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***Frontier Geography
and Boundless History***

Islam and Arabs in East Africa

*A Fusion of Identities,
Networks and Encounters*

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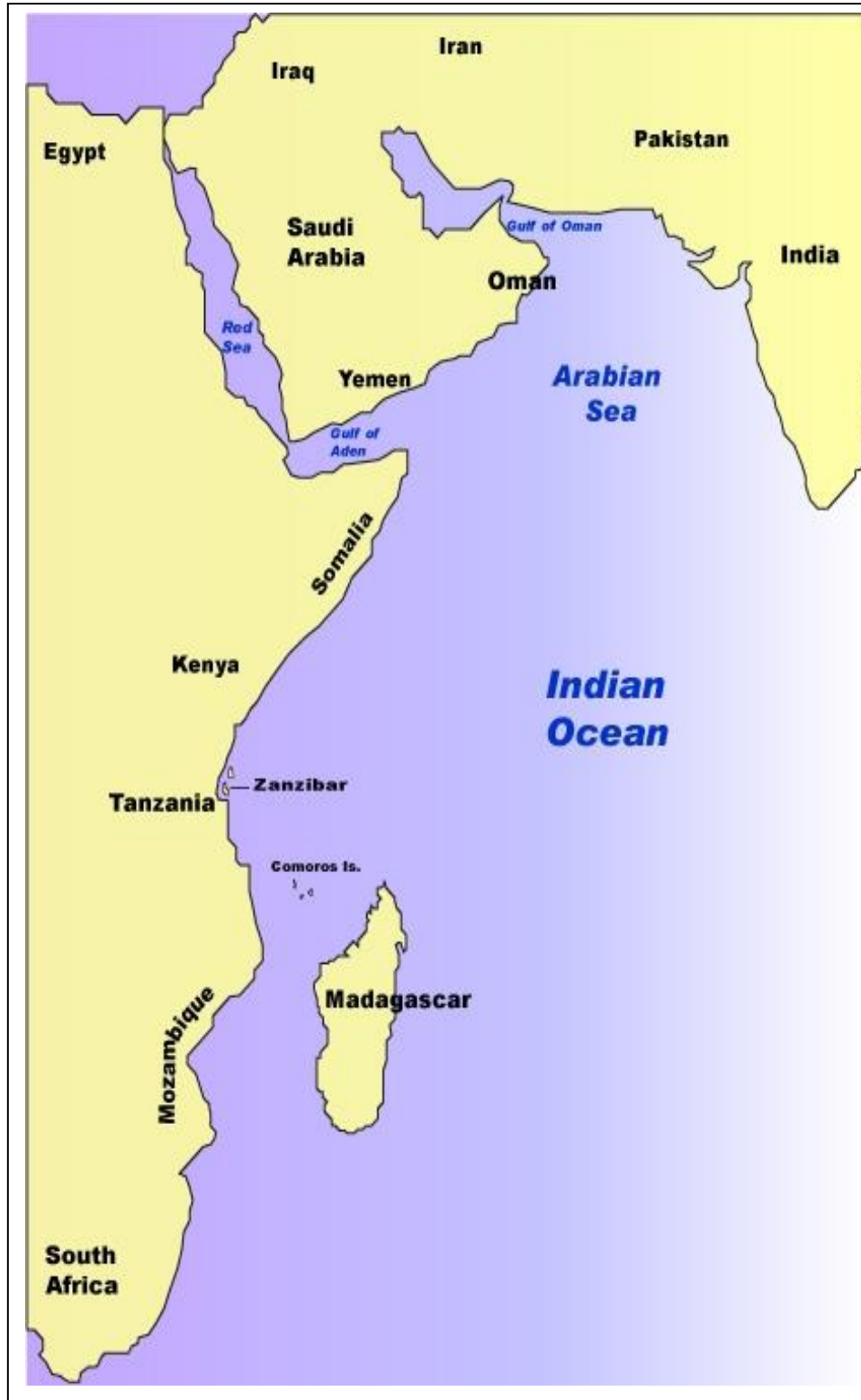
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FRONTIER GEOGRAPHY AND BOUNDLESS HISTORY

ISLAM AND ARABS IN EAST AFRICA A FUSION OF IDENTITIES, NETWORKS AND ENCOUNTERS

AN INTRODUCTION

Amal N. Ghazal*

Two years ago, on the pages of this journal, Eugene Rogan commented that “borders, frontiers, margins and peripheries catch the imagination. These are the zones of fusion and transition, where hybridity is the norm and orthodoxy the exception.”¹ Rogan’s words were inspired by borders and peripheries of the Ottoman Empire but they nevertheless spoke truth for borders, frontiers and peripheries everywhere else. They are applicable in the case of Arab communities in East Africa whose margins have been delineated not only by geography but also by the historical discipline itself.

Marginality is an inherently relative term and an elusive concept. It is defined in relationship to both a geographic ‘center’ and issues and debates that we deem ‘central’ to our professions and our fields. Far away from the ‘center’ of the Arab world and not quite recognized as befitting one dominant definition of an African history that sees ‘Arab’ as an antonym to ‘African’, the Arab communities in East Africa have fallen in the cracks of both Arab geography and African history. And yet, it is this same fluidity and subtlety of belonging, this fuzziness of places, categories and identifications that allow those communities to thrive with fusion – fusion of identities, networks and encounters. This is where hybridity evolves and where the historical imagination breaks down illusive boundaries and creates new frontiers.

Drawing on a rich variety of sources ranging between archives, manuscripts, religious texts, newspapers and oral interviews, the contributors are

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contesting conventional knowledge and scholarship in the fields of Arab and Islamic history in East Africa. By breaking new ground, probing new questions and opening new venues, they are delineating new intellectual paradigms that defy existent boundaries of scholarship on Islam and Arabs in that region.

[The first article by Louise Rolinger analyzes the historiography of Islam and identity in East Africa. Drawing on philosopher Ian Hacking's concept of the "looping effect," i.e., an effect in which the categorization of certain kinds of knowledge shapes the object of study and in turn influences the way knowledge is constructed, the author examines the "loops" that have constrained the study of Islam in East Africa. She argues that in order to better understand the relationship between Islam and identity, we must escape the "loops" of the past and find new frameworks in which to analyze and write about both.](#)

The four remaining contributions position themselves outside those loops and share three common features. They all deal with Arab communities of Omani origin, highlight the deep interconnectedness between East Africa and Oman and tackle issues related to social, cultural and intellectual dynamics under al-Busa'idi rule in East Africa.

Limbirt and McDow contest the notion of an 'Arab' identity portrayed by the historiography as being unitary and all-encompassing. Looking at non-elite Omanis, they disclose identities that floated underneath the general categorization of 'Arabs' in East Africa and that were the pivots of complex social structures inside Omani communities. Between Manga and Baysar, we learn of Omani social divisions and tensions and of various categories of identities or sub-identities that reflected those divisions and daily life's complexities. Manga and Baysar were migrant identities from Oman to East Africa but the authors detect possible variableness in their meanings in each of the two places. Oral history here seems to be an indispensable tool for examining those nuances but while Limbert sees it as complementary and corrective to the archival and historiographical record, McDow criticizes its limitations.

My work redefines the 'Arab' identity of Omanis by resituating it outside the socio-economic variables employed by the British to identify the different ethnic communities in Zanzibar. By focusing on the Omani elite, I link that identity and its definition to a wider world with which that elite strongly identified. Association with and contribution to the various religious and literary movements in the Arab world, such as pan-Ibadism, pan-Isamism, pan-Arabism and the Salafiyya, highlight deep religious, cultural and political connections that widened the scope of the Omani elite's identity. Those connections cast doubt on the historiographical representation of the Omani elite as a politically conservative one and allow us to reconsider its relationship with the colonial order in Zanzibar.

Hoffman's essay also examines members of the Omani elite in Zanzibar. The hybridity and cosmopolitanism of Zanzibar is best represented by its 'ulama, their wide knowledge, diverse scholarship and multiple encounters. Of the many encounters, that with Christian missionaries serves as a window into the vibrant and complex intellectual world in which Zanzibar's 'ulama dwelled. Hoffman also reveals the anxiety such encounters were gradually producing among those 'ulama alarmed by 'Christian' influence on the Zanzibari community. That concern, as the author demonstrates, extended to Omani 'ulama in both Oman and Zanzibar, highlighting the interconnectedness between the two places and their scholars.

The various topics tackled by the contributors and their different approaches inaugurate a new chapter in studies pertaining to the history of Islam

and the Arab-Muslim communities in East Africa. Their common theme of delving into questions of identity only confirms the uniqueness of 'frontier' zones in their defiance, through their hybridity and fusion, of all geographic and disciplinary borders. Those zones rather become tied to boundless geographies and wider histories and invite the curiosity of those who see in crossing boundaries an opportunity to push the limits and craft a new intellectual domain.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Eugene Rogan, "Introduction", *MIT Electronic Journal Middle East Studies* 3(Spring, 2003), p. 1.

CONSTRUCTING ISLAM AND SWAHILI IDENTITY

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND THEORY

Louise Rolinger*

. . . there is a different kind of construction, well worth calling social, that occurs when we develop our systematic classifications of and knowledge about people and their behaviour. This has to do with the looping effect . . .

Ian Hacking¹

For there to be an identity, society, culture, or ethnic group, it is not necessary for all parties to agree on what defines this culture; it is sufficient that they are able to establish the terms of identity as a problem about which they can debate or negotiate.

Jean-Loup Amselle²

The people of Coastal East Africa, from Somalia to Mozambique, have long been recognized as the bearers of a unique and fluid culture and language—Kiswahili. That culture and language are the product of trading relationships that encompassed the Indian Ocean and extended from Africa, the Middle East and India to as far east as Indonesia and China. Although “Swahili” language and culture have absorbed many influences from visitors to the East African coast over the centuries, it is predominantly based on varying combinations of African and Arab cultural and linguistic forms and religion—Islam.

Debates about Islam on the Swahili Coast, and the East African mainland, have centered on the “penetration” of Islam into East Africa—how, when and by whom—and orthodox vs. popular praxis. These debates have frequently borne the mark of philosopher Ian Hacking’s looping effect. Hacking argues that the classification of knowledge has a kind of “feedback” effect in which our categorization of certain kinds of knowledge shapes the object of our study, which in turn influences the way we classify that knowledge. Classification and knowledge are continuously folding back on one another.³ In this paper, I will discuss some of those loops in the study of Islam in East Africa and then examine some works whose authors have attempted to free themselves from the feedback effect and point the way for future scholarship.

* [Louise Rolinger](#) is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Alberta. She is working on her dissertation, “[In the Zanzibar Household: Domestic Relations, Cultural Mixing and the Making of East African Identities in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries.](#)”

Among those scholars who do write primarily about Islam, one of the most frequently cited sources is J. Spencer Trimingham's *Islam in East Africa*. Trimingham falls into the camp of those who have insisted that Swahili culture owes more to Arabia than to Africa. He begins his review of Swahili history with the statement, "The history of Islam in East Africa belongs more to the history of the Indian Ocean than to African history."⁴ From his account of the people and their history, it is clear that he sees the syncretic nature of Swahili society and the role Islam plays in it. The second chapter of his book gives a detailed description of the many and varied "contemporary Muslim communities," and speculates on their origins. However, for him Islam as a "revealed religion" is the archetypal reified category. It is universal, unchanging and unbending—"a way of life" imposed from above. He uses the following diagram to illustrate his point:

Islam —► Bantu Culture = creative tension = synthesis in the Swahili Culture⁵

The arrow from Islam to Bantu Culture is the essence of his argument. For him, African cultures were passive and Islam aggressive. Hence, the "creative tension" was a one-way street. This top-down analysis then leads him to see the spread of Islam into the interior as "penetration" facilitated by the European colonial presence. He identifies a number of possible "agents" -- "guides, interpreters, soldiers and servants" as well as the merchants from the coast—all of who might profitably be investigated in greater depth. However, his "invasion" metaphor leads him to dismiss this line of enquiry by attributing conversion of inland people to "unconscious" processes and a handful of Qur'an teachers.⁶

Moreover, Trimingham assumes that Muslim influence outside the coastal cities is something that arises suddenly in the late nineteenth century with the arrival of German and British colonizers. It is very difficult to assess from the literature where this idea originates. There are instances of trading centers that sprang up over short periods in the interior. For example, David Sperling notes the increase in the population of Ujiji, a town located on one of the caravan routes to the interior of present-day Tanzania. Between 1860 and Stanley's visit there in 1872, Ujiji grew from an insignificant town to a trade center whose population, though transient and mostly slaves, numbered seven to eight thousand. According to Stanley, twelve dozen of the residents were "Arab" traders (Afro-Arab Swahili from the coast).⁷ Another such center, Tabora, is said to have become "the citadel of Islam in the interior" by 1912.⁸ However, Sperling also adds that not all trading centers showed a significant Muslim influence. Those centers that did see an increase in their Muslim populations seem not to have affected the surrounding rural areas until the 1950s and in some cases only in very recent times.⁹ A reading of John Illiffe's account of late nineteenth-century changes in Tanganyika seems to indicate that the missionaries, focused on eliminating the slave trade and seeing Islam as their competitor for souls, may have been the "agents" of the notion of a marked increase in Muslim converts.¹⁰ These were hardly unbiased accounts by disinterested observers.

Michael N. Pearson's review of the literature calls attention to two possibilities here. On the one hand, there are some fragments of information in Portuguese accounts that suggest settlements of Muslim traders already existed in the interior as early or, even before, the arrival of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. On the other hand, it may simply be the case that the relative lack of

information for the earlier period creates the impression of a sudden increase in Muslims in the nineteenth century when more Europeans were making their way there and reporting their findings.¹¹

More importantly Trimingham seems to have set the agenda for the study of the relationship of Islam to Swahili identity as his one-way penetration of Islam argument appears to dominate historical studies. August Nimtz, another scholar of Islam in East Africa, disagrees with Trimingham's claim that the presence of Europeans facilitated the spread of Islam, but not his assumption that there was a sudden and numerically significant increase in converts. He has a difficult time finding evidence for this new wave of Islam except in a few reports from frightened German administrators and one missionary who complained that the Muslims were impeding his efforts to recruit converts. Nevertheless, he asserts that the cause of this perceived rise in Muslim converts was the result of an ideological vacuum created by the German defeat of the Maji Maji rebellion.¹² He looks for various agents as well and finds that the *turuq*, the Sufi brotherhoods, have stepped in to fill the void.

Nimtz' thesis has led to much speculation about how the *turuq* accomplished their work. A favorite site for examination has been charisma, the personal power of individual Sufi saints to attract followers who swelled the ranks of the brotherhoods. François Constantin, drawing on an ethnography of Lamu society by Egyptian anthropologist Abdul Hamid M. el-Zein,¹³ examined the life of one Sufi saint known to his followers as Habib Saleh to find the "seed" of this charisma.¹⁴ Constantin decided that charisma resulted from a combination of personal (personality and power) and religious factors (his perceived link to the Prophet, *baraka*, defined by Constantin as Islamic knowledge, and his reputation as a scholar) with broader social factors (social upheaval). Habib Saleh was the right man in the right place at the right time. It seems that Constantin confirms Nimtz' assertion that Sufism somehow filled a void - in this case a need for stability during a period of political instability caused by European colonization.

Another issue for Trimingham was the contrast between a "pure Islam" and "popular Islam." This as Pearson notes in his *Port Cities* is a recurring theme throughout the history of Islam in Africa and elsewhere. Randall Pouwels takes up this theme in his *Horn and the Crescent* and adds to it the question of how Islam spreads. He talks about the "high Islam" of the Qur'an and the ulama (learned teachers) vs. "popular Islam," and the Islam practiced by ordinary Africans. He locates the greater spread of Islam in a somewhat earlier period. For Pouwels, the arrival of Seyyid Said and his court in Zanzibar in the 1840's is a key factor. He examines at length the changes brought about by the introduction of new "types" of ulama—the administrative types who brought literacy and a "higher" form of Islam and the charismatic types who gave rise to Sufi brotherhoods. In *The Horn and the Crescent*, Pouwels' version of penetration is one of depth rather than breadth. Although he notes that the appeal of these new ulama was for the most part "an elitist phenomenon," he wants to ascribe agency to the charismatic Sufis whom he sees as somehow more "African" than "Arab." Thus, in his recent article in the *History of Islam in Africa*, we find that the *turuq* have become the agents responsible for spreading Islam. At the same time, they are also the agents of a not-so-creative ethnic tension and conflict.¹⁵

It is not that these lines of enquiry are not interesting, even suggestive. It is more the case that this particular loop is not getting us beyond structural paradigms and debates about theological correctness that say little about the processes

involved and the view that “Islam itself” can explain all. We need to ask different questions or we will never find new answers. A rethinking of the “unconscious process” by which some of Trimmingham’s “agents” reproduced Swahili culture, including Islam, is precisely what I am trying to do here. I am questioning the familiar, as Foucault prescribes, in order to reveal the not so “unconscious” aspects of that process.

When I began my research for this work, I encountered Abdul Hamid M. el-Zein’s, *The Sacred Meadows: A Structural Analysis of Religious Symbolism in an East African Town*. It is a study of the town of Lamu off the coast of Kenya and the social relationships of its Swahili-speaking inhabitants. He was attempting to show how the tensions in Lamu society, especially between masters and slaves, were played out in myth and religious practice as well as everyday practices such as marriage and family. Zein’s goal was to explore the “structure of a religious system and the relations between its constituent parts and everyday life” in order to uncover what he saw as the dynamic nature of religion as a “symbolic system engaged in a dialectic with social reality.” He posited this view in opposition to what he saw as the image of religion, especially Islam, as conservative, tending to maintain some sort of *status quo* in the face of outside forces.

Zein’s fellow anthropologists recognized *Sacred Meadows* as an original and important contribution to anthropological theory at the time. However, historians have been more critical, citing his lack of attribution of sources (i.e., his informants) and a-historicity as his major failings.¹⁶ Patricia Romero believed that Zein, because he was an Egyptian and a Muslim, should have been in a better position than non-Muslim, Western scholars, to get the story right.¹⁷ However, according to her informants, Zein got it wrong, especially with regard to the story of Lamu’s Sufi saint, Habib Saleh. He was not, as Zein postulated, a friend to slaves and an enemy of the Lamu Swahili elites. As a *sharif*, a descendant of the Prophet, he may have been charitable in his attitude toward slaves, but only to the extent that Islamic law and custom decreed. Her recent book is an attempt to counter what she sees as a “hopelessly ahistorical” and “confusing” work by giving a descriptive chronology of Lamu society from its origins (as far as they are known) to the late 1990s.

Randall Pouwels subsequently reviewed Romero’s *Lamu*.¹⁸ He commended her analysis of colonial figures, which he felt was sufficiently skeptical of their motives in setting colonial policy, but he noted that she appeared to be blind to the motives of her Swahili informants on Lamu. More important, Romero’s attempts to discuss the history of Islam and her “accounts of Shi’a, the Hadrami shurafa and the Alawiyya” were full of errors.¹⁹ He asserts that because her knowledge of Islam is superficial, she “underutilizes or mishandles available published sources” such as his translation of Shaykh Abdallah S. Farsy’s *The Shafi’i Ulama of East Africa, 1820-1970*.²⁰ It is apparent from Romero’s comments, however, that her informant, Sheikh Ahmed Jahadhmy, who “read drafts of every chapter and corrected factual errors”, heavily influenced her representation of Islam.²¹

Zein could not respond to the criticisms and debate carried on by Romero and Pouwels because he died in 1979.²² From the forward to his book written by his advisor Lloyd Fallers, it seems that like Romero, Jahadhmy and Pouwels, he had been enmeshed in a debate about the right or wrong nature of various versions of Islam, or more properly, Islamic practice from the first day he arrived on Lamu. Fallers points out the difficulties that Zein and his family faced in Lamu, contrary to Romero’s assumption, precisely *because* they were Muslims:

. . . if their background gave them an initial intellectual advantage, it also imposed burdens that non-Muslims would not have faced. Like members of Muslim communities elsewhere, the Lamuans naturally assume that their reception of Islam is the correct one, and so they first regarded the Zeins [Zein's wife Laila and son Hani accompanied him to Lamu] as ignorant, if not positively heretical. The demands made upon them to correct their errant ways were sometimes quite uncomfortable.²³

Perhaps because of this experience or because he was a Muslim, an Egyptian *and* a scholar in the West,²⁴ Zein was concerned with finding a way to move beyond similar debates in anthropology—to escape from his own loop. In the last article he published before his death, Zein examined works by some of the major anthropological and Islamicist theorists of his day and their arguments about anthropology and Islamic theology as tools for understanding the interplay between religion and social behavior. The anthropologists included Clifford Geertz (Islam as a historically constituted ideology), Vincent Crapanzano (a Freudian interpretation of Moroccan myths), and D.F. Eickelman (a Weberian interpretation of Maraboutism in Morocco). The Islamicists were Abdallah S. Bujra (religious politics) and Michael Gilsenan (Sufism and charisma).²⁵ Zein argued that neither the ideological assumptions of anthropologists nor the theological assumptions of Bujra and Gilsenan could account for the everyday experience of a given society because all of these approaches require some kind of universal and fixed notion about the nature of “man, God, history, consciousness, and meaning.” They all portray Islam as a closed cultural system. Further, they all assume that religion, economy and history are things—bounded entities—that exist outside or above the societies in which people construct relationships with others and with their environment on a daily basis.

Today, such ideas are commonplace, though sometimes contested, among anthropologists, sociologists, cultural studies scholars and historians. The reified category is under attack from all sides.²⁶ Examining the daily practices of ordinary people, as Zein advocated both in *Sacred Meadows* and in his later article, is evident in much current scholarship, especially the influential work by Michele de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.²⁷ Some postmodernist and postcolonial scholars now bemoan the lack of historicity in theoretical and philosophical approaches to various fields of study in the humanities and social sciences. The quintessential postmodern scholar Fredric Jameson, looking for a way out of the “vicious circle” created by the “hegemony of theories of textuality and textualization,” offers “historicism” as an alternative. He asserts that in order to “play the game” scholars and critics are trapped by their need to agree with “basic presuppositions of [their] general problem field” which “traditional positions . . . refuse to advance.” Historical analysis and an assertion of the “real” offer a way out.²⁸ “Postcolonial” anthropologists such as Lila Abu-Lughod for example, attempt to historicize and contextualize the study of religion, tying their observations to a past as well as the present in order to appreciate their subjects more fully.²⁹ This may seem flattering to us as historians, but the example of the history of Islam in East Africa demonstrates that “history” is not an answer in itself. “Loops” and “vicious circles,” plague historians as well as literary critics and anthropologists.

As an ideal, focusing on change over time and the mundane details of the everyday are laudable goals, especially for one who aspires to write social or cultural

history. Such a focus would indeed expand our picture of the lives of ordinary people past and present. However, while Jameson and Abu-Lughod have to deal with selecting from an overabundance of information, the situation for the historian of Africa is different.³⁰ The evidence we work with is often at best uneven and in many cases almost nonexistent. We sometimes have to work from fragments or from very one-sided materials—both written and oral. More often than not, we have to approach our subject matter obliquely “writing against the grain.” In an effort to bridge gaps, writing history in the African context, especially the history of subalterns, can sometimes become a search for theory.

But, which theory or theories should we choose? Abu-Lughod, inspired by Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, notes, “In popular and much scholarly thinking in the West, Islam is perceived as all-determining. This view corresponds to that of many Muslims who believe that they should indeed be guided by the ideals of Islamic faith and practice.” As someone who is as she says “between” both worlds, she is concerned to demonstrate “that not all events . . . can be explained by reference to Islam.”³¹

For many scholars, the problem is not so much one of explaining events without reference to Islam, but of weaving between polar opposites. How can we talk about Islam and identity without assuming Islam explains everything? How can we talk about Islam and identity without assuming Islam explains nothing? Here, I believe, anthropologist Jean-Loup Amselle’s notions of “originary syncretism” and negotiation are important. In his 1998 book, *Mestizo Logics*, Amselle calls for an abandonment of “ethnological reason” that “extracts, refines, and classifies with the intention of isolating types.” Against this search for types, he offers a “continuist approach that would emphasize an originary syncretism or lack of distinctness.” On close examination, he says, every culture “dissolves into a series of conflictual or peaceful practices used by its actors to continually renegotiate their identity.”³² They are important because they point to a process always underway and to relationships between individuals as well as groups.

Take for example works that examine Islam and slavery in East Africa. I have been struck by the fact that while everyone talks about how masters converted their slaves to Islam, few seriously consider the slaves to be “agents” or even significant in either the spread or construction of Islam in East Africa.³³ Slaves are portrayed as passive recipients of a deficient form of Islam or if not entirely passive then perpetual outsiders with no claim to a place in Muslim and “Swahili” identity.

Trimingham talked about porters and *askaris* (soldiers) as “agents,” but he forgot to tell us that many were slaves or ex-slaves. Frederick Cooper tells us in *Plantation Slavery* that nearly 140,000 slaves were imported into Zanzibar at the height of the plantation economy—1850 to 1875.³⁴ Many died and some escaped, but the number who stayed were significant and the process was more visible (to Westerners) for a longer period than was the case with people in the interior.

At about the same time that Zein was writing his critique of Clifford Geertz, Cooper published an article on Islam as hegemonic ideology in the Swahili culture of the nineteenth century. He wrote it in the wake of Edward Said’s influential, but highly controversial book *Orientalism*. *Orientalism*, originally published in 1978, was a critique of the representation of Islam as the “other” or binary opposite of the West from the Greeks to the present. Referring to Western power, Said cited Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony as the means by which dominant classes or groups manufacture consent to their rule among the dominated.³⁵ Cooper, an economic and social historian, gave Said’s work a mere

footnote, but in his article he attempted to find a relationship between Islam and slavery without resorting to “orientalist” stereotypes used by Islamicist scholars.³⁶ He asserted that while no such entity as “Islamic slavery” existed, there was a connection between religion and slavery in the way masters characterized their relationship to their slaves. He drew on Clifford Geertz’ concept of religion as an ideology grounded in specific historical circumstances (similar to the discussion advocated by Zein) and linked it to an interpretation of Gramsci similar to Said’s.

The nineteenth century was a turbulent one for the Omanis and the Swahili elites. Zanzibar and all of East Africa was being drawn ever more tightly into the expanding capitalist world of the Europeans at the same moment they began their experiment with large-scale agriculture. The British attack on the slave trade gradually became more effective over the nineteenth century. Declining markets in slaves meant merchants had to look for alternatives. They found it, if briefly, in the production of cloves on Zanzibar and grains on the coast.³⁷ Control over the “means of production,” the slaves, was never complete and often fragile. Slaves could and did run away or rebel.³⁸ While some masters might use physical discipline to keep production on schedule, it was generally more profitable and less difficult to resort to older relationships of reciprocity like giving slaves their own land, allowing some to accumulate wealth through various means and even to purchase their own slaves in some cases. However, in Zanzibar to some extent, but especially on the coastal plantations where grains were the major crop, the demands of production sometimes meant a change in this unspoken agreement—longer hours and fewer benefits. Thus, Cooper argued that the masters had to find ways to convince slaves to accept these changes and that way was through the “hegemonic ideology” of Islam.

One of Zein’s chief criticisms of Geertz was that while Geertz acknowledged the historical specificity of Islam in particular places-- Morocco and Indonesia--he nevertheless, continued to insist on a universal, bounded Islam that floats above all societies in which it is the predominant religion. In both societies, the ulama, the more learned members, represent this universal Islam by separating “themselves from local interpretations or the specifications of a particular history.”³⁹ Cooper, following Geertz, assumes the universal concept of Islam rather than the historically particular by insisting that the ulama and especially the leaders of the Sufi brotherhoods were the East African equivalent of Gramsci’s “intellectuals”—the individuals whose task it is to convince the masses that the ideology of the ruling class should be the ideology of all. Although he argues against an “Islamic slavery” on the grounds that to do so “puts more of a burden on the significance of religion than it can possibly bear,” he later insists on its universality. He argues that “the particular importance of Islam . . . lies in the fixity and evocative power of the written word” and the “aura of permanence” that it conveys.⁴⁰

Talal Asad, the renown anthropologist has indirectly taken up Zein’s cause also calling Geertz’ theories of religion and ideology into question. Although he grounds his analysis in the historical development of Christianity, his arguments with Geertz are much the same as Zein’s. In contrast to Geertz’ focus on meaning, symbols and ideology, Asad proposes a constructivist approach, one that sees religion not as something already there, but as something created out of power relations between people and groups of people in specific historical and societal contexts. Adopting this approach, Asad reminded us that orthodoxy in Muslim communities and states has always been subject to competing discourses, especially

in “conditions of change and contest.”⁴¹ Asad draws loosely on Foucault’s concept of the relationship between power and knowledge. Individuals and groups in a given society assert power through discourses about rights, but other individuals and groups may contest those discourses in order to assert their own place in that society.⁴² By taking such an approach, we can then look at Islam and Swahili identity as ongoing construction projects couched in competing discourses between masters and slaves—discourses that, as Foucault insists, have real effects in the world. Thinking about the process in terms of discourse rather than ideology allows a more fluid and nuanced analysis than the concept of an *a priori* universal religion. It also allows multiple discourses to be in play at the same time.

Much of Cooper’s argument draws directly from *Sacred Meadows*, especially the celebration of the *Maulidi ya Kiswabili*.⁴³ *Maulidi*, the celebration of the Prophet’s birth, in Zein’s work and in many studies of East and other parts of Africa, has been a favorite site for examining social relations in societies where Islam is the predominant religion. It has been analyzed as a ritual in which the power of the elite is displayed for the masses (Combs-Schilling), a sign appropriated by ex-slaves on Zanzibar to signify poetry (Fair), an example of resistance on the part of slaves (Glassman) and a ritual that maintains Arab hegemony on Pemba today (Goldman).⁴⁴ For Zein, as a major social and religious event on Lamu, it provided an insight into the social arrangements there.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Lamu society had become highly stratified. At the top were the *wangwana* (people of the town)⁴⁵ who called themselves the *Wa Yumbili*. This group was divided into three. At the top were the *Wa Yumbili Pembe* followed by the *Wa Yumbili Ngombe*. At the bottom rung of the *wangwana* were the *Wa Yumbili Ponde*. Beneath these groups were the Comoros Islanders who were permanent outsiders and the slaves who were insiders, but without status. The manner in which each group celebrated the *Maulidi* signified their position in Lamu society. The *Wa Yumbili Pembe* and *Wa Yumbili Ngombe* celebrated the *Maulidi Barzanji*, a private and quiet ceremony performed in the mosque only by persons licensed to do so. The *Wa Yumbili Ponde*, the Comoros Islanders and the children of *souriyas* (concubines) celebrated their own *Maulidi*, the *Maulidi ya Rama*, in public with musical accompaniment and dancing.⁴⁶

Despite exclusion by the *wangwana* from religious education and hence from the “traditional” celebration of the *Maulidi*, the slaves formed two competitive groups led by ex-slaves Mwalim Jum’ani and Bajuri and created their own ritual. This particular *Maulidi* was performed in Swahili and was given the name *Maulidi ya Kiswabili*. Performed in the elite and exclusive Langoni area of Lamu town, the two factions acquired backers from among its *wangwana* residents. *Wangwana* masters had often used their slaves in competitions against each other. In the *Maulidi ya Kiswabili*, however, the slaves and ex-slaves were free to chose the group to which they would belong. That created a reordering of old loyalties and identities.

Initially, the *wangwana* used the competition between Bajuri and Jum’ani’s followers to their advantage. They became mediators between, as well as backers of, the competing ex-slave groups. When the competition became too heated, the masters would step in temporarily reasserting their power. However, over time, the role of competitor eclipsed that of mediator. Controlling the followers of Bajuri and Jum’ani became less important than vying for greater status within their own group to such an extent that they began to sell their land to pay for increasingly lavish celebrations.⁴⁷ The masters then declared the *Maulidi ya Kiswabili* to be unorthodox, a secular event more to do with competition than religion. The title of Mwalim

which in an earlier context had been used to signify a religious leader became synonymous with *fundi*, a secular term emphasizing the mechanics of competition and dramatic effect. In their eyes, celebrations of the *Maulidi ya Kiswahili* were “no longer rituals for the sake of God’s blessings, but performances which mainly sought to attract other people’s attention.”⁴⁸ At that point, the *wangwana* still had sufficient power to have the last word.

Cooper has resolutely argued against a Foucauldian approach to the analysis of power on the grounds that to embrace it would be to deny the very real power imbalances that now exist between the neo-colonial powers of the West (the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) and African nation states. He rejects Foucault’s notion of power as “capillary” (presumably referring to the concept of biopower Foucault developed in his *History of Sexuality*) because for him current relations between Africa and the West are most emphatically “arterial” and one-way.⁴⁹ In the East African context, Cooper sees power is a negative, injurious force rather than Foucault’s more nuanced view that sees power as positive and generative as well as destructive.

In his work on slavery in East Africa and especially his article on ideology and cultural hegemony, however, Cooper weaves carefully between a view of Islam as cultural hegemony and a view that would allow some agency (counter-hegemony) for the slaves —something he wants very much to do. His is a delicate balancing act that is not always taken up by those who have followed.⁵⁰ In the section of his article where he discusses the slaves, he comes very close to Asad’s notion of a constructed Islam, were it not for the fact that he was looking instead for the development of a separate and unique “slave culture” as a counter-hegemonic *force*. He talks about the ways in which people began to think of themselves as both Muslims and connected to non-Muslim Africans through dances and initiation rituals that combined elements of Islam with practices brought from the mainland. What these slaves were making *was* Islam and in the process, Swahili identity.

I am arguing here for an approach that explores the connections between Islam and Swahili identity; one that does more than reverse the flow of Trimmingham’s model from African to Arab- a methodology that can help us to escape from loops created by debates about “penetration” and “charisma”. I want to find a way to weave between the universal qualities of Islam and its practice on the ground without becoming enmeshed in debates about orthodoxy.⁵¹ I want to begin to think in terms of a process of originary syncretism that denies essentialisms and simultaneously allows for both conflict and negotiation in the generation of Islam and identity. It is a process that operates on many levels through time and space, one that begins to approximate the complexity of religious practice and identity formation in East Africa.

Taking Talal Asad’s proposition that Islam (and identity) is a project continually under construction rather than an essence or reified category is a first step toward creating richness and complexity from small bits and pieces of the relics we call evidence. In the performance of a ritual like the *Maulidi ya Kiswahili* we can read both agency and domination. By including Foucault’s notion that power can be both generative and destructive and is embedded in and created by both discourse and practice, we can make space for agency on the part of subalterns. Then reading such an analysis of power into the construction of Islam and identity, we can begin to investigate, in specific historical contexts, the ways in which power was negotiated and produced at

“multiple sites.” People in East Africa struggled to define what it meant to be a Muslim and what it meant to be Swahili.

ENDNOTES

¹ Ian Hacking, “Symposium Papers, Comments and an Abstract: The Sociology of Knowledge About Child Abuse,” *Noûs* 22, no. 1 (1988): 57.

² Jean-Loup Amselle, *Mestizo Logics: Anthropology of Identity in Africa and Elsewhere*, trans. Claudia Royal (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 41.

³ Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 34

⁴ J. Spencer Trimmingham, *Islam in East Africa: The Report of a Survey Undertaken in 1961, Research Pamphlets; No. 9* (London: Published for the World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism by Edinburgh House Press, 1962), 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 53 – 56.

⁷ David Sperling, “The Coastal Hinterland and Interior of East Africa,” in *The History of Islam in Africa*, ed. N. Levtzion and R. L. Pouwels (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 289.

⁸ Becker quoted in *Ibid.*, 295.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 77 – 87.

¹¹ Michael N. Pearson, *Port Cities and Intruders: The Swahili Coast, India and Portugal in the Early Modern Era* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 86 – 100.

¹² August H. Nimtz, *Islam and Politics in East Africa: The Sufi Order in Tanzania* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 13.

¹³ See below.

¹⁴ Francois Constantin, “Charisma and the Crisis of Power in East Africa,” in *Charisma and Brotherhood in African Islam*, ed. Donald B. Cruise O’Brien and C. Coulon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 69.

