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Lamu in the nineteenth century: land, trade, and politics

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PREFACE

The first full-length study of Lamu, A. H. Prins's *Sailing from Lamu* (Assen, 1965), was an economic and sociological discussion of the port of Lamu as it faces the Indian Ocean, a view from the jetty or the deck of a dhow, as it were. A more recent sociological study of Lamu, Abdul Hamid M. el Zein's *The Sacred Meadows: A Structural Analysis of Religious Symbolism in an East African Town* (Evanston, 1974), examined the religious life of the town of Lamu. The present volume does not deny the importance of Lamu and the other towns of the archipelago as Islamic centers and as ports thriving on the thrust of the monsoon. This study is written, however, if not with one's back to the sea--this would be difficult in Lamu District--at least with one foot in the *mtama* field.

The four towns on the islands of the archipelago, Lamu, Pate, Siyu, and Rasini (or Faza), because of their relatively remote locations off the northern Kenya shore, have been among the best-preserved of nineteenth-century ports on the East African coast. Each one of them has a distinctive aura. My aim, however, was to give equal attention to the mainland, to ponder its lesser villages and hamlets, some now completely overgrown by bush, and to attempt to discover what relationship the island urban centers had with this nearby coast. My goals included learning what the cargoes were of dhows sailing from Lamu, but also extended to examining Lamu and the other islands in their full geographical and historical setting. From all indications they were adjuncts of a mainland which had been vital to them both economically and politically throughout their history.

I chose the nineteenth century as the range of my study, in part, because it covered the span of time during which Omani Arabs attempted to achieve hegemony over the archipelago. This intrusion created a variety of reactions among the inhabitants of the area, and these responses precipitated intense contact between mainland and islands. Moreover, the nineteenth century was a period for which information is available to make possible a coherent examination.

My research focused along two lines of island-mainland relationships. The first was that of economic contacts--that is, agricultural and commercial ties. The islands, limited in their agricultural capabilities, depended upon the mainland for many food crops both for consumption and for export. This need resulted in the creation of mainland plantations held by island merchant-proprietors and worked by their slaves. Non-agricultural products which contributed to the wealth of island-dwellers came from the mainland to the port towns as well.

The economic situation was complicated by what became my second line of inquiry--political relationships. The mainland populations included not just African slaves of island owners and the riverine agriculturalists, the Pokomo, but two hunter-gatherer peoples, the Boni and Sanye, and two competing pastoralist groups, the Oromo (or Galla) and the Somalis. In addition, during the course of the nineteenth century, island peoples who resisted Arab rule retreated to the mainland and there created their own states in alliance with mainland peoples. Another of the powers on the mainland was the cluster of runaway-slave villages in the forest, whose history has rarely been noticed. In their efforts to subdue those who refused to recognize their rule, the Omani Arabs resorted to mainland alliances themselves.

In following these lines of inquiry, the limitations of the approach taken by el Zein and other writers became evident to me. The insignificance they have attached to the island-mainland relationship seemed not just to oversimplify but to distort the history of the district. El Zein, for instance, examined the Islam of Lamu with little awareness of the multiethnic contacts of the near mainland and their inevitable influence on Lamu's religious and cultural life. Other writers too have emphasized a single direction of political, economic, and cultural impact, apparently radiating out from the island urban centers after having been received from abroad.

This study attempts an alternate approach stressing the internal forces which shaped the nineteenth-century history of Lamu. In this attempt, some of the questions raised are these: What were the bases of indigenous political power, and how did they change over the course of the century? How did the many varied peoples of the district affiliate or split in response to foreign intrusion? By what means did an alien power, Zanzibar, achieve control over local alliances? What is the evidence for cultural interchange in this multiethnic milieu?

Many nineteenth-century developments of the Lamu area have been clearly indicated in the written sources, even though there are decades during the century for which written records are few, especially those before 1850. Among noteworthy sources are the writings of Richard Brenner, who visited the Lamu mainland during a pivotal period in the district.[1] Brenner is almost alone as a source of information on the situation of the Oromo in the 1860s, prior to their defeat. Within the next decade another European, G. A. Fischer, reported on a much weakened and reduced Oromo people.[2]

[1]Richard Brenner, "Forschungen in Ost-Africa," *Petermann's Mitteilungen* (1868), 175-179, 361-367, 456-465.

[2]G. A. Fischer, "Über die jetzigen Verhältnisse im südlichen Galla-Lande und Wito," *Mitteilungen der Geographischen Gesellschaft in Hamburg* (1876-1877), 347-362.

Also writing in the 1870s, the French merchant H. Greffulhe gave some of the first clues to the existence and importance of the runaway-slave settlements.[3] Our only first-hand information on any of these forest communities, before the destructive expedition of the British, results from visits recorded by the German ivory trader Kurt Toeppen and his companion, Adolf von Tiedemann.[4] During the latter half of the century British consular dispatches also provide important information. In treating the history of the Witu sultanate, however, the German material is essential to counterbalance the valuable but negative reports of the British.

Oral information gathered in the Lamu area provided an additional dimension to this study. Oral data often reinforced written sources, and occasionally led me to follow previously unsuspected themes in the area's history. Sometimes informants furnished isolated bits of information which, when pursued, brought unexpected fruit. If I had not been told by several informants, for example, that chief Avatula, who led the forest people for twenty years or more, was a Bajun--contrary to all written records--I would not have guessed at the complexities of his relationship with coastal powers.

The oral information I gathered in the Lamu area was, except in rare cases, of an informal nature. For the most part informants reminisced about their own lifetimes or had memories of family lore from their parents' lifetimes. I used a tape recorder for the few more formal traditions which I encountered, but mainly I preferred to keep meetings with informants more as conversations than interviews, especially when visiting mainland villages where I was sometimes unfamiliar to the inhabitants. Whenever possible, I would not interview potential informants on our first meeting, but would arrange to return on a future day. Most informants were interviewed several times, and some many times. My questions were usually not set in advance, but were more apt to follow a stream-of-consciousness pattern according to the knowledge and mood of the informant.

Informants spoke Swahili and most did not know English. I took notes in English, retaining in my transcript any Swahili words which were unfamiliar to me or which had meanings or connotations difficult to translate. Occasionally bilingual persons were present at interviews, but usually I did not have an interpreter with me. This helped to establish good relationships with informants, who approved of my being able to converse in Swahili.

[3]H. Greffulhe, "Voyage de Lamoo à Zanzibar," *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie et d'études Coloniales de Marseilles*, II (1878), 209-217, 327-360.

[4]Kurt Toeppen, "Aus Deutsch Witu-Land," *DKZ* (1889), 325-328; Lt. Adolf von Tiedemann, "Ein Besuch beim Suaheli-Hauptling Futula," *DKZ* (1889), 271-273.

In the following chapters I have standardized the spelling of Swahili and Arab proper names when feasible. Where Swahili plural forms would be awkward, I have used the anglicized plural. References to "Lamu District" indicate the modern division of Coast Province, but lower-case "district" throughout the text refers to the area of Lamu in general.

The research for this study was pursued during sixteen months in Kenya and several weeks in London. I am grateful for a Fulbright-Hays Graduate Fellowship and a Woodrow Wilson Dissertation Fellowship enabling me to go to Lamu, and for a travel grant from the African Studies Center, Boston University, which made the London stay possible. Also invaluable were two summer courses in the Swahili language at the University of California, Los Angeles, under NDFL Title IV grants.

I wish to express my gratitude to Norman R. Bennett, for his guidance and encouragement, to A. A. Castagno, late director of the African Studies Center, for kindnesses shown me, and to my father, the late Paul Ylvisaker, for assistance with German sources. I would also like to acknowledge the interest and assistance of administration officials in Coast Province, Kenya: N. Ngugi, who was Lamu District Commissioner during my stay there; the District Officers, John Mwaniki of Lamu Division, Faneuil Kombonyo of Witu, Paul Siemo of Kiunga (all in Lamu District), and J. Wuapari of Kipini (Tana River District); Henson Nyangwe, Agricultural Officer in Lamu; and many others. The librarians and archivists of the Kenya National Archives, Nairobi; the Ministry of Agriculture Library, Nairobi; the Methodist Missionary Society, London; and the Royal Geographical Society, London, were especially helpful to me, as were staff of other libraries and archives. Thanks are due also to James deVere Allen and Omari Bwana of the Lamu Museum; James and Dorothy Kirkman of Fort Jesus, Mombasa; H. Neville Chittick and the staff of the British Institute of History and Archaeology in Eastern Africa, Nairobi; to Sheila Unwin, and to many other individuals. To the kind residents of Lamu and Tana River Districts, whose hospitality will not be forgotten, *asanta sana*.

M.H.Y.

Albert Lea, Minnesota

February 1979

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ABBREVIATIONS

DKZ	*Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*
FO	Foreign Office
GJ	*Geographical Journal*
IJAHS	*International Journal of African Historical Studies*
JAH	*Journal of African History*
JAS	*Journal of the African Society*
JEAUNHS	*Journal of the East Africa and Uganda Natural History Society*
JRAI	*Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal African Society*
KNA	Kenya National Archives
PP	Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers*
PRGS	*Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*
PRO	Public Record Office, London
RGS	Royal Geographical Society
SRBG	*Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government*
TBGS	*Transactions of the Bombay Geographical Society*
TNR	*Tanganyika (Tanzania) Notes and Records*

CHAPTER 1

THE PHYSICAL SETTING

Imagine yourself in a colossal, totally wild botanical garden and you have some idea of the country.

Adolf von Tiedemann, upon entering the forest north of Witu[1]

The appearance of the country as a whole would not be called tropical....

William Astor Chanler, at Mkonumbi[2]

The Lamu archipelago off the northern Kenya coast (between 2° and 2°20' south of the equator) comprises three main islands, Lamu, Manda, and Pate, and a number of smaller islands which include Ndao and Kiwayuu. All of these islands lie close to the Kenyan mainland: to this day, for example, cattle for Lamu are urged to swim across the Mto wa Kipungani, the channel which separates Lamu from the mainland; Manda is an island only by virtue of the narrow creek called Mkanda which is not navigable at low tide; and Pate, a bit farther off, is well within sight of the opposite mangrove-filled shore. The islands lie close to one another as well and as a group they form a complicated indentation of the coastline--according to one view, a partially submerged delta of a former course of the Tana River. Although the Tana reaches the sea today at a point south of the archipelago (at 2°32' south latitude), the mainland shore facing the islands is indented by four or five long, meandering sea creeks which suggest a complex drainage system for much of today's Lamu District and the lower part of Tana River District.

On the mainland, for historical and geographical reasons which I will discuss, the hinterland of the Lamu archipelago stretches roughly from today's border with the Republic of Somalia (at 1°45' south latitude) to the mouth of the Tana at Kipini. At times the archipelago influenced, and was influenced by, a broader mainland area than this, especially to the north. My concentration, however, will be on Lamu District and the southern part of Tana River District, both in Coast Province of modern Kenya, an area which was in constant contact with the islands during the nineteenth century. This area includes the 5,800 square kilometers of Lamu District and a smaller portion of

[1]Adolf von Tiedemann, "Ein Besuch beim Suaheli-Hauptling Futula," *DKZ* (1889), 272.

[2]William Astor Chanler, *Through Jungle and Desert. Travels in Eastern Africa* (London, 1896), 17.

lower Tana River District which lies east of the Tana.[3] The Tana River, which forms the approximate southern boundary of the study, has served as a natural focal point of population movements, for it is the only source of fresh water in this mainland area during dry years; it is a waterway to the interior; and it has limited access to the Lamu hinterland from the south and west. The northern boundary of my study is more arbitrary, because in former times island people knew the coast well as far as the Juba River. Specific episodes of the Lamu archipelago's involvement in this northern area will be discussed.

The interior limits of the archipelago's interests, and, conversely, of the interests of mainland inhabitants in the islands, depended upon relationships between coastal and island peoples and resulting trade patterns. Although pastoralists and hunters traverse the semi-arid stretch between the Tana River and the Lorian Swamp, this *nyika* (dry wilderness) behind Lamu District forms a natural boundary to the Lamu hinterland.[4] Whether one places narrow or broad limits on the definition of the hinterland, it is difficult to agree with the view of some socio-historians that Lamu and the other islands were outward-facing ports, little involved in the affairs of the mainland.

Yet most visitors from the outside have arrived at Lamu by way of the Indian Ocean. Assuredly, travel by sea has been the easier choice, for access by land--by foot or even by modern vehicle--has until recently been difficult. Nearing the archipelago from the sea, there is little to set off the islands from the mainland shore except the low hills of Kiwayuu Island, the highest point in the archipelago, and the tall ranges of white sand dunes on Lamu and Manda. Below the dunes on these two islands are sand beaches extending the length of their southeasterly-facing sides, while all the other shores of the islands are filled with mangrove trees, to a greater or lesser extent. This low and level greenness on the horizon causes the islands to blend in easily with the mainland landscape.[5]

Lamu is the most southerly of the three islands and is about equal in size to Manda (roughly 9,000 acres).[6] Unlike Manda, which is separated into five distinct areas by mangrove-bordered creeks, Lamu is an undissected piece of land, a thick crescent of sandy soil over coral rock, with paths connecting its villages with the "capital," Lamu town, which contains about

[3]Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Lands and Settlement, Town Planning Department, *Coast Province. Regional Physical Development Plan* (Nairobi, May 1971), 16.

[4]C.W. Haywood, "The Lorian Swamp," *GJ*, 41 (May 1913), 467.

[5]See *Handbuch der Ostküste Afrikas* (Berlin, 1912), 167-171; James Horsburgh, *India Directory*, I (2nd ed., London, 1817), 197-198; and Hydrographic Department, Admiralty, *Africa Pilot*, III (London, 1954), 453-481, for nautical approaches.

[6]Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Agriculture, "Lamu District Development" (Ref. Ag. Pol. 1/11. 2-12-65).

nine thousand of the District's 22,400 inhabitants. The stone-built town, edged with mud-and-thatch dwellings, is stretched out along Lamu harbor, which is formed by the presence of Manda Island opposite. The village of Shela is situated near the entrance to the harbor from the open sea, a particularly rough spot for vessels arriving and departing during the southwest monsoon. On the side of Lamu Island facing the mainland are two villages, Matondoni and Kipungani; in former times there were other small settlements which lay in the shelter of the dunes.[7]

About one-third of Lamu Island consists of sand dunes, useless for agricultural purposes, but valuable as a natural filter for Lamu's fresh water. Along the Kipungani side are extensive flat marshes with mangrove trees, and between the dunes and these marshes lies the cultivated part of Lamu Island, where sandy soil has been conducive to coconut-palm and mango-tree planting more than to any other form of agriculture.[8] But some ground crops, including rice, have been grown and cattle have grazed here. In the unused areas of Lamu Island, as on Pate and Manda, dense thorn bush flourishes. Although lacking soil heavy enough for steady cultivation of staple crops, Lamu had had two advantages: it is the one place in the archipelago and nearby mainland with an unlimited supply of sweet, fresh water;[9] and, second, its harbor offers extensive anchoring at all tides for vessels of fairly deep draught.

Manda Island in recent times has been almost deserted, except for the huts of a few fishermen and lime burners and a small permanent settlement of Bajun farmers, refugees of the Somali *shifta* raids on the mainland during the 1960s. This island has the stone ruins of the oldest settlement in the archipelago thus far known,[10] and it has supported several towns and villages in the more recent past, despite a serious lack of fresh water.[11] At Ras Kilindini, on the north side,

[7]R. Rabenhorst, "Die Witu-Inseln," *Globus*, Band LVII (1890), 257.

[8]*Ibid.*; *PP* (1903), XLV, C. 1534, Report by Mr. A. Whyte on His Recent Travels Along the Sea Coast Belt of the British East Africa Protectorate, 10.

[9]The 1969 district agricultural report stated that Lamu Island has the "only reliable water supply in the whole district." Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Agriculture, Annual Report, Lamu District, 1969.

[10]For the latest description of the excavation, see H. Neville Chittick, "Archaeological Finds from the Region of Lamu," in James deVere Allen, *Lamu* (Nairobi, 1972), 29-31.

[11]See R.W. Hamilton, "The Ruined Town of Takwa," *The Agricultural Journal of British East Africa*, I, 1 (April 1908), 76; and Republic of Kenya, "Lamu District Development," 4, for information on wells.

is a deep-water harbor considered in the nineteenth century superior even to Lamu, and preferred by the captains of Zanzibari, English, and German steam vessels despite the necessity of taking a smaller craft through the Mkanda to reach Lamu. About one-fifth of Manda consists of sand dunes, backed by sandy flat land with thornbush and doum-palm growth. Another three-fifths is made up mostly of mangrove swamps along twisting creeks which wander through the island and almost cut off the Takwa-Kitao area at high tide. Thus only one-fifth of Manda is cultivable, the elevated coral plains which are covered with the rich red loam called *udongo kundu*.[12]

Pate Island is about three times as large as either Manda or Lamu and has no great land area taken up by sand dunes. Once one enters the interior of this island, it has a much less island-like feeling than the other two, because of its size and its predominantly arable land. The island has often been considered by observers to be two islands, the one to the southwest containing Pate town, which is separated by a narrow, shallow channel at Siyu from the area to the northeast, which has been called Faza Island. The activities of the towns of Pate Island, especially Rasini (or Faza) on the one hand and Pate and Siyu on the other, have been independent enough at times to warrant a geographical as well as political separation. Nevertheless, this channel, if it ever was larger, must have silted up over the years, for today the demarcation between the two sections appears less definite. The towns of Pate, Siyu, and Rasini are all situated on shallow inlets which can be entered by dhow or motor vessel of shallow draught only at high tide. Pate Island, like Lamu and Manda, has one deep-water landing point, at Ras Mtangawanda, but it is not a sheltered harbor and there is no evidence of a major settlement ever being there, nor of any great use being made of the point, although small villages have existed nearby. The town harbors may have silted up fairly recently, for all three places had their own inter-island and sometimes foreign dhow traffic, whereas today only Rasini of the three has "direct service" to Lamu. Siyu is least accessible, but Rasini and Pate people go by dhow from their own seafronts to the mainland as they have in the past.

The formerly imposing stone houses of Pate town have been crumbling since the nineteenth century. Tobacco flourishes in small fields and gardens among the lime-filled and potsherd-strewn ruins. Near the small villages behind Pate town cultivators raise ground crops in fields edged by the mangrove swamps which border the island. Here as at Manda is found

[12]Rabenhorst, "Witu-Inseln," 258; Republic of Kenya, "Lamu District Development," 6. Swahili agricultural vocabulary will be discussed in Appendix A.

fertile red soil, although it is often shallow over its coral bed.[13]

Siyu was also a stone-built town, although today the mostly ruined area lies outside the inhabited one of mud-and-*makuti* (palm-frond thatch roofing) houses. Siyu creek separates the time-darkened Arab fort from the residential section. Craftsmen still fashion leather belts and sandals which are the last vestiges of a once flourishing industry and trade. Siyu supports extensive coconut plantations outside the town, as well as field cultivation in a large area behind these. Herds of cattle were once kept here and elsewhere on the island, but today one sees only a few goats.

To the northeast, one path leads to the town of Chundwa, a two-hour walk from Siyu in the midst of a productive farming area;[14] a path closer to the shore leads directly from Siyu to the current headquarters of the division of Faza, Faza town or Rasini, and several well-populated towns and villages beyond it--Kizingitini, Bajumali, and Yambogi. Rasini people and those of the lesser towns are cultivators, but unlike the Chundwa and Siyu people they are occupied also in the affairs of the sea, including fishing and--in the past--dhow building. It is perhaps not unusual in islands which support cultivation to find villages in the interior uninterested in maritime activities.[15] This seems to be the case with Chundwa, only one-half hour inland, and other places in the interior of Pate Island, the only island in the archipelago which is well enough endowed to allow this diversification. Pate Island, center of the once great Pate sultanate, is geographically capable of the greatest self-sufficiency among the islands. Its problems, however, hark back to Lamu's advantages: it lacks a good supply of potable fresh water--indeed, the lack has been called "acute"[16]--and it has no harbor which is both deep and protected.

North of Pate, strung out along the coast as far as Kismayu and beyond, are the small raised and undercut coral islands called the Bajun Islands, lying offshore one hundred to three hundred yards, within the reef. At the southern

[13]Republic of Kenya, "Lamu District Development," 7. W.W.A. Fitzgerald, *Travels in the Coastlands of British East Africa and the Islands of Zanzibar and Pemba* (London, 1898), 380-389, describes the topography of Pate Island.

[14]See Janet Bujra's study of Chundwa, "An Anthropological Study of Political Action in a Bajuni Village in Kenya" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1968), 17.

[15]For instance, the Dodecanese island of Symi of similar size. See William Travis, *Interval at Symi* (Boston, 1971), 22.

[16]Republic of Kenya, "Lamu District Development," 5.

end of the string lie Ndao and Kiwayuu, which are both visible from the seafront at Rasini, the town in the archipelago with which the Bajun Islands have had the closest ties. Many of the islands are minute and without water; others have supported fairly large populations recently, and perhaps long ago, as their stone ruins testify.[17] The islands have served as a refuge for the Bajun inhabitants of the northern mainland at dangerous times, including the recent *shifta* raids which struck so hard at Kiunga Division in the mid-1960s. As a result of this emergency, tiny Ndao, for instance, had in 1969 the highest population density in the district.[18] In fact, this recent situation upset the normal settlement patterns in the district so that in some cases villages of long standing were completely and permanently deserted. In other cases, residents were only in 1971 beginning to move back to the charred ruins of their home villages after years on the islands.[19] Others will never return. This modern episode echoes earlier times when Oromo and Somali raiders dictated the movements of coastal inhabitants.

The archipelago's--and especially the Bajun people's--ties with the islands beyond the modern Somali border continue today in the form of family relationships and occasional trade. In the period under study, before the 1925 cession of Jubaland by the British to Italy, the economic and political contacts were closer, for trade and communication were then open and free. The islands, which may number as many as five hundred in all, form the outer edge of a narrow and sometimes shallow shipping lane. To know which *milango* (openings between islands) can be entered safely, and at what stage of the tide the north-south stretches are navigable, requires intimate knowledge of the locale, which many Bajun dhow captains possess. This waterway makes possible communication by sea between the archipelago and the north even during rough seas, which the southwest monsoon, especially, produces.[20] At

[17]See J.A.G. Elliot, "A Visit to the Bajun Islands," *JAS*, 25 (1925-26), 10-22, 147-163, 245-263, 338-358, for a full description. See also C. Wightwick Haywood, "The Bajun Islands and Birikau," *GJ*, 85 (1933), 59-64; J.T. Juxon Barton, "Report on the Bajun Islands," *JEAUNHS*, 17 (March 1922), 24-39; and Thomas Huxley, "Oxford in East Africa," *The Geographical Magazine*, XXIV, 11 (March 1952), 543.

[18]United Nations Development Programme/Food and Agriculture Organization Range Management Project, "Vegetation-Land Use Survey of Lamu District" (mimeographed report, Nairobi, 1969), 7.

[19]See "Ravage of the Shifta," *Kenya Weekly News*, 27 November 1964, for the problem in Lamu District; and Catherine Hoskyns, ed., *Case Studies in African Diplomacy. Number II: The Ethiopia-Somali-Kenya Dispute 1960-67* (Dar es Salaam, 1969), *passim*, and I.M. Lewis, "The Problem of the Northern Frontier District of Kenya," *Race*, 5,1 (1963), 48-60, for the international setting.

[20]Baron Claus von der Decken, *Reisen in Ost-Africa in den Jahren 1859-1865*, II (Leipzig and Heidelberg, 1871), 278. Henry C. ArcAngelo, "A Rough Sketch of the River Juba," *Colburn's United Service Magazine*, Part I (1845), 278, stated that Lamu craft worked their way north even against the northeast monsoon.

any place within the archipelago, small local craft travel the channels between the islands and mainland rather than enter the open sea, even if it means missing a tide at the Mkanda, for example. The southern coast of Lamu district from Kimbo Creek to the Tana River has no such protection as the northern coast does, and during the southwest monsoon is almost inaccessible to the archipelago. This condition led to the importance of Kimbo and Kiongwe, lying within a protected creek, as dhow ports for the southern part of Lamu district.

The mainland area includes a stretch of coast less than one hundred miles long, but many times that if one follows the circuitous indentations of the numerous sea creeks. The major creeks, from south to north, are called the *mto* or creek of Kimbo or Kiongwe, Mkonumbi, Hidio, Mongoni, and Dodori; there are several lesser ones as well. These creeks allow travel by boat, at least at high tide, into the heart of the cultivated areas of the coast, while at the same time they cut the mainland into distinct sections.

The most important waterway of all is the Tana River. As late as the 1890s the Tana's entrance to the sea was at a spot called Mto Tana (at about 2°40' south latitude) and it seemed the mouth of the Tana was gradually moving even more southerly due to the piling up on sand dunes along the shore by the northeast winds. This caused the river to run roughly parallel to the shore for some miles. About sixteen miles northeast of the Tana mouth was the estuary of a lesser river, a wide tidal creek called Ozi. Dhows could travel up this creek as far as a village called Kau, but the Ozi was in reality a mere drain for the flood waters of the Tana.[21]

About 1860, a small canal was cut above Kau for purposes of irrigation, to ease communications with the next major village, Chara on the Tana, and to connect the Ozi with the small rivers descending from Witu. The digging of this canal, called Belezoni, a narrow ditch wide enough only for local dugout canoes, was a project initiated by the Nabahani sultan.[22] Apparently this small channel did not greatly affect the flow of the Tana, which often in its course meanders and forms lagoons and small insignificant streams. But in the late 1890s a colonial officer at Kipini

[21]C.W. Hobley, "The Tana River," *GJ*, 56 (October 1920), 299; H.C. Sampson, "The Tana River Region of Kenya Colony," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 84 (1935), 98.

[22]G.A. Fischer, "Über die Jetzigen Verhältnisse im südlichen Galla-Lande und Wito," *Mitteilungen der Geographischen Gesellschaft in Hamburg* (1876-1877), 357; R.P. LeRoy, "De Zanzibar à Lamo," *Les Missions Catholiques*, 21 (1889), 104; Omari Atiki, interview in Witu, 22 February 1971.

had the Belezoni widened, just in time for an unusually heavy flood. In a single season, the old Tana mouth gave way to its successor, the Ozi, as its entrance to the Indian Ocean, and only a small amount of river water, at the highest flood, discharged at Mto Tana thereafter.[23]

To an observer flying in an airplane over the Tana River above Hola, the changes which are constantly occurring in the course of the river are evident. One can view old bends of the river abandoned by its current course, which may cut completely through a bend and form a new one. This picture becomes less well defined where the flood valley widens, that is, within the area adjacent to, and involving, Lamu District. But within this area about 1870 the whole course of the river approximately from Garsen to just above Kau moved to the west, changing drastically the settlements of the Pokomo people on its banks.[24] In the lower reaches of the river, it has over the years discharged so much silt that it has raised the level of the ground along each side of its course, until it is running on land higher than the surrounding country.[25] This effect is especially startling from a boat on the Tana below Kau, at high tide, for one can almost see over the tall trees edging the river and into the adjoining fields.

It is feasible to consider the Ozi as the most southerly of the many sea creeks which cut into the Lamu hinterland. If the Ozi, before the Belezoni canal changed its function, was a drain for the flood waters of the Tana, there is some evidence that the more northerly of these sea creeks also discharge varying amounts of fresh water. The whole district is flat except for the low Mundane hills behind Kiunga and a small area around Witu town, and each creek drains a large area. Even at the district boundary thirty miles inland, the elevation is only one hundred and fifty feet above sea level.[26] During the Tana's flood seasons, the entire southern part of Lamu District is very obviously affected and it is possible that much of the central part is also receiving Tana water.[27] All the creeks

[23]Hobley, "Tana River," 299-300, *PP* (1905), LVI, C. 2406, Report on the Possibilities of Cotton-Growing in the East Africa Protectorate for 1904, 16; J.S.S. Rowlands, "An Outline of Tana River History" (typescript, [1955], 4-5).

[24]Robert Louis Bunger, Jr., "Islamization Among the Upper Pokomo of Kenya" (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1972), 27, 29. See also Kurt Toeppen, "Aus Deutsch Witu-Land," *DKZ* (1889), 326.

[25]Sampson, "Tana River Region," 95.

[26]U.N. Development Programme (FAO), "Vegetation-Land Use Survey," 2.

[27]Hobley, "Tana River," 300; G.D. Patterson, "Report on Lamu Hinterland, 1957," (ALDEV Report LR/8) 6.

south of Mongoni creek may once have composed a delta of the Tana River, for which the three main outlets were Siyu Channel, Manda Bay, and Mkonumbi Creek. The great beds of sand forming the archipelago are, according to one view, relics of alluvial deposits brought by the river and piled up against coral reefs.[28]

The water situation in the Lamu hinterland is uneven. Areas in the southern part of the hinterland lie in a water-logged condition up to six months of the year, due to a combination of the Tana flood and local rainfall. In the north, even the long rains of March to June are undependable, and water for the now small population of Kiunga, for instance, often has to be transported from wells twenty miles away. "Rainfall is the most important climatic element for land use planning in Coast Province," stated the 1971 regional physical development plan,[29] and nowhere is this more true than in Lamu District.

Allied with any discussion of rainfall is that of the effect of the two monsoon seasons which determine not only agricultural habits, but the life of the whole area, at sea as well as on land. The northeast monsoon, called *kaskazi*, gains impetus in November and reaches the peak of its strength from December to February. In the Lamu area one bright, cloudless day follows another during this period of hot, dry winds. The *kaskazi* has been blamed for much damage to the soil of Lamu District, for the cultivable ground, bare of plantings at this season, bakes in the hot sun and is eroded by the strong wind.[30] Although usually a long unfruitful season for agriculture, the *kaskazi* is a kind one for marine activities; this fact has long been acknowledged by local people, who often combine farming with a sea-faring occupation.

After the *kaskazi* gradually diminishes, an airless and sticky period of calms called *maleleji* occurs. This can last a month or more until the major annual rains of the *mwaka* begin to fall, often in a great burst in May but sometimes earlier or later. The rains also vary in amount from year to year.[31] The wind at this time veers to the southwest; this monsoon, the *kusi*, brings all that is opposite to the *kaskazi*. The air is laden with moisture and the sea is extremely rough, limiting all sailing and fishing activities.[32] The ocean currents reverse themselves along with the prevailing winds;[33] it becomes apparent in Lamu that the current as well as the

[28]Hobley, "Tana River," 301, and map facing 328.

[29]Republic of Kenya, *Development Plan*, 5.

[30]Republic of Kenya, "Lamu District Development," 3.

[31]See Appendix B for rainfall tables.

[32]B.A. Datoo, "Misconceptions about the Use of Monsoons by Dhows in East African Waters," *The East African Geographical Review*, 8 (April 1970), 1.

[33]D.N. McMaster, "The Ocean-going Dhow Trade to East Africa," *The East African Geographical Review*, 4 (April 1966), 14-15.

wind has changed when the muddy flood waters of the Tana River swing into Lamu harbor, floating a layer of tan fresh water over the usually turquoise-colored sea.

The *mwaka* rains in Lamu sometimes last into July, but they are interspersed with many sunny and relatively cool days. The strength of the *kusi* tapers off in August and ends with a period of calm paralleling that at the end of the *kaskazi*. The short rains, called *vuli*, which are quite dependable on the more southern East African coast, occurring in October or November, are highly inconsistent in the Lamu hinterland, often not arriving at all.[34] The Witu-Mkonumbi area receives reliable short rains, the islands sometimes receive them, and Kiunga division rarely. There is thus only one dependable growing season for much of the area.

The Tana delta and the Lamu archipelago and hinterland form the northern shore of Formosa (or Ungama) Bay, the main topographical feature affecting local rain. This shoreline comprises the last moist zone before the arid Somali country. Despite the fact that as one goes north the rainfall decreases, there are pockets of heavier precipitation within the hinterland. The pockets coincide with areas of high evaporation, such as bodies of water and forests. In the Lamu hinterland, these areas are the Tana delta, which includes a number of lakes and pools in all but the driest season, and the Witu forest. In addition, one suspects the so-called Boni forest, covering an area north of Witu of probably over 180,000 acres, to reflect higher rainfall, although no records have been kept here, nor is it any longer a true forest in the sense of the Witu Utwani Reserve.[35]

This Witu forest, isolated from any other high rainfall area, owes its favored condition partly to its being the one remnant of tropical rain forest left in the area. Although partially dependent on ground water for its survival, it contributes to the stability of its own environment.[36] The Witu forest's existence today is due not to any inaccessibility to agriculturalists, who

[34]But for an example for what havoc unusually heavy short rains can cause, see Fischer, "Verhältnisse," 358, who reported that crops were ruined and cattle dying in the 1877 "so-called little rainy season."

[35]Republic of Kenya, "Lamu District Development," 3; Kenya, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Water Resources, *African Land Development in Kenya 1946-1955* (Nairobi, 1956), 220. Patterson, "Lamu Hinterland, 1957," 5, states that the country from Duldul northeast to Milimani received reliable short rains when the Boni forest still existed there.

[36]James C. Moomaw, *A Study of the Plant Ecology of the Coast Region of Kenya Colony, British East Africa* (Nairobi, 1960), 11, 13. Even this forest is not a true rain forest because there is a definite dry season. U.N. Development Programme (FAO), "Vegetation-Land Use Survey," 4.

have bypassed it in the midst of a cleared area of sometimes intensive cultivation; rather, it is attributed to local fear of evil spirits which were believed to lurk there, and, pursuant to this, the "no trespassing" orders of the Sultan of Witu.[37] As late as 1902, however, the Witu forest covered a much larger area than it does today, and cultivators appeared then to be encroaching upon it.[38] Such a forest must have covered much of Lamu District as well as much of the coastal strip at one time, for the species represented at Witu have a remarkable similarity to those in many scattered woods in other parts of Coast Province.[39]

The small population in Lamu District recently, with consequent vast unused areas of land, may give the erroneous impression that the area has never been more heavily populated. Yet is is mainly due to man's use of this land that ecological changes have come about, including the water problem. The nineteenth century probably saw the all-time maximum use of the Lamu hinterland, for it was a period when island proprietors owned hundreds of slaves to cultivate their mainland plantations. Settlements were so close together that it is said a letter could be sent from Kikoni, the mainland point closest to Lamu town, to Witu by one farmer's simply handing it to the farmer in the adjoining field, in one continuous relay.[40] Bearing in mind the shifting cultivation commonly practiced on the mainland, this may be an exaggeration, but it is apparent that the mainland was able to support a population several times greater than that of today, besides being the source of grain for export. This was possible only by clearing a great amount of land, and, ironically, this is a factor in the gradual dessication of the area.

Generally throughout Lamu District soils are sandy with poor structure. There are several types. Much of the district has lagoonal deposits characterized by pale-colored sandy soils that quickly lose their fertility if cultivation is continuous. In certain areas, under suitable rainfall conditions and when well drained, these soils are appropriate for deep-rooted perennial tree crops; the long-abandoned but still lush mango trees at Hindi bear testimony to this. Also frequently found are the coral rag soils which include dark grey loamy sands and red or yellow-red sandy loams. The red loams are especially fertile, as we have seen at Manda and Pate, and are the most suitable

[37] Omari Ali Omari Mzee, interview in Mokowe, 11 November 1971. See also Chapter 4 below.

[38] Whyte's Report, 9-10.

[39] J.A. Allan, "Vegetation Survey" (Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Agricultural Department, typescript Rept/9/7, March 1949); James Templer, "Floral Changes on the Coast of Kenya" (Forestry Dept., Mombasa, 12 April 1954).

[40] Omari Ali Omari Mzee, interview in Mokowe, 11 November 1971.

of all the local soils for intensive cultivation, excepting the superior Tana delta silts which provide some of the richest soils in the hinterland.[42] In the north, another type exists in the Mundane hills--red sandy soils, deemed extremely deficient and infertile by modern experts.[43] Blackish clays, unsuitable for agriculture or grazing, occur in depressions where swamp conditions prevail.[44] Soil types can alter abruptly from one location to the next, obvious even to the casual observer because the surface colors vary greatly. Local farmers know well what type of soil is to be found in any given area.

Except for the clays, it is likely that all of the soil types have been cultivated off and on, and that the soil structure deteriorated rapidly once forest and bushland were removed. Soils became increasingly sandy, deteriorating further if overcultivated or overgrazed.[45] The cultivators in Lamu District shifted their farms every year or two, clearing new fields from an area which had been left fallow over a period of ten to fifteen years. Clearing involved chopping down trees and then burning off the lower growth.[46] Even in 1971, a cloud of grey smoke rose over the whole area during February and March, the peak of the burning time.[47] Since the cultivated area today is much smaller than that of the nineteenth century, any area burned off now is that of secondary growth, not true forest. But as recently as the late nineteenth century, Bajun cultivators were clearing for new plantations at the edge of the Boni forest, which covered a much greater area than it does today.[48] The burnings of a century ago show vividly in aerial photographs of the Boni forest north of Witu, in the midst of which the huge once-cultivated sites of the

[42]The Tana silts are an exception to most of the comments that follow, as they are semi-annually replenished by floods and thus cannot suffer from overcultivation.

[43]G.D. Patterson, "Some Notes on the Ecology and Agricultural Economy of the Lamu Hinterland" (ALDEV Report LR/6, 1955), 2; U.N. Development Programme (FAO), "Vegetation-Land Use Survey," 1-2.

[44]U.N. Development Programme (FAO), "Vegetation-Land Use Survey," 2; Templer, "Floral Changes," 5-7; Patterson, "Lamu Hinterland, 1957," Appendix A. See also Fitzgerald, *Travels*, ch. XIX, for descriptions of soils.

[45]U.N. Development Programme (FAO), "Vegetation-Land Use Survey," 2; Templer, "Floral Changes," 5, 11. The red loams have apparently been used more, burned more often, and have thus deteriorated the most.

[46]This was true for cultivators. Honey gatherers and hunters such as the Sanye and Boni, who also cleared by burning, would not have chopped trees.

[47]Ministry of Agriculture, Lamu Annual Report for 1969. In the 1950s Patterson, "Lamu Hinterland, 1957," estimated that there were only 2600 cultivators on the mainland of Lamu District; there were perhaps 4500 in Lamu District (including the islands) in 1971.

[48]Fitzgerald, *Travels*, 398, 487; Whyte's Report, 10, tells of farmers burning forest for new fields in 1902.

watoro (runaway slave) settlements have grown up into a mixture of secondary bushed or wooded grassland, and secondary woodland.[49]

There are other vast areas now producing acacia-euphorbia thorn bushland, a dry-country vegetation, seen in acre after acre behind the once heavily populated northern coast. This vegetation suggests over-cultivation--more intensive than the light shifting type mentioned above--which has led to much soil deterioration.[50] This situation is probably the result of the large nineteenth-century slave-run Bajun plantations which were located here.

Doum-palm savannah, however, stretching endlessly on the horizon, has taken over much of the rest of Lamu District, occupying space which was once part of the Witu forest, and assisted in its dispersal by the numerous baboons and elephants of the area.[51] Consistent firing also encourages the doum palm and coarse grass, to the detriment of all other growth.[52] The doum palm, *mkoma,* has been plentiful on the Lamu mainland for a long time, and, because it is less common on the southern East African coast,[53] the *mkoma* has been the basis of a large export trade in matting and mat bags woven from its strong fibers. But the doum-palm savannah which has taken over the area east of the Tana River today is an undesirable result of years of destruction of the natural vegetation conditions, followed by abandonment.

Most agricultural experts examining the Lamu hinterland have agreed that the custom of annually burning off bush growth has helped to erode the soil and to destroy its make-up, but no modern substitute has been found more suitable to the light soils of the area than the shifting cultivation practiced.[54] Nevertheless,

[49]See maps accompanying U.N. Development Programme (FAO), "Vegetation-Land Use Survey," constructed from aerial photographs. This secondary growth is attributed by the survey to recent burnings by Boni hunters and honey-gatherers, but this is unlikely because the area affected is so vast. Kenya, *African Land Development,* 220, suggests that "Waboni cultivators" are responsible for the burning, even more unlikely, as the Boni are not cultivators by preference. The *watoro* village sites are unmapped, but the location is appropriate. See Chapter 9 below.

[50]U.N. Development Programme (FAO), "Vegetation-Land Use Survey," 4-5.

[51]Templer, "Floral Change," 9.

[52]Allan, "Vegetation Survey," 8; Moomaw, *Plant Ecology,* 37.

[53]R.O. Williams, *The Useful and Ornamental Plants in Zanzibar and Pemba* (Zanzibar, 1949), 302.

[54]But B.W. Langlands, "Burning in Eastern Africa," *The East African Geographical Review,* 5 (April 1967), *passim,* suggests that the effects are not so deleterious as has been assumed. See also Republic of Kenya, "Lamu District Development," 7; Patterson, "Notes on Ecology," 5; and Patterson, "Lamu Hinterland, 1957," Appendix A, where he points out that the methods used are the result of long experience.

it is likely that the destruction of the ground cover on the shallow soil of the Lamu hinterland has resulted in a serious lowering of the dry-season water table. The removal of the forests, which were high evaporation areas, has caused a decrease in rainfall. In addition, the exposure of the soil, by burning, to five or more months of fierce *kaskazi* sun and wind annually has meant that the rain which does fall penetrates only a shallow area, and that no moisture reaches the deeper layers of soil no matter how heavy the rain. The soil's capillary structure connecting the surface layers and the water table has been destroyed, causing a cessation of all vertical movement of soil moisture, which is normally downwards when a moisture surplus exists and upwards during dry periods.[55] This explains the waterlogged conditions of some areas during the wet season and the tinder-dry soil and ground cover found during the *kaskazi*. Many wells have dried up or become salty along with the lowering of the water table. It is therefore doubtful that the Lamu hinterland could support its nineteenth-century population under similar conditions now.[56]

Another resource of the area, that of wild game, has also undergone changes in the last century, due to a decreased human population and the restrictions brought about by game laws. The smaller game such as gazelle and duiker are present on all of the islands, and an occasional elephant or lion walks across the Mkanda at low tide to Manda Island. On the mainland, however, the presence of wild game involves the ways of life of at least three peoples, the Sanye, Boni, and Oromo; certain trade patterns between islands and mainland have depended upon its presence; it is tied ecologically with the keeping of cattle by various peoples; and, with the restrictions on killing game, it has become a matter of concern to farmers. In fact, the restrictions are one of many reasons for the decline of agriculture in the area.

Numerous species are represented in Lamu and lower Tana River districts.[57] The buffalo for which the Wange area was famous are

[55]Templer, "Floral Changes," 12,19; Patterson, "Notes on Ecology," 12; Allan, "Vegetation Survey," 8. See also N.N. Nyandat, "The Development of Arable Settlement Scheme on the Soils Bordering Lake Mkunguya and Mapenya and Stretching to the East.Lamu District" (Soil Survey Unit, Ministry of Agriculture, Republic of Kenya, 1970).

[56]Patterson, "Notes on Ecology," 18. Many towns and villages, including the port of Kimbo, have suffered for this reason. Field notes, Mapenya, 25 October 1971.

[57]For details see Noel Simon, *Between the Sunlight and the Thunder. The Wildlife of Kenya* (London, 1962). For species represented in the past, see Arthur Blayney Percival, *A Game Ranger's Note Book* (New York, 1924); Sir Robert G. Harvey, "Letter from Sir R.G. Harvey," in Captain Sir John C. Willoughby, *East Africa and Its Big Game* (London, 1889), 262-283; and Sir Frederick Jackson, *Early Days in East Africa* (London, 1930).

now largely gone,[58] but one sees herds of topi, zebra, and bushbuck, which are these days the main hosts of the tsetse fly which is very much present in the area. The generally humid conditions throughout the year mean the fly is present constantly, and much of the vegetation gives a perfect fly habitat, although in this the infamous doum-palm savannah is fairly innocent. Large herds of topi and zebra compete with cattle for available grazing in the dry season.[59]

Many animals are a menace to crops--the wart hog, baboon, and even the weaver bird which attacks ripening grain. The most obvious wild game problem is that of the increasing number of elephants, the only game which make a seasonal migration in the area. The coast holds certain attractions for them; the doum-palm nut, the heart of the coconut tree, the oil of the cotton seed are all delicacies favored by the elephant. Elephants come to the coast with the beginning of the long rains and remain there until all the pools dry up. The migration unfortunately coincides with the period when food crops are grown.[60]

This chapter has suggested only some basic ecological features which have governed economic and political activities in the Lamu region. It is an area with a variety of landscape and resources, and with many local and seasonal differences. The comments of the two observers quoted at the beginning of the chapter are both factual: the area can appear to be a lush tropical garden or it can seem a barren semi-desert. The Lamu archipelago and hinterland's resources are limited, but in the nineteenth century the inhabitants of this area used them to the fullest.

[58]Adolf von Tiedemann, *Tana-Baringo-Nil. Mit Karl Peters zu Emin Pascha* (Berlin, 1907), 47.

[59]U.N. Development Programme (FAO), "Vegetation-Land Use Survey," 8.

[60]Patterson, "Lamu Hinterland, 1957," Appendix F; Nyandat, "Development," 2.

CHAPTER 2

THE PEOPLE

In the mid-1860s the German explorer Richard Brenner and his party, traveling in thick woods north of the Tana River, unexpectedly met a party of Galla, or Oromo. Brenner was sure that these Oromo people had never before seen a European. Yet, "without giving any indication of surprise whatsoever, they commanded our Negroes by an energetic wave of the hand to get off the narrow path, and then proceeded silently, without word or glance, on their way."[1]

When most later observers recorded their visits to the Lamu archipelago and district, the powerful Oromo people, who could deal so arrogantly with their visitors, had been subdued and reduced in number by the steady encroachments and sudden raids of Somali and Masai. This is a development which bears heavily on the history of Lamu district. Until the last third of the nineteenth century, however, there was no group of people which influenced the political and economic activity of this area more than the Oromo. The Pokomo of the lower Tana River were vulnerable, sedentary cultivators; the Oromo were mobile pastoralists. The nomadic Boni and Sanye, equally mobile, were, if not the slaves of the Oromo, their dependent subordinates. Moreover, the Swahili-speaking peoples and the Arabs and Asians of the islands and coast were Muslim, while the Oromo in the nineteenth century held to their traditional religion. The spiritual distance and resulting fear and hate between these peoples was a basis for the unsettled state of affairs which prevailed in the Lamu hinterland throughout the nineteenth century.[2]

The recognition of this religious factor does not deny the existence of other important components of the economic and political scene. It is obvious that the mixture of peoples in the area under consideration was diverse not only in religious belief but also in origin, language, and way of life. Also, the resources of the area, as we have seen, were not conducive to the pursuit of entirely separate ways for these many peoples. Nor would some of them have wished to isolate themselves. Even without considering the specific need for food beyond the productive limits of the island of Lamu, for instance, the commercial bent of its urban inhabitants would have brought them to the mainland. Moreover, island politics created the need for alliances with mainland acquaintances, not only in the obvious case of the Witu sultanate, but also at Siyu and elsewhere.

[1]Richard Brenner, "Forschungen in Ost-Afrika," *Petermann's Mitteilungen* (1868), 462.

[2]A.R. Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," *Globus*, Band LIV (1888), 133-134, discusses the Swahili attitude toward non-Muslims.

There are several important issues to consider in a discussion of the diverse peoples of the Lamu area in the nineteenth century. The first is to ascertain the power or weakness of ethnic ties. The second is to weigh ethnicity against the pull of the immediate political and economic needs and opportunities that faced these peoples during the course of that century. When an Oromo chief, for example, decided to abandon his traditional nomadic ways and settle near his Muslim ally, the Sultan of Witu, how important was his Oromo-ness to him? And how did such an alteration of his way of life change the outlook of his allies, and even more importantly, his enemies, toward him? One must examine the Arab-Somali collaboration against the Swahili-Oromo alliance in the 1860s both in the light of past ethnic enmities and in the context of more pressing practical needs.[3]

Intra-tribal differences, often difficult to ascertain when simple labels have been applied and when tribal lines have been blurred, brought another level of diversity and fluidity to the area. What traits of the Boni who lived among the Bajun-*Watoro* settlements in the forest made him different? In view of the Boni people's active role in these mixed villages, is it fair to speak of the Boni merely as the retiring and self-effacing clients of the pastoralists? The personal followings of a Bajun, Swahili, or Arab leader never included all of one ethnic group, nor was it limited to any one group. Such alliances can be attributed to geographic location, resources, intermarriage, and interdependence between ethnic groups, as well as to the ability of a given leader to draw together diverse peoples. Consideration of differences within ethnic groups is one of the keys to understanding the activities of Lamu district in the nineteenth century. Bearing in mind these caveats, then, an attempt must be made to identify the peoples who enter into the nineteenth-century history of the Lamu area. The origins of these peoples are beyond the chronological scope of this study, but some clarification of their ethnic ties is necessary to a discussion of their activities.

The Swahili and Bajun Peoples

> *...a mixed quantity, but in fact an absolute distinction*[4]

One result of the establishment of the towns of the Lamu archipelago and coast, centuries before 1800, was a Swahili-speaking

[3]See Fredrik Barth's introduction to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Fredrik Barth, ed., (Boston, 1969) 9-38, for an analysis of ethnic groups and their persistence.

