decided to stand firm and fight from a single position, rather than resort to guerilla war as Bwana Heri would do. The fortifications were easily destroyed by Wissmann's artillery, hauled to the site by Nyamwezi volunteers; Bushiri barely escaped, and scores of his followers and allies were killed. The Germans broke the siege of Dar es Salaam five days later. Bushiri fled inland intending to rally support along the central caravan routes, but once he left the coast, he would never again command popular support. His tactics increasingly became those of a freebooter, his soldiers increasingly a mercenary force.²⁰

Leue, who like most of the DOAG agents was taken on as one of Wissmann's officers, wrote that "the African must first feel the clenched fist before he will become accustomed to the easy yoke." Most of his colleagues shared that conviction, making good use of the "clenched fist" to terrorize the people of Bagamoyo and Dar into submission. Leue brushed aside European critics; one need only look at the results (he wrote) to see that what they protested as "brutality" was in fact only "strict discipline." "Apart from fear and terror," he boasted, "only the deepest peace reigns here." The few rebels who fell into German hands during the siege were summarily hanged as robbers. In January the Bagamoyo station chief, Freiherr von Eberstein (the same man who had been mocked by Lindi's town crier), requested that he be sent more rope for the purpose—"preferably a good hemp or fine manilla cord"—as his supply had run out and he had been forced to waste bullets on executions. Such practices continued on a hugely intensified scale once the siege was lifted and Wissmann's troops took full control.²¹

The armed might of the German Empire had finally made the conquistadors a major factor in local politics. But while ideologues like Leue acted on the presumption that East Africans were "sick dogs" who would automatically defer to whichever

16. Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 147.

17. Müller, *Deutschland*, 433.

18. Schmidt, *Geschichte*, 51–2; Kieran, "Holy Ghost Fathers," 292–3.

19. Schmidt, *Geschichte*, 52; Deinhard, 3 May 1889, RKA 697, 110.

20. The most detailed published accounts of military conquest are in Schmidt, *Geschichte* and Müller, *Deutschland*. Iliffe provides an excellent summary in *Modern History*, 95ff.

21. Müller, *Deutschland*, 390, 439, 452.



FIGURE 9.2. The DOAG station-house, Bagamoyo, 1889. In the center is the stonemason whose hands Bushiri chopped off as punishment for working for the Germans.

racial caste proved itself in possession of superior force, Wissmann was too crafty a military commander to allow himself to be deluded by such rhetoric.²² Like Napoleon, he knew that soldiers could not sit on their bayonets—that while brute force might compel submission, it could not induce lasting consent.²³ In any case, Wissmann's resources were not substantial enough for an effective military occupation of the entire coast, let alone of the entire colony. Thus, once the Germans had cruelly demonstrated the futility of resisting their Maxim guns, the exigencies of conquest demanded that Wissmann work to coopt the Arab elite, a trend that had already been started by the Company's most successful agents. Public pronouncements about the parasitism of the Arab and the liberating mission of German imperialism—rhetoric that had been used to justify conquest—would have to be set aside if trade and plantation agriculture were to be revived and political stability restored.²⁴

22. Müller, *Deutschland*, 429. Nevertheless, in his role as propagandist Wissmann might also voice such rhetoric: see the account of his speech to the Reichstag in *The Times*, 28 Jan. 1889, quoted in Euan-Smith, 4 March 1889, FO 84/1977, 163–8.

23. Euan-Smith opined that Wissmann learned this only after two years of martial law had failed to bring stability, but it is unlikely that it took him that long. Euan-Smith, 29 Sept. 1890, FO 84/2064, 336–40.

24. See Maercker, *Unsere Schutztruppe*, 155, 157–9. For examples of the anti-Arab rhetoric that had been used to justify German conquest: *Kölnische Zeitung*, 30 Sept. 1888, in RKA 688, 64.



FIGURE 9.3. "The first execution at Bagamoyo."

Wissmann therefore pursued negotiations with Pangani's "peace party," even after the rout of Bushiri's forces had given German conquest an aspect of inevitability. Initially, Wissmann was reluctant to bombard Pangani as he had other rebel-held towns; he was told that such action would only prompt the town's caravan merchants to take their wares to Mombasa, in the British sphere. But by June he had given up on reaching a peaceful settlement, and he continued the negotiations only as a stalling tactic to allow more time to prepare an invasion of Pangani. This decision was partly prompted by the negotiations themselves, through which Wissmann learned that the town's major property owners would welcome an invasion, which they hoped would reestablish order. Wissmann was impatient to complete the conquest of the northern coast so he could turn his attention to the southern ports and the interior. Every day that he delayed moving against the storm center of the revolt only increased the German reputation as a paper tiger.²⁵

But even had Wissmann negotiated in good faith, the talks would undoubtedly have foundered, for Pangani's leading townsmen had not been able to persuade the crowd to accept a settlement. The Germans attributed the "peace party's" failure to

25. ZStA, RKA 739, *passim*.

several factors, among them the example of Bwana Heri's protracted resistance at Saadani. Wissmann was convinced that Saadani must be "allowed to disappear" in order to discourage the militants at Pangani; Saadani's destruction would also eliminate the last terminus of the central caravan routes still not in German hands. He launched an assault in early June, but Bwana Heri and his followers simply retreated inland to their main settlement at Ndumi, and Wissmann, not wanting his men to go beyond the range of German gunboats, did not pursue them. Saadani's caravan trade quickly resumed (Wissmann had not left a garrison), and the entire operation merely served to enhance Bwana Heri's renown and thus further encourage the Pangani militants.²⁶

The troubled political mood at Pangani is suggested by an incident that occurred three weeks before it was finally subdued by German troops. On June 16 the sultan summoned Suleiman bin Nasr to Zanzibar, in part to pursue further negotiations with Wissmann. Suleiman had difficulty persuading the rebels to let him leave Pangani, and he managed to get away only by mobilizing an escort of forty soldiers. At Zanzibar, the sultan and the British Consul gave him letters to carry to the townspeople and to Semboja, urging them to lay down their arms and accept German administration. Suleiman, reluctant to return to Pangani, sailed on Khalifa's steamer *Cutch*, taking care to fly the sultan's colors even on his landing boat. But to no avail: every attempt to land was turned back with heavy fire.²⁷