¹⁵ Randall L. Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent: Cultural Change and Traditional Islam on the East African Coast, 800-1900, African Studies Series; 53* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987) and Randall L. Pouwels, “The East African Coast, C. 780 to 1900 C.E.,” in *The History of Islam in Africa*, ed. N. Levtzion and R.L. Pouwels (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 265.

¹⁶ T. O. Ranger, “Review,” *The Journal of Religion in Africa* Vol. III (1975), Patricia Romero, “The Sacred Meadows: A Case Study of “Anthropologyland” Vs. “Historyland,”” *History in Africa* 9(1982) and Patricia Romero, *Lamu: History, Society and Family in an East African Port City* (Princeton: Marcus Wiener, 1997), ix.

¹⁷ Romero seems quite oblivious to the complicated position Zein really occupied. See below.

¹⁸ Randall L. Pouwels, “Review,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 32, no. 1 (1999).

¹⁹ These are different sects of Islam.

²⁰ It would have been useful to have some examples of how Romero “mishandles” the sources, but Pouwels leaves us in suspense in this regard.

²¹ Romero, *Lamu: History, Society and Family in an East African Port City*, vii.

²² Zein died of a heart attack, but rumour has it that he was killed in a car accident at the moment a curse was being pronounced on him by some of those he had offended on Lamu. Scott Reese, E-mail, Tue, 05 Jun 2001.

²³ Fallers quoted in Abdul Hamid Mohamed el Zein, *The Sacred Meadows: A Structural Analysis of Religious Symbolism in an East African Town* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1974), xvi.

²⁴ For a description of the position of the scholar who bridges the East/West divide, my discussion of Lila Abu Lughod below.

²⁵ Zein reviews nearly the whole of the body of Geertz’s work to that time including his 1964 essay, “Ideology as a Cultural System,” reprinted in Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973). For Crapanzano he references Vincent Crapanzano, *The Hamadsha: A Study in Moroccan Ethnopsychiatry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973). For Eickelman, Dale F. Eickelman, *Moroccan Islam: Tradition and Society in a Pilgrimage Center* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976). Works by Bujra and Gilsenan are Abdalla S. Bujra, *The Politics of Stratification, a Study of Political Change in a South Arabian Town* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) and Michael Gilsenan, *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt: An Essay in the Sociology of Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973). Gilsenan is one of Constantin’s interlocutors in the debates about Sufism and charisma.

²⁶ For an excellent review of the culture wars see Robert Brightman, “Forget Culture: Replacement, Transcendence, Relexification,” *Cultural Anthropology* 10, no. 4 (1995): 509 – 546.

²⁷ Michele de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984)

²⁸ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 94. Jameson uses the terms history and historicism to refer not only to the contextualization of events in a diachronic narrative. He is also referring to what he sees as the demise of the Marxist sense of history as dialectic. He has long held that Marxism is the point at which theory and history find common ground. See his comments in the preface to Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 13-14. I am well aware that Jameson is a controversial figure among post-colonial theorists particularly for his characterization of “third world literature” as non-canonical. As Aijaz Ahmad points out, Jameson takes his Hegel seriously viewing societies outside the West as societies without history and therefore outside “Civilization.” Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literature* (London: Verso, 1992), 95 – 122. However, as an important actor in the debates on postmodernism, his views on history are pertinent here.

²⁹ Lila Abu Lughod, *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 6 – 14.

³⁰ See my reference to Pearson above.

³¹ Abu Lughod, *Writing Women's Worlds*, 23.

³² Amselle, *Mestizo Logics: Anthropology of Identity in Africa and Elsewhere*, 2. I am indebted to Peter Mark for generously sharing his ideas and sources on cultural mixing, especially the work of Amselle. See Peter Mark, *“Portuguese” Style and Luso-African Identity: Precolonial Senegambia, Sixteenth-Nineteenth Centuries* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

³³ Many scholars who insist that the Swahili are Africans prefer not to discuss how that identity is related to slavery.

³⁴ This is not an unproblematic number. Richard Burton wrote that in 1859 estimates of the total population of Zanzibar ranged from 100,000 to 1,000,000. When he asked Seyyid Said how many “subjects” he had on the island, the Sultan replied, “How can I know when I cannot tell you how many there are in my own house?” He finally settled on 300,000 as a compromise and estimated the slave population at between two thirds and three quarters. Richard Francis Burton, *Zanzibar: City, Island and Coast*, 1st reprint ed. (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1872; reprint, 1967), 312. Abdul Sheriff has proposed that the numbers of slaves in any given area— island or coast—fluctuated widely as the export demand for cloves, grains and oils rose and fell throughout the nineteenth century. Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770 - 1873* (London: James Currey, 1987). Nevertheless, slaves remained a significant portion of the population along the coast even after slavery was officially abolished by Seyyid Said’s grandson, Seyyid Hamoud bin Mohamed bin Said in 1897.

³⁵ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 5-6. For Said the dominant group was the West, i.e. Europe and the United States.

³⁶ Including Said’s arch nemesis Bernard Lewis for whom Islam was (and is) always the “determining factor” of analysis. Cooper was particularly critical of Lewis for talking about “Islam’s attitude” toward racism. Islam he noted does not have attitudes, people do. Frederick Cooper, “Islam and Cultural Hegemony,” in *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa*, ed. Paul E. Lovejoy (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1981), 273.

³⁷ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar*, 49.

³⁸ See for example Fred Morton, *Children of Ham: Freed Slaves and Fugitive Slaves on the Kenya Coast, 1873 to 1907* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990).

³⁹ Abdul Hamid Mohamed el Zein, “Beyond Ideology and Theology: The Search for the Anthropology of Islam,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6 (1977): 241.

⁴⁰ Cooper, “Islam and Cultural Hegemony,” 273 & 97. Some new work on the intellectual history of Zanzibar and East Africa may add some credibility to Cooper’s argument on the influence of the ‘ulama but it is very early days yet. I am aware of several people working in the field, one book on the topic that has been published, Anne K. Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea: Family Networks in East Africa, 1860-1925, Indian Ocean Series* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003) and a Ph.D. dissertation, Amal N. Ghazal, “Islam and Arabism in Zanzibar: The Omani Elite, the Arab World and the Making of an Identity, 1880s-1030s” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Alberta, 2005).

⁴¹ Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 210.

⁴² Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 82 – 83.

⁴³ Cooper's reading of *Sacred Meadows* in the 1980 article is noticeably less skeptical than his earlier discussion of it in *Plantation Slavery*. In that work, though he found Zein's analysis interesting and suggestive, like Romero later, he criticized the lack of a clear historical context for the study. As far as I know, Cooper has never discussed this change of mind.

⁴⁴ M.E. Combs-Shilling, *Sacred Performances: Islam, Sexuality, and Sacrifice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989). Laura Fair, *Pastimes and Politics: Culture, Community, and Identity in Post-Abolition Urban Zanzibar, 1890-1945* (Oxford: J. Currey, 2001). Jonathon Glassman, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995). Helle Goldman, "A Comparative Study of Swahili in Two Rural Communities in Pemba, Zanzibar, Tanzania" (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1996).

⁴⁵ *Wanguwana* has had several meanings over time. In recent times, both Western scholars and their informants have translated it to mean "freeborn." However, as Jonathon Glassman notes, in earlier times it was translated as roughly equivalent to the English word "gentleman." Glassman, *Feasts and Riot*, 62. In his 1994 novel, *Paradise*, Zanzibari writer Abdulrazak Gurnah, translates the word to mean "a man of honour" Abdulrazak Gurnah, *Paradise* (New York: The New Press, 1994), 100.

⁴⁶ Abdul Hamid Mohamed el Zein, *The Sacred Meadows: A Structural Analysis of Religious Symbolism in an East African Town* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 19 & 41.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 109 - 15.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁴⁹ Frederick Cooper, "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History," *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 5 (1994): 1533.

⁵⁰ Ann McDougall in her article on the life of a Moroccan slave, Fatma Barka, treats hegemony as Cooper seems to have intended it. She looks at Fatma's life as a concubine and Islam becomes the context in which Fatma negotiates and creates her identity. E. Ann McDougall, "A Sense of Self: The Life of Fatma Barka," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 32, no. 2 (1998). In other hands, (Jonathan Glassman and Helle Goldman) "hegemonic ideology" and "hegemony" look rather like raw power, which can then be resisted, or explanations in themselves for social differences. Glassman, *Feasts and Riot*, Goldman, "A Comparative Study of Swahili in Two Rural Communities in Pemba, Zanzibar, Tanzania".

⁵¹ I believe questions of orthodoxy are more properly left to religious scholars or read as competing discourses to be used as 'evidence' by historians or anthropologists.

PERSONAL MEMORIES REVOLUTIONARY STATES AND INDIAN OCEAN MIGRATIONS

Mandana Limbert*

In the first half of the twentieth century, thousands of Omanis traveled on dhows from Southern Arabia to East Africa. The descendants of earlier periods of Omani migration, first during the height of the Omani Ya'ariba dynasty in the mid-seventeenth century and then during the move of the Omani capital from Muscat to Zanzibar in the mid-nineteenth century under the rule of Seyyed Said bin Sultan al-Bu Saidi, were thus met with a new wave of immigrants. However, unlike the earlier waves from Oman to Zanzibar, many of those who traveled at the beginning of the twentieth century were from oasis towns and villages in what is now called the "Interior" region (*al-Dakhiliya*) of Oman. They were poorer than their established predecessors and often worked as farmers, shopkeepers, migrant laborers and plantation supervisors. And, unlike the previous waves of Omani migration to East Africa, the early twentieth century wave also included many women.

This article focuses on one woman's personal story of life in Zanzibar and her return to Oman at the height of the revolution in 1964. Although her story does not detail the procedures of migration as evidenced in other personal accounts and in the archival record, her story sheds light on the practices and choices of everyday life among non-elite Omanis moving to and living in rural Zanzibar as well as on the ways that memories of life in East Africa become meaningful in contemporary Oman. In particular, her story reveals the importance of "work" in Zanzibar, both for her and for the ways that social relations and social identities on the farm are remembered. For herself, she emphasizes her role in running a store, an activity that her status as an "Arab" woman would have prevented in Oman. And, for the social relations on the farm, she and her grandson navigate through the pitfalls and assumptions about labor, servitude and wages as they have been transformed in Oman and become a lens through which to understand life in Zanzibar. In this context especially, what the woman chose to describe was as significant as what she chose not to say. Finally, her story reveals how she and her family survived the massacres of Arabs in Zanzibar's rural areas in 1964 and eventually made their way back to Oman.¹ All these aspects of her past highlight not so much her distinction from and tensions with her East African neighbors, but the local, Omani, social divisions. They reveal, as well, her pride in her independence and fearlessness, a

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local and personal politics of the present rather than a statement about colonial divisions, inequalities and hierarchies. In some ways, of course, privileging Omani social divisions and her personal pride in her work help obfuscate the other, perhaps unspeakable, inequalities on Zanzibar.

What struck me about her account, however, was not only the details of her life as they reflected, complemented and perhaps corrected the archival and historiographic record, but also the way that she told me, her daughter and some of her grandchildren her difficult tale. She told us this tale not with emotion, but with detachment. Indeed, her account of the death of her mother while she was in Zanzibar, the loss and search for her children during the revolution as well as her thoughts as she contemplated remaining in Zanzibar were all told with little obvious emotion. The *form* of her account as an unemotional rendering of her personal past worked, I would suggest, to emphasize her independence and strength, features of herself and her life that she had begun to portray at the beginning of our conversation about her “work.”²

TRAVEL, THE “WAMANGA,” AND WORLD WAR II

Although thousands of Omanis from *al-Dakhiliya* made the voyage to Zanzibar in the first half of the twentieth century, historical and anthropological accounts of the connections between Oman and East Africa have tended to focus their attention elsewhere. Instead, scholarly accounts of Omanis in East Africa have either emphasized the ways that Arab communities benefited from the racialized policies of the British Protectorate administration established in 1890 to maintain elite roles – as administrators, slave traders and plantation owners – in Zanzibari life (cfr. Cooper 1997) or have highlighted the scholarly and mercantile contributions of Omanis in the cosmopolitan milieu of the island. Without denying the significance of these perspectives, most Omanis, however, belonged to neither of these categories. Rather, most were petty merchants, itinerant laborers and farmers, sometimes traveling alone and sometimes traveling with their families. They lived in rural Zanzibar rather than in the main town, Stone Town. And, some were, from the perspective of Omani social categories, considered “Arabs” (patrilineal descendants of free men) while others were *akhdâm*, literally “servants,” who were themselves patrilineal descendants of slaves from East Africa. Although in Zanzibar these early twentieth century immigrants were (officially at least) considered “Arabs,” they were generally also considered of lower status than the Omanis who had settled in Zanzibar in the previous centuries and who had established themselves as an elite, creole community. Many of the newcomers were termed “manga Arabs,” a pejorative term with debatable Zanzibari origins that was appropriated by British officials and that continues to have significance in contemporary Zanzibar.³ Relations between the previous immigrants and the newcomers were not always peaceful. Indeed, tensions between well-established Omanis and manga Arabs waxed and waned in the first decades of the century, reaching peaks in the violence of 1925, 1936 and in 1941 on the island of Pemba.⁴

Despite its official status as a British Protectorate from 1890, for many Omanis, Zanzibar continued, in some ways, to be an Omani state. This understanding was not completely wrong, as the British protectorate administration was primarily concerned with “protecting” what it considered to be the Arab elite. In fact, as the Zanzibar Attorney-General stated in 1933 when the economic depression threatened to result in the expropriation of their clove plantations by an

Indian merchant class to whom many Arabs were indebted: “This is an Arab state. It is the duty of the protecting government to assist the protected people. It is impossible for us to stand by and take the risk of the expropriation of His Highness’s people.”⁵

Between 1924 and 1931, the number and percentage of “Arabs” in Zanzibar (and Pemba) increased from almost 19,000 (8.7% of the population) to about 33,500 (14.2% of the population). By 1948, there were about 44,500 Arabs in Zanzibar (13,977 “Arabs” on Zanzibar and 30,583 on Pemba) making up 16.9% of the population. While most of this increase was probably due to migration from Oman, according to Michael Lofchie and others, some of this increase was also due to a shift in the ways people were describing themselves in the local censuses.⁶ Just as some “Swahilis” were increasingly claiming to be “Hadimu,” others were becoming “Arab”.⁷ Nevertheless, it is clear that there was a dramatic increase in the numbers of Arabs on the island. And, many of these were considered “manga,” whether as more permanent residents or as temporary workers traveling to Zanzibar during the clove harvest.

The British Protectorate administration, although relatively sympathetic to the Arab elite, attempted to quell the numbers of migrants, especially after the 1936 riots. The increase of migration from Oman to Zanzibar and especially the increased numbers of destitute Arabs looking for temporary work on the clove plantations or at the Zanzibar port propelled the British Protectorate administration to promulgate several immigration decrees and regulations limiting the numbers of such recent migrants. Despite tensions with the new arrivals, the Arab Association, which was an officially recognized association dating to the 1920s and run by the elite of the Arab community, contested these limits. Discussions between the British administration and the Arab Association as well as documents between Muscat, Zanzibar and London outlining rulings, negotiations and numbers, however, suggest not only that the administration did not concede to the association, but also the ways that the security measures and rationings instituted during the Second World War were used to legitimize travel restrictions after the war as well.

From 1923, the Immigration Regulation and Restriction decree had managed the entry of Arabs from Arabia and the African mainland into Zanzibar. In 1940, however, the Protectorate Administration established another procedure under the Defense (Immigration Restriction) Regulations, geared specifically at Arabs arriving from Oman and the Hadramaut. There were several issues at stake for the British administration in the early 1940s. First, the numbers of immigrants had increased in the late 1930s when the Clove Growers Association began hiring a considerable number of buying agents from among the recent arrivals.⁸ However, when the hiring policy changed in 1939 and the Association began purchasing directly from producers, both the previously employed and the prospective agents arriving from Muscat were left without jobs. The number of destitute Arabs increased and the Protectorate Administration began systematizing their repatriation procedures, not to mention their immigration policies.⁹ Second, the protectorate administration claimed that during the Second World War, for security reasons, it was incumbent on them to limit the numbers of ships traveling the Indian Ocean. Third, private ships began demanding additional payments from Omani passengers in case, due to the heightened restrictions, they were turned back at Zanzibar port. Not all passengers were allowed to disembark at Zanzibar and those who were refused entrance to Zanzibar, were sent back to Arabia or the

mainland. As most of those who were refused entrance did not have (or claimed not to have) the funds for the return trip, the ship captains not only had to take care of the passengers confined to the ships in the port, but also had to allow them to return at their own expense.

The new procedures established in 1940, tightened in 1942, amplified in 1944, and barely relaxed after the war ended in 1945 affected not only the woman whose story I recount below, but countless other Omanis. According to the new procedures, Omanis were expected to request entry permission from the British Resident in Muscat before their departure from Arabia. Given contemporary travel procedures, this hardly seems particularly restrictive. However, the policy and the opposition it generated suggest that prior to these regulations travel from Oman to Zanzibar was relatively unhindered. By 1944, the Arab Association began complaining vociferously about the restrictions especially because once arriving in Zanzibar and until paperwork could be checked, many people were kept in uncomfortable and unsanitary conditions on ships in the harbor. And, those who could not gain entrance, because of illness (such as, trachoma) or because no one would take responsibility for them by providing work or a place to stay, would remain on the ships until the return voyage. Complaints also increased because the Association suspected that the restrictions would not be removed at the end of the war. In response, and as the protectorate administration recognized that many immigrants from Arabia did not know of the procedure, they asked that the Arab Association establish an "Arab Immigration Committee" that could vouch and provide a place to stay for the new migrants who arrived without proper travel papers.¹⁰ Bringing the Arab Association into the management of the immigrants into Zanzibar, of course, enabled the protectorate administration to make the Arab Association accountable for "its community," making the Association members feel as though they were participating in the administration and enforcing the racialized distinctions at the heart of Zanzibar's administration.

The new restrictions also articulated British concerns about the status and potential destitution of the newly arriving immigrants. Indeed, the restrictions, as outlined by the Provincial Commissioner, stated that "consent will be given freely to all persons who have business interests or property in Zanzibar; or if it can be shown to the satisfaction of the Immigration Authorities that the intending immigrants have somebody to whom they can come who will be responsible for them and ensure that they obtain gainful occupation, and be responsible for their repatriation should they become destitute."¹¹

These restrictions, although not stemming the numbers of dhows from Arabia (in fact, the numbers increased from 171 in 1943 to 291 in 1944), meant that the majority of those traveling to Zanzibar were returned to Arabia.¹² Internal notes from 1944 and again after the war in 1945 reveal, as some Arab Association members suspected, that the protectorate administration intended on continuing its restrictions, which they did. In 1944, for example, the Provincial Commissioner, in outlining the amplification, admits: "if this war control is handled sympathetically, I think the Arabs themselves will ask for its continuance."¹³ And, again, in 1945, the Acting Secretary wrote in a memorandum "I think the food situation and the employment position are the best remaining arguments for continuing restrictions, and more might be made of them."¹⁴

Despite the restrictions, Omanis continued to travel. Oman of the time is remembered as a place of drought, poverty and sporadic fighting. Compared to the fruits of Zanzibari trade and the East African economy more generally, Oman was

considered destitute. Fighting, blockades and rations between the supporters of the newly re-established theocratic government in the Interior, known as the Imamate (from 1913), and its adversaries – either the Sultanate in Muscat, the oil companies that were looking to begin exploration in the region,¹⁵ as well as local tribal and town rulers who did not support or want to succumb to the taxes, power and hierarchies of the Imamate administration – made travel to Zanzibar extremely tempting for many. During World War II, food rations and restrictions were also placed on both the Sultanate territory on the coast as well as the Imamate territory in the interior. This period, remembered in Oman as the period of “*kontrol*,” aided in people’s desires to leave their already impoverished villages.

One woman I knew possessed such desires, although she left Oman for Zanzibar less than a decade later, when the travel procedures were well established. And, as she notes, the time she made the trip to East Africa was neither a time of war nor a time of drought. Instead, she simply says that they had heard that it was nice (*zayna*) in Zanzibar. Indeed, none of the “hardships” of the procedures seem to have affected her. Rather, her focus in talking to me and to her family about her life in East Africa centered on “work,” what she did and what the others who worked on their farm did as well as her experiences during the revolution and their return to Oman.

GHANIA¹⁶

Ghania was born to a family of “Arabs” (that is, not of *akhdâm*), probably in the late 1930s. When I met her in 1996, she was a great-grandmother and most of her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren were living in the lower middle-class area of Muscat called al-Khodh, while her daughter was living in Bahla, Ghania’s natal home. For the most part, Ghania stayed in Muscat with one of her daughters, but would come and visit occasionally, either during the holidays or when her daughter in Bahla needed extra help around the house. Ghania’s husband Ahmad lived in a large house in the more wealthy area of al-Ruwi with his second wife, their children and some of their grandchildren. Ahmad was both a businessman and a respected and well-connected religious scholar: he was the imam of a mosque in his neighborhood and knew the grand Mufti of Oman, also originally of a family from Bahla and also someone who grew up in Zanzibar.

Every time Ghania would come to Bahla, she and I would sit and talk: she loved to talk and I loved to hear stories of the spirits, black magic, and scholars for which Bahla is famous. She also would, from time to time, speak of her own life, what it was like in Bahla when she was young, her marriage, her time in Zanzibar and her return to Oman. As she often pointed out when her grandchildren asked her how old she was then or how old she was when she went to a certain place, “what do I know?” She remembered, though, how as a little girl, Sheikh Abu Zayd, the famous Bahlawi governor (*wâlî*) from 1916-1945 used to patrol the streets of the town at night listening for unusual noises; she remembered how she used to be terrified of him, with his long hair and abilities to call upon the spirits. She also remembered how as a little girl during Abu Zayd’s time, she would go to the prison in the fort, bringing food for a family member who was being punished.

On one of her visits to Bahla, as her daughter and some of her grandchildren were sitting around after dinner, she began to speak about her travels to East Africa. As she began, I asked if she would mind if I recorded her story. As I had already recorded a number of her accounts of Bahla and its notorious world of

spirits, she was accustomed to the process and agreed. When I returned and began the tape, she explained:

Many years ago, before I was born but when my father was alive, there was a very serious drought (*mahl*) and our family (*hayyannâ*) all traveled from Bahla, some going to Khaburah, some to Zanzibar, and some to Hamra. There was no one of our family here.

Traveling to Khaburah 150 miles away was likened to traveling to Zanzibar 2200 miles away and likened to traveling to Hamra, 30 miles away from Bahla. She made no categorical distinction of different spatial or political boundaries.

Her father, who had stayed in Bahla, although of a prominent family, was hardly wealthy.

We lived in “the neighborhood” [meaning one of the main neighborhoods in Bahla, Hârat al-‘Aqur] and my father worked as a porter. There were no jobs at that time. He had a donkey and would ride it, carrying with him water, dirt and manure (*samâd*). He couldn’t work with heavy things, but he had a donkey. And, when my father died, they said: it is better if she marries her cousin [the son of her paternal uncle]. I did not have a brother. So, four months after my father’s death, he took me.

This must have been in the early 1950s.

We stayed in Bahla at first, farming: alfalfa (*qat*), indigo (*nîl*), chick peas (*dengiû*), onions (*basal*), and sesame (*simsim*). Within the year, he came to me and said Zanzibar is nice, let’s go to Zanzibar. Most people would go to Zanzibar, though, when there was fighting (*ma‘ârik*) or drought, but there wasn’t either when we went. They just told us it was nice (*zayna*). So, we went to Zanzibar, together (*irbâ‘a*), and opened a store.

When I asked about the voyage, how they got to Muscat, where they took a boat, what happened when they arrived in Zanzibar, Ghania seemed less interested. Ahmad, she said, took care of all that. She didn’t remember where they took the boat. She was with the women on the ship and when they arrived in Zanzibar, they went to the Association house at first. Instead, Ghania wanted to explain her life in Zanzibar.

We lived in a village where there were plantations (*shamba*) outside of Zanzibar town. When Ahmad would go to the town (*al-balad*) [Zanzibar town], I would stay in the store and I would buy and I would sell.

Ghania liked to repeat how she ran the store when Ahmad would go to the town and, she would add, Ahmad’s brother Abdullah was there too. He also opened a store and his wife Salma would run his store. In contemporary Oman, it would have been unlikely that Ghania would run a store: her status as an Arab woman would have been an obstacle to her partaking in what is sometimes understood as less than appropriate work. Ghania, nonetheless, took pride in her work in the store, emphasizing how on the island, it was the women who took care of such things. Ghania and Ahmad sold, she said, whatever people wanted.

We would sell groceries (*samân*), sugar, rice (*‘aysh*). I would make mandâzî [a type of fried bread] and sell it. We also had coconuts.

Do you know what we did with the coconuts? We would break the

coconuts in half and use an iron stick, a “shanga,” that’s what they would call it, to skewer the coconuts, and we’d put the coconuts above a fire. I would add to the fire, and when it would go down, I would add more, and then, when they were cooked, they would be ready. We would use them to make bags and would sell them.

The process of preparing the coconut husks for drying, a process foreign to those in Northern Oman and foreign to me, fascinated her and my own inexperience provided an occasion to describe it. Rather than cloves, whose prices were dropping, Ghania and her husband focused their business on copra.

I then asked who worked for them.

Omanis. They would work (*yishtighilū*), sometimes 5 or 6 people.

Ghania’s grandson, Sayf, who was sitting with us, suddenly asked: “*You would rent them (tistaqirūhum), the workers, or were they servants (akhdām) that you had (‘an andkum)?*”

They were workers (*‘ummāl*), workers. They worked (*yishtighilū*).
Workers.

Again, Sayf: “*From there? You would find them there?*”

No, not from there, they were all Omanis, all of them. There was Su‘ud bin Ali, he worked, and there was Hashu, you know him, the one who used to work at the hospital, at the doors. Then, Muhsin bin Shaykhan worked with us (*ma’nā*), and Mohammad bin Khamis.

Sayf: “*And you’d give them a salary (ma’āsh)?*”

What’s wrong, yes, we’d give them money.

Sayf: “*So, they weren’t servants, they would work (sbtughul)?*”

We’d give them money. One would carry (*yisūq*) coconuts, one would pick up (*yatla*) coconuts, one would go to the town also, taking and bringing wood. And Su‘ud, do you know Su‘ud who now fertilizes your father’s date palms? Well, him. He was young when he came to us. He was young, like Nasr [who was about 10], when he came to Zanzibar, he worked. First he worked in the store and then he sold wood, he’d go to the town.

For Sayf, “work” clearly meant getting paid with money, and thus it meant not being a servant. Ghania, though, does not answer whether or not their workers were servants (*akhdām*). Instead, she says that they were paid, that is, that they were not slaves, and that they were “Omani”. Ghania, here, is eliding the question of how people of the servant class, although engaged in wage labor, continued to be servants.

And then there was the clove season. There, we knew people from “the neighborhood” (*al-hāra*) [the village neighborhood], and the town too. There were many from the town, we got to know. They would work with us during the clove season. They would put the seed on one side, and would put, what do they call it? “maqoni”, or “makroni”, on the other side. And then they would come and we’d weigh by the kilo, on the scale, and give them money at the price of the kilo, and then we’d give them their pay (*igārathum*). And I was in the store.

While Ghania was in Zanzibar, they would also hear about what was going on in Oman.

My mother died while I was in Zanzibar. Someone brought the news in a letter, as there weren't telephones (*tilifûmâ*) in those days. People would come from Oman with letters. And, the war in Oman too, we heard from people who came. We were in Zanzibar then, but we heard about it. We heard that they bombed the fort.¹⁷ And, we heard about how they tricked my sister into selling the house. She was there but they sold it behind her back (*kebahfûhâ*).

In telling this list of tragic and dramatic events in her life, Ghania focuses not on the pain, sadness or shock that she felt, but on the means of communication: letters rather than telephones. Her mother died, the town's fort was bombed and her sister was tricked into selling their home, but Ghania simply lists these events.

Then, there was the war in Zanzibar. At first we began to hear of people getting killed when they would go to the plantations and other villages, they would be kidnapped and killed. We heard of injuries. Then, one day, they attacked the store. I was not in the store that day, but Ahmad's niece was there. They came in and started cutting everything and they cut her and she jumped under the table and they were going to kill her, but they thought she was already dead. They said "she's already dead, let's go." She still has a scar, but they sewed her up.

Ghania explained how she could not find two of her children, Zouayna and Said, or her husband for three days.

There were places, where there were schools (*madâris*), schools (*skûlât*), that's what they called them. I don't know. They'd put them there. And the women, also, they would take them. I spent the next three days with our neighbors and we tried to escape (*shardîn*), first to a place called "Bunda" near the water. A group of men saw us and asked what we were doing. We explained to the men that we needed to save our children. Then, we went to a place called "Bikunguna" and I went to speak to the head of the neighborhood who was "from there" (*bû bunâk*) [that is, from Zanzibar] and who was a friend of Ahmad's. The head of the neighborhood told me that they had looked for the children, but I protested to them. I said: the children are young and if they see your men; they'll be scared, they won't come out. The next day, the head of the neighborhood sent one or two men, "Gumma', whatever they were called in those days" and we went out into the plantations to look for coconuts and bananas to eat.

Sayf, turned to me at this point, explaining *Gumma'* – but with uncertainty – meant "police" (*shurta*).

The men said that they found my children, in Mtuni, Maqumbira. So I went there, where the plantations were like prisons, and found my children and took them. Then Ahmad returned. His hand had been cut and he had been beaten up, he hadn't gone to one of the

prisons because he was in the hospital. We still, however, hadn't found Ahmad's brother Abdullah. Finally we tracked him down, hiding in a neighborhood mosque.

Ghania and her group (her family, the neighbors, and Abdullah and his wife and daughter) decided that it would be best to go to the town, where there was a hospital and where they could go to the association house, *Bayt Gam'ya*. Ahmad and his brother Abdullah went first, perhaps making sure there was room, and returned the next day.

When Ahmad started to cover us up, I asked what he was doing and he said: "do you want to be killed?" I said that I wasn't going to go without our neighbors (*gírán*). I said I would not leave my neighbors! Ahmad said that he wouldn't come back the next day to get them, but would send a driver. So, the next day, a car came and took me, my children, and a neighbor and then another car took the other neighbors and we went to the town, to the association house. We stayed there for a bit, but then decided to "take" [rent] our own house in town. They came and said that it was safe now, whoever wanted to return to his houses (*baytú*) could go, but we were afraid that we would be killed, so we stayed in town and rented a house. We would get some money from someone who would come from our farms, but he wouldn't give us everything, just a little bit, just enough to eat and drink. For three months, we took from our farms in the village.

Ahmad then heard that a travel ban might be imposed from Zanzibar so it would be better if they signed up to get their papers to leave. Ghania, though, wasn't sure about going back to Oman. "What would I have there? I didn't have a father, or mother, or brother. I didn't have anything. So, I said to Ahmad, give me the farms, and I will stay here with my children."

Ahmad had, several years before, married another woman, Thuraya, the woman he now lives with in Muscat and it was perhaps with her that Ahmad lived when he would go to the town, leaving Ghania to manage the store. Although her husband hadn't divorced her – probably due to his own devoutness and piety – she knew that she had "no one". But, Ghania explained, she realized that in fact she would not receive enough money from the farms to provide for her children. "What could I do? I delayed. But, in the end I signed our names and we boarded the ship, the "mail", and went to Oman."

Since Ghania's return to Oman, she has been moving back and forth from Muscat to Bahla. She once explained that when they got to Muscat, her husband at first wanted to return to Bahla. "I should not have gone, but what would I do? So I went. I did not have anyone there."

In the end, though, they returned to Muscat where her husband bought apartments and started a small-scale construction company. Ghania continues to travel back and forth from Muscat to Bahla, her birth place but to which she was – since her first departure to Zanzibar – always reluctant to return.

MEMORY, LABOR AND VIOLENCE

Ghania's account of life in and return from Zanzibar is structured around work and the violence of the revolution. Contrasting her life in Zanzibar with what was possible in Bahla, she emphasizes how she and her brother-in-law's wife would manage their stores near the farms in Zanzibar. Although many women in her birth place of Bahla manage little stores outside of the main market today, few Arab women do. Within the market as well, although some young women have taken jobs in shops, they are usually not Arab women. The market is, in general, considered (as in some other places in the Middle East) a place of disrepute and inappropriate for women, especially for Arab women. Stores in the rest of the town selling candy for children, feminine hygiene goods and basic cleaning products as well as some ready-made clothes have been established outside the main market in Bahla to cater to women who are not supposed to venture to the market. Although I knew several Arab women who ran such stores, most of the stores were connected to the houses of and managed by those of the "servant" class. Ghania's pride in her management of the store did not in this case, however, reflect a complete rejection of class divisions between servants and Arabs in Bahla, but rather a pride in her responsibilities for the formal affairs of their business endeavors.

In addition to the management of the store, Ghania enjoyed describing the details of copra production. Frederick Cooper has noted that in the late nineteenth twenties, Zanzibar's copra was sun-dried and mostly done by a small number of Indians. And, except for some Arab families on Pemba, Arabs, he notes, generally did not do their own drying.¹⁸ Ghania's detailed account of Copra drying – with fire – suggests that either her techniques and participation were exceptions to the general economy of copra or that by the late 1950s and early 1960s, the industry had changed. It is also possible, of course, that while elite Arabs in Zanzibar did not participate in copra, *manga* Arabs in rural areas did. Similarly, it is possible that colonial officials writing the archival record simply did not know about the activities of rural *manga* Arabs.

Although Ghania did not associate copra drying with a particular ethnic category, whether Arab, African or Indian, as some of the literature on early twentieth century coconut agriculture does, Ghania was also very careful about her use of social categories in reference to labor in other contexts. In particular, when speaking about who worked for them on the farm, Ghania insisted that all of their "workers," were Omani and, further, that all received payments. She was, in other words, insisting that they were not slaves, either from East Africa or from Oman. Indeed, she became somewhat defensive about their "payment" of the workers, saying "what's wrong, of course we paid them." At the same time, however, Ghania refused to answer her grandson's questions about whether the workers were "servants" (*akhdām*) in the Omani sense of the term. Her refusal and her grandson's continued questions not only suggested that, in fact, their workers *were* servants, but that her grandson was somewhat confused about the structure of identity. Like their own identities as "Arabs," being a servant in Oman is transferred patrilineally and is not necessarily a condition of labor. For Sayf, the distinction was between workers and servants: "work" for Sayf implied monetary compensation while being a servant did not.

In her account, Ghania distinguishes herself and her family from those "from there," but it is also quite clear that she and her family might have stayed in

Zanzibar had the revolution not taken place. Indeed, she considered staying in Zanzibar as some other (albeit few) women and families had despite the revolution. In what ways Ghania could or would not eventually also have been “from there” opens questions about the status of the previous waves of Omanis in Zanzibar and the ways they came, in the years just before the revolution, to claim to be Zanzibaris (rather than Omani Arabs) in Zanzibar as well as they came to be considered “Zanzibaris” in Oman. Although she lived in East Africa for about 10 years, she would not, in Oman today, be considered a “Zanzibari,” as the descendants of the previous generations of Omanis to East African have been. She was, instead, a manga Arab.

CONCLUSIONS

In the first half of the twentieth century and especially after the intermittent successes of the clove industry in the 1920s and during the turbulence of interior Oman’s politics, thousands of Omanis from towns like Bahla undertook the arduous journey from their desert oases to coastal Oman and on to East Africa. For the most part, the travelers were men looking for temporary work on the clove and coconut plantations or as porters in the market and port. Many were also hoping to set up their own shops and farms, bringing their families with them from Oman. They often expected to move outside Zanzibar’s capital, Stone Town, to the villages either on the island’s coast or in the more fertile central and northern interior. While they certainly benefited from the economic and political assistance of the policies of the British protectorate administration, they were hardly “elite” large plantation owners or members of Stone Town’s cosmopolitan social world. Indeed, they were hindered in their attempts at migration. Thus, to the extent that families and women such as Ghania participated in agricultural life and shop-keeping, this personal story reveals aspects of rural life that complement and contrast both with the historiographic record and social expectations in contemporary Oman.