[4]KNA/JUD/1/614 (Report on the Administration of the Tanaland Province, 1909 hereafter Ainsworth and Hollis's Report , 19, 20.

population, a mixture of Arab and African ancestry which, despite common religion, customs, and language, was not a unified body of people.[5] Each of the major towns was a political entity, and each had its own sphere; Pate's may have been extensive. Although there was a varying amount of contact between the towns, each attests to its relative isolation by maintaining until recently its own dialect of the Swahili language.[6] Although today, in a different political and social setting, a coastal person may identify himself as "Mswahili," in the nineteenth century it was more likely that he would have named his tribe, or his home--"I am Mpate," for example. In the nineteenth century, certain Arabs of long residence on the coast sometimes identified themselves as Swahili because of their dissatisfaction with Omani Arab rule.[7]

Although it is equally difficult to define a Bajun, or Mtikuu, the Bajun people, more than the Swahili, maintain their own identity. Like the Swahili, the Bajun claim Arab ancestry,[8] and are equally well mixed with African blood. In addition, and varying from place to place, Somali ancestry is acknowledged. Of all the dialects of Swahili, the Bajun speech, called Kitikuu, has until the present best maintained its individuality. A Bajun, too, would have identified himself by a specific tribe, of which there are many. For instance, a young man from near Kiunga stated in 1874, "I am a 'Mtawayo,' a division of the tribe of 'Bajunia.' I am a true Bajunia."[9] The Bajun have been described as "a 'people' who are

[5]For earlier history, see Neville Chittick, "Discoveries in the Lamu Archipelago," *Azania,* II (1967), 37-67; Neville Chittick, "A New Look at the History of Pate," *JAH,* X, 3 (1969), 375-391; James S. Kirkman, *Men and Monuments on the East African Coast* (London, 1964); James S. Kirkman, *Ungwana on the Tana* (The Hague, 1966).

[6]See C.H. Stigand, *A Grammar of Dialectic Changes in the Kiswahili Language* (Cambridge, 1915), for the various Lamu area dialects.

[7]Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu Land," 133. For a general discussion of the Swahili-speaking people, see A.H.J. Prins, *The Swahili-Speaking Peoples of Zanzibar and the East African Coast,* Ethnographic Survey of Africa, ed. Daryll Forde (2nd ed., London, 1967); for Swahili social relations, see Peter Lienhardt's introduction to Hasani bin Ismail, *The Medicine Man: Swifa ya Nguvumali* (Oxford, 1968). On material culture, see J. de V. Allen, "Swahili Culture Reconsidered: Some Historical Implications of the Material Culture of the Northern Kenya Coast in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Azania,* IX (1974), 105-138; and Hamo Sassoon, *The Siwas of Lamu* (Nairobi, 1975).

[8]Suleiman bin Surur El-Manthiry, *Kurratil-Ayun-Fi-Nusbatil-Bajun* (Mombasa, 1943), *passim.*

[9]*PP* (1875), LXXI, C. 1168, Inc. in No. 18.

united by a sentiment of common identity," but for whom the village has been traditionally a largely autonomous unit.[10]

Many observers did not distinguish between Bajun and Swahili, except by their location. In the nineteenth century the Bajun populated areas of Pate Island, especially the Rasini end, and the small inhabited islands and coast north of Pate. In the later years of the century, however, the Bajun moved into several Lamu district mainland villages far beyond their traditional territory of Pate Island and the northern coast.

The identity of Swahili and Bajun peoples depends, like all tribal identity, upon the context. But the distinction between Bajun and Swahili is one which these peoples themselves make now and which they made in the nineteenth century, and it was a factor in the politics and economics of the time. The distinction is important to the historian not so much from a genealogical viewpoint as from that of the nineteenth-century political context. By the 1860s many Bajun were unified under the Rasini chief Mzee bin Seif, while many Swahilis found a similar rallying point with the Witu sultan.

The Swahili and Bajun peoples are both stratified societies, each including a sharifly class, the reputed descendants of the Prophet Mohamed, which can for my purposes be considered part of the *wangwana*, the free or nobly born; and the *watumwa* (in Kitikuu, *wachumwa*), slaves. Slaves were sometimes called *wazalia*, implying slave parentage on at least one side, and more literally meaning "those born in this place." Place of residence, in fact, is a key to both the stratification of Swahili and Bajun societies and to the distinctions between these two peoples. The Swahili were, until the late nineteenth century, town dwellers on the islands, or temporary residents of towns which had grown up for trade purposes on the adjacent coast, or, as in the case of inland Witu, for political reasons. There were always a few freeborn Swahili who engaged in farming and rural activities, but Swahili ties to the island urban centers were never broken. The Nabahani Swahili, the ruling family of Pate, moved to Kau on the Ozi River and later to Witu, but they held claim to the island and town of Pate as their homeland. "The Swahilis living in Witu long for their old tribal home, the city of Patta, and everyone would give many years of his life for this possession," an observer reported late in the century.[11] In Witu they attempted as best they could to establish city ways.[12] The slaves of the Swahili were the true rural folk, looked down upon by the *wangwana* because they could neither understand the fine points of Islam nor gain polished manners, both of

[10]Bujra, "Bajuni Village," 12-14.

[11]Toeppen, "Aus Deutsch Witu-Land," 326.

[12]Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 131-132.

which could be acquired only in a city.[13]

The urban-rural distinction is also a basis of difference between Swahili and Bajun. The Bajun are considered a mainland people by some historians, and have claimed affiliation with the mysterious Shungwaya, traditional homeland of many of the Bantu-speaking, agricultural coastal tribes, including the Pokomo and Giriama. Whether this claim is a concession to modern politics or not, the Bajun have historically been more content with rural existence than have the Swahili. Rasini, the most sophisticated of nineteenth-century Bajun towns, was not a cultural center in the way that Pate had been, or Lamu became. Although Bajun engaged slave labor on their huge plantations behind the northern coast, just as did the Swahili farther south, they also settled permanently in places like Kiunga and Mambore and pursued agricultural and marine activities in their own right.

African blood was, of course, constantly being infused into the Bajun and Swahili mainstreams, especially while thousands of slaves from the Lake Nyasa region were imported into the district in the nineteenth century. For reasons to be discussed in chapter six, the African tribes of the near mainland were not often taken as slaves by island people, although Pokomo and Oromo were considered desirable as slaves by islanders. This may not have been the case, however, in previous centuries. Although the peak of the long-distance slave trade occurred in the nineteenth century, slavery was an institution in Muslim society. As political situations changed, so must have the sources of slaves.

Today some former slaves and descendants of slaves of Nyasa origin who inhabit the rural villages of Lamu district call themselves Waswahili, implying *wangwana,* when by the older definition they are *wazalia.* To be an *mngwana,* free-born, one must be of "Arab" descent on the paternal side. If a slave woman in Lamu, for instance, had a male child by an "Arab" (that is, Swahili with a pedigree), the child was an Arab. But if such a child were female, and did not marry an *mgwana,* then her own child was an *mzalia,* a term also applied to offspring of a slave man and slave woman. The paternal side was what counted, even though the mothers might have been African for many generations. There was thus often little or nothing physically to distinguish Waswahili from *wazalia* who had no Arab blood at all, or, conversely, from more recently immigrant Arabs, who followed similar patrilineal rules.[14]

[13]Abdul Hamid el Zein, *The Sacred Meadows: A Structural Analysis of Religious Symbolism in an East African Town* (Evanston, 1974), ch. 2.

[14]Mervyn W.H. Beech, *Aids to the Study of Ki-Swahili* (London, 1919), xiii-xvi; Mervyn W.H. Beech, "Slavery on the East Coast of Africa," *JAS,* 15 (1916), 146.

Omani Arabs

At the turn of the nineteenth century the Swahili and Bajun peoples, including the *wazalia*, were the basis of the island population, and government of the island towns was in the hands of *wangwana*. The eighteenth century, however, had not been one of isolation. In the early years of that century the Portuguese were still attempting to cling to their coastal enclaves, including Pate, and throughout the century Omani Arabs were involved in the activities of the East African coast. The Lamu archipelago very likely had some Omani residents during this century.[15] There were certainly Arab traders living in Lamu and Pate, if not elsewhere in the archipelago, but there is little record of their actual arrival or of the manner in which they were received by the island populations, for it was no sudden occurence.[16] As I shall discuss in chapter five, it was only after the turn of the century, about 1812, that Omanis in any number came to reside in Lamu, when Sayyid Said sent a governor and garrison of troops in answer to a request for help from a Lamu political faction. These few were followed by more Omanis as the years passed, until a stratum of Omani Arabs overlay the Swahili society in Lamu. On Pate Island, however, attempts at Omani domination were not so successful.

The new Arab arrivals, not accepted as anything but outsiders by the older society, became the most politically powerful group in the islands throughout the nineteenth century, although their numbers on the whole coast even late in the century were perhaps one Arab to every thousand Swahili.[17] The governor appointed to Lamu, as to other outposts of the Omani dominion, was usually a close relative of the Sultan of Zanzibar. He and his immediate subordinates often came to Lamu not directly from Muscat and Oman but by way of Zanzibar. Most were connected to the Busaidi clan of the Sultan, and must have been accompanied by their families, or later followed by them once established. Swahili *wangwana* were not eager to allow their daughters to marry such newcomers. The garrison of mercenaries of the Sultan was often made up of Baluchis who did

[15]Nicholas Buckeridge, *Journal and Letter Book of Nicholas Buckeridge, 1651-1654*, John R. Jenson, ed. (Minneapolis, 1973), 45, reported Arabs at Pate in the mid-seventeenth century.

[16]See Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies*, I (Edinburgh, 1727), 11-12. For a description of this period see C.S. Nicholls, *The Swahili Coast. Politics, Diplomacy and Trade on the East African Littoral, 1798-1856* (London, 1971), ch. 1. See also G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville, ed., *The French at Kilwa Island* (Oxford, 1965), 141.

[17]Andreas Künzel, "Die Expedition von S.M. Kreuzerfregatte 'Gneisenau' zu Achmed, dem Sultan der Suaheli," *DKZ*, Band 3 (1886), 487. See also Charles Pickering, *The Races of Man: And Their Geographical Distribution* (Boston and London, 1848), 187.

marry local women, but usually not those of notable Swahili families.[18]

Although the Omanis were of the strict Ibadi sect of Islam, built their own mosque in Lamu, and settled in a particular part of the town, Islam was a common tie between them and the older urban society, which was of the Shafi'i rite. There is, however, some hint--though little evidence--that the religious differences between the Omanis and the Swahili-Bajun society may have contributed to the political rift which widened between them early in the nineteenth century.[19] The Omani newcomers spoke Arabic and, as in Zanzibar, probably had difficulty in communicating with the local people, among whom only the learned would have known Arabic beyond the verses of the Quran.[20] The Omani Arabs remained town dwellers, even though the powerful officials among them took advantage of their almost unsupervised position to control great tracts of land on both island and mainland.

Asians

Because the acquisition of an East African empire by the Omani Arabs had economic as well as political goals, other immigrants came to the coast at the beginning of the nineteenth century. These were Asians, both Muslim and Hindu, who, like Omani Arabs, had made trading contacts with East Africa during the eighteenth century, and who were now encouraged by Sayyid Said to set up business in East Africa on a more permanent basis. Two Muslim sects, the Ismaili Khoja and the Bohra, mainly from Surat in the Gulf of Cambay, were early arrivals on the East African coast. Few Khojas moved north of Mombasa, but Bohras came to Lamu even before 1800.[21] After about 1820 Hindus of Cutch emigrated from their homeland to East Africa, and they too became involved in the commerce of Lamu, where, as early as 1832 and probably before, they held official positions.[22]

The Asian Muslims, called *wahindi* by the Swahili and Bajun, were Shias, and therefore even more divergent from the Sunni beliefs of the Swahili and Bajun than were the Omani Arabs. The

[18]El Zein, *Sacred Meadows,* 59-60. In Kipini, where at midcentury the sultan of Zanzibar installed a garrison, the Baluchis married Oromo women, and later settled as farmers. Field notes, Kipini, 16 August 1971.

[19]See chapter five below.

[20]El Zein, *Sacred Meadows,* 49; Nicholls, *Swahili Coast,* 71.

[21]*PP* (1872), LIV, C. 657, Inc. in No. 21, Administration Report of the Zanzibar Agency, 1870; L.W. Hollingsworth, *The Asians of East Africa* (London, 1960), 139.

[22]Nathaniel Isaacs, *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa,* II (Cape Town, 1937), 323.

Bohras who resided in Lamu had their own mosque and cemetery and formed a distinct community, for they were usually accompanied by their families when they came from India. The Hindus, known as *wabanyani* to coastal people, usually came to East Africa only on a temporary basis and planned to return to India, after making their fortunes, to the families they had left behind. Being non-Muslim, they were given the protection of the Sultan, but they did not mingle with local society. The Asians were town dwellers, but often single agents of Lamu merchant houses would be sent to remote mainland villages to be resident traders. Such traders, when Muslim, sometimes married local village women.

The islands, then, largely populated by Swahili and Bajun, were early in the nineteenth century the object of settlement by those encouraged by the sultan of Zanzibar, in particular Omani Arab officials and traders, and Asian merchants and traders who had emigrated from the area of the gulfs of Cutch and Cambay in northwestern India. The presence of these outsiders in small numbers was nothing new to Lamu, but their position of power was new and was reflected by political and economic shifts elsewhere in the archipelago and mainland.

Mainland Peoples: The Oromo

> *O thou little Dombala, how much fat milk wilt thou have to drink, and how much meat must thou eat, before thou wilt become a large man. Yet we care for thee. When thou art grown, thou wilt go with spears in hand over the Danise (Juba) and chase the Djidu (Somali) into the sea, from whence they have come.*
>
> Oromo song at the feast of name-giving [23]

In the hinterland at the beginning of the century, the Galla, or, as they called themselves, the Oromo,[24] were still the aggressive people that had in the early seventeenth century forced the evacuation of coastal towns such as Ungwana near the mouth of the Ozi River.[25] By 1800 their movements were restricted somewhat

[23]Brenner, "Forschungen," 458.

[24]Cornelius J. Jaenen, "The Galla or Oromo of East Africa," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, 12 (1956), 172. Galla and Oromo are names used interchangeably in the records. "Wardei Galla" is commonly used in colonial literature. The Swahili refer to them as "Wagala" or "Wakatua" but know also the name "Waoromo." See Brenner, "Forschungen," 462; Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 173; Rowlands, "Outline," 18.

[25]Kirkman, *Ungwana*, 7, 42.

by two other powerful peoples, the Masai on the southwest and the Somali to the north, but within these territorial limitations the Oromo set limits on whatever mainland activities were to be conducted by islanders. In the 1840s a Pate man stated that Pate people, who had associated with the Oromo for a long period of time, had not been able to go into their country for the last eighty-five years.[26] By this he may have meant long-distance travel into the interior, for the Oromo came to the villages near the mouth of the Tana for trading purposes; indeed, they considered this their territory.[27] The Oromo people's cautious dealings have been attributed to "irreconcilable enmity" with Muslims in general in the nineteenth century,[28] but the Oromo of the Tana River and Lamu regions made concessions to certain Islamic people, in particular those of Pate, in the interests of trade and, later in the century, in the interests of defense. Rather, their most hostile thoughts were directed toward the Muslim Somalis and their traditions nearly always related the history of their removal by the Somalis from east of the Juba River, an action which they resented profoundly.[29] It also seems that the tact and tolerance which the Nabahani Swahili used in dealing with the Oromo were not repeated by the Omani Arab governors of Lamu, who viewed the Oromo as barbarians and treated them accordingly. Nor would the Arabs forgive the Oromo for assisting the Nabahani Swahili.[30]

The settlement sites, way of life, and attitudes of the Oromo of the Lamu hinterland have changed so drastically during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that it is difficult to reconstruct their situation as it was in the early 1800s. It is, however, clear that the Oromo led a semi-nomadic life devoted to the well-being of their cattle. They have been considered the most enlightened stockmen in Kenya, even from precolonial days.[31] They avoided all cultivation and depended for food upon the milk and butter their cattle provided, and the meat from their sheep and goats, and from wild animals. They rarely slaughtered their cattle for meat, but

[26]Pickering, *Races of Man*, 212.

[27]Decken, *Reisen*, II, 268; Henry C. ArcAngelo, "Notes on Eastern Africa," *Colburn's United Service Magazine* (Jan. 1845), 128.

[28]Brenner, "Forschungen," 457; Decken, *Reisen*, II, 374-375.

[29]Brenner, "Forschungen," 458; Fischer, "Verhältnisse," 348; Rowlands, "Outline," 23. See also Edmund R. Turton, "The Pastoral Tribes of Northern Kenya, 1800-1916," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1970), 63; and Lewis, "Northern Frontier District," 55. Tribal lines between Oromo and Somali were more blurred than much of the literature suggests, and the Oromo had not controlled the whole Juba area, for much of it was fly-infested.

[30]See Brenner, "Forschungen," 458-459; Pickering, *Races of Man*, 187; Fischer, "Verhältnisse," 348.

[31]Rowlands, "Outline," 23-24.

they did bleed them.[32] The location of their encampments therefore was limited only by the availability of water and grazing land. In the first half of the nineteenth century they occupied a good part of the Lamu hinterland, from the Sabaki River in the south to beyond the Juba in the north, and from the mouth of the Tana far up that river. In former times they also grazed their herds many miles west of the Tana, but presumably the Masai in the early nineteenth century placed limitations on this.[33] Generally, the Oromo would seek pasture in the west during the wet season, but as soon as the rains stopped they would return to the Tana area.[34] A rough estimate of the total number of the twelve tribes which were thought to make up the southern Oromo in the early 1860s was twenty thousand--this after a century or more of strife between the Oromo and neighboring tribes, but just before the Somali began in earnest to try to annihilate them.[35] In 1893, a careful census of the southern Tana River Oromo revealed only about a thousand people.[36] This did not include the then numerous Oromo of Witu and Mkonumbi, but the total number of Oromo in the area could not have exceeded two or three thousand.[37]

The Oromo tribes, including the Kofira and Barareta tribes which in the twentieth century comprise most of the Oromo in Tana River and Lamu districts, were divided into two exogamous moieties, each with a ritual leader.[38] The moieties were

[32]Brenner, "Forschungen," 464; Pickering, *Races of Man,* 213.

[33]Alice Werner, "The Galla of the East Africa Protectorate," *JAS,* 13 (1914), 134; Cynthia Brantley Smith, "The Giriama Rising, 1914: Forces for Political Development in the Kenya Hinterland, 1850-1963," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1973), 19.

[34]Thomas Wakefield, *Footprints in Eastern Africa, or, Notes of a Visit to the Southern Galas* (London, 1866), 73.

[35]Brenner, "Forschungen," 462. But see Fischer, "Verhältnisse," 351, who disputes the number of tribes. By the late 1870s observers could no longer determine the names of separate Oromo tribes because of the disruption of the previous decade.

[36]Letter of Rev. R.M. Ormerod, 13 November 1893, *The Missionary Echo,* I (1894), 19-20.

[37]KNA/CP/1/68/20, Notes on Galla Law and Customs. This typescript is undated, but was written about 1899.

[38]Werner, "Galla," 135-136. The Oromo at Mkonumbi were Kofira; at Witu, Kofira and Barareta; south and east of the Tana, all were Barareta in the early twentieth century. But in the 1860s the Kosikawa tribe lived north of the Tana. Fischer, "Verhältnisse," 347. See also J. H. Phillipson, "Notes on the Galla," *Man,* 16 (1916), 178.

groupings of clans,[39] within which were named segments, the primary lineage groups. The basic unit of Oromo society was the patriarchal, authoritarian, extended family. The clans were also divided into right- and left-hand clans, membership in which obliged Oromo to assist one another in case of attack or injury. At no level were the segments localized, and none had a head or senior lineage. Until the mid- to late-nineteenth century, Oromo territorial loyalties were held only on a very broad level.

The tribe was governed by chiefs called *haya* who were chosen by the elders two at a time to serve for eight years. The elders also decided which of the two chiefs ranked first. Qualities of strength, courage, and eloquence were desirable in a *haya*.[40] In the past, this chief was in charge of all trading which the tribe might carry on with outsiders. He was also considered the owner of the land, which he divided among his tribesmen, and he entrusted the supervision of various districts to certain councilors. These men were called *abuoti dirbua*, guardians of the road.[41]

Within the tribe, feud and homicide were rare. Aggression was directed not against another clan, but against non-Oromo, who were considered exploitable. The constant concern of the elders was the maintenance of intra-tribal peace, made easier because most Oromo moved in annual cycles, and concentration of people was only intermittent.[42] A man might travel anywhere and receive the hospitality of widely dispersed kin. He could also move his homestead to another part of Oromo country at any time. Despite this mobility, people who camped near each other and followed the same pattern of movement shared a strong sense of community. They coordinated their movements and worked out joint stock-watering rotations, and they referred to themselves as Oromo of the region in which they grazed. Sometimes two or more districts might cooperate in time of war.

Oromo culture was homogeneous, in part due to mobility, but also due to the institution of the *gada* age system, which cut across clan affiliations.[43] This system may have been adopted from

[39]Clan and moiety names are common to Boran, Kofira, and Barareta. Werner, "Galla," 135-136.

[40]Werner, "Galla," 275-277.

[41]Notes on Galla Law and Customs, 3.

[42]P. T. W. Baxter, "Repetition in Certain Boran Ceremonies," in M. Fortes and G. Dieterlen, eds., *African Systems of Thought* (London, 1965), 64-65; Brenner, "Forschungen," 463.

[43]See Asmarom Legesse, *Gada: Three Approaches to the Study of African Society* (New York, 1973), Chapter 3 and *passim;* and Clifford H. F. Plowman, "Notes on the Gedamoch Ceremonies Among the Boran," *JAS*, 18 (1919), 114-121.

the Bantu age-grade system as the Oromo moved south, but the whole Oromo ritual system seems to have been tied to it. If the *gada* system was as rigid in practice as it was in structure, however, its efficiency for military purposes seems doubtful. The age at which an initiate reached warrior grade varied widely because it depended upon the *luba* (generation set) of his father and grandfather. Every eight years a ritual festival *(jara)* celebrated the opening of a new age set, which followed in cycles of five. There were four *luba* between the retirement of the father's set and the admission of the son's. Thus a man's set became eligible forty years after his father's and eighty years after his grandfather's.[44] The age classes may have served an almost entirely ritual and moral function, because only a minority of men ever completed the entire series. Early in the twentieth century Godana Jara of near Witu admitted that the eight-year period might be abrogated to allow the next group to hold its festival prematurely. In one case the current set was succeeded not by the group next in line but by another quite out-of-sequence group which had had no cattle for the feast at the time it should have entered.[45] With widespread dispersal of lineages and clans, and the synchronization of age-grade activities throughout the tribe under the leadership of the *haya*, it would seem that any military action would have made use of the appropriate warrior class simply because of the difficulty of mobilizing on a clan basis.

The Oromo believed in an all-powerful, infinite higher being called Waka, who had created all and cared for the Oromo by increasing their cattle herds and sending rain frequently. When the moon declined to its final crescent, it was believed that Waka forsook the Oromo and went to their enemies, the Muslims--especially the Somali--whom he had also created and must likewise care for. During this time the Oromo encampments were silent at night, no war expedition was initiated against the enemy, and the children who were born would, it was believed, fall in battle against the Somali. As soon as the new moon became full, however, Waka returned to the Oromo, who celebrated accordingly. A regular, formal worship of Waka was unknown; only during epidemics, drought, or unusual cattle mortality did the elders of the tribe lead a public prayer.[46] The Oromo had no medicine men except for those who made special war medicine. They feared *waganga* and considered them to be mostly members of tribes such as the Sanye, their subordinates.[47]

The Oromo were stockmen on a grand scale. Just as a Lamu

[44]Baxter, "Repetition," 68-69; Werner, "Galla," 142, 263-265.

[45]Werner, "Galla," 264. Godana Jara was a "guardian of the road" but was mistaken by British administrators as a chief. Notes on Galla Law and Customs, 3.

[46]Brenner, "Forschungen," 463.

[47]Werner, "Galla," 277.

landholder's wealth was not in cash but rather in his slaves and the produce of his land, so the Oromo's wealth was in cattle. It was not unusual to find seven or eight times as many cattle as Oromo at any encampment, and the need for water for the herds, not for the people themselves, dictated their nomadic life. The cattle were of the Zebu variety, their color largely silver grey, less attractive to the tsetse fly than darker beasts, which the Oromo had purposely eliminated.[48] The cattle were divided into a small camp herd, including milch cows, and a herd which grazed in sections often a day away from the camp. It was up to the herdsman, often a youth, to protect the cattle from wild animals, and brave action in this line was considered a duty. Cattle, goats and sheep were kept by individual family groups, but branded with the sign of the clan to which the owners belonged.[49] The eldest son succeeded to the main herd of his father.[50]

The pastoral life of the Oromo had two major requirements: a good deal of space and access to water. The Oromo were restricted in their movements by 1800, but without further pressures such territory as they controlled might have been adequate. They were able to exchange their ivory and other products for the goods which they desired from coastal people, and an occasional raid on their herds by Masai could easily be avenged, with dividends. It was the pressures of their long-term enemies, the Somali, and those of the coastal Arabs who used the Oromo-Somali animosity to their own advantage, which would force the Oromo to give up their position as lords of the land.

The Somali

Although groups of Somali grazed their cattle south of the Juba, few Somali entered the Lamu hinterland in the early years of the nineteenth century because of the dominance of the Oromo. Somali in the Juba area traded with neighboring Oromo, and small numbers of Somali were living among them through intermarriage and through occupations such as cattle herding. Conversely, Oromo women were sometimes taken as wives by the Somali. Their interactions with one another were more complex than simply the strong versus the weak.[51]

[48]Brenner, "Forschungen," 464; Rowlands, "Outline," 23.

[49]Werner, "Galla," 130; Alice Werner, "Some Galla Notes," *Man*, XV, 2 (1915), 17-22.

[50]Turton, "Pastoral Tribes," 42.

[51]ArcAngelo, "Rough Sketch," 278; Turton, "Pastoral Tribes," 62, 70-78; Richard R. Turnbull, "The Darod Invasion" (printed but unpublished paper in the Fort Jesus Library, Mombasa, n.d.), 1-3; I.M. Lewis, "Northern Frontier District," 55.

The Darod is one of seven huge clan families of the Somali, each of which is divided into the political unit of the clan, which numbers from 20,000 to 130,000 members. The Darod clans include the Ogaden, Herti, and Mohamed Zubeir, all of whom were active in the Lamu area in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Each clan has a sultan who is a figurehead of clan solidarity but who holds little institutional power. This sultanship can wield great authority, however, through a strong individual.

The Somali would describe himself as a member of a primary lineage group, the depth of which is usually six to eight generations. This group has no formal office of leadership; its elders exert control through informal councils. The primary lineage group is usually exogamous, forging affinal links outside. Within the primary lineage group, a man is a member of a *dia*-paying group, a collection of small lineage segments comprising a hundred to a few thousand men. This alliance has no formal leader either, but is the most stable political unit of pastoral Somali society, and the minimum unit capable of meeting compensation responsibilities.[52]

Because the Darod Somali way of life, with exceptions at the coastal towns, was pastoral like that of the Oromo, none of the above units was territorial, nor was a unit defined by permanent rights in grazing or access to water. Rights to the use of land and wells depended upon the ability of established groups to repel competitors,[53] but wells could "belong" to a family, being covered and marked with its cattle brand. Wells could even be left to heirs.[54] Generally, however, only the immense clan family could control a traditional territory, and men and stock of different segments interpenetrated in the pastures.[55]

The Somali are, for the most part, like the Swahili people, Sunni Muslims of the Shafi'i rite,[56] and their membership in the world of Islam was one of their most striking differences from the Oromo in the nineteenth century. In contrast to the Swahili form of Islam, however, Sufism and saint veneration are particularly well adapted to the Somali segmentary lineage system. The saints are in fact considered ancestors of lineages, and local cults and practices are readily accommodated in the Islam of some of the Somali. Brotherhoods *(tariqas)* are followed; sheikhs and kadis who are

[52]I. M. Lewis, "Clanship and Contract in Northern Somaliland," *Africa*, XXIX (1959), 274-278.

[53]*Ibid.*, 278-279; I. M. Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy* (London, 1961), 1-7.

[54]Turton, "Pastoral Tribes," 20.

[55]Lewis, "Clanship," 279.

[56]Turton, "Pastoral Tribes," 29.

versed in the Quran and *sharia* are mediators in disputes. Conflicts between *tariqas* have led to violence, with their members resorting to the tactics of warriors; political status has depended ultimately upon fighting strength.[57]

The Oromo and Darod Somali would, because of their similar ways of life, be likely competitors in the Lamu hinterland for the pasture and watering places which they both required for their herds, and both peoples would be willing to fight for them. The Somali had a certain advantage in the organization and spiritual drive which the *dia*-paying group and Islam respectively lent them. There were surely Somali who considered their strife with the Oromo a *jihad* (holy war).

The Hunting Peoples

If tribal identities are blurred on the part of other Lamu and Tana River district ethnic groups, they are even more so with the Sanye and Boni, the two hunting-and-gathering, forest-dwelling peoples who reside in scattered pockets in the area, and who lived in the nineteenth century in the shadow of the Oromo and Somali. Because these two peoples lead such similar lives and speak languages even today not fully investigated, some observers have believed them to be not two, but one people. The confusion does not end with this, for Sanye is a name applied vaguely to two separate tribes: the Waata (an Oromo word meaning low-born craftsmen), who today live near Malindi and Gedi, and who answer to "Wasanye" when speaking Swahili, but who are called "Alangulo" by the Mijikenda peoples;[58] and the Dahalo, who live in the Tana River plains and in southern Lamu District, and who apparently reject the name Wasanye. The Boni, who call themselves "Aweera," and whom the Oromo call "Juwano,"[59] live in the area of Lamu District north and east of Witu, but observers in the late nineteenth century identified certain Tana River people as Boni. The disruptions which occurred in the lives of the Oromo in the nineteenth century must likewise have drastically changed the locations

[57] I. M. Lewis, "Shaikhs and Warriors in Somaliland," in M. Fortes and G. Dieterlen, eds., *African Systems of Thought* (London, 1965), 204-223; Lee V. Cassanelli, "The Benaadir Past: Essays in Southern Somali History" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1973), ch. 3.

[58] Arthur M. Champion, "Some Notes on the Wasanye," *JEAUNHS*, VI, 11 (March 1917) 21. See also C. W. Hobley, "The Wa-Langulu or Ariangulu of the Taru Desert," *Man*, 12 (1912), 18-21.

[59] A. N. Tucker, "Sanye and Boni," in *Wort und Religion. Kalima na Dini. Ernst Dammann zum 65. Geburtstag* (Stuttgart, 1969), 66, 80. See also Charles New, *Life, Wanderings, and Labours in Eastern Africa* (London, 1873), 278, 281; Fischer, "Verhältnisse," 355.

and allegiances of these peoples,[60] just as the colonial period, with its restrictions on their way of life as hunters, altered their economic lives.

Sultan Ahmed of Witu estimated the Boni population at six to seven thousand in the 1860s. Even at this time they spoke their own language only among themselves, a language which sounded unrelated to the Oromo language to some hearers, and they fully understood all the dialects of Oromo. The Boni had a nominal chief, who was himself often subject to Oromo domination and apparently enjoyed little allegiance from his scattered people. Rather, a small Boni group would obey the lead of an elder.[61] Their encampments were far flung throughout the forest, although Balawa north of Witu was considered their chief place in the 1870s. Their "bake-oven" huts, built of poles bent to shape and covered with grass, were readily abandoned when hunting expeditions required it. The Boni were expert trappers and hunters, using bows and poisoned arrows.[62] They avoided the cultivation of crops. Their population extended into southern Somalia; it is, in fact, possible that the Boni came into the Lamu hinterland only when the Oromo did. After the Oromo retreat, some Boni became clients of the Somali. The Boni also had close associations with the Bajun who lived on the northern coast. These relations sometimes involved a friendly partnership, sometimes near servitude on the part of the Boni.[63]

The Dahalo, according to Swahili accounts in the 1870s, lived an even more nomadic life than the Boni did, roaming during their hunting trips up the river plains from the Ozi to Tula, west of Witu.[64] They seem later to have spread into the Witu area--unless observers confused them with the Boni--along with their Oromo patrons. Their association with the Oromo seems of long standing: every clan was affiliated with, and in a sense dependent upon, a corresponding Oromo clan of the same name.[65] The Dahalo were the craftsmen for the Oromo, and, like the Boni, were elephant hunters par excellence.

[60]Fischer, "Verhältnisse," 354.

[61]Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 173, gives a description of the Boni.

[62]See Tiedemann, *Tana-Baringo-Nil*, 39-41, for details of a Boni hunting trip.

[63]R. E. Salkeld, "Notes on the Boni Hunters of Jubaland," *Man*, 5 (1905), 168; F. Elliott, "Jubaland and Its Inhabitants," *GJ*, 41 (1913), 557; Fitzgerald, *Travels*, 487, 489.

[64]Fischer, "Verhältnisse," 355.

[65]Alice Werner, "A Few Notes on the Wasanye," *Man*, XIII, 12 (Dec. 1913), 199-201. See also W.E.H. Barrett, "Notes on the Customs and Beliefs of the Wa-Giriama, Etc., British East Africa," *JRAI* 41 (1911), 29.

The Pokomo

These agricultural, riverine, Bantu-speaking people were in the nineteenth century the only representative of the Mijikenda peoples in the Lamu hinterland; they have been joined since the late nineteenth century by Giriama who have immigrated from south of the Tana.[66] Today the Pokomo of this area inhabit only the banks of the Tana River, except for those attracted to modern opportunities in Lamu and Mombasa. Long ago, possibly as they migrated south from the dispersal point of Shungwaya in southern Somalia, they lived on the mainland opposite Pate, and, according to some Pokomo people and some Pate islanders, on the islands of the archipelago.[67] One trace of their former residence is the creek named Pokomoni, near Mongoni creek opposite Pate island.[68] A section of Pokomo is called even today Pokomo wa Mgine,[69] after the mainland farming area of that name which lies opposite Pate. Another possible vestige is the name of the section of the Wapate called Waozi; Ngozi was the mainland strip of territory opposite Pate from which came the name Kingozi for the archaic dialect of Pate.[70] Pokomo traditions have in common with Pate traditions the story of Liongo Fumo and his dealings with the Pokomo ancestor, Sango Vere.[71]

The modern Pokomo are divided into four major subgroups, who live for the most part in separate locations on the river Tana. The Pokomo of the upper reaches of the Tana, if not, indeed, those of the lower, seem to be of composite origin. Of the subgroups it is the Lower Pokomo inhabiting the area nearest the mouth of the river who have played the biggest role in the history of the Lamu hinterland. Upper Pokomo, who live in the next section of the river, have, however, migrated to Lower Pokomo locations.[72]

[66]Smith, "Giriama Rising," 32.

[67]Bunger, "Upper Pokomo," 30-32, 76; Haji Hamisi, interview in Lamu, 25 April 1971.

[68]Fitzgerald, *Travels,* 402-403.

[69]Bunger, "Upper Pokomo," 27.

[70]William Hichens, ed., *Al-Inkishafi: The Soul's Awakening* (1939; reprinted Nairobi, 1972), 17. The stem "ozi" may have nothing to do with the Pokomo, however, for the Ozi River may have been named by Swahili.

[71]Alice Werner, "A Traditional Poem Attributed to Liongo Fumo with Some Notes on His Legend," in *Festschrift Meinhof* (Gluckstadt and Hamburg, 1927), 45-54; R. G. Darroch and Mikael Samson Kirungu, "Some Notes on the Early History of the Tribes Living on the Lower Tana, Collected by Mikael Samson and Others," *JEAUNHS,* 17 (1943-44), 244-254, 370-394.

The Lower Pokomo are divided, as are all the subgroups, into clans (*keti*, pl. *vyeti*), each of which occupies a specific area and is the largest corporate group among the Pokomo. Each clan alliance possesses blocks of farmland along the river which are further sub-divided into areas belonging to constituent lineages. Indeed, the primary function of the Pokomo clan and lineage is to control access to farming land;[73] disputes over boundaries are not infrequent.

Each *keti* was divided into two sections which received new names with each generation. From these sections were chosen alternately a senior chief and a junior chief, the latter succeeding upon the death or incapacity of the senior. The appointment of the chief was an event celebrated by the whole clan in the village considered to be the capital of the district. Like the Oromo *haya*, the Pokomo senior chief, called *haju kuu*, was first among equals, for he was under the check of a council of elders called *mahaju*. There was no overall chief of the Pokomo or even of a section, and thus the district of each *keti* was theoretically independent, although one clan group might in practice be under the protection of another.

The elders' authority seems to have depended upon their membership in the highest religio-political order in Pokomo society, the *ngadzi*, for here, as in Oromo social life, the age-grade (*luwa*--the same Oromo term) system covered a Pokomo's life from puberty to death. The *ngadzi* was the highest of age grades. This order itself had three stages, and the elders belonged to the highest of them, the *mukijo*, and had possession of the sacred drum. The initiation fees increased in value at each stage, and only the well-to-do could aspire to the higher stages.

The Pokomo were primarily farmers, but they were also exceptionally skilled hunters, a possible indication of diverse origins. Their circumstances and environment led them into other occupations

[72]Bunger, "Upper Pokomo," 24. For information on the Pokomo generally see Alice Werner, "Some Notes on the Wapokomo of the Tana Valley," *JAS*, XII (1912-13), 359-384; Alice Werner, "The Bantu Coast Tribes of the East Africa Protectorate," *JRAS*, 45 (1915), 326-354; Alice Werner, "The Tribes of the Tana Valley," *JEAUNHS*, 4 (1913), 37-46; A. H. J. Prins, *The Coastal Tribes of the North-Eastern Bantu* (London, 1952).

[73]Bunger, "Upper Pokomo," 54, 67.

as well, such as the transport of goods and people up, down, and across the Tana in their large dugout canoes *(mau)*. The Pokomo situation directly on the banks of the Tana brought them into direct contact with Muslim and Hindu traders from the islands, as boatmen and commercial middlemen. Because the Tana was a source of dry-season water from Oromo cattle, the Pokomo were obliged to serve as go-betweens for the Oromo as well. The Pokomo people's sedentary ways, their position on the river, and their many skills made them valuable as well as vulnerable to the more aggressive peoples in the area. They had little protection against them despite their fortified villages, almost surrounded by water, which they built in the bends of the river.

CHAPTER 3

LAND TENURE ON THE LAMU MAINLAND IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

> *...when the people of Siu got to know, they made a plan to attack Mpekatoni. It was the village of the people of Lamu from whence all their food stores came and where the cattle of Lamu were then kept.*[1]

The mainland territories which were under the control of the peoples of the Lamu archipelago in the nineteenth century were both their wealth and their Archilles heel. The people of the islands were forced by geography to keep some of their most valuable assets--their slaves, cattle, and fields--in the most vulnerable part of their territory, *barani*, on the mainland. The people of Siyu, in the instance cited above, did attack Mpekatoni, and they carried off *jumla ya mali*, that is, all of the wealth of the people of Lamu. This attack on Mpekatoni was not an isolated incident. Many times during the nineteenth century island-based politics would be the cause of the devastation of large mainland areas, culminating in the destruction by British and Zanzibari forces of the flourishing Bajun-*watoro* fields north of Witu at the end of the century. The loss of even a single season's crop caused a setback with repercussions at every level. Control of land was vital for political as well as economic prosperity.

Each of the islands' four main towns, Lamu, Pate, Siyu, and Rasini, had control over an area on the mainland in which its fields were cultivated annually. Over the centuries, these mainland areas controlled by the islands had fluctuated in size according to need and the political situation. Even in the 1960s the cultivated mainland areas of the people of Pate Island shrank to almost nothing when the Somali *shifta* raids forced cultivators to farm on the island itself. A few years of abandonment, however, did not mean these areas were no longer the traditional *bara*,[2] or mainland domains, of the island towns. When it once again became possible to return to the mainland, islanders returned to their respective areas. During the nineteenth century, when the ownership of slaves permitted island proprietors to control and work large plantations, these areas were vast blocks of land. But in the nineteenth century, too, there were periods when the Oromo and Somali prevented islanders from cultivating on the mainland.

[1] William Hichens, "Khabar al-Lamu: Chronicle of Lamu by Shaibu Faraji bin Hamed al-Bakariy al-Lamuy," *Bantu Studies*, XII, 1 (1938), 28-31, describing the Siyu-Zanzibari struggles of the 1850s.

[2] See glossary, Appendix A, for the full connotation of this word, and for other agricultural vocabulary.

Lamu Island, as we have seen, is not generally endowed with soil suited to the steady cultivation of field crops, even though certain small areas on the island allowed such cultivation. The island was set out largely in coconut and date palms, mango and tamarind trees. The island population could not live without importing grain from elsewhere, or without controlling a fertile mainland area. The Lamu *bara* thus included a block of land to the west and south of Lamu Island which was many times larger than the island itself. In peaceful times this domain extended from a point at approximately Ras Tenewi, on the coast, to Mpekatoni, a village on the southern shore of the large Lake Mkunguya, all the way to Pangani and Milhoi and then north to Hindi, Jipe, and Magogoni at the shore almost opposite Pate. After Zanzibari Arabs took control of Kipini at midcentury, Lamu's influence expanded south to this place, commanding the Ozi River's entrance to the sea. But certain other areas, such as Ukanga, a village midway between Mpekatoni and Kipini, were within the realm of Pate and Siyu people during the first half of the century.[3] The Lamu area included soils and terrain suitable for all the traditional food crops consumed by Lamu people--the grain *mtama,* rice, fruit of all kinds--and other crops such as simsim which were mainly for export. In addition good grazing land was available from north to south throughout the district that was used by Lamu cattle owners. The Lamu *bara* was served by the ports of Kiongwe and Kimbo on Kimbo Creek, and to a lesser extent by Mkonumbi; these sea creeks wound their ways into the heart of the cultivated areas. During the *kusi* even the produce of Kipini came to Lamu via Kimbo Creek. In the 1930s, when Lamu people made formal claim to this land, they stated that it had been in effective occupation by them and their ancestors for over seven hundred years.[4]

While this territory was under the basic control of Lamu townsmen, the Swahili *wangwana* and Arabs, cultivators from the villages of Lamu Island such as Kipungani had their own *bara* within Lamu's greater *bara.* Kipungani and Matondoni, for example, were considered *zitongoji* (sing. *kitongoji*), tributary villages, to Lamu town.[5] The Kipungani people, who cultivated on the island behind their own village, also cultivated at Ngoi and other areas just opposite on the mainland.[6] Matondoni people did the same on the coast in the direction of Kimbo and Kiongwe. These areas were within the greater Lamu sphere. The term *zitongojini,* literally, "in the villages," was used as a covering term for the Lamu *bara* as a whole. *Nendao zitongojini,* for instance, would

[3]Hichens, "Lamu Chronicle," 28-31.

[4]Kenya Land Commission, *Evidence and Memoranda,* III (Nairobi, 1934), 2610-2611.

[5]This status was not necessarily accepted by the villagers, who sometimes claimed to be independent of Lamu.

[6]Othmani Mabruku, interview in Kipungani, 9 Nov. 1971; Mohamed Ali Pame, interview in Lamu, 9 Nov. 1971.

mean, "I am going to the fields."[7] Just as the island *zitongoji* had their respective *bara*, so the more important mainland villages referred to their *bara*, for instance, *bara ya* Mokowe. This usage, however, may have depended upon the presence of resident *wangwana* in the village. There seems to have been little correlation between the *mitaa* (sing. *mtaa*), quarters, of the towns and the mainland areas to which their inhabitants went to cultivate. The area of Yumbe beyond Msanga did, however, gain its name from the *mtaa* and tribe called Yumbe in Lamu town.[8]

The island town of Shela, although close to Lamu town, was larger and less dependent than the other island villages, and seems not to have had the *kitongoji* status of the lesser places in the nineteenth century. Shela people cultivated in the Lamu *bara* as well, however, and seem to have been dominant in Mpekatoni and well represented in Hindi. Shela's wealth was due to farming rather than its own export trade, which Lamu had largely absorbed.[9] In the early nineteenth century the island of Manda, from which Shela people are said to have come, was almost deserted.[10] This island was in Lamu's sphere, and Lamu and Shela people there obtained coral stone and clay for building. Shela people cultivated at Ras Kitao, the area of Manda Island nearest Shela, and Lamu people grew field crops at Kwae, opposite Lamu town.[11] Nevertheless, the Nabahani Swahili of Pate and Witu considered Manda to be their territory late in the century when the sultan of Witu sold and issued titles to certain Germans for property there, "of our lands which have come to us by inheritance."[12]

The Lamu *bara* changed somewhat over the century. The villages directly on the coast, like Kiongwe, were not large until after the Oromo threat subsided in the late 1860s. Before that time Oromo controlled as much of the grazing land as they wished, and some of the best grazing land was near these villages.[13] Later in the century, settlements of Hadhrami Arabs and Bajun created a class of resident rural *wenyeji*, an idea contrary to the Swahili and Omani Arab way of life that was essentially urban. This settlement may be attributed in part to the lessened threat of attack by Oromo. During the peak of Witu's strength, the port of Mkonumbi as well as other areas traditionally Lamu's were given over to Witu, and settlement patterns changed. This was in large part due to European intrusion.

[7]Abdallah Ahmed Kombo, interview in Mokowe, 16 Oct. 1971.

[8]Feraji Bwana Mkuu, interview in Lamu, 30 Oct. 1971.

[9]Feraji Bwana Mkuu, interview in Lamu, 30 Oct. 1971.

[10]Alice Werner, "A Swahili History of Pate," *JAS*, XIV (1915), 156-157; Decken, *Reisen*, II, 276.

[11]Sheikh Abdulla bin Ali, interview in Lamu, 14 July 1971.

[12]Lamu Court Correspondence, File 1.

[13]Fischer, "Verhältnisse," 349; Bakari Abdulla and Ali Mjana, interviews in Mapenya, 25 Oct. 1971.

Pate town's sphere included the part of the mainland nearest Ras Mtangawanda, encircling the sea creek of Mongoni and extending as far east as Ndununi. On the south it shared a vague boundary with Lamu at Magogoni. One of the most desirable of Pate's areas for cultivation was that near the small sea creek called Mgine, the place to which the Pokomo have apparent ties, and where the soil is still said *kushinda yote* (to surpass all).[14] Whereas the Lamu hinterland would by midcentury compete at its western edge with the Witu cultivators, the tilled area here was backed by no such mainland agricultural people, and extended as far inland as any given year required or the political situation allowed. It was for this reason especially vulnerable to attacks by Oromo and later by Somali. Ultimately the Boni forest was its inner boundary. Siyu people made use of land adjoining Pate's sphere east of Ankishi, around Kiangwe and Wange. Siyu's Bwana Mataka took refuge at Kiangwe during his struggles with Zanzibar,[15] and it may have been in this area that the Siyu alliance with certain Somali took place in an earlier century. The sizes of the Pate and Siyu *bara* reflected the increasing differences in the population of the towns: Pate dwindled to a few hundred after the exodus to Witu, while Siyu had a population of several thousand until late in the century. When the factional political activities of Pate and Siyu overlapped, so must have their mainland domains, which became permanent refuges as well as sources of food.[16]

The ties of Pate and Siyu people with the area near Kau on the Ozi River were of long standing, but it is unclear whether this area, before the Nabahani Swahili moved permanently to the mainland, was ever one of cultivation for Pate people themselves, or whether the association with this lower Tana region was due only to political and commercial arrangements with the Oromo and the Pokomo. Cultivation of the Ozi land would have had advantages over the farming of the Mongoni Creek area, for the Ozi banks held rich alluvial delta soil replenished semi-annually by floods, as well as more dependable rainfall. Because of Pate's peaceful and long-term dealings with the Oromo, which went back to the mid-seventeenth century and probably earlier,[17] it is possible that Pate's influence, before the Omani Arab takeover, did extend along much of the coast, even north to Barawa. "All the coast is

[14]Haji Hamisi, interview in Lamu, 5 July 1971.

[15]C. H. Stigand, *The Land of Zinj* (London, 1913), 88.

[16]See Brenner, "Forschungen," 459, for the strategic use of Magogoni by Siyu people.

[17]Justus Strandes, *The Portuguese Period in East Africa* (2nd ed., Nairobi, 1968), 187. The Liongo Fumo traditions involve Oromo, as well as Pokomo. See Hichens, *Al-Inkishafi*, 11.

likewise subject to Patta except the towns up the Ogee [meaning Juba in this case]", the English naval officer, Lieutenant Hardy, learned in 1811, although Pate people had not traded at the Juba within the memory of his informant's father.[18] Lieutenant Emery of Mombasa considered the Swahili sultan of Pate, whom he called the "present Sultan of Ozee Ozi " to be the "rightful heir" to this part of the coast. The sultan, in 1824 Fumo Luti bin Sheikh, had "great influence over the Gaullas, and... descended from the latter nation on the mother's side."[19] It is certain that the Swahili of Pate had good reason for expecting refuge at Ozi when they needed it after 1812. There is no indication that Pate's influence extended as far as Witu, which was apparently only a small encampment, probably an Oromo one, when the Nabahani arrived there.[20] Witu was not an area of cultivation or settlement for island people before the 1860s.

The Bajun people of Rasini, Kizingitini, and several lesser villages of the northeastern end of Pate Island dominated the coast east of Dodori Creek around Siyu Channel, which faced Siyu and Rasini and included a whole series of coastline villages. The Rasini people cultivated an area which extended up to six or more hours' walk inland, into the Boni forest, where certain villages such as Mangai and Bolaa were meeting places, if not joint residences, of Boni and Bajun.

From Mkokoni north past Mambore, Kiunga and Shakani and on into present day Somalia, Bajun fishing and farming villages lay along a coastal strip of cultivation of varying depth, all backed intermittently by Oromo or Somali pastoralists. Certain sites within this area were the sources of dry-season water for the island town of Rasini.[21] While the Bajun on this northern coast had ties to Rasini, they were permanent residents of the coastal villages, unlike the villages farther south which were inhabited largely by slaves of island townsmen. Kiunga was the most important town on the northern coast.[22] The whole coast from Dodori Creek east to beyond Ras Kiamboni was called by the islanders Kariani, which means "in the villages or outposts,"[23] an

[18]British Museum, Add. MSS. 8958, pp. 39, 45.

[19]RGS, Emery Correspondence, LBR, MSS. file. John Barker Emery letter to W. D. Cooley, 20 December 1833; Pickering, *Races of Man*, 213. See Chapter 5 below.

[20]*Witu*, in the Oromo language, means a large bird that this people regards as a demon. E. S. Wakefield, *Thomas Wakefield* (London, 1904), 210.