At about this time, as Wissmann was completing preparations for taking Pangani, the militants drove other proponents of a negotiated settlement out of town.²⁸ Arriving at Zanzibar and Bagamoyo, the expelled townsmen told the Germans that while they realized the futility of resisting conquest, "the Blacks and the propertyless masses" want war. "One even went so far as to offer to take part in our expedition," wrote Gravenreuth, "hoping he might thus be able to protect his stone house and his property."²⁹ Wissmann's troops stormed Pangani on July 8, covered by the guns of the German fleet. They first occupied the heights overlooking Bweni, where the town's defenders, led by Said Abeja, had concentrated their forces. From there, Wissmann's Maxims had a "wonderful" effect, as he put it, raking the defenses on the other side of the river. German losses totalled two African mercenaries. Admiral Deinhard took care to bombard only the *makuti* quarters of the town, sparing the stone houses of Pangani's wealthy. But to no avail: Wissmann's troops plundered and raped indiscriminately, robbing even the Indian merchants who had "joyously" welcomed the invasion. The rampage was allowed to continue for two full days.³⁰

Tanga was conquered a few days later, but Wissmann still could not turn his attention to the south. In August there were rumors at Zanzibar of a general rising against all Europeans on the carnival of the Solar New Year; Wissmann had to station a ship in the harbor, ready to land a force of five hundred Nyamwezi mercenaries.³¹ At Pangani, German troops held only the town and its immediate surroundings. The

26. *Ibid.*; also Wissmann, 30 May and 1 June 1889, RKA 738, pp. 90, 93; Portal, 24 June 1889, FO 84/1979, 117-23.

27. Portal, 24 June 1889, ZNA AA 1/64/252; Wissmann, 23 and 30 June 1889, ZStA RKA 739, 52, 56; Gravenreuth, 27 June 1889, RKA 739, 59.

28. Deinhard, 4 July 1889, RKA 739, 85.

29. Gravenreuth 27 July 1889, RKA 739, 59-60.

30. Müller, *Deutschland*, 440-3; Behr, *Kriegsbilder*, 154-61; Wissmann, 2 July 1889, ZStA, RKA 739, 67; Deinhard, 11 July 1889, RKA 739, 100-1; Wissmann, 10 July 1889, RKA 740, 13-7; Deinhard, 3 Aug. 1889, RKA 740, 46-50.

31. Glassman, "Social rebellion," 639.

propertied townspeople—especially Arab planters and Indian merchants—fully cooperated, but the “Negro population” remained hostile. The rebels had withdrawn to the countryside; their main position was the heavily fortified village of Madanga, only a few miles from town, which by September had withstood two German assaults.³² The most active rebels then withdrew further inland, concentrating their energies on Bondei. Pangani’s *majumbe* continued to defy the conquerors through November, sending messages from their village strongholds refusing orders that they come to town to acknowledge the new government, but also trying to avert an armed confrontation by vowing not to attack.³³

Wissmann felt that conditions would remain unstable on the northern coast so long as Bushiri and Bwana Heri remained at large, and so long as the latter continued to resist the conquest of Saadani and its hinterland. A “peace party” had never materialized at Saadani, where anti-Omani sentiment was especially bitter; unlike the planters and state officials who dominated Pangani, Bwana Heri had based his power not on Omani patronage but on intimate ties to a mixed clientele of plebeians, peasants and hinterland chiefs. Although Wissmann attempted to negotiate with his old host, Bwana Heri’s followers would not allow it.³⁴ Bwana Heri kept the Germans ignorant of his whereabouts for six months following the destruction of Saadani in June, yet at the same time he managed to raise resources by smuggling slaves and ivory to Zanzibar.³⁵ Rumors were rampant—Bwana Heri and Semboja were planning a joint attack on Pangani; Bwana Heri had taken to piracy and was attempting to wrest control of the Zanzibar Channel from the Europeans—and he soon acquired an aura of invincibility.³⁶

In an effort to locate Bwana Heri and intimidate villagers from assisting him, Zelewski set out from Bagamoyo in early November on a march north through Uzigua. His troops were flanked on either side by unsupervised columns of irregulars, mostly the personnel of large Sukuma and Nyamwezi caravans, who were given instructions to destroy crops and plunder any village where arms were seen. Such instructions amounted to *carte blanche*, and even the expedition’s official historian felt obliged to apologize for the resulting brutality. Ndumi was one of the many villages torched. Zelewski found Saadani deserted, and he continued north, garrisoning Mkwaja (the mosque was used as a barracks), and seeking in particular to win the submission of the *watoro* colony of Makorora, which was expected to offer stiff resistance. The runaways chose not to fight—as at most villages this far north, the news of Zelewski’s rampage had been effective—and they sullenly acquiesced to German demands for tribute.³⁷

32. A. Becker, “The capture and death of the rebel leader Bushiri,” transl. Iris Davis, *TNR* 60 (1963), 2; Wissmann, 29 Aug. 1889, ZStA RKA 740, 93–4; Gravenreuth, 29 Sept. 1889, ZStA RKA 741, 83–4.

33. Gravenreuth, 31 Oct. 1889, ZStA RKA 742, 89; Bumiller, 11 Nov. 1889, ZStA RKA 743, 11–2.

34. Bwana Heri to Wissmann, 2 July 1889, ZNA AA1/64/260, encl. In July, crowds prevented Wissmann’s envoys from landing and presenting gifts to Bwana Heri, who was then at Ndumi: Portal, 29 July 1889, ZNA AA1/64/287. For evidence of Bwana Heri’s unsuccessful attempts to moderate Saadani’s crowd: Euan-Smith, 14 Jan. 1889, ZNA AA1/63/25.

35. For Bwana Heri’s commercial activities during this period: “Report as to Fugitive Slaves,” 30 May 1890, ZNA AA2/56, 489–503 (recounts an incident from July 1889); Steifensand, 31 Oct. 1889, ZNA AA2/51/376.

36. Gravenreuth, 31 Oct. 1889, ZStA, RKA 742, 87.

37. Behr, *Kriegsbilder*, 295–8; Schmidt, *Geschichte*, 153–6; Wissmann, 20 Nov. 1889, RKA 743, 32–3; Senior officer to Admiralty, 27 Nov. 1889, RKA 743, 96–7. In January, Wissmann was still concerned about Makorora’s neutrality, which he hoped to cement with a decisive victory against Bwana Heri: Wissmann, 1 Jan. 1890, RKA 744, 29–30.

Zelewski's terror had the desired results. At Pangani, it finally induced the *majumbe* to come to town and formally submit to German "protection"; Semboja vacillated, but he was reported to have rejected Bushiri's advances. In subsequent weeks, similar expeditions destroyed any village suspected of having harbored Bushiri, who, an isolated fugitive with 10,000 rupees on his head, was desperately trying to flee to the British sphere. In December he was finally betrayed and handed over to the Germans, and on the fifteenth he was hanged at Pangani. Before his execution he was photographed as an ethnographic curiosity, first in the finery of an Arab aristocrat and then unclothed except for manacles and a woman's *kanga*.³⁸

Bwana Heri held out for another four months, withstanding several assaults from the full weight of Wissmann's army. His success was based largely on brilliant guerilla strategy, which in turn was made possible by the strength of his religiously inspired leadership: German officers marvelled at his ability to arouse an unusual degree of "fanaticism" (their term for Islamic devotion), and during pauses in the battles they heard the call-and-response of Islamic prayers.³⁹ But the solidarity of Bwana Heri's forces probably also had much to do with the heterogeneity of leadership structures that coexisted in his guerilla army—Islamic and pagan, coastal and upcountry. This heterogeneity is suggested by descriptions of his return to Saadani in early April, when hunger and the lack of munitions finally forced him to surrender.