At the same time, this account cannot be understood isolated from its practice as memory work, both in its content and in its form. Indeed, in contemporary Oman, Ghania’s emphasis on her daily activities in the store and on the farm works to highlight both local Omani hierarchies and her personal independence and strength, obfuscating to some extent the tense racialized relations on Zanzibar before the revolution. Striking, however, in this account is also Ghania’s apparent detachment from the affective weight that arduous travel, death of a mother and a massacre might be expected to convey. Rather than simply draw conclusions about the culturally appropriate articulation and structuring of grief and sentiment, her renderings could also be understood to heighten her own message of independence and strength, a message that is geared not so much against the ravages of a massacre or ethnic tensions, but against the vagaries of a personal story. In the end, this is a story, therefore, not only of a class of migrants and the violent revolution focused against them, but of a personal attempt at balancing between independence and loneliness, between strength and reliance.

 ENDNOTES

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¹ Debate persists in Zanzibari historiography about the degree to which the massacres of 1964 were ethnically or racially motivated rather than “socially” grounded. It seems to me that as much as the two were linked in people’s expectations and assumptions about privilege and exploitation, they cannot be understood as independent in historical analysis.

² For an excellent analysis of the absence of sentiment among Indonesian servants’ accounts of their memories of Dutch families, see Ann Stoler and Karen Strassler, “Castings for the Colonial: Memory Work in ‘New Order’ Java” *Comparative Study of Society and History*, 42:1 (2000): 4-48.

³ In his *Omani Sultans in Zanzibar*, Ahmed Hamoud al-Maamiry (as others do elsewhere) claims that the term “Manga” simply means “Oman” or “North”. Al-Maamiry, however, dates the term to a political song from the mid-seventeenth century when a delegation of indigenous Zanzibaris is said to have traveled to Oman to request help from Imam Sultan bin Said al-Yaaruby in expelling the Portuguese from the island.

⁴ Most of the records on the 1925 riots seem to be missing from the Zanzibar National Archives (ZNA) and only passing comments appear in subsequent files on “Riots and Disturbances” ZNA AB/70. Files on the riots of 1936 (which were sparked by Copra inspection procedures and which led to a commission of enquiry), however, are available. For the 1936 riots, also see Jean-Claude Penrad, “Émueté à Zanzibar (février 1936): La violence ambiguë” in *L’Étranger Intime: Mélanges offerts à Paul Ottino* (Saint André, Réunion: Université de la Réunion, 1995), 395-410. According to Lofchie, fighting in 1928 began when someone from the older community did not invite someone or some families from the newer community to a wedding. Michael F. Lofchie, *Zanzibar: Background to Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 205n. According to notes in the ZNA, however, disturbances in 1928 involved tensions between an Indian shopkeeper and a “manga” Arab in Pemba (ZNA AB/70/3/1). On the other hand, the disturbances in Pemba in 1941 seem to have involved tensions over marriage. The records suggest that more than tensions between manga and non-manga Arabs, the marriage dispute was based primarily in personality conflicts between various “tribal” sheikhs of two communities.

⁵ Quoted in Lofchie, *Zanzibar*, 115-116. After Seyyid Said bin Sultan al-Bu Saidi’s death in 1856 and ensuing succession fighting, the British authorities arbitrated between different parties, helping to establish two distinct Sultanates, each of which was ruled by the descendents of Seyyid Said bin Sultan. Zanzibar continued to be ruled, nominally, by the al-Bu Saidis until the 1964 revolution in Zanzibar, while Oman continues to be ruled by the al-Bu Saidi dynasty. Oman was never officially established as a British Protectorate, although discussions of the possibility of entering such an arrangement occasionally occupied British officials. One example of such a discussion appears in files from 1891 on whether or how to have the Omani Sultan Feysal bin Turki promulgate a slavery decree, IO R/15/6/20. The question of establishing Oman as a British protectorate came up again during a case between the British and French over “Omani” dhows that had been flying French flags, which had been brought to arbitration at the Hague in 1905.

⁶ See Lofchie, *Zanzibar*, 74-75.

⁷ For an account of the history of the Hadimu and this appellation, which means slave or servant, see J.M. Gray 1977 “The Hadimu and Tumbatu of Zanzibar” *Tanzania Notes and Records*, 81/82: 135-153.

⁸ ZNA DO/40/52/16

⁹ ZNA DO/40/52/33

¹⁰ Similarly, Arabs (that is, Omanis) could, according to the plans of the administration, request that the Arab Immigration Committee recommend entry to the Immigration Officer at Zanzibar, who would in turn send the entry permit to Oman by Post. It has to be remembered, that a “postal service” was hardly available to anyone outside the diplomatic corps or government officials in Muscat. While people sent letters back and forth from Oman to Zanzibar, these letters were hardly part of a “postal service,” but were, instead, often carried by relatives, neighbors, and townsfolk.

¹¹ ZNA AB/26/92/43

¹² ZNA AB/26/92/84

¹³ ZNA AB/26/92/43

¹⁴ ZNA AB/26/92/143

¹⁵ Oil was not discovered in Oman until the mid-1960s and the first shipment of commercial crude oil from Oman was exported in 1967.

¹⁶ Many of the personal names in this account have been changed.

¹⁷ The bombing of the Bahla fort in 1957 was part of a campaign by Sultan Said bin Taimur and supported by the British military to oust the Imamate government of Imam Ghalib bin Ali.

¹⁸ See Frederick Cooper, *From Slaves to Squatters* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Press, 1991), 133-134.

BEING BAYSAR (IN)FLEXIBLE IDENTITIES IN EAST AFRICA

Thomas F. McDow*

Unitary notions of Arabness in East Africa mask processes of migration and settlement, and older interpretations of African history based on the geographical unity of Africa occlude a fuller picture of the processes of history in East Africa. Without reference to Arabia and the Indian Ocean world, the history of Zanzibar or the Swahili world is difficult to understand, and this broader analysis can extend into the interior of East Africa, to the caravan trails and trade towns that sprang up in the nineteenth century. Omani migrants were one of the groups that traveled to the interior of East Africa, but these migrants and itinerants identified subgroups among themselves, casting doubt on the idea of a single Arab identity in East Africa. Indeed, by focusing on Omani migrants and taking into account categories that circulated across the Indian Ocean it is possible to disaggregate Arab identity in nineteenth century East Africa and clarify at least one little known category of identification—“baysar”—among Omani residents. Certain marriages cast differences of social categories among Arabs into stark contrast.

Consider one particular marriage. Sulayman bin Sleyum had brought a proposal to marry Zuwayna bint Muhammad. It must have been sometime before 1910. Zuwayna had not been in Tabora long—she had fled into German East Africa from the Congo Free State after her father, Muhammad bin Khamis al-Kiyumi (an Arab born in Oman) had been killed fighting the Belgians in the late 1890s.¹

Both Sulayman and Zuwayna were part of a community of Omanis who lived in Tabora, a bustling town on the central plateau of East Africa. Tabora had grown up in the mid-nineteenth century from a series of hamlets in the Unyanyembe region, more than 500 miles from the Indian Ocean. Groups of Arabs and coastal traders established a base for themselves in Unyanyembe in the 1830s and 40s by allying with local chiefs, making them business partners and fathers-in-law. The best known example of this is Muhammad bin Juma al-Murjebi, whose son Hamed, also known as Tippu Tip, was one of the most famous traders in the interior in the late nineteenth century. Muhammad bin Juma married Karunde, a daughter of a Nyamwezi chief in the 1840s and, in so doing, established a base for himself and other people who had come from the coast to that vicinity.²

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As the caravan trade in ivory and slaves grew in the nineteenth century, Tabora became a principal way-station and cross roads for caravans coming from Zanzibar and coastal towns. By the 1890s more than 80,000-100,000 porters were passing through Tabora every year, and with them came more people from the coast—a variety of Arabs and Swahili people—as well as Africans from all parts of the interior.³ From Tabora the routes continued north to the kingdom of Buganda, west to Lake Tanganyika and the Congo, and southwest to the slave-hunting regions south of Lake Tanganyika.

The Omani community in Tabora began with itinerant traders who had reached the far interior from Zanzibar.⁴ From the early decades of the nineteenth century Zanzibar was the center of Omani power in East Africa. In the 1830s, the Omani ruler Sa'id bin Sultan al-Busa'idi had moved his court some 2000 miles from Muscat in Arabia to Zanzibar, just south of the equator to expand commercial opportunities in the face of encroaching British suzerainty over the Persian Gulf and sea routes to India.⁵ As the seat of the Omani empire and a booming trade port, Zanzibar became the jumping off point for the interior of East Africa. As ivory prices rose in India and Europe throughout most of the nineteenth century, Arab traders pursued ivory on the African mainland opposite Zanzibar, eventually moving west in search of cheaper ivory and more abundant herds.⁶

Admittedly, the trading post and way-station of Tabora was far from the interior oases of Arabia, and the number of Arabs who claimed Omani heritage in Tabora was not large. In the early years of the town, the size of the community varied seasonally, as traders arrived and departed with the caravans. Increasing numbers of Arabs and coastal Muslims settled there in the latter half of the nineteenth century, making Tabora the most important Muslim town in the interior. Men of Omani descent controlled important sectors of the economy and, through business partnerships, linked the Congo River basin with the Indian Ocean.⁷

Zuwayna, the bride to be, was born in East Africa. Her father was born in Oman and emigrated to East Africa in search of new opportunities.⁸ With the expansion of trade and trade routes throughout eastern and central Africa, many Arabs, coastal people, and their clients moved into the Congo Free State where ivory was plentiful and the market good for trade items from Zanzibar. In the 1890s, representatives of Belgium's King Leopold and their mercenaries came into increasing competition with the east coast and Indian Ocean traders. They fought openly for the first half of that decade, and many Zanzibari Arab and Swahili people escaped or were killed.⁹ Zuwayna and her two sisters crossed Lake Tanganyika to Kigoma in German East Africa and then went to Tabora where their father's business partner, Sulayman bin Zahir al-Jabri, resided. Sulayman had been established in the interior for many years and enjoyed good credit in Zanzibar from the Indian financiers of the ivory trade.¹⁰ Zuwayna lived with Sulayman and his family, and it was with him that the young suitor Sulayman bin Sleyum was to finalize the wedding.

Old Sulayman bin Zahir was ill when the wedding day arrived, and he had to ask his trusted slave, Marjani bin Othman to conclude the wedding arrangements. Everyone wore their finery, and when Sulayman bin Sleyum arrived, he was well dressed in Omani style, with a long white *kanzu* [dishdasha] and a *joho*, the woolen cloak favored by well-to-do Arabs for occasions such as these. Sulayman bin Sleyum greeted Marjani and the assembled group, "Al-Salaam 'alaykum," and the servant Marjani answered, "Wa'alaykum al-salam, ya shaykh Sulayman."

Sulayman corrected the slave. He was not a shaykh, he said, but a servant of shaykhs. With that, as the story is told, the wedding was called off.¹¹ Sulayman bin Sleyum was a baysar,¹² and thus, to Omanis and their trusted slaves, unfit for marriage to an Omani of noble birth.

This failed attempt at marriage between two people of Omani descent in the town of Tabora, several hundred miles from Zanzibar and several thousand miles from Oman, hinged on notions of status imported from Oman. This raises important questions. Who were the people who identified others as baysar, and who were identified that way?¹³ In nineteenth and early twentieth century East Africa, Omanis became part of increasingly multi-ethnic societies in Zanzibar and the East African interior, yet it is clear in a number of examples that this societal differentiation from Oman continued to operate. At the same time, however, new opportunities for mobility, wealth, and marriage in new communities offered people identified as baysar new contexts in which to escape social limitations imposed by other Omanis. The tension here is between the kind of constructed and fluid identities that could occur in frontier places and the kind of identifications and fixed social statuses within established communities. A review of historical accounts and usage of baysar helps illuminate its meanings, but it is only in a certain social milieu that one can see the results of the status in practice.

In popular conceptions today, people of Arab descent in East Africa and Oman identify baysar as those without a tribe and who may or may not be Arabs.¹⁴ This set of labels exists for those with a claim on Arabness; those who do not claim Arab descent were unfamiliar with the status of baysar. Perhaps their predecessors in East Africa may have known of this strand of Arab identity—certainly the slave in the story of the failed wedding did—but, “baysar” is not included in early Swahili dictionaries.¹⁵ The contemporary lack of knowledge of this category today may be attributed to a compression of all categories of Arab and Arab descended people in eastern Africa over the last century.

The term baysar, as it is used in East Africa, derives from the Omani Arabic word *baysari* (plural *bayāsira*). Written sources give a variety of meanings, all of which connote low status and suggest the lack of origin.¹⁶ Serjeant equates it with the *duʿif* (ضعيف) [weak] class in southern Arabia, and there maybe a historical link to both the concept and the region.¹⁷ Some consider baysar to be a different race than Arabs, and thus *mawālī*.¹⁸ The concept of baysariness has circulated in Arabia beyond Oman including Kuwait, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates.¹⁹ With Arabian migrants, the status traveled to East Africa. After considering the literature on baysar and treatment of the various Arab identities in East Africa, we will return to the topic of baysar in Oman and East Africa to explore the limited references to this status from the nineteenth century.

To date the most sustained writing on baysar status and identity in Oman is J.C. Wilkinson’s 1974 article comparing *bayāsira* and *bayādir*. He identifies the former as perhaps the earliest inhabitants of eastern and southern Arabia, a group without origin (اصل) who were never assimilated into the dominant Arabic social order after the rise of Islam.²⁰ *Bayādir*, on the other hand, operates as a social class linked to agricultural work that has been incorporated into tribal structures in the Ibadi areas of Oman, but not in the Sunni regions, where the status remains marked as low.²¹ Here Wilkinson is interested in “the underlying layers in the palimpsest of present traditional social organization in South East Arabia.” Wilkinson argues that the explanation of *bayāsira* that rest on a deep history of Arabia and Islamic conversion is one that works socially, but not historically. He overstates his case,

however, when he suggests that the reason *bayāsira* failed to be integrated into Omani society is that they had no racial origins so that those with known origins, Arabs and Persians, spurned them.²² Some baysar groups have *nisha* adjective names representing tribes, and some are linked as clients with Arabs.²³

One of the keys to understanding nineteenth-century East African history, especially in the interior, is determining what drove settlement of Arab and coastal migrants. Within this, the question of who were the “Arabs” in East Africa is very important. During the colonial period, historians of East Africa were interested in the role of outsiders as they sparked change.²⁴ In these works, Arabs, sometimes vaguely defined, played an important role as innovators. Early post-independence and nationalist scholarship glossed over Arab roles to structure arguments around African initiative. Too often all Muslim people in the interior were lumped together. For instance in writing about the role such people played in Manyema, in the eastern Congo, one scholar has posited, “The Islamic traders from Zanzibar and the east coast saw themselves as the political and social overlords of Manyema,” partially, he suggests because they were already accustomed to this role in the Tabora area.²⁵ Identifying Muslims in the interior in such a sweeping way impedes an understanding of the ways in which people and ideas moved within the interior.

More recent scholarship has taken pains to be more clear on social (and economic) categories, distinguishing between Omani and Yemeni migrants to East Africa, thus showing the complicated interactions of various Arab and African groups at the coast.²⁶ Examining the interior of East Africa, however, such disaggregation must go further in order to better understand the role of historical actors. For instance, a common contention among historians of nineteenth century East African history is that Arab migrants took part in the caravan trade and traveled to towns like Tabora and Ujiji in order to amass wealth and retire to Zanzibar or Oman.²⁷ Some, however, remained in East Africa, and played important roles in the early colonial economy. Furthermore, all of these “Arabs” were not necessarily Arabs. Among these “Arabs” were Baluchi men, the mercenaries and adventurers from the Makran coast and Oman who served the Arab elite. They were of relatively low status among the Arabs and thus less fixed on the idea of returning to Zanzibar after a sojourn in the interior.²⁸ Perhaps the same incentives applied to people considered baysar in Oman or even at the coast. Making better sense of Arab identities in East Africa in the nineteenth century will enable us to better understand such processes.²⁹ Furthermore, examining the role and status of baysar in East Africa provides a more complicated picture of idioms of Arab-ness as they were deployed at the coast and in the interior in the nineteenth century.

Only a few historical accounts that address Arabs in Oman and East Africa in the nineteenth century identify people as baysar. While traveling in northern Oman near the town of Nakhl in 1876, the British officer S.B. Miles found the “mixed character of the population” remarkable, and noted that the “Bayâsir” made up a large proportion of those in the area. He described them as “as an industrial and peaceable folk,” many of whom were wealthy, though not given positions of command or authority.³⁰ They were considered alien by the tribal Arabs—their origin was thought to be the Hadramaut.³¹ Indeed when, five years later, Miles attempted to estimate the population of Oman he included “the foreign element, *viz.*, African, Belooch, Indians, Persians, Byasir, and Gipsies.”³² Just as the Africans, Baluchis, Indians, and Persians were linked to flows of goods and people to and from East Africa and the Indian Ocean, so were baysar.

When Tippu Tip (properly Hamed bin Muhammad al-Murjebi) related his life as a trader and adventurer in eastern and central Africa in his autobiography, he recalled an incident from 1867 in which his porters warned him against advancing on Isamu's territory in Urungu, southwest of Lake Tanganyika. They cautioned him to halt his advance because Isamu, though he had plentiful ivory, was cruel. They noted that he had already killed various Arabs, baysar, and coastal people.³³ This hierarchy and grouping of people would have been one that a man of Omani descent such as Tippu Tip would have understood. Tippu Tip's biographer, the German writer Heinrich Brode, a long-term resident of East Africa, described a baysar as an Arab from Oman who was not pure blooded but was descended from a slave caste. This marked them in contrast to "full-blooded" Arabs who were "Kubails," i.e. *qabā'il*, tribesmen.³⁴ Whether or not the porters' warnings represented their own conception and naming of various layers of Muslim society is an open question.

In both Oman and East Africa, baysar faced social restrictions and Arabs expected them to conform to some behaviors of servants. Some places in Oman may have had substantial numbers of baysar inhabitants and little or no slave populations.³⁵ In Oman, baysar meeting a shaykh were not allowed to go directly to the man, kiss his hands, and greet him. The expectations were that baysar, like slaves and other inferiors, would first drop their sandals at the side of the path.³⁶ In both Oman and East Africa, baysar were expected to defer to Arabs in social situations and greet Arabs of higher status, i.e. those with a tribal name, as "Hababi" (master).³⁷ Thus social proscriptions reified the status of baysar as a category in every day practice.

The social restrictions extended, as the story of Zuwayna and Sulayman illustrates, to marriage. The prohibition of marriage between baysar men and Arab women was strong, and seemed to follow some aspects of the Islamic legal principle of *kafā'a*, or equality and sufficiency for marriage. In classical Islamic legal doctrine, *kafā'a* relates to the social status, fortune, and profession of the groom (vis-à-vis his father-in-law to be) and parity of birth of the couple. *Kafā'a* protects Muslim women from "inadequate" matches; Muslim men were permitted to marry women "below" them on a social—or economic—hierarchy.³⁸ A classical understanding of this would suggest differences of descent as part of parity of the couple, but such differences could be mitigated over time. A freed slave or Islamic convert was to be considered an equal to all Muslims after three generations.³⁹ It seems, however, that even though baysar were Muslim, they were subjected to more stringent social codes.

Beyond these social restrictions, baysar seemed to enjoy some measure of freedom. In the 1920s a British traveler in southern Arabia noted that although the social position of a baysar was by definition subordinate, his societal roles and occupation were not limited by his status.⁴⁰ In East Africa, Brode noted that despite their inferior social status with respect to the Arabs, baysar were "far superior to them in intelligence" and because of this were able to become quite wealthy and "raise their importance."⁴¹ This freedom to amass wealth and raise their status became important to baysar in East Africa. In a region where people from Oman were in the minority, the differentiations of status among Omanis became less important when the majority population was able to see both non-baysar and baysar people from Oman as Arab.

By the mid-twentieth century, the status of baysar in East Africa had changed. From the comfort of his home near Muscat, an Arab man born in

Zanzibar and educated at al-Azhar related that in Africa baysar ate with other Arabs and sat together with them at the *baraza*, the men's meeting place. This was in striking contrast to the situation in Oman where baysar had meals apart and did not take coffee and halwa [sweets] with Arabs. In East Africa, baysar bought farms, worked them, and enjoyed social mobility. Some of them became wealthy and through prestige removed what he called "the color bar."⁴²

Attempts to analyze historical categories of identity are fraught with difficulty in contexts such as East Africa where the sources for such information are limited. Some sources are also not reliable. In Brode's early twentieth century biography of Tippu Tip, for instance, he identifies Snay bin Amer as baysar, but this is a red herring in understanding baysar status in the interior of East Africa. Snay bin Amer was a merchant in Kازه (later Tabora) in the 1850s and 1860s who was a close ally of the early Arab and coastal settlers there and also Richard Burton's principal guide and companion for the time that he was in Kازه.⁴³ Snay left Muscat, where he had been a sweetmeat seller, in the 1840s and less than two decades later, he was one of the leading merchants in central Africa and a pillar of the Arab community in Kازه.⁴⁴

Brode identifies Snay bin Amer as a baysar in his biography of Tippu Tip, the trader born as Hamed bin Muhammad al-Murjebi.⁴⁵ Although this identification would shed new light on the social mobility and the fluid construction of identity in the interior, until more data is available, this seems an incorrect identification. Tippu Tip makes no mention of Snay's status in his autobiography, and Burton did not include any reference to being baysar in his descriptions of Snay. When Burton traveled to central Africa and befriended Snay, he had already learned Arabic and made his pilgrimage to Mecca. The fact that he did not mention that Snay was a baysar and that he refers to Snay specifically with the honorific "shaykh," suggests that Brode may have been mistaken.⁴⁶

And what of the rescued bride and jilted bridegroom? Zuwayna, as an "Arab" woman born in East Africa was most likely the daughter of an African wife or concubine. The fact that her mother does not fit into the story of flight from the Congo suggests this as well. Standards of *kafā'u* may have been important in a few cases in the interior of East Africa in the nineteenth century, but as was likely in the case of Zuwayna's father, marriages involving Arab or baysar migrants tended to follow the pattern of Omani men marrying African women. As both Arab and baysar men were free to marry African women or take them as concubines, the immediacy of the debate over sufficiency was removed but, as we see in Zuwayna's case, still applicable in later generations.

Zuwayna's guardian later found a suitable match for her. She married Sayf bin Hamed al-Busa'idī, a man who shared a name with the ruling family of Zanzibar. They had one child, Hemedi bin Sayf, who was born near Tabora.

Suleiman bin Sleyum, the baysar bachelor, arrived in Tabora sometime in the last decade of the nineteenth century or early in the first decades of the twentieth century. He was said to be born in Oman. Perhaps he made his way to Zanzibar where, either through clientship with a well-to-do Arab or through his own wits he joined a caravan to the interior. Such maneuvering for patronage was common among migrants and freed slaves in the second half of the nineteenth century because established Arabs had greater access to capital in Zanzibar and thus more easily financed trading ventures for ivory into the interior.⁴⁷

That Zuwayna's guardian did not know Suleiman Sleyum and his status suggests that the bridegroom had not been in Tabora long. He remained in the

town afterwards, however, and may have been in a position to buy and sell houses.⁴⁸ In his neighborhood he became known as “Suleiman Chai,” for anytime a guest would appear he would call into his house for someone to prepare tea (Swahili, *chai*). His descendants still own property in Tabora, not far from the soccer stadium. And there are not many people left in Tabora who identify with the early Arab settlers or know their stories.⁴⁹

The fact that the memory and idea of baysar people is fading in East Africa indicates a longer term process of assimilation of nineteenth century migrants. This also suggests that important oral sources for understanding both the variety of Omani migrant identities and the process of assimilation are limited. This paper has attempted to draw some attention to the category of baysar in East Africa as a way of thinking about the mobility of such categories and their appropriateness for making sense of the Omani traders and merchants in the East African interior. In doing so, many questions remain. To what degree was this status negotiable? In what ways were baysar identities constructed socially and historically? How did colonial policy in Tanganyika create an Arab ethnic identity along with other African identities?

The presence of the category baysar in the interior of East Africa indicates the circulation of people, goods, and concepts between Oman and East Africa, coast and interior, in the nineteenth century. Though relevant only for a seemingly small group within a relatively small migrant community, the persistence of the category of baysar into the early twentieth century grants insight into an incomplete process of racial assimilation in Oman and the ways in which such attitudes traveled and remained operative in a new multi-ethnic context. By disaggregating nineteenth century Arab identity, we better understand processes of migration and settlement, and the social gradients of opportunity and constraint in East Africa.

ENDNOTES

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¹ The story of his death is, in fact, a tragic one. As the Arabs fled the Belgian forces, Muhammad bin Khamis realized that his teenage son Khamis was not there, so he returned to rescue him. Both father and son were killed by the Belgian forces. Interview with Sayf Muhammad Sulayman al-Jabri, Tabora, Sept. 2001. All interviews cited were conducted by the author. The recordings and transcripts are in the author’s possession. All interviews were carried out in Swahili unless otherwise noted.

² Hamed bin Muhammed al-Murjebi, *Maisha ya Hamed bin Muhammed el-Murjebi, Yaani Tippu Tip kwa Maneno Yake Mwenyewe*, W.H. Whitely trans. (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1966), 9.

³ Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770-1873* (London: James Curry, 1987).

⁴ For a detailed discussion of the expansion of trade into the East African interior, see Stephen J. Rockel, *Caravan Porters of the Nyika: Labour, Culture, and Society in Nineteenth Century Tanzania* (unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1997).

⁵ M. Reda Bhacker, *Trade and Empire in Muscat and Zanzibar: Roots of British Domination*, Exeter Arabic and Islamic Series (London: Routledge, 1992).

⁶ For a general economic history of East Africa in this period see Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*.

⁷ The best known example of this is Hamed bin Muhammad al-Murjebi, better known in Africa as Tippu Tip. His exploits as a slave and ivory trader; his control of a vast territory in central Africa; and the fact that he wrote an autobiography make him comparable to the role and fame of Zubayr Pasha in Nilotic Africa. See Heinrich Brode, *Tippu Tip: The Story of His Career in Zanzibar and Central Africa; Narrated from his Own Accounts* (Zanzibar, 2000); al-Murjebi, *Maisha*.

⁸ Interview with Sayf Muhammad Sulayman al-Jabri, Tabora, Sept. 2001.

⁹ Norman R. Bennett, *Arab versus European: Diplomacy and War in Nineteenth Century East Central Africa* (New York, Africana Publishing Company, 1986), 235-244.

¹⁰ See, for instance the contract between Sulayman Zahir and Sewa Haji, 29 Dhu al-Hijja 1302, Zanzibar National Archives, AA12/20/4, registered deed 1080 of 1888 and records of land transactions in Tanzania National Archives G50/29-LR.

¹¹ This account comes from a series of interviews with Sayf Muhammad Sulayman al-Jabri, in Tabora, in September 2001 and August 2002.

¹² Throughout this paper the term is rendered "baysar," though it has a variety of spellings (besar, beisar, etc.) in historical accounts, and, although used in Swahili oral accounts, Swahili orthography would not support this transliteration.

¹³ These thoughts on identity were shaped by Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity,'" *Theory and Society* 29 (2000). See particularly the discussion on page 17 and following.

¹⁴ Interviews with Mas'ud Rashid al-Gheithi, Muscat, 18 December 2001; SAR al-Bahri, Ujiji, 1 August 2002.

¹⁵ See for example, Frederick Johnson, *A Standard Swahili-English Dictionary* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1999 [1939]), which was based on Madan's 1903 work.

¹⁶ For an account of the various interpretations, see J.C. Wilkinson, "Bayasirah and Bayadir," *Arabian Studies* 1 (1974): 76.

¹⁷ R.B. Serjeant, "Fisher-Folk and Fish-Traps in al-Bahrain," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 31 (1968): 486.; Wilkinson, "Bayasirah and Bayadir," 79.

¹⁸ Wilkinson, "Bayasirah and Bayadir," 231.

¹⁹ Serjeant, "Fisher-Folk," 486; Wilkinson, "Bayasirah and Bayadir," 76.

²⁰ Wilkinson, "Bayasirah and Bayadir," 80.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

²² *Ibid.*, 80.

²³ Sarhan ibn Sa'id al-Izkiwi, *Annals of Oman to 1728* (Cambridge: Oleander Press, 1984), 105. J.C. Wilkinson, *Water and Tribal Settlement in South-East Arabia: A Study of the Aflaj of Oman* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 232.

²⁴ See for instance Reginald Coupland, *East Africa and its Invaders: From the Earliest Times to the Death of Seyyid Said in 1856* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1938).

²⁵ Melvin E. Page, "The Manyema Hordes of Tippu Tip: A Case Study in Social Stratification and the Slave Trade in Eastern Africa," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 7:1 (1974): 74.

²⁶ See Jonathon Glassman, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856-1888* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1995; Randall Lee Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent: Cultural Change and Traditional Islam on the East African Coast, 800-1900* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Anne K. Bang, "Sufis and Scholars of the Sea: The Sufi and Family Networks of Ahmad ibn Sumayt and the Tariqa 'Alawiyya in East Africa c. 1860-1925," (Dr. Art. Dissertation, University of Bergen, 2000).

²⁷ A.J. Wills, *An Introduction to the History of Central Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 76; Glassman, *Feasts and Riot*, 32.

²⁸ Marcia Wright and Peter Lary, "Swahili Settlements in Northern Zambia and Malawi," *African Historical Studies* 4:3 (1971): 548-549.

²⁹ For an informative approach to such issues in Sudan, see Anders Bjorkelo, *Prelude to the Mahdiyya: Peasants and Traders in the Shendi Region, 1821-1885* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

³⁰ S.B. Miles, "Across the Green Mountains of Oman," *Geographical Journal* 18:5 (1901): 468.

³¹ Given the south Arabian caste systems that Bertram Thomas and others discuss, this is not surprising. See Bertram Thomas, *Arabia Felix* (London, 1938), 26, 12.

³² S.B. Miles, "Notes on the Tribes of 'Oman by Lieutenant-Colonel S.B. Miles," [1881] Reprinted in *Annals of Oman* (Cambridge: Oleander Press, 1984), 98.

³³ Al-Murjebi, *Maisha*, 16.

³⁴ Brode, *Tippu Tip*, 11.

³⁵ When Wilkinson carried out his research in Oman in the 1960s he observed that in some towns little evidence of an ex-slave class existed, but that there were “considerable numbers of bayāsira.” Wilkinson, *Water and Tribal Settlement*, 231. See also Matthew Hopper’s forthcoming work on Omani history.

³⁶ Miles, “Across the Green Mountains,” 468.

³⁷ Brode, *Tippu Tip*, 11; Bertram Thomas, *Alarms and Excursion in Arabia*, (London, 1931), 153.

³⁸ “Kafā’a,” *The Encyclopedia of Islam, new ed.*, vol. IV (Leiden: Brill): 404. For more on *kafā’a* in the contemporary Omani and Zanzibari context, see Mandana Limbert, “Of Ties and Time: Sociality, Gender and Modernity in an Omani Town” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2002), especially chapter six, “Gender, Race and Genealogy: Being and Becoming Bahlawi,” which also includes a story of near marriage (p. 266). I am grateful to Mandana Limbert for her stimulating discussion of these topics.

³⁹ Wilkinson, “Bayasirah and Bayadir,” 86.

⁴⁰ Thomas, *Alarms and Excursions*, 153.

⁴¹ Brode, *Tippu Tip*, 11.

⁴² He said, “Walipata mali nyingi helafu *color bar* iliondolewa.” Mas’ud Rashid al-Gheithi, 18 December 2001, Muscat.

⁴³ Burton’s knowledge of the region derived, it seems, largely from conversations with Snay bin Amer. Snay taught him local languages and the geography of eastern and central Africa. Burton consulted with Snay about place names and double checked his journal with Snay. One is tempted to conclude that many of Burton’s views were in fact Snay’s views, for it was he that interpreted central Africa for Burton during their long halt in Kazehe and subsequent visits. Richard F. Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa* (New York, Dover Publications, 1995 [1860]) 454, 263, 428.

⁴⁴ Burton, *Lake Regions*, 226-229, 233, 258, 259, 260.

⁴⁵ Brode, *Tippu Tip*, 11.

⁴⁶ Obviously one of the clearest ways to determine whether or not other Arabs regarded one among them as a baysar is through sufficiency for marriage. It is unclear whether or not Snay bin Amer was married, and the opportunity for marrying Arab women was extremely limited in Kazehe in the middle of the nineteenth century. The only woman mentioned in relation to him was Mama Khamisi, who Burton called the “buxom housekeeper in Snay’s establishment.” Whether she was Arab, Swahili, or Nyamwezi is unclear. Perhaps all that we can tell is that she had a son named Khamis and that she knew how to cook a wide variety of Omani delicacies like kawurmeh, firni, rice-jelly, and halwa, and the proper way to cook rice. Burton, *Lake Regions*, 263.

⁴⁷ See for instance the debt contracted by Salum Sa’ad Khamis Khadim from Sewa Haji, 29 Moharram 1305, ZNA, AA12/20/4, registered deed 1075 of 1888; and the series of mortgages taken out by Hamdan Shwain Salmun Khadim al-Harhi, ZNA, AA12/20/4, registered deeds 1096-1098 of 1888.

⁴⁸ See deed of sale from Tanzania National Archives G50/29-LR 1906.

⁴⁹ Most people in Tabora have little invested in the precolonial or early colonial history of the region. Those who had some knowledge invariably also had a link to one of the families who had been prominent. These few descendants preserve an older sense of Arab identity in the interior of East Africa. Many of those in East Africa with strong links to Oman have migrated there in the years since 1970, when, with a new ruler, the country welcomed overseas Omanis and their descendants.

THE OTHER 'ANDALUS' THE OMANI ELITE IN ZANZIBAR AND THE MAKING OF AN IDENTITY, 1880s-1930s

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In 1997, the Arab journalist Riyāḍ al-Rayyis visited Zanzibar, the famous island on the East African coast. The visit evoked for him memories of Arab glory lost in the cities of the Iberian Andalusia. Zanzibar's Arab-Islamic heritage as well as tragic events of 1964 that resulted in the massacre and expulsion of Arabs (and others) granted the island, according to al-Rayyis, a status in Arab history and memory similar to that of Andalusia.¹ In some respects, the comparison between Zanzibar and Andalusia is an overstated and an overstretched one but it nonetheless invites an inquiry into a phase of Arab-Muslim history on an island that was not only a prosperous trade terminus but also an entrepôt for ideas and a significant hotbed of modern Arab-Islamic intellectualism.

Brought under the formal rule of al-Busa'īdīs in 1832, Zanzibar became the capital city of the Omani dynasty. The ambitious plan of its founder, Sayyid Sa'īd (r. 1806-1856), to transform Zanzibar into a major economic center and an international seaport opened the gates for a flood of migrants from Oman as well as Hadramawt and India. A number of those were 'ulama whose presence in Zanzibar institutionalized the long presence of Islam on the island and resulted in an unprecedented spread of Islamic institutions and of a literate Islamic tradition that was Arabic in character. They also brought ideas and ideologies, ties and connections, and along with the rulers, they changed the intellectual and political landscape of Zanzibar. Together they pulled Zanzibar closer to the Arab and Muslim world.

Following Sayyid Sa'īd's death in 1856, the rivalry between two of his sons provided Britain, now the major power broker in the Indian Ocean, with the opportunity to force a separation between Oman and Zanzibar, each to be headed by a descendant of Sayyid Sa'īd. Zanzibar was declared a British protectorate in 1890 and gained independence in 1963. A year later, a coalition of communists,

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socialists and anti-Arabs led a successful insurrection against the al-Busa'īdī rule in Zanzibar, closing one chapter of Arab history on the East African coast.