[21]Saleh bin Othman, interview in Lamu, 16 March 1971; Bwana Maalimu Kame, interview in Lamu, 17 April 1971.

[22]Fitzgerald, *Travels*, 435, 437.

[23]See glossary for full definition.

indication of the outlook of the island-based Bajun toward mainland enterprises. They referred to the Bajun residents of the northern coast as Wakariani.[24] This strip of land, on which *mtama* and *mawele* (types of millet) flourished, was even more vulnerable to Oromo and Somali attacks than the Pate-Siyu *bara*. Later in the century the flag of Mzee bin Seif of Rasini would fly at the town of Itembe near the dhow port of Mwazi, opposite Rasini, and his influence would extend over much of the northern coast. The Wakariani, however, had alternatives and were not entirely under his control.[25]

In any of these spheres, the people of the dominant town, be it Pate, Lamu, or the others, were considered *wenyeji* (hosts or owners) of the area. It often happened, through family ties or for other reasons, that a person or persons from another town wished to cultivate within the area of the controlling town. This could be agreeable to the *wenyeji*, but such persons were *wageni* (guests or tenants), even if they cultivated there for several consecutive years. Mgine, the fertile farming area in Pate's mainland sphere, attracted Lamu people who farmed there under this arrangement.[26]

Because of the system of land usage and methods of farming which were employed on the mainland, there were in most places no firm boundaries between the areas controlled by people of the archipelago and those areas which were inhabited, permanently or intermittently, by the semi-nomadic coastal tribes. The Dahalo and Boni depended upon the fruits of the forest and the availability of wild game for their livings. The Boni lived in the forest and deep bush which stretched north and northeast from Witu to beyond Dodori Creek, just behind the cultivated areas of island people. They were in constant communication with the Bajun. The Dahalo were scattered along the Tana plains west of Witu, but they also occupied a strip of bush and woods just inland from the shore, east of Lake Mkunguya. This strip was thus well within the domain of Lamu, but was infertile and therefore not in demand by cultivators. Although at least some of the Dahalo and Boni were subservient to the Oromo, they were not their slaves--other peoples served in this capacity--and they did not live in the same encampments. Rather, they performed certain crafts and hunting duties for the Oromo and presented such tribute as one tusk of every elephant felled. In return they received protection. As Oromo strength waned late in the century, however,

[24]Abdalla Ahmed Kombo, interview in Mokowe, 16 Oct. 1971; Bwana Maalimu Kame, interview in Lamu, 14 Nov. 1971.

[25]See Chapters 6 and 9 below.

[26]Jambeni Mohamed, interview in Lamu, 28 June 1971. Newcomers from upcountry Kenya who are farming in the settlement scheme at Mpekatoni, which was begun in the mid-1970s, are also termed *wageni* by local people.

the Boni north of Witu appear to have gained complete independence from the Oromo, who moved south. These Boni had closer ties to the Witu Swahili and to the Bajun.

The movements of the Oromo depended upon the season. The wet season might find Oromo herds scattered the length of the district, avoiding certain forested areas where the tsetse fly was known to thrive. During the dry season they pressed toward the Tana and the pools near the river which only gradually dried up in a year of normal rainfall. They had control of the Ozi area early in the century, and, with the Nabahani alliance, they remained in the area between Witu and Ozi, and on the river plains to the northwest. The Oromo were, of course, the inhabitants of the western bank of the Tana as well as of this space near the eastern bank.[27] After the wars of 1867-1868, however, the range of Oromo grazing was considerably compressed, while the Somalis thereafter had free access to lands formerly considered Oromo.

The Pokomo lived strictly on the banks of the Tana, and the only variation to this rule came when political situations forced them to move from one side of the river to the other. In the 1840s the Pokomo were said to occupy the east bank only,[28] while Oromo lived on the west. Late in the century, when Somali importunities grew too harsh for them, the Pokomo would reside on the west bank. The fields of the Pokomo clans surrounded their river villages, each lineage's farm a long strip with its narrow end fronting on the river. Because of the river's seasonal floods and consequent changes in course, every Pokomo family's rights extended an indefinite distance from the river so that either a high or a low flood would ensure some success to their crops.[29] With drastic changes in the river's course, the Pokomo area could fluctuate greatly, but, as the river's course moved, so moved the Oromo who were the occupants of the plains directly behind the Pokomo. If the Oromo had access to the Tana's water, they did not need to compete with the Pokomo for land.

The Lamu hinterland presented a variegated scene early in the nineteenth century. Cultivated areas lay several miles deep near the coast and were centered around the several sea creeks. Because of shifting cultivation, these areas often appeared to be more bush than field, for much of the land would be allowed to lie fallow. Behind this was bushland or doum-palm grassland extending into the forest at Witu and to the north, and to the

[27]The Oromo settlement Msanga, near Mkonumbi, seems not to have existed before the British defeat of Witu. KNA/DC/LAM/3/1, J. H. Clive, "Short History of Lamu," 22.

[28]Pickering, *Races of Man*, 193.

[29]Rowlands, "Outline," 57. See also Bunger, "Upper Pokomo," 35-36.

south into a mixture of bushland and swamp. The Tana River banks were fully cultivated from near the sea far up the river, but for the rest of the district the thick forest formed a "mighty, natural wall" from two to five days' journey from the coast. Only two or three half-grown-over paths were generally known to lead through the forest into the flatlands beyond.[30] Deep in this forest, near the lakes Shalu and Gambi north of Witu, the *watoro* would begin to cut and burn for plantation space about midcentury.

[30]Brenner, "Forschungen," 457; Charles Chenevix Trench, *The Desert's Dusty Face* (Edinburgh and London, 1964), 26-27.

CHAPTER 4

AGRICULTURE ON THE MAINLAND AND ISLANDS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Two distinct types of cultivation were pursued by the people of the Lamu archipelago and district. The differences between the two were apparent in the attitude of the "landowner" to the endeavor, the rituals attached to the annual cycle of cultivation, the amount of investment in time and capital, rights over the land, and laws of inheritance regarding the land. The distinctions lie largely between island and mainland cultivation.

Because the islands were the most easily defendable part of the area, both from invaders and from the depredations of wild animals, it was here that townsmen kept *mashamba* (sing. *shamba*) of trees which required many years' growth before reaching maturity and allowing profits for the owner. Here the boundaries were clearly marked, land could be bought and sold, and Islamic laws of inheritance applied to island real estate. Because there was no danger involved in farming on the island, there was believed to be little need to propitiate evil spirits.[1] Once a tree was planted and thriving, it was not necessary for experts to calculate the *mwaka wa shamsu*, the solar year, in order to obtain a crop. The urban *mngwana* himself looked upon his palm-shaded property as a holiday retreat from the rush and heat of the town.

Quite the opposite held true *barani*, on the mainland. The fields, carved out of the bush, were not *mashamba* but *makonde* (sing. *konde* or *honde*), planted with grain and other annual ground crops, without permanent trees or large capital investment. Only near a few large defendable villages were there plantations of trees. Mainland *makonde* were neither bought nor sold, nor were they inherited, for they would be shifted every year or two to a new, freshly burned, area. Entering a forest for purposes of creating a new field was a hazardous undertaking, and required the advice of a *mwalimu* who could read the appropriate Arabic books. One must have precise knowledge of the solar calendar to calculate the times of clearing, burning, planting and harvesting. The failure of the rains was a disaster. Far from being holiday retreats, *makonde* were deserted at night by the cultivators, who returned to their nearby villages each evening, except at times when the ripening crops were susceptible to destruction by animals. Except in the northern Bajun coast, the farming of *makonde* was left almost entirely to slaves of the island proprietors, and this farming reflected their mainland customs and beliefs.

[1]Exceptions were island areas where ground crops were grown, such as Mwanda Mariamu on Manda and an area behind Kipungani on Lamu. These areas followed mainland practices.

Mainland Agriculture

Chondrovi: "Mwanangu hulia mwituni." Ukufungulia: "Kitoka."
(Riddle: "My child cries in the forest." Answer: "An axe.")[2]

The Arabic calendar, a lunar one of twelve months of twenty-eight days each, was followed on the islands and on the mainland wherever Muslims lived. The obligations of the religious year, including the fast during the month of Ramadhan, required that all Muslims be aware of this lunar year, the *mwaka wa kamaria*. Because the Muslim religious calendar had about 355 days, it began ten days earlier each year and had no correspondence with the seasons. Those people involved in agriculture and seafaring, and therefore dependent upon the monsoons, needed another calendar by which to plan their annual activities. The solution was the *mwaka wa shamsu* (solar year), based upon the Persian Nairuz calendar. Because it was followed especially by Swahili and Bajun, who made up that segment of the population which most needed a solar calendar, it has been known as the Swahili calendar. There were, however, similar agricultural and maritime calendars in use in southern Arabia and elsewhere in the Middle East,[3] as well as in inland Africa.[4]

The Swahili year began always in August with the sighting of the new moon. It consisted of twelve months of twenty-nine or thirty days, plus an important additional few intercalary days.[5] The months were numbered one through nine and were followed by three which had the names Rajabu, Shabani, and Ramadhani, common

[2]A Lamu riddle of the type explained in A.C. Hollis, "Nyika Enigmas," *JRAS*, XVI (1917), 135-36, and in S.S. Farsy, *Swahili Sayings from Zanzibar* (Nairobi, 1958).

[3]The most thorough discussion of the Nairuz calendar is Sir John Gray, "Nairuzi or Siku ya Mwaka," *TNR*, 38 (March 1955), 1-22. See also Pickering, *Races of Man*, 188; and, for similar reckoning at sea, R.B. Serjeant, "Maritime Customary Law off the Arabian Coasts," in Michel Mollat, ed., *Sociétés et Compagnies de Commerce en Orient et dans l'Océan Indien* (Paris, 1970), 197. The solar year was also called *mwaka wa hesabia*, from *kuhesabu*, to count or reckon. Jambeni Mohamed, interview in Lamu, 17 July 1971.

[4]Hugo Huber, "The Agricultural Calendar of the Kwaya," *TNR*, 75 (1974), 51.

[5]But see E.C. Baker, "Tribal Calendars," *TNR*, 33 (1952), 33, who did not note the intercalary days in his observations on the Swahili calendar.

as well to the Muslim calendar. In addition to being divided into twelve months, which may simply have been an African concession to Arabic custom, more importantly the year was divided into decades, *miongo* (sing. *mwongo*), of ten days each, some of which were propitious and some not, while in each decade some days were considered lucky and some fraught with problems. Each decade had a numerical name. The first ten days, *mwongo moya* or, more properly, *mwongo ashara* (decade of the tenth day), which followed New Year's day (Siku ya Nairuzi or Siku ya Mwaka), were believed to have bearing on all the decades of the year: should rain fall on the first day, rain would be forecast for the tenth day. If it should rain on the second day, the twentieth day was expected to be wet, and so forth. If the tenth day of the first *mwongo* was rainy, the *kusi* could be expected early that year. In addition, the final five or six intercalary days of the year were believed to be particularly unlucky. Some cultivators kept track of the months, but more attention was given to the decade and the day: "Today is the first day of Mwongo Mia na Ashara. One hundred days have passed since Nairuzi."[6]

Because August and early September, when the influential first *mwongo* occurred, were usually without any rain at all in the islands -- although some rain might fall on the mainland -- other signs were taken into account. The Swahili people calculated, as did the neighboring Pokomo and Giriama, agricultural seasons from certain stars, especially the *kilimia*, the Pleiades. If this bright constellation first appeared in sunny weather, it was believed that it would set in rain, and vice versa. The appearance of the *kilimia* in early November was a signal to begin cultivation during the *vuli* in areas where this was possible. When it set in early May the planting of the *mwaka* season should have been completed.[7] During the six months when the Pleiades were not visible, the farmer could calculate only according to the *mwaka wa shamsu*.

[6]Salimu Bakeli, interview in Lamu, 8 Nov. 1971; Feraji Bwana Mkuu, interview in Lamu, 30 Oct. 1971; Pickering, *Races of Man*, 188; Richard F. Burton, *Zanzibar; City, Island, and Coast* (London, 1872), I, 170-176; A. de V.W. and E.J.N., "The Mtepe," *The Field, The Country Gentleman's Newspaper*, CXLVI, 3796 (24 Sept. 1925), 525; Gray, "Nairuzi," 9.

[7]The word *kilimia* is related to *kulima*, to cultivate, a word common to Swahili, Pokomo, and Giriama. Alice Werner, "Notes on Bantu Star-Names," *Man*, 12, 12 (1912), 193. Attention to the Pleiades for agricultural purposes was not limited to African peoples. William Peck, *The Southern Hemisphere Constellations* (2nd ed., Edinburgh, 1963), 24. See also W.E. Taylor, *African Aphorisms* (London, 1891), 32; Burton, *Zanzibar*, I, 175; Gray, "Nairuzi," 3.

Cultivation on the Lamu mainland, although it had its communal aspects, was the affair of the individual, and each cultivator was able to calculate the solar year. The fine points of the calculations, however, and the predictions based on the first *mwongo* were left to an island expert or experts who made predictions not only for the agricultural community but also for seafarers. This expert was well acquainted with the meteorological history of the area and had worked out the probabilities of rain falling in each decade. He also read Arabic sources to substantiate his observations. There is no indication that any one person was the recognized weather prophet in the Lamu archipelago; rather, it seems that each of the major towns had its own professional forecaster.[8]

In addition to the weather expert--and in some instances one person may have filled both positions--there was a *mwalimu* or *jumbe ya wakulima,* a leader of the cultivators who, like the weather prophet, could read Arabic sources, and who advised farmers on specific details of mainland cultivation. Because mainland agriculture was risky, this mwalimu was not only a weather expert, but more importantly an *mganga,* a medicine man who knew how to use charms and offerings to satisfy the spirits of the forest.[9] The mwalimu was a teacher of the local Quran school. He was therefore not necessarily an elder, but his wisdom was recognized from his literacy and consequent mystical power, especially in a largely illiterate rural society. This mwalimu or jumbe may have been the sole mwalimu in a small village, or one of several in a larger village or town. Although his jurisdiction was not according to *mtaa* (town quarter) lines, in practice his following may have been largely of one *jamaa* (relationship) or group of friends whose residence was limited to one *mtaa.*[10] In Witu, for instance, each of four *sehemu* (sections) of town, which were not considered *mitaa,* had a mwalimu.[11] In Mokowe, and probably elsewhere, the mwalimu, who was not a farmer, gave spiritual advice, while an *mzee* (elder), who was himself a knowledgeable and

[8]A comparable recognized expert for the Zanzibar Swahili lived at Tumbatu. Pickering, *Races of Man,* 188; Burton, *Zanzibar,* I, 171-172.

[9]See the definitions of *mganga* and *mwalimu* in Saada Salim bin Omar, "The Swahili Life," *TNR,* 9 (1940), 24-25; and Huber, "Calendar," 52.

[10]Mohamed Ali Pame, interview in Lamu, 9 Nov. 1971, stated that Kipungani village once had six *waalimu* corresponding to the six *mitaa,* but Othmani Mabruku, interview in Kipungani, 9 Nov. 1971, said that Kipungani had only one mwalimu. This may reflect a change in the size of the village and that the position was flexible with the needs of the town.

[11]Mbwana Othmani, interview in Witu, 5 Nov. 1971, stressed that the people of one *mtaa* would not be apt to farm in one place so that they could not possibly have only one mwalimu.

experienced farmer, led the cultivators in practical matters.[12]

The guidance of an *mganga* in agricultural affairs was not, of course, limited to the Swahili and Bajun cultivators. Pokomo and Giriama communities, with whom -- judging by common agricultural vocabulary -- the Swahili and Bajun may have had closer ties in the past, sought such advice, for they believed that their survival depended upon the good will of the *shaitani* (spirits) and consequent rainfall. Even though the Swahili and Bajun were Muslim, and the recently arrived slaves from Nyasa and elsewhere in the south usually soon became nominal Muslims, religious life in rural areas rested upon a double foundation, Bantu and Islamic.[13]

Because Lamu district's soil was light, the shifting of the site of cultivation every year or two, or, exceptionally, every third year, had by experience produced better yields and actually made field preparation easier, for farm tools were few and primitive: the short-handled, iron-bladed *jembe* (hoe), a simple *kitoka* (axe), a *panga* (a kind of scythe), and *kisu* (knife) were the extent of a cultivator's set. If an iron hoe were unavailable, a wooden digging stick was used. Domestic animals were not employed, for even the possession of a single donkey by a farmer was rare. Therefore, the practice of allowing a once-cultivated site to grow up for twelve to fifteen years into tall bush and trees which could be burned down saved the farmer from the nearly impossible task of hacking down half-grown bush.[14] In addition, it was unwise to attempt to raise grains in the same soil for many consecutive years.[15]

[12]Omari Ali Omari Mzee, interview in Mokowe, 11 Nov. 1971. The mwalimu's position is similar to that of the *mvyale* described by Sir John Gray in Zanzibar, but the office of the mvyale was hereditary, whereas the mwalimu's position was theoretically not. Possibly the mwalimu's position is a more recent version of that of the mvyale, the latter no longer remembered by Lamu district people. See Gray, "Nairuzi," 7,8. See also Gabriel Baer, *Population and Society in the Arab East* (London, 1964), 167, for the comparable role played by the village teacher in the Middle East.

[13]J. Spencer Trimingham, *Islam in East Africa* (Oxford, 1964), 68.

[14]Jambeni Mohamed, interview in Lamu, 11 June 1971, stressed that *mwitu* or *msitu* (forest), never *pori* (scrub or bushland), was cleared for farming.

[15]Omari Ali Omari Mzee, interview in Mokowe, 11 Nov. 1971. Beans and other less important crops might be grown in second- and third-year plots.

Perhaps the mwalimu's most important duties began, then, in December or January when it was time for a community to choose the site of cultivation, within the range of its customary *bara*. A group of ten to fifteen farmers, slave or free, would approach the mwalimu to ask whether or not the time was appropriate to begin the annual preparation of the fields. The mwalimu's answer would depend upon his interpretation of *miongo* and other signs. If a new area, that is, forest, was being entered, it was necessary to ask the mwalimu whether the spot chosen was acceptable for farming. There were certain places where, in the cultivators' view, the *shaitani* were apparently evil. One such place was Margiza, near the well-cultivated area of Hindi, where a child had once been mysteriously lost. The Mokowe mwalimu (for Hindi was in Mokowe's immediate *bara*) advised the cultivators not to enter Margiza, but the farmers knew it to be a fertile area and they could not bear to take this pronouncement, so they sought the further advice of a Lamu mwalimu, who agreed that they might go ahead. The cultivators chopped the trees, as was the practice, and then tried to burn off the area, but rain fell and prevented the success of their efforts. For three consecutive years they attenpted the same thing and were unable to complete the clearing because of rain. After this, they conceded that the *shaitani* of Margiza were indeed at odds with them, and until today the area has never been cultivated. Similarly, Mambosasa in the Witu forest had the reputation of being evil and was never cultivated.[16] Late in the century the sultan of Witu refused his subjects permission to cut the trees here, but his refusal was probably due to his wish to reap the profits from the forest's rubber industry, over which he had a monopoly.

Barring such problems, the local mwalimu, after referring to written sources such as a *kitabu cha falaki*, an Islamic book dealing with astronomy, astrology, and omens, would grant permission for the farmers to enter an area and prepare it for cultivation. Before entering a forest to chop the smaller trees--the initial stage of preparation--a huge feast *(sadaka)* was celebrated on a date set by the mwalimu. The use of the word *sadaka* here, which can denote charity in the Islamic sense of giving alms for the love of Allah or for one's own merit in his sight, had quite a different meaning in the usage of rural people.[17] For them it was a sacrificial offering and feast seeking blessing on the cultivation each year through prayer and the propitiation of the *shaitani* of the forest. Because it was under the supervision of the *mwalimu*, who was an Islamic cleric, it involved not only the sacrifice of the blood of an animal in the forest, but also Muslim prayers. The depth of Muslim beliefs as opposed

[16]Omari Ali Omari Mzee, interview in Mokowe, 11 November 1971: Bwana Maalimu Kame, interview in Lamu, 14 Nov. 1971.

[17]J.L. Krapf, *A Dictionary of the Suahili Language* (London, 1882), 319, defines a rural *sadaka*.

to Bantu beliefs expressed at a *sadaka* may well have varied in direct proportion to the remoteness of a village from a center of orthodox Islam.[18]

In addition to the *sadaka* which took place in the rural areas, official prayers for rain would take place in the mosques of the island towns.[19] In Lamu the preacher at the Jumaa mosque had the duty of performing a rainmaking ceremony when the *mwaka* rains were late. This involved the ritual of leading a bull through the town, followed by the sacrifice of the bull, the meat of which was then eaten by the *wangwana* at a communal meal. This was the urban version of the agricultural *sadaka*, a term which applied also to it. An agricultural ceremony similar to this one in Lamu was practiced at Pemba by a spirit cult which was apparently non-Islamic.[20] In Lamu, it had been absorbed into the mainstream of Muslim life, which was increasingly under the influence of the sharifs as the century wore on.

The rural *sadaka*, to which all cultivators contributed, was partially prepared in the rural village.[21] But because the offering of blood, which was considered to be the most important feature of *sadaka*, must take place in the forest which was to be cut, the killing of the cow, goat, or chicken would be carried out there, and the rest of the food was brought from the village for the feast.[22] Once the *sadaka* had taken place, the cultivators as a group began chopping down the trees.

In some places an *ngoma* accompanied *sadaka*, but the occasion for the largest *ngoma* of the season was that at the next stage of field preparation, when the cut trees and bush were fired (*kupisha* or *kukokea moto*), in about February.[23] This celebration was most important among Pajun. Prior to going into the fields the Pajun

[18]In Mapenya, for instance, informants who were descendants of Wanyasa slaves referred to the feast as both "sadaka" and "karamu," the latter a feast or party entirely without special Islamic meaning. Ali Mohamed Masudi, interview in Mapenya, 25 Oct. 1971.

[19]Tiedemann, *Tana-Baringo-Nil*, 27.

[20]Peter Lienhardt, "The Mosque College of Lamu and Its Social Background," *TNR*, 53 (Oct. 1959), 230. See also chapter 7 of El Zein, *Sacred Meadows*, which describes the ritual of the circulation of the bull through Lamu town.

[21]The proprietor himself must have contributed, for often the cultivators (that is, slaves and poor freemen) would have had little grain left at this time of the year.

[22]Jambeni Mohamed, interview in Lamu, 17 July 1971; Ali Mohamed Masudi and Dawa Mjana, interviews at Mapenya, 25 October 1971; Othmani Mabruku, interview at Kipungani, 9 November 1971.

[23]Krapf, *Dictionary*, 166-167, describes the firing of a plantation, and indicates that the offering of the blood of a cock was made at this time. See also L. Bouvat, "L'Islam dans l'Afrique Nègre. La Civilisation Souahilie," *Revue du Monde Musulman*, II (1907), 27.

cultivators made this occasion auspicious by the all-night dancing of the *ngoma* called Randa, and the reciting or singing of verses called Wawe. After the firing, the *ngoma* would continue in the village. Other *ngoma* were held to mark the first planting and harvest.[24]

The mwalimu of the farmers was paid an amount of grain according to the size of the harvest, normally *pishi nane*, a measure equalling about forty-eight pounds.[25] Those cultivators who also farmed rice might give the mwalimu some rice as a gift, but it was not necessary to do so because the growing of rice did not involve the mwalimu's services as did the cultivation of other grain.[26] In the event of crop failure, the mwalimu received nothing--it was *shauri ya mungu*, God's affair.[27]

Although anchored at its important stages by communal ritual and activity, farming in the Lamu hinterland was an individual effort on the part of the freeman, and the responsibility of the proprietor in the case of slave-run plantations. The small free cultivator was perhaps more common in the Bajun mainland, but in the southern part of the district, too, the smallholder existed. Although there was much in common in their manner of cultivation, in this individualism the coastal Swahili

[24]Abdalla Kombo, interview in Mokowe, 16 October 1971; Omari Ali, interview in Mokowe, 11 November 1971; Othmani Mabruku, interview in Kipungani, 9 November 1971; Salimu Bakeli, interview in Lamu, 8 November 1971. Bujra, "Bajuni Village," 40, 162, discusses *Wawe (vave)* as a very old, connected series of verses on Bajun history about which little is known. No one I queried could remember the words of the verses. Certain verses, probably Wawe, were sung at the time of the *ngoma* Randa as a *shindano*, with one group answering another. Jambeni Mohamed, interview in Lamu, 9 Sept. 1971.

[25]Awadhi Helimani, interview in Kipini, 13 Nov. 1971. This large amount may have been a gift from a group of farmers, not each individual.

[26]In Swahili communities where rice rather than grain was the important crop, more ritual surrounded its cultivation. See William McKay, "A Precolonial History of the Southern Kenya Coast" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1975), 243-249, Appendix III.

[27]Omari Ali, interview in Mokowe, 11 November 1971; Awadhi Helimani, interview in Kipini, 13 November 1971. The gift of a measure of millet to Quran teachers during the month of Ramadhan was considered *sadaka* on the southern Swahili coast. Lienhardt, introduction to Hasani bin Ismail, *The Medicine Man*, 43.

and Bajun differed from their Bantu-speaking neighbors, who worked land on a clan basis. The reasons for the limited, but important, joint activities were both spiritual and practical--the need to seek blessing on the cultivation, which was the basis of the Lamu hinterland's economy, and the need for mutual defense and a sense of community in the face of hostile mainland peoples.[28]

Each farmer, or proprietor with slaves, annually controlled a block of land within his community's customary *bara*. It is possible that he cycled his fields within a particular range of land and returned to precisely the same spot twelve to fifteen years after first cultivation, but it is unlikely that this was the practice in an area with few permanent markers. A large proprietor with hundreds of slaves could control entire rural villages and all their surrounding land. Such a proprietor was the Arab *liwali* or governor of Lamu, Sud bin Hamed, who controlled during the latter part of the nineteenth century an immense tract of land called Mwanzamwarabu on Hidio Creek.[29] Mwanzamwarabu had its own large village, hundreds of slaves and cattle, and direct access to Lamu via the creek.[30] Sud bin Hamed also had a large plantation near Ozi and many properties on Lamu Island to which he retired when occasionally out of office.[31] Other Lamu proprietors had vast holdings near Lake Mkunguya, and wealthy Siyu and Rasini slaveowners held large tracts in their respective *bara*.

Because slave-run plantations were in the majority, I shall discuss farming as it was pursued on plantations under the control of a proprietor with slaves. The allotment of land was decided

[28]Lineage control of land may have been more important in the Lamu hinterland in earlier times, lessening in importance as Islamic law regarding property gained influence. This is suggested for the Shebelle River area of southern Somalia by Lee Cassanelli, "Benaadir," 85,95.

[29]Mwanzamwarabu, "the village of the Arab." Sud bin Hamed was known locally as Bwana Mwarabu. Sud bin Hamed bin Sud, interview in Lamu, 3 June 1971.

[30]Saidi Mchomo, Mokowe, remembered seeing Mwanzamwarabu when it was still flourishing. It had, he stated, representatives of *kila kabila* (every tribe), and its own cattle trade with the Somalis. Interview in Mokowe, 12 July 1971.

[31]H. Greffulhe, "Voyage de Lamoo à Zanzibar," *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie et d'études Coloniales de Marseille*, II (1878), 333; Fischer, "Verhältnisse," 359.

annually according to the manpower at any proprietor's disposal. This decision on the amount of land to be cultivated also took into account the workability of the soil and the crops which were to be grown. Some soil was considered hard to cultivate (*tiati ngumu*) and some crops required much more care and time to mature than others did. Such decisions would hardly have been made by the town-dwelling proprietor without the advice of his mainland overseer, the *nokoa*, who was a slave of long experience and proven dependability. The proprietor, who might only occasionally visit his mainland holdings, would know the number of slaves he had at his disposal, but he would be unlikely to know intimately the rural locale, or the varying characteristics of the dozens of *kabila* (varieties) of *mtama* or rice.

The block of land under an individual's control was built up from several gradations of linear measurements. The basic unit of cultivated land was the *ngwe* (pl. *ungwe*),[32] the amount of land which could be taken care of by one slave in one day. The *ngwe* seems to have been a flexible measurement, however; its size reflected the quality of the soil and its consequent workability. Heavy *udongo*, red loam, would require more labor than the light powdery sandy soils, so an *ngwe* in an area of heavy loam would have smaller dimensions than in an area of light soil. The *ngwe* was always a long, narrow piece of land, however, and often measured *hatua miatene* (two hundred paces) by four or five paces. A number of *ungwe*, usually ten, would make up the unit called *kambaa* or *ukambaa*, which would also therefore be a rectangle longer than it was wide, its size dependent upon the number of *ungwe* which it comprised. The term *kipande*, often used less precisely as a "section" of land, was originally five *kambaa*, and thus usually measured about two hundred paces square.[33]

Taking into account these factors, the proprietor would proceed to have his plot cleared. This plot would be adjacent to the fields of other proprietors on perhaps two or three sides--except when a proprietor like Sud bin Hamed controlled a complete area--but it was bordered on at least one side by the forest out of which it was cleared. This boundary was called *tambini* (at the edge of the forest), a different word from that used to describe the boundary of a *shamba* of trees, which was the usual Swahili word for boundary, *mpakani*, implying that it would be clearly bordered by other *mashamba* on all sides. The slaves would chop with hatchets all the trees that they could, leaving baobabs and other trees which were impossible to clear.

[32]See glossary in Appendix A for the derivation of this and other measurements.

[33]Jambeni Mohamed, interview in Lamu, 11 June 1971.

Once cut and fired, an area was called *tange*, that is, a field in its first year before harvest.[34]

Following the go-ahead from the experts, who signaled the activities of the season according to their knowledge of the *miongo* and other signs, planting of seed could take place. The choice of crops was dependent upon this forecast, as well as the type of soil, number of slaves available, types of wild animals and birds known to be in the area, local demand, and the demand for export produce in the port towns.

In the nineteenth century two crops were grown which were the mainstays of the Lamu district population: *mtama uti*, which was variously described by European observers as millet, sorghum or guinea corn,[35] and *mpunga*, rice. *Mtama* was especially popular as a crop with the Bajun in the north, but it was also raised and consumed by mainland peoples, especially slaves, in the southern parts of the district. The urban Arabs, Swahili, and Indians of the Lamu area preferred to eat rice, which was grown extensively from the Ozi River in the south to Lake Jipe in the north, and beyond this around any ponds that existed, but these same townsmen grew rich on the export of *mtama* to southern Arabia and elsewhere, where it traveled under the name *jowari*.[36]

Mtama (mchama in Kitikuu) was a grain which required a good deal of watchfulness on the part of cultivators during the course of its growth. Initially, it required good, "strong" soil *(tiati nguvu)*, usually meaning use of a field for only one year before shifting to a new site. Because of its full growth and great height--ten to fifteen or more feet--it allowed no interplanting with other crops. Certain varieties required up to 120 days to reach maturity, although others such as the popular *bishee*

[34]Omari Ali, interview in Mokowe, 11 Nov. 1971. In its second year, it was called *upovu*. See glossary.

[35]Williams, *Plants*, 449-450, calls it *sorghum verticilliflorum* and *sorghum vulgare;* P.J. Greenway, *A Swahili Dictionary of Plant Names* (Dar es Salaam, 1937), 76, states that many varieties of *mtama* are of local origin. See J.D. Acland, *East African Crops* (London, 1971), for information on many of the crops grown in the Lamu region.

[36]No cultivator I queried knew the term *jowari*. Indian customs officials in the ports may have labeled the exported *mtama* "jowari," although the cultivators never used the word. See also Charles Guillain, *Documents sur l'Histoire, la Géographie et le Commerce de l'Afrique Orientale*, II (Paris, 1856), 313-314. See glossary.

needed somewhat less time;[37] a cultivator might plant several varieties in a single season. *Mtama* could usually be harvested only once a year on the northern Bajun coast where the *vuli*, or lesser, rains were almost nonexistent. Planting time was just before the major rains of the *kusi*, in April. It was also unusual to plant *mtama* twice a year in the south, but in both places a second planting might be carried out directly after the first harvest.[38]

An elephant merely strolling through a field of *mtama* could cause great loss, but the worst enemies of this grain were birds. Several kinds of birds attacked it, but three were notorious for ruining *mtama:* the *shongwe*, *zinangunangu*, and *mnana*. The *mnana*, golden weaver finch, could destroy a field nearing maturity in no time at all; hence the sayings, *una tumbo kama mnana* (you have a stomach like the weaver bird)[39] and *mtama wa kwanza hula nyuni* (a bird has eaten the first grains of *mtama*, that is, the harvest is approaching). It was necessary to build in *mtama* fields a three-legged platform called *ulingo* where a watchman *(mlinzi)* with a slingshot *(teo)* could frighten the birds away, while various noisemakers were employed elsewhere in the field.[40] Whole families of slaves came to the fields at this time of the season to protect the ripening crop. Because these destroying birds were believed to be less prevalent inland, Bajun *mtama* plantations in the north were often miles from the sea;[41] other cultivators felt, however, that *mtama* grew best close to the coast.[42] Despite all the difficulties, *mtama* and the related smaller grains *mawele*

[37]Swaleh Bahamfusi, interview in Mkonumbi, 14 Sept. 1971; Omari Ali Omari Mzee, interview in Mokowe, 11 Nov. 1971; Patterson, "Notes on Ecology," 13; W. W. A. Fitzgerald, "The Agricultural Resources of the Coast Lands of British East Africa" (printed paper read at the Imperial Institute on Jan. 29, 1894), 24.

[38]Fitzgerald, *Travels*, 278.

[39]Krapf, *Dictionary*, 238. One compensation: the *mnana*, cooked with ghee, was considered a delicacy by Swahili farmers. Jambeni Mohamed, interview in Lamu, 9 Sept. 1971. See also Patterson, "Lamu Hinterland, 1957," Appendix F, who stated that swarms of the Sudanese Dioch bird were the worst pest.

[40]The *ulingo* is pictured in Vinigi L. Grotanelli, *Pescatori dell'Oceano Indiano* (Roma, 1955), 133. See also Huber, "Calendar," 53, for similar methods in the Kwaya country of Tanzania.

[41]Bwana Maalimu Kame, interview in Lamu, 14 Nov. 1971; Fitzgerald, *Travels*, 431 ff.

[42]Seif Siaka, interview in Lamu, 13 March 1971. Another reason for inland cultivation may have been that the winds of the southwest monsoon, which were hard on *mtama*, were less strong away from the immediate coast. H. Charles Treakle, *The Agricultural Economy of Somalia*, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Economic Research Service, Foreign 310 (Washington, 1971), 7.

(bullrush millet)[43] and *wimbi*[44] were the most widely grown cereal crops in the north. Cultivation of *mtama* was so widespread that this grain served almost as currency.[45]

At harvest, the *mtama* stalks were hacked down, the ears cut off and taken to the village, where the grain was threshed and dried in the sun, and then, if it were to be stored, it was placed in a mat bag called *kipunju*. If available, a little salt was placed in the bottom and at the top of the bag. Goat dung was plastered on the floor where *mtama* was stored to keep off white ants. Under normal conditions *mtama* would keep for a year or more.[46]

Except in its initial stages, rice cultivation was, if anything, more difficult than that of *mtama*. Unlike the cultivation of *mtama*, however, which generally meant going into new forest land each year with the permission of a mwalimu, the cultivation of rice was not considered risky and required no official permission. Rice was grown at the edges of lakes and ponds *(upambizoni)*. It was not necessary to cut and burn new land, and in this way it was not only free from the grief which was believed to be caused by angry forest *shaitani*, but also meant that little, if any, clearing was needed before actual planting took place. Rice cultivation was also freer of the restrictions of the *mwaka wa shamsu* because it could be planted any time when a pond had sufficient water. Year-round cultivation was restricted to areas which had lakes that did not often dry up--near the lakes which were north and south of Witu, and at lakes Mkunguya and Jipe, for example--and of course along the Tana River. Seasonal rice growing, with planting in April, could be pursued, however, near ponds on Lamu Island, and on the mainland wherever water lasted long enough for a rice crop to reach maturity. Rice was not a crop suitable for most of the Bajun coast, but it was grown there too wherever the terrain allowed.[47]

[43]Williams, *Plants*, 404, *Pennisetum typhoides*. Fitzgerald, *Travels*, 477-478; Grotanelli, *Pescatori*, 129; and Prins, *Swahili-Speaking Peoples*, 60, refer to *mawele* as *mchama wa pembe*. Its growing season was only sixty days, half that of *mtama uti*.

[44]Pickering, *Races of Man*, 343, labels wimbi *eleusine coracana Gaert*. Fitzgerald, *Travels*, 438, calls it "raggy" from the Hindustani *ragi*.

[45]Jambeni Mohamed, interview in Lamu, 12 June 1971. See Chapter 6. *Mtama* also served as an offering to sea spirits in Bajun country. Grotanelli, *Pescatori*, 308.

[46]W. W. A. Fitzgerald, "Planting. Mr. Fitzgerald's Reports, September and October, 1891. Suggestions and Notes, February 1892" (Royal Commonwealth Society library, Case A70), 2; Patterson, "Notes on Ecology," 14.

[47]Fitzgerald, *Travels*, 436.

The choice of the variety of rice to be grown could depend upon weather predictions. There were a dozen or more *kabila* or varieties. Certain types, quick growing but with a less desirable flavor than longer-growing varieties, could be cultivated in a season when little rain was expected. A farmer would be likely to plant several varieties at once, "to try the luck," for all lake beds were not equally suitable for all varieties.[48]

The delicate rice shoots were easily trampled by wild pigs and baboons, and if the water level of the lake sank too far, the shoots would have to be transplanted lower along the water's edge. Along the Tana River, dykes were built around rice fields to keep the water at a suitable depth. When approaching maturity, the grains of rice were equally as attractive to birds as were fields of *mtama*. Guarding the rice from birds was somewhat easier than guarding *mtama* because of its lower level of growth, but if manpower was lacking, flocks of weaver birds could lay waste whole fields.[49] To harvest rice, the stalks were cut, fiber mats were placed on the ground and the grain beaten out with sticks. Large quantities of unhulled rice were sold as *mpunga;* hulled rice, called *mtee* (or *mchele),* was usually sold in smaller measure.[50]

Another important traditional field crop in the Pate area, both island and mainland, and on the Bajun coast, was tobacco, always in demand by the Oromo, Somali and Boni. Its production increased late in the century.[51] The coastal people, especially in the north, also grew a perennial type of cotton, which took five or six months to mature and required good soil. The plants were sometimes allowed to stand ten years before being burned off.[52] Numerous pulse crops were raised. The most popular were *kunde* (pl. *ukunde,* the cow pea), with many varieties, and *fiwi,* a tiny black bean resembling a poppy seed.[53] These were consumed locally as well as exported. *Muhogo* (white cassava) and maize *(mahindi,* but locally *mtama buru)* were not popular foods with Arabs and Swahilis, although they were certainly grown by the Wanyasa slaves and the Pokomo for their own consumption. Many varieties of maize were known. Its cultivation became more widespread after slavery was abolished, when, lacking sufficient labor, *mtama* and rice became too difficult to raise and harvest.[54]

[48]Shaibu Fumo, interview in Kipini, 17 Aug. 1971; Omari Ali Omari Mzee, interview in Mokowe, 11 Nov. 1971.

[49]Frederick Jackson, *Early Days in East Africa* (London, 1930), 91.

[50]"Deutsch-Wituland," *DKZ,* 3 (1886), 517.

[51]Rabenhorst, "Die Witu-Inseln," 258; Fitzgerald, *Travels,* 439, 474, 478.

[52]Report on Possibilities of Cotton-Growing, 9-10. Fitzgerald, *Travels,* 394-397, describes the cultivation and processing of this local cotton.

[53]Burton, *Zanzibar,* I, 245; Greenway, *Dictionary,* 12, 28.

[54]During the late 1880s maize was extensively grown near Witu. Hörnecke, "Deutsch-Wituland," 483.

All of these crops were grown intermingled in the fields. With the exception of cotton, they were often raised in second- and third-year fields which could no longer support *mtama,* and they were sometimes planted twice a year to take advantage of the *vuli* rains, when and where they occurred. This second growing season, beginning in October, was called *mwaka wa kilimo* and was considered to have seventy days.[55]

Oil-producing crops were increasingly cultivated as export demands grew. Oil for culinary purposes was, of course, obtained from the coconut, but ground crops produced oil not only for local consumption but for manufacturing purposes abroad. The tall, perennial castor oil plant *(mbono)* thrived in the Lamu area and was easy to harvest,[56] but most important was the simsim plant *(ufuta, ufucha* or *mafuta* locally, that is, *sesamum indicum),* the production of which was urged by the sultan of Zanzibar with an eye to the European market. Simsim oil, called *gingelly* or *gingil* in parts of India, was widely used there for cooking, as it was by Arabs and Swahilis, but France became a destination for much of Lamu area's simsim seeds and oil.[57]

The light, sandy soils of the coast were well adapted to the cultivation of simsim, which was planted at the beginning of the *mwaka* rains and matured in about four months. The plants were then pulled up, made into bundles and allowed to dry in the field.[58] Disaster could strike at this stage if the farmer was not watchful: elephants disliked the smell of simsim seeds as the stalks lay stacked for drying, and they would throw the stalks about, causing the seed to be lost.[59] If simsim survived this drying period, it was winnowed by hand in a flat basket *(uteo).* Any oil which was extracted from the seeds locally was extracted in the towns after the farmer had transported the seeds there.

The crops produced on any given plantation would have included, as they do today, an enormous variety, if only to satisfy local tastes, which were cosmopolitan because the population of the area comprised people of wide African and Indian Ocean origin. The rural slave population, mostly of Nyasa origin, had its preferences for maize, cassava, beans, *maboga* (pumpkin-like vegetables), and plantains. The Arab, Swahili, and Bajun cuisine, based on rice and the millet-like grains, had much in common with south Arabian and northwest Indian preferences, and was influenced by the Indian taste to include a large number of vegetables--eggplant, spinach, etc.--as well as flavorings such as tamarind

[55]Haji Hamisi, interview in Lamu, 4 July 1971.

[56]*Agricultural Journal of British East Africa,* I, 1 (1908-09), 83.

[57]Burton, *Zanzibar,* I, 244.

[58]H. Powell, "Sem Sem (Sesamum Indicum)," *Agricultural Journal of British East Africa,* I, 3 (1908-09), 295-296.

[59]Patterson, "Lamu Hinterland, 1957," Appendix F.

and hot peppers.[60] Some of the smaller luxury food items were limited to cultivation on the islands, but most of them could be found near any of the larger mainland villages as well. The crops would also include annual plants which produced fruit or seeds used for medicinal purposes, and non-food-producing shrubs and trees such as the *mhina* bush *(Lawsonia inermis)*, which produced the henna used for cosmetic and dyeing purposes, and *msufi (ceiba pentandra)*, whose pods contained a soft, silky fiber used for stuffing pillows and mattresses.[61]

The great variety of crops grown on the mainland, with their diverse growing and harvesting seasons, kept the agricultural slaves and free farmers, and their families, busy for most of the year, unless they combined a marine-oriented occupation, such as mangrove cutting, with farming. In that case they might leave the mainland after the major harvest in August or September and remain away until it was time to clear for the next season, in about December or January. This combining of occupations was especially common on the northern coast where cultivation was possible during only one monsoon, the *kusi*.

The cultivators and their families normally lived in permanent villages of mud-and-*makuti* dwellings. These villages were surrounded by, or at the edge of, the area which was customarily cultivated by their respective inhabitants. The rural villages, which might be inhabited entirely by slaves--not necessarily of the same master--were under the control of slave elders.[62] Any problems too large for the elders to handle would reflect back to their masters, and in turn to the masters' *kadi* (Islamic magistrate in the town. The *kadi* of Mkonumbi, for instance, had jurisdiction over many surrounding farm villages.[63] If such a village was large enough it might have a mosque, but more often it did not. This meant that any good male Muslim must travel on Fridays to a town with a Jumaa mosque.[64] Although the uneducated rural slave was usually by no means a zealous Muslim, the general rule was that Friday was the slave's day off. In the dry season he was allowed both Thursday and Friday. On these free days the slave was expected to till his own field, which was allotted him by his master for his own sustenance. The fields were within walking distance of the

[60]See the glossary of Bernhard Krumm, *Words of Oriental Origin in Swahili* (London, 1940), for words such as *bilingani* (eggplant) as indications of the intermingling of food crops in the Indian Ocean area.

[61]Field notes, Kiunga, 23 July 1971; Fundi Harafa Jumaa, interview in Mokowe, 9 July 1971; Saidi Mohamed Bamasudi, interview in Lamu, 26 August 1971. See also Williams, *Plants*, 183, 327.

[62]*PP* (1896), LIX, C.8274, No. 72, Hardinge to Salisbury, 12 April 1896.

[63]Rabenhorst, "Recognoszierung," 237. Such jurisdictions changed a good deal over the century as Witu and Zanzibari claims fluctuated.

[64]Jambeni Mohamed, interview in Lamu, 18 July 1971. A Jumaa mosque required a congregation of forty males.

village and the cultivators would go to the fields at the first dawning light *(saa alfajiri)* and remain there until dusk.[65] If the crops required extra care, as in the case of ripening *mtama,* the cultivator would sleep overnight in a small, impermanent palm-frond hut *(kibanda)* in the fields. At times his entire family would be needed to guard the field or to carry out the harvest. On large, slave-run plantations under the direction of one or more *nokoa,* such operations were well organized.[66]

If an area were suitable, cattle owned by island people would graze also within range of the rural village, and sometimes a village would be inhabited entirely by those involved with the cattle trade or herding. There was no land especially set aside for grazing, nor did it "belong" to the owners of cattle, but certain areas were understood to be accessible to cattlemen--Koreni, for example, near Hidio Creek. And here the herders, who might be Swahili, Oromo, Somali, or Wakore,[67] would keep the cattle of Lamu owners and make ghee to be shipped to the towns. When cows were giving milk they would often be tied together and towed across the channel to Lamu Island to stay until they were dry, when they would be returned in the same way to the mainland. Similarly, cattle for island consumption would be towed across to the island for slaughter. Very few cattle were kept on the island of Lamu. At Pate Island, however, the paths were sometimes so crowded that a human pedestrian was unable to pass, but no cattle were kept on the mainland opposite Pate, or on the Bajun coast.[68] It is likely that this was due to the cattle-raiding propensities of the Oromo and Somali, and also to the prevalence of tsetse fly.[69] The large mainland settlements in the south had their own herds of cattle which were grazed in the vicinity of the villages. Although cattle were owned individually, the herding was for practical reasons a community effort in these villages as it was for the island towns.

Among the activities which occupied rural people when farming duties were completed were the collection of rubber *(mpira)* and orchella weed *(marere).* Both of these forest activities, although always carried on to some extent, became of economic importance only late in the century under European supervision. Other industries had no dependence upon the European market,

[65]Haji Hamisi, interview in Lamu, 4 July 1971.

[66]Fitzgerald, "Agricultural Resources," 13-14. See also Frederick Cooper, "The Treatment of Slaves on the Kenya Coast in the 19th Century," *Kenya Historical Review,* I, 2 (1973), 92-96.

[67]Wakore, apparently of Masai origin, were taken to the coast by Somali slaveraiders. Kassim Daimu, interview in Mokowe, 11 Nov. 1971; Husein Ali Shamuti, interview in Lamu, 28 Oct. 1971. The name "Kore" was given the Masai by the Oromo. New, *Life,* 203.

[68]Haji Hamisi, interview in Lamu, 4 July 1971; Jambeni Mohamed, interview in Lamu, 19 July 1971.

[69]Fitzgerald, *Travels,* 432, 434.

however. For mainland villagers who lived near the heads of the sea creeks, one dry-season occupation was the collection of salt (*munyu*). This salt was not of high quality and was not sent to the islands, but it was adequate for the preservation of meat, fish, and other food on the mainland. For the flavoring of foods everyone preferred salt brought from Stambuli near Kismayu, from Gongoni near Malindi, or from Arabia. Salt could be gathered in any of the creeks, but certain locations were more productive than others, including Ziwa la Munyuni ("salt lake") near Ndununi on Mongoni Creek; a site near Sud bin Hamed's Mwanzamwarabu on Hidio Creek; one near Mkonumbi; and Mwanda Munyu ("salt village") near Mokowe. The collection of creek salt began during the *kaskazi* and continued until the *mwaka* rains began. The quantity varied with the number of sunny days, necessary for evaporation, and the amount of rain in any given season. Because salt had to be collected between the high tides, all able members of the family took part in it.[70] Salt could also be obtained in certain lakes between Witu and the Tana River.[71]

Another year-round activity was the manufacture of fiber mats, bags, baskets, and sails. This industry was shared with island people, but the raw materials were more readily available on the mainland: the *mkoma* (doum palm) and other palms furnished the fiber. Slips cut from the fronds *(mwaa,* pl. *miaa)* were split with a knife into narrow strips of which the central section was the most flexible and used for *zizigo* (sing. *kizigo)*, the woven strips out of which mats *(mikeka* or *jamvi),* bags, and baskets for every purpose were created. The thicker side strips of a *mwaa* were suitable only for the making of brooms.[72] Women, and boys in Quran schools, customarily wove the strips, which sold at a rate per arm length, and men sewed the strips together.[73] The finest, most flexible mats of all were made from the fronds of the wild date palm *(mkindu),* which was less plentiful than the *mkoma* in the Lamu hinterland except along the Tana, where it flourished. A farmer would carry grain or other produce *kichwani* (on the head) in a *kapu,* a large, round, deep basket, from field to village; there were also mat panniers *(sogi* or *fumba)* for donkeys, by which means a village shopkeeper, having purchased the produce from the farmer, would transport it to a dhow port.

[70]Jambeni Mohamed, interview in Lamu, 3 July 1971; Omari Ali Omari Mzee, interview in Mokowe, 12 July 1971.