Even from a distance an endless column could be seen approaching across the plain. At its head a magician leapt to the beat of a native drum, his body adorned with a lion's skin and his head with huge eagle feathers on either side. The drummer followed him, then some servants and women, and then Bwana Heri himself, with his lieutenants and a great number of white banners.⁴⁰

The surrendering army consisted of "a motley mixture of all the tribes we had fought," wrote German observers: "Arabs, Beluchis, slaves, Wanyamwezi, Wazigua, all possible tribes."⁴¹

Wissmann, hoping to put Bwana Heri's authority to good use, allowed him and the core of his followers to return to their old homes in Saadani's agricultural hinterland, with the understanding that the rebel leader would relocate to town within a few weeks, once reconstruction had begun. But throughout the rest of the year, Bwana Heri defied repeated commands that he move to the shadow of the new German fort at Saadani. He appeared in town only when absolutely necessary, each time accompanied by three hundred armed men. By December, Wissmann was writing irritably of the need to take strong action, as Bwana Heri believed himself not to have surrendered but to have merely agreed to an "armed neutrality." The direst of ultimatums and military threats finally brought Bwana Heri to Saadani by the end of the month. But the canny leader never collaborated with the Germans as they had hoped, nor did he stay long in German East Africa. He maintained his independence

38. Schmidt, *Geschichte*, 156ff; Wissmann, 20 and 28 Nov. 1889, ZStA, RKA 743, 32–42; *idem.*, 27 Dec. 1889, RKA 744, 5–8 (plus photographs ff.); Euan-Smith, 26 Dec. 1889, ZNA AA1/70/426. A compelling account of Bushiri's betrayal can be found in an anonymous Swahili document from Handeni, 1950: "Abushiri rebellion, notes," SwMss 162.

39. Schmidt, *Geschichte*, 169, 171; Behr, *Kriegsbilder*, 323–4.

40. Behr, *Kriegsbilder*, 327.

41. *Ibid.*; Schmidt, *Geschichte*, 180.



FIGURE 9.4. Bushiri prior to his execution.

from the German state as he had from the Omani sultanate, and died peacefully at Zanzibar in 1897.⁴²

II

The military occupation of the coast and the brutal ten-year war of conquest that followed in the interior were opening chapters in the story of colonial Tanzania. Yet in a sense conquest changed little, for the Germans were still largely extraneous to East

42. A full history of Bwana Heri's resistance to German conquest has yet to be written. This paragraph draws from the following ZStA files: Wissmann, 28 Apr. and 1 July 1890, RKA 746, 38–9, 129; Schmidt, 30 Sept. 1890, RKA 747, 16; Wissmann, 3 and 31 Dec. 1890, RKA 747, 122, 143–4; RKA 699, 11. Gustav Meinecke

African society, and the immense task of constructing colonial hegemony still lay ahead of them. To be sure, it might be said that the groundwork for German hegemony had been laid prior to conquest by the expansion of "legitimate commerce," in which Europe and European commodities commanded enormous prestige. But Germans were still far from dominant figures in East African markets; an economic study in 1892 argued somewhat tendentiously that the new colony was "wholly a dependency of India, an object of exploitation of Indian capital," and noted that conquest had done little to alter that fact.⁴³

Even more significantly, although market exchange impinged on the lives of most coastal Africans, it could not be said to have been hegemonic. Its reach was uneven, and many of the most significant structures of power had little to do with cash or commerce or the accumulation of commodities. East African society continued to be structured primarily by interlocking pyramids of patronage and clientele, not by markets. Many of these pyramids had become linked by commerce, yet, as we have seen, commodities generally brought authority only if deployed within the contours of local political culture. German administrators tried to strengthen the grip of commerce by introducing hut taxes in 1898 (to be paid only in currency), and by introducing other measures intended to restructure the colonial economy. But it would be years before the "dull compulsion of economic necessity"—in this case, the need to earn cash—contributed substantially to the hegemony of the state.⁴⁴

For much of the 1890s the Germans dominated coastal society through sheer force, imposing a violent regime of martial law that did little to enhance the domination of market relations or the Germans' place within them.⁴⁵ The nature of early German rule is eloquently reflected in a collection of texts solicited from Swahili intellectuals in 1895 by the linguist and colonial official Carl Velten. Predictably, Velten's contributors tend to praise the Germans, often in fulsome tones embarrassing to modern readers. But the aspect of colonial rule most commonly praised is the Germans' naked power; the Swahili authors rarely mention justice or any other attribute that might be deemed normative. Many dwell on German fire-power and its superiority over that of other European nations; one poem even alludes to the Franco-Prussian War, claiming that German guns subdued Paris in a mere twenty minutes. When the authors describe the Mrima wars of 1888–90 or ongoing resistance such as the abortive uprising in the Kilwa hinterland in 1895, the lesson they draw usually concerns the hazards of playing with German power. An example is the chronicle quoted at the beginning of this Epilogue, which likens the rebels of Bagamoyo to the child in the Swahili proverb who learns not to play with razors.⁴⁶ A popular song

suggests that Bwana Heri was expelled from German East Africa because of his continued ties to rebellious *majumbe*. *Die deutschen Kolonien in Wort und Bild* (Leipzig, n.d. [1899]), 50.

43. Kaerger, *Tangaland*, 39

44. For the restructuring of the colonial economy after ca. 1898 see Iliffe, *Modern History*, Ch. 5 (for hut taxes: 133–4). Some scholars argue that the market and the state still have not succeeded in capturing the peasantry, most notably Goren Hyden, *Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania* (Berkeley, 1980).