This paper explores aspects of that history insofar as it relates to the Omani elite in Zanzibar and its politics of identity between 1880s and 1930s. Members of that elite were rulers, politicians, landlords, journalists and 'ulama, and constituted, at least until World War II, the majority of Zanzibar's literati.² This paper redraws the colonial and disciplinary boundaries that have so far framed the elite within a defined geography and a narrow history, and as such, imposed or restricted the parameters of its identity. This identity, I argue, was not completely subject to British rules and racial classification or to territorial frontiers, as the historiography has too often portrayed it. It rather depended on elements rooted deep in history and shared by a world with which the Omani elite associated. Theirs was an identity molded by the Islamic religion, the Ibadi sect, the Arabic language and all the history that bore the legacy of that religion and that language.

By weaving the Omani elite's different links to the Arab world, I resituate the elite's politics of identity within that world's political and intellectual realms, represented by its various religious and cultural *nahḍas* (s. *nahḍa*, renaissance). Not only did this interconnectedness with the Arab world --especially Oman, Algeria and the Mashriq-- shape the identity of the Omani elite in Zanzibar to a large extent but it also defined the elite's position toward the British colonizers. Members of the Omani elite have been portrayed by the prevalent literature at best as compromisers and at worst as collaborators with the colonial order. Described as "instruments" of Europeans,³ the Omani elite has been put in one category with Europeans vis-à-vis other inhabitants of the Swahili coast.

The fact that Omanis in Zanzibar were themselves in the category of the 'colonized' is routinely downplayed in the literature. Despite the claim by historians that the British were maintaining Omani political hegemony in Zanzibar,⁴ Omanis were, after all, subjugated by the British. The use of the term 'hegemony' to describe a circumscribed power, constrained and controlled by the British Foreign Office, later on the Colonial Office, is misplaced. Upholding a certain degree of the economic and social status of ruling elites in British protectorates was a characteristic of Indirect Rule in many parts of the British Empire.⁵ Defining this status in terms of 'hegemony' is to downplay the reality of the degree to which, in effect, the influence of those elites was limited and controlled. Omanis lost sovereignty, not to mention a unified dynasty, as a result of British hegemony in the Indian Ocean. That loss was experienced at different levels. Their economic stature had been increasingly weakened since the abolition of the slave trade in 1873 and the subsequent abolition of slavery in 1897. It should be remembered that during the early decades of the twentieth century a number of Omani plantation owners went bankrupt or were otherwise forced to sell their land because of British labor and tax laws.⁶ Moreover, the colonial educational system generated constant complaints by Omanis and other Arabs who felt the education being offered not only marginalized their language and religion but ill-prepared them for the kind of jobs they hoped to obtain in Zanzibar's administration and economy.⁷ Thus, the extent of Omanis' 'victimization' by the colonial regime and the degree to which they recognized themselves to be 'objects' of colonialism should not be underestimated. The present work takes issues with this trend in the historiography and adopts a more subtle perspective on the relationship between the Omani elite and the British colonizers. That relationship was much governed by the Omani elite's ties of identity and ideological connections to pan-Islamic, pan-Ibadi and

pan-Arab movements and its contribution to reform and renewal movements throughout the Arab world.⁸

DE-PAROCHIALIZING DISCIPLINES AND GEOGRAPHY⁹

Arab history is not confined to Arab ‘nation-states’ and is not a monopoly delineated by their past or present boundaries. Arab history is as elastic as Arab geography and its definition is as resilient as that of the ‘Arab world’,¹⁰ marked not by boundaries and frontiers but by a borderless identity, that al-Rayyis located in end-of-twentieth century Zanzibar. That identity builds its foundations on a common language and religion and draws on shared memories and cherished pasts that contract and expand geography in order to accommodate history.¹¹ While it borrows from reality and imagination, memory and desire, it continues to wrap itself in the robe of the Arabic language and the garb of Islam.¹² It is this definition of Arab history that qualifies members of the Omani elite in Zanzibar --as speakers of Arabic, followers of Islam, and bearers of common history and beliefs with much of the Arab world-- to be identified as both subjects and agents of Arab history. So far, their role has not been recognized as such and they have been cast outside the field of Arab and Middle Eastern studies.¹³

This marginality of the Omani elite in Zanzibar is not confined to Arab/Middle Eastern studies alone but is also characteristic of Islamic studies. It is a Muslim elite but most of its members belong to a sect to which Islamicists have devoted little attention. Ibadism, one of the early sects of Islam, if not the earliest, and an offshoot of Kharijism, has generated limited interest among researchers. Although Ibadite communities are found almost exclusively in the Arab world, they rarely feature as contributors, or even participants, in modern Arab-Islamic history.¹⁴ Thus, there is a ‘double marginalization’ occurring in the case of Ibadis – due to sectarian affiliation and to geographic location.

This chapter in the history of Zanzibar, however, is as much part of African history as it is of the Arab one. These two fields are complementary and overlapping though they are often treated as being dichotomous.¹⁵ While the definition of ‘Arab’ tends to defy geography, that of an ‘African’ is often made to manipulate geography, insulating itself within borders, rigidly marked by the demarcations of a specific color, race, tribe, religion, or language. Arabs and Islam, along the lines of that definition, do not belong within those borders but outside them and do not usually fit the categories of ‘African’ races and religions. They tend to be often rejected as part of the African heritage.¹⁶ It is for this reason that ‘Arab’ North Africa and often the Sahara, are carved out of ‘African’ history with the assumption that they represent, and therefore, belong to another category of history.¹⁷ As a result, several communities born out of this conjuncture of histories remain marginalized within the field of African history. This has been the case with the Omani ruling elite in Zanzibar.¹⁸

REDEFINING ‘ARAB’

Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula have inhabited the East African coast for centuries and have contributed to the birth and development of Swahili language, culture and society. The arrival of al-Busa’idīs in the nineteenth century was but one more chapter in that continuous interaction between Arabia and East Africa, a by-product of their deeply interwoven histories. Omani Arabs, like many

Arabs who had been arriving on the coast became an integral part of the Swahili society; they defined it as much as it defined them, they were part of it as much as it was part of them.

Their arrival was soon followed by that of the British whose perspective on African history and societies, one that has shaped Western historiography, was defined by the search, creation and imagination of 'indigenous' races and tribes. From that perspective, the British were very keen on, if not obsessed with, creating biological categories of identities to classify the heterogeneous Zanzibari population. Omanis identified themselves as 'Arabs' and were identified by the British as such but the British definition of an 'Arab' was one with which few Arabs would agree. An 'Arab', as the British Resident in Zanzibar Francis Pearce indicated, is "the true Arab of unmixed descent,"¹⁹ while "the Zanzibar negro", he added, "whose great-great-grandmother may have had some connection with an Arab harem, cannot fairly be classed at the present day as an Arab, as the term is understood in Zanzibar."²⁰ This definition of the term 'Arab' was surely one that was understood by the British alone and not by the Swahili society with its Arab and non-Arab members. On the one hand, "so dense have been the many forms of Arab/African intermingling over a great many cultures that there was no analogous line of demarcation between the Arab, the Arabized, and the non-Arab as there had been and continued to be between the European and the non-European."²¹ On the other hand, it was not race but language and culture that marked the difference between an 'Arab' and a 'non-Arab'. Long before al-Busa'īdīs established their rule on the East African coast, "an ideal of cultural Arabness had already emerged in the mind of the Swahili."²² This trend to 'Arabize' through linguistic and cultural assimilation intensified under al-Busa'īdī rule and 'Arabness' was 'a mark of status' many desired to achieve.

'Arabness' in British eyes, in addition to being associated with 'race', was a socio-economic identity. An 'Arab' was a land-owner, 'a perfect gentleman', and a dweller "in a massive, many storied-mansion."²³ He was "par excellence a landed proprietor, and usually has his money in clove and coco-nut plantations."²⁴ Arabs of Hadrami or Comorian origins who did not fit in those categories were looked upon as inferior to Omanis. Thus, the British distinguished not only between an 'Arab' and a 'negro', to use Pearce's word but also between Omanis and other Arabic-speaking communities. Omanis seemed to have been regarded as *more* Arab than Hadramis and Comorians – indeed Comorians had to petition the British to be classified as 'Arabs' in 1930.²⁵ William Ingrams, writing in the late 1920s, considered Omanis the 'principal' Arabs in Zanzibar, although he admitted Hadramis were the most numerous.²⁶ His description of 'Arabs' lifestyle, social organization and occupation was restricted to Omanis.

Racial classification reflected European racial attitudes and mentality that could comprehend African societies and African history only in terms of classified races and tribes. This racial ideology found its way into British laws as articulated by the Native Administration Regulations in which social, economic and political privileges were allocated according to racial hierarchy.²⁷ 'Arabs', from that perspective, were at a socio-economic advantage in comparison to those classified as Swahili or Africans and who were considered by the British as racially inferior.

The literature on identity politics in Zanzibar has so far accepted the British-ordained socio-economic variables as the only ones that Zanzibaris, including Omanis, drew on to define their identity. It has fallen short of examining the identity of Omanis (and others) from a wider perspective.²⁸ The degree to

which Omanis defined their identity exclusively along those variables, as the historiography has often argued, is questionable or at least overblown. New material introduced in this work indicates that Omanis were engaged in debates other than those related to their economic (mis)fortune or to inter-ethnic politics inside Zanzibar. Moreover, and more significantly, the material presents an Omani definition of identity that is at variance with the one employed by the British and adopted by the prevalent literature.

The members of the Omani elite did not always see their ‘Arabness’ through a British lens and their definition of an ‘Arab’ was not in conformity with the British one. Their ‘Arabness’ was not based on ‘race’ nor was it always considered *the* primary dimension of their identity. Omanis identified themselves first and foremost as ‘Muslims’ and more specifically as as ‘Ibadi’ Muslims. Their ‘Arabness’ was not understood in nationalistic terms, at least not until after World War I. Even then, ‘Arabness’ was not devoid of a religious content and was largely shaped by Islam. In short, they were not exclusively Arabs but were ‘Arab-Muslims’.

Using this binary definition of Arabness, as well as situating it in historical context is crucial for two reasons. First, it creates a common space between Arabs and other members of the Swahili society, a space provided by the ‘Muslim’ component of their identity that must have blurred to some extent the racial boundaries that have hitherto marked our understanding of identity politics in Zanzibar.²⁹ Even the *ustu‘rabu* phenomenon, literally meaning ‘Arabization’, was strongly inspired by Islam in terms of pure religious dogmas or as a web of cultural practices – or, in some instances, both.³⁰ Second, it reformulates the identity of Omanis and redraws its boundaries beyond Zanzibar and beyond identity politics inside Zanzibar. Theirs was a collective identity unconstrained by class or race or geographic borders, one that linked them to many of those who shared the same variables of their identity. Below we explore those links that defined and shaped that collective identity.

THE OMANI ELITE AND THE IBADI *NAHḌA*

This Ibadi *nahḍa* was first and foremost a religious movement associated with a literary renaissance that had debuted in the late eighteenth century in both Oman and the Mzab valley in Algeria and was boosted by Zanzibar’s printing press introduced in the 1870s by Sultan Barghash (r. 1870-1888). It was part of the broader movement of religious renewal and reform that had been sweeping across the Muslim world since the eighteenth century.³¹ While the *nahḍa*, like all renewal and reform movements in the Muslim world, was in principle a self-reflecting movement, European colonialism was a galvanizing factor that transformed this *nahḍa* into a political and ideological force shaping an anti-colonial discourse and joining other movements in their anti-colonial struggle. In Oman, for instance, leading scholars of the Ibadi *nahḍa*, seeking to fend off foreign interference in Omani affairs, led political alliances that culminated in the establishment of the Ibadi Imamate rule twice (1868-1871; 1913-1955). Moreover, this *nahḍa* featured the emergence of a pan-Ibadi movement that consisted of collaboration among the different Ibadi communities in the context of this revival, mainly in Zanzibar, Oman and the Mzab valley.

The Omani elite in Zanzibar was at the center of this *nahḍa* and played a vital role in shaping its different manifestations, whether literary or political.

Zanzibar's printing press provided Ibadis with the unprecedented opportunity of seeing their works published and distributed at a large scale. Yet the contribution was not confined to publication services but to patronage of Ibadī scholars who spearheaded this *nahḍa*, namely Muḥammad Aṭfiyyash (d. 1914) in Algeria and Nūr al-Dīn al-Sālimī (d. 1914) in Oman. Aṭfiyyash, known as *qutb al-a'imma* (the pole of Imams), was at the helm of Ibadī opposition to French colonialism in the Mzab valley in Algeria and educated a generation of Mzabi scholars who became leading figures in several anti-colonial movements spanning the Maghrib as well as the Mashriq.³² He corresponded frequently with the Zanzibari Sultans who sponsored the publication of his works, honored him with high ranking medals and provided him with financial support. Al-Sālimī was considered a spiritual guide to Ibadis and was constantly consulted by the Omani community in Zanzibar on various matters.³³ He led the opposition to Sultan Fayṣal (r. 1888-1913) in Muscat when the latter failed to resist British interference in Omani affairs and succeeded in re-establishing the Imamate rule in 1913.

Omanis in Zanzibar extended financial and moral support to the cause of the Imamate, in both overt and covert ways. Sultan Ḥamad in Zanzibar (r. 1893-96) had financed an attack on Muscat by the Imamites (supporters of the Imamate rule) in 1895 in a bid to oust Faysal and reunite Oman and Zanzibar.³⁴ Such a reunion was seen as a way to reassert Omani sovereignty and independence from the British. Ḥamad's dream never materialized and the attack failed but Ḥamad's successor, Khālīd, moved the battle against the British to Zanzibari soil. Nearing death, Ḥamad appointed Khālīd as his successor in defiance of the British who accused Khālīd of harboring anti-British feelings. Khālīd declared himself Sultan of Zanzibar and led a rebellion that was defeated within twenty five minutes and with an unprecedented show of force. Many of the rebels returned or were exiled to Oman. They added to the anti-British resentment growing there and filled the ranks of al-Sālimī-led opposition. When al-Sālimī launched his attack in 1913, many Omanis in Zanzibar were quick to provide material assistance.³⁵ Equally important was the enthusiasm with which his *nahḍa* was met among Omanis on the island. This is evident in the work of the most accomplished and celebrated Omani poet and member of the Omani elite in Zanzibar, Nāṣir al-Bahlānī (d. 1920). Al-Bahlānī regarded the Ibadī *nahḍa* as an exemplary revolution against the enemies of Islam and urged all Muslims to follow al-Sālimī's example in overthrowing rulers who bowed to Europeans and in attempting to revive the past glory of Islam.³⁶

ISLAMIC REFORM AND UNITY: THE OMANI ELITE AND SALAFISM

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed a new development in modern Ibadī history characterized by the birth of a movement labeled as neo-Ibadism.³⁷ It sought common ground with mainstream Islam by integrating Ibadī revival with Sunni Salafī revival and by merging pan-Ibadism with pan-Islamism.³⁸ The broad setting that was stimulating this Ibadī-Sunni rapprochement was the common colonial experience. As John Wilkinson has observed, "the Ibadis' experience of the imperial powers was putting them on equal footing with the rest of the Islamic world and leading to some effort to find common ground between them."³⁹ The Omani elite was not only engaged with neo-Ibadism but was also playing a significant role in its own development.

The Salafiyya movement led by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad ‘Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā, with its advocacy for Islamic reform and unity, made its way into Zanzibar in the late nineteenth century and appealed to many members of the Omani elite. According to Muḥsin al-Barwānī, Sayyid Maṣṣab Abū Bakr bin Sālīm (1863-1927) was in direct contact with Rashīd Riḍā and his movement in Egypt. Another member who came under the influence of the Salafī ideology was ‘Īsa bin ‘Alī, al-Barwānī’s uncle, described by his nephew ‘as religious but with a secular approach’.⁴⁰ He kept photos of Muḥammad ‘Abduh and al-Afghānī and read *al-Manār*, which was already known to a number of Zanzibaris, including their Sultans, and was probably found in the library of the Arab Association.⁴¹ Moreover, there were a number of Egyptians residing in Zanzibar since the late nineteenth century and they were known for their sympathies to modernist Islam. One of them was Muḥammad Luṭfī, a supporter of Salafī views that he discussed with young Zanzibaris in the Jum`a mosque in Zanzibar.⁴²

The Sultans themselves were not isolated from those Salafī currents and more important, they seem to have been known for their openness towards them. This prompted some pioneers of the Salafiyya movement to contact the Sultans and ask for financial assistance to help run their journals. Rashīd Riḍā, editor of *al-Manār*, was one of those who contacted Sultan Ḥamūd asking for such assistance.⁴³ Further evidence of the Zanzibari Sultans’ reputation as supporters and sponsors of religious movements and scholars was a letter sent from the manager of *al-Urwa al-Wuthqā* seeking financial aid.⁴⁴

This relationship with the Salafiyya movement seemed to have taken a new turn when Nāṣir al-Lamkī, a prominent member of the Omani elite and a wealthy landlord, visited Egypt some time between 1900 and 1901, and met with some of Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s pupils, and more significantly with ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī.⁴⁵ It is also said that al-Lamkī had the chance to discuss with al-Kawākibī some of his ideas in *Ṭ’abā’i’ al-istibdād*, excerpts of which al-Lamkī had probably read in *al-Mu’ayyad*, also circulating in Zanzibar and with which al-Lamkī used to correspond.⁴⁶ This meeting between al-Lamkī and al-Kawākibī might have intrigued the latter to visit Zanzibar and the East African coast in 1901 and the opportunity and funding to do so might have been provided by the pan-Islamist Khedive ‘Abbās II of Egypt.⁴⁷

The imprint of the *Salafiyya* movement on Omani intellectual and political life in Zanzibar was seen in the publication of the first Arabic newspaper, *al-Najāh*, edited by al-Lamkī and al-Bahlānī between 1910 and 1914. It served as the mouthpiece of a party they established called *al-Iṣlāḥ*.⁴⁸ *Al-Najāh* was molded, in terms of content, in a fashion similar to *al-Manār*’s. The only surviving volume indicates that it had a pan-Islamic tone and a pro-reform agenda.⁴⁹

OTTOMANISM VERSUS COLONIALISM: THE OMANI ELITE AND PAN-ISLAMISM

The Ottoman court, during what is known as the Hamidien era (1876-1909), cultivated the ideology of pan-Islamism for two main purposes. One was to curb the influence of nationalist movements threatening the unity of the Ottoman Empire and the other to intimidate European colonial powers ruling over Muslim communities. Ottoman pan-Islamism had much resonance in the Muslim world,

especially among Arabs, and galvanized the support of a large sector of Arab intellectual and political elites.

The Omani elite was among them and though its cordial relationship with the Ottomans dated back to the eighteenth century, it seemed to have gained an unprecedented significance under Sultan ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd II. His long rule of thirty three years coincided with that of five Zanzibari Sultans, from Barghash to ‘Alī and with the firm establishment of British control over Zanzibar. It is not surprising that during that period, ties between Zanzibar and the Ottomans were strengthened and visits were exchanged between members of the Zanzibari elite and Ottoman officials. Cordial ties with Istanbul culminated eventually in the official visit of Sultan ‘Alī (r. 1902-1911) to Istanbul in November 1907 and where he was received by ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd himself.⁵⁰ ‘Alī had officially acknowledged ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd as the Caliph of Muslims, as had the many Muslims in Zanzibar and the East African coast who used to praise his name during Friday prayer.⁵¹ In that same year, ‘Alī offered to act as a mediator between the Ottoman Sultan and some Yemeni rebels. His aim was “to pull together the parts of a warring Islamic commonwealth and halt a conflict between Muslims.”⁵² The following year, ‘Alī received in Zanzibar the Ottoman Grand Vizier and other dignitaries sent on behalf of ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd.⁵³

Sultans in Zanzibar were not alone in harboring sympathetic feelings toward the Ottomans. The general public shared those feelings as well, which manifested themselves in a public manner at times when the Ottoman Empire was challenged or threatened. For example, Zanzibaris held public demonstrations and boycotted Italian goods after the Italian invasion of Tripoli, then under Ottoman rule.⁵⁴ This sympathy made it difficult for the British to win public support of Muslims in Zanzibar and East Africa during World War I.⁵⁵ It also prompted the docile Sultan Khalīfa bin Ḥārib (r. 1911-1960), in order to counter the Ottoman Sultan’s call for *jihad* against the British, to issue a statement on November 6, 1914 urging Zanzibaris and Muslims on the East African coast to cease their support for the ‘Turks’ and show loyalty to the British instead.⁵⁶ It is not clear what effect Sultan Khalīfa’s statement had on Muslims in Zanzibar and East Africa and to what degree he was able to change their allegiance by publicly announcing his loyalty to the British. While Sa’īd al-Mughayrī spoke about letters of support to the Sultan from Arab leaders in East Africa in response to this statement,⁵⁷ he also spoke about the many Arabs, most notably Omanis, who gathered in Tabora to support the exiled former rebellious Sultan, Khālīd bin Barghash, in his efforts to aid the Germans – then allies to the Ottomans -- against the British.⁵⁸ Khālīd remained “a leading spirit” of anti-British activities in East Africa and of pan-Islamic propaganda until his capture in 1917.⁵⁹ More than three years after the Ottoman Sultan’s *jihad* declaration, its effect on Muslims in East Africa remained worrisome to the British. “Mohammedans of the Swahili speaking area,” an intelligence report explained, “have been ‘given furiously to think’ by the declaration of the JIHAD from STAMBOUL.”⁶⁰

THE ZANZIBAR OF THE MASHREQ: THE OMANI ELITE AND THE ARAB *NAḤḌA*

For the Omani elite, however, it was the birth of a cultural *nahḍa* in the Mashriq that was most engaging. That was an Arab literary renaissance which focused on the leading role of Arab culture, language, history and people. The

Omani elite was exposed to that trend since its inception and the Sultans of Zanzibar were financially assisting several of its vanguards.

One of those Arabists with whom Omanis frequently corresponded was Jurjī Zaydān (1861-1914), an icon of this Arab *nahḍa*, “who did more than any other to create a consciousness of the Arab past”.⁶¹ He was the editor of the Egyptian-based journal *al-Hilāl* --a journal that enjoyed wide circulation among the Zanzibari elite-- and author of many short stories and books, including *Tārikh al-adab al-islāmī*, a popular book in Zanzibar.⁶² He communicated regularly with Sultans Ḥamūd and ‘Alī, and his correspondence consisted primarily of formalities, notification to renew subscription, replies to requests, etc... Zaydān’s interest in Zanzibar, however, is noteworthy. It is testimony that for him, Zanzibar, despite geography, was part of the Mashriq and politically and ideologically integrated into the larger Arab world. Its Sultans were Arab and thus they symbolized the Arab ‘heroism’ that Zaydān was seeking. Perhaps, it is that same ‘heroism’ that prompted Nāṣir al-Lamkī, a prominent member of the Omani elite in Zanzibar, to send *al-Hilāl* a biography of the Omani adventurer Ḥamīd al-Marjībī, otherwise known as Tippu Tip.⁶³ The piece focused on al-Marjībī’s adventures in Central Africa and his role in expanding Omani rule in this largely unknown territory. The introduction to the article in *al-Hilāl*, presumably written by Zaydān himself, was even more interesting than the article. The editor presented al-Marjībī as an Arab hero from among “the geniuses of the *Sharq* [East]...who performed miracles in politics, in prudence and in leadership”,⁶⁴ and whose efforts to discover the interior of Africa must be revealed to all.⁶⁵

The editor ended his introduction by thanking al-Lamkī for “his earnest concern to make known the achievements of the *Sharqīyyīn* [Easterners].”⁶⁶ During a period of Arab self-glorification and resurrection of a celebrated past, it is very significant that Zaydān chose Zanzibar to represent that history, and to remind the Arab world of that golden moment when history witnessed the expansion of Arab rule in Africa. Al-Marjībī’s achievements in East Africa, in Zaydān’s eyes, were Arab ‘heroic’ achievements worth placing al-Marjībī among the greatest ‘celebrities’ Zaydān listed in his *Mashābir al-sharq*,⁶⁷ and among those who helped build the Arab legacy.

Zaydān was not the only writer of the avant-garde of the Arab *nahḍa* to seek and receive the support of the Sultans. Ibrāhīm Nāṣif al-Yāzījī (1847-1906), a Christian Arab who believed that “[t]he Easterners, or at least the Arabs, instead of being inferior to the Europeans, were the most remarkable of people, a people who had civilized the West,”⁶⁸ was in touch with them as well. His famous work *Nuj‘at al-rā’id* (The Hope of the Seeker)⁶⁹ was published with the full support of Sultan ‘Alī.⁷⁰

Those Arabs, though not Muslims, converged with Salafīs on the need to highlight the splendor of the early history of Islam and to assert that Arabs were capable again of reincarnating that history. Much of their discourse, like that of Salafīs, was geared toward underscoring the presence of a full-fledged Arab civilization long before the European one. The involvement of the Omani elite in Zanzibar in this cultural renaissance of Arabs reflects their interest in the resurrection of the Arab heritage for the sake of promoting the legacy of Islam. It also reflects their awareness of their role as ‘Arabs’ in encouraging all efforts that aim at cherishing Arab history and the Arabic language.

INTERWAR ZANZIBAR: THE IDEOLOGY OF ISLAM AND ARABISM

The interwar period ushered in a new era whereby a new generation of Omanis in Zanzibar followed in the footsteps of their ideological mentors such as al-Sālimī, Aṭfiyyash and al-Bahlānī in advocating Islamic reform and Islamic unity but whose anti-colonial rhetoric was increasingly sharpened in tone. Like the earlier generation, they maintained their networks of connections and ties of identity within the frameworks of Ibadism, Arabism and Islamism. Their realities, however, were more bitter than those of their mentors. The center of gravity of the Muslim world, the Ottoman Empire, had vanished and its remnants were now prey to European powers that by now had established their mandates over the Mashriq as well as the Maghrib. That only served to widen and highlight the commonality of the colonial experience in the eyes of many Arabs; those once within Ottoman boundaries had become, like those outside them, subjects of colonialism. How to change that fate was a task many Arabs discussed and debated collectively. The Omani elite in Zanzibar took part in that discussion, and the political and intellectual discourse it adopted during the interwar period revolved around Arabism and Islamism as the basis of its identity and that of Zanzibar, now frequently called the *waṭan* (*la patrie*).

The platform mostly used by Omanis (and other Arabs) to articulate that identity and voice their dissatisfaction with and opposition to the British was the weekly *al-Falaq* which first appeared in 1929 as the mouthpiece of the Arab Association.⁷¹ *Al-Falaq* marked a new turn in the intellectual life of Arabs on the island; not only did it provide a public forum for ideas to be debated and disseminated among members of the Arabic-speaking community but it also linked Zanzibar with the wider world of the Arabic press, on which *al-Falaq* counted to report events and reprint articles on a number of subjects of interest to Arabs and Muslims in Zanzibar.⁷²

A major issue of concern for Omanis writing in *al-Falaq* was British educational policies in Zanzibar. They voiced strong opposition to those policies and saw in the educational system crafted by the British an attempt to de-Arabize and de-Islamize Zanzibaris and Zanzibar and a threat to those most sacred elements of the elite's identity: language and religion.⁷³ *Al-Falaq* criticized the Department of Education for being

headed by a foreign colonizer aided by a number of his fellow citizens, executing a plan of pure colonization and enslavement... It is a department that chases, persecutes and uproots the Arabic language while it is the language of the master of this country, that of the victors who converted this land, the language of thirty one thousand Arabs... By not knowing their language and by lacking national pride, they [Arabs] are behind in terms of the renaissance among their kin in other countries. By not knowing the language of the Qur'an, the Muhammadan *sunna* [tradition] and the Islamic Shari'a, they have moved away from their religion, its merits and its virtues.⁷⁴

By eroding the Arabic language and religious studies from the curriculum, Omanis believed the British were not only trying to damage their identity and that of the island but also trying to sever Zanzibar's relationship with the broader Arab-Muslim world. Thus, British educational policies were not seen in isolation from broader colonial schemes to keep the Arab world divided. The Omani elite saw its

agony and struggle through the prism of the whole Arab-Muslim world and the road to salvation was in the unity of that world. The concern of *al-Falaq* about Arab unity was best expressed in its reaction to the death of King Ghāzī of Iraq:

The whole Arab nation is mourning. His death was devastating to the hopes of Iraqis but also catastrophic for the dreams of seventy million Arabs and Arabized between Basra to the East, Marrakech to the West, Aleppo to the North and Zanzibar to the South. The hopes were for the agreement and union of all Arab nations.⁷⁵

In reality, *al-Falaq* was not mourning Ghāzī himself but was rather concerned about the hopes placed on Iraq as the beacon of Arabism and its potential role in uniting the Arab world. Iraq at the time occupied a special place in the minds and hearts of Arabs. “To many Arab nationalists in the 1920s and 1930s,” Adeed Dawisha has commented, “Iraq seemed best equipped to fill the heroic role played by Prussia in uniting the German-speaking people into one unified German nation-state.”⁷⁶ The indispensability of Arab unity was a recurrent theme on the pages of *al-Falaq*, a theme discussed either by its editors and contributors or by other pan-Arab newspapers such as *al-Fath*, the articles of whose editor, Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb, *al-Falaq* reprinted frequently.

CONCLUSION

The Omani elite in Zanzibar positioned itself, until World War II, within the Arab world’s intellectual and political movements of Islamic reformism, pan-Ibadism, pan-Islamism and Arabism. Its members were affiliated to a broad spectrum of networks and communities debating and shaping a collective identity. Islam and Arabism were its parameters; Oman, the Maghrib and the Mashriq with their networks of ‘ulama, writers and thinkers were partners in outlining and articulating those parameters. Through those ties and connections, and through the prism of its Arab-Muslim identity, the Omani elite pulled Zanzibar into the orbit of the Arab world and molded the history of the island with that of other Arab communities. From that perspective, Zanzibar earned, in the eyes of many Omanis as well as others, a reputation of another ‘Andalusia’ that Arabs had (re)created on the East African coast.⁷⁷

By defining itself in relationship to movements that upheld religious revival and Arab cultural renaissance, the Omani elite perceived its identity outside the narrow scope of British classifications based on economic and social status. While that status shaped much of Zanzibari politics before, during and after British rule, it was neither the only marker of identities on the island nor one of exclusive concern for the Omani elite. The religion and the language of that elite remained at the core of its identity and the more those two elements were deemed vulnerable or under attack, the more protective of them and assertive of their precedence Omanis became.

ENDNOTES

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¹ Al-Rayyis was moved by the Swahili *tarab*, which, for the ears of an Arab like him, was nothing but an Arab *tarab*. This music and the Zanzibari ‘Umm Kulthūm’ performing and singing in both Arabic and Swahili woke in him, as he said, “my historical senses and moved in me nostalgic sentiments. I almost forgot that I was half the globe away from Beirut...” Upon leaving this performance, he felt inside him “a strong bitterness for an Arab Andalusia that Arabs lost in Africa.” Riyād Najīb al-Rayyis, *Ṣabāfī wa madinatayn: ribla ilā Samarqand wa Zanzibār* (Beirut: Riyād al-Rayyis Books, 1997), 192-193.

² As Mandana Limbert argues in this volume, not all Omanis enjoyed an ‘elite’ social and economic stature. “Many were considered of lower status than the Omanis who had settled in Zanzibar in the previous centuries and who had established themselves as an elite, creole community and were known as Mangan Arabs.” Idem, “Personal Memories, Revolutionary States and Indian Ocean Migrations.” According to one British official document, Manga Arabs were defined as being “of a wild, ungoverned nature, turbulent and prepared at all times for any mischief...”, a description different from that given to the ‘elite’, as shown in this work. PRO CO 618/66/1, 07 February, 1936, 3. (Report of the Commission of Enquiry Concerning the Riot in Zanzibar on the 7th of February, 1936).

³ Randall L. Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent: Cultural Change and Traditional Islam on the East African Coast, 800-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 191.

⁴ See, for example, Laura Fair, *Pastimes and Politics: Culture, Community, and Identity in Post-Abolition Urban Zanzibar, 1890-1945* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001), 42.

⁵ See Francis Robinson, “The British Empire and the Muslim World,” *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, eds., Judith et al., vol. 4, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 406.

⁶ Fair, *Pastimes and Politics*, 38.

⁷ Norman R. Bennett, *A History of the Arab State of Zanzibar* (London: Methuen & Co., 1978), 222-231.

⁸ This, however, does not mean that each and every member of the Omani elite articulated opposition to the British and their policies. Omani intellectuals were as critical of the British as they were of other Omanis who either did not dare to criticize the British or did not hesitate to implement their policies. In any case, members of the Omani elite who voiced their opposition and adopted an anti-colonial discourse seem to have dominated Omani intellectual life on the island and to have shaped the political opposition to colonialism.

⁹ Engseong Ho uses the term ‘parochialization’ to refer to “the imprint of colonial history, and of colonial categories which still organize its historiography” in his study on Arabs in the British and Dutch colonies in Southeast Asia. This, as he observed, occurred at a number of levels, from defining a political geography that later became a ‘national’ geography, to dividing time into specific historical periods to, most significantly, creating racial categories out of multi-ethnic conglomerates. Idem, “Before Parochialization: Diasporic Arabs Cast in Creole Waters,” Huub de Jonge and Nico Kaptein, eds. *Transcending Borders: Arabs, Politics, Trade and Islam in Southeast Asia* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002), 11-35.

¹⁰ As Adeed Dawisha indicates, the concept of an Arab world is “a cultural rather than a political construct, and consequently, there has been considerable shift over time in the conceptual delineation of the land mass inhabited by ‘Arabs.’” Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 14.

¹¹ The impact of those three elements on defining an Arab-Muslim identity is best captured by Albert Hourani in his prologue to his seminal work *A History of the Arab Peoples*, a prologue centered around the career of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khaldūn. Idem, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Faber & Faber, 1991), 4.

¹² While the Arabic language has always been the basis for defining an Arab identity, ideologues of Arab nationalism (and therefore Arab identity) were split on the role of Islam in defining that identity. The secular version of Arab nationalism, as formulated by someone like Ṣāḥib al-Ḥuṣrī for example, did not accommodate Islam but rather considered it problematic in defining the national identity of Arabs. See William L. Cleveland, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist: Ottomanism and Arabism in the Life and Thought of Ṣāḥib al-Ḥusri* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971). However, Arab identity as defined by Arab Islamists considered Islam as its backbone. This was expressed by Muslim reformers such as Muḥammad ‘Abduh, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī, Rashīd Riḍā, Shakīb Arslān, Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb and many others. The Arab-Muslim identity and the version of Arab nationalism examined here is the one that reckoned on both language and religion as propagated not by secular ideologues such as al-Ḥuṣrī but by those religious reformers mentioned above. See, for instance, William L. Cleveland, *Islam against the West: Shakīb Arslan and the Campaign for Islamic Nationalism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), Ernest C. Dawn, “The Origins of Arab Nationalism,” in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, eds., Rashid Khalidi et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 3-30, Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 1995), especially 90-96 and Amal N. Ghazal, "Power, Arabism and Islam in the Writings of Muhib al-Din al-Khatib in *al-Fath*," *Past Imperfect* 6 (1997): 133-150.

¹³ Hourani, for example, chronicles the history of Arabs from the rise of Islam until modern time but completely dismisses the history of Arabs beyond the Maghrib-Mashriq paradigm. See Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*. Moreover, the discussion of marginality in Middle Eastern studies, for example, has not taken into account marginality of geography but rather social marginality in Foucauldian terms. See Eugene Rogan, ed. *Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East* (London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 2002).

¹⁴ For example, Ali Merad, in his seminal work on the Islamic reform movement in Algeria between 1925 and 1940, devotes no more than three pages on the role Ibadis played in that movement. See idem, *Le reformisme musulman en Algérie de 1925 à 1940: essai d'histoire religieuse et sociale* (Paris: Mouton et Co., 1967), 222-225. Muḥammad 'Alī Dabbūz, however, makes the case for a more significant role of Ibadis in the modern history of Algeria, especially their role in the reformist anti-colonial movement. See Muḥammad 'Alī Dabbūz, *Nabḍat al-jazā'ir al-ḥadītha wa thawratuhā al-mubāraka* (Algeria: al-Matba'at al-Ta'āwuniyya, 1965).