[71]Mbwana Othman, interview in Witu, 22 Feb. 1971, stated that much salt was taken from the lakes near Witu until the first decade in the twentieth century when the British tampered with the drainage system in this area. Abdulla Mohamed Kadara, interview in Lamu, 6 Apr. 1971, pointed out that some of the salt collected on the mainland was *magadi,* unfit to eat, but used to make soap and cure tobacco. See also Fitzgerald, *Travels,* 346, 377.

[72]Field notes, Lamu, 12 June 1971. See also Taylor, *Aphorisms,* 65.

[73]Jambeni Mohamed, interview in Lamu, 18 July 1971.

Island Agriculture

> *A cocoa-nut will not grow out of the sound of a human voice.*[74]

A few hundred yards away from the mainland, on Lamu Island, a quite different system of agriculture was pursued. In contrast to the wide-open look of the half-planted, half-fallow mainland areas, the island at the peak of its prosperity had "not even an inch" of unclaimed land,[75] and most of it was devoted to the coconut palm. The palm thrived in the free-draining, sandy soil on its high water table, enjoyed the sea breezes, and stood up well to the high salt concentration and low rainfall. Although the shamba owner waited some years for first fruit--from eight to ten, depending upon the type of coconut palm--the *mnazi* had a long life of over fifty years. Coconut palms near the mainland towns of Mkonumbi, Witu, and Kipini bore fruit within five to seven years of planting because the soil there was richer, but the security offered by the island more than offset the additional investment of time. On Pate Island, too, better soil allowed earlier bearing.[76]

In addition to slave cultivators on the island, who often lived on the plantations, certain slaves specialized in climbing the coconut tree to gather the ripened nuts and also to tap the tree for its sap which, unfermented, was used in cooking, and, fermented and distilled, became the palm wine, *tembo kali*. The constant tapping of a palm was distinctly harmful to the tree, unless it was allowed to rest at least four months out of a year. The best cared for coconut palms received a dosage of goat manure and coconut refuse spread at the roots for a radius of six to eight feet; the results, especially at the earlier stages of a palm's growth, were noteworthy.[77] The goats and the few cattle which were herded on the island were carefully kept away from the coconut palms lest they graze too closely.

The coconut itself had many uses. The unripened nut, *dafu*, contained a refreshing drink, and the milk made of the ripe coconut meat was a basic ingredient in local cuisine. In addition,

[74]A saying in Ceylon quoted in Fitzgerald, "Planting," 31.

[75]Ahmed Mohamed Jahadhmy, interview in Lamu, 21 March 1971.

[76]E. J. M'Rabu, "The Coconut Palm (Cocos Nucifera L.)," (Mimeo paper F.485.51, Library, Ministry of Agriculture, Nairobi, n.d.), 1-2; H. Powell, "Notes on The Coconut Palm, Manuring, Preparation of Copra," *The Agricultural Journal of British East Africa*, III (Oct. 1910), 245-246. Jambeni Mohamed, interview in Lamu, 25 Aug. 1971; Shaibu Fumo, interview in Kipini, 17 Aug. 1971.

[77]Whyte's Report, 10; Othmani Mabruku, interview in Kipungani, 9 Nov. 1971.

this ripened flesh could be dried in the sun on mats or special cement floors to become copra from which oil could later be extracted. With the high percentage of sunny days on Lamu the copra could be dried quickly and produce a high oil content.[78] The branches of the coconut palm produced the raw material for the manufacture of *makuti*, thatch roofing, which was sold in strips. The husk which covered the nut, first soaked in salt water and then dried in the sun, furnished the fiber for the strong, elastic, and rot-resistant coir rope which was used to bind the planks of the *mtepe*, the sea-going sewn vessel built in Rasini and Ndao.[79] The coconut palm of the islands thus provided not just food and drink but was the basis of a whole group of industries.

Coconut palms were the focus of any island shamba, but along with the palms grew the large hardwood trees, tamarind *(mkwayu)* and mango *(mwembe)*, and a few date palms *(mtende)* and cashew-nut trees *(mkorosho)*. Most varieties of mango--and there were many--took four or five years from planting to bearing, as did the tamarind.[80] A vast assortment of vegetables and fruits were grown on the ground beneath the palms; whether by design or accident, they provided soil nutriments beneficial to the palm.

As I have discussed, a few areas on Lamu Island behind Kipungani were suitable for rice and even *mtama* cultivation. In the *mtama* fields, which may have developed only when coconut *mashamba* were allowed to lie derelict at the end of the century, mainland agricultural rituals and methods were followed.[81] But for the most part cultivation on the island was not seasonal and was free from the communal activities of the mainland *makonde*.

At Manda, where the cultivators were not resident year-round and the soil was red loam, cereal and pulse crops were grown. Here again, mainland rituals and methods were followed. Consistent with mainland practice, no formal, specific claims to land existed here until very late in the century; then the claims were made for political and not economic reasons. At Pate, the largest of the three islands, coconut cultivation was pursued near the towns--most luxuriantly at Siyu--while cereal and pulse crops were grown in the center of the island, especially in the area west of Chundwa. Siyu also featured *tambuu* (betel pepper plant) gardens in and around the town, as did Kipungani on Lamu island. Between them, these two places furnished the entire archipelago with the leaf which was chewed along with the popular

[78] M'Rabu, "Coconut Palm," 1-2; Powell, "Notes," 247.

[79] Fitzgerald, *Travels*, 381.

[80] Shaibu Fumo, interview in Kipini, 17 Aug. 1971.

[81] Saidi Mohamed Bamasudi and Ali Macho, conversations in Lamu, Nov. 1971.

betel nut and lime.[82] The tobacco fields of Pate town, among the ruins which were already existent early in the nineteenth century, and the coconut plantations here and at the other towns, were well marked, but the interior *makonde*, without trees, were largely free of boundaries and were treated like mainland fields.

Rights over the Land

Just as two types of farming were pursued in the Lamu archipelago and mainland, so two corresponding kinds of rights over the land existed in the nineteenth century. The two kinds of rights reflected the pragmatic approach of Lamu cultivators, traditional Islamic law, and, on the mainland, very likely Bantu traditions.

A community customarily controlled its own *bara*, or mainland domain. Within a community's *bara*--for example, Mkonumbi's--all Mkonumbi cultivators would annually prepare their fields, allowing former fields, also within Mkonumbi's *bara*, to lie fallow. The community's control over a block of land was established by long tradition, and was not unlike the neighboring Pokomo people's strict territorial claim to areas surrounding their villages. While the Pokomo and other agricultural peoples' cultivation was carried out on a shared, clan basis under the control of elders, in a Lamu district village or town, community or group control ended with its hold over a customary *bara* and with the rituals connected to it.[83] Individual plots were the sole responsibility of the single cultivator and his immediate family, or of the proprietor with slaves. If the individual's crop failed, he alone would go into debt to buy food for sustenance and seed for the planting next season. If the yield from his plot was exceptionally good, he reaped the profits and bore no formal responsibility to his neighbor.

Under the system of shifting cultivation which was practiced in the area, it would seem to Western observers that the individual cultivator could hardly claim formal ownership to unsurveyed land which he had abandoned twelve or fifteen years before, even though

[82]Jambeni Mohamed, interview in Lamu, 21 July 1971. The areca palm *(mpopoo)* which yielded the betel nut grew along the Tana River.

[83]Even though, in the early twentieth century, in a desperate attempt to alienate land which they had used in the customary way for decades, if not centuries, the Lamu notables made a communal claim to a large piece of land near Mpekatoni. Kenya Land Commission, *Evidence*, III, 2610ff. See also Lienhardt's introduction to Hasani bin Ismail, *Medicine Man*, 22-25, for information regarding spiritual ties to the land in some Swahili Communities.

he might plan to return to such land in the future. However, under Islamic law, abandonment of land was entirely a question of the intention of the user, and if a cultivator advertised his plans to return the following year to the once-used fallow ground, he had the right to do so. On the mainland, it was not the land which was owned but rather the right to use the land. Abandonment was justly presumed from failure to cultivate, but if local custom meant land would lie fallow more than ten years, this was not abandonment. Any established resident *(mwenyeji)* of Mkonumbi, for instance, had the right to cultivate any unclaimed land within Mkonumbi's *bara,* and would be well acquainted with the intentions of other Mkonumbi cultivators to use certain areas.[84] In the rare case where a former cultivator had set out trees, even the trees would fail to alienate a field if they were abandoned beyond a reasonable length of time.[85] Land itself on the mainland opposite Lamu was not valuable unless manpower were available to make it productive. And, in turn, with manpower a proprietor could easily alienate land and make clear his intention to use it. Island-controlled land on the Lamu mainland was, unlike Arab-Swahili controlled land south of the Tana, largely free of competition from agricultural African neighbors. Shortage of land was not a problem in times of peace.

A *shamba* of trees, be it near a mainland village or on one of the islands, was treated quite differently. First of all, while the investment in a *honde* included only a supply of seed and labor for one season, a *shamba* of coconut trees could be without any profit for five to ten years. After that time, however, a *shamba* would bring year-round produce not for one season but for half a century or more. With such a substantial investment of time, and in view of such potential profit, the proprietor of a shamba would naturally want a firmer claim to a shamba than he would to a treeless *honde.*

In essence, the same Islamic law applied to *mashamba:* as long as land was in use it was alienable. Therefore any productive and cared-for coconut or fruit-tree plantation would be alienable. The *shamba* was not measured by the linear measures used on the mainland, but by the number of trees, which were, however, customarily planted with a certain number of paces between them. It may well

[84]See John Middleton, *Land Tenure in Zanzibar* (London, 1961), 21, and G.E.T. Wijeyewardene, "Kinship and Ritual in the Swahili Community" (unpublished paper read at a conference of the East African Institute of Social Research, May 1959), 10-13, for similarities and differences on Zanzibar Island and on the southern Swahili coast. See also Patterson, "Notes," 12; Kenya Land Commission, *Evidence,* III, 2501, 2620; Bujra, "Bajuni Village," 28.

[85]Fundi Harafa Jumaa, interview in Mokowe, 8 July 1971; Bwana Maalimu Kame, interview in Lamu, 29 March 1971.

be that in earlier days it was indeed the trees and not the land which was owned, as was the case in parts of Zanzibar,[86] and in other African and non-African settings. Certainly the value was assessed by the number of trees rather than acreage.[87] But by the end of the century *mashamba* were apparently sold at auctions as pieces of land.[88] *Mashamba* were inheritable under the Islamic *sharia*, which allowed descendants of the deceased to receive specified fractions of the estate and often resulted in the division of a *shamba* among several owners. If unmodified by the sale of shares by one heir to another, the *shamba* would thus be further split with each generation. This fragmentation of land was obviously impractical, however, and was rarely allowed to happen.

In the days of slaveholding on a vast scale, a rich merchant of Lamu, Rasini or Siyu would control land on both the island on which he lived and on the mainland *bara* of his town. On Lamu the largest proprietors included an increasing number of Omani Arabs. These Arabs, as well as wealthy Bajun of Rasini and Swahili of Siyu who ostensibly cooperated with Zanzibar, increasingly encouraged on their plantations the raising of grains and oil seeds for export. The Pate Swahili who retreated to the mainland also pursued agriculture intensively on both *mashamba* and *makonde* at Witu. More important to the local economic scene than their peaceful farming pursuits, however, were the disruptions they caused to the mainland agriculture of the friends of Zanzibar.

[86]Middleton, *Land Tenure*, 27-29; Prins, *Swahili-Speaking Peoples*, 63.

[87]Stigand, *Zinj*, 109-110.

[88]Salimu Ahmed Basaida, interview in Lamu, 2 March 1971.

CHAPTER 5

POLITICS IN THE LAMU ARCHIPELAGO FROM 1800 TO THE DEATH OF SAYYID SAID IN 1856

> *The Arabs settling upon the island [of Lamu] "made them [the Swahili] low." The Soahili do not like this state of things, but they cannot help themselves. The Soahili did not in former times fight the Galla; but the people of Lamo now fight them, when they come to steal. The Soahili have feeling, but the Arabs have none; and they are a very bad people.*[1]

After the demise of Portuguese power, the large towns of the Lamu archipelago became independent city states. Pate was predominant among the towns until the late eighteenth century, while Lamu and Siyu became increasingly important. We know less about Rasini at the turn of the nineteenth century; either the town remained more isolated than the others or, more likely, its main contacts were until then with the Bajun north rather than with the rest of the archipelago. In competition with one another, these nominally independent towns became more and more attached to outside powers, and shortly after the turn of the nineteenth century both Pate and Lamu were actively seeking foreign assistance. This they had done before, but the results of their efforts at outside alliance in the early years of the nineteenth century would carry through to the days of modern Western imperialism.

In Lamu, Pate, and Siyu the *wangwana* were divided into tribes or clans, some of which had become predominant over the years. In Pate, the Nabahani clan had been in a position of power throughout the eighteenth century, and from this clan the *mfalume* or sultan was chosen. Advisers, called *waziri*, were drawn from other leading families. Limiting the sultanship to one family, however, did not prevent succession disputes among its factions, which led in great part to the downfall of Pate as an independent power. In Siyu the powerful Famao family had in the seventeenth century invited certain Somalis to assist them against the Nabahani, admitting the Somalis to a share in Siyu's government, with a sheikh of the Famao and a sheikh of the Somali each administering justice through a kadi to his respective people.[2] This system continued in theory into the nineteenth century, when the Famao family regained power. The clans became increasingly divided by factionalism and intrigue. In Rasini, "three sheikhs" are said to have ruled.[3]

[1]Pickering, *Races of Man*, 187, quoting his interpreter, Sadik of Merka, about 1844.

[2]Mwana Kupona, *Advice Upon the Wifely Duty*, eds., A. Werner and W. Hichens (Medstead, 1934), 15-16.

[3]Ainsworth and Hollis's Report, 6; *PP* (1898), LX, C. 8683, Sir A. Hardinge: Report on the...East Africa Protectorate, 14.

An ostensibly more republican form of government had evolved at Lamu. The town was divided into two halves called Zaina and Suudi, and all of the noble families were affiliated with one or the other. The halves elected leaders from the heads of their constituent families and, alternately, the elected leaders from the two sections ruled the whole town for four-year periods.[4] Even though the elders of the leading families acted as advisers to the *mngwana wa yumbe*, as the ruler was called, this form of government also leaned toward division.[5] That the military regiments were also drawn from the two halves did not lessen this tendency.[6]

The strength and independence of any of the towns of the archipelago depended not only upon control of its respective island territory and people, but upon control of its hinterland and what that entailed: access to produce, which meant sustenance; wealth and the ability to collect taxes or tribute from subject peoples; and access to the manpower which was so important in time of war. The jurisdiction of a town could be enforced on the island and on its nearby mainland dominions, but tight control beyond any cultivated area was impossible. In these peripheral areas beyond cultivation, political alliance and commercial ties were the only means of making the influence of a town felt. These means were put to full use by the island towns in the nineteenth century.

As we have seen, the mainland area of each town was cultivated largely by slaves belonging to town-dwelling proprietors. These slaves were under the control of townsmen, then, even though in normal times they would have been left entirely to the supervision of other slaves. Plantation slaves thus owed allegiance to townsmen and could be called upon to serve as soldiers, just as could town-dwelling slaves. In the independent mainland villages of the Bajun north, little control was exerted from Rasini early in the century, but if their interests were aroused and their tribal loyalties excited, the Wakariani would assist islanders in time of war.

This also applied to other nearby peoples of the mainland. Oromo near the Tana River and elsewhere were influenced by the Pate Nabahani; Boni were sometimes enlisted by the Bajun. So great was this latter possibility that some Boni voluntarily allied themselves to the Somali to avoid servitude to the Bajun. There is only one known early nineteenth-century example, at Siyu in the 1840s, to

[4]Prins, *Swahili-Speaking Peoples*, 100.
[5]Nicholls, *Swahili Coast*, 61-68, describes the political organization of the archipelago at this time.
[6]Hichens, "Lamu Chronicle," 12, 26-27.

compare with the seventeenth-century hiring of large groups of Oromo mercentaries by Pate,[7] but such arrangements were probably more frequent, and more subtle deals were made. Trade was the basis of mutual understanding between the Oromo and Nabahani at Ozi. Siyu and Rasini were historically more involved with the Somali, but as the leaders of Siyu became more allied to the deposed Pate Nabahani, they made use of the Nabahani friendship with Oromo.

The external political affairs which are known, however incompletely, to involve Pate and Lamu and the other towns in the early years of the nineteenth century have been discussed in other volumes,[8] and will not be repeated in full here. Rather, the concentration will be on the clues from the records of this period which suggest the importance of mainland alliances, trade, and agriculture to the islanders, and how these connections were reflected in political activity at the international level.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Pate and Lamu affairs were interwoven, the ever present factions having been strengthened as a result of the marriage of an eighteenth-century Pate sultan, Bwana Bakari wa Bwana Mkuu, to a Lamu woman. At the death of Sultan Fumo Madi in 1807, the descendants of this marriage fought over the succession and, finally, men of Lamu went to Pate in about 1809 to help their kinsmen. A long battle with no hope of settlement ensued, so that certain Pate people requested that the liwali of Mombasa, an Omani Arab of the Mazrui family, come and mediate. The choice of a Mombasa liwali as mediator was not without precedent, for Pate had in the past been dependent upon the Mazrui.[9] Also, as early as 1801, the ruler of Pate had wanted British protection against the French who were actively trading on the coast.[10] Pate was clearly awake to the advantages of outside alliance. Now the Mazrui liwali came and supposedly reconciled those involved in the dispute, with the

[7]Strandes, *Portuguese Period*, 207.

[8]Most recently, Nicholls, *Swahili Coast*. See also Reginald Coupland, *East Africa and Its Invaders* (Oxford, 1938); G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville, "The Coast, 1498-1840," in Roland Oliver and Gervase Mathew, eds., *History of East Africa*, I (Oxford, 1963), 129-168; J. M. Gray, "Zanzibar and the Coastal Belt, 1840-1884," *ibid.*, 212-251; and G. Akin Akinola, "The Mazrui of Mombasa," *Tarikh*, 2, 3 (1968), 26-40.

[9]Hichens, "Lamu Chronicle," 18-19; Guillain, *Documents*, I, 567.

[10]Nicholls, *Swahili Coast*, 120; see also Freeman-Grenville, *The French at Kilwa Island* (Oxford, 1965), 19 and *passim;* and Capt. T. Smee and Lieut. Hardy, "Observations during a Voyage," *TBGS*, VI (1841-44), 33, regarding fear of the French in Pate as late as 1811.

help of a garrison of five hundred soldiers under the direction of the liwali's son, Amir Abdulla bin Ahmed, who remained in Pate. Although the Lamu people agreed to build a stone fort in Lamu under Mazrui guidance, in order to prevent further strife with the Pate Nabahani, the cautious Lamu leader Bwana Zahidi bin Mgumi investigated and exposed an intrigue between the friendly Mazrui and a group in Pate which was badly disposed toward Lamu.[11]

Succession rivalries continued in Pate, but they were now under the tutelage of the Mazrui, who made an agreement with one of the heirs to the throne, Ahmed bin Sheikh. In accordance with this, Ahmed was able to overcome his rival, Fumo Luti, who was imprisoned in Mombasa. Once in office, Ahmed demanded from the people of Lamu a produce duty called *kikanda,* which was a measure of grain to be exacted for every slave a proprietor owned.[12] This tax had been charged before the time of Ahmed; Lamu proprietors had paid it during the reign of the Pate sultan Fumo Madi, father-in-law of Ahmed. It may be indicative of the abrupt upheavals suffered by the Pate ruling family at this time that the tax had been allowed to lapse. In Fumo Madi's time the tax had been collected even from territory which was deep in the heart of Lamu's mainland agricultural lands--for example, at Ndambwe south of Mkonumbi--and avoidance of the tax had been punishable by a severe fine.[13] The Frenchman Guillain reported the existence of such a tax in the Mombasa area in the 1840s, along with a tax called *mlia,* which was based upon the amount of land a proprietor cultivated. According to Guillain's reckoning, both the *kikanda* and the *mlia* were not inconsiderable taxes in relation to seasonal yields.[14]

In the Lamu archipelago the *kikanda* tax was obviously imposed

[11]Hichens, "Lamu Chronicle," 20-21; Shaikh al-Amin bin Ali Al-Mazrui, "The History of the Mazrui Dynasty of Mombasa," trans. James M. Ritchie (mimeographed copy in Fort Jesus library, Mombasa) [hereafter Mazrui Ms.], 31.

[12]Swaleh Bahamfusi, interview in Mkonumbi, 14 September 1971, stated that the word is *kikunda,* a measure larger than a *pishi.* At one time slaves received a kikunda of grain every evening. Even today landowners sometimes pay agricultural workers by the *kikunda* of grain to equal the daily rate. Krapf, *Dictionary,* equates *kikunda* with *kibaba.* See glossary in Appendix A.

[13]Stigand, *Zinj,* 67-69. Stigand recorded one version of the Pate Chronicle. It is possible that this was the only time that Lamu had been forced to pay *kikanda.* Toeppen, "Deutsch Witu-Land," 327, stated that Lamu paid the tribute for only one year.

[14]Guillain, *Documents,* III, 259-260.

almost entirely on mainland rather than island produce, since little grain was grown on any of the islands, except perhaps Manda, and Manda was largely deserted after 1806.[15] But because all major proprietors were towndwellers, a fine could quite readily be collected if the payment of grain were evaded. The Lamu proprietor Abdulla bin Hafithi attempted to avoid paying his usual three loads of produce by setting his slaves to cutting planks rather than cultivating one season, but Fumo Madi of Pate, interpreting the spirit rather than the letter of the law, was able to collect the large fine he imposed upon Abdulla.[16] The *kikanda* was now a Mazrui-inspired tax, but it had been enforced in Pate dominions before the Mazrui became true overlords there, and it retained its Swahili name. It was probably a pre-Omani form of taxation which the Pate Nabahani had collected whenever they were capable of doing so.

When Sultan Ahmed, backed by the Mazrui, now ordered the *kikanda* to be paid, after a lapse of some years, the Lamu people refused to do so. Whether the idea of paying the *kikanda* into the treasury of the Mazrui was distasteful to Lamu proprietors, whether the tax had become exorbitant in a bad year, or whether Lamu saw a good chance to escape it once and for all, the imposition of this tax now was one of the reasons for the well known battle of Shela.

In the battle of Shela,[17] as in all Pate-Lamu issues of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, factionalism ruled. The unsuccessful partisans of Fumo Luti had, in fact, retired to Lamu.[18] The Zaina section of Lamu sided initially with the Mazrui-Pate forces, and did not join with the Lamu Suudi group until they feared defeat, and even at this stage certain men of Lamu served as informers for Pate. On the Pate side, the pro-Mazrui forces had been joined by Watikuu,[19] a name which may either be interpreted in the archaic general sense of people of the mainland, or, more specifically, as Bajun. These divisions are clouded by a so-called Lamu victory over Pate and the Mazrui at Shela, but in fact the victory was one of a temporary coalition.[20] It cannot be overemphasized that factions would exist just under the surface at Lamu, even under Omani rule, and these factions would include sympathizers and even members of the deposed Pate ruling party throughout the century.

During the conflict which culminated in the battle of Shela, before victory was within the grasp of the dominantly Lamu-based faction, emissaries from Lamu traveled to Oman to seek assistance from Said bin Sultan of the Busaidi dynasty, who in 1806 had

[15]Decken, *Reisen*, II, 276.
[16]Stigand, *Zinj*, 67-69.
[17]Dating of the battle ranges from 1808-1809 to 1812.
[18]Guillain, *Documents*, I, 568.
[19]Hichens, "Lamu Chronicle," 26-27.
[20]For a contemporary account of the Shela battle, see that of Bwana Bakari in Stigand, *Zinj*, 76-77.

assumed the sultanship of both the Omani Persian Gulf and East African dominions centered at Zanzibar. Although the Shela battle was over before Said bin Sultan's men-of-war arrived, the Mazrui alliance with Pate seemed a continuing danger to Lamu: "Now after the Shela fight, although they were victorious, the Amu people mistrusted Pate because the island was near them, and they governed the same mainland, and, moreover, Pate was an old kingdom."[21] The leaders of Lamu were willing to allow the Omani sultan to establish a garrison and a resident governor at Lamu in 1813.[22] The fort, initiated under different auspices, was now completed. The move enabled Said bin Sultan to get a foothold in a northern area which could check the power of his strong Mombasa-centered Omani rivals, the Mazrui. The penetration of Omani power at Lamu was the farthest-reaching result of the battle of Shela.

At Pate the Mazrui *amir*, Abdulla bin Ahmed, remained as commander of the garrison until he returned to Mombasa to succeed his father as liwali. Abdulla's brother Mbaruk bin Ahmed then took command at Pate. The Mazrui strength kept intrigue under control during the first years of Sultan Ahmed's reign, but soon there were renewed attempts by the deposed party to regain power. Sultan Ahmed was forced, at least once, to retire to the mainland for safety.[23] Fumo Luti and his following approached Sayyid Said as the most likely power to assist them in their goal of re-establishing themselves at Pate, and in 1817 Said sent four thousand men in a fleet of thirty Omani ships which cast anchor off Ras Mtangawanda, Pate's deep-water anchoring place. The ensuing attack on Pate was part of a more general program against the Mazrui also carried on in Mombasa and Pemba.[24] The town of Pate was captured through the treachery of the pro-Busaidi party in Pate, and Said's choice of sultan, with a garrison, was then established.[25] The depth of Busaidi success at Pate, however, remained uncertain.

Early nineteenth century political records contain little information about the mainland dominions of the Lamu archipelago towns. After the 1817 episode, however, the party of the deposed sultan of Pate--who had retreated to Mombasa--seized "some Arab possessions" along the Ozi River, and then held them for their exiled leader.[26]

[21] *Ibid.*, 77.

[22] Mazrui Ms., 37; Hichens, "Lamu Chronicle," 28-29, Guillain, *Documents*, I, 368-369.

[23] See Smee and Hardy, "Observations," 34-37, who visited Pate in February 1811. See also British Museum Add. Mss. 8958, Report of Lieutenant Hardy; Guillain, *Documents*, I, 571.

[24] Mazrui Ms. 45-56; Thomas Boteler, *Narrative of a Voyage of Discovery to Africa and Arabia*, I (London, 1835), 373-374.

[25] Guillain, *Documents*, I, 572; Coupland, *Invaders*, 219-220.

[26] Boteler, *Narrative*, I, 374.

This Ozi River area was considered part of the Nabahani dominions,[27] yet this is one of the first specific references to the actual possession by Pate people of territory at the Tana-Ozi delta. It is possible that the Nabahanis seized land which had been used by Arab families who had come from Oman in pre-Portuguese times. According to some accounts, when the Nabahani came to the Ozi River some of these Arabs moved south to Malindi, while others stayed on at the Ozi River and intermarried with the Nabahani.[28]

Allegiances were mixed in the Lamu archipelago and hinterland even after the expedition of 1817. Although Sayyid Said held Lamu, his control of Pate was tenuous, and his domination of the mainland, it would seem, was nonexistent, except as it was exerted by local townspeople who were loyal to him and who in turn controlled the mainland inhabitants. In this, the very topography of the country made supervision difficult: the mainland agricultural centers were spread over a wide area, often inaccessible by land, and the surrounding country was inhabited not only by island-controlled slaves but by tribes whose ways were largely unknown to the Omanis. The best Sayyid Said could aim to achieve was control of commercial ports and trouble spots. After 1817 he found that there was not just one such trouble spot, Pate, but that the island town of Siyu was allying itself, at least in part, to the discontented party at Pate. The Ozi River was, of course, also a source of friction for the Omanis. Accordingly, Sayyid Said sent another naval expedition against Pate in 1822 under the command of the Omani Hamed bin Hamed. The inhabitants of Pate as a result placed themselves "with all their dependencies" under the protection of Sayyid Said.[29]

The order of events involving Pate at this time is unsure, but contacts between the Mombasa Mazrui and Pate and Ozi were clearly unbroken.[30] The party in Pate town may have acceded to the overlordship of the Sultan of Zanzibar, but the party out of office remained strong through its Mombasa alliance, and the rival sultan considered

[27]W. F. W. Owen, *Narrative of Voyages to Explore the Shores of Africa, Arabia and Madagascar,* I (London, 1833), 383.

[28]Abdulla Mohamed Kadara, interview in Lamu, 3 March 1971; Mbwana Othmani, interview in Witu, 21 February 1971. See also Arthur E. Robinson, "The Shirazi Colonization of East Africa: Vumba," *TNR,* 7 (1939), 97-98; Lyndon Harries, *Swahili Poetry* (Oxford, 1962), 51; and Frederick Cooper, "Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa in the Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1974), 174. Possibly these displaced "Arabs" were among the early nineteenth century settlers of Malindi.

[29]Owen, *Narrative,* I, 366; S. B. Miles, *The Countries and Tribes of the Persian Gulf,* II (London, 1919), 330.

[30]See FO 84/1799, "Genealogical Table of the Sultans of Patte," in Zanzibar Boundary Commission, June 1886, for one chronology.

himself the legal heir to the throne of Pate and all her dominions. The Englishman Lieutenant Emery gave one explanation of the tumultuous situation of 1824:

> The rightful heir is the present Sultan of Ozee, Fumolute ben Sheikh. His father, Sultan of Patta, died a year or two before my appointment. On the father's death, the younger son, Bana ben Sheik, being on the spot, reigned in his father's stead; but subordinate to his elder brother Fumalute, who was the legal Sultan, and was then residing in Mombasa. Things went on well for about a year, till Bana was resisted by Sêf ben Hamed [then liwali of Lamu], who offered the Imaum of Muscat 3,000 dollars together with an annual tribute of several hundred dollars, to induce the Imaum to assist him in conquering Patta; which he was to hold as Governor under the Imaum. The enterprise at first failed, because the Mombasians, with Fumalute and Mombarrock at their head, went and attacked Sêf ben Hammed at Patta, and defeated him. But he applied again at Muscat for aid, and received a stronger force, which drove Fumalute and his troops back to Mombas. Bana ben Sheikh, Fumalute's brother, was made prisoner by Sêf, and cast into a dungeon at Lamo....[31]

Emery's sympathetic view of the "Sultan of Ozee" reflects his position as a member of the British naval force under Captain Owen which was surveying the Indian Ocean at this time in the hope of curbing the slave trade and limiting French advantage in the area. Although British interests were not particularly East African to begin with, such discontented Swahilis as the sultan of Ozi and such Arabs as the Mombasa Mazrui were amenable to friendship with the British in the face of strengthening Busaidi power, and consequently attracted the attention of the naval officers.[32]

When Captain Owen visited Pate and Lamu in November 1823 he was apprised of current local political matters. Kau, the town which had been built up on the Ozi River some twelve miles from the sea, was described to him as:

[31]RGS, Emery Correspondence, LBR, MSS File, Letter of Lt. John Barker Emery to W. D. Cooley, 19 May 1835.

[32]See Sir John Gray, *The British in Mombasa, 1824-1826* (London, 1957), *passim;* and Mabel V. Jackson Haight, *European Powers and South-East Africa* (2nd ed., New York, 1967), ch. 5 and 6, for descriptions of this episode.

> an island in the dominion of Patta, and possesses an extensive independent territory by right of conquest, being inhabited by Sowhylese and their slaves. They have but few swords or matchlocks, but are well supplied with spears and bows and arrows, in the use of which they are particularly dexterous...

The Pokomo villages above Kau on the eastern bank of the Tana were "subject to Sheikh ben Hamed," the Nabahani sultan, and in addition the "chief of Kow contrives to carry on some little trade in ivory" with the Oromo of these parts, by means of an "annual gift to their chief, which is forfeited by any act of hostility or robbery committed by his subjects during the year."[33]

Fumo Luti bin Sheikh informed Emery, Owen's agent in the Lamu-Ozi area, that the river ran a great distance inland, and that he himself had been two months on his passage up the river. Emery was convinced that Fumo Luti had great influence over the Oromo, who inhabited "the inland country of Ozy." Fumo Luti had, it was said, descended from the Oromo on his mother's side, and employed Oromo at his Ozi headquarters. "One of them was sent to me [Emery] as a messenger by the Sultan of Ozy, and they always knew the Sohilie language; I attribute that knowledge to their friendly intercourse with the latter people.[34]

Strife continued between the Lamu-based Omanis and the Kau-Ozi Nabahanis and their followers. On one occasion, Seif bin Hamed, liwali of Lamu, invaded and plundered both Ozi and Rasini when Fumo Luti left Mombasa to take possession of these two places. The Lamu Chronicle states that the people of Lamu "saw cause of daily affront" from the people of Kau.[35] The men of Lamu went and fought with the inhabitants of Kau, defeating them in a difficult battle in which eighty Lamu men were killed. The lack of defensive posts through the agricultural land between Lamu and Kau contributed to a further loss for the "victors," for many Lamu men were killed en route home by Kau men who had followed them.[36]

Another episode occurred in late September 1824. When the Lamu Arabs now arrived in the district of Ozi they sent twenty men

[33]Owen, *Narrative*, I, 395-397; Boteler, *Narrative*, I, 392-394.

[34]RGS, Emery Correspondence, Emery to Cooley, [?] Nov. 1833 and 20 Dec. 1833; John B. Emery, "Short Account of Mombas and the Neighbouring Coast of Africa," *JRGS*, III (1833), 281-282.

[35]The name Kau is limited to the town, while the term Ozi seems to have applied to the area surrounding it along the Ozi River. The present village of Ozi is not an old site.

[36]Hichens, "Lamu Chronicle," 28-29.

into the town to reconnoitre and found that a slave belonging to the sultan of Pate was hoisting the English colors. He informed them that the English were on the march to Ozi. At this, the Arabs made their exit. Within a month, however, the slave who had raised the Union Jack at Ozi had been made prisoner at Lamu, the Arabs having discovered that the flag had been made in Mombasa and sent to Ozi under Mazrui auspices.[37]

On 17 November 1824 Owen promised his protection to Fumo Luti, sultan of Ozi and exiled sultan of Pate.[38] The terms of agreement stated that the sultan would not permit any traffic whatever in slaves.[39] While the British flag flew at Ozi, Fumo Luti was advised by the British at Mombasa "to resist all invasions and punish the offenders; which he did."[40] The Sultan and the British officers exchanged gifts as tokens of good will. The following months were evidently prosperous ones for the Ozi people, with much direct trade carried on between Ozi and Mombasa and the towns just south of Mombasa.[41]

The Omani authorities were clearly irritated by British activities in the Lamu area. Seif bin Hamed, liwali of Lamu, wrote Sayyid Said in March 1825 that Owen's behavior was becoming increasingly improper.[42] The same month the liwali of Pemba, Nasor bin Suliman, wrote from Rasini that Owen had demanded from Seif bin Hamed the surrender of Ozi, Siyu, and Jezeer (Pemba), the

> only places, with the exception of Pate and Lamu, that are free from Captain Owen's control. Those which he previously took from us have been given up to their inhabitants and freed from all allegiance to the Imam, whereby the revenue of Pate and Lamu, which, as you know, was almost entirely derived from those places, has been considerably diminished.

According to Nasor bin Suliman, Owen had even come to Rasini and demanded that all of the lesser ports and landing places of Pate Island be delivered into the hands of his allies, the Mazrui. Owen's request was ignored.[43]

[37]PRO/Ady/52/3940, entries for 30 October and 9 November 1824.

[38]*Ibid.*, entry for 17 November 1824.

[39]*PP* (1826), XXVI, C. 331, Inc. 3, Owen to Cole, 4 August 1825.

[40]RGS, Emery Correspondence, Emery to Cooley, 19 May 1835.

[41]For early ties by marriage between Ozi, Wasin, and Vanga, see A.C. Hollis, "Notes on the History of Vumba, East Africa," *JRAI*, XXX (1900), 286-288; Robinson, "Shirazi Colonization," 97, 99.

[42]Coupland, *Invaders*, 252-253, quoting Seif to Said, 2 March 1825.

[43]*Ibid.*, Nasor to Said, 12 March 1825.

In early 1825, Seif bin Hamed instigated the murder of Bwana Mkuu bin Hamed, Fumo Luti's uncle, at the hands of the Omani liwali of Pate. Bwana Mkuu was strangled in the night.[44] When Fumo Luti heard of it, he went by dhow to Kizingitini, the fishing town near Rasini, and from there to Siyu, where Bwana Mataka (Mohamed Ishaq bin Mbarak bin Mohamed), a member of the Famao family, was in sympathy with him.[45] Bwana Mataka commanded a good number of men and had arms. Seif bin Hamed learned that Fumo Luti was at Siyu and ordered his soldiers to go to Siyu to plunder property which Fumo Luti held there. The soldiers did so, carrying off seven slaves and several head of cattle, and killing the herd boy who also was Fumo Luti's slave. This incident led to a full-scale attack and counter-attack by Fumo Luti and Bwana Mataka on one side and the forces of the Omani liwalis of Pate and Lamu on the other. Fumo Luti requested that the British send a man-of-war, but Emery limited his assistance to writing to the liwalis, telling them how "injudicious" their behavior had been.

The outcome of the trouble was not clear. Pate was well barricaded against Fumo Luti, but on the other hand Siyu did not fall under Omani control.[46] When the wall of Siyu was broken down, Fumo Luti and Bwana Mataka fled to the mainland for a time, to the Siyu-controlled town of Kiangwe in Dodori creek, and from there they sent for help from the liwali of Mombasa. With a company of Mazrui soldiers, Fumo Luti and Bwana Mataka regained possession of Siyu, and once re-established they "fought Pate from Siu" as before.[47]

Bwana Mataka, in one version of the Pate Chronicle, is called the *ta'a* of Fumo Luti. This has been translated "vassal" from the Arabic, but Bwana Mataka was hardly a vassal to the deposed Pate sultan; his own power and influence were considerable. It is possible that Bwana Mataka's role was that of *ta'adad,* the possessor of sacred magic, a term applied to persons in southern Somalia, especially the sultans of Geledi, whom Bwana Mataka's family was allied with later, in 1848, and was very likely associated with as early as 1825. *Ta'adad* was commonly employed for military ends.[48]

[44]RGS, Emery Correspondence, Emery to Cooley, 19 May 1835. The liwali of Pate's name is given here as Sef ben Abdalla, but in Emery's diary as Nashur b. Burnatain [?]. PRO/Ady/52/3940, entry for 27 June 1825.

[45]Mwana Kupona, *Wifely Duty,* 15-16.

[46]PRO/Ady/52/3940, entries for 12 March, 27 June, and 4 July 1825.

[47]Stigand, *Zinj,* 88. They retreated to "Kang'ee and Deloo on the mainland." Nearby Mgine was also a Nabahani refuge. Ahmed Mohamed Jahadhmy, interview in Lamu, 6 April 1971. See also Werner, "Swahili History of Pate," 294-295; and Mazrui Ms., 68.

[48]Werner, "Swahili History of Pate," 292-293; Cassanelli, "Benaadir," 67-69.

One may speculate, in this event, that Bwana Mataka was a very desirable colleague for Fumo Luti. Also, such a charismatic aspect of the Nabahani-Mataka coalition may be indicative of a deeper and more widespread religious antagonism between the puritanical Omanis and the Pate-Siyu group; certainly it would have been a continuing irritant to the Arabs.

The British attachment to Fumo Luti ended when Owen's protectorate failed to be accepted by the authorities in London, but Fumo Luti and Bwana Mataka continued to work together against the Omanis. Siyu became the most active center of dissidence in the archipelago.

Little is heard of Ozi and Kau for the next two decades. In 1827, an American vessel, the brig *Ann* of Salem, visited Hosea (probably Ozi) and found its inhabitants unwilling to trade.[49] The Ozi Swahilis were very likely suspicious of strangers at this precarious period in their history, and they may well have feared American intrigue with the Omanis. The Nabahanis and their followers moved back and forth between Pate Island and Ozi as the situation demanded; apparently some of them remained in Pate town even when the Omanis controlled it.[50] But some sort of continuous Nabahani establishment, including both commerce and agriculture, was maintained at the Ozi River. When life became too hazardous on the island of Pate in the 1840s, they readily removed themselves to the mainland part of their dominions.[51]

Conflict with the Omanis was centered at Siyu in the 1830s and 1840s. Sayyid Said, once he was free of troubles within Oman, sent a naval force against Siyu in 1833-1834, in answer to Bwana Mataka's work against him. With Mazrui help, Siyu badly defeated the forces of Sayyid Said. Further Omani moves against Pate and Siyu in the 1830s were equally unsuccessful.[52] Presumably the dissident Nabahanis and Bwana Mataka and their followers were able to pursue their own ends with only minor interruptions from the Omani liwali of Lamu and the forces at his command.

In Siyu, as in the other towns, no united front defied the impending overlordship of Sayyid Said, but rather the Somalis who were even now resident in the town as a result of the seventeenth-

[49]Norman R. Bennett and George E. Brooks, eds., *New England Merchants in Africa. A History Through Documents, 1802-1865* (Boston, 1965), 148.

[50]Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 129.

[51]Werner, "Swahili History of Pate," 294-295. One of Bwana Mataka's four wives was a woman of Kau, possibly a Nabahani. Mwana Kupona, *Wifely Duty*, 19.

[52]Miles, *Countries and Tribes*, II, 336-337.

century alliance, and perhaps later alliances, were perturbed by Bwana Mataka's usurpation of power during the 1820s and were among those who appealed during the 1840s to the Omanis as a means of deliverance.[53] These Somalis, who kept great numbers of cattle on the island around Siyu and Chundwa, were the descendants of those Somalis with whom the people of Siyu had allied as a result of association on the mainland beyond Wange.[54] An agreement was now reached between the island Somalis and the Omanis, the first alliance between these groups in the Lamu area in the nineteenth century, but not the last. Such a bond between the Omanis and the Oromo people's arch enemies must have been influential in forming the Oromo attitude toward the Arabs as well.

The situations of the two great pastoral peoples of the near mainland were not unrelated to activities on the coast and islands at this time. Within southern Somalia, the immigration of the pastoral Darod Somali from the north into areas where more sedentary Somali tribes and their client peoples cultivated and herded cattle provoked great opposition in the Benadir and its hinterland. This opposition forced the Darod to press on beyond the Juba into territory where the Oromo were still dominant. Political and religious movements within southern Somalia were also related to events in the Lamu area. The Somali religious center of Bardera on the Juba was founded in 1819, and religious wars emanated from there after 1836. The Bardera *jihad* was a far-reaching attempt at puritan reform by certain Somali sheikhs who wished to remove from the Islam of southern Somalia its worship of saint cults and other unorthodox local practices. The rivalries of religious leaders were a part of the Bardera *jihad,* but also involved were the Somalis who were concerned because the ivory trade was threatened, and indeed stopped, by the Bardera sheikhs. The Darod immigration from the north coincided with this *jihad.*

It is also worth noting that Sultan Yusuf Mohamed of Geledi, renowned as a bearer of *ta'adad* and as a superior practitioner of mystical arts, defeated the reformist sheikhs in 1848 and emerged as the dominant political personality of the Benadir. He immediately revitalized the ivory trade.[55] If, in fact, Bwana Mataka of Siyu had ties with Geledi during the early decades of the century, reflecting religious agreement as well as political and economic factors, it would give further basis to the anti-Omani feelings of Bwana Mataka and the deposed Pate sultan. The Omanis' puritanical Ibadi form of Islam was in opposition, of course, to such mysticism. It is also likely that the effect of the *jihad* on the ivory trade was felt by the Pate-Siyu people.

[53]Ainsworth and Hollis's Report, 5.

[54]Jambeni Mohamed, interviews in Lamu, 17 July and 19 July 1971. According to Stigand, *Zinj,* 165, the first inhabitants of Siyu were Watikuu and Somali from Dondo and Burkao.

[55]Cassanelli, "Benaadir," ch. 2 and 3 *passim.*

Initially, Bardera maintained good relations with the Oromo south of the Juba, but in 1836 two raids were undertaken. In battles near Mandera and El Wak, the Oromo were defeated.[56] These raids occurred about the time of Sayyid Said's unsuccessful expeditions to Siyu, which also weakened the pro-Busaidi party of which the Somali residents of Siyu were members. There is no evidence of a large-scale Somali migration to the south of the Juba after the 1836 raids, although some Ogaden members of the Darod group probably remained in the area. Several factors helped to blur the Oromo-Darod boundary. The Ogaden may have been able to cross the Juba in large numbers during the 1830s, but once across they would have been in a bad position for moving their stock into the wet-weather and mid-season grazing areas to the west, which were controlled by Oromo. Remaining near the Juba would have meant serious loss of stock from the tsetse fly, for much of the river area was fly-infested. Also, a few Somalis intermarried with Oromo south of the Juba, and the two peoples traded with one another. Some skirmishes took place between the Ogaden and Oromo: for example, Murgham Yusuf of the Mohamed Zubeir defeated an Oromo party at Wajir Bor, an area of vital water supply, in 1848. But there is no evidence of a crushing defeat of the Oromo by Ogaden and Marehan Somalis in the 1840s as has sometimes been suggested.[57]

The first half of the nineteenth century saw a fair balance between these pastoralists in the Lamu mainland. The population movements of the Darod Somali were steadily southward, but the continuation of this migration does not seem to have been inevitable. Progress depended upon many factors: the seasons, the health of the stock, the skill of both peoples at overcoming or disarming resistance, and, not least, the acquisition of allies.

The reasons for Sayyid Said's decision to send another expedition against Siyu in 1843-1844 included the request for help by the Somalis of that place. In addition, the Nabahani and Famao people were probably obstructive to Omani policy in the area and, as before, they diverted trade revenues from the Omani. The Nabahani may also have used their affiliation with the Oromo, who lived scattered throughout the mainland but who were heavily concentrated in the area south of the Tana, to cause trouble for the Omanis, especially in their efforts to trade in the interior. Very likely there was active rebellion in Siyu. In any event, in late November 1842, a fleet was sent out from Zanzibar with two thousand men.[58] The

[56]Turton, "Pastoral Tribes," ch. 2. Also, during 1836-1837 a chole epidemic struck the Somali ports and the East African coast. James Christie, *Cholera Epidemics in East Africa* (London, 1876), 100-101.

[57]ArcAngelo, "Rough Sketch," 279-280; Turnbull, "Darod Invasion," 3-4; Turton, "Pastoral Tribes," 74.

[58]Bennett and Brooks, *Merchants*, 255, Waters Notes, entry for 28 Nov. 1842.

expedition, once it reached Pate Island, was a failure. Sayyid Said next induced, by gifts of money, the maritime chiefs of the Arabian coast to assist him, and many of them in their own ships joined a fleet at Zanzibar[59] which landed at Rasini in January 1844. This force was routed before it ever reached Siyu. Hamed bin Hamed, Sayyid Said's trusted commander, was killed; Ali bin Nasir, the Omani liwali of Mombasa, and his sons, were taken prisoner and then killed; and the guns, left behind by fleeing soldiers, were captured by Bwana Mataka.[60] A major factor in the defeat of the Omanis may have been Bwana Mataka's hiring of a great number of Oromo to augment his forces,[61] which very likely also included a number of Bajun from Rasini and the mainland.[62] The episode was humiliating for Sayyid Said, determined as he was to subdue the island.[63] His attempt to blockade Pate was not successful either, although in 1847 he claimed that it had reduced the followers of Bwana Mataka to hunger and famine.[64] It is unlikely, however, that the Omani fleet could have prevented small coasting dhows from crossing to and from the island at the various landing places among the mangrove swamps.

In the end, Sayyid Said achieved his goal, at least formally, through diplomacy. In 1846 he sent the kadi of Zanzibar, Muhyi-al-Din, who had previously lived for long periods at Lamu and Mombasa, to mediate with the dissidents at Siyu and Pate.[65] Through these mediations, Bwana Mataka acknowledged the sovereignty of Zanzibar, sent back the captured cannon with the message that he could not afford the powder to use them, and promised to pay an annual tribute of five thousand dollars, a pledge which he may never have intended to fulfill.[66]

[59]Lt. Kemball, "Further Continuation (to 1844) of the Preceding Sketches," *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government,* XXIV, N.S. (1856), 215; and Lt. Disbrowe, "Conclusion, to the Year 1853" (of Historical Sketch of the Government of Muscat), *ibid.*, 215. See also Joseph B.F. Osgood, *Notes of Travel or Recollections of Uajunga, Zanzibar, Muscat, Aden, Mocha, and Other Eastern Ports* (Salem, 1854), 67-68.

[60]Richard Burton, "Zanzibar," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,* LXXXIII (Feb.-March 1858), 223.

[61]ArcAngelo, "Rough Sketch," 281, stated that 2,000 Oromo, some of whom had converted to Islam, were in Bwana Mataka's pay.

[62]Burton, "Zanzibar," 223; Burton, *Zanzibar,* I, 298-299; Mrs. Charles E.B. Russell, *General Rigby, Zanzibar and the Slave Trade* (London, 1935), 351.

[63]J. L. Krapf of the Church Missionary Society decided it was not a good time to ask the Sultan for permission to establish a mission at Lamu. *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labors* (Boston, 1860), 106.

[64]Bennett and Brooks, *Merchants,* 372, Said to Waters, 1 Jan. 1847.

[65]Guillain, *Documents,* III, 102; B. G. Martin, "Notes on Some Members of the Learned Classes of Zanzibar and East Africa in the Nineteenth Century," *African Historical Studies,* IV, 3 (1971), 531, 533.

The Lamu archipelago continued to be of doubtful allegiance to Sayyid Said. The terms of his 1845 slave-trade agreement with the British, effective in 1847, which limited the seagoing trade to the area between the "port of Lamoo to the north, and its dependencies, the northern limit of which is the north point of Kuyhuu [Kiwayuu] Island, in 1° 57' south latitude, and the port of Kilwa to the south...,"[67] could not have won many friends for Sayyid Said in the archipelago, first of all for its questionable claim to Lamu's "dependencies"--the Nabahanis had previously claimed Kiwayuu and Manda.[68] More importantly, the treaty would, if enforced, hinder the northern slave trade in which many of the residents of the Lamu area were involved.