45. Müller, *Deutschland*, 452. See the comments of Euan-Smith, 24 March 1890, FO 84/2060, 195–7.

46. Velten, *Prosa und Poesie*: examples include Hamisi bin Auwi, "Utenzi wa Kaisari," 345 (for the conquest of Paris), and the anonymous "Sifa za Wazungu," 365–6. Praise poems of this kind can also be found in Velten, *Suaheli-Gedichte*. A few of the poems cite the Germans' domination of the cash economy, but this is not nearly so common as the praise of German fire-power: see, especially, "Sifa ya Jermani," *Prosa und Poesie*, 363–4; and the song in Baumann, *Usambara* (1891 Berlin ed.), 349.

during the decade was the so-called "Bagamoyo boom-boom," which celebrated the destructive power of German artillery.⁴⁷

The Germans used their extraordinary armed force to suppress the decades-old tensions that their intervention had aggravated. They ruled not so much by creating new structures of authority as by coopting old ones: by bolstering the power of certain preconquest elites and reinforcing certain preconquest forms of social domination. John Iliffe has described the arrangement as an extensive series of "local compromises" between imperial forces and African potentates; the pattern constituted a continuation of the "diplomatic phase of colonial rule," a phase which in turn may be said to have begun with the rising power of the European Consuls-General in the mid-nineteenth century.⁴⁸ Thus the first decade of the colonial period was in many ways but a continuation of the era of "informal empire" and "legitimate commerce." The prime difference lay in the armed might of the colonial state, which had a greater capacity than its failed Omani predecessor to rein in the conflicts engendered by the rapid and uneven spread of commerce.

The ironies of this situation were perhaps most telling in the realm of plantation labor, where colonial officers, like the officers of the Sultanate before them, aided coastal planters in the imposition of *shamba* slavery. As elsewhere, the havoc created by conquest enhanced slaves' opportunities to escape the rigors of plantation life.⁴⁹ Hastily attempting to revive production and reestablish order, the conquerors led forays into the towns' immediate hinterlands, reenslaving laborers who had run off during the fighting and forcibly resettling them on their masters' estates. The status of slavery was never abolished in German East Africa, and as late as the second decade after conquest many colonial officers made it their policy to return runaways to their masters. To critics who argued that abolition must be the new rulers' first priority, the acting governor retorted in 1890 that such an act would destroy Pangani's valuable sugar industry at a stroke.⁵⁰

It is easy to become diverted by the hypocrisy of such policies; the Germans, after all, had insistently invoked abolition as the great moral justification of their imperial adventure. But in the unevenly commodified society of German East Africa, where market exchanges were not hegemonic and where the colonial rulers were marginal players in local markets anyway, the Germans had little choice if they wished to revive plantation production. This was recognized as early as 1888 by Friedrich Schroeder, the Company agent whose sadism at the Lewa tobacco plantation had embarrassed German diplomats into having him expelled from East Africa. Schroeder defended his methods (which included the brutalization of contracted slave labor) by arguing that slavery or its colonial equivalent, forced "free" labor, were the only alternatives open to agricultural entrepreneurs in an economy where cash inducements could not procure steady labor supplies. Government officials were brought around to his point of view once they, rather than the Company, were

47. The song apparently had many variants: see Baumann, *Usambara* (1891 Berlin ed.), 347, 351.

48. Iliffe, *Modern History*, 119–20.

49. Morton, *Children of Ham*; Richard Roberts, "The end of slavery in the French Soudan," in Suzanne Miers and R. Roberts (eds.), *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Madison, 1988), 286; Paul Lovejoy, "Fugitive slaves: resistance to slavery in the Sokoto Caliphate," in Gary Okihiro (ed.), *In Resistance* (Amherst, 1986), 71–95.

50. Iliffe, *Modern History*, 131; Schmidt, 2 Aug. 1890, ZNA, AL2/47, 177–9. For German policy toward slavery, see J. Georg Deutsch, "Slavery and abolition in German East Africa," unpublished seminar paper, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, April, 1993.



FIGURE 9.5. Chained prisoners and their overseer. German East Africa, c. 1899. This engraving suggests how little conquest had changed the lives of those at the bottom of Swahili society (compare with figure 3.2). It appears in a book on the colonies by Gustav Meinecke, Director of the German Colonial Museum and an early booster of German attempts to revive sugar production at Mauya. "Since natives do not perceive imprisonment as punishment," wrote Meinecke, "it is necessary to use methods such as these, which permit a certain amount of labor to be extracted from the prisoners." Chain gangs are set to cultivation and road work (he continues), and in particularly difficult cases the hippo-hide whip is used. In all likelihood these women are slaves.

responsible for boosting production: after conquest Schroeder was allowed to return to Lewa, which he would make one of the first sites of forced labor in the new colony.⁵¹

If the coastal estates were to serve colonial economic interests, it was imperative that the conquerors restore the domination of planter over slave. The British hoped to do the same in their sphere, but having led the international campaign to abolish slavery, they took pains (largely unsuccessful) to recast that domination within an ideologically acceptable framework of employer and wage laborer.⁵² The Germans had

51. Behr and Schroeder, 16 May 1888, ZNA, AL2/59, 85–6. For the Lewa plantation in the years after conquest see Meinecke, *Aus dem Lande*, 105–6, and files in ZStA, incl. RKA 404, 27–32; RKA 741, 82; RKA 745, 62–71; RKA 746, 202–4.

52. Frederick Cooper, *From Slaves to Squatters* (New Haven, 1980).

fewer qualms⁵³ and were even willing to connive at a local slave trade. Their willingness was only further enhanced when in August 1890 the sultan's British "protectors" pressured him to decree the total abolition of the slave trade at Zanzibar. The Germans hoped that by allowing slave markets to continue on the Mrima they might not only alleviate labor shortages but also embarrass the sultan in the eyes of the mainland planters, whom the new rulers suspected of harboring lingering loyalties to the Bu-saids.⁵⁴ In September, Bagamoyo's newly appointed *liwali*, Suleiman bin Nasr, responded to the complaints of the wealthiest townsmen by publicly encouraging the sale of slaves to local planters. Suleiman's proclamation, apparently issued with the approval of his German supervisor, was plainly intended to restore plantation production and speed up resettlement of the desolate town. "We desire that the shamba owners should begin working their shambas without delay," it read, "because it will be good for the people and the town."⁵⁵ A scandal ensued when the British caught wind of the decree, but the slave trade continued on the Mrima, under close governmental regulation, throughout the period of German rule.⁵⁶

Despite their commanding armed force, the conquerors were caught in a dilemma. Plantation production was vital for the prosperity of their newly won coastal possessions, and the planters were their most important local allies. On the other hand, the ideological imperatives of colonial politics demanded that the Germans take at least token steps toward the amelioration if not abolition of slavery. So although German officials generally strove to assist the planters, they also took some steps that weakened the planters' hand in their ongoing struggles with plantation laborers, such as giving discontented slaves the opportunity to purchase their freedom. But overall, the Germans were reluctant to interfere directly in production relations on the estates.⁵⁷ Of far greater significance in altering the power equation between master and slave were the consequences of colonial military campaigns in the interior. We have seen that Pangani's planters had managed to cope with the acute tensions attendant on sugar production by taking advantage of their privileged position within East African slave markets. But when German troops put an end to the activities of warlords in the interior, coastal planters could no longer rely on cheap supplies of captives with which to replace laborers who had fled, rebelled, or failed to reproduce themselves.