¹⁵ A similar notion of the conformity between Arab and African history is expressed by Alamin M. Mazrui and Ibrahim Noor Shariff, *The Swahili: Idiom and Identity of an African People* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1994). In discussing the Swahili identity, for example, they consider its Arabocentric paradigm as "merely a subset of the Afrocentric paradigm." Ibid., 9.

¹⁶ Not every Africanist, of course, shares this view. Ali al-Mazrui for example, in his documentary and book *The Triple Heritage of Africa*, highlights the integral role of Islam and Arabs in African history and argues for their essential part in the African 'heritage'. See idem, *The Triple Heritage of Africa*. His views, however, are not shared by all Africanists whose definition of African history is not as inclusive as Mazrui's. A different view and a different definition are implicitly invoked by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in idem, *Wonders of the African World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999).

¹⁷ This abbreviated definition of African history and African geography is even reflected in a recent study of Islam in Africa. While Egypt and North Africa are presented as 'gateways' to Africa, Africa itself is divided into West Africa and the Sudan, and Eastern and Southern Africa. See Nehemia Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels, eds., *The History of Islam in Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000).

¹⁸ The same applies to the group identified as 'Swahili' who, for long, remained 'unrecognized' by academics as a category of Africans and were deemed unworthy of their attention. See the introduction to James de Vere Allen, *Swahili Origins: Swahili Culture and the Shungwaya Phenomenon* (London: James Currey, 1993). The notion that the 'Swahili' is not pure 'African' on account of the different color, language, and intermixing with Arabs still persists today and has reappeared in the statement of Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in his controversial documentary *Wonders of the African World*, when he said the following: "It has taken my people 50 years to move from being Negro to being black, to being Afro-American. How long is it going to take the Swahili to become African?" Gates, Jr. *Wonders of the African World*, 152. Ali A. Mazrui criticized Gates for practicing a form of Orientalism, that the former called "Black Orientalism". Mazrui's initial response can be found at Ali A. Mazrui, A "Preliminary Critique of the TV Series by Henry Louis Gates, JR," *West Africa Review*, 1(2000). His second reply can be found at Ali A. Mazrui, "Black Orientalism: Further Reflections on 'Wonders of the African World,'" *West Africa Review* 1 (2000).

¹⁹ Francis B. Pearce, *Zanzibar: The Island Metropolis of Eastern of Eastern Africa*, 1st. ed, 1920 (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967), 214. Pearce's racial categorization and definition, as outlined in his book, reflected the British mind at the time. His account became a reference to researchers who took that categorization for granted.

²⁰ Ibid., 215.

²¹ Mazrui and Shariff, *The Swahili*, 28.

²² Ibid., 29.

²³ Pearce, *Zanzibar*, 221.

²⁴ William H. Ingrams, *Zanzibar: Its History and Its People*, new imp., (London: Frank Cass, 1967), 204.

²⁵ Comorians gained that status in 1939. See Fair, *Pastimes and Politics*, 45-46. Pearce included Mshihiri or Shihiris (Arabs from Hadramaut) and Comorians in the category of 'Arabs' but made a clear distinction between them and "the most numerous and important section of the Arab race in the Sultanate," in reference to Arab Omanis. Pearce, *Zanzibar*, 216.

²⁶ Ingrams, *Zanzibar*, 194-5.

²⁷ Institutionalizing privileges was neither exclusive to British colonialism nor confined to a hierarchy of races. The French in Syria and Lebanon adopted a similar pattern that allocated more privileges to men than to women, to Lebanese than to Syrians, to Christians than to Muslims. See Elizabeth

Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

²⁸ Michael Lofchie's analysis of Zanzibari politics during the interwar period, for example, is based solely on an economic perspective that regards the indebtedness issue as the major factor defining not only political life but inter-communal relationships as well. Idem, *Zanzibar: Background to Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), especially Chapter 4 and 99-126. Frederick Cooper examines the period from exactly the same perspective but his depiction of the inter-racial and inter-ethnic relationships is more nuanced in examining the fluidity and the inter-racial mixing in terms of class. Frederick Cooper, *From Slaves to Squatters: Plantation Labor and Agriculture in Zanzibar and Coastal Kenya, 1890-1925* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 158-172. Laura Fair, examining the 'cultural' identity of slaves in Zanzibar, relates cultural expressions of identity to underpinning socio-economic and ethnic factors. See, for instance, Fair's introduction and chapter 4 on the music of Siti bint Saad. idem, *Pastimes and Politics*, 1-63, 169-225.

²⁹ This is not to deny the existence of racial boundaries or to deny that Arabs in Zanzibar were totally blind to those boundaries. The mark of difference however, was not based on color and race but more on culture as defined by the *ustu'rabu* phenomenon. The argument made here rather is that Arabs and non-Arabs shared common values that are not usually taken into consideration when examining their identity and their perception of each other. The case of Arabs in Java may be more exemplary of my point. Mandal's study on Arab identity in Java at the turn of the century shows how Arab and native leaders drew closer in the name of Islam to face the competition of non-Muslim Chinese. See Mandal, "Forging a Modern Arab Identity in Java," Huub de Jonge and Nico Kaptein, eds. *Transcending Borders: Arabs, Politics, Trade and Islam in Southeast Asia* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002), 165-66. However, as Jonathon Glassman argued, cultural differentiation can be a source of a 'racial' discourse that considers culture rather than race as a mark of difference. See idem, "Slower than a Massacre: The Multiple Sources of Racial Thought in Colonial Africa," *American Historical Review* 109.3 (2004), 722-754.

³⁰ This means that Islam at the coast was not only practiced as a religion but also as a cultural phenomenon that existed among non-Muslims as well. See Mazrui and Shariff, *The Swahili*, 34-35. Whatever the case was, as Mazrui and Shariff indicate, "In the Swahili people's own definition of the term Swahili, the faith of Islam still seems to feature as an important criterion." Ibid, 10.

³¹ I am not suggesting here that there was no line of continuity, in terms of Islamic renewal and reform, between the eighteenth century and the preceding one(s). I take the eighteenth century as a starting point because it can be considered "a time of important developments which provide both a culmination for the medieval experiences of Muslims and a foundation for the modern developments... The experiences of the eighteenth century Muslims have direct ties with past and future." Nehemia Levtzion and John O. Voll, eds., *Eighteenth-Century Renewal and Reform in Islam* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 18.

³² Prominent among those students were Sulaymān al-Bārūnī, Ibrāhīm Aṭfiyyash, Ṣāliḥ bin Yahyā bin al-Hājj Sulaymān and Ibrāhīm Abī al-Yaqzān.

³³ See, for example, the exchange between al-Sālimī and a Zanzibari correspondent in Nūr al-Dīn al-Sālimī, *Badhl al-majhūd fī mukhbālafat al-naṣāra wa al-yahūd* (n. p., 1910) and see the numerous *fatwas* al-Sālimī wrote in response to questions posed by inquirers from Zanzibar in idem, *Jawābat al-imām al-Sālimī*. 2nd ed. (n. p., 1999).

³⁴ See Sa'īd bin 'Alī al-Mughayrī, *Jubaynat al-akhbār fī tarīkh Zanjabār*. 4th ed. (Oman: Wizārat al-Turāth al-Qawmī wa al-Thaqāfa, 2001), 377-78.

³⁵ 'Abd Allāh al-Sālimī, *Nabḍat al-a'yan bi ḥurriyyat 'umān* (Beirut: Dār al-Jil, 1998), 197.

³⁶ Nāṣir al-Bahlānī was an advocate of Islamic reform and renewal whose poetry was dedicated to extolling the Ibadi *nabḍa*, to lamenting the weakness of Muslims and lamenting colonial rule over Muslim lands. For an analysis of al-Bahlānī's career, see Amal N. Ghazal, "Islam and Arabism in Zanzibar: The Omani Elite, the Arab World and the Making of an Identity, 1880s-1930s," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Alberta, 2005), 147-195

³⁷ For a discussion of pan-Ibadism, see John C. Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition of Oman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 243-45.

³⁸ See Amal N. Ghazal, "Seeking Common Ground: Salafism and Islamic Reform in Modern Ibadi Thought," *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies* (forthcoming).

³⁹ Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition of Oman*, 243.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² See Randall L. Pouwels, "Sh. al-Amin B. Ali Mazrui and Islamic Modernism in East Africa, 1875-1947," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 13 (1981): 342 and Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *Al-A'lām*.

14th. ed. (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1999), vol. 5, 59. The readership for *al-Manār* grew in the 1920s as direct correspondence from some Zanzibaris started to appear on the pages of *al-Manār*.

⁴³ ZNA/AA5/27, dated Jumādā 2, 1319 (October 3, 1901).

⁴⁴ ZNA/AA5/11-51, letter dated 26 Sha‘bān, 1322 H. (November 5, 1904).

⁴⁵ Interview, Sa‘īd b. Muḥammad al-Riyāmī, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, April 19, 2002.

⁴⁶ See *al-Mu‘ayyad* (February, 1908), 3.

⁴⁷ Albert Hourani suggested that al-Kawākibī “might have undertaken his journeys on his [Khedive ‘Abbas] behalf and in furtherance of his ideas of an Arab caliphate.” idem, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1789-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 272. It is doubtful that al-Kawākibī’s trip to East Africa was to propagate the idea of an Arab Caliphate. Despite his criticism of ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, al-Kawākibī did not call for a break-up of the Ottoman empire or for its disunity. See Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism*, 24.

⁴⁸ Nāṣir bin Sulaymān al-Lamkī took over the editorship of *al-Najāḥ* in 1914. However, he was exiled to India in July of the same year and with his exile, *al-Najāḥ* ceased publication. It was to reappear later in 1929 under the title *al-Falaq*.

⁴⁹ The only issue available is dated December 22, 1911. It is number 8 in the first year of publication.

The copy is found in the ministry of Culture and Heritage in file number 5482/11, and another copy can be found in Muḥammad al-Busa‘īdi library in Muscat. That specific copy, as the note on it indicated, was presented as a gift by Jum‘a bin Sa‘īd al-Mughayrī to a certain Sayyid Fayṣal in 1931.

⁵⁰ The impact of that visit on ‘Alī in terms of redefining his relationship with the British was noted by Hollingsworth who reported that, upon his return, the Sultan “began to chafe at the restrictions imposed upon him by the Regency and to show resentment at his treatment by Mr. Rogers.” L. W. Hollingsworth, *Zanzibar under the Foreign Office* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1953), 179.

⁵¹ Jacob Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization*, 2nd. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 68.

⁵² B. G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 175.

⁵³ Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*, 207. ‘Alī’s insistence on granting each of them a medal of the “Order of the Brilliant Star” caused a quarrel between him and the British over the cost of the medals (total of £315). See *Ibid*.

⁵⁴ See Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islamism*, 68.

⁵⁵ Interview, ‘Alī Muḥsin al-Barwānī, Muscat, Oman, March, 2002.

⁵⁶ See al-Mughayrī, *Jubaynat al-akbbār*, 474-76 and Pearce, *Zanzibar*, 119. This statement must have been a direct response to the Ottoman Sultan’s proclamation of *jihād*, urging Muslims everywhere to unite and defend their state against the Entente.

⁵⁷ Al-Mughayrī, *Jubaynat al-akbbār*, 476.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 479.

⁵⁹ PRO, WO 106/259, 15 July, 1917 (Memorandum: “Africa for the African and “Pan-Islam”: Recent developments in Central and Eastern Africa).

⁶⁰ *Ibid*.

⁶¹ Hourani. *Arabic Thought*, 277. For more information on Zaydān and his writings, see Thomas Philipp, *Gurjī Zaidan: His Life and Thought* (Beirut: Orient Institute, 1979).

⁶² Interview, al-Barwānī, Muscat, March, 2002.

⁶³ Nāṣir bin Sulaymān al-Lamkī, “Ashhar al-ḥawādith wa a‘zam al-rijāl: Ḥamīd bin Muḥammad al-Marjabī, fātiḥ al-congo,” *Al-Hilal* 19 (July 1906): 571-580.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 571. This conforms to Zaydān’s definition of *al-sharq* as being the whole Arabic-speaking world.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*.

⁶⁷ Check Jurjī Zaydān, *Mashābir al-sharq fī al-qarn al-tāsī‘ ‘ashar*, vol. 1, in which the information on al-Marjabī was reproduced.

⁶⁸ Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 141. For more information on al-Yāzījī’s contribution to the Arab *nabḍa* at the turn of the century, see Yasir Suleiman, *The Arabic Language and National Identity: A Study in Ideology* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 96-109.

⁶⁹ See Ibrāhīm al-Yāzījī, *Nuḥat al-ra‘id wa shar‘at al-wārid fī al-mutarādij wa al-mutawārid* (Maṭba‘at al-Ma‘ārif: Cairo, 1904).

⁷⁰ Ibrāhīm al-Yāzījī, “Rasā’il Ibrāhīm al-Yāzījī.” TMs (photocopy), #1365. Jaffet Library, American University of Beirut.

⁷¹ Al-Mughayrī stated that the Arab Association was founded under Sultan ‘Alī but its first organizational body and its by-laws were ratified in 1920.

⁷² Among journals and newspapers from which *al-Falaq* reprinted articles are: *al-Abrām*, *Ākhir Sa‘a*, *al-‘Ālam al-‘Arabī*, *al-Bayraq*, *al-Dijā‘ al-Qawmī*, *Kawkab al-Sharq*, *al-Kjāh*, *al-Laṭā’if al-Muṣawwara*, *Majallat al-Azhar*, *al-Shabāb*, *al-Sharq al-‘Arabī*, *Umm al-Qurā*... The most oft-quoted newspaper, however, was *al-Fatḥ* of Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb. *Al-Fatḥ* was also a major resource for Ibadī newspapers published during the interwar period in the Mizab in Algeria. See Muḥammad Nāṣir, *Abu al-Yaqẓān wa jibād al-kalima* (Algeria: Al-Sharika al-Waṭaniyya, 1980), 118-19.

⁷³ See, for instance, *al-Falaq*, April 9, 1938: 1; April 26, 1938: 1; May 21, 1938: 2; December 31, 1938: 2; July 8, 1939: 1; July 15, 1939: 1; July 22, 1939: 1. The Arab Association, led by members of the Omani elite, had filed in 1934 an official complaint about the misfortunes of Arabs in Zanzibar to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Sir Philip Cunliff-Lister. Among those misfortunes was an educational system that did not take into consideration the Islamic culture and history of Zanzibaris. The Association attached an eight page appendix outlining the shortcomings of that system. PRO CO 61 8/60/15, 05 February, 1934 (Appendix on Education to the Memorial submitted by the Arab Association to H. M.’s Secretary of State for the Colonies).

⁷⁴ *Al-Falaq*, April 9, 1938: 1.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, April 8, 1939: 2.

Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism*, 75⁶

⁷⁷ Al-Rayyis’ view of Zanzibar as being another Andalusia is shared by many Zanzibaris in Oman who expressed a similar view when remembering al-Busa‘īdī rule on the island.

MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN ENCOUNTERS IN LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY ZANZIBAR

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The empire that Oman's ruler, Sayyid Sa'īd b. Sultan al-Bu Sa'īdi (r. 1806-1856), created in East Africa was one of the most cosmopolitan the world has ever seen. The ruling Omani Arabs were Muslims of the Ibadi sect; the "Swahilis" were Shafi'i Sunni Muslims;¹ the Indians were of various religious persuasions—Hindus, Sunnis, Twelver Shi'a, Isma'ilis, Bohora, and Parsees; the army consisted mainly of Baluchis, who were Hanafi Sunnis; and non-Muslim Africans came from many different regions. When Sayyid Sa'īd made Zanzibar the capital of the Omani empire in 1832, scholars migrated to Zanzibar from various parts of the Swahili coast, and he appointed *qadis* for both Sunnis and Ibadis in every large town. Sayyid Sa'īd and his successors were admired for their broad tolerance of all religions; according to one source, Sayyid Sa'īd would not allow the slaughter of any cattle in predominantly Hindu sections of town, for fear of offending the residents.² When European travelers, diplomats and Christian missionaries arrived on the scene in the 1840's, they were also impressed by the good-humored politeness of the Muslims. A British missionary in East Africa in the 1880s wrote:

Although the Arabs, like other Mohammedans, fiercely resent one of their number becoming a Christian, they are not on that account hostile to Christians who have not been Mohammedans . . . , nor do they take much, if any trouble, to convert either Christian or heathen to Mohammedanism. The heathen coast man, the converted native from the interior, . . . the Buddhist from India and the Parsee fire-worshipper, all alike live in peace, and pursue unhindered and unpersecuted their religious observances in the Arab-ruled towns of Zanzibar and the coast. . . . So far as I have been able to gather from my intercourse with them, they do not even object to a missionary speaking to them of the claims of Christ; only they consider any personal questions as to their own individual belief an exhibition of bad manners and a want of courtesy on the part of their questioner.³

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The first Christian missionaries to East Africa were German Lutherans, who began a missionary settlement near Mombasa in the 1840s, and French Catholics of the Holy Ghost Fathers, who followed up their work among ex-slaves in Réunion with the establishment of a permanent mission in Zanzibar in 1860. But the missionaries with the deepest impact on Zanzibar, with the closest ties with the sultan and with Muslim scholars, were those who came from the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (hereafter UMCA). Founded as a direct result of David Livingstone's appeal to bring Christian civilization to Africa and end the horrors of the slave trade, the UMCA initially attempted to establish a center near Lake Nyasa. However, the missionaries found that by providing asylum to those trying to escape enslavement, they became targets of the aggression of those engaged in the slave trade.⁴ Furthermore, many missionaries rapidly succumbed to diseases. This led to Bishop Tozer's crucial decision to remove the center of the UMCA mission to Zanzibar in 1864.⁵

British political interest in East Africa in the nineteenth century focused mainly on the control and eventual elimination of the slave trade. There was, therefore, a convergence of interests between the British political agents in Zanzibar and the missionaries,⁶ which undoubtedly stood to the missionaries' advantage, as Great Britain, whose consulate in Zanzibar opened in 1841, exercised a great deal of influence on Zanzibari politics, finally making Zanzibar a protectorate in 1890. In 1845 Sayyid Sa'īd entered into a treaty with Great Britain, prohibiting the export of slaves from his East African dominions and the import of slaves from any part of Africa into his possessions in Asia, and allowing British warships to seize any vessels carrying the slave trade under his flag, except those transporting slaves from one East African port to another in his domains. Later treaties with Sayyids Barghash (1870-88) and Khalifa (1888-90) abolished the slave trade altogether, and ultimately abolished the legal status of slavery. Shortly after Bishop Tozer arrived in Zanzibar in 1864, a group of five slaves, seized from an Arab dhow, were released by Sayyid Majid (1856-70) into his care. The nucleus of Christian converts emerged out of the growing numbers of freed slaves for the next twenty-five years.

This article focuses not on the slave trade, which is thoroughly covered in all histories of the Zanzibar sultanate and of Christian missions in East Africa, but on more subtle interpersonal dynamics between missionaries and Muslims in Zanzibar. Missionary opposition to the slave trade did not necessarily imply disaffection from the Arabs, even on the mainland, where the impact of the slave trade was most devastating.⁷ Although Livingstone "saw the slavers at their work and realized that this was a country invaded by Asiatics whose exploitation of it carried no single mitigating feature," writes Oliver, "socially, there was always something of a fellow-feeling between the European and the Arab in the centre of Africa."⁸ As Tozer remarked, "Every Arab is a 'perfect gentleman'." Nonetheless, Tozer described Islam as a "horrible parody of religion, pandering to every passion and lust, and utterly misrepresenting God and goodness," and decided that Muhammad "must have been a coarse, vulgar, treacherous man to invent a system which could lull his followers into security, and yet leave them as far from God as ever."⁹ He seemed to believe that Sayyid Majid's "perfect" manner was partially attributable to his contact with Christians, which "improves and softens the Mahometan character and disposition." In view of Muslim antagonism to Christianity, Tozer concluded that the best policy was to refrain from all hostile attacks.¹⁰

When, in 1872, the British government sent Sir Bartle Frere to Zanzibar to negotiate a treaty for the total abolition of the slave trade by sea, he inspected all the different missionary groups in East Africa, and was particularly impressed with the settlement of 324 freed slaves at Bagamoyo, on the mainland opposite Zanzibar, founded by the Holy Ghost Fathers in 1868. Such settlements tended to become independent political and economic units. The UMCA, on the other hand, would take in only as many freed slaves as they could provide with a solid Christian education. Whereas the UMCA stressed spiritual rebirth and conversion, and felt that economic incentives were disastrous for both Africans and missionaries, Catholics, for whom salvation is obtained through membership in the Church with consequent access to the “means of grace” in its Sacraments, saw little harm in material incentives.¹¹ They focused primarily on extending practical help to Africans, in the hope of surreptitiously baptizing infants and the elderly without their relatives’ awareness.¹²

EDWARD STEERE IN ZANZIBAR, 1864-1882

The most influential and capable leader of the UMCA was Edward Steere, who accompanied Bishop Tozer when he first came to Africa in 1864, and took his place as bishop in 1874 when Tozer was forced by illness to return to England. A man of talent in multiple areas, Steere made a permanent mark on Zanzibar by composing a handbook of the Swahili language, establishing a printing press in Zanzibar, translating large portions of the Bible into Swahili, and building, on the site of the recently-closed slave market of Zanzibar, Christ Church, an imposing structure of which he was the chief architect and builder. Steere’s gentleness, humor, respect, and compassion won him many accolades and friendships with people of all ethnic groups in Zanzibar, and his mastery of many languages was indispensable to the mission.

In a letter shortly after his arrival in Zanzibar, Steere writes about his fascination with the Arabs, “a race that has done more, and is less known than any other in the world.”¹³ Thirteen years later he groped for an appropriate Christian theological evaluation of Muhammad. In contrast to typical Christian demonization of Muhammad, Steere said that at the very least, Muhammad was “a man possessed with a great zeal for God, and a great hatred for idolatry and injustice.” He even speculated that Muhammad might really have had a divine commission to call the Arabs back to the faith of Abraham, so that they might be prepared for faith in Christ.¹⁴ Nonetheless, he was critical of Muslims’ idealization of the past, so that, “instead of encouraging growth, it petrifies.”¹⁵ And of the much-vaunted Muslim tolerance for non-Muslims, Steere comments, “He tolerates other men much as we do the lower animals; they are at liberty to live and do as they please, so long as they make themselves useful in their places, or at least do not excite the anger, or the cupidity, of the superior race. Beyond this toleration or contempt, no thorough-going Mohammedan can ever get.”¹⁶

Many Christian missionaries felt that it was virtually impossible to convert Muslims to Christianity, and hoped to influence Muslims in a less direct fashion, through living an austere lifestyle devoted entirely to the service of others. Dr. Steere felt this was not enough. In a letter written in December 1873, he wrote that the people of Zanzibar were suspicious of European motives in working to end the slave trade, and he felt it only honest to proclaim publicly the religious inspiration for their actions.¹⁷

In reality, however, while Steere enjoyed many theological discussions with Muslims, he felt that he lacked the gift of evangelism; he saw his focus on understanding Muslims and other Africans rather than evangelizing them as a flaw: "I do not possess some of the essential elements of a Missionary character. I can be very friendly with Negroes and Arabs, and can learn to use their language, and enter into their modes of thought, mainly because I am content to accept them as my teachers rather than to put myself forward to teach them."¹⁸ It was for this reason that he declined, at first, the request to become bishop of Zanzibar, a post he accepted under pressure.

A major impediment to evangelism among Muslims, Steere wrote, is the threat hanging over any convert from Islam. Sultan Majid warned the first missionaries that if they made any converts, "there were many people in the town who would consider it a duty to cut their throats, and he could not protect them." Missionaries were under European protection and had nothing to fear, but Steere was disturbed by the idea that "one is bidding another to danger his life, while one's own is in perfect safety."¹⁹ Nonetheless, there was at least one Muslim convert to Christianity in Zanzibar, an Arab named 'Abdallah b. Muhammad, who had learned English from Bishop Steere.

As long as he was only an enquirer he might stand at the end of the Slave Market Church, and no notice was taken. But one day he uncovered his head, and knelt down among the Christians. The next day, the enlightened Seyid Barghash sent him to prison; and there for three and a half weary years he remained, scorning all offers of freedom at the cost of his religion. All his Christian friends could do for him was to supply him with food, and to receive letters from him declaring his full trust in Christ. Then he fell ill; and there, in the utter loneliness of a prison, with none to applaud or console him, he who had never tasted the joys of Christianity among the faithful, and whose only privilege was to suffer for his Master, was content to die a captive.²⁰

A letter dated November 2, 1881, addressed to Bishop Steere from Archdeacon Farler, a UMCA missionary at Magila, on the mainland north of Zanzibar, speaks of "another notable conversion" of a Muslim elder who had previously threatened his son for converting to Christianity, but was convinced by the Christians' high moral standards, that their faith must be true.²¹ Tristram Pruen, a missionary in German East Africa in the late 1880s, argues against those who say there are no converts from Islam. "This is obviously erroneous, as there are men, now in orders as clergymen of the Church of England, who once were Mohammedans."²²

Christ Church was formally opened on Christmas Day 1879, to a large and diverse audience, including some leading Muslim men. Sayyid Barghash had signaled his good wishes not only by allowing the church to be built on the site of the closed slave market, but also by donating a clock for the church tower.²³

In contrast to the self-righteousness often associated with European efforts to abolish slavery in Africa, Heanley describes Steere's work with the freed slaves as "a poor installment of the debt that England owes to Africa, and a very inadequate occupation of the opportunities still open to her of repaying it," citing the crimes of former English pirates and slave-dealers, giving England "an evil name that has been most justly earned." He writes, "If we could but realize the debt that we owe

them, and give but one tithe of English lives for the lives that Africa has given us, we should send out missionaries, not by twos or threes, but by hundreds and thousands.”²⁴

The mission’s printing press regularly printed the sultan’s invitations and public announcements. On October 15, 1879, Sayyid Barghash came to inspect the printing press. Steere writes:

I went over to Kiungani and set up a little couplet in the Arabic, that he might print it himself if he chose. . . . He came at about half-past four in a steam launch with a party of about a dozen, all of them men of learning and devotees. I suspect they thought printing an uncanny art, and he wanted to show them what it was. Christease was printing off some of the book of Genesis, and went on like clockwork, and then they came and looked at the type and read the couplet, which comes out of the *Arabian Nights*, and approved of it highly, and saw another of our printers setting up type.²⁵

It is notable that shortly thereafter Barghash acquired a printing press for the sultanate, which in 1880 issued the first of many publications of Ibadi works.²⁶

Steere’s work on the Swahili language was also greatly appreciated by leading Zanzibaris. When he returned to England for a furlough in July 1878, he brought with him in manuscript form, or roughly printed at the mission press, a grammar and dictionary of the language, several parts of the Bible translated into Swahili, portions of the Book of Common Prayer, and schoolbooks, all to revise and publish in England. Barghash’s chief minister came to bid him farewell, and “said he could only bear the parting in the hope that, in getting our grammar and dictionary printed in England, I might be building a bridge over which the thoughts of Zanzibar might pass to England, and English learning and wisdom find their way to Zanzibar. And perhaps our own wishes could hardly have been expressed more neatly.”²⁷

Steere studied Arabic with local Arabs, and discussed Christian doctrine with Muslim scholars. Zanzibari Muslims of Zanzibar eagerly received Arabic Bibles from the mission, which was constantly running out and needing to order more.²⁸ The British consul, Sir John Kirk, was surprised while passing through town in July 1879, to overhear a group of Zanzibaris discussing the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

One of the Muslim scholars with whom Steere was in frequent contact was Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Amawi (1838-96), whom Abdallah Saleh Farsy, author of the only published account in Swahili of the Shafi’i scholars of the coast, described as “one of East Africa’s cleverest shaykhs.”²⁹ From Farsy we learn that he arrived in Zanzibar from Somalia as a teenager, and became a judge in the coastal town of Kilwa at the prodigiously early age of sixteen. After only a few years he was brought to Zanzibar to serve as *qadi*, and remained so until the early 1890s, when he resigned and his eldest son, Burhan, filled the post. Throughout an illustrious career in which he served six of Zanzibar’s sultans, Amawi wrote on theology, law, Sufism, grammar, rhetoric, and history, and composed an unfinished Swahili-Arabic dictionary. He also served as a political advisor, ambassador and diplomat. Although Farsy lamented the loss of nearly all of Amawi’s writings, some may be found in Oman, and fragments of others have been discovered in Dar es Salaam.³⁰

Farsy wrote that of all the Muslim scholars of the coast, Amawi was the most skilled at, and involved in, debating Christian missionaries, and he specifically mentions Tozer, Steere, and Canon Dale.³¹ Steere also wrote that he held weekly meetings with local Muslim shaykhs in his home, and it is likely that Amawi was a participant. In one letter he wrote, “Abdul Aziz called and asked for an explanation of the statement that man was made ‘in the image of God,’ which shocked them. I wrote and sent him an explanation in Swahili.”³² Despite Amawi’s reputation as a debater with missionaries, he assisted Steere in the translation of some of the Psalms and the Gospel of Luke into Swahili.³³ In one of the Dar es Salaam fragments, Amawi mentions a debate that he had with Bishop Chauncy Maples in Christ Church, moderated by Sir Arthur Henry Hardinge.³⁴ Amawi says that he had known Maples since the days of Bishop Steere, and proceeds to cite the precise hour of Steere’s death—a sign, perhaps, of a close relationship between them.

“THE APOLOGY OF AL-KINDI,” AND ‘ALI AL-MUNDHIRI’S RESPONSE

In 1877 Steere suggested that the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in London might devote a special branch to the publication of “any and every book and tract on the Muhammadan controversy.”³⁵ Only three years later, the Turkish Mission Aid Society published an apologetic treatise written ca. 830 C.E. by an Arab Christian identified as ‘Abd al-Masih b. Ishaq al-Kindi, a courtier of the ‘Abbasid Caliph al-Ma’mun, in answer to a letter written to him by his friend, ‘Abdallah b. Isma’il al-Hashimi, inviting him to embrace Islam. The text, edited by Anton Tien, was based on two manuscripts, one from Egypt and one from Constantinople. The book was reissued by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge in London in 1885, and at some point Tien undertook a translation entitled “The Apology of al-Kindi,” at the end of which he comments, with apparent frustration, “Both manuscripts are largely corrupt and differ in a number of passages. [The editor] has labored to put them together as best he could; he who has done his best is not to be blamed, even if he fails.”³⁶

The book includes an introduction describing the circumstances under which Hashimi wrote his letter (pp. 2-3 of the Arabic), followed by Hashimi’s letter (pp. 3-37), then Kindi’s heated response (pp. 38-270), and finally a brief account from the Egyptian manuscript of al-Ma’mun’s response to their debate (pp. 270-272).

Sir William Muir published a commentary, summary and partial translation of the text in 1882, with “the primary object” of placing it “in the hands of those who will use it in the interests of the Christian faith.” Although Muir finds that Kindi’s arguments contain “a good deal that is weak in reasoning, some things that are even questionable in fact, and an abundance of censorious epithets against the Moslem, Jewish, and Magian faiths that might well have been materially softened, yet, taken as a whole, the argument is, from the Apologist’s standpoint, conducted with wisdom and agility.”³⁷

Muir’s hope that missionaries might use the text to debate with Muslims was apparently realized when an unnamed missionary brought it to the Ibadi shaykh, ‘Ali b. Muhammad al-Mundhiri, and used it to debate with him. Mundhiri describes the treatise as “important” (*‘aḥimāt al-sha’n*) and “well-argued” (*qawīyyat al-burhan*), and of better quality than the polemical works the missionary had brought to him earlier, which he had easily “refuted and destroyed.” Mundhiri felt obligated

to respond to Kindi's *risāla*, although it was more than a thousand years old, because of its recent publication, its strong arguments, because he did not know of any other Muslim response to it, and because it is a religious obligation to refute all *bida'*, especially in this case, as the text could do great harm to Islam. He regrets that his father, "the matchless scholar," was not alive to write this response, for then "we would have been spared the burden of its evil, for he blocked similar efforts by Christians."³⁸ However, he resigns himself to the fact that the treatise had "become the responsibility of the humble, ignorant and stupid one, after the passing of this great, perceptive man from our company," and asks God to give him insight into what in the treatise was true and what was not. He explains that as Kindi's treatise employed proof texts from "the ancient scriptures," he felt compelled to do the same, "because an argument that takes its proof from a text the opponent does not accept [the Qur'an] is ineffective."³⁹

'Abdallah b. Isma'il al-Hashimi, whose letter prompted 'Abd al-Masih al-Kindi's heated response, informs his friend that he had for many years been immersed in reading the books of other religions, especially those of the Christians. He had read the entire Bible as well as books of the various Christian sects, of which he found the Nestorians ("your own party") to be the most like the Muslims. He speaks very highly of the monks and their piety and said that he had always avoided religious disputation, endeavoring to be respectful and hear what others have to say. But finally, he felt compelled by conviction and by his friendship with al-Kindi to summon him to the true *hanifi* faith of Abraham and of "my master, the lord of mankind, friend of the Lord of the universe, seal of the prophetic order, Muhammad, son of 'Abdullah the Hashimite, of Quraysh descent, an Arab of the country and town of Mecca, master of the rod and the pool and the camel, who intercedes for us, friend of the Lord of power, companion of Gabriel the faithful spirit."⁴⁰ He proceeds to summon al-Kindi to do the five daily prayers, fast in Ramadan, make the pilgrimage to Mecca, and to "struggle in the path of God" by raiding the hypocrites and fighting the unbelievers (*al-kafara*) and the idolaters (*al-mushrikin*) with the edge of the sword. He quotes many Qur'anic passages describing the rewards of Paradise and the tortures of Hellfire in hope that Kindi might heed the warning. He finally appeals to him to cease wearying himself with useless asceticism, and "embrace the faith that brings assurance."⁴¹

Kindi's reply can be broken into three parts: (1) an attempt to prove the Christian doctrine of the Trinity; (2) a derogatory examination of the life of the Prophet Muhammad and a discussion of the signs of true prophethood; (3) a discussion of the "true" origin of the Qur'an as the work of a Christian monk named Sergius and of its compilation, with an argument that the first four caliphs hated each other and corrupted the text of the Qur'an, and a denigration of the language of the Qur'an; (4) a denigration of Muslim ritual practices and customs, including ablutions, circumcision, the pilgrimage, and Muslim marriage and divorce; (5) a denial that Muslim holy places offer any benefit, in contrast to the healing miracles of the Apostles; (6) a condemnation of Muslim practices of jihad and the sufferings of Christians under Muslim conquest; (7) a condemnation of Muslim preoccupation with the pleasures of this world; and finally, (8) a long summary of the teachings of the life of Christ and the teachings of Christianity.

'Ali al-Mundhiri responds to al-Kindi's arguments point by point. In the course of his discussion he demonstrates an extraordinarily detailed knowledge of the Bible, which he says he had read in four editions, three of them in English,⁴² the

other Steere's Swahili translation of the New Testament published in Zanzibar in 1879.

Mundhiri's arguments are often refreshingly original. He usually appears to accept the Bible as authentic, although he occasionally accuses Kindi of *tabrif*, as when Kindi uses the word *rabb* for "lord" in Psalm 110:1; without an Arabic Bible in hand, he believes Kindi's use of *rabb* instead of *sayyid* in this context must be mistaken. Likewise, when Kindi tells a strange and insulting story about Muhammad (to be discussed below), Mundhiri finds this as evidence of the untrustworthiness of Christians and the need to be wary of the authenticity of their texts. But when Kindi attributes words from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke to Jesus, Mundhiri replies that these words belong not to Jesus but to the Gospel, which is from God; Jesus is merely the recipient of his Lord's message, as indeed Jesus affirms in John 14:24 ("The word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me"--although Mundhiri translates "the Father" as "Allah"). He does indeed follow the standard Muslim interpretation that the promised "spirit of truth" who would come after Jesus (John 16:12-14) was none other than Muhammad, and implies that Muhammad brought the whole truth, in contrast to Jesus, because Jesus himself told his disciples in this passage, "I have many other things that I do not tell you because you cannot bear them now, but when the spirit of truth comes, he will guide you to the whole truth. . . ."