The year of Fumo Luti's death, at Siyu, is uncertain. His nephew Ahmed, the eldest member of his family, succeeded him. In about the year 1848 Ahmed and his followers established their residence at the Ozi, which was of course already under their control. In 1846 or 1847 a Hamburg merchant, Herr Schmeitzer, had visited the Ozi with the "King of Patta, to which district the city of Kau belonged"; a hundred soldiers of the king welcomed him, and many houses existed along the Ozi River.[69] It is unlikely that Ahmed was "less warlike" than his uncle and therefore "preferred not to continue the struggle with the Arabs."[70] According to some sources, Bwana Mataka died in 1848;[71] if so, this loss of a strong ally must have had bearing on Ahmed's decision to stay on the mainland. There seems, however, to have been a more urgent cause for Ahmed's flight. Bwana Mataka's son, Mohamed bin Sheikh, who had opposed the Omanis, interfered in Pate affairs, and even aided Sultan Yusuf of Geledi against the Omanis in 1848,[72] finally submitted to Sayyid Said. The Omani sultan did not trust him, however, and deceived him into going to Zanzibar, where he was imprisoned and eventually sent to Fort Jesus in Mombasa to die. Upon hearing of the seizure of his ally, Ahmed hurriedly left the dominions of the sultan of Zanzibar.[73] He and his followers lived at Kau undisturbed for some twelve years, until after 1860.[74] During this period they maintained

[66]Burton, *Zanzibar,* I, 298-299; Mwana Kupona, *Wifely Duty,* 18; Guillain, *Documents,* III, 103.

[67]Coupland, *Invaders,* 515.

[68]Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 129-130.

[69]Decken, *Reisen,* II, 267.

[70]Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 130; Fischer, "Verhältnisse," 361.

[71]Nicholls, *Swahili Coast,* 303. But Stigand, *Zinj,* 94, and Mwana Kupona, *Wifely Duty,* 18, give the year as 1856, the latter according to the testimony of his descendants.

[72]Guillain, *Documents,* III, 444-445.

[73]New, *Life,* 257.

[74]Fischer, "Verhältnisse," 361.

contact with allies on the islands of Pate and Lamu, who would assist Ahmed in one more attempt to regain Pate.

There was evidence of continuing unrest elsewhere in the archipelago. Although the Frenchman Guillain did not visit Lamu, there were rumors in 1847 that certain "native chiefs" of Barawa and Lamu were willing to sell their ports to France.[75] In 1844, Said had banished his eldest son, Said Hilal, from his dominions. Because Said Hilal was recognized by the English as the heir apparent, they did not discourage his efforts to recover his birthright.[76] Said Hilal first took refuge in Mecca, but by 1849 he had arrived in Lamu--probably not without expectation of asylum--where he instigated the murder of the Omani liwali, Ali bin Seif, and took possession of the town. Said Hilal, with the assistance of Lamu residents, seized the revenues of the town, which amounted to "10 or 12 thousand a year," but when the pressures from Zanzibar became too great he left Lamu for Bombay. One of the Arabs of Lamu who had favored Said Hilal later came to Zanzibar to pay his respects to the sultan, obviously a mistake, for Sayyid Said publicly disgraced him. Said Hilal died in exile in 1851, but order was not restored at Lamu until 1853.[77]

The first half of the nineteenth century was one of almost constant political strife in the Lamu archipelago. And it is a period for which we have few of the details. We do not know the requirements of Said's representatives in the towns of the archipelago, nor do we know whether or not the duties of citizenship within the Omani dominions were felt at all levels. The Said Hilal case was the last open breach of allegiance in the Lamu area during Sayyid Said's lifetime, which ended in 1856. This affair, while short-lived, was indicative of the shallow allegiance given Sayyid Said even in Lamu town, which had been the most outwardly cooperative of all the ports in the archipelago. Lamu had in fifty years time become the entrepôt for the whole district, however, and if it was not a center of dissidence itself, it was a place where the disgruntled from everywhere in the district made contact with one another. At this time, as in later decades of the century, many inhabitants of this area were deeply dissatisfied with Busaidi policies, not least those regarding the slave trade, and they would take their chances at finding alternative leadership.

[75]Miles, *Countries and Tribes*, II, 345. But see Norman Robert Bennett, "France and Zanzibar, 1844 to the 1860s," *IJAHS*, 6 (1973), 622, who points out the lack of evidence.

[76]FO 54/9, Extract of Hamerton to Willoughby, 14 April 1845, and Extract of Bombay Government to Directors of East India Company, 26 August 1845.

[77]Bennett and Brooks, *Merchants*, 482-483; Decken, *Reisen*, II, 371.

CHAPTER 6

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WITU STATE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES 1856-1876

The news of the death at sea of Sayyid Said in 1856 was held back as long as possible from the people of the Lamu area for fear it would foment further insurrections against Zanzibari rule.[1] Sayyid Said was succeeded, after a brief dynastic struggle, by his son Majid, who followed his father's policies in these northern areas. Although no new conflict began directly as a result of Said's death, the unrest which had been continuous throughout the first half of the century did not cease. The bitterness aroused in the hearts of the old ruling families by the Arabs' usurpation of power resulted during the next decades in the establishment of not only the Witu sultanate in alliance with the Oromo, but also in the heavily populated independent *watoro* villages which were helped initially by alliance with islanders from Siyu, and by cooperation with the Boni and Bajun. These inland dominions attracted runaway slaves from far and near, but also gave asylum to those persons who were politically persecuted by the Omani Arabs. As the Omanis came increasingly to enforce British policies, more islanders were affected economically, and the interior attracted even more inhabitants and allies.

Between the dissidents of Siyu and Pate on the one hand and the Zanzibaris on the other the attacks and counter-attacks, intrigues and counter-intrigues continued. Toward the end of Sayyid Said's reign, for example, Siyu people had destroyed the mainland cultivation and stolen the herds of the Lamu people at Mpekatoni, in retaliation for a sea-going attack on Siyu by the Omanis. Now, during Majid's reign, this devastation of the valuable Mpekatoni property was countered by a Lamu attack on Ukanga, a rich village and farming area of Siyu and Pate people midway between Mpekatoni and Kau.[2] Although the ethnic backgrounds and aims of the people of Siyu and Pate were not identical, dissidents from both towns were now in alliance; activities at Siyu on the island and at Kau and its environs on the Ozi River were interwoven. In this sense, Siyu could rightly be called "the pulse of the whole district."[3] In 1860 Majid's garrison at Siyu was expelled and the fort destroyed by the joint work of Ahmed (often called Simba in the literature), the successor of Fumo Luti, and the Siyu dissidents. They may at this time already have had a following of runaway slaves who had everything to gain from such an alliance. The followers were described as "self-liberated slaves" who received "no pay or rations, and subsist entirely on pillage.[4]

[1]Burton, "Zanzibar," 202.

[2]Hichens, "Lamu Chronicle," 29-31.

[3]"Extract from the Administration Report of the Political Agent at Zanzibar," *TBGS*, XVII (1865), 287; FO 84/1798, Kitchener to Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 30 April 1886, No. 12.

[4]W. Cope Devereux, *A Cruise in the "Gorgon"* (1869; 2nd ed., London, 1968), 381-382.

Sultan Majid himself accompanied the expedition against Siyu in 1861 and succeeded, with the help of Bajun from Rasini under their chief Mzee bin Seif, in taking the town and rebuilding the fort which Said had built earlier. A garrison remained in the fort to keep the peace at Siyu,[5] but this seizure of the town had little bearing on the many inhabitants of Siyu who had taken themselves to the mainland, as had the Pate dwellers earlier.[6] What Majid now had was not one but two former island-town populations working against him and his representatives from the relative safety of the mainland.

Majid's expedition against Siyu coincided with trouble at Lamu which resulted from English pressures against slave trading. The recently established Hamburg and Marseille merchant houses in Lamu, and the consequent growth of trade beneficial to Majid, depended upon a serene political situation at Lamu, which town the foreign merchants considered "the first trading place and staple market of the coast."[7] In this regard, it was in Majid's economic and political interest also to control the delta of the Tana-Ozi. The Arabs, under the leadership of the man who became *akida* of Kipini, attacked Ahmed and in a violent battle in 1862 drove him and his followers out of their position at Kau, despite Oromo assistance on Ahmed's side. Kau, now in Omani hands, was very well situated: large dhows could reach it at high tide, and the various tributaries of the Ozi flowed together there bringing the trade products of the Oromo and Pokomo.[8] The Arabs took over the Nabahani fort already built on the water-surrounded site, and placed a garrison there. Moreover, an Omani fort was erected and a garrison placed at the small village of Kipini, at the mouth of the Ozi. Once Kau and Kipini were under Arab rule, Chara, on the upriver end of the canal which the Nabahani had caused to be dug, was readily taken, but was not so easily held in its situation remote from the other garrisons.[9]

[5]"Extract," 287.

[6]The Omani garrison was continuous in Pate after 1850, having been maintained off and on since 1834. FO 84/1799, Procès-verbal, No. 14, 21 May 1886. Many Siyu people and some Lamu people went to the mainland at this time. Abdulla Mohamed Ali, interview in Lamu, 24 April 1971.

[7]Russell, *Rigby,* 89-90, 94, 173, 189-190; FO 84/1179, Hanseatic Consulate to Pelly, 11 March 1862 ff. See also Chapter 7 below.

[8]Fischer, "Verhältnisse," 361-362.

[9]Decken, *Reisen,* II, 371-372; Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 129-130. Awadh Abdulla Helimani, interview in Kipini, 26 March

The Nabahani family with its followers, free and slave, moved now to the well protected site of Witu, which during the wet season was accessible from Kau only via the several tributaries of the Ozi River. Under Sultan Ahmed, Witu grew quickly. Within a very few years of its foundation, many of those who had in one way or another suffered at the hands of the Arabs had made Witu their home.[10] By the mid-1860s Witu was the center of a large, well cultivated area carved out of the forest which surrounded it.

Emigrants from Siyu founded the town of Magogoni opposite Pate Island on the coast just south of Mongoni creek. They remained there in secret contact with their countrymen who had stayed at Siyu under Omani rule. It was not unusual for the Magogoni people to pirate the loaded Arab cargo vessels which passed through the narrow Mkanda channel.[11]

As for the people of Rasini, their leader Mzee bin Seif had opted for nominal allegiance to Zanzibar. Mzee bin Seif Banu Stambul, "Sultan" of the Bajun, was one of the most influential leaders in the Lamu area during the latter half of the nineteenth century. His rise to power was apparently due to his willingness to seize the opportunities afforded by the political upheavals of the times, and to take advantage of a rather loose political structure at Rasini, where there was neither a sultan nor a single ruling family. He may, however, have been a member of one of the three families in Rasini who controlled political power.[12] His background is hazy: the "Stambul" in his name, according to some informants, was due to his grandfather's having come from Turkey, but it may rather indicate a connection with the place called Stambuli on the southern Somali coast. Mzee bin Seif's father had lived at Rasini and had held large plantations on the adjacent coast which later became the immense slave-run holdings of Mzee bin Seif. The elder Seif had given lavish *ngomas* in order to gain a following, and there

1971, stated that Ahmed never visited Kipini, and that the real founders of the village were people of Ras Ngomeni south of the Tana. According to Fischer, "Verhältnisse," 361-362, Ahmed tried to settle at Kipini as well as at Kau, but the Arabs prevented him from remaining there.

[10]Brenner, "Forschungen," 459, stated that in 1867 Witu had 45,000 people, without counting the Oromo. This figure must have included the *watoro* in villages north of Witu, as well as the Siyu emigrants at Magogoni, all of which Brenner considered part of Witu.

[11]Brenner, "Forschungen," 459.

[12]*PP* (1898), LX, C. 8683, Hardinge's Report, calls Mzee bin Seif "a cadet of the Sindi house, one of the three ruling clans of Faza."

is some hint that he had ruled at least a part of the Bajun coast.[13] Mzee bin Seif also gathered followers by using a free hand with the cash box, but the details are few as to how he gained the allegiance of most residents from Rasini on the island to Ras Kiamboni on the coast. His own decision for the side of the Omanis may have resulted from rivalry with Siyu and Pate, and from seeing their fate as victims of Omani power. In the Sultan of Zanzibar's eyes, he was not trustworthy, but gaining even his lip-service was better than having him and his numerous countrymen openly blocking Zanzibari policies.

Sultan Ahmed of Witu was a man in his forties at the time of the Nabahani exodus from Kau in 1862. He was called Simba (the lion), his countrymen explained years later, because of his fiery nature as a young man, but he himself did not like this nickname as he grew older, preferring the titles "Bwana Mkubwa" (great master), "Mwenyemui" (master of the city--a common Bantu-language appellation), and "Sultan."[14] He had the reputation of a benevolent despot, apparently earning the respect of all of his subjects, most of whom, of course, had come to his dominions freely and out of fear of a common enemy. The advisers to the Sultan of Witu were Swahili *wangwana* who had come for the most part from Pate at the same time as Ahmed. There were individual *sharifs* at Witu, who ranked after the Sultan and his heir apparent; the *kadi* and the *walimu* were other important personages in this Muslim community.[15]

Slavery as an institution continued in Witu, despite its reputation then and later as a "free" state. In Witu, Ahmed was master of nearly all of the slaves, whom he would loan out according to the needs of other *wangwana*.[16] Villages populated by former slaves and fugitives of all kinds grew up around Witu, however, and there the inhabitants were free people in return for military service in the Sultan's behalf. These refugees had come voluntarily from as far away as the Benadir ports, as well as from the south. Many were runaway slaves, but others were attracted to Witu because of its reputed freedom and smoothly run administration.[17]

New arrivals were presented to the Sultan, and at his discretion distributed to various plantations. At each of the rural villages

[13]See page 88 below. Mohamed bin Haji bin Bwana Heri, interview in Lamu, 31 March 1971; Bwana Maalimu Kame, interview in Lamu, 29 March 1971.

[14]Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 131. The name Simba seems to have been perpetuated by Richard Brenner.

[15]*Ibid.* Brenner, "Forschungen," 459, stated that the *wangwana* of Witu included members of the Mazrui family from Mombasa and Takaungu, and the dissident Fumo Bakari family of Lamu. There is no further evidence for members of the Mzarui family living at Witu.

[16]Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 131-133.

[17]Mbwana Othmani, interview in Witu, 22 February 1971.

the Sultan placed a trusted military governor, presumably a Swahili, who ruled with the help of an older African of slave background or a Boni, who served as elder and judge. Each newcomer was encouraged to build a hut and to cultivate a piece of land. Neighboring Pokomo and Boni were induced to give their daughters to the *watoro* as wives, for neither the Swahili of Witu nor the Oromo were willing to do so. The military governor gave each *mtoro* a musket with ammunition and, with a specified body of men, the *mtoro* stood border guard on the coast two days each week.[18]

In addition to the Swahili *wangwana,* and the slave, former-slave, and fugitive population of Witu, there were also Oromo who had lived and now remained near Witu. They resided in their own encampments south of the town, where year-round pools furnished water for their cattle. Their relationship with the Witu sultan was that of equals, and the agreement made between Ahmed and the Oromo chiefs was basically one of mutual defense.[19] Both parties gained: the Oromo were fierce fighters, but the Nabahani had wealth and access to arms.[20] Oromo continued to control the country around Kau, where they exacted an annual tribute from the Omanis.[21]

Agriculture and cattle-keeping were the most important economic activities in Witu. The area included much of the best soil in the whole Lamu hinterland, and received the most favorable rainfall. The plantations of Witu included all the crops traditionally grown in the rest of Lamu district, including coconuts and rice (foods considered necessary to the diet of any *mngwana*) and also crops such as pineapples, which only here and at Mpekatoni in all of Lamu district received the rain which they needed. The former slaves cultivated mtama as the staple of their own diet.

Although Witu's economy was based on agriculture, certain crafts were carried on in the town, just as they had been in the island towns. Skillful ironworking and meticulous wood carving, especially on doors, were pursued in Witu. Sultan Ahmed's "masterpiece of turning," an ivory chess set, however, was a Siyu product.[22] The way of life in Witu essentially echoed that of the island towns from which the Witu *wangwana* came.

[18]Brenner, "Forschungen," 460; Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 133.

[19]FO 84/1799, Boundary Commission, June 1886. Inc. in Procès-verbal, No. 14. See evidence given by the Oromo Dadi ja Badada.

[20]Awadh Said Timimy, interview in Lamu, 29 April 1971, stated that the Oromo chief of Dida Waredi urged Ahmed to stay in Witu because of his money and arms.

[21]FO 84/1799, Boundary Commission, June 1886. Inc. in Procès-verbal No. 14, and Procès-Verbal No. 14, 21 May 1886.

[22]Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 133.

In Ahmed's time, Witu had the added advantages of peace and order.[23]

The date of the foundation of the first watoro villages in the forest north of Witu is uncertain. It is possible that the Wabalawa (the people of Balawa) included not only Boni but also watoro even before the Nabahanis arrived at Witu, and that they welcomed Ahmed as a powerful ally.[24] It is more likely, however, that the first watoro, including debtors and other fugitives as well as runaway slaves, came to the Witu state shortly after Ahmed's arrival precisely because of the strength of the Witu-Magogoni-Oromo alliance, and did indeed settle within the jurisdiction of Witu. By the mid-1870s, however, new watoro settlements no longer within Witu were located far into the Boni forest north of Witu, and their association with Witu, while friendly, was not wholly subservient. This independence may have resulted from the arrival in the interior of Avatula bin Bahero Somali.

Avatula has been erroneously termed a "Boni chief" in the literature of the late nineteenth century. He has also been called a "pure-blooded Somali,"[25] again misleading. Avatula was an Mkatwa, a member of a Bajun tribe with part-Somali ancestry, which was divided into eight sub-groups, of which the Avtila (Avatula's sub-group) ranked first. The Mkatwa is sometimes considered to be a Somali by Swahilis, for one reason because he does not eat fish, and Katwa has been taken as a tribal name by Boni associated with the tribe. The Boni were subservient to the Katwa Bajun.[26]

Avatula was born in Chundwa, but like many Bajun of Pate Island he had connections with the mainland coast. His father fought with a Bajun chief named Bwana Seif at Tula, north of Burkao, and was defeated.[27] Avatula fled to the forest where he gathered Boni warriors who recognized the Katwa superiority,

[23]There was "*starehe kabisa*" at Witu--complete peace. Abdulla Mohamed Ali, interview in Lamu, 24 April 1971.

[24]Abdulla Mohamed Ali, interview in Lamu, 28 April 1971, stated that the Wabalawa were the real indigenous people of the area (*wenyewe hasa*). See ArcAngelo, "Rough Sketch," 280-281, for the existence of the Juba River runaway-slave settlements in the 1840s.

[25]Toeppen, "Deutsch Witu-Land," 326.

[26]Bwana Maalimu Kame, interview in Lamu, 28 March 1971; Jambeni Mohamed, interview in Lamu, 17 July 1971; Omari Boroso, interview in Lamu, 28 February 1971; Mbwana Tora, interview in Kiunga, 15 April 1971.

[27]It is not implausible to suggest that this Bwana Seif was Mzee bin Seif's father, but there is no conclusive evidence. There is a group of Avtila gravestones at Chundwa, some of which date from the mid-nineteenth century, but their worn inscriptions prevent their identification as Avatula's or his father's. Field notes, Chundwa, 17 June 1971.

then returned to the coast, and was himself defeated by Bwana Seif. Avatula fled to the forest again, this time to Balawa.[28] The reasons for conflict between Avatula and the coastal chief are unknown, but Avatula stated that he had been persecuted by the Arabs, and that his father had been imprisoned at Lamu and "broken down" by the Arabs.[29] It is also possible that Bahero and his son Avatula, as dissidents of Omani rule, had been raided by the Arabs' Somali allies on the northern coast. Further disruptions may have occurred in the mid-to-late 1860s when cholera devastated whole villages along the Bajun coast.[30] Once ensconced in the stockaded village of Balawa, however, Avatula, with his Boni-and probably *watoro*--warriors, contributed to the power structure of the interior. He was the perfect ally for Ahmed at this time of increasing pressure from the Arabs. In fact, Balawa may have been given over to Avatula by Ahmed in return for the promise of his assistance in time of war.

The addition of Avatula to the forest alliance was countered on Lamu Island by the arrival of a *liwali* of unusual power. Sud bin Hamed, a Busaidi relative of the sultan of Zanzibar, arrived in the 1860s. Sud's early associations with the Lamu archipelago were bitter: his brother, Hamed bin Hamed, had been killed there in the Siyu expedition of 1844, and was buried at Rasini. Sud himself had come to Zanzibar, then returned to Muscat for a few years, where he had amassed great wealth. When he returned to Zanzibar, the sultan sent him to Lamu, where he quickly established himself both as an aggressive governor and as an avaricious landholder.[31]

Sud bin Hamed was not slow to seek out Sultan Ahmed of Witu, whose interior state was causing grave problems for Lamu's commercial and financial community.[32] For one thing, Sud wished to recapture fugitive Lamu slaves, many of whom had escaped to Witu and the forest communities. Sud bin Hamed's attack in 1866 did not take place at Witu, but at Balawa. It is not known whether Avatula had already reached the interior in 1866, whether Ahmed controlled Balawa, or whether he merely fled there upon hearing that Sud bin Hamed's army of one thousand strong was pursuing him. In any event, the stockaded village deep in the forest, no doubt enhanced by arms from Witu, withstood the Arab attack. Sud was forced to return to Lamu "without having inconvenienced the enemy in the least."[33]

[28]Omari Boroso, interview in Lamu, 28 February 1971, stated that Bahero died in the battle with Bwana Seif. Omari Ali Omari Mzee, interview in Mokowe, 11 November 1971, stated that Avatula fled to the interior because he fell out with his brother at Burkao.

[29]Toeppen, "Deutsch Witu-Land," 326.

[30]Brenner, "Forschungen," 456, n. 1; Christie, *Epidemics*, 139.

[31]Sud bin Hamed bin Sud, interview in Lamu, 3 June 1971; Salimu Ahmed Basaida, interview in Lamu, 2 March 1971.

[32]See Chapter 7 below.

[33]New, *Life*, 257.

Despite the failure of this Arab attack, Sultan Ahmed of Witu foresaw that the strength of the Zanzibari Arabs would only increase with the English backing they were now receiving. In 1867 Ahmed sought the protection of the Prussian government through the explorer Richard Brenner, who visited Witu during that year. The protection was not granted, but from this time on the sympathies of certain German individuals were with the Witu sultanate, and their interest during the next two decades resulted in action in 1885.[34]

Sud bin Hamed was undoubtedly influential in instigating the Oromo-Somali wars of the late 1860s which completely overturned the balance of power in the whole of Lamu district. Sud's anti-Oromo policies may be surmised from an incident in 1867. The liwali had learned that an Oromo caravan was nearing the coast at Mkonumbi in order to trade ivory and cattle. Sud allowed the Oromo to set up a market, but while the exchange was going on his men overpowered the Oromo and cut off the right hand of every Oromo present.[35]

In the view of the Arabs, there were several advantages to be achieved by a defeat of the Oromo. They would, first of all, have revenge upon the Oromo who had helped the Witu Swahilis. Also, they would boost the slave trade through capture of vanquished Oromo; and, with docile neighbors, they would be able to open the now risky land route to the north. Underlying all of these reasons was the further justification that the forces of Islam would be fighting the infidel.[36]

Until this time, the Oromo had been at a disadvantage in conflicts with the Somali, but they had maintained their position. The strife of the late 1860s, however, which came upon an Oromo people weakened by smallpox,[37] was decisive. There is no record of particular battles, but a full-scale invasion by the Somali caused the Oromo to flee to the south toward the Tana-Ozi and to the west as far as Borana country. The Oromo tribe called Kosikawa, which had lived north of the Ozi, was almost exterminated, and the northeastern boundary of the Oromo became the Tana-Ozi. Witu, therefore, was no longer in real Oromo country, except for those Oromo who had permanently settled near Witu and who were no longer truly nomadic. The Oromo would not return in any number to the left bank of the Tana until the 1890s after the British had curbed the raids of the Somali. Although the Somali did not move

[34]Fritz Ferdinand Müller, *Deutschland-Zanzibar-Ostafrika, Geschichte einer deutschen Kolonialeroberung 1884-1890* (Berlin, 1959), 293-297.

[35]Brenner, "Forschungen," 458, n. 2.

[36]Fischer, "Verhältnisse," 347-348.

[37]Turnbull, "Darod Invasion," 5.

south in great numbers, they could now move at will throughout the district, and they had access to the Tana and Ozi in the dry season, herding their cattle undisturbed within a few hours of a large Oromo camp.[38]

An immediate result of the war for the Arabs was that slaves were suddenly obtainable in an area where slaves were usually almost totally unavailable. There was little or no selling of their own people among the neighboring tribes. No slaves came to Lamu from the Boni or Pokomo. Rarely, during famines, would Giriama from south of the Tana pawn their children, and only infrequently would Somali bring a few captured Oromo to sell.[39] Almost all slaves who worked for Lamu masters or who were sold by Lamu slave-dealers came from Zanzibar or Kilwa. Now, suddenly, the young Oromo captured in raids by the Somali were bought by Arab and Swahili traders for five to ten dollars, and cattle in large numbers for two to five dollars per head. Five or six years later the price of an Oromo slave would be one hundred and fifty to two hundred dollars, and fat oxen or good cows would sell for twenty to thirty dollars each. Many captured Oromo girls went no farther than the houses of Lamu--they were sought after as concubines--and some Oromo boys were no doubt put to work as cattle herders by Lamu masters, but other Oromo slaves were now taken both north and south out of the Lamu area. Except for a temporary glut on the market, these were golden days for the traders, who normally had to travel hundreds of miles away to obtain slaves. Also, with the Oromo thus weakened in the hinterland, slave traders could now safely use the inland route to the Somali ports.[40]

The Arabs' relationship with the Oromo changed drastically as a result of the Oromo's new position as the vanquished. There was nothing to be gained by the Arabs' plundering them further, for the Oromo would then no longer be able to furnish the coastal traders with the desirable products of the interior, including ivory, which they brought to markets such as Kau. Their cattle supply, now so diminished, would be exterminated if the Somalis were allowed to raid them further. In 1876, fifteen Somali elders came to the akida at Kau to seek permission to fight the Oromo again, but the Arab was well aware of the new policy of his government to coexist and benefit from trade with the nearby Oromo,

[38]Fischer, "Verhältnisse," 347-348, 351. See also John Kirk, "Visit to the Coast of Somali-land," *PRGS*, XVII (1873), 342. Oromo were not found within "a month's journey" from Kismayu.

[39]Sheikh Abdulla bin Ali, interview in Lamu, 10 July 1971; Awadh Said Timimy, interview in Lamu, 1 April 1971; Haji Hamisi, interview in Lamu, 4 July 1971.

[40]Fischer, "Verhältnisse," 348; see also *PP* (1872), LIV, C. 657, Nos. 49 and 50, Kirk to Granville, 20 June 1871 and 27 June 1971; *ibid.* (1870), LXI, C. 209, pp. 2-3; G. L. Sulivan, *Dhow Chasing in Zanzibar Waters and on the Eastern Coast of Africa* (2nd ed., London, 1873), 154. See also Chapter 7 below.

and he did not allow the Somali to attack their old enemies.[41] This policy allowed more freedom of movement on the part of cultivators. Following the retreat of the Oromo a number of villages were founded or resettled by Lamu people in the mainland area from Kipini along the coast to Lamu and beyond. Kipini now grew up to be a sizable village around the Arab fort, and a whole chain of settlements, including one at Shaka, grew up east and north from Kipini.[42]

The presence of the watoro villages served as a buffer between the populated area of Witu and the Somalis in the north, who no longer had to fear the Oromo. The watoro, who numbered at least five thousand in the mid-1870s,[43] were known as the best fighters in the country next to the Somalis, so anxious were they to avoid being enslaved again.[44] This reputation may have been gained as a result of the defeat Lamu suffered in the mid-1870s at the hands of the watoro and Boni. Lamu slave-owners, accompanied by their slaves, and under the leadership of two renowned soldiers, attacked the village of Katawa in a new attempt to recover their runaway slaves. They burned the town, causing its inhabitants to flee. It was the Boni allies of the watoro who, with a "rain of arrows" on the attackers, saved the watoro and killed Omari bin Abderaman, one of the Lamu leaders. The disorganized Lamu force fled, and did not return.[45]

So powerful an alliance was that of the watoro with the Boni people and the Siyu emigrants that they attained control of a port on Mongoni creek, where they came to exchange ivory, hides and other products for the cloth and firearms which the island towns could furnish. The exchange was possible because the former masters of the watoro, and those who sought the seizure of fugitives who had joined the runaway slaves, were terrified of crossing them after the battle at Katawa.[46]

The relationship of the watoro villages to Witu even in the 1870s is not altogether clear but the watoro were allied with the

[41]Fischer, "Verhältnisse," 349-350. There was already some fear on the part of the Arabs that the Somali were too powerful. See also *PP* (1876), LXX, C. 1588, No. 33, Holmwood's Report, 68.

[42]Fischer, "Verhältnisse," 349-350.

[43]H. Greffulhe, "Voyage de Lamoo à Zanzibar," *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie et d'études Coloniales de Marseilles,* II (1878), 215-216.

[44]Müller, *Deutschland-Zanzibar-Ostafrika,* 291.

[45]Toeppen, "Deutsch Witu-Land," 326; Mbwana Othmani, interview in Witu, 5 November 1971.

[46]Greffulhe, "Voyage," 215-216, 328. The port which was given over to the watoro was called "Dioû" or "Tenéni-ya-Bouan-Combo." The latter name is remembered today as a place south of Wange near the sea, in an area of Siyu influence. Awadh Said Timimy, interview in Lamu, 1 April 1971.

Boni and with the Siyu refugees at Magogoni. They may even have invited free people of Siyu and Bajun from elsewhere to join them in fighting the Somalis.[47] The few details available on contacts between Siyu and villages on the mainland indicate that there was a good deal of intermingling. Each watoro village was ruled by its own *wazee* (elders), but questions regarding jurisdiction arose between Siyu's mainland areas at Mongoni creek and the watoro-Boni villages. For example, Singida, a Siyu man who lived at Wange, was instructed by Omari, of Bwana Mataka's family, to attack Adi Wadiza, a Boni who was "acting like a sultan" in Wange, in order to collect tax on the people of Adi Wadiza.[48] Another Siyu man, Kambi Alishi Wange, who also farmed at Wange, became a good friend of Avatula, and married into his family.[49] Some of the success of the watoro was attributed to their *mganga*, the well known Shemaloo. Shemaloo's origins are unclear: by some accounts he was an Mzigua;[50] by others, he was a Siyu man who consulted Arabic books on magic and sorcery.[51] In any event, his advice was sought by people from far and near, including the Sultan of Witu.

The death of Sultan Majid of Zanzibar in 1870 seems to have caused a further exodus from the island towns of Pate and Siyu. The liwalis representing Zanzibar in these towns may have used the opportunity to act independently before Sultan Barghash's power could be asserted. One reason for emigration after 1870 was the Arab liwalis' imposition of unauthorized taxes on their subjects,[52] but no doubt a major factor in the exodus was the 1873 Zanzibari-British treaty barring the slave trade by sea. By the mid-1870s Pate was in ruins,[53] and, although Siyu town continued to flourish, more Siyu residents emigrated to the mainland, some of them to an area called Jaguani, almost opposite Rasini. This group of Siyu emigrants included those of Somali ancestry who now became active in the slave trade on the mainland.[54]

Several incidents in the 1870s are illustrative of the unrest which never ceased in the Lamu hinterland so long as those disagreeing with Zanzibari rule remained powerful. The underlying reason for the disturbances was frustration over Omani-British policies in general, and most obviously that regarding the slave trade, which had become basic to the prosperity of many residents of the area.

[47] Jambeni Mohamed, interview in Lamu, 19 July 1971.

[48] Omari Boroso, interview in Lamu, 28 February 1971.

[49] Mbwana Tora, interview in Kiunga, 15 April 1971.

[50] Jambeni Mohamed, interview in Lamu, 19 July 1971. The term Mzigua has a broad usage in Lamu district, meaning simply a slave brought from the south.

[51] Bwana Maalimu Kame, interview in Lamu, 9 April 1971; Awadh Said Timimy, interview in Lamu, 7 April 1971.

[52] Greffulhe, "Voyage," 215-216.

[53] Holmwood's Report, 68.

[54] *Ibid.*, 7.

The first of these episodes was the murder in September 1873 of Lieutenant McCausland, a British naval officer from H.M.S. *Daphne*. The vessel had been cruising the northern coast enforcing the new treaty which curbed the seaborne slave trade, a trade which had increased in this area due to the Oromo-Somali conflict in the interior. Lieutenant McCausland had had fair warning in Lamu: a dhow carrying slaves, some of them belonging to a Somali of Barawa and others to a Bajun, had been seized by him at Lamu. While guarding fifty of the slaves who had been on board, Lieutenant McCausland was struck but not badly injured by a spear thrown by an unidentified Somali.[55]

Because the slave trade was especially active on the Bajun coast, McCausland came ashore at Kiunga, the most important of the *kariani* villages. The officer, accompanied by an interpreter from the ship, was greeted upon landing by the chief of Kiunga, a Bajun named Mujahidi bin Sharifi, and, after an apparently friendly reception, he entered the stockaded village to meet with the chief and leading men, all of whom, as was usual in these parts, were armed. While Mujahidi left the group briefly, McCausland was stabbed fatally with a spear. The only witness for the British side was the interpreter, whose testimony conflicted with that of Mujahidi, who later claimed that he had been away at his plantation during the entire visit. Because of widespread bad feeling about the curbs on the slave trade, this chief was immediately suspected by the British of having instigated the murder. The blame for the actual attack, however, was placed on a young Bajun named Mohamed bin Bwana Heri, a cowrie seller at Ngomeni, a two-hour walk north of Kiunga. Mohamed bin Bwana Heri was related by marriage to Mohamed, the brother of Mzee bin Seif, and to Mahathi, chief of Ngomeni, who would later become Avatula's successor in the interior. The accused claimed that, while he knew personally the chiefs of Ngomeni and of the neighboring village Shakani, he knew only the names of Mujahidi bin Sharifi of Kiunga and of Mzee bin Seif, and he knew nothing about the murder. Both Mzee bin Seif and Mujahidi declared Mohamed bin Bwana Heri to be guilty, but the young man would neither confess to the murder nor implicate Mujahidi, despite great pressure to do so. Sayyid Barghash would not allow the death sentence which the British wanted, however, and Mohamed bin Bwana Heri was imprisoned at Zanzibar.[56]

Sultan Barghash wanted to maintain at least relatively good terms with the Bajun, whose subjection would be impossible to regain should they once throw it off. Mzee bin Seif stated that there were about 10,000 fighting men along the Bajun at this time. Barghash

[55]*PP* (1874), LXII, C. 1064, No. 71, Kirk to Granville, 12 November 1873; *PP* (1875), LXXI, C. 1168, No. 4, Kirk to Granville, 22 November 1873.

[56]FO 84/1399, Kirk to Foreign Office, 9 June 1874; *PP* (1874), LXII, C. 1064, No. 64, Kirk to Granville, 11 October 1873; *ibid.* (1875), LXXI, C. 1168, No. 38, Prideaux to Derby, 4 April 1874.

was appalled when he learned that the British had handed out their own harsh punishment to the village of Kiunga, where they had burnt buildings and boats, slaughtered cattle, cut down coconut palms, destroyed the mosque, and even killed a woman, all without informing Barghash. "And we have shut our eyes to all this on your account,..." wrote Barghash when he found out.[57] The naval officer who led the destruction also called at Shakani, whose chief Mbarahaji indicated a willingness to come to terms with the English at the expense of the village of Kiunga.[58]

On 21 July 1874, Mohamed bin Bwana Heri died in prison.[59] The Bajun chiefs Mahathi of Ngomeni and Mbarahaji of Shakani, along with Mohamed bin Seif, the brother of Mzee bin Seif, learned of the death only in October or November of that year, when the British vice-consul Holmwood visited the northern coast.

> I took the opportunity to inform them that the murderer of the English officer, their relative Bwana Heri, was dead, and that I had seen him lying dead in the common prison at Zanzibar just before I left. I noticed that this news caused strong emotion in all present, and Mohamed Saif got so excited for a moment as to be hardly able to control himself, and I heard him whisper to Mahathi to go instantly and tell Jahidi. Before leaving he asked me privately, and with marked anxiety, whether Mzee Saif knew that the man was dead.[60]

There was little doubt in Holmwood's mind that the Bajun chiefs and those of their people who had sustained losses by British action against the slave trade had conspired in the murder, and that Mujahidi of Kiunga had been chosen to carry it out. Mujahidi, along with some of Mzee bin Seif's family, and Mohamed Shakua of Rasini and Kismayu, had been partners in two slave ventures which had recently gone wrong because of British cruisers. With the death of Mohamed bin Bwana Heri, Holmwood believed, these chiefs no longer had to fear anyone telling the truth.[61] Others in Lamu believed, however, that the murder had been planned by certain Somalis, whose booming trade in slaves since the Oromo defeat was now also suffering at British hands.[62]

[57]FO 84/1398, Barghash to Prideaux, 26 March 1874.
[58]*PP* (1874), LXII, C. 1064, Lieut. Philpotts to Capt. Malcolm, 6 October 1873, Inc. 3 in No. 100.
[59]FO 84/1398, Prideaux to Secretary of State, Foreign Affairs, 21 July 1874.
[60]Holmwood's Report, 16.
[61]Holmwood's Report, 16; FO 84/1400, Inc. in Holmwood to Prideaux, 17 November 1874.
[62]Greffulhe, "Voyage," 216.

The Bajun were outwardly respectful to the British, but the McCausland affair did little to endear the British and their Zanzibar allies to them. As for the Sultan of Zanzibar, the Bajun were "annoyed" with the idea that he was their sultan, for they "think of him only as a relative of the governor of Lamu." They referred to him simply as Barghash bin Said. Most Bajun acknowledged Mzee bin Seif as their sultan, at least when faced with foreign interference.[63]

There were other occurrences which pointed up the barely hidden dissatisfactions. In September 1874 a recently arrived general dealer and moneylender in Lamu, a young Banyan named Manji Muraji, was found murdered and robbed of his gold and other valuables. Those implicated in the death included Ali bin Fumo Bakari, whose father was the "representative of the old Chiefs of Patte," who lived at Lamu on a pension granted by the Sultan of Zanzibar; his Swahili slave girl Mariamo; a Lamu Swahili named Musa Sadiki; a slave belonging to Ahmed, Sultan of Witu; and others. Musa Sadiki and another person, both suspected of the actual murder, escaped to "their relative," Ahmed of Witu. Several soldiers of the Arab liwali had also been shot or stabbed in the streets of Lamu recently, and the culprits "hidden in the town." In Holmwood's view, the murder of the Banyan was more proof that "the majority of the people of Lamu are inimical to Arab rule."[64]

In June or July of 1875 another Banyan, Dewji Dayar, a shopkeeper at Rasini, was murdered, and four Bajun suspects seized at Lamu. This second murder within a year of a Banyan and British subject caused great excitement among the Indian communities in the Lamu area.[65] The liwali of Lamu, Sud bin Hamed, arrested the Bajun, but did not pursue the case because, as he stated, he was fully occupied with the "commotion caused by the Egyptians." Just as he had hesitated to press charges against the Bajun in the McCausland affair, he may well have feared taking on the Bajun at this time because of their active intrigue with the leaders of the so-called Egyptian invasion. The Bajun prisoners were later released, with their guilt unproven, when Mzee bin Seif agreed to the payment of a fine of 800 dollars on behalf of the Bajun people of Rasini for the death of the Banyan.[66]

[63]FO 84/1423, Holmwood to Prideaux, 17 November 1875.

[64]*PP* (1876), LXX, C. 1588, Inc. 1, 2, and 3 in No. 22, Holmwood to Prideaux; FO 84/1799, Inc. 3 in Holmwood to Kitchener, 20 June 1886.

[65]*PP* (1877), LXXVIII, C. 1829, No. 313, Kirk to Derby, 21 June 1876; FO 84/1417, Euan-Smith to Secretary of State, 2 July 1874. Dewji Dayar had lost his case for compensation by the British when suspected of slave trading in November 1870. *PP* (1872), LIV, C. 657, Inc. in No. 42, Kirk to Granville, 20 April 1871; and No. 48, Granville to Kirk, 8 August 1871.

[66]*PP* (1877), LXXVIII, C. 1829, No. 224, Kirk to Derby, 10 December 1875; No. 265, Kirk to Derby, 31 March 1876; FO 84/1484, Kirk to Derby, 24 February 1877, Awadh Said Timimy, interview in Lamu, 28 March 1871.

The Egyptian attempt to secure East African ports as a means of gaining trade and entering the continent to reach the Upper Nile has been discussed fully elsewhere.[67] The arrival of an alternative power on the Benadir coast could not have been more timely in the eyes of those Bajun, Somali and others whose prosperity was in jeopardy because of the policies of Zanzibar and the British. The appeal of Islam was also not a minor factor in the attraction the Egyptian invasion held for the people of the Lamu archipelago and hinterland in late 1875 and early 1876.[68] It was clear to the Zanzibari Arabs that in this situation the Bajun, whose loyalties were always suspect, would, through their constant contact with dissidents on the Somali coast, have an advantage.

The Egyptian Khedive Ismail wrote to his naval commander, Captain H. F. McKillop, in October 1875 that the Juba River area was not suitable for considerable commerce, but that, according to all available information, "all advantages desired" were to be found at Formosa Bay, that is, at the Ozi-Tana delta. "I have therefore decided to establish depots at Formosa, and it is on you that I rely to go and establish the first bases for an outlet..." Should he fail at Formosa, McKillop's instructions were to land at Burkao (Port Durnford).[69]

Heading south from Ras Hafun, however, the Egyptians landed first at Barawa. Here the chief subjects asked the Egyptians to assume the protection of the town,[70] and the Sultan of Zanzibar's garrison fled on the approach of the Egyptians. A detachment was left in charge of the town in October 1875. McKillop next took the fort at Kismayu, which was manned by several hundred Somali irregulars led by the liwali of the Sultan of Zanzibar, Hamed bin Abdulla, who refused to deliver to the Egyptians a letter from the Sultan telling them to leave.[71] The Egyptians made camp on the Juba and awaited the arrival of coal for their ships with the monsoon.[72] Meanwhile, McKillop did not give up the plan of attaining Formosa Bay, for he found that he could expect a friendly reception. Residents south of the Juba were openly

[67]See E. R. Turton, "Kirk and the Egyptian Invasion of East Africa in 1875: A Reassessment," *JAH*, XI, 3 (1970), 355-370, and Reginald Coupland, *The Exploitation of East Africa* (London, 1939), ch. 13.

[68]In all their moves the Egyptians hoisted the flag of the Islamic Khaliph in Turkey. FO 84/1417, Kirk to Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 14 December 1875.

[69]E. A. Stanton, "Secret Letters from the Khedive Ismail in Connection with an Occupation of the East Coast of Africa," *JRAS*, XXXIV (1935), 280, 282.

[70]FO 84/1417, Kirk to Derby, 2 December 1875, Memorandum on the Seizure of Brava.

[71]FO 84/1417, Kirk to Secretary of State, 17 November 1875.

[72]Charles Chaillé-Long, *My Life in Four Continents*, I (London, 1912), 177-183.

expressing their hopes that the Egyptian occupation of Kismayu and Barawa would facilitate slaving operations.[73]

The British consul-general at Zanzibar, John Kirk, traveled to Lamu to talk with British Indian subjects there, who, along with their agents at Barawa and Kismayu, were suffering from a standstill in trade as a result of the Egyptian intrusion. At Shela, the entrance to Lamu harbor, Kirk found the liwali of Lamu with a large body of troops and a sandbag battery built in fear of the Egyptians. On November 18 an Egyptian vessel had passed by, returning on the 26th without communicating with Lamu. Another Egyptian vessel had anchored off Shela, and, despite being informed by the liwali that its party could not come ashore, had landed thirty armed men. Seeing the number of troops at the liwali's command, however, the Egyptians set sail again, saying they would return in force.

One Egyptian vessel had anchored off the mouth of the Ozi River,

> communicating with the village of Chaka, where a party landed and took off an Arab who had been residing at Lamu--probably a spy in their service. The object of visiting a place of so little importance could only be to open intrigue with Simba chief of Witu district, only two hours journey from Ozi...he is one who might no doubt be readily influenced to rise again if assured of assistance....Simba might yield the island of Patte from which he has been a refugee for years.[74]

In fact, it is doubtful that the Sultan of Witu had anything to do with Shaka, which was a village built up after the Oromo wars under the shadow, as it were, of the Omani fort at Kipini, and a good distance from the Ozi River towns once under Ahmed's control. Ahmed was, however, very likely well aware of the opportunities the Egyptian invasion might open for him, and in this he was not alone. The Lamu liwali told Kirk that

> an intrigue had been set on foot by the Egyptians with the chief of Siwy [Siyu], the way in which this was done was by demanding payment of a debt said to be due to a man at Kismayo at the same time offering to be instrumental in securing payment of debts claimed by the Siwy people against Somalis.[75]

[73] FO 84/1417, Kirk to Derby, 15 November 1875.
[74] *Ibid.*, Shaka lay east of Kipini on the shore.
[75] *Ibid.*, 8 December 1875.

The liwali stated that he had enough troops for any ordinary attack, but that thousands of "bad characters from Witu and of Bajuns from Paza and the coast" were in Lamu ready for pillage and waiting to see which was the winning side. It was generally circulated that the Egyptians would soon return in force against Lamu, but in the liwali's opinion the Egyptians would raise disorders by intrigue first, possibly encouraging the pillage of the merchant houses in Lamu, and "then step in as if for the preservation of order." The confidence of the sixty to eighty Indian merchants in Lamu had already been shaken; trade was stopped. They had placed their goods aboard dhows in the harbor and concealed their valuables, but the "bulky produce of the season's trade," no doubt oil seeds and grain from the mainland, still lay in their stores.[76] In late December 1875 the Egyptians withdrew from the Juba and moved farther south to Burkao, which was virtually within Lamu's sphere of influence.[77] Until this time, the aim of the Egyptians was still to gain a base at Formosa Bay.[78]

Kirk sent to Lamu H.M.S. *Diamond*, along with a good supply of artillery, to restore confidence in the Sultan of Zanzibar's power. The liwali was ordered to dismiss the "ruffians" from Lamu town, and to stop all land slave caravans on their way north. The ship's officer, Lieutenant Carew, was detached from the ship, which was anchored off Ras Kilindini at Manda Island, to serve as a vice-consul in Lamu.[79] Although the Egyptian move to Burkao caused apprehension in Lamu in certain quarters, and raised hopes in others,[80] Kirk's show of force deterred the Egyptians. McKillop's intercepted letter addressed to General Charles Gordon stated: "I have since been to Formosa Bay and found it an open Bay and no fresh water for a station. I then went to Lamo which I did not occupy as I should have had to use force against the Zanzibari troops. I have now however orders to return to Suez--troops and all."[81]

It was no accident that Sud bin Hamed, liwali of Lamu, with three hundred soldiers, accompanied Kirk to Kismayu to reestablish the Sultan of Zanzibar's authority.[82] Sud bin Hamed had much influence at Kismayu, "for his own ends and private trade," and had assisted some Mijertein Somali to drive off "Brava Somalis and the Gallas who had hitherto enjoyed the profits of the trade in that part." In 1870 Sud had reinforced the

[76] *Ibid.*

[77] FO 84/1452, Kirk to Derby, 2 February 1876.

[78] Stanley Lane-Poole, *Watson Pasha* (London, 1919), 61, Gordon's letter to Watson, 28 Decem er 1874.

[79] FO 84/1417, Kirk to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 15 December 1875.

[80] FO 84/1452, Kirk to Derby, 8 January 1876.

[81] *Ibid.*, McKillop to Gordon, 25 December 1875, enclosed in Kirk to Derby, 2 February 1876.

[82] *PP* (1877), LXXVIII, C. 1829, Kirk to Derby, 2 February 1876.

garrison at Kismayu to withstand an attack by Ahmed Yusuf, chief of Geledi.[83]

By late January 1876 the Egyptians had withdrawn completely from the Somali coast, and the hopes of many residents of the Lamu area to be taken under the protection of the Khedive had come to naught. Many Somalis of Barawa, who may have been allied to the Bajun cause, were arrested for taking the Egyptian side. The Bajun and Siyu mainlanders, and others dependent upon the land slave trade, lost more than they at first realized, for Kirk used the episode as a lever in attaining what he wanted from the Sultan of Zanzibar: an edict against the slave trade by land made effective in 1876.[84]

As the Egyptian affair marked the turning point in the northern slave trade, so, politically, it marked the entry of unquestionable and direct British power into the area. The chances for Egyptian success in the Lamu area had been great, considering the number of residents who were dissatisfied with Zanzibari rule--who in fact had never recognized it--and who were alert for alternatives.[85] The chances for ousting those whom many, perhaps most, of the area's inhabitants considered usurpers would never be so great again. The most stalwart Lamu dissidents did not acquiesce in this fact for two more decades. Sultan Ahmed of Witu, one of the most active dissidents, had already foreseen in 1867, and continued to recognize, the need to balance this outside power with new allies of his own.

[83]*Ibid.* (1871), LXII, C. 340, Kirk to Granville, 12 July 1870. See also Turton, "Pastoral Tribes," 80-82, on the settlement at Kismayu.

[84]See Chapter 7 below for the effects in the Lamu area of this edict and also the 1873 treaty barring the export of slaves from East Africa.

[85]Charles Chaillé-Long, *The Three Prophets: Chinese Gordon, Mohammed-Ahmed (Maahdi), Arabi Pasha* (New York, 1884), 55-56. In the opinion of this commander of the land forces for the expedition, the Egyptians might have succeeded were it not for the slave issue and consequent British intervention. See also Turton, "Kirk," 367-368.