In the long run, this situation led to a renegotiation of the patron-client relationship between planters and their former slaves. The Germans attempted to prolong the life of the Mauya sugar estates, promoting production schemes that involved child labor and other features reminiscent of plantation slavery. But to no avail: by the 1920s shortages of readily exploitable labor had led to the decline of sugar and its replacement by coconut, a crop demanding far less intensive labor inputs that could be performed by autonomous clients who not only cultivated their own *makonde* but also raised crops in the shade of the coconut palms on their patrons' *mashamba*. Plebeian

53. Some propagandists, Leue among them, even began to indulge in apologies for coastal slavery that in the days before conquest would have elicited from them the fiercest condemnation.

54. Euan-Smith, 29 Sept. 1890, FO 84/2064, 336–40.

55. Proclamation, Bagamoyo, 20 Mohurum 1308, ZNA, AA1/76/379.

56. Euan-Smith, 15 and 25 Sept. and 3 Oct. 1890, ZNA AA1/76/379, 390 and 400; Statement of Liwali Suleiman bin Nasr, incl. in Michahelles, 1 Oct. 1890, ZNA AL2/47/181–2; Euan-Smith, 29 Sept. 1890, FO 84/2064; Deutsch, "Slavery and abolition." Slaves were also smuggled from the islands to resupply the Pangani sugar estates: ZNA AL2/47, 323–44.

57. Deutsch, "Slavery and abolition."

resistance can therefore be said to have contributed to the failure of the sugar estates to develop along the lines of large-scale capitalist enterprise.⁵⁸

Yet while German conquest may have ultimately altered the balance of power between master and slave, it did little to alter the terms in which masters and slaves perceived their differences. Slaves continued to struggle for the prerogatives of citizenship, including the ability to engage in autonomous commerce and peasant production and to participate in the rituals of town Islam.⁵⁹ Some slaves, to be sure, adopted the ideological language of the new rulers; this was especially so of those who managed to come up with the requisite cash and patrons to purchase their "freedom."⁶⁰ But the slaves most likely to ransom themselves were those who had always managed to make effective claims to urban citizenship, such as *mafundi* and trading slaves. And for such plebeians, the rituals of Shirazi citizenship retained their attraction. In 1898 residents of Dar es Salaam complained that slaves had become more "mischievous" under German rule. Slaves now mimic their masters in everything, they said: male slaves wear turbans and shoes and carry umbrellas; female slaves veil themselves and wear even the *shiraa*.⁶¹ In other words, despite the onset of a new colonial order, ambitious slaves still aspired to wear the "new clothes" of Shirazi sumptuary convention.

For slaves who were tied to the plantations and could not hope to amass the resources to ransom themselves, the new order must have borne striking similarities to the old. In April 1890 the Pangani District Officer, Eugen Krenzler, received protests from slaves who had been forcibly settled on the Mauya sugar estates. Krenzler suspected that the slaves had been illegally smuggled from Pemba to alleviate the labor shortages that had been plaguing the estates since the rebellion. But upon interviewing over two hundred of them, Krenzler found that the slaves had not been newly purchased, but had previously served as domestics and *mafundi*; the masters had simply exercised what they and Krenzler considered their prerogative to utilize their slaves as they wished. Krenzler therefore did not act on the slaves' protests.⁶² The same struggles that had given rise to the Mauya slave revolt of 1873, sparked when trading slaves refused to become *shamba* slaves, were still to be found at Pangani, and the state continued to impose the masters' view of bondage.

III

Still, it would be a mistake to suppose that conquest had changed nothing. Colonial rule was a brutal fact and East Africans were forced to confront it: no longer could

58. For similar developments at Zanzibar, see Cooper, *Slaves to Squatters*. For the sugar estates after conquest, see Meinecke, *Aus dem Lande*, 108ff (and for child labor, 142); Paasche, *Deutsch Ostafrika*, 185–6, 379. For coconut, Notes by A.H. Scott (n.d.), and "Land and land settlement-native" (anon., n.d.), Pangani District Book, vol. 2, TNA MF/7; Baker, *Report*, 38, 64–5. The lax labor relations described for the 1920s and 1930s continue to characterize the Mauya coconut estates today. For a brilliant analysis of how resistance to primitive accumulation thwarted capitalist development in Africa, see Frederick Cooper, "Africa and the World Economy," *African Studies Review* xxiv:2/3 (1981), 1–86.

59. For struggles over Islam during the German period: Nimtz, *Islam and Politics*.

60. Thaddeus Sunseri, "Hegemonists, autonomists and slave ransoming in German East Africa, 1884–1914," unpublished paper, 1991. Mission slaves were the classic examples of freed slaves who adopted the ideological language of the new rulers. See James Mbotela, *The Freeing of the Slaves* (London, 1956).

61. Velten, "Sitten und Gebräuche," 38–9. Strobel has done much to document the heightened appeal of patrician ritual to colonial-era plebeians, especially women. See *Muslim Women* and Mirza and Strobel, *Three Women*.

62. Wissmann, 28 Apr. 1890, ZStA, RKA 746, 37.

they dismiss the Germans as “puny people.” Yet when coastal Africans reflected on the new regime, the conclusions they drew were remarkably ambiguous. Martial law might command colonial subjects to salute every European they passed on the street, but it could not force them to internalize deference. Indeed, many Africans seemed to combine respect for the Germans’ fire-power with disdain for their fitness to rule. Hans Meyer, returning to East Africa nine months after he was held for ransom, noted that the “Bagamoyo boom-boom” was often sung sarcastically.⁶³ The obsequious poems collected by Velten were of course but an extremely limited sample of the discussions pursued in the aftermath of conquest; political thinkers did not restrict themselves to ruminations on the futility of resistance. Other poets pondered the causes of the disaster and possible ways to rectify past errors. Such reflection even crept into the Velten volume, which contains a bitter, impassioned poem with a veiled call to *jihād*, a poem portending the millennial unrest that would grip the coast a decade later.⁶⁴

That unrest, and the more momentous Maji Maji rebellion that would convulse the southern interior in 1905–07, were powerful reminders that although the Germans’ overwhelming armed force made them the masters of the region, it did not give them the power to transform colonial society simply as they envisioned. The conquerors may have imagined themselves the determining force on the coast, as had the ruling Arabs before them. But no one class or racial caste, no matter how deadly its weapons, could by itself shape historical change. The real determining factors in post-conquest society were ongoing tensions such as those which have been the subject of this book, tensions which had intensified for half a century before finally thwarting Bismarck’s iron will and pulling the German Empire into East Africa.