Some of Kindi's arguments are strange, and Mundhiri has no trouble refuting them. For example, Kindi believed that when Genesis 15:6 said of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son at God's command that "he believed the Lord and it was accounted to him for righteousness," this meant that until that time Abraham had not believed in the one God, and had worshipped an idol while he lived with his father in Harran. So when al-Hashimi summons him to be a *hanif* like Abraham, Kindi allegedly takes this to mean a summons to be an idolater! Mundhiri finds it unthinkable that a prophet could ever worship an idol, and sees Kindi's statement as insulting and unmanly. Mundhiri comments that not only does Gen. 15:6 *not* indicate that Abraham had been unbelieving beforehand, but that Hebrews 11:8 affirms that "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance," indicating that he had faith when he was still living in Harran.⁴³ Mundhiri's ability to jump from the story of Abraham in Genesis to this verse in Hebrews, which might easily be overlooked by many Christians, is truly remarkable.

Likewise, when Kindi tries to limit the legitimate heirs of Abraham to the descendants of Isaac, Mundhiri quotes Galatians 3:28-29: "There is no Jew or Greek, no slave or free, no male or female, for they are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, you are a descendant of Abraham, heirs according to the promise given to his descendants." Mundhiri persists, "Do you think Abraham left his son Ishmael without knowledge of the oneness of God? . . . Was it not Ishmael with whom God was [in the wilderness] and whose voice He heard and whom He rescued from death and to whom He promised His blessing, as recorded in Genesis? . . . The one who is calling you to monotheism inherited it from his prophet and father, our master Muhammad!"⁴⁴

Kindi finds cryptic references to the secret of the Trinity in the Old Testament, as when God identified himself to Moses as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Ex. 3:15). Mundhiri retorts that by such logic, if God had mentioned His name four or five times, that would mean that He is four or five persons.⁴⁵ Kindi's Arabic translation of "God" in Gen. 1:1 ("In the

beginning God created the heavens and the earth”) is *al-aliba*, “the gods,” and he saw this plural form as a reference to the Trinity as well.⁴⁶ Mundhiri, confined to English and Swahili translations, did not realize that in the original Hebrew what we translate as “God” is *Elohim*, a plural form. He accuses al-Kindi of distorting the text, substituting words and changing them, adding and taking away from the text. “Because of such examples, we suspend judgment concerning the acceptance of all that is in the books in your hands, except what is in agreement with the truth we have.”⁴⁷ (p. 29). Kindi points out that the Qur’an also uses the plural “We” in reference to God, but Mundhiri retorts that this is merely for magnification and emphasis on God’s greatness. Kindi also sees an allusion to the Trinity in the three men who appear to Abraham in Gen. 18:2-3. Mundhiri retorts:

If you make this a proof for the Trinity because he saw three men and you make them gods, then you must affirm the Marcionite doctrine, for indeed you follow their doctrine that these three whom Abraham saw were separate gods. . . . If you make these gods, you also attribute to your gods the need to occupy space and to take shade under a tree from the heat of the sun and to rest under the tree [referring to Abraham’s offer of hospitality in Gen. 18:4]. The true God cannot be contained in a place, because He existed from all eternity before there ever was a place, and He does not move from one place to another, because there is no place that for a single second is devoid of God’s knowledge, power, and administration. Nothing is hidden from Him so that He would have to move to see what it is about, because He knows what is hidden in our breasts. . . . And He cannot be seen by eyes, because eyes can only see what takes up space in a place, and God is not in a place. As the Book says: “The Lord says, ‘What is the place of my rest? Did not my hand make all these things?’” (Acts 7:49-50). . . . The three are angels whom God sent to him and his wife Sarah to give them the good news of Isaac’s birth, just as God sent an angel to Zechariah to give him the good news of John’s birth, . . . and just as he sent an angel to Mary to give her the good news of Jesus’ birth.

Mundhiri points out that according to Gen 18:22, “The men turned from there, and went toward Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the Lord,” indicating that the three men were in no way a symbol of the Trinity, but were merely three angels.⁴⁸

Kindi says that the Qur’anic verse, “Those who say that God is the third of three are unbelievers” (5:73), refers not to Christians, but to the Marcionites, for they believe in three separate gods, but are not Christians, whereas Christians affirm that God is one and three. Mundhiri replies:

I concede to you your statement that this verse means the Marcionites, not you and those like you, because it does not mention a religious community by name. But I make this concession with the stipulation that you have no belief or doctrine that includes what is in this verse; otherwise, you and the Marcionites are jointly indicated by this verse. And I say: Do you not believe in three persons, all of whom you profess to be divine, existing in His essence, as indicated by what you say concerning

His word, “I will praise the Word of God” (Psalms 56:10) that this indicates that the Word of God is a god in truth, and that this indicates that each of the Persons is a god in truth?⁴⁹

Rather than finding it problematic that Jesus be called “son” (*ibn*) of God, Mundhiri heartily agrees with Kindi that *ibn* does not mean *walad*, because the Qur’an itself assures us of that; rather, *ibn* is used as a metaphor. But others have also been called sons of God, e.g. Adam in Luke 2:38. Does this mean that Adam also existed from eternity and is uncreated?” challenges Mundhiri. “Calling Jesus the son of God does not remove him from the attributes of creatures; it simply means that like Adam he was created without a father--and Adam also had no mother, which is even more amazing! Likewise in Luke 4:35, Jesus tells his disciples that if they love their enemies they will be sons of the most High. . . .”⁵⁰

Naturally, Mundhiri is highly affronted by Kindi’s derogatory interpretation of Muhammad’s life:

He even claims that he was a brigand who stole people’s possessions! Isn’t that one of the repugnant things that he prohibited, fighting those who did such acts and cutting off their hands and feet because they did these things? . . . You even allege that he went out to Yathrib to become a highwayman, and that this is why the people of Mecca expelled him from their city! By God, you have told a staggering lie and committed a grave sin . . . , and the book of Jesus does not permit that. But this is no worse than the allegations you make against God’s book, the Torah, and against Moses, on whom be peace, and against Abraham.⁵¹

As evidence that the Muslims did not enjoy God’s support, Kindi cites a Muslim raid on a Meccan caravan that was aborted because the Meccans outnumbered the Muslims more than three to one, “whereas you know that Gabriel in human shape rode on an ashen gray camel wearing a green mantle while Pharaoh and his host of 4,000 horses pursued the Israelites. . . . But your master has no such witness to bring”; likewise, the angels fought for Joshua at Jericho. Kindi suggested that if Muhammad were a man of God, an angel would have protected him from getting wounded at Uhud, as Elijah was protected from King Ahab, Daniel from the lions of Darius, and the three men from the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar.⁵²

Mundhiri responds with reference to Numbers 13: Although God had said that he would cast fear of the Israelites into the hearts of the people so they could take their land, Moses sent men to spy out the land. “Did Moses not know God’s promise to him that he would have the land? So why did he send spies? Is this a sign of fear or because of a lack of angelic support? Beware of criticizing the prophets and what they do, for if you criticize one of them, you criticize all of them!” Referring to the spies’ fearful report of the strong people of the land and the people’s fear and doubts on hearing this report, Mundhiri asks, “Does this mean that Moses was not a prophet? Why didn’t angels come at that point to support and encourage them and to fight on their behalf--and Joshua was among them, for whom the angels fought [at Jericho]?”⁵³

Mundhiri defends Muhammad’s sternness with the Jews by comparing his actions with Peter’s harshness with a couple who had hidden some of the money gained from the sale of their land, at a time when all the Christians were sharing all

things in common. Peter announced that they would die on the spot, and so they instantly fell down dead at Peter's feet (Acts 5:8). Mundhiri finds this inconsistent with Christian mores: "Surely this is something of which Jesus would not approve!"⁵⁴

Kindi argues that if Muhammad were really a prophet, he would have performed miracles, and all the people would have believed in him. Mundhiri retorts by saying that Muhammad did indeed work more miracles than he had time to mention, and that if miracles were sufficient to convince all the people, then everyone would have believed in Moses and Jesus, although John 12:37 says, "Although he had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in him," and Mark 6:4 says that Jesus could not perform any miracles in his hometown and with his relatives because of their lack of faith.⁵⁵

Kindi wrote that Muhammad had ordered the Muslims not to bury him when he died, because God would raise him to heaven, as Christ was raised, and that he was too dear to God to be left on earth more than three days; and that when the promised event did not happen, his body could not be washed, because it was already decaying, so he was buried without being washed.⁵⁶

Not surprisingly, Mundhiri finds this to be "the worst calumny that you utter about his life," and comments:

It is by such statements that the rational man knows that the Christians cannot be trusted in what they say on religious matters, and because of such statements nothing they have or claim can be trusted to be from the Gospel, the authenticity of which we do not know, not anything they claim to have from Jesus or from any other prophet, because these people have substituted true speech with lies.

Nonetheless, Mundhiri does not accuse the Christians as a whole of propagating such falsehood--"just this Kindi who allegedly belonged to their religion and who by his lies defiled their religion and its people." Concerning the strange story, Mundhiri denies that there is any report that Muhammad ever said he should not be buried.⁵⁷

Kindi felt that as a true Arab he was able to assess the Qur'an's literary qualities. He found fault with the Qur'an's use of foreign words, although there is no language with as rich a lexicon as Arabic. He claimed to have read the language of the *mushaf* of Musaylima, who made his claim to prophethood after Muhammad's death, and found it superior to the language of the Qur'an. He argued that although his friend was of the Quraysh, he had no advantage over him.

If you say that the Quraish are the most eloquent of the Arabs, the knights errant of eloquence, we oppose to you a fact, the truth of which you can scarcely deny or dispute, viz. that Mulaika daughter of Nu'man al-Kindi, when Muhammad asked for her hand, and she married him, said, "Shall Mulaika marry a trader?" We both know that the Quraish are the merchants and traders of the Arabs, while the Kinda were a royal race, who ruled the rest of the Arabs.⁵⁸ I do not mention this fact to boast of the nobility of my own birth, or to establish my descent from a pure Arab stock, but to remind you that the Kinda were the most powerful and literary tribe in the kingdom, distinguished for their eloquence and poetry,⁵⁹ leaders of armies, owners of cattle, distinguished for their

virtue. The barbarians of Rome and Persia always sought relationship with them, and boasted that their daughters were at our service--a boast such as only the brutish could make. No doubt the Quraish also excelled in point of influence and natural gifts, particularly the Hashimites, as no one can deny who is not blinded by envy. And so, in my judgment, are all the Arabs and the rest of the nomads--high spirited, excelling in point of virtue and natural gifts, as God has endowed them beyond other barbarians.⁶⁰

Mundhiri's response to this is first of all to accuse Kindi of ignorance of his own lineage and of the origin of the Arabs. Kindi said that the Arabic language goes back to "our father Isma'il," but Mundhirī replies that Arabic existed before the time of Isma'il; it existed from the time of the Tower of Babel. Isma'il merely married into the Arabs, and Kindi's claim to be a descendant of Isma'il is incorrect. Rather, Mundhiri says, Kindi descended from the prophet Hud. Kindi's claim that the Kinda ruled over all the other Arabs is nonsense, he says. It is true that the Kinda were kings, but they were conquered by Mundhiri's own ancestor, the Lakhmid king al-Mundhir ibn Ma' al-Sama',⁶¹ who won people over with prudence and generosity rather than brute force, and whose greatness was such that he was said to be the third Dhu al-Qarnayn (the second Dhu al-Qarnayn was Alexander the Macedonian). When the Banu Asad killed their own king, Hujr, and proclaimed their loyalty to al-Mundhir al-Lakhmi, Hujr's son Imru' al-Qays, the famous poet, massacred the Banu Asad but failed to win the support of any Arabs in his quest to march against al-Mundhir. He finally turned to the Roman emperor, who gave him his daughter in marriage. "This is the one of whom you boasted, saying that the Romans and Persians gave your ancestors their daughters." But an interpreter from the Banu Asad at the emperor's court told him that Imru' al-Qays's ultimate plan was to turn against the emperor after conquering al-Hira, so the emperor gave Imru' al-Qays a poisoned garment, that killed him. Mundhiri asks:

So how could they have ruled over all the Arabs? Where is their strength and their eloquence? How can their sayings be compared with the style of the Qur'an and the knowledge and wisdom it contains? But God guides whom He wishes.⁶²

Mundhiri's wealth of knowledge of Arab genealogy and lore is interesting, as is his confidence that, a millennium more remote from the events of which he speaks than his opponent, he knows the facts better than Kindi. Anyone familiar with Arabic literature cannot fail to notice the familiar theme of boasting of one's lineage, and the notion that the deeds of one's ancestors continue to reflect on the esteem of their descendants many centuries later.

Kindi claims that he found the Qur'an to be nothing but disorganized, self-contradictory phrases with no literary merit or meaning. Regarding these alleged contradictions in the Qur'an, Mundhiri advises him to remove the log from his own eye before trying to extract the speck of dust from someone else's (an obvious reference to Jesus' advice in Matthew 7:3-5 and Luke 6:41-42), and points out contradictions between stories in the gospels. He goes on at some length to speak on Arab eloquence and the reactions of Muhammad's contemporaries to hearing the Qur'an.⁶³

Kindi's discussion of circumcision is interesting for two reasons: first, he tells a very bizarre story concerning its origins,⁶⁴ which Mundhiri correctly refutes

with reference to the book of Genesis;⁶⁵ second, Kindi provides an apparently inaccurate quotation from St. Paul,⁶⁶ which may indicate that the Bible he used was different from the version accepted as canonical by the Catholic church, and Mundhiri is only too ready to respond with an accurate quotation of Romans 2:25.⁶⁷ When Kindi argues that it is unnecessary to wash after sexual emission, because it has no color or unpleasant odor, but rather is the source of “a human being of perfect knowledge,” Mundhiri responds with a quote from Leviticus 15:17 that indicates that seminal emission is indeed unclean, and everything that comes into contact with it must be washed with water.⁶⁸ When Kindi criticizes Islamic food prohibitions by saying that “God saw that all that He made was good, and He made pigs,” Mundhiri says this deception is from Satan, for Satan deceived Adam into eating the fruit of the forbidden tree that God had made. He interprets the story of Jesus casting the demons out of two men and sending them into a herd of pigs as an indication of the uncleanness of pigs (Matthew 8:30-33). If they were not unclean and were it not prohibited to own them, Jesus would never have allowed himself to destroy the herd, for he would not destroy lawful property.⁶⁹

These are just some of the many indications that Mundhiri had a very full command of the Bible, and was able to use it to good and original effect in debating with Christians. It is clear that Mundhiri was in no way daunted by Kindi’s attacks, despite his humble disclaimers at the outset. He also had full confidence that the power of God that continued to work among Muslims. After finding fault with the powerlessness of Muslim holy places, Kindi admits that Christian holy men no longer perform miracles, explaining that they were only needed when the faith was new.⁷⁰ Mundhiri finds this unconvincing, and affirms that God continues to perform great miracles among the Muslims: God answers the prayers of Muslims, and those who are especially pure of soul experience special graces.

They are guided by the lights of their hearts to knowledge of secrets and wisdom, without any strenuous effort or bitter life. Some even fly in the air and walk on water, or travel long distances in less than an hour, and the wild animals and beasts of prey do not harm them; rather, the wild animals love them, and the lion casts amorous glances at them, and if they desire anything it is given to them before they ask for it. There are even some who, if they told a mountain to cease existing, it would cease to exist, and if they wanted something, it would come to them. This happened to our shaykh, the worshipper and ascetic, Nasir b. Abi Nabhan, who died in the time of our master Sa’id b. Sultan--he moved a very large mountain from its place, and did other things from the blessings that appeared at his hands. Likewise other pious Muslims who were known by the people of this time--they saw their blessings with which God favored them. I only mention these to you so you will know that these things continue to happen to pious Muslims to this day. . . . The Imams of Nizwa, who manifested justice when all the world was unjust, worked many miracles . A light continues to appear over their graves to this day. Whoever does not believe this should come to Oman and see their tombs.⁷¹

‘Ali al-Mundhiri was born in East Africa, and his family had lived there for generations, but he was able to testify, perhaps from personal experience, of the

miraculous light that appears over the tombs of the Imams of Nizwa, a reference that places him squarely in the heart of Ibadi tradition. His reference to Nasir ibn Abi Nabhan is interesting but not surprising, given the account of his fearsome talisman against Sayyid Sa'īd and his uncle, Talib b. Ahmad, that led Sa'īd to keep Nasir by his side for the rest of his life, and hold Nasir's head in his lap as he expired.⁷² Even Abdallah Saleh Farsy, whose interest is mainly in Shafi'i scholars, mentions that Nasir was said to deal with the jinn.⁷³ Nasir had died only forty-four years before; he had been an associate of Mundhiri's father, and his reputation remained vivid. Such stories strongly affirm that the Muslims--and for Mundhiri, the true Muslims are only the Ibadis--are the true heirs of the *baraka* of Jesus as well as Muhammad, for they are able to perform miracles, whereas the Christians are not.

In 1891, at the time that Mundhiri wrote his refutation of Kindi's treatise, Zanzibar had become a British protectorate, ruled from the Colonial Office in London. Interactions with the British and with Christians had become inevitable for leading scholars of Zanzibar, though perhaps they were not yet particularly alarmed at potential European cultural and religious influence. This situation changed dramatically as the judicial system came under British control in the late 1890s,⁷⁴ more Muslim children attended Christian schools, and some Muslims in Zanzibar were adopting European dress. In January 1910, the leading scholar in Oman, Nur al-Din 'Abdallah ibn Humayyid al-Salimi, wrote a response to some Ibadis living in Zanzibar concerning the permissibility of attending Christian schools, wearing European clothes, learning European languages, and shaving the beard. To all of these questions Salimi gives a strongly worded and tightly argued prohibition.⁷⁵ In the section on schools, he draws on *Irshad al-bayara fi tabdhir al-muslimin min madaris al-nasara*, written in 1901 in Beirut by the Palestinian scholar, Yusuf b. Isma'il al-Nabhani (1850-1932).⁷⁶ Nabhani in turn cites *Tarbiyat al-mar'a*, by the Egyptian, Muhammad Tal'at Harb, who quotes a European magazine indicating that Christian schools in Muslim lands, and especially schools for girls, were intended to promote disaffection from Islam and love for European imperial rule.⁷⁷ Only on the subject of learning foreign languages does Salimi grant a small concession: foreign languages may be learned only to the extent that is necessary by those who are forced to interact with foreigners. But he feared that if children learned foreign languages, their familiarity with Arabic would decrease, and they would become less influenced by the Qur'an and Sunna of the Prophet.

CONCLUSION

Christian missionaries enjoyed, for the most part, very cordial relationships with Muslim scholars in Zanzibar, who were interested in reading the Bible and discussing theological issues, who helped them in their study of Swahili and Arabic, and were even willing to assist them in translating Christian texts into Swahili. Until the cessation of the slave trade at the end of the 1880s, Muslims showed little concern about missionary activity among Africans, and many Christians believed Muslims to be unconvertible; those who did believe them to be potential, if unlikely, candidates for conversion worried about the consequences of such conversions. The activities of Christian missionaries were only mildly worrisome in 1891 to al-Mundhiri, who confidently tore away at the only Christian tract he had yet found to pose any significant challenge to Islam. His citation of the miracles of the great Ibadi Imams of Oman indicates his close connection to that country and

that tradition, despite the fact that his family had lived in East Africa for generations. Salimi's response to the Muslims of Zanzibar in 1910, however, indicates a drift of many Muslims in Zanzibar away from Ibadi ideals, and that by then Christian influence had become a serious concern to Muslim religious scholars.

ENDNOTES

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¹ Many Swahilis consider themselves to be "Shirazis," descended from princes of the city of Shiraz who escaped political persecution by escaping to East Africa in the tenth century; hence some Swahilis insist that they are of Persian descent, although their alleged ancestors could have been Arab or Persian. There is a vast academic discussion on Swahili identity, and whether it is primarily Bantu or Arab, or to be seen as a mixture of both. I have no intention of entering this controversy, as both race and ethnicity are largely subjective terms that are subject to change. The spiritual linkages of much of the Swahili learned class with the Hadramawt are evident. Many Somalis claim Qurashi descent.

² Ali Muhsin Al Barwani, *Conflicts and Harmony in Zanzibar (Memoirs)* (Dubai: n.p., 1997), 33 The author, who was prominent in Zanzibari politics before the anti-Arab revolution of 1964 and was imprisoned for ten years after the revolution, also describes the complete harmony among people of various religions in Zanzibar before the revolution.

³ S. Tristram Pruen, *The Arab and the African: Experiences in Eastern Equatorial Africa During a Residence of Three Years* (London: Seeley & Co., Ltd., 1891), 257-8.

⁴ Although the slave trade in East Africa was primarily initiated by Arab traders, many African chieftains became involved by raiding their weaker neighbors and handing them over to the Arabs.

⁵ Roland Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa* (London, New York, Toronto: Longmans, Green & Co., 1952), 13-15; see also A. E. M. Anderson-Morshead, *The History of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa, 1859-1896* (London: Office of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa, 1897).

⁶ Oliver insists that this was a "happy accident," and that missionaries were not consciously working as an arm of European imperialism. *Missionary Factor*, 178-9.

⁷ See, for example, Pruen's comments on the mutual assistance slave traders and missionaries offered each other. *The Arab and the African*, 254-6.

⁸ Oliver, *Missionary Factor*, 11, 101. This "fellow-feeling" changed abruptly between 1884 and 1888, largely because of the aggressive German takeover of Tanganyika.

⁹ Letter to Mrs. Jackson, September 24, 1864. Bishop Tozer's letters are available online through the work of Project Canterbury, at <http://justus.anglican.org/resources/pc/africa/umca/tozer/letters/>.

¹⁰ Letter to Miss Tozer (his sister), September 14, 1864

¹¹ Oliver, *Missionary Factor*, 19-25.

¹² Mgr. R. de Courmont (head of the Holy Ghost Fathers in Zanzibar), *Notre-Dame des Anges, ou un Hôpital à Zanzibar* (Lyon: Imprimerie E. Paris, Philipona et Cie., 1886), 11-12.

¹³ Robert Marshall Heanley, *A Memoir of Edward Steere, D.D., L.L.D., Third Missionary Bishop in Central Africa* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1888), 306.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 307.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 309.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 310.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 310-311.

²⁰ Anderson-Morshead, *The History of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa*, 288-90. Heanley also mentions this in a footnote, *A Memoir of Edward Steere*, 311-2.

²¹ Heanley, *A Memoir of Edward Steere*, 346-7.

²² Pruen, *The Arab and the African*, 289.

²³ Heanley, *A Memoir of Edward Steere*, 250-3.

²⁴ Ibid., 219-20.

²⁵ Ibid., 249.

²⁶ The first work published there was *Qamus al-Shari'a*, a 90-volume work by the nineteenth-century Omani Ibadi scholar, Jumayyil b. Khamis al-Sa'di, of which the press in Zanzibar published volumes 1-16; vols. 1-21 have been published in Oman. Complete manuscripts of all ninety volumes may be found in Oman's Ministry of National Heritage and Culture and in the private library of Sayyid Muhammad al-Bu Sa'idi in Sib, Oman. Barghash's printing press also published works by Ibadi scholars of the Mزاب valley, Algeria.

²⁷ Heanley, *A Memoir of Edward Steere*, 87.

²⁸ Letter from Bishop Tozer to the Rev. J. W. Festing, August 25, 1865; Heanley, *A Memoir of Edward Steere*, 86.

²⁹ Abdullah Saleh Farsy, *Baadhi ya wanavyuoni wa kishafi wa mashariki ya Afrika* (Mombasa: n.p., 1972), originally published in 1944 by Zanzibar's Education Department as part 2 of *Tarehe ya Imam Shafi na wanavyuoni wa kubwa wa mashariki ya Afrika*. Randall L. Pouwels translated this as *The Shafi'i ulama of East Africa, ca. 1830-1970* (Madison: University of Wisconsin African Studies Program, 1989), where this appears on p. 44.

³⁰ I found Amawi's book on theology, over 400 pages in length, portions of a poem in praise of the Prophet, portions of his history of the Bu Sa'idi dynasty, and, most interestingly, portions of his diaries of two of his journeys in the Rovuma river region on behalf of Sayyid Barghash, in the private library of Sayyid Muhammad al-Bu Sa'idi in Sib, Oman. The Dar es Salaam fragments include portions from some of these same works, as well as a work on Sufism and a portion of his Swahili-Arabic dictionary. I received a photocopy of these fragments from Mwalimu Muhammad Idris Saleh of Zanzibar, some of them sent to me by Dr. Mohammed Kassem of Brock University in Ontario. I am extremely grateful for the assistance rendered by all these individuals. A fuller account of Amawi's life and work can be found in Valerie J. Hoffman, "In His (Arab) Majesty's Service: The Career of a Somali Scholar and Diplomat in Nineteenth-Century Zanzibar," *The East African Coast in Times of Globalization*, ed. Roman Loimeier and Rüdiger Seesemann (Münster, Hamburg, Berlin, Vienna, London: LIT Verlag, 2006).

³¹ Farsy, *Shafi'i ulama of East Africa*, 44.

³² Heanley, *A Memoir of Edward Steere*, 86. In 1877 he also wrote, "I was once asked by some Mohammedan doctors to give my sense of the saying that man was made in the image of God, and they were quite astonished to find that I did not attribute to God body, parts, and passions." Ibid., 309. As there is a well-known *hadith* saying that God created Adam according to His own form, it is odd that the passage in Genesis should have aroused such surprise and consternation.

³³ In *A Handbook of the Swahili Language as Spoken at Zanzibar* (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1924), vi-vii, Steere states that Shaykh 'Abd al-'Aziz (al-Amawi) volunteered to translate the Psalms from Arabic into the best and purest Swahili, but Steere "found, before long, that not only did his numerous avocations prevent any rapid progress, but that his language was too learned to suit exactly our purpose in making the version; it did not therefore proceed further than the Sixteenth Psalm. I printed these as at once a memorial of his kindness and a specimen of what one of the most learned men in Zanzibar considers the most classical form of his language." Aloo Osoti Mojola credits Amawi with translating the Gospel of Luke, "The Swahili Bible in East Africa from 1844 to 1996: A Brief Survey with Special Reference to Tanzania," *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends*, ed. Gerald O. West and Musa W. Dube (Boston, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2001) 514, although he did it in cooperation with Rev. R. Lewin Pennell, who is credited with the translation in A. E. M. Anderson-Morshead, *History of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa, 1859-1896* (London: Office of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa, 1897), 66.

³⁴ Chauncy Maples joined the mission on March 18, 1876, during the bishopric of Dr. Edward Steere. He became Archdeacon of Nyasa, then priest on September 9, 1876. He was consecrated Bishop of Likoma on June 29, 1895, and the Rev. William Moore Richardson was consecrated for Zanzibar. As Hardinge became head of the British administration in Africa only in July 1895, it must be assumed that the debate between Maples and Amawi took place during Maples's brief stay in Zanzibar before he proceeded to take up his bishopric in Likoma. Bishop Maples drowned in a storm on Lake Nyasa September 2, 1895, on his way to take up his post.

³⁵ Heanley, *A Memoir of Edward Steere*, 313.

³⁶ Al-Kindi, 'Abd al-Masih b. Ishaq, *Risalat 'Abdallah b. Isma'il al-Hashimi ila 'Abd al-Masih b. Ishaq al-Kindi yad'uhū ila 'l-islam, wa risalat 'Abd al-Masih ila 'l-Hashimi yarudd bi-ba 'alaybi wa yad'uhū ila 'l-nasranīyya* ['Abdallah b. Isma'il al-Hashimi's letter to 'Abd al-Masih b. Ishaq al-Kindi calling him to Islam, and 'Abd al-Masih's letter to al-Hashimi in which he responds to him and calls him to Christianity], 2nd ed.

(London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1885). Anton Tien, “The Apology of al-Kindi,” *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue*, ed. N.A. Newman (Hatfield, PA: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1993), 515.

³⁷ Sir William Muir, *The Apology of Al Kindy, written at the court of Al Mâmun (AH 215/AD 830) in defence of Christianity against Islam, with an essay on its age and authorship, read before the Royal Asiatic Society* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1882), v, vii.

³⁸ Shaykh Muhammad b. ‘Ali b. Muhammad b. ‘Ali al-Mundhiri was a man of towering intellect. His known works include a book on theology entitled *Al-Khulasa al-damigha*, another book dealing specifically with the theological problem of the vision of God, which the Ibadis deny but the Sunnis affirm, a book on etiquette, a teacher’s text on grammar, and a Sufi-style prayer of petition bearing special instructions for its recitation and promises of its efficacy in revealing divine secrets. Shaykh Muhammad served as chief Ibadi judge under Sayyids Sa‘id b. Sultan (1832-56) and Sa‘id’s son Majid (1856-70), until the shaykh died in 1869. His position was inherited by his younger brother, ‘Abdallah. Shaykh Muhammad’s cousin, Muhammad b. Sulayman b. Muhammad al-Mundhiri, was chief Ibadi judge during the reign of Sayyid Barghash b. Sa‘id (1870-88) and was among those who accompanied Sayyid Barghash during his visit to Europe in 1875. Later, Shaykh Muhammad b. ‘Ali’s son, ‘Ali b. Muhammad al-Mundhiri, born in 1866, only three years before his father’s death, became the chief Ibadi judge during the reigns of Sayyids ‘Ali b. Hamud (1902-11) and Khalifa b. Harub (1911-60), until he died in 1924-5. The Mundhiri family had lived in East Africa for generations before the coming of Sayyid Sa‘id. Steere, *A Handbook of the Swahili Language*, viii, thanks a “Sheikh Mohammed bin Ali, a man of the greatest research” for a copy, in his own hand, of some very famous Swahili poetry, with an interlinear Arabic version, as well as a paraphrase of it in modern language. This likely was Muhammad b. ‘Ali al-Mundhiri.

³⁹ Mundhiri’s original manuscript, entitled *Kitab fi ‘l-radd ‘ala ‘l-nasara*, written in his own hand, is #ZA 8/10, 316 pages, in the Zanzibar National Archives, and it appears to be the original, with many crossed-out pages, but it is incomplete: pages 80-281 are missing. He says that he wrote it from 19 Rajab until 23 Ramadan 1308 (28 February until 2 May 1891), and adds that it took him so long to write it because he was busy teaching Islamic law at the mosque. A complete copy of the manuscript is in the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture (MNHC) ms. #2089, 295 pp., copied by ‘Abdallah b. Musbih al-Sawafi for Shaykh ‘Ali b. Muhammad b. ‘Ali b. Muhammad al-Mundhiri on 21 Muharram 1309 (26 August 1891). All references to page numbers here are to the MNHC edition, unless otherwise stated.

⁴⁰ Tien, “Apology of al-Kindi,” 384-8.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 401.

⁴² Mundhiri, *Kitab fi ‘l-radd*, 30, says, “Know that I have read four editions of the Torah: The first was published by “Rigarn” [?] Watts in London in 1831 A.D., based on the text published in Rome in 1471; the second edition was published by William Watts, also in London, in 1857 A.D.; the third was published by Oxford University Press in 1871 A.D.; and the fourth is a Swahili translation of the Bible published in 1879.” This indicates that Mundhiri was fluent in English as well as Swahili, but that he had not read the Bible in Arabic, the language of his and Kindi’s treatises. Sometimes he uses Kindi’s quotations of Bible verses, and at one point, in his discussion of Psalm 110 (p. 264), he objects to the use of *rabb* for the second “lord” in Kindi’s quotation of “The Lord said to my lord” (Ps. 110:1), suggesting that Kindi’s text had been distorted, and that the original should have used *sayyid* instead. All page numbers for Mundhiri’s text refer to the MNHC manuscript, unless otherwise stated. An online search for information on the English-language Bible translations to which he refers was unsuccessful, but there is a reference to a “Missionary Register for 1830 containing the principal transactions of the various institutions for propagating the gospel,” issued by the Church Missionary Society and printed by an R. Watts in London.

⁴³ Mundhiri, *Kitab fi ‘l-radd ‘ala ‘l-nasara*, 6-8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 11-13.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 15-17.

⁴⁶ Our present-day Arabic translations of the Bible, largely the work of Protestant missionaries, translate “God” in Genesis 1:1 as *Allah*, but perhaps in Kindi’s time *Elohim* was translated *al-aliba*.

⁴⁷ Mundhiri, *Kitab fi ‘l-radd ‘ala ‘l-nasara*, 29.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 32-34. Genesis 18:1-3 reads: “The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, ‘My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant.’” In Gen. 18:16, “The men set out from there, and they looked toward Sodom; and Abraham went with them to set them on their way. The Lord said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do . . . ?” In Gen. 18:22, “So the men

turned from there, and went toward Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the Lord.” Gen. 18:23-32 has Abraham pleading with the Lord not to sweep away the righteous with the wicked, and in verse 33, “And the Lord went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham.” In Gen. 19:1, “The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom.” The *New Oxford Annotated Bible* says in its commentary on this story, “The relation of the three visitors to the Lord or Yahweh is difficult. All three may represent the Lord; thus the plurality becomes a single person in vv. 10, 13. On the other hand, v. 22 and 19.1 suggest that the Lord is one of the three, the other two being attendants.” The wording of this commentary is astonishingly similar to the Qur’an’s accusation against the Christians that they said that God is the third of three, although of course that is a misunderstanding of the meaning of the Trinity. Many Christians believe that “the Lord” is a pre-Jesus incarnation of the eternal Word of God, while the other two are angels.

⁴⁹ Mundhiri, *Kitab fi ’l-radd ’ala ’l-nasara*, 37. What Kindi says in Tien’s translation is (p. 423): “David the prophet says of God in Psalm 33 (v. 6): ‘By the Word of God the heavens were made, and all the hosts of them by the breath (i.e., Spirit) of His mouth.’ Here, clearly and explicitly David speaks of the three persons when he mentions God, the Word and the Spirit [literally in the Arabic, “God, His Word, and His Spirit”]. Have we said anything in advance of this [more properly, “Have we added anything to what David said in our description?”] In another Psalm he solemnly affirms that the Word of God is God Himself [more literally: “that the Word of God is a true god (*ilab haqq*)]: ‘I will praise the Word of God’ (Ps. 56:10, Peshitta, paraphrase). Do you suppose that David praised what was not God? In another Psalm he says: ‘Blessed be God, even our God, who daily beareth our burdens’ (Ps. 68:19, paraphrase). Did David desire that the one God should be praised by him, or three gods? Does he not rather in his Psalms hint at the three persons who yet are one God? [literally, “But it is a symbol in his book of the mention of the three Persons, that they are one God”]. Isaiah the prophet praised God most High in chapter 61 of his prophecy, saying: ‘From the beginning I spake not in secret, and from the former time I was there; and now the Lord has sent me and His Spirit’ [it is actually Is. 48:16; in the Arabic, it is clear that “His Spirit” is a subject along with “the Lord.”]. This is just as we have said, there are three persons yet one God and one Lord. We have not gone beyond God’s own word, nor have we added to or taken from it, nor have we altered or falsified it, though you say we have done so.”

⁵⁰ Mundhiri, *Kitab fi ’l-radd ’ala ’l-nasara*, 19-23.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

⁵² Tien, “Apology of al-Kindi,” 428-9, 431-2.

⁵³ Mundhiri, *Kitab fi ’l-radd ’ala ’l-nasara*, 60-64.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 87-88.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 104-116.