CHAPTER 7

TRADE AND COMMERCE IN THE LAMU AREA, 1800-1876

Because of the varied local resources and the geography of the Lamu archipelago and hinterland, the economy of the islands and the mainland was intertwined. Similarly, because the Lamu area was a part of the greater Indian Ocean monsoon-guided trading community, the archipelago, fed by local trade with the mainland, was established within this larger commercial system. In the nineteenth century, under the tutelage of the Omani government centered at Zanzibar, Lamu became the entrepôt for the whole district, and reached the peak of her involvement in the Indian Ocean economy. Lamu's own economic status benefited from early political cooperation with the Omanis, while Pate's foreign trade, which had in the eighteenth century led the archipelago, dwindled along with the town.

This chapter does not examine all aspects of the foreign trade, commerce and finance in which Lamu and other island merchants and financiers took part, but rather concentrates on those aspects of the economy which depended upon the hinterland's peoples and products.

Agricultural Trade and Finance

In general, there was a gradual stepping up of agricultural production as Arab rule increased the East African coast's contacts. These contacts meant not only markets for the products of the Lamu area, but the availability of slaves necessary for increasing the area and pace of cultivation.

As we have seen, the grain which furnished so much of Lamu's export produce in the nineteenth century and earlier was harvested mostly from large, slave-run mainland plantations under the control of townsmen. In addition, Bajun and Swahili freemen inhabited rural villages and farmed their own small fields. As the century progressed, there was a growing number of immigrant Hadhrami Arabs who became laborers, shopkeepers, and farmers, especially in and around the towns nearest Lamu. These Hadhrami cultivators farmed their own land until they grew prosperous enough to own slaves. Moreover, the Baluchi soldiers of the Omani garrisons at outlying stations such as Kipini would sometimes marry local women and retire to the land.[1]

The slaves on big plantations had one of two arrangements. Infrequently, they rented their master's land for a set fee and

[1]Greffulhe, "Voyage," 332; Saidi Mchomo, interview in Mokowe, 12 July 1971.

took all of the produce as their own; more commonly, they paid no rent but turned over to their master all of the profits from the season's harvest, themselves subsisting on the produce of the small plots which they were allowed to work one or two days a week, and on a small additional allowance of grain from their master.[2]

The slave or free farmer would take his harvested grain to the nearest town which had a shopkeeper (*mtajiri*, pl. *watajiri*) dealing in grain. Usually this would be not the rural hamlet where the farmer resided, but rather a port village or town such as Kimbo, Mkonumbi, or Wange which was situated on a sea creek navigable by dhow. An exception to this was Mpekatoni, which was an inland agricultural center with resident *watajiri* who bought grain from the community's farmers and then transported the grain by donkey to the nearest port, Kimbo.[3] Witu in the dry season was in a similar situation of having to transport its goods overland, but during the rainy season produce could travel by small dhow or canoe from a point near Witu town to the Ozi, via the tributaries called Mto Magogoni and Mto wa Yuu.[4]

As a commercial network was built up along the coast during the course of the century, the farmer's distance for transporting goods became shorter. In some areas such as Mgine, Mokowe, or Mwanzamwarabu where fields were close to the sea creek, a farmer or proprietor might himself arrange dhow transport for his produce to an island town. In the north, cultivators disliked transporting their produce along paths in sparsely settled bush country for fear of Somali attack,[5] and preferred to send their crops by dhow whenever possible. If the price for grain were known to be higher in a more distant town, however, a farmer might carry his produce there.[6]

The grain was measured according to certain customary volume and weight measures which were used by the farmer and his buyer, the latter usually an agent of a Lamu commercial house who resided on the mainland. These measures included the following:

mfuto (pl. *mi-*) = about 2 lbs. The *mfuto* was a wooden container.
hundavi = about 2 *mifuto*, or 4 lbs.

[2]Feraji Bwana Mkuu, interview in Lamu, 30 October 1971; *PP* (1903), XLV, C. 1631, Report on Slavery and Free Labor in the British East Africa Protectorate, 3.

[3]Mpekatoni cultivators carried their grain into the village, and the *watajiri* brought it the two and one-half hours via donkey path to Kimbo. From Kimbo it went at high tide by *mashua* to Lamu. Bakari bin Hamis and Mohamed Hasan, interviews in Mapenya, 25 October 1971.

[4]New, *Life*, 269; Decken, *Reisen*, II, 267-268.

[5]Jambeni Mohamed, interview in Lamu, 12 June 1971.

[6]Mbwana Othmani, interview in Witu, 5 November 1971.

pishi = 1 *kila* or 4 *mifuto* (6-8 lbs.)
kata = about 6 *mifuto*, or 12 lbs.
frasila = 35-36 lbs. The measure for balls of wild rubber as well as for ivory.
ngoma = 7½ or 8 *pishi*, or 64 lbs. Also originally a wooden container.
mzigo (pl. *mi-*) = 2 *ngoma*, or 128 lbs.
gunia = 4 *ngoma*, or about 250 lbs.
jizla = 2½ *gunia*, up to 500 lbs. Used only for products packed in sacks.

Other small measures were used only on the plantation: the *kibaba*, large and small (6-8 lbs. and 1½ lbs. respectively); the *kikunda*, based on the volume of a small matting bag; and the *mzana*, which was a measure for maize and simsim. The *mfuto* and *pishi* were in common usage in the shop which purchased from the farmer. Since the measures were volume measures, the exact weight depended upon the produce being measured, but a man could customarily carry one and one-half to two *ngoma* in a basket *(kipundu* or *kitumba)* on his head, while the donkey's load was often four *ngoma* in woven fiber panniers *(sogi* or *kitumba)*. The larger measures, as well as other measures in use in the Indian Ocean trade, were favored by the Lamu dealer who exported the produce when he dealt with customs officials and the shipper.[7]

The rural dweller was for the most part able to use mtama as his medium of exchange, or, less frequently, *wimbi*, *mawele* and the other common cereals. There was little need for coin among Swahili, Bajun and slave farmers, for mtama could be exchanged at the local shop for merchandise such as cloth and hardware.[8] If coin were used, it was the varied coinage which circulated in Zanzibar and its dominions: the riale, the Maria Theresa dollar, the Indian rupee, and others.

The use of grain as the medium of exchange allowed a certain lenience regarding usury laws among Muslims, for it was not considered to be money in the context of borrowing and lending. Loans arranged in grain were not considered money loans and in many cases the true amount was never recorded. The Hindu traders labored under no such laws against usury, but moneylending was not limited

[7]Jambeni Mohamed, interview in Lamu, 12 June 1971; Omari Ali Omari Mzee, interview in Mokowe, 12 July 1971; Othmani Suwo, interview in Kiunga, 24 July 1971; Bwana Maalimu Kame, interview in Lamu, 18 August 1971; Patterson, "Notes on Ecology," 13; Richard Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa*, II (London, 1860), 334, 415; C.W. Hobley, *Kenya: From Chartered Company to Crown Colony* (London, 1929), 248-249.

[8]Along the Bajun coast, one measure of mtama was exchanged for three of cowrie shells. Georges Revoil, "Voyage chez les Bénadirs, les Çomalis et les Bayouns," *Le Tour du Monde*, LVI (1888), 399.

to them. All of the *watajiri,* be they Omani or Hadhrami Arabs, Swahili, Bajun, Muslim Indians or Hindu, participated in moneylending.[9]

The need for borrowing was not uncommon among the free farmers; it arose in the event of crop failure when a farmer needed grain both for seed and subsistence. Advance on prospective crops was a part of the agricultural system in almost all of the towns on the Lamu coast. The practice flourished among the Bajun especially, because they were the most numerous of the freeborn farmers, and also because the arid Bajun coast in the north produced only one sure crop a year, so that often Bajun farmers had to borrow food or the money to buy food to tide them over until the next harvest.[10]

There is little information on the details of moneylending in the early and mid-nineteenth century, but evidence of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries indicates patterns which extended back at least several decades. It was customary to borrow one unit of currency, one riale, for example, or an equivalent amount of merchandise in the creditor's shop, on each prospective load of mtama (often from sixty to ninety pounds), and for this advance the borrower would pay one load of mtama from his first crop.[11] Such a load might be valued at from four to six units of currency in Lamu, which became the controlling market. If a crop failed, and the borrower could not pay back the loan under the terms arranged, he had eventually to repay it at the Lamu rate per load. In that case interest, although never called the prohibited *riba,* was in effect being charged at a rate of several hundred per cent on a loan for one season.[12] The price of mtama at Lamu had no bearing on the case other than to influence the creditor to advance his money.

Interest rates were formidable because the creditor took great risks. In case no mtama whatsoever was procurable in the town or village of the borrower, and cash payment was impossible, the creditor must sometimes wait for another season or cancel the contract. The assumption made was that if mtama was obtainable in the borrower's area, then the crops had not failed and so the borrower

[9]Mohamed Ali Pame, interview in Lamu, 9 November 1971; Saidi Mchomo, interview in Mokowe, 12 July 1971. But see Greffulhe, "Voyage," 215, on the moneylending of Hindus in Lamu.

[10]KNA/Jud/1/481, Horne to Principal Judge, Mombasa, 3 March 1909. There were few cases of debt in such areas as Hindi, where most inhabitants were slaves.

[11]Loans were made in small amounts as well, usually in kind. Saidi Mchomo, interview in Mokowe, 12 July 1971; Swaleh Bahamfusi, interview in Mkonumbi, 14 September 1971.

[12]Ainsworth and Hollis's Report, 25-26; KNA/Jud/1/481, H. Silberrad to D. C. Lamu, 3 April 1909.

must not have planted. The debtor was bound to pay the creditor even if it meant buying mtama at the market price, but he could not be forced to buy mtama from any town but his own. Also, freeborn cultivators, who in the agricultural system were more apt to be debtors than slaves were, came and went readily to the major towns of the archipelago, where they could shop for the best rate. The moneylending situation for cultivators was never so restrictive as the debt system in which sailors became involved.[13] Occasionally, *watajiri* charged no interest at all in an effort to build up a following. Yet, inevitably, the traditional system of borrowing led to many rural people becoming bound to their creditors.[14]

Generally, then, agricultural surpluses were funneled into the large island towns through the services of middlemen who were traders and moneylenders, and who were situated in the mainland centers. Occasionally these surpluses were transported directly to the islands by the farmer or proprietor, who maintained close ties to at least one of the island urban centers. Much of the agricultural produce which reached the islands was consumed there by the large populations, free and slave, which inhabited them. But grain, beans, and oil seeds were exported as well. All in all, grains and legumes constituted the bulk of the local coasting trade from early in the century on.[15]

Ivory

We know few specific details of the trade in ivory at the local level early in the nineteenth century. With two hunting tribes, the Sanye and Boni, and the Oromo, who were hunters as well as pastoralists, living in the area, it is likely that many mainland centers from the Tana River in the south to Kiunga in the north saw ivory pass through their gates which ultimately reached the customs house at Lamu, as well as much ivory that evaded the Sultan of Zanzibar's tariff.

If the Oromo rule held true, trade between Oromo and outsiders was handled only through an Oromo leader,[16] whose dealings

[13]Jambeni Mohamed, interview in Lamu, 13 June 1971. See also T. Ainsworth Dickson, Precis of Political Record Book, Lamu District, 12 June 1923 (typescript in Fort Jesus library, Mombasa).

[14]KNA/Jud/1/481, letter of H. Hastings Horne, 21 December 1908. Some of the debt cases considered in 1908 were at least twenty years old. See also the rulings of the kadis of Rasini and Lamu in 1909 in KNA/Jud/1/614, Ainsworth and Hollis's Report; and *ibid.*, R. W. Hamilton, "Money Lending in Tanaland."

[15]See Boteler, *Narrative*, I, 377; ArcAngelo, "Rough Sketch," 280; Devereux, *Cruise*, 399.

[16]Brenner, "Forschungen," 463; Decken, *Reisen*, II, 376.

in ivory would have been unlikely to take place with anyone but a Swahili or Bajun leader or his agents. At the Ozi, arrangements were made to deal at one market with the Swahili chief of Kau, after suitable tribute had been received.[17] The ivory trade was very likely a major interest of the Nabahani when they established themselves at the Ozi River, adjacent to Oromo territory. Similarly, the Siyu mainland centers on Dodori creek were situated at the edge of rich Boni hunting grounds. Both of these centers were accessible by dhow. Hides and ghee, other products of the pastoralists, often accompanied the ivory to market, where they were exchanged for wire, beads, tobacco, and cloth. The *lemale*, a coarse cotton cloth worn by the Oromo, was woven in the island towns.[18]

Boni traders, who desired especially tobacco in exchange for their ivory and honey, arrived in Witu every three or four months after first receiving permission to come. They placed their ivory and honey at a spot outside the town and sat silently by until a spokesman for the town, probably the Sultan's agent, came forward and settled the transaction. Then, with their new burdens of tobacco, iron spear points, and cloth, they turned quickly back into the woods.[19]

Ivory was the only product for which expeditions were made by island traders into the interior. A few Swahili of the Lamu area ventured up the Tana to deal with the Oromo through Pokomo middlemen.[20] Such river caravans most often started from Kau and Kipini once the Arabs had established their garrisons there and the strength of the Oromo had been curbed, by 1870. At Kipini, two Bohra and three Banyans, all connected with Lamu merchant houses, dealt with the produce of the area and sent it to Lamu for export. These agents no doubt made arrangements, including financial ones, for Swahili or Arab ivory-gathering expeditions up the Tana River.

Such expeditions normally set out in Pokomo canoes when the Tana was high and the country on either side flooded. The regular Lamu ivory traders kept huts and wives at each important stage of the journey in Pokomo country. They carried white and blue cottons, beads, red dye from Muscat, thick copper wire, copper chains, brass rings and iron hoes. In 1873-1874, six to ten dollars worth of these goods was reckoned as the price for one *frasila* of ivory.

The canoe caravans would travel as far as Malalulu on the Upper Tana, to the borders of Masai country. Here they were

[17]Boteler, *Narrative*, I, 394; Owen, *Narrative*, I, 397; Fischer, "Verhältnisse," 350.
[18]New, *Life*, 63; Wakefield, *Footprints*, 71-74.
[19]Brenner, "Forschungen," 461.
[20]Brenner, "Forschungen," 457.

refused permission to pass without payment of tribute to the chiefs. These Upper Tana peoples were willing to admit traders, but they also insisted on the right to bring their produce to the coast. A few years before 1873, one of their trading parties had been seized when traveling to Kipini, and their messenger told by the Arabs that the Sultan refused permission to all the Upper Tana peoples to pass to the coast on any pretext.[21] It is doubtful that the Oromo in the Kau area at this time demanded tribute from ivory traders; by the 1870s these Oromo were so reduced that they requested the protection of the garrisons at Kau and Kipini.[22]

Other Mainland Products

Along with agricultural products, ivory, and hides, a contribution of the Lamu mainland to the export trade of Lamu throughout the nineteenth century was the mangrove pole. The best mangrove cutting took place in the tidal creeks between Lamu and Ndao Bay, on the mainland and on the landward edges of the islands. North of Ndao and south of Mkonumbi creek the shore was largely sandy beach or undercut coral cliffs. Mangrove cutting, however, was an island-initiated industry using island-owned vessels on which the crews lived while working in the sea creeks. These crews were often made up of Bajun who during the southwest monsoon were cultivators on the mainland. Other than this, the mangrove industry made little impact on mainland peoples, for such work did not interfere with the interests of cultivators or pastoralists.

Similarly, the collection of cowrie shells, tortoise shell, and occasionally ambergris were peripheral mainland activities. They were collected on mainland beaches by villagers--cowries especially on the northern beaches at Kiunga and Shakani--and brought to local dealers who shipped them to an island town for export.[23] Ambergris was so rare and valuable that it was unlikely a random finder would reap the profits. This is suggested by the saying, *kiacho na mai, hakina mlai ila mwenye mui.* (If one finds something of value on the beach, there is no profit but for the ruler.)[24]

Foreign Trade

Patterns of local trade did not change suddenly in the early nineteenth century, but trade at the import-export level quickly

[21]Holmwood's Report, 66-67; Fischer, "Verhältnisse," 353.
[22]Greffulhe, "Voyage," 333.
[23]See Owen, *Narrative,* I, 391, for methods of collection.
[24]Ali bin Suleman Riyamy, interview in Lamu, 29 October 1971. Ambergris was found on the beach north of Kiunga occasionally. Mervyn W. H. Beech, untitled manuscript on Swahili life, dated 1921, in Fort Jesus library, Mombasa.

came under the supervision of the new Omani rulers. Prior to their arrival, Pate, of all the archipelago's towns, had been the focus of foreign traders. Pate had carried on a considerable trade with India, some of it in small English vessels which carried cowrie shells; the town also had a cowrie trade with the Comoro Islands. Pate could furnish two or three hundred tons of cowries a year, as well as ivory and slaves.[25] At one point in the eighteenth century Oromo ivory traders changed their route from Barawa to Pate because three Surat boats came to Pate each year.[26] There was, however, no formalized slave trade carried on between the archipelago and the hinterland, for there was little supply to be obtained from neighboring peoples. If anything, there was a small amount of raiding by Oromo and Somali on the Swahili and other coastal peoples, rather than the reverse.[27]

In 1776 both Dutch and French ships were ill-received in Pate, but in 1777 the Sultan of Pate was encouraging the French to call. Such abrupt shifts in policy probably reflected the political problems which contributed to Pate's economic decline. In addition, Pate's port facilities were inconvenient: the anchorage was six miles south of the town, and a ship must await a pilot far out in Pate Bay to assist in navigating through the shoal-filled waters.[28] The approach to Pate was suitable only for small dhows. By 1811, when the British naval officers Smee and Hardy visited the town, they reported that Pate had little or no trade, not even her once large trade with India, because of the unfriendly attitude of her inhabitants, and her impossible harbor.[29] This was, of course, a time of serious conflict between Lamu and Pate and of the intrusion of Mazrui and Busaidi forces into the archipelago.

One result of the events of the first two decades of the nineteenth century was that Lamu, accepting Omani rule, became the commercial port for the whole archipelago and district. Sayyid Said encouraged the growth of trade, channeled it through

[25]Freeman-Grenville, *French at Kilwa,* 114, 120, 176; Sir John Gray, "The French at Kilwa, 1776-1784," *TNR,* 44 (1956), 35.

[26]Smith, "Giriama Rising," 14, citing Historical Archives of India, Danjim, Goa, "Letter, King of Pate to Viceroy, Sultan Babucar bin Sultane, Umar bin Dau and his brother Bwana Muca bin Sultan, Balucar Fumo vay King of Jagaya," n.d., trans. 10, 10, 1728 L.M. #95-B, folio 585 r and v.

[27]The source of Pate's slaves, apparently transshipped, is a mystery. In the seventeenth century the town had imported as many as 2000 slaves annually from Madagascar. Buckeridge, *Journal,* 45. Hamilton, *New Account,* I, 11-12, reported that Pate was a good source of ivory and slaves for Muscat Arabs who, wishing to monopolize the trade, settled in Pate in 1692.

[28]William Milburn, *Oriental Commerce,* I (London, 1813), 67.

[29]Burton, *Zanzibar,* II, Appendix III, 513-517.

the ports he controlled, brought Indian businessmen under his protection to these ports, and strengthened commercial ties not only with Zanzibar and the rest of his African dominions, but with the Hadhramaut and Persian Gulf. Lamu, as the seat of Omani government and as the port with the best situation in the archipelago, soon overshadowed Pate and the other island towns.

As a part of Sayyid Said's dominions, Lamu was just one of many such ports along the East African coast. But it had a unique position in being the northernmost of the Sultan's ports which could be considered under his control. Barawa, Mogadishu, and Merka were urban pockets of doubtful allegiance surrounded by country in no way under the Sultan.[30] In many ways Lamu was such a pocket too, but the Arabs were more firmly ensconced in the town, at least, than they were in the Somali towns. Lamu was thus in a more favorable monsoon position for trade with Arabia and India than were the other East African ports controlled by the Sultan. This position became particularly advantageous to the slave trade.

Sayyid Said recognized the Lamu area as a source of a variety of goods and agricultural products which could be even more valuable to him through the development of the port of Lamu. A customs house was soon established. When Owen visited Lamu in 1823 he found the Arab liwali, Seif bin Hamed, "in an open shed called the Custom House" receiving duties levied on goods both embarked and landed, out of which he received his allowance as governor. Owen and Boteler considered Lamu to be one of the best stations on the coast, with a population of five thousand and much commerce.[31] Isaacs, who called at Lamu in 1831, found it to be a free port for any trade, "but few have visited it except the enterprising Americans...other nations would not deign to traffic." He also noted that Lamu was an excellent place for overhauling vessels.[32] Meanwhile, Pate's trade had degenerated to a mere coasting trade "for the supply of articles of daily consumption."[33]

The Lamu archipelago had long been a port of call for the monsoon traders from the Red Sea, southern Arabia, the Persian Gulf, and western India,[34] and this trade continued and increased when it was discovered that the port of Lamu was funneling most of

[30]Guillain, *Documents*, III, chs. 20 and 21.

[31]Owen, *Narrative*, I, 364, 387-388.

[32]Nathaniel Isaacs, *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa*, II (Cape Town, 1937), 321-322.

[33]Lieut. Wolf, "Narrative of Voyage to Explore the Shores of Africa, Arabia, and Madagascar," *JRGS*, III (1833), 210. Wolf accompanied Owen.

[34]See Henry Salt, *A Voyage to Abyssinia* (Philadelphia, 1816), 87; James Bird, "Commercial and Geographical View of Eastern Africa," *TBGS*, III (1840), 114: Lieut. T. Postans, "Some Account of the Present State of the Trade," *ibid.*, 169-170.

the produce of the entire hinterland and that the tariffs were consistent. There was also trade between Lamu and the Somali coast.[35]

Sayyid Said soon farmed the customs at Lamu to a Banyan, just as he had in Zanzibar. Banyans occupied such official positions in Lamu by 1832, and may have been placed there earlier. An *ad valorem* tax on all products incoming and outgoing was set at five per cent, the exception being ivory, which was the Sultan's monopoly, and which was taxed as high as the traffic would bear.[36]

Escaping the Sultan's collection in the 1820s and 1830s was the commerce of the Tana River, which, so far as we know, was under the control of the Nabahani Swahilis, who traded with the Oromo at Kau and carried on a sea-going grain trade with Mombasa and ports south of Mombasa.[37] We have no information as to whether or not the Nabahanis brought the ivory and hides purchased from the Oromo to ports outside of Lamu in order to avoid dealing with the Omanis. In the 1840s the principal market for Oromo ivory was Kau, for buyers from both Lamu and Pate, even though Kau and the Ozi were at this time controlled by the "King of Patta."[38] Presumably the customs at Kau went to the Swahilis, even if the goods eventually traveled to Lamu. Until Mzee bin Seif gave his allegiance to the Sultan of Zanzibar, the ship-building center of Rasini also carried on independent foreign trade.

Sayyid Said encouraged the cultivation of simsim, which he knew the Europeans wished to buy for its oil. Simsim was grown in the Lamu area during the 1840s;[39] during the 1850s and 1860s it was a major crop.[40] In addition, by the early 1860s cultivators from the Lamu area were growing export crops in the areas of Malindi and Mambrui. This may have been a continuous seasonal migration of cultivators from the Lamu archipelago, including those from the town of Shela. In about 1861, they requested and

[35]For example, ArcAngelo, "Rough Sketch," 279-280, noted in 1844 that Lamu vessels brought mtama to Somalis at the Juba who were besieged by Oromo.

[36]The five per cent tax applied to Muslims; Hindus were charged six and one-half per cent. Postans, "Account," 170. Copal, another product highly valued by the Sultan, was not produced on the Lamu mainland.

[37]ArcAngelo, "Notes," 127-128. See also Chapter 5 above.

[38]Guillain, *Documents*, III, 384; Decken, *Reisen*, II, 268.

[39]Guillain, *Documents*, III, 315.

[40]Russell, *Rigby*, 343; John Robb, *Medico-Topographical Report on Zanzibar* (Calcutta, 1879), 22; M. Adrien Germain, "Note sur Zanzibar et la Côte Orientale d'Afrique," *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* (Paris), XVI (1868), 541; Burton, *Zanzibar*, I, 244, 319.

received the Sultan of Zanzibar's protection in these areas south of the Tana.[41] Although the Oromo were a factor to be considered at this time by cultivators both north and south of the Tana, the quality of the land south of the Tana may have been superior to that available in the Lamu hinterland. The fertile area between Lamu and Kipini which Shela people often cultivated, under peaceful conditions, would at this time have been in an upset state due to the Omani-Nabahani strife.

By the 1840s Lamu was well established within the network of Zanzibar, which place was the Omanis' "great mart and rendezvous" for their East African dominions.[42] Of its own products, Lamu was exporting hides, which were said to be tanned better than anywhere else on the coast.[43] Ivory, mtama, simsim and simsim oil, matting and mat bags, timber and bark for tanning, and a few slaves were also sent from Lamu. Moreover, the port dealt in the re-export of, among other items, salt fish received from Arabia, and salt, presumably from Arabia or the Benadir. Imports included coffee and dates from Arabia, rice from Pemba and Zanzibar, beads from Zanzibar and India, brass from Europe via Bombay, American cotton goods, and slaves from the south.[44]

The Sultan of Zanzibar negotiated commercial treaties with the United States of America in 1833, Great Britain in 1839, France in 1844, and the German Hanseatic states in 1859. These treaties allowed the merchants of these nations to visit Zanzibar and the coast freely, usually excepting the Mrima coast directly opposite Zanzibar, and obliged them to pay only the five per cent tariff on imports. While the Americans had been trading in the Lamu area since at least the 1820s, in 1852 two French trading houses at Zanzibar, Vidal and Rabaud, both of Marseille, sent their first resident agents to Lamu. They specialized in the oil products of simsim and coconut. The house of Roux de Fraissinet soon joined them at Lamu.[45] As early as 1849 the Hanseatic

[41]Cooper, "Plantation Slavery," 174-175. See also FO 54/17, Rigby to Secretary of State for India, 1 May 1860; Thomas Wakefield, "Rev. Thomas Wakefield's Fourth Journey to the Southern Galla Country in 1877," *PRGS*, IV, N.S. (1882), 371; Wakefield, *Wakefield*, 146.

[42]H. Hart, "Extracts from Brief Notes of a Visit to Zanzibar... 1834," *SRBG*, XXIV, N.S. (1856), 280.

[43]Guillain, *Documents*, III, 307.

[44]*Ibid.*, ch. 24; Lyons McLeod, *Travels in Eastern Africa; with the Narrative of a Residence in Mozambique*, II (London, 1860), 266, 275. F. M. Hunter, *An Account of the British Settlement of Aden in Arabia* (London, 1877), 63, 92-93, mentions Lamu especially as a source of mtama.

[45]Burton, *Zanzibar*, I, 319. Greffulhe, "Voyage," 327. Greffulhe was the Roux de Fraissinet agent in Lamu from 1871 to 1874. M. Terassin was an early Rabaud agent.

merchants were the Americans' strongest competitors at Zanzibar, and at least one of their firms, the Hamburg house of Hansing, sent agents to Lamu. Like the French, they were to specialize in oil products, but also would buy cowrie shells which they carried to West Africa. By 1870 there were, in addition to the Europeans, eleven Bohra and twenty-five Hindu merchant houses in Lamu.[46]

These foreigners in Lamu were no homogeneous group, however, as became clear from incidents taking place during Majid's reign. The French were at odds with the British in Zanzibar over the latter's suppression of the slave trade, for the prosperity of the French plantation islands in the Indian Ocean was at stake. The Indian merchants, who were under British jurisdiction, were often slaveholders themselves as well as being the financiers of large slave-trading ventures.

In 1847 the British consul at Zanzibar, Hamerton, put into effect the treaty with Sayyid Said which limited the sea trade of slaves to the area between Kilwa on the south and the Lamu archipelago on the north. This prohibited the trade to Arabia, to the French islands in the Indian Ocean, and elsewhere beyond the Sultan's East African dominions. Traders now had to pay a tax on each slave and secure a license at the Zanzibar custom house for the number of slaves they wanted to transport. Any vessel with such a license was exempt from detention by the British ships which now began to cruise the coast. The enforcement of the treaty depended largely on the perseverance of the British consul.

In November 1859 the British consul, Rigby, who was devoted to the abolition of the slave trade, suspected Bonaventura Mas, the Spanish-born agent for Vidal at Lamu, of dealing in slaves. Two years before, Mas was known to have sent five hundred slaves from Lamu to Havana; in February 1859 he had shipped six hundred more in a French ship, and had sent an Arab dealer, Salim Jubran, to Kilwa for more slaves. Jubran had bought four or five hundred slaves at Kilwa, but when the ship in which they were carried became disabled, Mas had ordered them to be taken overland to Lamu. Only half of the total number of slaves survived this journey, and they were subsequently shipped from Lamu to one of the French islands. Now, in late 1859, a Spanish brig, *Formosa Estrella*, under French colors and consigned to Mas, had come from Ibo in Mozambique to Zanzibar. Mas failed to produce satisfactory papers there, but had sailed for Lamu anyway. Mas's ship was followed to Lamu by the Sultan of Zanzibar's frigate, but upon arrival in Lamu her papers were found to be in order. Again, in late 1860 *Formosa Estrella* was seized by the Sultan's authorities, but no

[46]*PP* (1871), LXII, C. 385, Inc. in No. 11. In 1873 there were fourteen Bohra, one Khoja and thirty-six Hindu traders in Lamu. *Ibid.*, Holmwood's Report, 68.

slaves were on board.[47] Even so, Rigby ordered all Banyans and other Indians to have no more to do with Mas.[48] In 1861 Mas was banished to Aden.

It was common for the Europeans to hire a local Arab or Swahili buyer to travel to the smaller places and to mainland areas. Such a buyer was Auwesi bin Hamadi, a well-traveled Bajun from the island of Simambaya, who worked for Lamu merchant houses.[49] In the case of Mas, it was Salim Jubran who had carried out his transactions in Kilwa. Salim Jubran, however, had taken on the additional task of informing the British of Mas's slave dealings. In September 1861 Salim Jubran was still in the pay of the British consulate in Zanzibar.

The Arab community vowed vengeance on Jubran, but failed in an attempt to capture and hang him.[50] Among the Arabs who threatened Jubran was Sayyid Sud bin Hilal, the liwali of Lamu, who managed to seize Jubran and carry him off to Lamu.[51] Sayyid Sud, angry with the British, had in turn antagonized the British because he had imprisoned for four months in the Lamu fort a man named Haji Noor, whom the British had dispatched to the Somali coast to inquire about the survivors of a wrecked ship. Sayyid Sud claimed he had imprisoned Haji for debt.

The British community was intent on removing Sayyid Sud from office for these affronts and because of his slavedealing, for the cruiser *Gorgon* had discovered about six hundred Kilwa slaves in Lamu awaiting transshipment to the Arabian coast after the departure of the British.[52] Rigby attempted to impress upon his superiors that Sayyid Sud bin Hilal was in ill favor with the foreign merchants of Lamu and was unfit to be liwali.[53]

Such was not the case, however. When it was discovered by the Europeans in Lamu in early 1862 that Sayyid Sud was to be removed, they rose to his defense. All the foreign consuls at Zanzibar whose merchants were in Lamu protested the removal on the grounds that Sayyid Sud was the only man in the Zanzibari dominions, outside of the Sultan himself, who was able "to control the Frontier District of Lamoo, especially in their present

[47]Russell, *Rigby*, 157, 164-165, 171-172.

[48]Bennett and Brooks, *Merchants*, 507-508, 516; *PP* (1871), XII, C. 420, Appendix 7.

[49]Decken, *Reisen*, II, 277.

[50]Devereux, *Cruise*, 87.

[51]Russell, *Rigby*, 173; FO 84/1179, Memorandum on Pelly's Despatch No. 167, 13 March 1862.

[52]Russell, *Rigby*, 190; C. P. Rigby, "Englishmen in Captivity in Eastern Africa," *PRGS*, X (1866), 113-116; FO 84/1179, Pelly to Foreign Office, 8 March 1862, Pelly to Russell, 13 March 1862, Inc. in No. 110, Pelly to Forbes, 10 January 1862.

[53]Russell, *Rigby*, 189-190.

disturbed condition." The Banyans in Lamu stated that Sayyid Sud was "the only Governor they had known who was just to all people; and that they could now keep their doors open all night whereas prior to Sayyed Saood's arrival they had never dared leave their doors open after dark."[54]

The Hanseatic merchants declared that Sayyid Sud's removal would cause considerable injuries not only to the trade of Lamu but to Zanzibar also:

> The trade of Lamu is not to be separated from that of Zanzibar...Hamburg merchants have their property in Lamo and its dependencies; their capital has been invested while Seyd Soud was Governor, relying on his energy, his justice and well-known predilection for Europeans.
>
> Remove Seyd Soud from Lamo and half the property and the outstanding funds would to a certainty be lost; the first trading place and staple market of the coast within the Sultan's dominions, which Lamo has been till now, and has mainly become through Seyd Soud's energetic rule, would lose its importance and would be locked up to mercantile transactions by disturbances and disorders....[55]

The French consul echoed the Hanseatic merchants, pointing out instances of the poor discipline which had prevailed in 1856 prior to Sayyid Sud's arrival, and that Lamu was now the major entrepôt for the oil grains. He stated that there was merchandise worth more than sixty thousand piastres in Lamu.[56] The American consul likewise felt that the removal of Sayyid Sud would be injurious to all merchants with business at Lamu and neighboring ports.[57]

The disturbances and disorders to which the foreigners referred were, of course, the troubles between the Omanis on the one hand and the Siyu and Pate dissidents on the other, which culminated in the 1862 expulsion from Kau of the Nabahani Swahilis, who then moved to Witu. The foreigners, including the Indians, had been encouraged by Sayyid Sud's show of force against the Nabahanis, for a system of long-term credit had developed in Lamu along with the Omani buildup of commerce. The refugee groups at Kau and later at Witu, Magogoni, and the forest villages included

[54]FO 84/1179, Inc. in No. 110, Pelly to Forbes, 10 January 1862.

[55]FO 84/1179, Hanseatic Consulate to Pelly, 11 March 1862.

[56]*Ibid.*, French Consul to Pelly, 12 March 1862; Hart, "Extracts," 280.

[57]*Ibid.*, U.S. Consul to Pelly, 11 March 1862.

those in debt to the foreigners, who attributed much of the insecure commercial situation to Sultan Ahmed of Witu.[58]

Sud bin Hilal was removed from office briefly, but was allowed by Sultan Majid to return as soon as Consul Rigby left the area in late 1861. Sud died in late 1862.[59] By June 1865, and perhaps earlier, the formidable Sud bin Hamed had been appointed liwali of Lamu.[60] During these intervening few years between the administrations of two strong liwalis, Arab pressures against the Nabahani were insufficient to cause their defeat; rather, the Nabahanis, at Witu, established a stronghold even closer to Lamu. Witu-controlled lands were in effect directly behind Lamu's cultivated mainland, which made it even easier for debtors and runaway slaves to escape. Sultan Ahmed's goal, the Europeans believed, was to control the whole coast opposite Lamu.[61]

In 1866 all communication with "Galla country," and presumably all trade in ivory, ceased. Oddly enough, an Oromo chief, named Hirebaya, of Chaffa, a place south of the Tana, attempted in April 1866 to mediate between Sud bin Hamed and Sultan Ahmed of Witu. Sud himself, no doubt to appease the merchants of Lamu, traveled by sea to Kimbo and on foot via Mpekatoni and Kipini to Kau for the discussions.[62] There is no record of the outcome of these negotiations. One can assume either that they failed, or that the terms of an agreement then arranged were not kept. Sud may even have used the occasion to acquire his extensive plantations at Kau.[63] In any event, before the year was out, Sud bin Hamed attacked Ahmed at Balawa. Unsuccessful, Sud resorted to the Oromo-Somali wars of 1867-1869 as, among other purposes, an indirect means of punishing the Witu sultanate.[64] Although this too failed to curb the activities and the immediate prosperity of Witu, the results of this tactic on the economic life of Lamu and the northern coast were far reaching.

[58]Müller, *Deutschland-Zanzibar-Ostafrika*, 292-293.

[59]Bennett and Brooks, *Merchants*, 520, Webb to Seward, 14 March 1862. "A shabby potentate," son of a "low, black concubine slave," according to Consul Rigby, came to Lamu as liwali in October 1862. Devereux, *Cruise*, 139. He was a Busaidi named Mohamed bin Hamed. KNA/DC/LAM/3/1, J.H. Clive, "Short History of Lamu," 39, includes a list of the liwalis of Lamu, 1813-1948.

[60]Decken, *Reisen*, II, 277.

[61]*Ibid.*, 371-372.

[62]Wakefield, *Wakefield*, 75-76. Some of the Chaffa Oromo had converted to Islam, which would have made dealings with them more palatable to the Arabs. Wakefield, *Footprints*, 57. Chaffa is not to be confused with Chara on the Tana, but was located some distance from the river.

[63]Greffulhe, "Voyage," 333.

[64]See Chapter 6 above.

Since 1847 the slave trade had not diminished. Because Lamu was at the northern edge of the limited area, the archipelago with its mangrove- and shoal-filled backwaters served as a superb jumping-off point for shipments of slaves to Arabia and other points north, including the Somali coast. If the Arab liwalis were not wholeheartedly in support of Said and Majid's acquiescence to British wishes in this regard, it is apparent that neither were those many inhabitants of the Lamu area who held openly divergent political views. Except for a brief period during 1859-1861 when Consul Rigby enforced it,[65] the Hamerton treaty tended to increase the prosperity of the Lamu traders. The price for slaves trebled between 1847 and 1860.[66] These were years during which the demand for slaves increased in Lamu, for the cultivated area of the district expanded along with the increased foreign market for grain and oil seeds. In addition, the need for slaves on the Benadir coast increased for the same reasons and also because of the collection there of orchella weed *(marere)*, which was exported for use in dyes.[67] The mechanics of the long-distance slave trade also developed during the mid-century decades.

The efforts of the British against the slave trade in the 1850s were not aimed so much against the coast trade as against that carried on in European ships. Slaves were transported in two ways after the enactment of the Hamerton treaty: in ships with the Sultan of Zanzibar's license, traveling within the limits of the treaty; and without the license, illegally in terms of the treaty, in dhows which sometimes carried other produce. In such cases, as many slaves as could conveniently be stowed without risk were carried. The captain might buy a few slaves in every port he put into, starting at Kilwa, and increase their number as he went north. The farther he sailed from Zanzibar, the less the risk of capture. Often an Arab passenger would pay the captain for the voyage by bringing a slave along and selling him at a northern market where prices were usually much higher. If the dhow were searched en route, slaves could be claimed as domestic slaves.[68]

In addition to this coastal trade, Arabs from the Hadhramaut and Muscat would come during the northeast monsoon with carpets, cloth, fish and dates, and return with a cargo combining coconuts, mangrove poles, grain and slaves. Occasionally Lamu dhows would make the voyage to Arabia with the southwest monsoon. Whether a dhow was licensed or not, the transport of slaves by sea north of Kiwayuu Island was a transgression of the 1847 treaty. Proceeding

[65]At one point in 1861, "slaves could not be disposed of at any price" in Lamu, for so many traders had landed their cargoes there fearing capture at sea. Russell, *Rigby*, 190.

[66]Burton, *Zanzibar*, I, 465.

[67]*PP* (1871), LXII, C. 385, Inc. in No. 11.

[68]Sulivan, *Dhow Chasing*, 57-59.

farther north was at the captain's risk; as the risks increased, however, so did the rewards.

During the 1860s the demand for slaves in the Lamu hinterland was high not only because of increased agricultural production, but also because during these years the Witu sultanate and the watoro forest villages absorbed a good many of the plantation slaves of Lamu and other island proprietors. To fulfill local needs, therefore, much of the slave trading of Lamu dealers was of the licensed variety and did not involve transport beyond the northern limits. By 1867 the situation had changed. The Lamu area was overstocked with slaves resulting from the Oromo-Somali wars and, in addition, the wars had prevented any transport of slaves overland north from Lamu. It was at this time that the trade in slaves by dhow to the north of Lamu reached its peak. In addition, and not involving the long-distance land route, some of the captured Oromo slaves were brought to the coast just north of the Sultan of Zanzibar's dominions, into the northern Bajun coastal area. Bajun of the Lamu archipelago, who had many contacts with this northern coast and who were theoretically subject to the Sultan of Zanzibar, were thus reaping profits from a trade in which the Sultan of Zanzibar shared no customs.[69]

The coastline north of Lamu received the attention of British cruisers after 1868, and many prizes were taken. The increased risk at sea coincided, fortunately for the slave traders of the Lamu archipelago, with the increased safety of the overland route north from Lamu as the Oromo were defeated. These two factors were not unconnected.

In 1870, Barghash succeeded Majid as Sultan of Zanzibar and in the same year John Kirk replaced Churchill as British consul there. Kirk's influence over Barghash caused increasing difficulties for slave traders; some of those living in Siyu moved at this time to the mainland. Yet there was no immediate slowdown of the trade at sea. The British believed that the slave-carrying vessels which went to Arabia at this time were almost always licensed for travel to Lamu from Zanzibar, where the dhow captains paid customs duty. Reaching the latitude of Lamu, they made for Arabia, touching at Lamu for water and provisions if the coast were clear.[70] Typical were the dhows captured off Merka and Barawa in November 1870. One belonged to a Banyan of Rasini, another to an Arab of Lamu. Neither had papers, but each had a crew of twelve and, according to the crews, only two passengers. The captain of a Hamburg vessel which happened to be in the area testified, however, that at least thirty-five slaves on each dhow had jumped overboard.[71] The

[69] *PP* (1870), LXI, C. 209, Report of the Committee on the East African Slave Trade, 24 January 1870. The Committee blamed slave dealers for having incited the "Galla tribes in the neighbourhood of Fazi" to go to war.

[70] *Ibid.*(1871), XII, C. 420. Evidence of Rev. Edward Steere and Rear Adm. C. F. Hillyar, 25 July 1871.

[71] *Ibid.*(1872), LIV, C. 657, No. 14, Churchill to Granville.

dhows had been bound for Muscat, touching at Barawa for water, reported the slaves who reached shore.[72] It was not unusual for slaves to be forced overboard at sea when capture of a dhow was imminent. The survivors of these incidents established watoro communities such as Anole near Tula on the coast south of Kismayu.

The export of slaves from Zanzibar to the north diminished during the years of the Oromo-Somali wars. Lamu then required only five hundred slaves annually to be imported from the south.[73] But in the period of May to December 1870, a year when cholera struck the coast, a total of 2,637 slaves were sent to Lamu.[74] In 1871, during the same months, almost twice this number went to Lamu.[75]

During the early 1870s the Somalis were importing and retaining at least 4,000 southern slaves annually to work their simsim plantations and to collect orchella weed. The Somalis preferred to sell the Oromo and "Abyssinian" slaves whom they captured in war, replacing them with slaves from the south who, being farther from home, were less tempted to run away.[76] It was largely to accommodate the immense Somali coast demand that the overland caravan route between Lamu and Barawa was opened, by or before September 1871.[77] After June 1873 this route became not just an auxiliary to the increasingly risky northern sea route but the main channel by which slaves traveled to the Benadir. In that month, Kirk succeeded in closing the Zanzibar slave market and persuaded Sultan Barghash to sign a new treaty abolishing the trade at sea. The new treaty, as did that of 1847, actually increased for a time the Lamu traders' chances for profit.[78] They

[72] *PP* (1872), LIV, C. 657, No. 65, Commander Blomfield to Captain Parish, 17 Nov. 1870.

[73] *Ibid.* (1873), LXI, C. 867, No. 2, Kirk to Granville, 25 Jan. 1872.

[74] *Ibid.* (1872), LIV, C. 657, Inc. in No. 50. In the same period, 1,060 slaves were sent to Pemba, 624 to Mombasa and Malindi, and 151 to Pangani. See also FO 84/1325, Kirk to Chief Secretary of Government Bombay, 2 May 1870. The cholera epidemic carried off entire slave communities at Zanzibar in that year, but may have struck the Lamu area a few years earlier.

[75] *PP* (1873), LXI, C. 867, No. 2, Kirk to Granville, 25 January 1872. The same increase was reflected at Pemba, Mombasa, Malindi and Pangani.

[76] *Ibid.*, C. 820, No. 56, Frere to Granville, 29 May 1873.

[77] *Ibid.* (1872), LIV, C. 657, Inc. in No. 78, Commander Tucker to Secretary of the Admiralty, 23 October 1871.

[78] See J. Frederick Elton, *Travels and Researches Among the Lakes and Mountains of Eastern and Central Africa* (London, 1879), 56-57, 103; Philip Colomb, *Slave Catching in the Indian Ocean* (London, 1873), 44.

gained not only from their prime geographic position, but from the fact that they no longer paid customs duties to the Sultan. Formerly the dealer had had to borrow money at high rates, usually from an Indian moneylender, but now he no longer had to pay in advance a large amount for a chartered vessel.[79]

In the year October 1873 to October 1874, four thousand slaves were estimated to have crossed the Ozi River, of which twelve hundred were believed by the British to have remained in the Lamu hinterland, one thousand to continue to the Bajun coast, and the rest presumably to the Benadir. The price for an ordinary laborer or domestic slave, which was twenty to twenty-five dollars at Pangani on the Mrima, increased to thirty-five to forty dollars in the Lamu hinterland, and to forty to fifty dollars on the Benadir coast.

After crossing the Ozi, the slaves were conducted by Swahili overseers to Kimbo, where proprietors from the Kipini district, and doubtless the proprietors of the rich Mpekatoni plantations, made their purchases. Even before the caravans left the Ozi River, small bands of Somalis began to barter for the most miserable of the slaves, whom they would sell cheaply on the Bajun coast, which was in great need of slave labor at this time. The remaining slaves then traveled via Mkonumbi to Mokowe, where Lamu townsmen came to choose the best domestic slaves. The next station was the rural village of Milimani, where the Bajun plantations met the Boni forest, four hours above Wange. In 1873 five hundred "Bush Somalis" seized this settlement, driving off the Bajun proprietors. The last station in the Lamu hinterland was Jaguani, nearly opposite Rasini, inhabited by those emigrants from Siyu who had seceded shortly after Majid's death. Here Mzee bin Seif and his Bajun relatives procured slaves for their extensive mainland plantations. Beyond this point the trade was entirely in Somali hands.[80]

The Somali aggression on Milimani may have been carried out with the encouragement of Arabs of Lamu with interests in the trade. It is more likely, however, an example of the too powerful position which the Somalis had gained following the Oromo defeat. Their trade in slaves north of Lamu, usually carried on at night, often involved stolen rather than purchased slaves. Were it not that only the Somalis could keep up a supply of Oromo and "Abyssinian" girls for the townsmen, their presence in the Lamu area perhaps would not have been tolerated. The liwalis of Lamu and Siyu had seized some of the canoes used for smuggling

[79]*PP* (1874), LXII, C. 1062, Inc. 1 in No. 5, Elton to Prideaux, 4 April 1874.

[80]Holmwood's Report, 7; FO 84/1423, Holmwood to Prideaux, 17 November 1874.

slaves between the mainland and the Bajun islands, for sometimes it was their own slaves who were being kidnapped. North of Kismayu many of the slaves offered for sale were runaways from Swahili and Arab owners who apparently preferred to serve Somali masters, and slaves stolen from the "badly guarded shambas at the back of Lamu."[81]

The Somali presence in the Lamu area was not restricted to the mainland. The town of Shela on Lamu Island was called a "Somali suburb" at this time, inhabited by "bush Somali" involved in the hide and cattle trade,[82] and probably those Somalis making arrangements for overland slave shipments. The presence of such a group of Somalis was a "cause of anxiety" to Sud bin Hamed, the liwali, which suggests that these were not Somali allied to the Omani cause. Some Somali tribesmen were actively brandishing their power on the near mainland: most of the slaves who cultivated mainland fields for the proprietors of Rasini and Siyu, for example, now preferred to cross over at daybreak and return to the island at sunset, for fear of Somali attack. Somalis had recently come down and carried off both slaves and cattle from the most distant of these plantations.[83]

The aims of the different Somali tribes varied, obviously; the difficulty lies in recognizing the tribal affiliations of those involved in Lamu district affairs. In about 1868 a few Mijertein Somalis had come from the north to Kismayu, where they were joined by others who also came overland, creating a force strong enough to overcome Barawa as well as Kismayu. The Barawa people, however, allied themselves with Ahmed Yusef, chief of Geledi, and pushed back the newcomers to the fort at Kismayu. In 1870 the Mijertein were reinforced and enabled to hold Kismayu by Arab soldiers of the liwali of Lamu, Sud bin Hamed, who had throughout the episode favored this settlement of Kismayu.[84] The settlement of the Mijertein coincided with the Oromo-Somali wars, and suggests the encouragement of the Lamu Arabs who had found other Somalis -- at Barawa, for example -- in friendly relations with the Oromo and with Somalis who had been allies of Bwana Mataka and his son twenty years before. While the conflict continued between the Mijertein reinforced by Lamu soldiers on the one hand, and the Barawa Somalis with their allies on the other, many slave vessels were captured by the British, for the disposition of the cruisers

[81]FO 84/1423, Holmwood to Prideaux, 17 November 1874.

[82]The Mijertein Somali, especially, sold cattle in Lamu after the Oromo were defeated. Turton, "Pastoral Tribes," 105.

[83]Holmwood's Report, 70. This may be a reference to their seizure of Milimani as a slaving station, for Milimani was one of the farthest inland areas farmed by the Bajun.

[84]FO 84/1325, Kirk to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 12 July 1870.

in northern waters could not easily be reported to Lamu traders. With the Mijertein in command at Kismayu and land communications open, however, intelligence was speedily passed to Lamu as to the movements of British cruisers.[85] This was an additional reason for keeping open the overland route.

The 1873 treaty barring the slave trade by sea and the 1876 treaty closing the land route, in part a result of the Egyptian invasion, marked the end of nearly a decade of an intensive trade in slaves centering on the Lamu archipelago and hinterland. It had been made possible by the defeat of the Oromo. The importance of the Somalis in this trade was a foreshadow of their powerful political and economic role in the Lamu area in the decades to follow.

[85] *PP* (1874), LXII, C. 1064, Inc. 2 in No. 18.