In the first two parts of this book, I have attempted to elucidate the tensions that were most significant in the shaping of nineteenth-century coastal society. There is no need to reiterate them now. But many readers may have been struck by what those tensions were *not*: they had nothing to do with “tribe,” because tribal allegiances were as yet of marginal importance. Students of African history understand that tribal consciousness, like any other political consciousness, is created in particular historical circumstances; in many parts of Africa it became significant only well after colonial conquest.⁶⁵ Thus, for example, while the broad outlines of a “Nyamwezi” identity may have already begun to emerge (although the word merely had the rough meaning of “westerner,” and was used by non-Nyamwezi to identify those from the western plateau who came east to trade), it did not determine how a person would respond to the crisis sparked by German conquest. Nyamwezi caravaners at Bagamoyo were among the rebel *majumbe*’s bitterest enemies and among the Germans’ earliest and most dependable allies; yet Nyamwezi also constituted many of Bwana Heri’s most dedicated followers as well as members of the band that kidnapped Meyer and Baumann. Similarly, although the militant crowds at Pangani were strengthened by

63. Meyer, *East African Glaciers*, 35.

64. “Shairi kwa Wazungu,” in Velten, *Prosa*, 367–70. For other poems of protest, see Pike, “History and imagination.” For the millennial “Mecca letter” unrest of 1908, in which Qadiri sodalities played a prominent role: Iliffe, *German Rule*, 189ff.

65. Iliffe was one of the earliest to argue this at length, in *Modern History*, Ch. 10; for studies inspired by his approach, see Leroy Vail (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (Berkeley, 1991). Willis, *Mombasa*, offers a subtle account of the making of tribal identity in the hinterland of a Swahili town. For a sensitive study of pre-conquest East Africa in which tribal categories play no role: Ambler, *Kenyan Communities*.

"Bondei" warriors (that is, warriors whose homes were "in the valley," below the mountain stronghold of the once-ruling Kilindi dynasty), other "Bondei" stood aloof, eager to help neither Semboja nor any other Kilindi potentate who might benefit from the collapse of Omani rule.⁶⁶

A major theme running throughout this study has been the multiplicity of communities with which any one East African might identify, and the situational flexibility with which such identities were assumed. When using the profits of a safari to pay bridewealth and marry, a caravan specialist from the hinterland might stress his ties to Zigua village elders and clan ancestors; when coming to the coast to trade, however, he would insist on being considered a Muslim townsman, entitled to participate in urban community ritual. The only regard in which concepts akin to ethnic boundaries have played a role in our analysis has been as the objects rather than the determinants of conflict. The boundaries separating Swahili townspeople from the supposed "barbarians" of the hinterland were shifting, permeable, and extremely ambiguous, and they were kept that way by the constant challenges of slaves, villagers, and people from the interior who wished to cross them. Even the cultural boundary that would seem at first glance to be most straightforward—that between a Muslim and an unbeliever—reveals itself on closer inspection to have been endlessly contested. These contests were not between people holding fast to mutually exclusive ethnic allegiances, but quite the opposite: they were arguments among people who claimed membership within the same community, but who had differing visions of the proper terms of that membership and of the proper nature of that community.

At stake in conflicts over Shirazi ritual such as those that exploded into riot in August 1888 was the shape of institutions that structured relationships of power in the coastal communities, communities that served as major nodes of an expanding commercial economy. It is tempting to say that "at bottom" these were conflicts of class, insofar as many of the main divisions can be analysed as battles over access to the means of production in a rapidly commercializing agrarian society. But while the language of class has a certain heuristic value for the historian of conflict in prequest Africa, it does little to help us understand the perceptions of the combatants themselves. Notwithstanding significant exceptions such as the Mauya sugar planters, the simple fact is that few social groups on the coast possessed a self-awareness defined by how they perceived their position vis-à-vis other groups within structures of production. Even the most rebellious of plebeians—the *watoro* of Makorora, the armed *vyama* dancers who sparked the riots of the Solar New Year—felt tied by bonds of dependence and loyalty to Shirazi and Arab patrons.

Like the concept of tribe, the concept of class should be interrogated, not assumed. In situations where a prevailing idiom of patronage, clientele and reciprocity continued to mediate efficiently the relations of production and reproduction, as it did on the Shirazi-dominated Maasai caravan routes and on estates where village client-slavery was the rule, plebeians and patricians tended not to perceive their interests as inherently contradictory. If, on the other hand, the parties in a relationship of production were prone to disagree constantly and bitterly over the bonds that tied them—as on the Mauya sugar estates and, to a lesser extent, on the central caravan routes—then a consciousness of class may have begun to emerge. But such

66. For Nyamwezi ethnic identity: Iliffe, *Modern History*, 318; for Bondei, Justin Willis, "The makings of a tribe: Bondei identities and histories," *JAH* 33 (1992), 191–208.

consciousness was rarely unambiguous. If slaves sometimes united to fight their masters, if porters sometimes struggled against the entrepreneurs who employed them, such conflicts did not always proceed from a perception that they and their antagonists were divided by irreconcilable differences within a relationship of production. On the contrary, as we have seen repeatedly on these pages, the most significant clashes were not over production at all, but over conflicting agendas regarding the institutions of *community*. Plebeian rebels rarely struggled to overturn patrician control of those institutions: few denied that the community ought to be ruled by Shirazi or other "Arabs" who had proven themselves worthy patriarchs and patrons. But plebeians often attempted to alter the terms of that rule; they sought to enhance their roles as clients and to force patricians to fulfill what they deemed the obligations of patronage.

The struggles of plebeians and parvenus for more active roles in the reproduction of Shirazi community institutions were foremost among the conflicts that shaped nineteenth-century coastal society. The consciousness of such struggle (the consciousness that was both produced by and productive of such struggle, for the relationship between consciousness and conflict is a dialectical one) was stamped by a profound ambiguity, an ambiguity born of dependence. Plebeians, after all, struggled for inclusion, not revolution, and they enunciated their aspirations within a hegemonic idiom of Islamic purity, Arabo-centric *ustaarabu*, and the ideals of generosity and display embodied in Shirazi festive ritual. This does not mean that they accepted the inferior position to which Omanis and patricians wanted to relegate them; such an assumption could never help us understand the riots of 1888. The ideas that undergirded Arab and Shirazi authority were hegemonic, not determinant; they were generally accepted, but only in the most ambiguous terms, and their precise meanings were endlessly contested. Rebellious plebeians used Shirazi rituals to challenge the control of Shirazi patrons; even large-scale slave revolt could occur within an intellectual context that accepted the broadest contours of Arab rule.