⁵⁶ Tien, “Apology of al-Kindi,” 528 n. 48: “Though there appear to be no Muslim sources for Muhammad ever saying that he would be resurrected as Jesus was on the third day, al-Kindi’s accusation is not entirely without merit. Muhammad died on a Monday, June 7, 632, but according to most major Islamic histories he was buried in the middle of the night Wednesday without even Aisha’s knowledge. It appears that the normal procedure, however, was to bury the dead on the day of their death (to precede the rapid decay of the corpse which was increased by the heat of the season), as in the case of Abu Bakr who died in August and was buried within a few hours of his death. Quite often Western and Eastern scholars of Islam attribute the delay in Muhammad’s burial to disagreements in the Muslim community at the time as to who was to be their new leader. The vast majority of Islamic sources show that ‘Umar didn’t believe that Muhammad was dead at all and he threatened anyone who should maintain such a thing. ‘Umar is reported to have said that Muhammad had just gone to be with Allah as Moses had for 40 days and that he would return. Nöldeke and Schwally (*Geschichte des Qurans*, vol. 2, p. 83) show Shahrastani (ed. Cureton I, 11) as maintaining that ‘Umar alluded to Jesus the son of Mary instead of Moses in this statement, and *Sahih Bukhari*, The Virtues and Merits of the Companions of the Prophet, ch. 6, hadith 18, vol. 5, p. 13 shows ‘Umar as saying that Muhammad was to be resurrected. One result of these somewhat apparent contradictions is that some Western scholars of Islam have brought the charge that Qur’an 3:138 and other verses (concerning Muhammad’s being mortal) were added to the text of the Qur’an by Abu Bakr at a later date. Schwally and Nöldeke (as the major Islamic histories also show) believe ‘Umar to have forgotten this verse in the moment of his shock . . . and see no reason why ‘Umar would have allowed Abu Bakr to add such a verse. However, if Muhammad had said that he was to be resurrected and then was not, this would have been reason enough for a fairly well organized cover-up on the part of Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and even the rest of the community. (This could have also been a cause of the apostasy of the Arabs after Muhammad’s death.) The accounts of Muhammad’s burial being delayed because of the choice of the first caliph seems to be extremely superficial. Furthermore, even if Q 3:138 was originally part of the

Qur'an, Abu Bakr still waited a few days to bury Muhammad's corpse. In view of the many inconsistencies concerning the death of Muhammad, it is quite possible that there were Muslim hadith in al-Kindi's day which reported that he was to be resurrected in a manner similar to Jesus. Moreover, it appears that none of the later Muslim apologists even tried to respond to al-Kindi's charge, though they must certainly have known of it at least through al-Biruni. Be that as it may, the matter of Muhammad's resurrection has long been a subject of dispute in Muslim circles, see Fritz Meier, 'Eine auferstehung Mohammeds bei Suyuti,' *Der Islam*, vol. 62 (1985): 20-58.

⁵⁷ Mundhiri, *Kitab fi 'l-radd 'ala 'l-nasara*, 128-9.

⁵⁸ Cf. Irfan Shahid and A.F.L. Beeston, "Kinda," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, CD-ROM version, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002.

⁵⁹ Imru' al-Qays, considered the most distinguished Arab poet of the pre-Islamic period, was a Kindi.

⁶⁰ Tien, "Apology of al-Kindi," 463.

⁶¹ Literally, "Mundhir son of the water of the sky." This is Mundhir III, who reigned from 503-54. Cf. Irfan Shahid, "Lakhmids," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, CD-ROM version.

⁶² Mundhiri, 185-192, includes Imru' al-Qays's poems on these events. Cf. S. Boustany, "Imru' al-Qays b. Hudjr," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, CD-ROM version. Boustany tells the story in a manner close to Mundhiri's version, identifying the emperor as Justinian in Constantinople, and saying that the poisoned shirt was allegedly a punishment for Imru' al-Qays' seduction of Justinian's daughter, although "in fact history does not mention that Justinian had a daughter."

⁶³ Mundhiri, 173-188.

⁶⁴ Tien, "Apology of al-Kindi," 471.

⁶⁵ Mundhiri, 202.

⁶⁶ Arabic version, 163.

⁶⁷ Mundhiri, 206.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 208-9.

⁷⁰ Kindi, Arabic version, 162-3.

⁷¹ Mundhiri, 219-230. Anne K. Bang points out that his obituary (*Supplement to the Zanzibar Gazette*, 2 January 1926) states that 'Ali b. Muhammad never left Zanzibar. She comments, "If this is correct, it was highly unusual for a member of a scholarly family, Ibadi as well as Shafi'i. Most of them would at one point of their life perform the *hajj*, often combined with a period of study in the Hijaz. For the Ibadi Omanis, a sojourn in Oman was also common." *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea: Family Networks in East Africa, 1860-1925* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 154. Mundhiri's comment here about the light appearing over the graves of the Imams in Nizwa would lead us to believe that he did travel to Oman.

⁷² Nasir b. Abi Nabhan was the greatest Ibadi scholar of his generation in Oman, and the son of the greatest scholar of the previous generation, he lived from 1778 to 1847. Abu Nabhan and his son Nasir were very critical of the ruling dynasty. After his father's death in 1822, Sayyid Sa'id launched an attack on the family estate, but Nasir was able to counterattack through the use of powerful talismans. This supposedly frightened Sayyid Sa'id so much that he took Nasir into his inner circle and never let him out of his sight, even taking him into battle, and taking him to Zanzibar, where Nasir died with his head on the Sayyid's lap. Nur al-Din 'Abdallah b. Humayyid al-Salimi, *Tuhfat al-a'yan bi sirat abl 'Uman* [The Gem of the Eminent in the History of the People of Oman], 2 vols. in one (Sib, Oman: Maktabat al-Imam Nur al-Din al-Salimi, 2000), 2: 179, 216-229.

⁷³ 'Abdallah b. Salih al-Farisi, *Al-Bu Sa'idiyyun, hukkam Zinjibar*, anonomously translated from English, 3rd ed. (Muscat: Ministry of National Heritage and Culture, 1415/1994), 90.

⁷⁴ Anne K. Bang and Knut S. Vikor, "A Tale of Three *shambas*: Shafi'i-Ibadi legal cooperation in the Zanzibar Protectorate," Part I, *Sudanic Africa: A Journal of Historical Sources* 10 (1999): 1-26.

⁷⁵ Nur al-Din 'Abdallah b. Humayyid al-Salimi, *Badhl al-majbud fi mukhalafat al-nasara wa 'l-yahud* (Sib: Maktabat al-Imam Nur al-Din al-Salimi/ Matabi' al-Batina, 1995).

⁷⁶ Yusuf b. Isma'il al-Nabhani, *Hadba kitab irshad al-hayara fi tabdhir al-muslimin min madaris al-nasara* (Beirut: n.p., 1901).

⁷⁷ Muhammad Tal'at Harb, *Tarbiyat al-mar'a wa 'l-hijab* [Women's Education and the Veil] (Cairo: n.p., 1899). This book was written in response to Qasim al-Amin's famous *Tabrir al-mar'a* [The Emancipation of Women] (Cairo: Maktabat al-Tarqi, 1899). Both books have been republished numerous times. Ironically, Harb's book was reissued in 1905 by Matba'at al-Manar, the publishing company established by Muhammad 'Abduh's disciple, Muhammad Rashid Rida. It is ironic because some believe Amin's book actually to have been the work of 'Abduh, and was certainly written under 'Abduh's influence. Rida, however, became more conservative than his master, and admired the Wahhabi movement of Arabia. Significantly, a recent edition of Harb's book was published in Riyadh,

Saudi Arabia, under the title *Taqrib k̄itab Tarbiyat al-mar'a wa 'l-hijab: wa huwa radd 'ala du'at muharriri al-mar'a* [Approaching the Book 'The Education of Women and the Veil, a rebuttal of those who claim to liberate women] (Riyad: Adwa' al-Salaf, 1999).

BOOK REVIEWS

REVIEW ARTICLE

Leo Strauss: Philosopher and Neither Straussian nor Imperialist Reflections on Anne Norton *Leo Strauss and the Politics of American Empire*

New Haven, CT: Yale University Press,
2004

Reviewed by Charles E. Butterworth¹

For two reasons, it is difficult for me to fault Anne Norton's book completely. The first, personal to be sure, is that she speaks kindly of me in her last chapter. Who among us is so free of *amour propre* as not to recognize the acumen of an author who discerns our own merit? The second, more important, is that I agree to a certain extent with what she has to say about some of those students of Strauss speaking about politics in our time and acting on the opinions behind their speech.

That said, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of American Empire* is riveted with problems, most having to do with Norton's carelessness. Far too often, she seems more intent on telling a good story or good stories than in being sure she has the facts straight. That carelessness leads her to distort the image of Strauss and to exaggerate the power of those whom she presents as his authentic students and labels as Straussians. All too often, the fault lies in her informants. For example, no one familiar with Leonard Binder's animosity toward Strauss and his students would rely on him for an accurate assessment of either. Thus Norton's willingness to circulate his anecdote about Strauss's penchant for seminars on anthropology with "slides of scantily clad natives and accounts of exotic sexual practices" (p. x) is naive at

best. Given her own assessment of the informant in other fora, one can only wonder about the reasons for according this questionable account any credibility.

Norton would like to show that the Straussians are wrong and dangerous, but that there are students of Strauss who are good and decent – as is Leo Strauss himself. But she tries so hard to place some blame on Leo Strauss for the Straussians that she often looks for the roots of their politics and teaching in his. Alas, the roots are not there. She would have done better to look at the way a few students of Strauss, while learning about the history of philosophy from him, have used that knowledge to serve goals he would not have endorsed. Allan Bloom and Harry Jaffa lack nuance, and they are overly intent on influencing the politics of the day. Strauss was not. He remained above the fray.

Indeed, the distortion of Strauss's teaching by politicizing it is the real issue. For some strange reason, people who have had no contact with Strauss at all, people who know Strauss only through his writings and a particular student (Allan Bloom, Harry Jaffa, Walter Berns, or Harvey Mansfield) have identified themselves as Straussians. They have done so as a way of claiming to be interested in political philosophy and not interested in the intellectual fads of the day. But that is the extent of their Straussianism. Unfortunately, Anne Norton does not seem to grasp that distinction. More to the point, nowhere in this book does she provide any evidence that she remotely discerns what Strauss's teaching was about.

Let me point out in a somewhat painstaking manner, going chapter by chapter through the book, some of the errors I perceive in what Norton has to say about Strauss and the Straussians. Taken as a whole, they weaken her account substantially and show that we do not yet have a sound portrait of Leo Strauss or of his more well-known

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students.

Using only hearsay as evidence, Norton claims in the first chapter of the book that Strauss was close to Nathan Leites and Albert Wohlstetter (p. 9). Now it would have been difficult for Strauss to have much to say to Leites, so distinct were their manners of perceiving politics and the course of human action as well as thought. Moreover, Leites was hardly ever at the University of Chicago. His imaginative understanding of how he might fulfill his teaching obligations while residing in Paris never quite found favor in the eyes of university administrators and prompted a mutually agreeable contract termination only a few years after his arrival. Indeed, of all those close to Strauss during Leites's tenure at Chicago, I may well have been most in contact with Leites. He never let on to me that he had a close relationship with Strauss. Many others have explained at length how different Wohlstetter's approach to politics was from Strauss's, so there is no need to pursue that theme.

The title of Chapter Two, "The Lion and the Ass," refers to Robert Sacks's commentary on Genesis. Norton exploits some rather curious tales about the way various students of Strauss assisted Sacks during the writing of this book to insist that they are foolishly protective of certain writings. The account reads well, as fiction most often does. Her portrait of Leon Kass will persuade no one who has any acquaintance with Kass, and she completely misconstrues his reluctance to share with her a writing in progress that a friend had asked him to critique. Kass is well-known for his own thoughtful interpretations of Scripture. Moreover, from his own connections with St. John's College, he knows Sacks well. So it is only reasonable for Sacks to have shared the manuscript with Kass. It is equally reasonable for him to ask that it not be disseminated widely until he thought it was ready.

Still, to Norton's credit, she does recognize that there was something powerful about Strauss's intellectual appeal (as well as that of several other professors at the University of Chicago). But in trying to capture that of Strauss in particular, she completely misses a lesson he tried to pass on to students: always teach as though there is one quiet student in the class who is more knowledgeable or more intelligent than you are – in other words, always be prepared (see pp. 28-29). To understand the extent to which Strauss followed his own advice, one must be aware of how often Strauss turned down invitations to dinner the evening before class on the grounds that he had to prepare for the next day. Not having studied with Strauss, Norton is ignorant of that important fact. Why her informants seem not to have passed it along must raise a question or two. No?

Similarly, Norton fails to explain what drew Leo Strauss to focus so deeply on good books or even what such books are all about. For him, there was no canon revered for itself (pp. 29-31). That anyone one can readily see by looking at books Strauss cites in his various articles. Rather, the point of reading good books is to try to learn about the tradition of thought to which we are heirs and to understand how its unfolding has brought us to our present opinions. That goal is valid whether one speaks about our own Western tradition or about some other tradition. (Here things become complicated, for the Eastern tradition has many strands; and it is not clear whether we really want to divorce the Middle Eastern tradition from the Western one). But without going into that problem, the salient point is how Strauss insisted his goal was to know the past well in order to reflect intelligently upon the present.

Anne Norton's account of Straussian "truth squads" in her third chapter and claim that Strauss sought to take over the political science department at the University of Chicago

(pp. 43-46) are apocryphal. To be sure, some Strauss students were excessive in their questioning of professors; but they never went so far that they could be called precursors of Lyndon LaRouche's bands. Nor did Strauss have a corner on money in the department: there, as in most other departments, the pot of money was shared among all professors and distributed according to their ability to make persuasive claims. Like other professors, Strauss had access to funds from outside sources and used them as he saw fit – mainly to fund graduate students who might not otherwise have had support, nothing more. Finally, for Norton to claim that Bloom and other Straussians are opposed to democracy and to freedom (pp. 53-54) is to misunderstand their commitment to liberal education: the issue is how to use freedom, not just to have it.

Anne Norton seems to be most critical of Allan Bloom, the subject of her fourth chapter. In her eyes, he was intent on putting a stop to the trend to open the university; moreover, she sees him as reactionary and anxious to preserve privilege. To be sure, Bloom criticizes many modern trends in the *Closing of the American Mind*, but he does so on the grounds that they lead to uncritical acceptance of novelty simply because it is novel. He speaks in favor of quality and of intellectual merit. Anne Norton does not refute Bloom here. Instead, she reduces his thoughtful criticism to a foolish attack upon class and race – which it is not. It is only in his attack on multi-culturalism that Bloom comes anywhere close to the charges Norton brings against him. Even in that attack, he is railing against the excesses rather than against the notion of learning about other cultures.

While I agree with Norton's criticisms in the fifth chapter about Leon Kass's heavy-handed role in staffing the Presidential Bio-Ethics Commission with those sympathetic to his views, they do not suffice to make her larger point, namely, that it is

impossible to take nature as a standard. Human foibles in particular instances do not constitute evidence for such a wide-sweeping claim.

So, too, Norton's attempt in Chapter Six to dismantle Strauss's argument about secret writing falls short. Instead of looking at Strauss's argument and weighing his evidence, she turns to Thomas Pangle and faults him for not having spoken about Derrida even though he has a foot-note reference to an article Derrida wrote, "How to Avoid Speaking." For her, this is a good example of games Straussians play by means of sly allusions. Perhaps. But even if some Straussians do engage in sly allusions, that does not disprove Strauss's insight into the way some authors in the past have written.

The analyses and arguments Norton puts forth in Chapters Seven-Ten suffer from over-statement and error. After a mighty digression at the beginning of Chapter Seven with respect to Sayyid Qutb standing as a parallel to Leo Strauss (a digression as unconvincing as it is daring), Norton returns to the question of humans having a single nature and there thus being a single standard for the good life. Alas, her whole account is inaccurate and would benefit from a careful reading of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Since I have not read Carnes Lord's book, *The Modern Prince*, I cannot assess whether Norton's account of it in her eighth chapter is accurate or not. But she is to be applauded for noting honestly that its argument does not arise from Leo Strauss's teachings. Her explanation of the Strauss-Kojève collaboration in Chapter Nine that led to the publication of *On Tyranny* is both fanciful and inaccurate. The rest of the chapter has nothing to do with Strauss or Straussians. In her tenth chapter, she seeks to show how William Kristol personifies the abandonment of conservatism. He is the only Straussian considered here, and the argument itself has nothing to do with Leo Strauss.

The rest of the argument will have to be judged on its own merits. Even though it is not possible for me to defend William Kristol's position on any political issue of the day, opponents of neo-conservatism will find little to applaud in the attack set forth in this chapter.

Chapter Eleven is quite interesting and certainly very timely. Anne Norton focuses on the William Kristol and Robert Kagan edited volume, *Present Dangers* to argue that the neo-conservatives are taking the US on a new imperial route – one that runs counter to the route Straussians previously preferred, given their former reading of Thucydides. The argument is clever, but incorrectly makes neo-conservatives into Straussians. Norton also criticizes Wohlstetter harshly for traveling too much and trying to teach without adequate preparation. To be sure that the charges stick, she repeats them almost word for word. But what does that have to do with the larger argument? Similarly, when she casts her net wider, Norton commits a mighty anachronism: Joseph Cropsey, Herbert J. Storing, and Nathan Tarcov were not all together at the University of Chicago when Wolfowitz was beginning his political career (p. 183). Indeed, Storing was dead before Tarcov ever came to Chicago.

Those interested in the Arab and Muslim Middle East will do well to read the last two chapters of Norton's book attentively. In Chapter Twelve, she focuses mainly on the way Straussians, not-named except for Carnes Lord, recast ideas today so that Muslims are the hated people and thus fall prey to a new kind of anti-Semitism. She notes, correctly, that this was not the way Strauss understood such matters and speaks about his essay on Hermann Cohen. But that essay does not address the issue. Unfortunately, those Straussians like David Schaeffer who have taken upon themselves the task of refuting Norton (see *Interpretation* 32/3,

Summer 2005, 283-306) richly confirm her charge. Chapter Thirteen could have served as a marvelous tribute to what Leo Strauss sought to do with his own studies of medieval Arabic and Islamic political philosophy and how he sought to promote it, but she gets simple facts terribly confused. Yusuf Chahine's film, *Destiny*, is not about Avicenna (p. 223), but Averroes. The Lerner-Mahdi *Sourcebook on Medieval Political Philosophy* does not contain anything on Alghazali, nor did I write anything in it (p. 225).

These last points are surely most telling. Above all, no one remotely acquainted with the medieval Arabic and Islamic tradition would group Alghazali among the philosophers. No one who had looked carefully at the Lerner-Mahdi *Sourcebook* would claim they had included Alghazali in it, and anyone wanting to write about it must look carefully at it – as at any other writing described or cited. Such a false attribution shows how little attention Norton pays to detail and how much she relies on vague impressions. Sympathetic as a reader like myself – who considers himself a Straussian – is with an attempt to show how others who consider themselves Straussians have allowed their political opinions to carry them far afield from our common interest in political philosophy and in the perennial questions to which we seek answers by its pursuit, Anne Norton's purported exposé is ultimately less than persuasive. In sum, this final instance of careless attribution is on a par with her opening reliance on an anecdote from one of Strauss's sworn enemies to attempt to belittle a man of inestimable intellectual greatness.

Eva Hanebutt-Benz, Dagmar Glass, and Geoffrey Roper
Middle Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution. A cross cultural encounter. A catalogue and companion to the Exhibition
 Westhofen: WVA-Verlag Skulima, 2002

Reviewed by Natalie Zemon Davis*

This catalogue is a fascinating contribution to the history of printing in Middle Eastern languages and to the history of the book more generally. If Arabic and Persian manuscripts have been studied – their calligraphy, their illustrations, their production, their collection – printed books in these languages and their impact have aroused interest only recently. *The Book in the Islamic World* (1995), a valuable collection edited by George N. Atiyeh, includes essays on printing in the Middle East, along with those on manuscripts and literary genres. Here we have a richly illustrated and focused study – published throughout in both German and English – of all forms of the printed object, from medieval block printing to typography, lithography, and digital texts, and in all the Middle Eastern languages. Printed materials in Hebrew, Armenian, Syriac, Coptic, Arabic, Turkish, and Persian are examined as they emerged from the presses of western Orientalists and, especially interesting, from presses throughout the Middle East.

The volume is associated with an exhibition that took place at the Gutenberg Museum at Mainz, and its editors are all specialists in the history of the book and communication: Eva Hanebutt-Benz, director of the Gutenberg Museum; Dagmar Glass, author of pioneering works on Arab-

Islamic printing and information flow; and Geoffrey Roper, learned specialist in the historical bibliography and printing history of the Middle East. As such, the volume is centered on the technology of printing (e.g., the creation of type and fonts), the establishment and sponsorship of presses, the major printers, and the description of books from many genres, with pictures of sample pages.

Printing in Arabic is a major theme among the twelve essays. The story opens with a study by Karl Schaefer of Arabic block prints, which have been dated as early as the late tenth century and are found in different scripts. They are amulets, their text characteristically beginning with the *basmala*, continuing with verses from the Quran, and then asking for God's aid and protection during travel, childbirth, sickness and the like. Distinctive wrinkles on them suggest they were carried on the person. Their seeming disappearance after the mid-fifteenth century is something of a mystery, according to Schaefer, since handwritten amulets composed by Sufi holy men continued.

The scene then moves to Europe in the 16th to early 18th century. Geoffrey Roper describes the religious books published in early sixteenth-century Italy in Arabic movable type – a *Book of Hours*, a polyglot Psalter – and Arabic grammars, an exposition of the Catholic faith, and a Protestant translation of a Pauline Epistle, published later in the century. They were intended to serve Arab Christian communities and to support the dream of converting the Islamic world to Christianity. The type-faces used were clumsy and inelegant until the 1590s, when the French typographer Robert Granjon designed several beautiful fonts for the *Typographia Medicea* in Rome. Editions of the Gospels and classic Arabic works in geography, medicine, and grammar came off its presses. The seventeenth century then saw a spread

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of Arabic printing to several European centers, both Catholic and Protestant, with Leiden especially noteworthy. Christian religious works predominated – these to go Christian congregations and missionaries in the Middle East – but books of Arabic philology, history, and geography appeared as well, to satisfy the interest of European Orientalists.

Helmut Bobzin devotes a chapter to the printing of the Quran in Arabic over the centuries. Here, too, the story begins in Europe for printing in Arabic was prohibited in Ottoman lands by the opening of the sixteenth century, out of concern for the accuracy and beauty of the sacred text of the Quran. The validity of this worry was borne out by the error-ridden edition produced in Venice in 1537/38, possibly with the vain hope of selling them in Istanbul. The 17th century saw Arabic editions of some Suras, published in Amsterdam and Leiden, and then in the 1690s the entire Quran was printed in two editions, one at Hamburg, one at Padua. They were prepared for learned European Christians: the editor of the Hamburg edition insisted in his preface that Christian theologians must read the Quran in the original; the editor of the Padua edition included Latin translations and a refutation. Neither edition followed the distinctive spelling of the Quran.

It was not until the late 18th century that a printed Quran was produced for Muslim readers. Empress Catherine the Great, having acquired some Turkish territories in the Russo-Turkish war, had a "Tatar and Arabic typographic establishment" set up in St. Petersburg to print decrees and school books for her Muslim subjects. With type designed by a Muslim and the editorial work of Muslim scholars, a Quran was published in 1786-87, with text variants or readings in the margins. Reprinted several times in Kazan, the Saint Petersburg Quran was, says Bobzin, a "bridge to the earliest Qurans

printed in the Islamic Orient." Though presses with movable type existed in Dar al-Islam in the 18th century, these first Qurans, appearing in Teheran, Shiraz, Tabriz, possibly Istanbul, and three cities in India in the years 1828-34, were all produced by lithography, a process invented in 1798. This was true of most if not all of the Qurans published subsequently in Islamic lands, for it allowed the reproduction of scribal handwriting and other manuscript features of the sacred book. Thus, the edition published in Istanbul in 1871-72 drew upon the calligraphy of a celebrated 17th-century figure. The next major step forward was the "Azhar Quran" of 1924, sponsored by King Fuad of Egypt and the result of seventeen years of work by Islamic scholars. Indicating the consonantal spelling of the days of the Caliph `Uthman and including everything needed for the correct recitation, the Azhar Quran provided an authoritative text to which the many subsequent editions in Islamic lands could refer. Whatever the variation in size, format, and ornamentation of these modern editions, Bobzin notes, they are always "based on a calligraphically designed text which is reproduced either by lithography or by photomechanical processes." The printed book has the appeal of the manuscript.

Roper and Glass then give a valuable overview of books and newspapers in the Arabic language printed in the Arabic world through the opening decades of the twentieth century. The earliest examples are religious works from Christian presses: a Psalter printed in a Maronite Christian monastery in Lebanon in 1610, and several examples from Byzantine Orthodox and Greek Catholic communities in Ottoman Syria and Lebanon in the eighteenth century. Meanwhile in 1727 in Istanbul, a license to print non-religious works was granted by the sultan to Ibrahim Müteferriqa, a convert to Islam of Hungarian origin.

His publications (described in an essay by Christoph Neumann) were all in Ottoman, but his tract justifying the importance of printing is significant: it would bring accurate texts to more people at prices they could manage to pay. Surely such an enlargement of general knowledge was an advantage to the reforming sultan.

The major centers in the nineteenth century were Cairo, Beirut, and for a time Istanbul. In Egypt the initiative came from the state: from authorities of the Napoleonic expedition, whose press issued military announcements and proclamations in Arabic to a generally hostile population in 1798-1801, and then in 1819/20, from the ruler Muhammad Ali, for whom the presses he established in Bulaq, still a suburb of Cairo, were a tool for his reforming projects. By the end of the century, the Matba`a at Bulaq had produced a remarkable number of titles, most of them by typography using fonts copied from those of the Ottoman Imperial Press in Istanbul. Lithography was preferred for religious works, as with the 1924 Azhar Quran, but most of the Bulaq publications had another focus: school books, the first newspaper in the Arabic world (1828, initially published in Arabic and Turkish both), and Arabic classics. A Thousand and one Nights (*Alf layla wa-layla*) appeared in 1835, the volumes of Ibn Khaldun's great history *Kitab al-`ibar* in 1867.

The initiative in Beirut came rather from non-governmental sources: the American missionary presses using a type face that came to be called "American Arabic," and printing houses founded by Arab Christians with a wide inventory – non-governmental newspapers and periodicals, Arabic literature, encyclopedias, science textbooks. The first press sponsored by a Muslim began in 1874, and immediately began to publish a newspaper. Interestingly enough, all these presses used American Arabic type. Istanbul is yet a third example, for

its publishing achievement in the nineteenth century was shaped by the vision of a remarkable Arab intellectual, the Lebanese writer Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq. After editing for a missionary press in Malta and traveling to England (where he published his translation of the Bible in Arabic) and Tunis (where he converted to Islam), al-Shidyaq was invited by the Sultan to Istanbul in 1859 to become the major figure in Arabic editions at the imperial press. He immediately founded the newspaper *al-Jawa'ib*, which became one of the most widely circulated periodicals in the Arab world. In 1870 he established his own press, publishing there his newspaper, his own writings and those of other contemporary intellectuals, and beautifully edited editions of classical Arabic literature. After his death in 1887, Roper notes, publishing in Turkey concentrated increasingly on the Turkish language, but al-Shidyaq's efforts helped widen the Arabic reading public.

This summary of the Arabic material in *Middle Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution* gives only a partial look at the treasures in the volume. Ulrich Marzolph's chapter on nineteenth-century Iran brings with it an important discussion of lithography, used there well beyond religious literature, and impressive book illustration, including an 1847 picture of the lithographic process – from the preparation of the etching acid to the working of the press by the bare feet of a pressman. Moreover, the multiple languages and locations considered add complexity and a dialogic character to the account: in late nineteenth-century Jerusalem, presses were producing books in Hebrew, Arabic, Armenian, Greek, and Turkish.

In certain ways the book undermines the stereotyped narrative of "first the progressive West, then the backward rest." Since Arabic block prints predate those in Europe by several centuries and printing with

movable type was going on in some languages in the Middle East, it is clear that the use of movable type for printing the Arabic language was being avoided by deliberate choice. *Middle Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution* deepens our understanding of that choice. The Quranic verses on the medieval block prints were allowed to circulate so long as they were simply popular amulets carried on the person; when printing with movable type threatened the accuracy, sanctity, and beauty of Qurans used for study and recitation, it was rejected and the block prints disappeared as well. So long as the widespread network of scribes was able to produce manuscripts in sufficient quantity to fulfill demand, their vigorous defense of their craft was accepted; when manuscripts were in short supply – as was the case in the Ottoman empire in the 18th century, when the export of manuscripts was prohibited – then Mütferriqa’s argument for the use of typography won some assent.

But especially this book fills out the challenges faced over the centuries in creating fonts for the cursive Arabic script, with its ligatures between characters and its letters existing in four forms, and in setting Arabic type. Demand is important as well, Geoffrey Roper stresses, but other authors stress the success of lithography because, reproducing a manuscript, it simultaneously eased certain technical problems and satisfied aesthetic preference. Hrant Gabeyan, creator of a computerized system for setting Arabic type with all its ligatures and letter forms with great efficiency, concludes on a hopeful note that "in moving from lead font to binary coding, and from *qalam* to laser, Arabic script should not lose its exquisite and multi-faceted qualities."

Middle Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution furthers the history of the book in many lands, but, as its authors would agree, much remains to be done. As the essay on medieval block prints was being completed, its author learned

that several more had been discovered in Istanbul; a book lithographed in Meknès in 1865 is given as the first printed book in Arabic in Morocco, but Moroccan scholars have recently found earlier editions. Book runs are given for many presses, but the actual readership, libraries, and impact on authors and readers are beyond the scope of this collection, as is a full treatment of the dialectic between oral, written, and printed forms. Still, in understanding these other topics, future scholars will find this beautiful and informative book an essential step.

Fruma Zachs

The Making of a Syrian Identity: Intellectuals and Merchants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut

Leiden: Brill, 2005

Reviewed by Leila Hudson*

Fruma Zachs’s *The Making of a Syrian Identity*: is a valuable and solidly researched contribution to the cultural history of Bilad al-Sham. Zachs’s attempt to locate indigenous roots of the twentieth century culture of nationalism in the milieu of the “middle stratum” Christians of Mount Lebanon and Beirut fleshes out the long accepted notion that these bourgeois intellectuals formed the vanguard of proto-national Syrian identity. To her credit, she acknowledges that this is one Syrian identity in a complex social, historical, regional cauldron with the inclusion of the particle “a” in the title. Noting that Lebanese Catholics and Muslims also had parallel processes of identity development, she convincingly posits the development of a Syrian, as opposed to a Shami or Phoenicianist, identity as the oldest and most influential and arguably the most complex. The

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Lebanese Christians of the middle stratum perched at the key nodes of a changing economy as well as imperial and local balances of power were more immediately and powerfully affected by external forces of change. Constituting an “other” both to Europeans and Muslims, but also mediating and forming alliances with each made the Syrian identity the most broadly inclusive and fraught with potential faultlines. Zachs’s analysis skillfully teases out the traces of this composite proto-national identity in the textual analyses which are the most interesting sections of the book.

Zachs begins with the economic and political transformation of Mount Lebanon under the in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Amir Bashir II and the rising merchant class of Zahleh and Dayr al-Qamar which thrived on silk and *laissez faire* policies constrained the traditional “feudal” landowners. The amirs and the emerging bourgeoisie also began an intellectual tradition of salons and literary patronage which would devolve to Beirut with the decline of the region. Zachs weaves together the economic factors in the rise of Zahleh and Dayr al-Qamar quite effectively with her readings of the court historians whose works are the best supporting evidence of the trend she describes. In addition to the well-worn ground of the literary *nabda*, Zachs finds evidence of the earliest Syrian identity in the historian’s praise for the virtues of the Shihabi emirate – not the traditional Shami administrative centers of Damascus and Sidon.

With Ibrahim Pasha’s incursion into Syria at the approach of mid-century, what Zachs sees as the first phase of Syrian identity formation comes to an end; and the second, or Beirut, phase begins. The middle stratum, mercantile class and their nascent notion of a non-Shami, non-Islamic Syrian identity move to the port city of Beirut, itself a rising star in the

new Mediterranean trade system. Attracted by the trade opportunities, security and cosmopolitanism of the new port-city, immigrants to Beirut made and Beirutis made the Syrian identity even more of a repository for literary, western, secular, and hybrid influences animating the city. Rather than following up on the most interesting thesis of links and continuities between the Mountain identity and the Beirut identity (Zachs disappointingly makes this connection only in a footnotes) she goes on to survey the more familiar territory of the merchant families and intelligentsia of Beirut and their public institutions. Her inevitable discussion of Butrus Bustani focuses on his use of the concept of *tamaddun* and that of his son Salim Bustani in his less known historical novels. I wonder if Zachs’ insistent reading of *mutamaddinun* as civilized (as opposed to savage) rather than the more subtle cosmopolitan (as opposed to insular or traditional) doesn’t degrade somewhat the subtlety of this important component of the proto-national secular Syrian identity. While her discussion of the concept over two generations of Bustanis is an original and helpful approach, Zachs fails to show how their concept of grounded cosmopolitanism reverberated in middle stratum Beirut society except as a critique.

The reader may at first be surprised that *The Making of a Syrian Identity* devotes its core chapters to addressing the external pressures which shaped Syrian identity. But therein lies the source of the dynamic complexity of the Syrian proto-national identity; it could not be understood without the political, economic and cultural pressures which forged it. In the first of these two central chapters “Re-enforcing an Identity: The Tanzimat Reforms” it is somewhat surprising that Zachs chooses not to engage directly with the work of Engin Akarli and particularly Ussama Makdisi who have made the topic of Ottoman “proto-

Lebanon” a theoretically interesting one. Akarli did this by emphasizing the stability and hybridity of the Ottoman /coastal provincial elite culture, and Makdisi did it by emphasizing the Ottoman contribution to the production of Lebanese sectarianism. Zachs’s contribution completes the triptych of Ottoman/Lebanese identity dynamics by illustrating how Tanzimat reformers – the little known governor Rashid Pasha and the well known Midhat Pasha in particular – turned the vague notion of a cosmopolitan, coastal, trade oriented, bourgeois, secular, non-Shami Suriyya into an actual administrative and functional unit by simultaneously enforcing reformist principles in their provincial regimes and reinforcing local resistance to homogenous, non-particular Ottomanism. On the other hand, following the lead of her mentor Butros Abu Manneh whose subtle analyses of the local effects of elite Ottoman reformist and court politics are sometimes neglected in the study of Arab nationalism, is to be commended.

More theoretically engaged in the literature of cultural interaction and cognizant of the argumentative poles defining her field than the previous chapter, Zachs’s revisiting of the American missionary literature intensifies the focus on “outsiders” contribution to shaping of the complex Syrian identity. (Again, Zachs inexplicably neglects to engage with the scholarly work of Ussama Makdisi on the topic except in an aside, while finding occasion to cite Daniel Pipes’ ideologically motivated *Greater Syria*.) This chapter, more than the Tanzimat chapter, strays into the distant origins of the admittedly interesting Protestant imported imaginings of Syria which brought with them a new-worldly air of bold beginnings, geographical determinism and proselytizing territoriality for the Beirut intelligentsia to strengthen their indigenous sense of Syrian identity. The argument is a convincing fleshing out of familiar

territory, and Zachs – based on her Shihabi court historians material sides with nationalist historian Abd al-Latif al-Tibawi that the missionaries and their educational systems did not ignite, but rather encouraged, the *nabda*. Yet another analysis of the ubiquitous Bustani, this time in parallel with his missionary mentor Eli Smith, reveals the contours of an evolving proto-national territorial referent from *balad* to *watan*. But as with the last chapter, this one fails to make the leap from the “outsiders” utilitarian concepts of Syria all the way to the Beirut middle stratum intelligentsia’s (other than Butrus Bustani’s) sense of self-identity.