CHAPTER 8

SULTAN AHMED, WITU, AND THE GERMANS

> *He [the first minister of the Sultan of Witu] told me he prays each Friday for his Sultan, and for the great Sultan in Istanbul. As I called to his attention that he now must include the German Kaiser in his prayers, he answered that he would pray not only for the German Kaiser, his vizier and soldiers, but also that in their shambas all fruits would prosper, as well as for all artisans and doctors in Germany.*[1]

The Witu sultanate, inland stronghold of the long-dissident Swahili people, along with the allied frontier settlements to the north of Witu, became in the 1880s the focus of political activity in Lamu district. By the middle of this decade, Europeans as well as local peoples had become deeply involved in the political affairs of the Lamu area. It has been suggested that Ahmed, the Sultan of Witu, played a passive role in the development of the sultanate in opposition to Arab and later English rule, allowing himself to be tutored by the Germans who came to him at this time.[2] The strategies of Ahmed and his allies, however, reflected a continuous, if rarely successful, attempt to attain economic and political independence during a period of aggressive Omani rule epitomized by the non-conciliatory attitudes of the Lamu liwali, Sud bin Hamed. The intrusion of Europeans did not alter these aims; it merely enhanced, for a time, the chances of achieving them.

The activities of the Witu sultanate in the 1870s, the second decade of its residence in Witu, give an indication of the attitude of Ahmed toward his Arab neighbors at this time. It could hardly be called subservient: the Witu sultan was allegedly the director of Boni who raided the luxuriant Mpekatoni area of Lamu proprietors for cattle and slaves, taking them to Witu where he held the slaves for a ransom of from twenty to fifty dollars per slave.[3] Sultan Ahmed also sometimes recaptured runaway slaves and delivered them to their Arab masters in the coast towns for a price of from five to thirty dollars.[4]

[1]Von Hörnecke, "Deutsch-Wituland. 4. Auszug aus dem Tagebuche des Regierungs-baumeister Hörnecke," *DKZ*, Band 3 (1886), 485.

[2]See Ahmed I. Salim, *The Swahili-speaking Peoples of Kenya's Coast, 1895-1965* (Nairobi, 1973), 59-60; and Müller, *Deutschland-Zanzibar-Ostafrika*, 298-299.

[3]Greffulhe, "Voyage," 350.

[4]FO 84/1714, Malet to Granville, 12 June 1885, quoting G. Fischer. It may be that after the land slave route opened Ahmed found demand for the slaves' return had diminished.

The income from raiding ventures was, at this time, Ahmed's chief source of revenue. Witu had little trade, although rice, mtama, and maize flourished in the area. Ahmed apparently had no desire to attract Indian merchants, for any such merchant wishing to settle in Witu had to pay a tax of from two to three hundred dollars for permission to open a shop. Those few Indians who did open businesses in Witu found that Ahmed appropriated some of their goods for his own use. In 1876 or 1877 there was only one Hindu merchant at Witu.[5]

There was, of course, the additional -- and basic -- difficulty of exporting goods from Witu to the coast through Arab-controlled ports. Except for the watoro port on Mongoni Creek,[6] there was no free exit for the goods of the interior within any reasonable distance of Witu. The route via tributaries of the Ozi led into that river between Kau and Kipini; a land route toward the sea creek of Mkonumbi also led directly to an area closely watched by the liwali of Lamu. In 1867, the more valuable items with a sure market, such as ivory, simsim oil, and cotton, were brought by Pokomo from Witu to the "coast," probably Kau or Kipini,[7] but this trade must have continued only because it suited the Arabs.

Despite these obvious problems, Sultan Ahmed had become a wealthy man soon after taking up residence at Witu. He had a monopoly on slaves; debtors and watoro were loyal to him because he had given them asylum. But because the very existence of Witu affected the system of credit on the whole northern coast of East Africa, and aroused the wrath of merchants and the Omani administration in Lamu and Zanzibar, Ahmed and his followers had to be very wily in order to continue to live in the manner in which they did.[8]

Ahmed had always seen the need for allies. His initial move to the mainland had been made with Oromo approval, which continued when he retreated to Witu. By the late 1860s, however, his Oromo allies were vanquished. Ahmed had not only to be wary of an Arab thrust but of the now stronger-than-ever Somali, who were in league with his enemies at Lamu and who had no longer to fear the Oromo. Ahmed welcomed any ally against this double threat, and had very likely sought the support of Avatula bin Bahero Somali. In 1867, Ahmed had requested the protection of the Prussian government through the first European to visit Witu, Richard Brenner. Brenner had come to Witu pursuing scientific interests, but not without ideas of colonization, which he could not, however, fulfill.[9]

In the late 1870s other Germans explored the area of the Tana and Ozi and included Witu in their itineraries. G. A. Fischer and Clemens Denhardt made a journey partly sponsored by the merchant

[5]FO 84/1714, Malet to Granville, 12 June 1885.
[6]Greffulhe, "Voyage," 328.
[7]Brenner, "Forschungen," 460.
[8]Müller, *Deutschland-Zanzibar-Ostafrika*, 291-292.
[9]*Ibid.*, 293-294.

houses of Hansing and O'swald, who wished to explore trading possibilities in the area. Fischer and Denhardt were well treated at Witu, where Ahmed promised them land should they settle within his domain. From 1876 to 1885, these Germans and others publicized the idea of Witu as a trading center and station of German influence.[10]

Meanwhile, the stealing of slaves by Ahmed's followers, which was apparently continuing somewhat out of his control, had angered Sud bin Hamed and the Lamu slave owners to the point where in 1881 Ahmed was told in no uncertain terms to disperse his raiders. He replied that he was powerless to do so without a supply of gunpowder.[11] The Sultan of Zanzibar, upon learning this, sent a force to Lamu only to find that the impatient local Arabs had already marched out and attacked Witu, and had been forced to retreat by the Witu people, who were armed largely with bows and arrows, swords, and knives. Several Witu men were captured, but shortly after this confrontation the Witu people stole fifteen slaves from an Arab plantation only one hour's walk from the coast, and no one could be induced to go after them.[12] Due to these depredations attributed to Ahmed, Lamu's richest mainland cultivated area between Kipini and Mkonumbi declined into a "trackless jungle."[13]

Some of these kidnapped slaves were not held at Witu for ransom by their Lamu owners, but were sold to Somalis who, cut off from the supply which had once reached them by sea and by the land route across Lamu district, were eager to obtain them. The slaves were exchanged for cattle and also for arms and gunpowder, which the Somalis obtained from the port of Mukalla on the Hadhramaut coast of Arabia. Opening this peaceful trade may have been an attempt by Ahmed to remove, at least for a time, the constant threat of a Somali attack. However, Somali raiders and Somali traders were usually of quite separate Somali tribes.

The supply of slaves increased in 1884 when a famine in the coastal area south of the Tana River caused some Giriama people to pawn their children in exchange for grain and cattle.[14] Some of these slaves traveled to Lamu by sea; a few may have crossed the Witu sultanate by land. Large numbers of Somalis from Cape Guardafui

[10]Müller, *Deutschland-Zanzibar-Ostafrika,* 294-297.

[11]*PP* (1882), LXV, C. 3160, Miles to Granville, 17 November 1881.

[12]*Ibid.* (1883), LXVI, C. 3547, Miles to Granville, 10 February 1882; Secretary of the Admiralty to Lister, 14 April 1882.

[13]*Ibid.* (1884-85), LXXIII, C. 4523, No. 95, Kirk to Granville, 23 September 1884.

[14]The famine may have extended into Lamu district. In mid-1884, a smallpox epidemic struck various communities in the area, including Siyu, where 1400 died, and Mkonumbi. *PP* (1886), XLVII, C. 4609, Inc. in No. 42, Haggard to Kirk, 25 August 1884.

arrived at Lamu and nearby Hindi on the mainland ready with herds of cattle to exchange for slaves, on which they made immense profits in the north. The liwali, still Sud bin Hamed until late 1884, found it difficult to prevent the new traffic. The Somalis told him plainly that they would retaliate if he did not restore to them slaves he had confiscated under pressure from the British, who had placed a vice-consul, John Haggard, at Lamu in 1883.[15]

Unfortunately for Witu's economy, the mechanism of the famine-produced slave traffic largely by-passed Witu, for Lamu became the main place of transshipment. Witu had gained access to the port of Kipini, however, which was on the north side of the Ozi River where slaves sometimes crossed from the south. The Kipini cultivators were left alone by the watoro in return for the use of the port.[16] But even when Ahmed was in a position to offer the Somalis slaves from the south, the Somalis were no longer able to furnish Ahmed with the gunpowder and arms he had until recently received from them, for the Mukalla supply had been stopped by the British Indian government.[17]

Vice-consul Haggard paid a visit to Witu--the first of any Englishman--in August 1884. He found Witu town in the center of dense bush which was three or four miles around and appeared to have been artificially planted for defense. The town was "so securely walled that a cat could not escape," with a stockade of tree trunks completely overgrown by the bush, and could be entered only at the massive gates, which opened just wide enough for one man to pass at a time. The gates were so stoutly fastened when Haggard arrived that it took fifteen minutes to open them.

Sultan Ahmed was about sixty-five years old in 1884. In splendid dress, he received Haggard accompanied by his heir apparent, the thirty-five-year-old Fumo Bakari, who was both his son-in-law and nephew. Also with him was a brother-in-law, Monyi bin Abdulla, who was probably the Sharif Abdulla whom the Germans became acquainted with in the following year, and who served as a prime minister. The Sultan told Haggard that he was an old man--he was indeed in ill health, suffering from elephantiasis--who wanted only

[15] *PP* (1884-85), LXXIII, C. 4523, No. 95 and Inc. in No. 95, Haggard to Kirk, 8 September 1884. The Somali cattle traders arrived in Lamu when the southwest monsoon was due, in order to return to the north with their slaves by dhow. Frederick Jackson, *Early Days in East Africa* (London, 1930), 22.

[16] *PP* (1886), XLVII, C. 4609, Haggard to Kirk, 25 August 1884.

[17] *Ibid.* (1884-85), LXXIII,C. 4523, No. 95 and Inc. in No. 95, Haggard to Kirk, 8 September 1884.

to live and die in peace. He promised to attend to all of Haggard's requests, which pertained mostly to the treatment of British subjects and to the stimulation of trade. In a subsequent interview with Monyi bin Abdulla, however, Haggard learned of the Sultan's indignation at, first of all, the British role in stopping Witu's gun and ammunition supply from Mukalla and, second, Haggard's insultingly slow arrival at Witu, which visit had been proposed four months before. Ahmed's slim hope that Haggard would agree to furnishing Witu with arms was quickly squelched. Thus the leave-taking, at the end of a visit which could have determined much different consequences for Witu than what followed, was cool on both sides. Haggard's reactions set the tone for all future dealings of the English with Witu. In his opinion, the best solution would be "to destroy the whole colony as soon as possible, and capture their leaders..."[18]

Ahmed owned six hundred slaves at this time, and could send three thousand men into the field. Haggard considered Ahmed to be the leader of all of the marauders troubling Lamu district, but after his visit to Witu he did see these distinctions:

> The people [Ahmed's following] are now best known by the name "Watoro," or runaways, but they call themselves "Watuawitu," [*watu wa Witu*, people of Witu] with the exception of the inhabitants of a few of the more northern villages, who call themselves "Wakengi," or the "Restless people"....
>
> In addition to Witu there are six principal villages in the vicinity under Simba, the inhabitants of which call themselves "Watua Witu," namely Hamasi, Mohonda, Mawani, Chanja, Gongoni, and Mominini; the inhabitants of these seven villages together number nearly 6,000 souls. A little to the northward are several more villages whose inhabitants call themselves "Wakengi." The most important of these are Balana [Balawa], Katana [Katawa], Balo, and Mtangamakundu. These Wakengi are partially independent of Simba, but he commands them in most things, and only the other day put some of their Headmen in prison for disobeying his orders.[19]

There is no complete record in 1884 or before, beyond such second-hand accounts as Haggard's, of the number of satellite villages which encircled Witu, or of the frontier settlements which existed in the Boni forest north of Witu, although clearly the area they and their adjoining fields covered was extensive. Balawa,

[18] *PP* (1886), XVII, C. 4609, Inc. in No. 42, Haggard to Kirk, 25 August 1884.

[19] *Ibid.*

which was Avatula's first forest headquarters, existed in the 1860s.[20] Katawa and Safareh were also among those northern villages settled by the 1870s.[21] Avatula founded Starani about 1883, and other villages waxed and waned according to the political situation and the agricultural potential. The larger settlements, like Katawa or Starani, were actually capitals of small districts, and were ringed by their own satellite villages. Some of the settlements were largely of Boni population, others were inhabited by runaway slaves originally from Kilwa's interior and elsewhere in the south. A Bajun element was introduced along with Avatula when he came from the coast. Thus, even in the so-called watoro or *wakengi* villages there was no homogeneity of background.

The forest villages, like Witu, were built in thick bush which took the place of ramparts and battlements, and were impenetrable to attack by anything but cannon. There was, for example, only one entrance to Starani, closed by a strong door which was in the style of those found in mainland villages opposite Zanzibar, built in triangular form with strong logs and closed at night by logs laid against it from the inside.[22] Because Arab attacks on these remote villages were extremely rare, it is apparent that the stalwart construction of the villages was to prevent Somali raids. The settlements, with their individual populations sometimes numbering a thousand or more, may also have served Witu as a protective buffer against the Somalis, who generally came down from the north.

In early 1885 Clemens Denhardt and his brother Gustav arrived in Lamu and prepared for an expedition to Witu. Vice-consul Haggard immediately confiscated the firearms the Denharts had brought for Ahmed, but eventually porters were sent and the Denhardts went on their way.[23] Even in 1867 Ahmed had promised potential Prussian settlers as much land as they wanted and full commercial freedom, including exemption from any duties and tribute that might be charged when traveling to the neighboring Pokomo and Oromo countries.[24] Ahmed was pleased to see the Denhardts, especially after his rebuff by Haggard, and also because he expected an attack from Zanzibar at any time. A treaty between Ahmed and the Denhardts was signed in April 1885.[25] The Denhardts received twenty-five square

[20]It appears on Brenner's map accompanying "Forschungen." The settlement called Balo by Haggard and others was a Boni settlement farther north. Mbwana Othmani, interview in Witu, 5 November 1971.

[21]See Chapter 6 above; also FO 107/23, Evidence of Mabareh and Saboori in Hardinge to Kimberley, 1 October 1894.

[22]Toeppen, "Deutsch Witu-Land," 326, stated that the doors were like "Usegua and Ukami" village doors.

[23]Jackson, *Early Days*, 3-4.

[24]FO 84/1714, Malet to Granville, 3 June 1885, including excerpts from *Norddeutsche-Allegemeine Zeitung* (Berlin).

[25]Müller, *Deutschland-Zanzibar-Ostafrika*, 297-298.

miles of land near Kimbo, as well as a large area near Wange. Neither of these plots, obviously, was at the heart of Witu; rather, these claims assumed Ahmed's authority as far as the coast.

The British consul Kirk wanted to eliminate Ahmed and his followers from their position hindering the prosperity of Lamu, but, more than that, he wished to prevent Ahmed from gaining the protection of the Germans, who had already been making treaties with African chiefs on the Zanzibar mainland.[26] Ahmed had apparently accepted a subsidy from the Sultan of Zanzibar, in the same way that Mzee bin Seif and Bwana Mataka had each done earlier--with no intention of serving any interests but his own.[27] In October 1884 Ahmed had written a conciliatory letter to Sultan Barghash, explaining that although he had feared the Lamu liwali Sud bin Hamed he had never disobeyed the Sultan of Zanzibar. He promised to obey the new liwali, Said bin Hamed: "You shall see it like the full moon on the fourteenth day..."[28]

In late 1884 Sud bin Hamed had been replaced by Said bin Hamed, the eldest of five brothers in an influential Busaidi family; both Said and his brother Abdulla would serve as liwali in Lamu at various times.[29] Sud bin Hamed came to be blamed by the British for creating, by his injudicious government, the complex state of affairs at Witu, and also for not doing enough to prevent the German involvement at Witu. Said bin Hamed, on the other hand, was against the German presence; he married into Sultan Ahmed's family; in addition -- and this seems to have become a prerequisite for the governorship at Lamu--he had great personal interest in and influence among the Mijertein Somalis of Kismayu who sometimes resided in Lamu to carry on their trade.[30] The latter two of these qualifications may well have given Ahmed reason to mean what he wrote in his letter. Further affront to the Zanzibari powers by Ahmed at this time is unrecorded. Nevertheless, in May 1885 Kirk wrote to the Sultan of Witu, whose name he did not seem to recall, and strongly urged him to support Barghash, who "wants only to confirm thy authority."[31] Sultan Barghash sent a military

[26]These Germans were of the German Colonization Society, in competition with the Denhardts, who represented a group called the Tana Committee The Society would become the German East Africa Company (DOAG) later in 1885. See Müller, *Deutschland-Zanzibar-Ostafrika*, 300-302, on the various German colonization groups.

[27]Salim, *Coast*, 53. Avatula also received a subsidy from the Sultan of Zanzibar and flew the Zanzibari flag at Balawa, presumably at the same time Ahmed's subsidy was paid. Toeppen, "Deutsch Witu-Land," 326.

[28]FO 84/1799, Inc. No. 2 in Report, Ahmed to Barghash, 24 October 1884.

[29]Sud bin Hamed bin Sud, interview in Lamu, 3 June 1971.

[30]FO 84/2089, Mackenzie to Under Secretary of State, F.O., 29 August 1890.

[31]FO 84/1714, Inc. in Hatzfeldt to Malet, 17 June 1885 (Kirk to Sultan "Vomlot," undated).

expedition against Witu at the end of May, and recalled it--when only one and one-half hours from Witu-- when he learned of the German Tana Committee's protectorate over Witu effected by the Denhardts and made official by the German consul in Zanzibar on May 27. Although Bismarck refused imperial protection to Witu he demanded the respect of Zanzibar for all German protectorates.[32]

One can imagine the *ngoma* in Witu on the night of the Zanzibari retreat. Not since Ahmed's early years at Kau had he been in such a strong position to assert his total independence of the hated Omanis. The Germans titled Ahmed "Sultan of Swahililand," which was as yet a vague domain in everyone's mind, but which had a hazy historicity if one acknowledged the Nabahani influence of old.

During these palmy days for the Witu sultanate, a number of Germans made studies of the possibilities of developing agriculture and trade there. A government building superintendent, Herr Von Hörnecke, had already arrived in June of 1885. Traveling from Kipini to Witu, a town which now comprised six to eight hundred houses, he reported seeing very large plantations of rice and maize (one field was over two kilometers long). The whole area around Witu was crowded with fields of grain, bananas, sugar cane and sweet potatoes, the Denhardts' own sweet potatoes among them. The simsim which was grown near Witu was processed in the Sultan's own oil mill, worked by a camel. The Sultan also possessed a small herd of cattle and larger herds of sheep and goats.

Von Hörnecke made a particular study of maize, which he observed to be the chief crop in the area. He reckoned that 750 *pishi* (3000 kilograms) could be harvested from one hectare (about two and one-half acres) of land. At the time of harvest thirty *pishi* were sold for one Maria Theresa dollar to "the Hindus"; thus the yield per crop per hectare brought twenty-five Maria Theresa dollars. The price on the export market was four and one-half times what the cultivator received. If the farmer came to the end of his supply before the new crop was harvested--and according to Von Hörnecke "that always happens"--he had to pay the export price in order to buy back grain from the Hindu trader. Clearly, Witu was not free from the wiles of the money-lender, and it appears that Haggard had been successful in placing a Hindu at Witu following his visit in 1884. Fortunately, at Witu there were usually four harvests a year--three during the long rains and one during the short rains. Von Hörnecke's advice was to plant the seeds closer together for bigger yields.

The building superintendent also examined the forest surrounding Witu and along the Ozi, where he recognized trees which could

[32]*PP* (1886), XLVII, C. 4609, Bismarck to Count Münster, 2 June 1885.

provide good commercial timber: the "Bombaro," whose hard wood was similar to European oak, and the "Bomba," like a soft beech. From the latter, canoes capable of carrying more than thirty passengers were hollowed out. The forests also contained a great amount of indiarubber.[33] Rubber vines were especially plentiful in the Utwani forest between Witu and Pangani.[34]

The Ozi-Tana system was another subject for study. The Belezoni canal, named after a governor of the Sultan of Witu once stationed at Kau, was shallow, narrow, and winding, but had capabilities, if improved, of becoming an excellent shipping lane between the two rivers. Enormous plantations of maize, bananas, rice, and sugar cane were run by Kau and Kipini people at Chara, at the upriver end of the canal.[35]

The interest of the Germans in these areas adjacent to the Witu sultanate, as well as their actual claims to territory here and elsewhere in East Africa, led the British to request a clarification of what constituted the Sultan of Zanzibar's territory. In addition, the Denhardts, with their private interests, antagonized the German consul at Zanzibar, and the DOAG made attempts of its own to deal with Ahmed. Negotiations were deemed necessary. Accordingly, a Delimitation Commission was appointed consisting of a German, an Englishman, and a Frenchman. The threesome and their entourage visited the northern coast during March and April of 1886.

Although none of the recorded queries put by the Commission to inhabitants of the Lamu area received as cynical replies as those given by the seven Somali chiefs at Kismayu,[36] the visits to coastal and island towns did reveal some varied loyalties. The tour was hasty and haphazard. The commissioners spent an hour in Pate, where some three to four hundred people lived. The chief of

[33]Von Hörnecke, "Deutsch-Wituland," 483-486. One of these trees was no doubt *mbambakofi*, sometimes called the Lucky Bean or Mahogany Bean tree, *Afzelia quanzensis*. (Welw.). P. J. Greenway, *A Swahili Dictionary of Plant Names* (Dar es Salaam, 1937), 17. See also H. Rayne, *Sun, Sand and Somalis* (London, 1921), 86, on its later export to Somaliland.

[34]Sultan Ahmed would soon monopolize the indiarubber, which was sent to Zanzibar or directly to India by the Indian traders. The Boni who had lived in the Utwani forest appear to have moved out when Ahmed's exploitation of the product began. Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 146, 173.

[35]Von Hörnecke, "Deutsch-Wituland," 483-486.

[36]For example: Q. Is Kismayu part of the Sultan of Zanzibar's dominions? A. You can see his flag. Q. Are you his subjects? A. We will answer you this evening. Q. Do you obey his orders? A. In the city of Kismayu we obey him. FO 84/1798, Procès-verbal No. 18, Kismayu, 24-25 March 1886.

the town (a cousin of Sultan Ahmed of Witu) told the British commissioner, H. H. Kitchener, that the whole island of Pate had been the Sultan of Zanzibar's from before the time of his father, but the Sultan of Zanzibar's power did not extend to the mainland, which was the Sultan of Witu's. Because Gustav Denhardt was serving as unofficial interpreter at this interview, Kitchener believed these remarks about the coast were modified to suit Denhardt's interests. By the same token, the number of the Sultan of Zanzibar's flags flying (six at Manda Bay alone) was evidence of renewed British interest in the area since the arrival of the Germans. Siyu was not visited because the commissioners lost their way.[37]

At Lamu, all of the witnesses recognized Denhardt--not unnaturally, since he resided there-- and Kitchener believed his influence prevented any evidence being given. The liwali was in Zanzibar, and the akida of Siyu, his substitute, wished to answer no questions in his absence. Another influential person responded that he was too ill to come.[38] By the time the Commission reached Kipini, Kitchener insisted that Denhardt absent himself, although Denhardt had, with the German commissioner Schmidt's sanction, prepared a deputation from Witu. The local akida was absent, and the Arab soldier filling in for him said he had been there such a short time he did not know how many soldiers were at Kipini. Kitchener made no complaint, however, about the information given by the Swahili kadi, Bari Mahadi bin Osman of Kimbo, who had lived in Kipini for fourteen years. The kadi claimed that the Sultan of Zanzibar had owned Kau since 1862 and maintained a garrison there. Kimbo and Mpekatoni likewise had been given over to Said Barghash, but at these places lived only cultivators and no soldiers. Mwandampiya, west of Mpekatoni, was inhabited by Swahilis, but was also subject to the Sultan of Zanzibar. The Pokomo country on the river bank south of Kau belonged to Barghash as well.[39]

From Witu came two viziers of the Sultan, Sharif Abdulla and one Mohamed bin Juma, as well as the heir apparent, Fumo Bakari, who had the reputation among the British of being a firebrand, although Haggard perceived this as a cover-up for Sultan Ahmed's own belligerence. Heavy rains made it difficult for the Witu delegates, who were camping out in the bush, to wait for the delayed Commission, however, and Fumo Bakari returned to Witu before the Europeans arrived. The two remaining delegates from

[37]According to Kitchener, the Denhardts had received 80 or 100 square miles of land from the Sultan of Witu in the area between Kipini and Lamu. FO 84/1798, No. 22, Patta, 2 April 1886; FO 84/1799, Kitchener to Kirk, 1 June 1886; FO 84/1799, Report on the delimitation of the Sultan of Zanzibar's territories on the coast to the north of Lamu and in the interior of Africa.

[38]FO 84/1798, No. 23, Lamu, 3 April 1886.

[39]FO 84/1798, No. 24, Kipini, 6 April 1886.

Witu defended Ahmed's sovereignty in the area from Kau as far as Tula, although they admitted the Sultan of Zanzibar had held it and the offshore islands for twenty-five years. Except for Lamu, the islands too belonged to Ahmed. Every three or four years, they added, there had been a war between the two sultans.[40]

Schmidt was inclined to give the Sultan of Zanzibar no territory between Lamu and Tula. Kitchener, however, based the Sultan of Zanzibar's possession of the northern Bajun coast upon the assurance given him by Mohamed bin Seif that his brother, Mzee bin Seif, was completely loyal to the Sultan of Zanzibar and so was the whole Bajun tribe, which had twenty-five years before assisted in driving Ahmed out of Pate.[41] The commissioners agreed that the Sultan of Zanzibar had numerous military posts between Kipini and Lamu, with flags flying and sub-governors ruling and collecting customs, yet Schmidt would not concede the effective sovereignty of Barghash. Perhaps he was aware of the suddenness with which the Sultan of Zanzibar's flag flew in 1885 at no less than seventeen hamlets and villages in addition to the older stations of Kipini and Shaka.[42] It was in this area that the Denhardts' huge tract of land had been ceded by the Sultan of Witu. North of Lamu a similar increase in stations took place, obviously with Mzee bin Seif's approval, for the Zanzibari flag was hoisted even at Mataroni, Itembe and Ashwe, hamlets among Mzee's own plantations.[43]

In May 1885 the Denhardts had transacted a declaration by the Oromo chief, Dadi ja Badada, in which the chief recognized the Sultan of Witu as the possessor of the whole coast, and discounted the Sultan of Zanzibar as the sovereign of any of the territory between Kilwa and Mogadishu. The Oromo had, however,

> tolerated the people and dependents of the Saids of the family of Abu Saidi in a few places of the aforesaid territory for the sake of trade and have permitted them to settle there temporarily. For this yearly-renewed permission to dwell and traffic the Saids of the family of Abu Saidi paid and still pay yearly to us an indemnity or payment consisting of money and goods and this tribute in conformity with an ancient treaty

[40]FO 84/1798, No. 24, Kipini, 6 April 1886.

[41]*Ibid.* See Chapter 6 above.

[42]At Kipini, Ozi (Kau), and Shaka on the southern Lamu district coast there had long been military guards of the Sultan of Zanzibar. FO 84/1799, Notes on the Customs Duties, No. 11, 18 May 1886.

[43]FO 84/1799, Report on the delimitation; FO 97/602, Humbolt's letter, Inc. in No. 21, 4 February 1887.

> was handed over to us by the Sultans of the Suaheli because we have afforded and still afford them armed assistance...[44]

This document was presented to the Commission and was immediately denigrated by Kitchener, who pointed out that the tribute which the Sultan of Zanzibar paid to the Oromo was only a simple "gratification" for Oromo assistance in retrieving slaves who had run away from their Arab masters after being beaten. In fact, he stated, the Oromo paid the Sultan of Zanzibar an annual tribute of four hundred dollars for permission to live in his territories. The French commissioner agreed that the Oromo had indeed been making this payment to the Sultan of Zanzibar for some time.[45] It seems likely that after 1868, if not earlier, the Oromo were in no position to demand such a tribute.

The Oromo condition in 1886 was far from serene, with Arabs who both used and hated them, controlling the lower river, and with Somali and Masai constantly raiding their weakened enemies. Most of the Oromo, despite their friendship with Witu, would gain little advantage from the German presence in Witu. An episode in early 1886, coincidentally at the time of the Commission's visit, involved many facets of an increasingly complex situation. Rev. and Mrs. Houghton, missionaries of the United Free Methodist Church in England, left Lamu in March with good wishes and a note of introduction from the liwali for the journey to Golbanti on the Tana River, where they were to serve a mission station established two years before. The liwali had warned them that the Swahilis on the river feared Germans entering their country, and, even when the Houghtons' nationality was made clear, the elders of Kau received them coolly. Relations were not helped by Mrs. Houghton's refusal to come ashore even when the elders said they would fire a salute in honor of the first European woman ever to visit Kau.

Golbanti was an Oromo settlement, with a few Pokomo and also some Mijikenda residents from the missions near Mombasa. Not many weeks after the Houghtons' arrival the Masai attacked Golbanti, killing Oromo and stealing their cattle, and soon returning to murder the Houghtons as well. An Arab soldier named Hamadi was believed to have led the Masai to the station.[46] The attack on Golbanti was an act of revenge by the Masai, for the Oromo had earlier persuaded some of the Mijikenda to assist them against the Masai, albeit without Houghton's knowledge. At the same time, however, Somali

[44]FO 84/1799, Procès-verbal No. 14, 21 May 1886, and Inc.
[45]*Ibid.*
[46]*The Free Methodist*, I (1886), entry for 27 May 1886; letter from Mrs. Houghton, 11 March 1886; *ibid.*, II (1887), accounts of the murder of the Houghtons collected by Reverends Wakefield and During, 23 June 1887.

attacks on other nearby Oromo camps were part of a massive Somali invasion of Oromo settlements in 1886-87, in which Oromo suffered tremendous losses of manpower and herds.[47]

The Oromo chief Dadi ja Badada and the Witu sultan were, of course, aiming-- with German help--for a return to the pre-1862 situation when the mainland was virtually free from Omani and Somali influence. Failing in this, they at least wanted to ignore the rash of Omani stations established on the coast immediately after the Germans had made their protectorate agreement with Witu.

The British believed that the people of Lamu and the mainland south of Lamu, mostly Swahilis, had been swayed by German agents and by the fact of the protectorate, but that in Lamu itself the influential Swahilis were loyal to the Omanis. This, Kitchener recognized, was not because of any love of Arab rule but rather was due to old family feuds with the Nabahanis.[48] This was no doubt true in some cases, just as the opposite was true in others. The unexpected appearance of a German frigate, *Gneisenau*, at Manda Bay in August 1886, ostensibly for its commander to make a friendly visit to Ahmed at Witu, caused varied reactions among the Lamu populace. The incident had similarities to the Egyptian visit of ten years before: the Arabs and their garrison became alarmed, locking their wives in their houses, while the Swahilis, according to the Germans, "believed that the time of liberation was near, and that Germany would activate her protectorate relationship to their hereditary ruling house and remove Arab intruders by force." The ship's boat, however, merely put in close by Gustav Denhardt's seafront house in Lamu, where the officers outfitted for an expedition to Witu.

This visit of the Germans to Witu, with good will simply exuding from both hosts and guests, was in startling contrast to the official visit made by Haggard two years before. When the German visitors reached Witu, "the fine Sharif Abdallah, the so-called right hand of the Sultan Achmed," was at the massive gate to greet them and escort them to their guest house. Left and right down the clean Witu street the soldiers of the Sultan formed an archway, "armed partly with guns of various sorts [the Mukalla imports, no doubt], partly with swords, partly with bows and arrows." The Sultan sent an ox, a sheep, goat's milk, eggs, mangoes, bananas, coconuts and everything the visitors might desire.

The German officers' audience with Sultan Ahmed in August 1886 exemplified Witu's most prosperous hour. The visitors, in their best uniforms, were directed by Sharif Abdulla to the courtyard of the palace, which was a spacious Arab-style, one-storied,

[47]Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 174-175; FO 84/1908, Harry L. Churchill's Report, 25 July 1888; Jackson, *Early Days*, 106.

[48]FO 84/1799, Report on the delimitation.

coralstone building without windows toward the street.[49] At the entrance, Lieutenant Paschen took position with his sailors while the commander, Valois, was led with his entourage into the hall. Here the heir, Fumo Bakari, and four ministers, all richly dressed, took their places on Indian chairs placed on the long side of the hall with the visitors opposite. A silent pause, and then the German command, "Weapons at the ready! Attention! Present arms!" The Sultan appeared in a gold-edged robe and turban. All arose. He walked the length of the hall and greeted "the great soldiers of Kaiser Wilhelm." After the Sultan had inquired concerning Valois's health, Gustav Denhardt presented the other guests to him individually.

The Sultan took an elevated seat at the head of the hall and Valois made known the purpose of his visit. Denhardt, in fluent Swahili, interpreted. The Sultan then explained the history of Witu and told how the Arabs, during Barghash's time and before, had with their cunning again and again overpowered individual coastal places. Much of the blame, he said, must be cast upon the British backing which the Zanzibari Arabs received. To the German visitors, Ahmed's statements "provided a complete confirmation of all that which the Denhardt brothers had earlier reported to the German Government in messages from the Sultan." The audience closed with a drill by the German sailors, followed by a tour of the town for the visitors.

Before leaving Witu, the commander invited the Sultan, along with Fumo Bakari, Sharif Abdulla and the ministers, to a shooting practice. After a skillful display by the sailors, Valois offered his new repeating rifle to Fumo Bakari to try, which he did so successfully that Valois gave the gun to him. The adjutant presented him with a revolver. Sharif Abdulla also tried his hand at shooting, but he was more eager than adept. The shooting practice was followed by an *ngoma*, a sword dance performed by three hundred men in honor of the visitors, the German government and the Sultan. Upon their departure from Witu, Ahmed urged the visitors to settle in Witu and to induce their countrymen to join them.[50]

Not many weeks after this visit, the Anglo-German Agreement was signed, defining a ten-mile coastal strip from the Rovuma River to the Ozi as the Sultan of Zanzibar's. This included the towns of Kipini and Kau as well as the Tana-Ozi estuary. The Benadir ports of Kismayu, Barawa, Merka and Mogadishu were deemed Barghash's, as was Lamu Island. Pate and Manda were not mentioned.

[49]Today only Ahmed's tomb and a well, not far from the center of Witu, mark the site of this palace. The building in Witu's main street often referred to as the Sultan's Palace was the home of the British puppet sultan, Omari, and was built later. See Chapter 9 below.

[50]Andreas Künzel, "Die Expedition von S. M. Kreuzerfregatte 'Gneisenau' zu Achmed, dem Sultan der Suaheli," *DKZ*, Band 2 (1886), 488-491. Künzel eventually did settle at Witu, with tragic results. See Chapter 9 below.

The definition of the Sultan of Witu's territory as comprising the entire coast from 650 paces east of Kipini as far as the latitude of the northern tip of Kiwayuu Island, so obviously a piece of international European diplomacy, must have come as a pleasant shock to Ahmed, whose situation had already improved so markedly in the past year and a half. His domain now officially included, if not the Tana-Ozi delta to which he did have some authentic claim, the sea creeks and ports of Kimbo and Mkonumbi, traditionally the outlets for Lamu's mainland plantations which now lay awkwardly within the Witu sultanate. Ahmed was also granted Mongoni Creek, an area customarily cultivated by Pate and Siyu residents, which currently was the site of the Denhardt plantation at Wange.[51] The Agreement gave Ahmed-- and his watoro allies led by Avatula-- the position of being next-door neighbors to the territory controlled by Mzee bin Seif.[52]

The Tana Committee, meanwhile, was in a grave financial position, despite Clemens Denhardt's attempts in Germany to stimulate colonization in Witu. DOAG took over Witu briefly in June 1886, but its resources were not much more extensive. A Witu Company, made up of former Tana Committee members, merchants, farmers, and others interested in colonization, soon succeeded DOAG in the Witu sultanate. The many internal German problems have been detailed elsewhere,[53] and many of them did not much affect Witu. Important for Witu, however, were the Denhardts' attempts to foil the new company's efforts, for they convinced Ahmed that he too must work against it. Members of the company just out from Germany found also that the Denhardts had misrepresented facts about the sultanate.

In early 1887 a group of Witu Company men undertook a trip through the sultanate to ascertain the nature of the land and to raise the German flag in the villages. The demography of southern Lamu district had not changed in the least as a result of the delimitation agreement which had been finalized in December 1886. The definition of the Witu sultanate by outsiders had created a strange, but apparently not upsetting, situation for the villagers. For example, the lines of communication had never developed between Mpekatoni, a Lamu-controlled center, and the inland Witu: an Mpekatoni elder could not furnish the Germans with a guide to Witu because he and his people did not know the way. They knew there was a direct route, but they never used it, always going by way of Kipini.[54]

The news of the delimitation had not yet even reached many

[51]Rabenhorst, "Die Witu-Inseln," 260.

[52]See E. Hertslet, *The Map of Africa by Treaty*, I (3rd ed., London, 1967), 304-308.

[53]See Müller, *Deutschland-Zanzibar-Ostafrika*, 313-314.

[54]R. Rabenhorst, "Rekognoszierung in Deutsch-Wituland," *DKZ*, Band 4 (1887), 238.

inhabitants of the mainland. At Ndambwe, a village of one hundred dwellings near Mkonumbi Creek, Captain Rabenhorst, the leader of the group, told the kadi that the land was now German, that Sultan Ahmed was a friend, and that their customs and religion would not be tampered with. As for taxes, they must not pay them to Sultan Barghash, but should just refrain from paying any at all for the time being. He gave the kadi some cloth and a German flag. At nearby Kitangani, however, where the chief landholder was away in Lamu, Rabenhorst raised objections to the overseer about some new and extensive cultivation underway, and left an armed guard. Arab inhabitants of Kiongwe on Kimbo Creek requested the German flag as a "visible sign that Said Barghash had actually yielded the land to Germany, which they up to this time really hardly seemed to believe." At Shaka, however, the Arabs had already deserted their military post.

The German party was hospitably received at the Arab towns of Kau and Kipini, although German visitors in 1886 had been badly treated. The possession of Kau by the Sultan of Zanzibar, who had increased the garrison from one hundred to two hundred soldiers recently, was a thorn in the flesh of the Witu Company, for it was the most important ivory mart for both Oromo and Somali traders. At both Kau and Kipini, however, the Company personnel discussed a commercial contract with resident Indian traders, who showed the Germans samples of produce, hides and ivory in order to get their ideas about price. Although Kau and Kipini were lost to them, the Witu people had gained through the boundary settlement an important ferrying point called Kikoni on the Kirimando river, a tributary to the Ozi, which Barghash's soldiers had held until December 1886 to defend the route against Witu people. And Witu itself was also an ivory mart, for Somali and Oromo often passed through the town on peaceful trading ventures.[55]

While Rabenhorst and his party were at Kau at the end of January 1887, several hundred Herti Somalis who were not peaceful traders arrived to demand canoe transport across the Ozi for themselves and their cattle.[56] The Arab garrison refused to comply, for since the recent 1886 humiliation of the Oromo by the Somali they were attempting to remain neutral, where previously they had supported the Somalis in their attacks on the Oromo. Just as had happened after the 1867-1869 wars, the Somalis had again become too strong for the Arabs' liking.

The Somalis now requesting transport were a mass of several groups which had just made simultaneous pre-dawn attacks on four Oromo settlements, one of them Dida Waredi just west of

[55]Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 145-146; Rabenhorst, "Rekognoszierung," 239.

[56]Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 188-189, stated that there were 3000 Somalis and identified them as Wasangeli and Mijertein, both Herti sub-groups. In the 1890s, if not before, most Jubaland Herti were Mijertein, with a few Wasangeli living at Kismayu. Turton, "Pastoral Tribes," 191.

Witu, and others near the Ozi.[57] The Oromo attacked were those of the Barareta tribe who, after the Somali invasions of 1886, had moved for security to the immediate vicinity of Witu. Those at the Ozi encampments were another section of the Bararetta who remained under the influence, but not the complete control, of the Arabs. These Oromo still acknowledged the authority of Sultan Ahmed, who had full sovereignty over those who settled near Witu.[58] The Sultan of Witu had rushed his soldiers to aid the Oromo at Dida Waredi, for the Somalis had raided not only Oromo herds but also his own which were grazing there. His men succeeded in recapturing some of the cattle and driving off that group of Somalis. It is likely that the Somalis who requested ferrying at Kau wished to attack the Oromo settlement on the right bank of the Ozi.[59]

At Witu, following the raid, there was concern for Gustav Denhardt, who had set out before the invasion for Ngao on the Tana, where he wished to raise the flag of the Sultan of Witu. Ahmed sent a hundred Swahili and Oromo men armed with rifles with Lieutenant Schmidt of the Witu Company to find his adviser. The group traveled through the devastated Oromo villages between Witu and the river. When they learned that Denhardt had safely headed for Kau, the search party also turned downriver. At Chara they saw whole Oromo caravans fleeing hurriedly, and shortly after followed "the whole fighting array of the Somali, over 3000 in number." The firearms of the Witu group convinced the Somalis to flee, even though the Somalis outnumbered the Witu men many times and the Swahili and Oromo showed little skill in the use of the rifles.[60]

Like the Oromo, the Boni people in general recognized the authority of the Witu sultan and had over the years provided personnel to him, especially against the Arabs. In Katawa, which was in Boni country four hours north of Witu, Ahmed maintained a governor and small garrison. Most Boni lived in small encampments scattered in the forest where they pursued their chief interest, hunting. They also undertook frequent hunting trips to the interior, especially for elephant. Their knowledge of the country was one reason for their earlier success as slave hunters. They would ambush passers-by who were away from their own land and take them, apparently sometimes independent of the Sultan of Witu, to the Somalis in exchange for cattle. They were also known to have

[57]Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 189. Rabenhorst, "Rekognoszierung," 239-241, gives the Oromo site near Witu as Katana (Katawa), which is unlikely since it was unsuitable country for cattle.

[58]When Sultan Ahmed wished to confer with an Oromo chief he sent a messenger with a hatchet and ten arm-lengths of *amerikani;* the Oromo set out promptly for Witu. Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 175. Dadi ja Badada, who had signed the document presented to the Delimitation Commission, was head of one of the Barareta groups now settled near Kau. *Ibid.*

[59]*Ibid.*, 189; Rabenhorst, "Rekognoszierung," 239-241.

[60]Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 189-190.

played a double game in serving as guides to the Somali in their undertakings against Witu, receiving a share of the profits.[61]

In July 1887, Ahmed began to charge customs which worked against the commercial attempts of the Witu Company. The Denhardts were believed to have instigated this plan in hopes of gaining a trading monopoly for themselves. Ahmed also had his slaves gather all of the indiarubber, and monopolized all ivory trade. He attempted to hinder Rabenhorst in his direct dealings with neighboring peoples, in order to collect a toll. Thus German traders were subject to a double customs, at Witu and at Lamu, which was the only port suitable for European ships. The Indians of Lamu, who possessed "nearly all the property on the coast-line of Witu," also suffered from the double tax. Trade dwindled so much that the German consul in Zanzibar and also the British Foreign Office insisted on Ahmed's ending his charges in March 1888.[62]

In 1887, the Witu Company received new personnel, including a new head, Kurt Toeppen, "Bwana Pembe" (Mr. Ivory), who became a great favorite at Witu, with Avatula, and generally with mainland and island peoples.[63] The Company had been unsuccessful in its early attempts to deal with Indian agents on the mainland, finding it was unable to compete with their resources and connections. In addition, the Oromo and Somali disturbances sometimes closed off the hinterland, limiting the Witu Company's access to trade. On German plantations, Toeppen and his countrymen quickly discovered labor problems, even though landholders such as the Swahili Mohamed bin Abderaman of Kiongwe and the elders of Kimbo were willing to rent out their surplus slaves. Toeppen found that rented slaves did not pay for themselves.[64] In 1887-1888, Toeppen unsuccessfully attempted to secure the customs farming at Lamu, and gained the reputation of being bitterly anti-British.[65] Barghash leased Lamu to the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEA) for five years in 1888. The antagonism of the Lamu administration toward the Germans, who resided there in large seafront houses, even extended to refusing them English postal facilities.[66]

[61]Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 173.

[62]Müller, *Deutschland-Zanzibar-Ostafrika,* 314; *PP* (1888), LXXIV, C. 5603, Euan-Smith to Salisbury, 2 April 1888; FO 84/1908, Inc. in Euan-Smith to Salisbury, 21 August 1888, Harry L. Churchill's Report.

[63]Tiedemann, "Besuch," 270; Tiedemann, *Tana-Baringo-Nil,* 14.

[64]Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 146; Müller, *Deutschland-Zanzibar-Ostafrika,* 319; FO 84/1908, Harry L. Churchill's Report.

[65]Müller, *Deutschland-Zanzibar-Ostafrika,* 318; Jackson, *Early Days,* 5. Marie J. deKiewiet, "History of the Imperial British East Africa Company, 1876-1895" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1955), 131.

[66]FO 84/1714, Scott to Salisbury, 23 July 1885. The resulting German "Lamu, Ostafrika" cancellations are a philatelic novelty, as are the "Sultan of Swahiland" stamps which appeared in 1889 and 1890. James A. Mackay, *East Africa. The Study of East Africa and Its Stamps* (London, 1970), 54, 60.

In 1888, following the leasing of the Lamu customs to IBEA, Sultan Ahmed built a customs house at the Belezoni canal and began to charge tolls on produce traveling through the waterway which he had caused to be dug so many years before. This customs establishment, called Bomani, was built at the upriver end of the canal, and here Ahmed placed a young Nabahani, Fumo Luti, as toll collector. Fumo Luti did not secure the customs from those using the canal "without strife and strong exchange of words." Ahmed also kept an agent, Shaibu Shale, at Kau to observe affairs there.[67] The presence in the area of IBEA, which assumed that Bomani was a transgression of the 1886 Agreement, caused a dispute out of all proportion to the shallow canal. The Belezoni could handle canoes with only a thousand-kilogram capacity at high tide, and only half that at low tide. The Sultan of Witu had plans, however, for Pokomo within his jurisdiction to widen and deepen the canal if his claim to it were honored.[68]

The sovereignty of Manda and Pate, which had not been dealt with in the 1886 Agreement, became an additional subject of Anglo-German dispute. A letter signed by twenty-eight residents of the two islands (mostly of Pate, since Manda had few inhabitants),[69] no doubt written by Witu Company personnel, implored the Sultan of Zanzibar to give the Germans control of the arable islands, because residents of Rasini, for instance, were sometimes prevented by the Arab liwali from going to their fields on the mainland. And, the writers added, while the Zanzibari government levied dues on the produce they raised on the mainland, it gave no protection there.[70] The Belezoni affair as well as the possession of Manda and Pate would be settled later at the European level.

With Avatula and his followers Toeppen got on more successfully than he did with the British in Lamu. Toeppen was the first European to visit Starani, and he soon arranged to trade in ivory with Avatula. When Avatula gathered a suitable amount of ivory, he sent a delegation to Toeppen's house in Lamu. Toeppen then accompanied this usually noisy and musket-armed group back to Starani, which was a day's march west of Mkonumbi. Starani was situated in thick forest and surrounded by a trench and an impenetrable twelve-foot hedge. From this site Avatula ruled five lesser villages and a wide expanse of land, some of it agricultural. He had settled at Starani because, for one reason, some of his followers already lived in the region. The move from Balawa had greatly enlarged his influence.[71] In early 1889 Avatula was "completely independent,

[67]Toeppen, "Deutsch Witu-Land," 327-328; FO 84/1961, Memorandum of Hatzfeldt, 12 December 1889.

[68]The Tana-Ozi delta was rather hazily dealt with in the 1886 delimitation, so that technicalities of each claim carried weight.

[69]Rev. John A. Dougherty, *The East Indies Station; or the Cruise of H.M.S. "Garnet," 1887-90* (Malta, 1892), 185.

[70]FO 84/1961, Inc. in Memorandum betreffend die Inseln Manda und Patta.

[71]Toeppen, "Deutsch Witu-Land," 326.

pays tribute to no one, can muster up to 1000 armed men and enjoys the reputation of great wisdom and uprightness." He was "immeasurably proud and fancies himself and his power as if he possessed half the world." In the late 1880s, after being in the forest for perhaps twenty years, Avatula indeed appears to have been at the peak of his physical and political strength.

At the gates of Starani, Avatula and a hundred armed men greeted Toeppen's party with a clamor of horns and rifle fire. Avatula was hardly of medium height, but sturdily built and renowned for his physical strength. Once in battle he had severed with his sword his opponent, an Oromo, from the right shoulder to the left hip, he told his visitors, and he continued to participate in war missions. Avatula's attendants were "loud-voiced, dangerous-looking fellows, some of giant size, and well proportioned." These men all carried swords, daggers, and flintlocks, and some also bows with poisoned arrows.

The inhabitants of Starani itself were neither watoro nor Boni, but rather Swahili, "like Witu," the Germans reported. Watoro, fugitives from the coast, and Boni, whom Avatula called "the natives of the area," lived in the villages nearby, within the district of Starani. The Boni joined in the celebrations honoring Toeppen's arrival. The inhabitants of Starani spoke Swahili, built Swahili-style houses, observed Muslim customs, and ate a coastal diet (at least on special occasions), although Avatula himself lived exclusively on beef and milk. At least some of Avatula's family lived in Starani, thus adding a coastal Bajun element.[72]

After completing his ivory business with Avatula, Toeppen left once again for Lamu, passing through the villages of Jongeni, Pumwani and Katawa, with the scene changing from thick forest to lush cultivated fields:

> At no place in the whole land did the maize, millet and especially the rice stand so fine as just on this primeval forest land. Here would be the place for greater undertakings with tobacco and other tropical plant development, for a better soil one could not possibly find in East Africa.[73]

Toeppen, as head of the Witu Company, found himself at times

[72]Tiedemann, "Besuch," 272; Tiedemann, *Tana-Baringo-Nil*, 18-22; Toeppen, "Deutsch Witu-Land," 326. Toeppen and his guest Adolf Tiedemann, like modern observers, may not have been able to distinguish "Swahili" from "Bajun," although differences in dialect should have been apparent. The Somali ancestry in Avatula was strong, from all evidence.