Because hegemonic discourse shaped popular consciousness, even the most militant of rebels seemed at times to express a vague loyalty to the sultan, or at least to some ideal of Omani rule. Historians have often observed such a phenomenon, especially in village societies where political figureheads were so distant and their voices so indistinct that agrarian rebels could imagine them to speak for virtually any of their own visions of the just society. Thus peasant insurgents have invoked Jomo Kenyatta and Mahatma Gandhi as thaumaturgical prophets who supported violent struggles for radical land reform (much against the proclivities of both those middle-class, university-trained leaders); thus the hidden tsar or sultan was believed to be misinformed or dissembling and in his heart of hearts supportive of his long-suffering subjects.⁶⁷ "We are loyal to the Sultan of Zanzibar," vowed some of the Pangani rebels, "but . . . we cannot believe that it is his real wish that strangers should come into his dominions and cut down his flag or hoist another beside it."⁶⁸ The myth that the sultan secretly supported the rebellion is kept alive by some at the coast, where

67. Daniel Field, *Rebels in the Name of the Tsar* (Boston, 1976); Pandey and Amin in Guha and Spivak, *Selected Subaltern*. For the imaginative yet unlikely hopes pinned on Kenyatta by village insurgents, see Donald Barnett and Karari Njama, *Mau Mau from Within* (New York, 1970), 75–6, 121; and for a novelist's reconstruction, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Weep Not, Child* (London, 1964).

68. Smythies in *Central Africa*; quoted in Iliffe, *Modern History*, 94.

significantly he is remembered not as Khalifa but as "Seyyid Barghash," the symbol of the powerful Arab ruler.⁶⁹

European observers allowed such beliefs to confirm their suspicions that the sultan, or some other powerful Arabs, must be behind the uprising. Racial and class biases combined to convince Europeans that African villagers lacked the savvy or political initiative to launch a broadly based movement, and prepared them to accept conspiracy theories implicating the sultan and his courtiers. The most tenacious of these theories were bruited about by the partisans of Khalifa's court rival, Seyyid Ali bin Said, who by early 1889 were working to win British support for a palace coup. Thus they tried to convince Euan-Smith that Khalifa was behind even the most militant acts, particularly attacks on British missionaries. Although many of these insinuations were patently absurd,⁷⁰ Euan-Smith had his own reasons for accepting them, including a need to justify his own unauthorized involvement in the schemes to unseat Khalifa. Hence they entered the diplomatic correspondence upon which historians of the period must rely, and the alleged plotting of Khalifa and his courtiers has played a prominent role in several published accounts of the uprising.⁷¹

Khalifa may well have supplied some covert aid to the insurgents, particularly along the central caravan routes where Omani interests were most at stake. But the true extent of Khalifa's involvement is largely irrelevant to our purpose; the narrative in the final part of this study was simply meant to suggest how plebeian consciousness shaped the response to German conquest. While some prominent Arabs played a role in the uprising, they quickly lost control of the situation, and the movement turned against them, despite occasional rebel protestations of loyalty to the sultan. To explain the actions of the plebeian crowd by the intentions of a handful of Arab aristocrats would be not only to ignore all the evidence of anti-Omani sentiment, but would also be to accept the illusion, which even Euan-Smith eventually abandoned, that the motivations of the crowd could be characterized by the utterances of a single, elite voice.

Yet such uncomplicated views of popular consciousness continue to bedevil perceptions of African politics, both past and present. Julius Nyerere, for example, the populist leader of Tanzania's struggle for independence and one of the foremost

69. Oral testimony: Ndembo Maburuki, Pangani, 17 June 1985; Juma Omari, Mkwaja, 13 Feb. 1986. (Mzee Juma portrays the sultan merely as a generic "Seyidi.") During the millennial Maji Maji movement that convulsed the southern interior twenty years after conquest, many of the rebels proclaimed themselves "Seyyid Said's men," invoking the by-then mythical founder of the Sultanate. Iliffe, *Modern History*, 169-70.

70. Euan-Smith attached particular significance to a series of events that occurred in early 1889, just as the anti-Khalifa plots were gearing up. In January Bwana Heri's nephew Abdullah was implicated in the murder of a CMS missionary in the Saadani hinterland; on British insistence, Nasr bin Suleiman al-Lemki was sent to make inquiries and if possible apprehend the culprits. Nasr's vessel was fired upon when approaching Saadani and he was not allowed to land. It was routine for vessels flying the Sultan's colors to receive such treatment at Saadani, where anti-Omani sentiments ran high, yet Nasr, a leading figure in the plotted coup, insinuated that Khalifa had arranged the whole affair. It was inconceivable, he told Euan-Smith, that such a popular figure as himself would be attacked without express orders from the Sultan. In fact Nasr had been widely reviled on the central Mrima since at least 1875, when his actions as *liwali* of Bagamoyo provoked a revolt. My understanding of these events and of the plotted coup is based largely on files in the ZNA consular records, including AA2/37c; AA1/63 (esp. nos. 82 and 93); AA1/67/130 and 151; also see Bennett, *Arab versus European*, 164-5.

71. Bennett argues for Khalifa's "rehabilitation" as a leader of the resistance: *Arab versus European*, 175-6; Pouwels stresses the covert encouragement supposedly given the rebels by Khalifa and his closest advisors: *Horn and Crescent*, esp. 170-1. The plotted coup came to nothing; Ali bin Said succeeded Khalifa upon the latter's death in 1890.

philosophers of African Socialism, imagined that elites and commoners in village Africa once shared a uniform, uncontested vision of society. In rhapsodic descriptions of the bucolic communalism which he supposed to have prevailed before conquest and which he dreamed might one day be revived in postcolonial Tanzania, Nyerere explained that such communalism had been made possible by the "basic assumptions of traditional life." "These assumptions were not questioned or even thought about," he wrote, "but the whole of society was . . . designed to uphold them. They permeated the customs, manners and education of the people. And although they were not always honored by every individual, they were not challenged."⁷² Nyerere's language might well have been lifted from the classic texts of British functionalist anthropology, one of which asserted that Africans knew "only one theory of government": public rituals, far from being forums for endless argument and innovation, were mechanisms that guaranteed stability and unity by elevating the organizing principles of society into "a system of sacred values beyond criticism or revision." Thus, "Africans . . . do not analyse their social system; they live it."⁷³