The final chapter on genres and narratives returns from imported (cartographic and territorial) concepts adapted into Syrian identity to the local elaboration of that identity in literature. It is a strong ending to a solid book in which the concept of a territorial *watan* descended from the hybridization of Islamic *umma*, minority *milla*, Shihabi *imara*, Beirut *tamaddun*, Presbyterian *balad*, and Ottoman *vilayet* comes to emotional life in three new literary forms – newspapers, “new historiography” and historical novels. Zachs misses an opportunity to reach a broader audience by failing to bring her analysis directly to bear on Anderson’s concept of “imagined communities.” She limits her comments on Anderson to observing that newspapers were a tool for spreading the concept of Syria and fails to emphasize sufficiently the extent to which the very acts of producing and reading newspapers were a crucial embodiment of the complex new community identity. Attention to local historians’ works shows the *watan* rather than the city becoming the new unit of historiographical analysis and of intellectual abstraction as *wataniyya*. The highlight of the chapter is the mini-essay on the emergence of the historical novels and patriotic heroines of (yet again!) Salim al-Bustani, Butrus’ son. This topic cries out for more

investigation in a stand-alone format or in extended comparison with Egypt and Istanbul because it deals with the representation of women at the nexus of *watan* and print capitalism and even presents tantalizing original illustrations of Bustani's patriotic heroines.

Coming at the tail end of this rich book, however, this fascinating section on literature, representation of women and nation seems tacked on rather than featured. One is left wondering if the exploration of other gendering practices – family, fashion, childrearing, schooling might have shown us Syrian identity emerging in middle stratum practice, rather than just in Butrus and Salim Bustani's works and heads. The feeling of anti-climax is heightened by the author's choice to end with an epilogue rather than a conclusion. Drawing together all the genealogies of the rich and complex Syrian identity would have been more helpful for the reader and an opportunity for greater theoretical insight for the author than the perfunctory assessment of Syrian identity's fate in the Hamidian, Young Turk and war periods. This topic of course deserves its own monograph.

The book includes a helpful prosopography of middle stratum Beirut, coastal and mountain families. Its catalogue of the uses of the name Syria would have been better incorporated into the book's introduction rather than tacked on as Appendix 2. In short, Zachs has produced a rich, well researched, nuanced yet readable account of the emergence of one complex part of Syrian identity through the translation of political, economic and cultural pressures into (elite) local literature. There is more to be done.

Ariel Salzmann

Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire. Rival Paths to the Modern State

Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004

Reviewed By Nora Lafi*

Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire fulfils a long-standing need in Ottoman studies. It is an application of the pertinent concepts that Tocqueville had developed for France and the United States to the context of the Ottoman Empire. In particular, the book represents a sweeping argument on the concept of *Ancien Régime* and its implications for the early modern Ottoman state. Now that Ottoman Studies has begun to overcome its isolated methodological frame of reference, there emerges a wider horizon for comparative history. The first step, and Ariel Salzmann is promoting this, is to try and circulate analytical concepts. The author has already developed such research trends in previous publications, and her book focuses on a major aspect of Tocqueville's work: state-building processes and the evolution of *ancien régime* organisation. The process of modernization of the Ottoman state structure is analysed from a double point of view: Ottoman history, and comparativism in the use of concepts. It is a very innovative way of dealing with Ottoman history, and in that sense Ariel Salzmann's work fits perfectly into the new frame of Ottoman studies, in which a good knowledge of the archival landscape is articulated by a good knowledge of present theoretical

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debates, beyond a strictly Ottoman horizon.

The book begins with an imaginary journey of Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire, or more precisely into its archives. In her introduction, the author depicts Tocqueville as a ghost, and at the same time as an alias of the historian, looking for archives on the governance of the empire. This imaginary journey presents to the author the occasion to paint a historiographical panorama and to articulate the directions she intends to take. Her book is based on her Ph.D. thesis (Columbia 1995) in which the main focus was tax policies and their role in the building of the Ottoman state and in the perpetuation of its dominance through a group of economic and social actors. Her focus here, in addition to these previous results which still constitute the core of the book, is a wider examination of other aspects of old-regime rule and governance. As the main archival terrain of Ariel Salzmann's Ph.D. was Diyarbekir, the intent is here to present a much broader work.

Salzmann's discussion of the concepts of the *ancien régime*, state, and empire between Tocqueville and the Ottoman case contains an enlightening paragraph on the "Vocabularies of Early Modernity" (p. 24), in which she tries, with both prudence and rigor, to establish correspondences between the French words of the Old Regime and the Ottoman language. Ariel Salzmann begins the core of her book with a chapter called "On a Map of Eurasia". The intent is to insert the regions her research deals with into the geopolitical atlas of the 18th century. After having conducted an examination of the ways in which the Ottoman Empire was treated in the European geographical production of the time, and of the circulation of cartographical knowledge between the empire and Europe, Ariel Salzmann proposes a detailed analysis of the vocabulary of governance in the

Empire (institutions, territorial entities) as it can be read on historical maps. Logically, she focuses on the Ottoman frontiers: regions which were particular objects of constant redefinitions. What emerges from this dynamic picture is also the old-regime style of governance, made up of adaptations, integrations, redefinitions. The map Ariel Salzmann draws reading historical maps is, then, a complex one, in which the different layers of old-regime governance begin to emerge. The Ottoman Empire – and this is an important aspect of the book – is described both in a dynamic relationship with its frontiers (Europe, Iran, the Indian Ocean, the Arab world), and with a detailed attention to its internal evolution: those little details of naming a region or an institution teach us a lot about the global conception of imperial rule at the time.

Chapter II - "The Sublime Porte and the Credit Nexus" - deals first with protocols, feasts, parades, court rituals, and more generally the symbolic apparatus established by the Ottoman government in newly conquered regions. But Ariel Salzmann also examines the impact of the extension of imperial rule to remote provinces on the central structure of government itself, and on the growth of the central imperial bureaucratic apparatus. This dynamic account of state-building processes, particularly the organisation of administrative *bureaux*, the evolution of the administrative hierarchy and gradual changes in the status of state agents, leads to a discussion of Ottoman fiscal organisation as a whole. The main question concerns the passage in the Ottoman Empire from a medieval financial structure to modern fiscality. This process is examined with particular attention to the characteristics of the *malikâne* contracts. The author demonstrates that the very definition of what is 'imperial' changed together with the evolution of fiscal issues and with the introduction of new financial solutions. But this was not a linear

journey towards rationality: Ariel Salzmänn illustrates how these evolutions took place in the frame of constant negotiations and redefinitions of the relationship between the empire and its fiscal *élites*. The examination of the fate of Feyzullah Efendi, who was executed in 1703, is used as a way to analyse the complex relationship between the court and the financial *milieu*, as is the narration of the development of tax-farming over the course of the 18th century. What is important here is not the moral and religious implication of financial innovations, and Ariel Salzmänn's paragraph on the matter is perhaps not entirely convincing, but the influence of the evolution of fiscal governance on state-building processes. "Fiscal patronage anticipated formal bureaucratization of the state," she writes (p. 119). Here is one of the most important aspects of the book: a reading of the growth of the Ottoman imperial state structure in a broad framework, considering both centre and periphery simultaneously, both the fiscal and the bureaucratic elements, and managing to conduct conceptual comparisons.

Chapter III ("Government in the Vernacular") is largely based on research on Diyarbekir, and focused analytically on the evolution of state institutions in the empire. The state is considered as a

work in progress and the quotidian facets of rule as a compound that I call vernacular government. Such forms of governance took shape in the shifting jurisdictions within and between provinces and as a by-product of a land or, better, labor regime that was continuously remapping itself against the demands and resistance of tax-lords, peasants and herders. It also opens a window on the city as a locus

of contractual relationships linking Istanbul with the urban élites." (p. 127)

Here lies the very core of Salzmänn's work based upon research in the Ottoman state archives in Istanbul. The interest of her inquiry is to follow the fate of old institutions into new frames, to pay attention to the social *milieux* involved in governance and, through a detailed description of the progressive shifts in institutional vocabulary, to trace the evolution of the conception of the state and of its relations with the provinces. The most important concept might be "interstices" (p. 139). Ariel Salzmänn shows how imperial governance is more complex than the mere description of institutions could illustrate, and that the characteristic of old-regime governance is precisely to allow the existence of such interstices. Her demonstration of rural taxation in the Diyarbekir province is particularly convincing, with her attention to negotiation, mediation and to the relationship between local communities, tax farmer and state employees.

The conclusion ("Paths not taken") is conceived as a return to the initial discussion of Tocqueville's concepts and begins with excerpts from the *Second Letter on Algeria* (1837). The object of the chapter is to examine the fate of Ottoman old-regime "vernacular government" in the confrontation with modernity. The method refers to World History, and Ariel Salzmänn draws a picture of the empire at the turn of the nineteenth century in which geopolitical issues are inserted into questions regarding the evolution of the imperial administration. But Salzmänn's method also proposes a kind of counterfactual history: the "paths not taken" are the directions in which the empire could have evolved. Arguably the most interesting aspect in this regard is her federalist hypothesis (p. 187). The

evolution of the empire between a constantly negotiated old regime situation and a modernized, centralised system could indeed have left space for this option. And examining it is a way to underline the issues at stake: fiscal privileges, provincial autonomy, the financing of the state structure and the evolution of the state personnel. But here Salzmann's work also meets what might be one of its limits: the centrality in her research of Diyarbakir does not always allow her, in spite of an excellent knowledge of the current historiography, to develop as far as one would have hoped her important ideas in the field of world history. And even at a simply Ottoman scale, conclusions about eastern Anatolia, though very important for introducing new perspectives on the Ottoman centre itself, would benefit from comparison and cross-examination with other regions. It is particularly true for the Arab provinces, where the rhetoric of imperial belonging was the object of intensive speculations between the 18th and the 19th century. One can, of course, only be thankful to Ariel Salzmann for proposing such interpretations. But engagement with a broader Ottoman sample is important. What would also have been important is an engagement with the new sets of issues the 19th century brought about.

Salzmann's work is clearly centred on the 18th century. But her conclusions and the perspectives on Ottoman modernity would perhaps have required a broader elaboration of 19th-century developments. Tocqueville's work on the 18th century was largely determined by his political passions of the mid-19th century. The first issue is about the Ottoman reforms. Ariel Salzmann proposes a convincing interpretation of the Ottoman old regime. But this very interpretation would have merited to be contrasted with the question of state reforms and modernity. Because it is now certain that the very Ottoman modernity of the

tanzimat period was in no way the result of a mere importation and inherited in many ways impulses that came from the old-regime situation itself. At the same time, the limits of the implementation of Ottoman reforms are sometimes to be found in the particularities of the Ottoman old-regime. Many aspects, then, have to be dealt with: from the role of the old-regime *élite* to the nature of their previously negotiated privileges. Paths taken are sometimes as telling as paths not taken. The second issue Salzmann might have brought out more clearly is the circulation of administrative solutions in the Empire.

Some other aspects of the old regime could also have been the objects of a particular focus, as Tocqueville's work itself suggests. Ariel Salzmann builds her theory on imperial governance mainly from the point of view of fiscal governance. But she could also have detailed more precisely some other aspects of old regime politics and their confrontation with modernity: urban governance, guilds, the governance of confessional communities for example. These are all matters in which the questioning she proposes brings original arguments to the table. They allow a more nuanced vision not only of the characteristics of the Ottoman old regime, but also of its passage – sometime problematic passages – towards modernity. Evoking Tocqueville could also have suggested some other questions regarding the Ottoman condition. Tocqueville's intent was not only to understand the functioning of the old regime, but also to explain the eruption of modernity. In that sense, his *Ancien régime et la révolution* of 1856 is an exploration of the roots of modernity. But Tocqueville, two decades before, also wrote *De la démocratie en Amérique*. This essay is also appealing for conceptual comparativism of the Ottoman Empire, with questions such as the birth of a civil society or the building of a state-apparatus. Ariel Salzmann, having chosen such an

ambitious title as “Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire”, might have tackled these questions, as well as the possible impact of Tocqueville on Ottoman intellectuals or statesmen of the second half of the 19th century.

Ariel Salzman’s book is set to become an important contribution to the present revival in Ottoman studies. In openly advocating the use of a concept – the old regime – elaborated in a different cultural sphere, Salzman contributes to breaking the traditional parameters of Ottoman studies and to broadening the horizons of post-cultural

studies. In addition, her interpretations of the peculiarities of the Ottoman regime are particularly convincing. And if questions do remain, for example about the passage towards modernity or about different local conditions, they are mostly invitations to persevere in the promotion of conceptual comparativism between various cultural spheres, which moves beyond a mere transfer, and of an Ottoman comparativism, based upon a critical intimacy with archives.

Fikret Adanır and Suraiya Faroqhi
(editors)

The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography
Leiden: Brill Press, 2002

Reviewed by Ryan Gingeras*

Despite the brief wave of interest that marked the 1990s, the Balkans has largely faded from public discourse. The gradual disappearance of Southeastern Europe from the pages of the morning newspaper has had a profound affect upon the visibility of the region within both popular and academic publishing. The once numerous works related to the fall of Yugoslavia and nationalism seen on the shelves of bookstores across North America and Europe appear now to have been replaced by studies of the Middle East and Islam. The book under review, *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, was published as this turn began to take effect. Largely comprised of a series of papers submitted at the Congress of German Historians in 1993, *The Ottomans and the Balkans* is a thorough and up-to-date critique of the historiography of the

region, representing a strong rebuttal to the nationalist and statist frameworks that define the historical writings in the region over the last two centuries. At the core of each of the essays presented in this work is a shared rejection of the claim that the “Ottoman yoke” stunted the growth and development of the region and denied to its people their true identity. Further than demonstrating the inherent tensions and contradictions within the dominant, state-centred narratives of the region, each author suggests new methodological approaches in dealing with the Ottoman Balkans.

The writing of history and its relationship to state-building is a theme that reoccurs throughout this volume. As a tool for justifying or legitimizing state policy, historical inquiry into the Ottoman past continues to provide a sounding board for the evolution the empire’s successor states. The various interpretations of Ottoman history cited in this book trace several processes by which state agendas necessitate the development of national histories. In surveying how the legacies of the early Ottoman state were understood by historians of the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Christoph Neumann and Büşra Ersanlı respectively point to a shared belief that the early Ottoman state’s socio-economic failures

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(the “theory of decline” as Neumann puts it) obliged *Tanzimat* Istanbul and Republican Ankara to undertake distinctly radical programs of reform. But as both scholars point out, imperial and republican historians struggled over the appropriate historical precedents and models that would inform both the means and the goals of these reforms (Is the model for Ottoman reform Japan or Egypt? How does a secular republican Turkey reconcile itself with the “greatness” of its Islamic Ottoman past?). Fikret Adanır, Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor tell of similar debates in the case of Bosnia and Hungary. In both cases, a recent generation of historians has conflicted with their past counterparts over the limits of Ottoman influence in their local histories, arguing that more indigenous factors (such as the legacy of the pre-Ottoman Bosnian church or the weakness of the pre-Ottoman Hungarian economy) were influential in laying the foundation of the contemporary state.

Whereas contemporary Bosnian and Hungarian historians still appear to accept the centrality of the Ottoman period in defining the contours of national culture and society, national historians from other areas of the Balkans have long rejected or marginalized the Ottomans as a force that impeded or warped national growth. It is in this regard that the contributions of Klaus-Peter Matschke, Hercules Millas, Johann Strauss and Antonina Zhelyazkova make several essential critiques. Following in the footsteps of the Dumbarton Oaks-Birmingham group and Cemal Kafadar, Klaus-Peter Matschke argues that the political and economic transition between Byzantine and Ottoman was remarkably fluid, representing more of an interregnum than an absolute break with the past. In his appraisals of local chronicles from the seventeenth century and nineteenth centuries, Johann Strauss goes one step further, contending that local Orthodox notables saw themselves

as integral components of the Ottoman imperial system, as opposed to aliens in their own land. Antonina Zhelyazkova’s survey of Islamization in the Balkans strikes a similar cord in her focus upon regional sources and conditions. Rather than as a phenomenon that was forcibly imposed upon the local populations of the Southern Balkans, Zhelyazkova describes conversion to Islam as a thoroughly local affair, conditioned by local geographic and social conditions than state intervention. Hercules Millas’s piece takes a somewhat different tone than the rest of the articles in this volume. In highlighting the roles assigned to non-Muslims in Ottoman historiography, Millas demonstrates that it is the Ottoman state that is defended by both past and contemporary historians. In this regard, Greeks and other non-Muslims who suffered under the oppressive policies of the later Ottoman administrations are transformed into something of a criminal class that was ungrateful for the generosity shown to them by the Ottoman state.

In confronting the question of what is to be done with this understanding of past historiography, the contributors to this volume offer some general suggestions. It can be said that one of the future frontiers of Ottoman historiography (not only in the Balkans but also elsewhere) is the exploration of provincial history. Strauss and Zhelyazkova particular underscore the need to investigate the building of Ottoman culture and society as the product of local conditions. Hand and hand with this issue of localism, Suriaya Faroqhi argues for continued research into the centre-periphery dynamics within the imperial power structure. Echoing the work of other authors in this volume, Faroqhi notes that our understanding of the late reforms from the perspective of the provincial *ayan* is particularly lacking. Admittedly, the themes and quandaries posed in this book are not meant for mass

consumption. Yet within the context of a scholarly field often divided along linguistic or regional lines (Ottomanist, Byzantinists, Slavists, etc), this collection is an excellent resource and provides some vision of how the history of the Balkans should be written.

Mark LeVine

Overthrowing Geography; Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and the Struggle for Palestine, 1880-1948

University of California Press, 2005

Reviewed by Jens Hanssen*

Overthrowing Geography is a powerful critique of Tel Aviv's self-perceptions as a city built on sand; a city whose modernity is a Jewish beacon of western progress in the otherwise wholly un-modern environment of Palestine. The author extracts from the Zionist noise around "the First Hebrew City" the echoes – barely audible and decreasingly visible – of an urban past that rested first on the denial of Palestinian modernity, then on legal but illegitimate expropriation of land, and finally, today, on the museumification of Jaffa. Taken together, they constitute the long-term physical and discursive goal underlying the Zionist construction of Tel Aviv – first expressed by Nahum Sokolovin (1933): "*mahapacha*" – a geographical revolution.

In Chapter One, LeVine sets up his complex analytical framework as a 'double helix' of modern Palestinian history: On the one hand, Jaffa's cosmopolitan Mediterranean/Levantine modernity of late Arabo-Ottoman heritage contends with the exclusivist-colonial modernity of Zionism imported under British rule and "various 'non-modernities' within and surrounding the space of Euro-modernity in Tel Aviv –

that is, Jaffa and its numerous villages 'erased' by Tel Aviv's development and expanding imagery and geographic domains." On the other hand, LeVine anchors his urban analysis of the Tel Aviv-Jaffa continuum in a four-fold matrix of discourses of modernity, colonialism, capitalism, and nationalism (p. 2). Tel Aviv was a colonial city in denial: "if Zionist (and later Israeli) identities and historiographies have sought to portray Zionism as both 'modern' and something other than colonialism, the epistemological and ontological premises of Zionism conclusively demonstrate just the opposite – that on the discursive and material levels, Zionism is a seminal example of the discourses of modernity and colonialism and their mutual embeddedness." (p. 16)

Chapter Two establishes Jaffa's cosmopolitan Ottoman past drawing on Schölch's and Doumani's economic history of Palestine in the 19th century as well as historical studies of Jaffa by Ruth Kark, Ruba Kana'an, Muhammad al-Tarawna, and Hana Malak. The port-city of Jaffa of 50,000 inhabitants emerges as a vibrant economic hub accommodating 10,000 Jewish, 9,300 Christian and 30,000 Muslim inhabitants in 1913. As Jaffa expanded beyond its city walls, social elites – merchants, journalists, landowners and religious figures – negotiated land development, urban improvement and property relations in the framework of the municipal council founded in 1871.

In "Taming the Sahara" LeVine traces the Zionist conquest of Palestinian land in the early 20th century and the Jewish debates in Ahuzat Bayit, the society that founded Jaffa's suburb of Tel Aviv in 1909. Ahuzat Bayit's project was by no means uncontested within the *yishuv* as many ideological immigrants held that city life was what they hoped to leave behind in a hostile and corrupt Europe. It was partly out of this ideological divide that the proponents of urban colonization

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adopted the modernist discursive strategy *vis-à-vis* Jaffa of Jewish cleanliness versus native urban squalor, even though many of them were more cognizant of the presence of (and the need to cooperate with) Palestinians in Palestine than agriculturalist Zionists.

Chapter Four analyses the relations between Arabs, both Muslims and Christians, and Jews through ever-intensifying labor disputes during the Mandate period and ends, somewhat achronologically, with the fateful May 1921 clashes between a group of rampant Jewish Marxists and Jaffan residents. The deaths of forty Jews and the looted shops in the mixed, well-to-do neighborhoods of Manshiyya, Neve Shalom and `Ajami led to the administrative segregation of the two towns. Manshiyya in particular became both the connecting piece and the Green Line along which, sporadically, violence flared up between Palestinians and Zionists. This northern most part of Jaffa had already been identified as a strategic urban location by a late Ottoman governor. The Hassan Bey Waqf/Mosque, in the words of Jaffa's last mayor, Yusuf Heykal, was an effective bulwark against Tel Aviv's southward expansion. (73-4)

These early chapters are based on a wide variety of archival sources including Israeli state, university, and Tel Aviv municipal archives; Hebrew and Arabic newspapers; Jaffa *shari'a* court records; and memoirs as well as French and British consular correspondence (not, however, as suggested, Ottoman archives). In Chapter Five LeVine returns to the foundational myth of Tel Aviv built on sand. He does so in a systematic reading of literary sources on Jaffa and Tel Aviv which brings out the emotional attachment to the capitals of the two competing nationalist movements. Far from a level playing field, Arabic literature about Jaffa – newspaper articles, cartoons and poetry – is about disappearance and loss, while Tel Aviv,

“the White City,” is about the triumph of Jewish culture over Palestinian nature.

Chapter Six is very much the centerpiece of the book and deals with the complex intersections between urban planning, architectural aesthetics, and national identity. Early Zionist planning discourse was ideologically modernist and drew self-perception from its *difference* to Jaffa's “traditional” urban fabric even as Jewish architects used local designs and construction techniques, and even though Jaffan patricians themselves built modernist residences at the same time. LeVine identifies two more “cracks” in the Zionist edifice of architectural ideology: Tel Aviv emerged not just as the negation of Jaffa but also its thriving Jewish neighborhoods, and – in the words of Arthur Ruppin – it would “present the most important step toward the economic conquest of Jaffa by the Jews.” (p. 157). Long before Jaffa was forcibly annexed by the Tel Aviv municipality in 1948, then, the two cities constituted a single, but dual city tied together by colonial appropriations.

Chapter Seven is the most significant contribution of this book to the debate of Zionism as colonialism, perhaps because it leaves the representational and discursive level to examine the impact of Zionism's ideological commitment to conquer Jaffa on Palestinian land tenure. Conventional wisdom in Israel is that Palestinian land was either purchased from absentee landlords and peasants above the market price, or it was rural wasteland inherited from Ottoman times. LeVine shows that invidious manipulations of the existing land laws by the British Mandate authority facilitated the urban expansion of Tel Aviv long before Israeli “transfer-as-ethnic-cleansing” during and after the 1948 War.¹ Ottoman land definitions

¹ For a recent reflection on Israeli transfer-as-ethnic-cleansing policies, see Robert

had very precise categories, three alone for unused or empty land: *mawat*, *mablul* and *matruka*. With the arrival of the British, however, agricultural land around Tel Aviv deemed unproductive was indiscriminately expropriated as state land and tendered for urban development. Palestinian peasants were subsequently prohibited from redeeming and cultivating land against the customary taxes. Gradually all villages in the vicinity of Tel Aviv were absorbed into the sphere of urban development. Such legal trickery in the name of ethnic purity continues in Israel – Palestinians have not been allowed to buy land from Jews – and has been the root of much of the violent protest by the people of Jaffa, where the *intifadas* of 1936-9 and 1987-91 broke out.

In a thorough presentation of a lively 1940 debate between representatives of the Jewish Agency, the Tel Aviv Municipality, Va`ad Le`umi and the Jewish neighborhoods of Jaffa, LeVine exposes the options that were considered for how Tel Aviv should relate to Jaffa. While Ben Gurion had declared in a 1936 diary entry that he “would welcome the destruction of Jaffa, Port and City” (p. 104), future ‘dove’ and `Ajami resident Moshe Shertok was unwilling to either up and leave or have the Jewish neighborhoods assimilate into Tel Aviv municipal territory. Rather than create a *tabula rasa*, Shertok calculated that if the Jewish neighbourhoods “did not demand their separation [from Jaffa], we can concentrate a population around Jaffa and bring to pass that the city of Jaffa itself will have a Jewish majority” (p. 204). The unspoken benefit of the demographic approach was that, devoid of economic threat, the old urban fabric of Jaffa could be left intact as a cultural

antidote that could be both consumed and rejected.

Colonial heritage consumption emerged before Tel Aviv became the capital of the state of Israel and long before the White City morphed into a world heritage sight and a self-conscious global city. The final chapter traces the link between the privatization of urban and municipal development and the gentrification of the old city of Jaffa in the last few decades. The apparent ‘non-modernity’ of today’s Jaffa has made it an object of museumification. Its *fin-de-siècle* villas and Ottoman harbor front function as an idyllic backdrop to large-scale, plantation-style residential projects such as Andromeda Hill. Jewish yuppies step out of the global high-tech fast lane by moving to exclusive condos with “‘Oriental’ feel while, in the process, “Jaffa has had to be emptied of its Arab past and Arab inhabitants” (p. 227). The century-long Zionist desire to conquer Jaffa is about to be achieved not by military means or hardly anymore by demography, but by the brute force of the market whose rules continue to be written in English and Hebrew.

Mark Levine has pushed the study of Tel Aviv into the conceptual context of the colonial city paradigm. His work effectively nips the oft-raised categorical objection that Israel cannot be considered a colonial state because it was not tied to a metropolitan power the way Caribbean or North African colonies were tied to European powers. Dissecting the urban power dynamics in Jaffa-Tel Aviv, LeVine finds parallels in colonial cities in North Africa and other parts of the colonized world whose archetype Frantz Fanon has defined so powerfully:

The settlers’ town is strongly built, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly-lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage-cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about. The

Blecher, “Citizens Without Sovereignty; Transfer and Ethnic Cleansing in Israel,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 47:4 (2005), 725-754.

settler's feet are never visible, except perhaps in the sea ... The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill-fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where and how they die there; it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men there live on top of each other... The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs.

LeVine's intervention is not strictly that of the revisionist school. He is concerned with the question of whether the colonized can ever be modern and how modern history can be written. He does so by looking at the interstices, physical and discursive, between the two cities. Neither Tel Avivian nor Jaffan purity is what is characteristic about each city but the economic, ideological, and psychological reliance on each other's Other. The criticism that this kind of work conjures up is a larger, scholarly-activist one which is finding it difficult to emancipate itself from the object of its criticism: Theoretically 'cutting-edge' if convoluted for the uninitiated, the historical actors in whose underrepresented name new histories are written appear as marionettes on the stage where the real protagonists are the authors. Can postcolonial criticism ever be more than a commentary on the constructs of exclusive history, can it be a self-sustained inclusive history that fully 'overthrows' Eurocentric, colonial or racist histories? *Overthrowing Geography* has not been able to replace or supersede the reference system it aimed to deconstruct. In spite of its theoretical appeal and inspiring interstitiality, those readers interested in the daily operations of both cities are left, reluctantly, to

recur to traditional accounts – silences and all – such as Joachim Schlör's 1999 *Tel Aviv; From Dream to City*, which, surprisingly, is unreferenced in LeVine's book. Meanwhile 20th century Jaffa still awaits its history to be written in English.

Halliday, Fred
*Two Hours that Shook the World--
 September 11, 2001: Causes &
 Consequences*
 London: Saqi Books, 2002.

Reviewed By Amir Asmar*

Only two chapters (1 and 12) of Fred Halliday's *Two Hours that Shook the World*, along with the Introduction and Conclusion, were written after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. Consequently, the book feels somewhat disjointed. Although replete with valuable information and analytical insights, it seems two books: one written to discuss the causes and consequences of the 11 September attacks, and another to highlight a variety of issues in the Muslim world and its relations with the West. It is on the former that this review will focus because, while the issues of the relationship between the Muslim and Western worlds are undoubtedly related to the events of 11 September, Halliday does not explicitly connect many of his pre-11 September sections to the attacks themselves or to the sections written specifically to discuss them.

Halliday outlines the shortcomings of this work—and articulates a familiar thesis—early in the introduction: “This collection is a

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necessarily partial and provisional response to 11 September... A response to these events can and should be based not on supposedly distinct cultural or civilizational values, but on an internationalist approach..." (p. 27). Readers familiar with Halliday's past work, particularly *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation* (I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 1995), will understand Halliday's fundamental theses that conflicts between the Islamic and Western worlds are neither a necessity, nor a function of the peculiarities of those two societies. In fact, Halliday correctly asserts the absence of a unitary Islamic world or a unified West, capable of having a single conflict-ridden relationship. Rather, the conflicts between Islamic and Western societies may be studied using the same approaches as any other conflicts.

After a review of his approach—including a deliberate admonition for the intellectual to exercise responsibility, rather than to inflame and profit from conflict—Halliday begins his discussion of the 11 September attacks by asserting they were the latest battle of a long-running conflict, "A battle, global in intent and extent, was joined well before 11 September 2001. Its course is by no means certain." (p. 29) In his first chapter, he identifies historical and conjunctural causes for the 11 September attacks. The historical causes fall into two broad categories: Long-term antecedents and immediate causes. The former include the Crusades by Western Christians on the Muslim Middle East that began in the late 11th century; the expulsion of the Arabs/Muslims from Spain, completed in 1492; and the Islamic concept of Jihad, literally exertion, or mobilization for the faith, which has acquired the popular interpretation of literal (holy) war.

Halliday identifies three immediate historical causes for the 11 September attacks: the legacy of colonialism, the Cold War, and

economic globalization. Colonialism (ending circa 1945) left a series of unresolved issues in the Middle East, causing generalized resentment of the West. The Cold War between a US-led West and a Soviet-led East (1945-90) made Afghanistan its last battlefield, resulting in a US-supported call to Muslims worldwide to fight Soviet "infidels," ultimately leading to the Taliban government, and its policies enabling the emergence of Osama bin Laden and the institutionalization of the al-Qa`ida network. The movement toward economic globalization is the seminal outcome of the end of the Cold War; its attendant inequities amplify existing resentments.

The conjunctural causes of 11 September, Halliday stipulates, are based in a "Greater West Asian Crisis" with three general features. The first is the new pattern of linkages between previously separate conflicts, such as the political and rhetorical linkage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to regional crises as diverse as the 1973 oil embargo, the Lebanese civil war that erupted in 1975, the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, and Osama bin Laden's call for jihad against the West. The second conjunctural cause is the crisis of the state in West Asia, where nationalists or Islamists are seeking to take power away from those who control the state, using terrorist tactics. Halliday highlights bin Laden's use of the Quranic term "hypocrite" (*munafiq*) to denote Muslim leaders and regimes who appear to back the cause of Islam, but do not; they and their association with the US are, according to Halliday, the principal targets of 11 September. He points out that al-Qa`ida emerged and succeeded in places where the state was particularly weak. Sudan, Afghanistan and, most recently, Yemen are the best examples. The third feature of the West Asian crisis is the emergence of a transnational, fundamentalist, and militant Islamism, based on the

reassertion of the most traditional strands of Islamic thinking. The congregation of Islamists in Afghanistan to fight the victorious campaign against the Soviet Union led to the emergence of a free-floating transnational army of fighters willing to challenge regional states and their Western backers.

Halliday also makes a reasoned assessment of European and Third World perceptions of the US. He neither accepts at face value European and Islamic criticisms of the US, nor does he absolve the US of a contribution in the circumstances leading up to the attacks. While pointing out that the US has a record that arouses indignation—rightly so, he suggests, in the cases of Vietnam, Nicaragua, Palestine, Cuba, among others—he chastises critics for not recognizing US accomplishments, accusing critics of being guided by lazy prejudices. They fail to acknowledge, Halliday points out, that the US is the most prosperous country in history, attracting many immigrants and expatriate workers; its vitality in a variety of fields outstrips all others. He points out that the US has a history of cautious—sometimes isolationist—foreign policy; it had to be dragged into world war in 1941. All its military involvements in the 1990s—Kuwait, Bosnia, and Kosovo—were in defense of Muslim peoples facing aggression. Although he correctly concludes that “the denunciation of America is detached from any concrete, informed assessment of US policy in the period since the Cold War” (p. 50), Halliday may have adjusted his assessment of overall US policymaking, as it initiated war against Iraq. Such a conflict must be assessed as either an inconsistency within the otherwise cautious US policymaking Halliday describes or the first indication of a new aggressive post-9/11 foreign policy. In either case, the US-led war in Iraq is a direct consequence of the 11 September attacks and will necessitate a further

exploration of the “global crisis” precipitated by the attacks that Halliday identifies in his introduction.

Four chapters written before the attacks and dealing with specific regions and their problems seem particularly disconnected from the attacks of 11 September, although they are intended to demonstrate elements of the Greater West Asian Crisis. Halliday fails to indicate explicitly how circumstances in those Middle Eastern societies are connected to the terrorist attacks. Chapter 6, dealing with the 1993 Palestinian-Israeli Declaration of Principles negotiated in Oslo, is highly dated. Although *Two Hours* was published well after the outbreak of the second Palestinian uprising—dubbed the Al-Aqsa Intifadah—in September 2000, this chapter does not discuss the violence that ended the Oslo process and led to the Israeli re-occupation of most of the Palestinian Authority territories. Subsequent chapters dealing with Kuwait, Iran, and Saudi Arabia are similarly dated. The discussion on Kuwait, written in 2000, focuses on the traumatic consequences of the 1990 Iraqi invasion and subsequent war, and the country’s socio-political problems including the place of the Shia population, the enfranchisement of women and the greater issues of political liberalization, censorship, and the expatriate labor force. Halliday makes no mention of the impending Iraq war, evident by mid-2002, and the difficulties it poses for Kuwait’s rulers and public. The chapter on Iran accurately describes a complex and divided society, concluding that Iran’s mullah oligarchy is motivated primarily by its desire to retain power rather than a commitment to religion. This section is particularly dated, with Halliday anticipating the presidential elections of June 2001, speculating on whether President Khatami would seek a second term. Khatami was into his second term before *Two Hours* was published. The section dealing with Saudi Arabia, “a

family business in trouble,” discusses the challenges to the unwritten contract between the al-Saud ruling family and the country’s growing population. Again, this section, apparently written in 1997, is not directly connected to the events of 11 September 2001. Two other terrorist attacks against US interests—the bombing of the Office of Personnel Management/Saudi Arabian National Guard in November 1995 and of the US military housing complex Khobar Towers in June 1996—are mentioned only in passing. More is known about these attacks than Halliday reveals and, despite the fact that *Two Hours* ostensibly deals with the 11 September 2001 attacks, he resists the temptation to use the earlier attacks in Saudi Arabia to discuss terrorism.

Other contributions of *Two Hours* are a “Lexicon of Crisis”—interestingly placed at the beginning of the book—that defines relevant historical, Islamic, and ideological terms along with group and location names of value to the reader. Halliday also chose to add six documentary appendices of particular use to students of the 11 September attacks: the Founding Statement of al-Qa`ida (23 February 1998); the Tashkent Declaration on Fundamental Principles for a Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict in Afghanistan (19 July 1999); UN Security Council Resolution 1328 (12 September 2001) condemning the attacks; UN Security Council Resolution 1373 (28 September 2001) dealing largely with the issue of terrorist financing; Osama bin Laden’s 7 October 2001 statement (broadcast on Al-Jazira Television and published the following day in the *International Herald Tribune*); and the 9 October 2001 statement published by bin Laden spokesman Suleiman Abu Gaith (published in the *Financial Times*).

Despite its disjunction, *Two Hours* is a rich volume, its valuable contents impossible to outline thoroughly in any review. It would have been much more gratifying if its two

parts were better linked. The sections in *Two Hours* dealing with specific countries would have better served Halliday’s articulation of the West Asian crisis that was the setting for the 11 September attacks, if they were explicitly linked to the attacks. Nonetheless, *Two Hours* will be of particular interest to the student of the Middle East and/or the Muslim World. It will not be as informative to—and was likely not intended for—the generalist or the casual reader. Still, it is a rare reader who will not be intrigued by Halliday’s ideas here, challenging as they do much of the accepted mythology about Islam and the West.

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