It is easy to imagine why such a vision would appeal to an anticolonial leader like Nyerere, for it implies that the issue of overwhelming importance in shaping society is the question of who is in charge. He saw the absence of conflict in "traditional" Africa as a noble legacy that might be put to good use in the modern world. With the death of colonialism, he argued, the Tanzanian people, no longer divided by the conflicts brought by foreign rule, could finally turn their attention to "building our country in accordance with our own desires." Debate over the content of those desires would be insignificant, as Tanzanians would now be "fighting not man but nature." It is perhaps indicative that one of the key occasions on which Nyerere expounded these themes was in his speech to the first parliament elected under the 1965 single-party constitution, a constitution that he justified by arguing that Tanzanians have no differences over social policy but only over the individual leaders who should implement it.⁷⁴

The notion that tradition cements the interests of elites and ordinary people is common in the nationalist thought that has dominated African politics over the past half-century, including the pronouncements of rulers whose venality and cynicism make them far different from Nyerere. Many scholars have abandoned the assumptions that undergird nationalist thought: "Merrie Africa" never existed,⁷⁵ and tradition is no longer perceived primarily in terms of its unifying function. But one aspect of the nationalist interpretation has endured. It is still common to assume that everything changed once African elites were removed from power; that after conquest the ineluctable trend was for the mass of Africans to become agitated by a more or less unified opposition to European rule. The assumption that conquest marked a total break has been made even by thinkers who do not share Nyerere's idyllic vision of the precolonial past. The West African guerilla leader Amilcar Cabral, for example, was a Marxist who believed that Africa's history was driven by conflict, a view approximating our own. Yet because "in the colonial period it is the colonial state which commands history," argued Cabral, "when imperialism arrived . . . it made us leave

72. Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism* (Dar es Salaam, 1968), 337–8.

73. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, "Introduction," *African Political Systems*, 13, 17–8, 21.

74. Iliffe, *Modern History*, 576; Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism*, 86–103.

75. The phrase is from A.G. Hopkins, *Economic History*.

history—our history.” “The moment national liberation comes,” he added, “we enter, or rather return to history, and thus the internal contradictions break out again.”⁷⁶

Cabral’s conclusion was far different from Nyerere’s—he looked forward to “contradictions” rather than dream of avoiding them—yet both conclusions flowed from a common misunderstanding of the politics of conquest. Conquest was not a single transforming moment, but a protracted, drawn-out process which in German East Africa was still incomplete a full twenty years after Carl Peters secured his first treaties. The colonial state rarely “commanded” history, and the “internal contradictions” that marked the decades prior to conquest continued well after Europeans had seized the reins of power. Nationalist leaders may have deemed the central conflict that between the African masses and the colonial state, but recent studies of popular protest suggest that peasant and plebeian understandings of the structures of power differed profoundly from those of the elite politicians who “led” them. Villagers were concerned far less with control of the state than they were with control of local agricultural resources or of the institutions of household and community. The most successful nationalist leaders were those who were able to link such localized concerns to their campaigns for political power—or at least those who, like Kenyatta and Gandhi, were lucky enough to have their words misinterpreted as such by agrarian rebels.⁷⁷

Insofar as those at the bottom of East African society were concerned, conquest was but another incident in an ongoing drama that had begun decades before. The issues that most concerned them had first drawn their attention during the century prior to conquest, and the perceptual languages with which they debated colonial rule included the old concepts of generosity and patronage, patriarchy and community. Seen from their perspective, the substitution of one set of ruling elites for another did not have the immediate and overwhelming significance that scholars and politicians have often assumed—neither at the moment of conquest nor, seven decades later, at the moment of independence. In both cases the changing of the political guard was merely a prelude to a new phase in the ongoing struggles of ordinary men and women to gain more meaningful control over their lives.

76. Amílcar Cabral, *Revolution in Guinea* (New York, 1969), 68–9.

77. See the works cited in the Introduction, esp. those by Beinart and Bundy, Feierman, Isaacman, Lan, Lonsdale, and Ranger.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE NOTES

- CMS: Church Missionary Society, archives. Microfilm, Center for Research Libraries, Chicago.
- DKZ: *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung* (Berlin)
- FO: Foreign Office records, Public Records Office, London.
- Hansing: Company archives, Hansing & Co., GmbH, Hamburg.
- HStA: Hamburg Staatsarchiv.
- HWWA: Hamburgisches Welt-Wirtschafts-Archiv, Hamburg.
- IJAHs: *International Journal of African Historical Studies*
- JAH: *Journal of African History*
- KPK: *Kolonial-Politische Korrespondenz* (Berlin)
- LMS: London Missionary Society, archives. Microfilm, Herskovits Library, Northwestern University.
- Miss. Cath.: Les Missions Catholiques*
- PP: Parliamentary Papers, Great Britain House of Commons Sessional Papers.
- PRGS: *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*
- Rhodes: Rhodes House Library, Oxford.
- RKA: Reichskolonialamt records, Zentrale Staatsarchiv, Potsdam.
- SwMss: Swahili and Arabic Manuscript Collection, University of Dar es Salaam Library.
- TNA: Tanzania National Archives.
- TNR: *Tanganyika/Tanzania Notes and Records*
- UMCA: Universities' Mission to Central Africa, archives. Microfilm, Center for Research Libraries, Chicago.
- ZNA: Zanzibar National Archives.
- ZStA: Zentrale Staatsarchiv, Potsdam.

ORAL INFORMANTS

All interviews were conducted in Swahili. Most were recorded on cassette tape; edited transcriptions were then prepared with the assistance of Zahoro Amiri Kallaghe. In instances when recording was not possible, notes were made in Swahili and a paraphrased summary of the interview prepared immediately afterwards to be checked with the informant. Copies of all transcripts and paraphrased summaries have been deposited in the library of the Department of History, University of Dar es Salaam.

Abdallah Mahine, Bweni, September-October 1985; August 1990.

Akida Karimu, Mkwaja, February 1986.

Ali Waziri, Pangani, September 1985.

Bakari Mohammed bin Abdallah, Bweni, August 1990.

Bilali Buheti, Saadani (Bagamoyo District), November 1985.

Bomu Juma Kirimo, Saadani, November 1985.

Chande Maftaha, Saadani, November 1985.

Hashim bin Said Abdallah, Bweni, June-September 1985.

Hatibu Salim, Mwera, October 1985; August 1990.

Heri bin Isa wa Amrani, Makorora, February 1986.

Idi Mwinyikombo, Mwembeni (Pangani District), September 1985.

Juma Omari, Mkwaja, February 1986; August 1990.

Mafuta Mtoo, Mwera, October 1985.

Makata Kombo, Pangani, July 1985.

Mkwayu Akida, Mwera, October 1985.

Mwinchumu Ibrahim, Mwera, August 1990.

Mwinyimvua Waziri, Saadani, November 1985.

Ndembo Maburuki, Pangani, June and October 1985.

Saidi Omari, Bweni, June and August 1985.

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