[73]Toeppen, "Deutsch Witu-Land," 326.

in the role of mediator in mainland controversies. At Kimbo the Swahili Omari bin Osman, to whom the Germans gave the title liwali, was manager of the German company's fields and coconut plantations. His "garrison" was made up of four soldiers. Omari adjusted all minor conflicts, collected mainland debts (presumably those owed to the Germans), supervised the palm plantings, and reported on all events in the company's area. While the one- and two-year-old palm saplings were doing well, matters at the town of Mapenya, under his jurisdiction, were serious enough to require Toeppen's attention in August 1889.

When Toeppen arrived at Mapenya, its inhabitants, who numbered six or seven hundred, were shouting at one another so loudly that Toeppen could not hear his own words. The strife had begun because Arab outsiders had set up shops in Mapenya, conflicting with the "Swahili custom" that Arabs could settle only in ports, which Mapenya was not.[74] The Swahili shopkeepers would have nothing to do with the Arabs. The leader of the "blacks," mostly old liberated slaves, proclaimed equal rights for all and wanted either no shops at all, or both Arab and Swahili shops.

Toeppen asked the Mapenya citizenry: What is a town or land without people? The land must be cultivated, and the laborer must be able to buy what he needs. Trade brings people to the land and makes the land valuable. He pointed out that the newcomers to Mapenya could only benefit its inhabitants. However, in order not to oversupply Mapenya with shops, he suggested that each shopkeeper pay a *robo* (one-fourth of a dollar) each month. To Toeppen's surprise, this suggestion met with popular approval and all of the shopkeepers signed themselves up for the "license."[75]

Toeppen looked forward to the day when, after a few years, he could enjoy the *dafu*, the sweet milky substance of the unripe coconut, from the palms planted under his supervision at Kiongwe.[76] He was, even if a "first-class rogue" in British eyes, genuinely interested in the development of the Witu protectorate's agricultural potential, especially in the rich Boni forest.[77] But it was not Toeppen who would harvest the Kiongwe nuts, and neither Toeppen nor anyone else would develop the Katawa fields.

In early 1889, when he was about seventy years of age, Sultan Ahmed of Witu died. At the end of his life he was confined

[74]The custom *(Suaheli-Brauch)* may have been according to the terms of the Witu protectorate, or according to prior traditional practice. There is no other evidence for such a rule.

[75]Toeppen, "Deutsch Witu-Land," 325.

[76]*Ibid.*

[77]Jackson, *Early Days*, 5; deKiewiet, "IBEA," 139, states that the Germans did not consider Witu valuable in itself, but only as a center of expansion. The reports of the Germans who came to Witu between 1886 and 1889 do not uphold this statement.

to his home because of advanced elephantiasis, and was always found there reading the Quran. He wanted to appear a pious Muslim, although circumstances had brought him the tolerance to accept Christian advisers and to allow the German Neukirchen mission to be established at Ngao on the Tana. On the wall of his bedroom hung a picture of the late Kaiser Wilhelm I of Germany. He was a wealthy man at his death, and his authority extended far beyond Witu into Oromo, Boni, and Pokomo country.[78]

Fumo Bakari, his son-in-law, was the heir both to the throne and the wealth of Ahmed -- the latter not immediately in hand, for Ahmed had buried his money. He was a tall, slender figure, with a poised and precise manner, a "rascal" to the British, but a good-natured, peacable Swahili to the Germans, to whom he was "very much inclined."[79] Considering the battles and the risks to which Sultan Ahmed had been exposed during his lifetime, Ahmed had lived to be a very old man for a Nabahani. Fumo Bakari would not be so lucky; the forces opposing him were soon to be overwhelming.

[78]Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 131; FO 84/1908, Harry L. Churchill's Report.

[79]Schmidt, "Deutsch-Witu-Land," 121; Künzel, "Expedition," 489; *PP* (1886), XLVII, C. 4609, Haggard to Kirk, 25 August 1884.

CHAPTER 9

THE DEFEAT OF THE NABAHANI SULTANATE AND THE FOREST SETTLEMENTS

And your people began it; and if any one goes to another person's place, and beats or kills people, is it not your custom and law to punish the wrongdoers? Please let us know, so that we can learn.
Or is it that only you want to come against us for nothing?

Sultan Fumo Bakari[1]

The exclusive object of the expedition is the infliction of such punishment as will satisfy European opinion and render European life more secure for the future in East Africa.

Colonel C. B. Euan-Smith[2]

While the people of Witu buried Sultan Ahmed and recognized Fumo Bakari as his successor, events moved at an ever more rapid pace within the circles of Europeans interested in Lamu and Witu. The presence of the IBEA in Lamu soon began to outweigh the German counterpoise in Witu, and more and more power was taken away from the local hands to be placed in those of Europeans.

In June 1889 the German Carl Peters in the ship *Neera*, under English flag, entered Kiwayuu Bay in order to begin a journey to the interior which would claim the entire Tana route for Germany. This expedition marked the beginning of the end of Germany's hold on Witu, for it created a fear among the British that the Germans were gaining too much of East Africa and, even more important, access to the Nile headwaters.

Peters and his people paused at Siyu to make landing arrangements, and discovered that the only dhows to be had for this purpose were in Rasini under the control of "Bwana Mse" (presumably Mzee bin Seif), and their rental was subject to the consent of the Arab liwali. In Rasini, a town with an Arab fort and garrison, Peters within half an hour secured dhows and promise of one hundred and fifty carriers, for the inhabitants believed that he was English. He quickly used the dhows to land his cargo--the porters never arrived--before the Arab liwali realized who he was. As he was landing his goods, Peters learned that the liwali indeed wanted to see him in Rasini again,

[1]*PP* (1890-91), LVII, C. 6213, Inc. 7 in No. 26, Sultan of Witu to Euan-Smith and Fremantle (n.d.).

[2]*Ibid.*, Inc. 8 in No. 26, Euan-Smith to Fremantle, 24 October 1890.

but he warily ignored this order.[3] By June 17 all was under shelter in the village of Shimbwe, on the western shore of Dodori Creek, just inside the borders of the sultanate of Witu. From there Peters made contact with Gustav Denhardt, Kurt Toeppen, and Adolf von Tiedemann, and received instructions from them as to the best land route to Witu.[4] At the Denhardt plantation in Wange, the three Lamu Germans greeted Peters and told him of the distorted storied in Lamu of his arrival: "Two thousand Germans had landed in Kiwayuu Bay!" The English community--especially Admiral Fremantle who was blockading the Lamu coast against just such an invasion--was confounded.

Within a few days, after Peters had moved from Shimbwe to Mgine, and then over "a much frequented road" to Hindi, Sultan Fumo Bakari sent several officers and ten men to greet the German party.[5] Nearing Witu, thirty more of the Sultan's soldiers welcomed Peters, and a mile from the town the ubiquitous Sharif Abdulla, along with Herr Dorfer, Gustav Denhardt's Witu plantation manager, met the newcomers.

Peters did not find the Witu court so brilliant as that of Zanzibar, but it made

> a more satisfactory impression through the general and patriarchal unanimity of its constituents, and was in my mind more interesting, through the elements of population that were new to me. Here types of Gallas and Somali crowd among the Suaheli, and beside these appear the strange head-dresses of the Waboni, and the muscular forms of the Wapokomo.[6]

Fumo Bakari appeared to have taken his new role in stride. As crown prince for many years, he had, of course, been able to observe the politics of Witu first-hand, for he had been present at most of the interviews of Sultan Ahmed with the Europeans since 1884. As Sultan, Fumo Bakari now commanded the audience hall of the Nabahani palace in Witu. At his right was now seated his own

[3]According to Peters, English gold flowed in quantity in the islands. "Manda and Patta particularly swim in it." Carl Peters, "Die Deutsche Emin Pascha-Expedition," *DKZ* (1889), 240. "At Pasa [Rasini] the sympathies were decidedly English, as Mr. Mackenzie had shortly before been strewing gold around." Carl Peters, *New Light on Dark Africa* (London, 1891), 40.

[4]The conflict between the Denhardts and the Witu Company was not apparent at the personal level. Gustav Denhardt, Toeppen and Tiedemann (who was to accompany Peters inland) were often together, and in Lamu they regularly played the card game Skat. Tiedemann, *Tana-Baringo-Nil*, 24. Clemens, not Gustav, was probably the troublemaker.

[5]Peters, "Expedition," 238-240.

[6]Peters, *New Light*, 66.

heir apparent, a brother named Bwana Shehe. Also present were Sharif Abdulla and the first officer of the Sultan's troops, a Siyu man named Omari Madi, wearing the uniform of a Prussian artillery officer.[7]

Fumo Bakari was now about forty years of age. He was a tall, proud figure with a "mild but shrewd face," according to Tiedemann, and a "gentle, benevolent expression," by Peters' account. At important audiences he wore the traditional costume of the noble Swahili--a long snow-white *kanzu* held together at the hips by a girdle richly ornamented in gold and silver and carrying a curved dagger. Over this he wore a long black *joho*, an open cloak which reached to his sandaled feet. His head was bound in a turban, which was also ornamented. He extended a "small, delicate hand" to his visitors, and he promised Peters all assistance.[8] He would, for instance, furnish boats on the Tana. He was, he said, "too good a German" not to be ready to meet all of Peters' wishes.

The system of finance at Witu was not so pleasing to Peters, however. He discovered there was no credit system--to buy even a coconut took cash--nor any idea of caravan commerce with the interior. Porters were not forthcoming. Toeppen helped to furnish necessities for the journey, but appropriate barter goods were not to be had in Witu. In July, just before the harvest, Witu could not even furnish grain for the expedition.[9]

While Peters was in Witu, an embassy of "Kawallala Somalis," twenty-three of them under the leadership of one Sharif Hussein, arrived to negotiate with Fumo Bakari over the opening of a free road of commerce toward Wange.[10] The group was impressed by the military preparedness of the Witu soldiery and Peters' entourage. In turn, there was no milk to be had in Witu on the day of the Somalis' arrival because the Oromo, "notwithstanding that they were under the protection of the Sultan, had fled in panic terror into the woods, with their herds, before the Somalis." These Somalis were part of a group which had carried on war expeditions even across the Tana. Peters wisely made a treaty of peace with Sharif Hussein, in accordance with the wishes of Sharif Hussein's sultan, Ali Nurr. Sharif Hussein told Peters that he wished him to remain neutral when he carried out a planned campaign against the English, who had shot one of his people.[11]

[7]Peters, *New Light*, 69.
[8]*Ibid.*; Tiedemann, *Tana-Baringo-Nil*, 37-38.
[9]Peters, *New Light*, 56, 67.
[10]KNA/JUD/1/319, MacDougall to Hamilton, 21 March 1907.
Wange may at this time have controlled "the highway of the Somalis from the coast to the interior" as it did after the turn of the century. Somali traffic probably accounted for the well-worn road Peters found from Mgine to Hindi. See Page 145 above.

The Tana River expedition of Peters is beyond this discussion's scope. The English, through the Arabs who controlled the lower river, attempted to sabotage Peters as they themselves marched up the south bank of the river to make treaties counteracting Peters' own forceful alliances.[12] Peters did, however, happen upon unusual evidence of coastal peoples' presence in the interior. At the Swedish station at Kulesa on the Tana, missionary Hedenstrom told Peters that in a nearby forest village, Mitole, were concealed "300 men belonging to Futilla [Avatula], a formidable Somali in the sultanate of Witu, under a Kau Arab named Bwana Omari, and that their object was to attack our [Peters] camp, or lie in wait for us..." Investigations showed no evidence of such an unlikely concealment or, for that matter, change of allegiance.[13] Another group of strangers in a distant land did materialize, however. At Oda-Boru-Ruva, a Borana settlement, a large number of Swahili slaves lived in separate villages and cultivated for these pastoralists. The slaves asked for Peters' protection. He granted it to those slaves who could prove they had been stolen, and not purchased or taken captive in war; thirteen of the slaves had been kidnapped from Witu.[14]

In September 1889 Kurt Toeppen officially replaced Gustav Denhardt as chief adviser to the Sultan of Witu. Toeppen reported that "the earlier rivalry is not there any more and the Sultan will go hand in hand with the German Witu Company..."[15] His reference may have been to the private agreement of one of the Denhardts with the IBEA's Mackinnon in March 1889 to induee Sultan Ahmed to withdraw from the Belezoni canal, which, however, he failed to do. Denhardt's authority at Witu may have been reduced after this apparent betrayal.[16]

[11]Peters, *New Light,* 72-73. Ali Nurr (Nahar) was a Mijertein Somali of Kismayu who had a house in Lamu. FO 84/2089, Inc. in Mackenzie to Under Secretary of State, Foreign Office, 29 August 1890. See also Turton, "Pastoral Tribes," 129-131.

[12]Carl Peters, "From the Mouth of the Tana to the Source-Region of the Nile," *The Scottish Geographical Magazine,* VII (1891), 114-116. See, for the English side, John R. Pigott, "Diary of My Journey up the Tana River in 1889" (hand-written copy in Fort Jesus Library, Mombasa).

[13]Peters, *New Light,* 98. The village of Mitole was, however, the object of Witu people's raids in October 1893. Sir Gerald Portal, *The British Mission to Uganda in 1893* (London, 1894), 298.

[14]Peters, *New Light,* 126, 139-142; Peters, "Source-Region," 116.

[15]Toeppen, "Deutsch Witu-Land," 326.

[16]DeKiewiet, "IBEA," 145. P. L. McDermott, *British East Africa or IBEA* (London, 1893), 51, states that Toeppen actively sought Clemens Denhardt's removal. It is difficult to determine which Denhardt was chief adviser, for Gustav was often in residence when Clemens was not.

European rivalry increased not only over customs dues at the Ozi and control of Manda and Pate Islands, but also over control of the area north of Kiwayuu Island's latitude as far as the Benadir ports, not to mention the ultimate control of all East Africa. Local preference in Lamu and its hinterland did not play much part in the decisions of 1890, which were as important to the future of the area as any event since the Omani protection given Lamu in the second decade of the century. On 1 July 1890, a second Anglo-German Agreement was signed affecting the Lamu archipelago and Witu protectorate.[17] The Germans were to withdraw their protection from Witu and also the northern coast as far as Kismayu, which they had recently claimed, retaining only their Tanganyikan territory. Zanzibar, including the ten-mile strip, Lamu, Manda and Pate, were to become a British protectorate. The Agreement left the Witu sultanate as a vague entity, for as in 1886 the ten-mile strip ended at the Ozi River.[18] In August 1890, an anti-slavery decree was published giving slaves the right to buy their freedom; granting freedom to slaves whose owners had no children; declaring punishment for the ill-treatment of slaves, as well as for selling, exchanging, or buying slaves; and awarding equal rights to all ex-slaves.[19]

Administrative changes in Lamu coincided with the European agreement and decree. Said bin Hamed had been replaced as liwali in Lamu by his brother Abdulla in 1886, when Said was discredited by alleged implication in the murder of a Denhardt servant.[20] After the anti-slavery decree in August 1890, Abdulla was considered an "intriguer" by the British,[21] because of his unwillingness to conform to the English measures. Specifically, he had failed to deal with a group in Lamu which actively resented interference with its ownership of slaves. He was deposed and replaced by none other than Sud bin Hamed, who thus began the fourth decade of his off-and-on career as liwali in Lamu.

During the latest interim, Sud had been broadening his perspective: he had been chosen by the Germans to be an envoy to Berlin,[22] and had also served as the Sultan of Zanzibar's ambassador to France, where he received La Croix de Chevalier de l'Ordre National de la

[17] *PP* (1890), LI, C. 6046, Inc. in No. 3. See Müller, *Deutschland-Zanzibar-Ostafrika,* Chapter X; deKiewiet, "IBEA," *passim;* Salim, *Coast,* 65-67, for details.

[18] It was assumed that on the withdrawal of the German protectorate a British protectorate began *ipso facto* to exist, but it was actually only within the British sphere of influence. McDermott, *IBEA,* 145.

[19] Salim, *Coast,* 66-67; Robert N. Lyne, *Zanzibar in Contemporary Times* (London, 1905), 175-176.

[20] FO 97/602, Barghash to German Consul General, 12 October 1886. Said bin Hamed later became liwali at Malindi.

[21] Jackson, *Early Days,* 14.

[22] FO 84/2089, Inc. in Mackenzie to Under Secretary of State, Foreign Office, 29 August 1890.

Légion d'Honneur.[23] The choice of Sud as liwali now by Consul-General Euan-Smith was made on the basis of Sud's earlier cooperation with British anti-slave trade efforts and his aggressive attitude toward Witu, rather than his merits as an ambassador of good will in Lamu district.

The fortunes of the Witu sultanate had changed drastically within a year's time. Although many plantations in the sultanate continued to be run by Germans after 1890, and businessmen such as Toeppen stayed on in Lamu to deal with the sultanate, German political protection was withdrawn. Witu's situation was even more precarious than it had been immediately before the Denhardt treaty of April 1885. The Oromo had been further weakened by Somali and Masai invasions in 1886-87 and by cattle disease in 1889-90, and could aid Witu in only a minimal way; the Arab hand at Lamu had been strengthened by the British protectorate out of all proportion to local rivalries. Witu was almost entirely dependent upon the forest communities to the north for alliance against both Somali raids and Arab-English pressures.

That Fumo Bakari should look for new allies is not surprising. It is likely that he attempted at this time to make contact with the remnants of the Mazrui clan south of the Tana, and with other discontented Arabs such as Suleman bin Abdulla bin Mohamed El Mowli of Marereni north of Malindi, who would become well known in the Witu area by the name Suleman Kimenya.[24] The Witu sultan was also believed to be in touch with Dadi ja Badada, the Oromo ally of former days, who lived south of the Tana.[25] Fumo Bakari's relationship with Mzee bin Seif at this time is not clear, but Mzee too was becoming concerned about the effects of the British anti-slavery decree on his prosperity, and also about IBEA control of trade on the northern coast.[26]

In August 1890, Andreas Künzel, who had first visited Witu in 1886 and had later returned as a planter, arrived in Lamu by German

[23]Le Ministre des Affairs Etrangères, Paris, to Saoud Ben Hmet, 6 November 1889 (letter in the possession of Sud bin Hamed bin Sud, Lamu).

[24]Suleman Kimenya was suspected of involvement in anti-British activities near Mombasa as early as February 1889. W. Salter Price, *My Third Campaign in East Africa* (2nd ed., London, 1891), 310.

[25]This chief of a Barareta section of Oromo seems to have been moving his encampment ever southward, probably to escape Somali raids. By 1896 he lived only three hours' walk from Mambrui. *The Missionary Echo*, III (1896), 164.

[26]A Lamu IBEA official, J.R.W. Pigott, stated that Fumo Bakari contacted Mzee bin Seif, but this may reflect the usual alarmist attitude of the British regarding Witu. *PP* (1890), LVII, Inc. 1 in No. 18, Pigott to Euan-Smith, 21 September 1890.

steamship, along with a party of ten Germans, most of them mechanics. Künzel brought with him a steam sawmill which he planned to set up in the Witu forest in order to supply Zanzibar and other British and German ports with planks and other timber. A few days after his arrival in Lamu, Künzel told R.T. Simons, the IBEA agent, that he intended to proceed to Witu at once. Simons pointed out that several Germans, including Gustav Denhardt, had recently been asked by Fumo Bakari to leave Witu, because "he said that he could not be answerable or responsible for their safety on account of the growing dislike evinced by his people towards Europeans and Christians, and towards Germans in particular." Simons and Herr Tiede, a German resident of Lamu who had business relations with Witu, urged Künzel to write to the Sultan and ask his permission before he went to Witu, but Künzel and his party left Lamu for the mainland about August 27 without first contacting Fumo Bakari.[27] He brought his sawmill to Mkonumbi, which was now the port for Witu, and he with some of his men proceeded to Witu, where he told the Sultan of his plans. According to Fumo Bakari, he told Kunzel to get permission from the English consul in Zanzibar or Lamu before he came to work in Witu. Künzel ignored the Sultan of Witu's advice.

Künzel apparently expected not only to set up his mill, but also to retain the plantation he had run in Witu during the time of the German protectorate, for which the Sultan had loaned him slaves. He soon found that Fumo Bakari was not willing to continue his generous policy of encouraging German settlement now that there was nothing in it for him. As for the sawmill being set up in the Utwani forest--and Künzel's men began preliminary building there immediately--it is very likely, although Fumo Bakari's testimony does not mention it, that this would have interfered with the Sultan's own rubber-collecting monopoly in that forest. Künzel seems also to have had some quarrel with Toeppen, for in Witu he showed the leading men some rope and a whip and told them that this was *"heshima"* (respect) for Bwana Pembe. Toeppen was still on good terms with Fumo Bakari.

Despite Fumo Bakari's disillusionment with the Germans, who had so recently betrayed his trust, it seems unlikely that the ensuing debacle had been premeditated by the Witu sultan. Fumo Bakari had not for naught been present at the audiences of Sultan Ahmed with Europeans, nor had he learned nothing during his own year's reign. He was probably aware of his own capabilities in relation to the Europeans' and would not have attacked a European unless provoked mercilessly. Künzel, on the other hand, appears to have been imperceptive to the sensitivities of the Sultan, of Omari Madi, his leading military officer, and of all the armed men of Witu. Even his own employees bore witness that Künzel "spoke very angry words in Swahili."[28]

[27] *PP* (1890-91), LVII, C. 6213, Inc. 6 in No. 18, Simons to Euan-Smith, 23 September 1890.

Eight Germans, including Künzel, who was hit "with several bullets and many arrows," were killed in or just outside of Witu on 15 September 1890. On the following day Fumo Bakari told Toeppen, whom he summoned to Witu, that he had not ordered his people to fire upon or to do anything to Künzel. "All the other men were very good and friendly, and Küntzel was the only man who wanted to fight, and he was the cause of the whole affair." Fumo Bakari wished Toeppen to explain to the British authorities what had taken place, and to ensure Toeppen's safety he sent ten soldiers with him to Kipini, the Mkonumbi route being too dangerous.[29]

Two other Germans were killed at places near the coast. At Kiongwe a German planter's house and outbuildings were burned "by the people of that place." Other German property at Baltia and Utwani was destroyed. Hedenstrom at the Swedish mission on the Tana reported that Witu soldiers threatened his life. According to an eyewitness, Carl Horn was killed with the approval and assistance of the people of Mkonumbi. At the Baltia plantation, the attack was also carried out by local people, although a "strange number of Witu Askaris" was in the area.[30] This rampage against Europeans following the Künzel affair is more indicative of Fumo Bakari and his people's anger at the turn of events than was the more personal clash with Künzel. But some of the local anger which was now manifested was probably over the threat of the anti-slavery decree, for the inhabitants of these villages would not be apt to have felt such strong loyalty to Witu, having been a part of the sultanate only since 1886.[31]

Fumo Bakari was summoned to Lamu for an inquiry, and was asked to bring with him all those of his people involved in the Künzel affair. Despite Euan-Smith's promise that no innocent man would suffer, Fumo Bakari carefully declined the summons, saying he did not know the criminals: "I cannot say that such and such a man has done this, because there was war...."[32]

[28]*PP* (1890-91), LVII, C. 6213, Inc. 3 in No. 18, Statement by Menschel and Hässler. But see Euan-Smith's view in Inc. 8 in No. 26, Euan-Smith to Fremantle, 24 Oct. 1890.

[29]*Ibid.*, Inc. 2 in No. 18, Statement by Toeppen.

[30]*Ibid.*, (1890-91), LVII, C. 6213, Inc. 3 in No. 26, Friedrich to Jackson, 20 October 1890. The names of those allegedly involved were recorded by Friedrich, and show a variety of ethnic connections. Some of the accused were from Mwanzamwarabu, Sud bin Hamed's plantation area.

[31]*Ibid.* (1896), LIX, C. 8275, Inc., in No. 12, Memorandum of Don MacLennan, Zanzibar, 17 January 1896. The August 1890 decree was not enforced in the Witu sultanate until March 1891.

[32]*Ibid.* (1890-91), LVII, C. 6213, Inc. 7 in No. 26, Sultan of Witu to Euan-Smith and Fremantle (n.d.).

The British felt constrained to punish Fumo Bakari for the outrage against Europeans, but they thought twice before sending an expedition against him. They believed that

> the sixty rifles and the large supply of ammunition which were furnished to him some two years ago by German authority will serve to arm a formidable body of sharpshooters who will form a nucleus for the thousands of discontented natives who will flock to the Witu standard on any appearance of hostilities.

They also realized the difficulty of approaching Witu with a military operation. Lamu, however, under Sud bin Hamed, had remained "perfectly quiet" throughout the incident. The likelihood that Lamu would not cause trouble encouraged Euan-Smith to attack Witu.[33] This strategy seemed the best solution to him, even though the German consul-general in Zanzibar wanted to treat Fumo Bakari with leniency.[34] The British feared rebellion in several areas along the coastal strip, and were thus particularly edgy about Witu's possible connection with the discontented of Takaungu, Gazi, and elsewhere south of the Tana.

The vague status of the Witu sultanate vis-à-vis the English-Zanzibari domain did not therefore prevent Euan-Smith from sending Admiral Fremantle with two armed parties to attack the coastal villages which were implicated in the later two murders. The villages of Mkonumbi, Baltia, Hidiokoma and Hidiojifa were all burned to the ground and "all the damage that was possible" was done. The infamous sawmill still stood untouched in Mkonumbi, but the village populations evacuated when the sailors landed.[35] Sud bin Hamed was instructed to remain in Lamu to quell any disturbance which might arise during the expedition, for the destruction of these villages could be expected to "greatly irritate the people of Lamu." This Sud managed, although there was much excitement in Lamu at the news of the mainland operations.

The attacking parties then proceeded to Witu by the Kipini road. The Witu people kept up a fire against the British along most of the route, until the morning of October 26 when Fremantle's 950 men advanced on Witu. A seven-pounder field gun failed to break down the gate, but explosives wrenched the tree trunks sufficiently to allow the attackers to enter. All the stone buildings, including the palace, and a great quantity of powder and ammunition were blown

[33]*PP* (1890-91), LVII, C. 6213, No. 18, Euan-Smith to Salisbury, 3 1890. According to McDermott,*IBEA*, 52, Toeppen had furnished Witu with 600 muskets, 500 kegs of gunpowder, and other ammunition in 1889.

[34]Salim, *Coast*, 67-68.

[35]*PP* (1890-91), LVII, C. 6213, No. 26, Euan-Smith to Salisbury, 30 October 1890; Swaleh Bahamfusi, interview in Mkonumbi, 14 September 1971.

up. Every effort was "successfully used to utterly wreck and destroy the town and defences of Witu." The evacuation of the town had taken place only a short time before the attack, and a few wounded "common slaves" were the only people left.

Fremantle posted a notice at Witu and in coastal towns offering a reward of 10,000 rupees for the apprehension of Fumo Bakari, now considered an outlaw by the British. They believed that he had 3,000 armed followers, that he had been joined by Suleman Kimenya with 300 men, and by Avatula (who was now under treaty arrangements with IBEA) with 200 men.[36]

On 19 November 1890, a Zanzibari protectorate over the Witu sultanate was declared, but no provision was made for administration. Fumo Bakari was never to see Witu again; he was poisoned by Bwana Kitini (Mohamed bin Fumo Omari el Nabahani) in early 1891, probably in one of the large forest settlements and very likely under British instructions. Fumo Bakari's successor, his younger brother Bwana Shehe, immediately announced his intention to make peace with the British. He was deposed and imprisoned by a more belligerent faction. Another brother, Fumo Omari, who may have been the murderer's father, replaced Bwana Shehe as Sultan of Witu.[37] It thus appears that the customary Nabahani intrigues over succession which had plagued Pate had only lain dormant during the long reign of Sultan Ahmed. Or, to give the Nabahanis the benefit of the doubt, Suleman Kimenya and Avatula may have been instrumental in preventing a surrender. Euan-Smith did not recognize Fumo Omari as Sultan, but he did offer pardon to all but the actual murderers of the Germans.[38]

[36]*PP* (1890-91), LVII, C. 6213, No. 26, Euan-Smith to Salisbury, 30 Oct. 1890; Inc. in No. 27, Berkeley to Euan-Smith, 30 Oct. 1890; Jackson, *Early Days*, 351. Several Lamu area leaders had signed treaties with IBEA in 1889: Mzee bin Seif in March, Avatula in July, Dadi ja Badada in August, Ali Nahar of the Mijertein Somalis in Kismayu in September. *PP* (1892), LVI, C. 6560, Inc. 7 in No. 1, List of Treaties.

[37]J. W. Cusack, trans., "History of the Nabahan Sultans of Pate," Lamu Political Record, I, 169-170 (typescript in British Institute in Eastern Africa, Nairobi). Bwana Kitini used a poisoned hookah to commit the murder. When Fumo Bakari fled to the forest, Bwana Kitini had accompanied him, but shortly afterwards had escaped alone to Lamu, submitted to the British, and "rendered useful services" in the re-establishment of order. *PP* (1899), LXIII, C. 9502, Hardinge to Salisbury, 6 February 1899.

[38]Lyne, *Zanzibar*, 164. Siyu people also attached themselves to the forest centers at this time. Binti Sheikh, daughter of Bwana Mataka, helped the British now by inducing some of them to surrender. They included the sons of Omar bin Mataka, namely Mohamed bin Omar and Sheikh Mataka bin Omar, one of whom was her half-brother. Mwana Kupona, *Wifely Duty*, 21, Appendix II.

In March 1891, IBEA undertook the administration of Witu. Fumo Omari returned to the town, was called "Sheikh," granted a position of some importance, and given 5,000 rupees to rebuild Witu. Other terms included the gradual abolition of slavery, and the immediate end to all slave dealing.[39] The IBEA felt that the treaty's inclusion of Avatula, whom they believed to be a Somali chief, was necessary to the company's prosperity, for the affairs of Witu were "inextricably connected with those of the Somalis of the Juba." The company wanted the administration of Witu, for they believed it was an integral part of the British sphere, but they had misgivings about the unsettled state of affairs which had resulted from the British government's avenging the murder of the Germans.[40]

The unsettled state became evident within a few months when Fumo Omari and his followers, incensed over the introduction of 250 soldiers at Witu, moved from Witu to the forest settlement of Jongeni, several hours north of Witu. Jongeni had existed in 1889, but seems to have been one of the newer settlements.[41] Avatula evidently had moved from Starani to Jongeni; in any event, it was considered his town by the British. In July 1891, Captain A. S. Rogers, who commanded the IBEA police and who was to have a long career in Lamu district where he is still remembered as "Bwana Rajees," went with Frederick Jackson to Jongeni unarmed to persuade the two chiefs to live within the terms of the treaty. They had no success. Fumo Omari stayed on in the forest, trade and agriculture in the Lamu hinterland were at a standstill, and the inhabitants of the forest came out to raid the surrounding country.[42] In October and November 1891, raids were made on the Pokomo at Ngatana on the Tana, an indication that the slave trade with the Somalis had begun again.[43]

The company forces attacked Jongeni in March 1892, but with an insufficient force; they had to retreat. A second attempt failed again to destroy the stockade. In April, Fumo Omari and Avatula were intimidated by a stronger British force--which had just subdued some rebellious Lamu residents--so that Fumo Omari temporarily gave in and dispersed his force. But in a month's time he had again entered the forest and his soldiers were more fearsome than before. He felt confident enough in February 1893 to demand the release of his men who had been caught raiding. IBEA, meanwhile, was in such financial straits that on 31 July 1893, it turned over the

[39] *PP* (1892), LVI, C. 6560, Treaty No. 74.

[40] *Ibid.* (1893), LXII, C. 7111, No. 5, Foreign Office to IBEA, 15 June 1893; Imperial British East Africa Company, Ltd, "Report of the Court of Directors to the Shareholders," 31 July 1893; and "Report of the 4th Statutory Annual Meeting," 31 July 1893 (Royal Commonwealth Society, London).

[41] Toeppen, "Deutsch Witu-Land," 326.

[42] Lyne, *Zanzibar*, 165; Jackson, *Early Days*, 344.

[43] Fitzgerald, *Travels*, 352; FO 107/5, Rogers to Mathews, 20 August 1893.

administration of Witu to the Zanzibari protectorate.[44]

In late 1892 or early 1893, Avatula bin Bahero Somali died. A successor named Bwana Ali, whose relationship to Avatula is not known, was soon deposed by a faction favoring Mahathi bin Taws (or Tanzi), the chief of the small cowrie-collecting community of Ngomeni, two or three hours north of Kiunga on the coast, who then proclaimed himself chief of the Boni country.[45] What rule of succession Avatula had arranged before his death is unrecorded. He had two brothers, one Amudu, who was a headman at Burkao (Port Durnford) and probably a rival of Mohamed bin Seif;[46] and another, Mohamed Bafaro of Kiunga. A much younger brother lived with Avatula at Starani.[47] A brother of Amudu (who may have been a brother, half-brother or no relation at all to Avatula) had been killed or enslaved by Oromo near Burkao, where a formidable settlement existed of a thousand Oromo who were runaway slaves of the Somali.[48] In any event, these brothers were bypassed, if indeed ever in line, for the forest chieftainship.

The politics of the Bajun coast, owing to a variety of ethnic backgrounds, was equally as complex as political activity in the southern part of Lamu district. In 1892 Mzee bin Seif's authority was acknowledged only as far north as Shakani; north from there government was in the hands of each village's elders, such as Mahathi and his counterparts. Ngomeni was the next village north from Shakani. The Bajun in these villages feared the Oromo who dwelled just inland beyond the Bajun plantations more than they feared the Somalis. But they kept peace with the Oromo for obvious reasons, traded with them, and also carried on a big trade in cattle and goats with the Somalis. Most of the trade with the interior was done at Kiunga, where Somalis, Oromo, and Boni brought their goods.[49]

In 1892 the Bajun of the coast were hostile toward Fumo Omari, although there was "an understanding of some sort" between them and the "Jongeni people." The Boni who lived inland from the Bajun coast, even as far as three days' march from Jongeni, feared Fumo Omari as well as the Bajun. The influence of the Bajun upon the Boni ceased at approximately Dodori creek, but Fumo Omari had on

[44]Lyne, *Zanzibar*, 165; *PP* (1893), LXII, C. 7248, Rodd to Rosebery, 5 August 1893.

[45]See Page 94 above.

[46]By 1894, in any event, Burkao was under Mohamed bin Seif's control. FO 107/23, Hardinge to Kimberley, 1 October 1894.

[47]Avatula's brother at Starani was only fourteen or fifteen years old in 1889. Because the Swahili word *ndugu* means sibling, half-sibling, cousin and other relations, a reporter could have mistakenly translated the word in its narrower sense. Tiedemann, "Besuch," 272.

[48]Fitzgerald, *Travels*, 465, 492.

[49]*Ibid.*, 466, see also Revoil, "Voyage," 410.

occasion sent his askaris to patrol as far as Burkao.[50] Mahathi's deposition of Bwana Ali as chief of the Boni was very likely an attempt to attain more control over the Boni by the Katwa Bajun, for they and other Bajun depended more and more upon the Boni for help at harvest time as slaves became harder to obtain. They also wanted the trade in ivory and indiarubber, in both of which the Boni were instrumental.[51]

After Avatula's death, a split within the forest communities is evident.[52] Fumo Omari and Mahathi may have competed for the support of Suleman Kimenya. This Muscat Arab had been apprehended by the British after the 1890 disturbances and deported to Muscat. Suleman's large plantation at Marereni, with valuable innovative plantings and many slaves, was confiscated by the British at that time.[53] He soon returned to Zanzibar, however, and then left that place secretly because he had been "dying of starvation," going to Takaungu and then overland to his friends Fumo Omari and Avatula at Pumwani, an hour and a half from Jongeni. Although Suleman was not of the Mazrui relationship, he may have been the agent of Mazrui assistance to Fumo Omari and Avatula.[54] After Avatula's death, Suleman quarreled with Fumo Omari, supposedly about a concubine Fumo Omari had given him, and he joined Mahathi.[55]

When Fumo Omari returned to the forest in May 1892, he made his fortress at Pumwani. This town became more populous and stronger than Jongeni, and together the two towns, surrounded by dependent villages, could muster 1000 guns. A series of conciliatory letters came to the British from Fumo Bakari, Suleman Kimenya, and Mahathi, but their willingness to fly the flag of the Zanzibari protectorate without fulfilling other terms was not satisfactory to the new administration. The Protectorate force thus traveled across desolate, depopulated country from Mkonumbi to Witu, hoisted its own flag, and prepared to attack Pumwani.

On 6 August 1893, the expedition marched north for a day and a half without meeting a human being, until a few shots were fired

[50]Fitzgerald, *Travels*, 479-495.

[51]*Ibid.*

[52]See, for instance, Mahathi's reluctance to leave the forest for fear that Fumo Omari would take possession of his town. *PP* (1893), LXII, C. 7248, Rodd to Rosebery, 5 August 1893.

[53]Fitzgerald, "Report," 3. Suleman had planted areca-nut palms and bamboo. Marereni (literally, "among the orchella weed") was a major center for collection of this lichen. By 1896 Marereni was completely deserted. *The Missionary Echo*, III (1896), 163.

[54]Abdulla Mohamed Ali, interview in Lamu, 28 April 1971. See Fred James Berg, "Mombasa Under the Busaidi Sultanate: The City and Its Hinterlands in the Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1971), 177, on Mazrui ties to watoro communities south of Mombasa.

[55]FO 107/23, Suleman's testimony in Hardinge to Kimberley, 1 Oct. 1894.

from the bush by still unseen persons warning Pumwani of the coming attack. After another two and one-half hours they reached cultivation, which extended over a large area of open country surrounded by a loop of forest. Pumwani lay concealed in this forest. The British placed their nine-pounder field gun, which had been drawn by seventy porters and accounted for their slow progress, into position at the entrance to the forest lane, some sixty yards from the town gate. Its charge failed to shatter the solid timbers of the gate, but other explosives succeeded, and within two hours the town was in British hands. As the force entered by the front gate, the Pumwani people escaped by the rear into the bush. Not a soul was found in the place; even the dead and wounded had been carried away.[56]

The town of Pumwani consisted of some 150 mud and wattle houses, and was evidently growing. The British now burned and completely destroyed the town, as well as another fortified village "which formed a sort of suburb to Pumwani." The porters, recruited on the coast and at Lamu, appeared to relish the destruction of the ripening mtama fields and the plantain trees adjacent to the town.[57]

Mahathi failed to reply to a warning which Rennell Rodd, the Acting Consul-General, sent to him. Consequently the British proceeded to Jongeni, through a rich belt of plantains which helped to conceal their approach. A repeat of what took place at Pumwani now occurred at Jongeni: within a few short hours the British had taken the settlement. It consisted of two main villages in adjoining forest clearings connected by a path, each having strong gates precisely like those at Pumwani. Two smaller villages, also fortified, were discovered a few hundred yards off. All were destroyed. "The land outside the forest is excessively fertile. The plantain groves were very fine, and the rice-fields magnificent..." These crops, upon which the forest people depended for sustenance, were devastated.[58]

The British had procured the assistance of a man from the coast who had relatives living in Jongeni to carry their latest letter to Mahathi. The man returned to Mkonumbi, where the British force retired after its forest expedition, and reported that Fumo Omari, who had been hiding in the forest, immediately ordered his execution, but the man's brother and relatives "led influential factions in Jongeni, and announced that if this were done they should not fight, but go over to the English." Eventually the man was released. He also reported that the losses in the forest were great, and that "two important Chiefs," one of them Suleman Kimenya,

[56]Sir James Rennell Rodd, *Social and Diplomatic Memories, 1884-1893* (London, 1922), 325-328. Newly constructed stockaded rifle pits had been installed along the approach from Witu, but the British force had arrived by a track from Mkumbi, fearing ambush.

[57]*PP* (1893), LXII, C. 7248, Rodd to Rosebery, 11 August 1893.

[58]*Ibid.*, Rodd to Rosebery, 15 August 1893.

had been injured. The Jongeni combatants had been ordered to "fire rapidly and do all the damage they could, and then retire into the forest."[59]

Another more prestigious informer was in the pay of the British, and his doings also give an indication of the rivalries among the Bajun and between Bajun and Nabahani. Mzee bin Seif had offered his services to the new administration when it first arrived in July 1893, even writing personally to Fumo Omari to recommend that he comply with British requests.[60] A rival claimant to Jongeni named Bwana Shello was now being helped by Mzee bin Seif with men, and by the British government with supplies, and was holding the forest settlement of Safareh, with the intention of "harrying Fumo Omari's people through the bush."[61] Mzee bin Seif

> has no love for the forest people, but has no doubt been in frequent correspondence with them, and Mahathi, of Jongeni, is an old follower of his. His avarice having been whetted with a small gift, and a promise of more to follow if he rendered efficient services, he undertook to do his best to secure the persons of Fumo Omari and Mahathi. He has provided the latter's chief rival, Shello, with a number of men with whom he is now holding Safare, to which it was presumed Fumo Omari would attempt to retire....[62]

The British did not trust Mzee bin Seif, so did not secure the arms and ammunition which he requested, but they feared that Mahathi would try "to join issues with the Hartis and rebel Arabs." Thus any means available must be employed to prevent the spread of rebellion. The British found themselves in a position similar to that of Sultans Said and Majid at the time of their endless trouble with Siyu in the early and middle decades of the century: intrigue

[59]*PP* (1893), LXII, C. 7248, No. 5, Rodd to Rosebery, 17 August 1893.

[60]*Ibid.*, No. 1, Rodd to Rosebery, 5 August 1893. Mzee had "marched in with beating drums and a picturesque suite to offer his services," according to Rodd, *Memories*, 322.

[61]*PP* (1893), LXII, C. 7248, Rodd to Rosebery, 17 August 1893.

[62]*Ibid.*, No. 9, Rodd to Rosebery, 19 August 1893. This betrayal of Mahathi by Mzee bin Seif recalls the occasion in 1873 when Mahathi's neighboring chief, Mbarahaji, was willing to help the British destroy Kiunga, a town under Mzee bin Seif's rule. It is likely that Mahathi had also been in competition with Mzee bin Seif for many years. See Chapter 6 above. See also Turton, "Pastoral Tribes," 184. Mzee bin Seif used his position as political officer for the British in Burkao in 1893 to enforce his authority over Bajun villages previously independent.

would succeed where military force had failed.[63]

The forest people made several raids of their own in September 1894--probably out of hunger--and the British retaliated, surprising the inhabitants of Pumwani, who were trying to cultivate again and to rebuild their town. At Pandanguo, Kwa Mbaruk, and Ngavuru the people set fire to their own towns upon seeing the British advance.[64] Jongeni was quite deserted, for Mahathi had built a new forest capital called Ngomeni after his coastal home. Deserters began coming into Witu, reporting that the forest people were disheartened and desperate for food, and that Fumo Omari was ill.[65] By November 1893, messengers came with letters from Fumo Omari and Mahathi asking for pardon. The British had requested witnesses to the good faith of the two chiefs' words; ironically, Mzee bin Seif and his followers now bore that testimony.[66]

General Mathews, who had commanded the Protectorate forces, wished to be lenient toward the forest people, who were now deep in the bush. He required that they move back to Witu and, among other rules, that there be no stockaded villages. More stringent conditions, he believed, would only drive them farther into the forest, and force them to continue their raids. "To leave such a productive country without a population to become a forest waste, would, in my opinion, be a great mistake."[67]

By June 1894 Fumo Omari had returned with about 300 followers to Witu, which the British had now laid out "on uniform lines." Its people began to cultivate and to collect rubber once again. Fumo Omari, member of the Nabahani family which had never recognized the right of the Omani Arabs or their British friends to rule over them, was then brought to Zanzibar to report to the Sultan on conditions in Witu. For this descendant of the island-dwelling sultans of Pate, it was his first glimpse of the sea.[68]

Mahathi, however, had thought better of his plea for pardon and was still at large in the Boni forest. With him were Suleman Kimenya and perhaps ten followers. All of the known forest strongholds, including Katawa and the Balawa cluster, had been destroyed.[69] In April, when Captain Rogers had gone to Ngomeni, he found that Mahathi and Suleman Kimenya had moved on to Safareh, "a village belonging to Waboni," which had also been--at least in July 1893--the headquarters of Bwana Shello, Mzee bin Seif's man.

[63] FO 107/5, Rogers to Mathews, 20 August 1893.
[64] *PP* (1893), LXII, C. 7248, Inc. in No. 15, Mathews to Rodd, 10 October 1893.
[65] FO 107/5, Rodd to Rosebery, 28 October 1893.
[66] FO 107/21, Mathews to Fumo Omari, 14 April 1894.
[67] FO 107/5, Mathews to Cracknall, 20 December 1893.
[68] FO 107/21, Hardinge to Kimberley, 1 July 1894.
[69] *Ibid.*, Mathews to Hardinge, 22 June 1894.

Mahathi had tried to get all of his people to go with him to Safareh but many of them were unwilling to flee anymore and wished only to go to the coast. Other than his lieutenants, Mahathi's followers were now reduced to his own slaves and the Boni. After living at Safareh only a month and a half he ordered all of the inhabitants to leave the village and build another in thicker forest close by. He chose the new site and ordered a gate even more strongly stockaded than was customary. The village was called New Safareh. Suleman Kimenya wrote plainly to Rogers that until his property at Marereni was restored to him he would not recognize the British or Zanzibari authorities. The British believed that Mahathi's "extraordinary behavior" was due to Suleman Kimenya's influence.

Rogers did not follow Mahathi and Suleman Kimenya, for the Boni would have informed them of all of Rogers' movements. Instead, he sent Omari bin Esha, liwali of the Siyu mainland, who had "considerable influence with the Boni," to try to arrest the two leaders. But at the end of June Rogers himself proceeded to New Safareh and joined Omari bin Esha, who had already captured seven of Mahathi's men who had gone to a settlement called Mwitu Mkuu to buy food. Rogers rushed the gate at New Safareh and found great amounts of arms and ammunition (including iron bullets made from bar iron), but the inhabitants had fled. He found two women in leg irons who said they had been seized by Mahathi's followers near Jongeni, where they had gone to collect plantains. A man captured at the same time had already been sold to the Somalis, which fate the women also expected. Of prisoners taken, one named Haji was a native of Merka who had for many years been an intermediary between the Somalis and Witu people in the selling of slaves.

Other prisoners informed Rogers that the Safareh people had been cultivating about three miles north of the settlement, with an eye to a food supply should the new village be destroyed. Rogers found there a large area planted with rice and maize, the latter nearly ripe. He destroyed the crops and expected that this would end Mahathi's influence over the Boni. To insure the capture of Mahathi and Suleman Kimenya, Rogers sent out Mzee bin Seif as well as Omari bin Esha with armed posses which doubtless included Boni well acquainted with the forest paths.[70] These efforts succeeded within the next few weeks, and on 16 September 1894, Mahathi, Suleman Kimenya, and their leading followers, called akidas, were tried in Witu. The akidas included Saleh bin Abed, a Muscat Arab; Hamisi wa Musa; Saburi; and several others.[71] Haji, the Merka dealer, had died of dysentery earlier.

The prosecution of Mahathi centered around his having purposely

[70]FO 107/21, Rogers to Mathews, 5 July 1894.

[71]A Bajun named Bwana Jile is also remembered as a follower, but is not included among those tried. Mbwana Othmani, interview in Witu, 21 February 1971.

built New Safareh in order to beat off a British attack. Saburi told of Mahathi's forcing the people of Safareh to leave their village, which they did not want to do. Saburi, for instance, had lived there all his life. But, he said, they had to carry out Mahathi's orders because they were all slaves or askaris, except for the few akidas. Mahathi had talked all along of fighting the Government, Saburi contended.[72]

Mahathi stated that he had run away from the forest Ngomeni because of fear that the Englisn would seize him. He had chosen the old Boni village of Safareh as a refuge because it was far from the coast and easy to run away from if any attempt were made to arrest him, "there being many forest paths." He had begun to build the new village after only a few weeks, he claimed, in order to keep the people together--"the Waboni and Safareh people" had themselves talked of going farther into the forest--and not to wage war against the Government. The gate to New Safareh, of more substantial construction than those of the other forest villages, was built "by the desire of all people, to prevent Somalis from raiding."[73]

Mahathi was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment in Zanzibar. His property consisted only of some two hundred slaves, who were granted their freedom. The akidas all received eight years' imprisonment. Suleman Kimenya, because of his continued "hostile attitude towards Europeans" and "evil influence" in the Witu district, was sentenced to death. Captain Rogers carried out the execution in Mkonumbi on 1 November 1894.[74]

In 1894, Somalis attacked the Oromo of the Tana River, and, for the first time, Pokomo. Pokomo had ferried some Oromo and their cattle across the Tana after an earlier Somali attack, and in October the Somalis retaliated against the Pokomo for this help to their enemies. Following the raids these Ogaden Somalis returned north by way of a route behind the Safareh forest.[75]

After the capture of Mahathi and Suleman Kimenya, Fumo Omari's last desperate attempt at freedom included secret negotiations with the Somalis who frequented the Witu-Tana area. Following his return to Witu from Jongeni, Fumo Omari sent for concealment in a forest called Milele many barrels of gunpowder which he had brought into

[72]FO 107/23, Hardinge to Kimberley, 1 October 1894; Evidence of Mabareh, Saboori, Omari, Bakeh Jumaa, and Abu Shiri.

[73]*Ibid.*, Evidence of Mahathi bin Taws.

[74]FO 107/24, Hardinge to Kimberley, 13 November 1894; Swaleh Bahamfusi, interview in Mkonumbi, 14 September 1971.

[75]FO 107/24, Rogers to Mathews, 5 November 1894. In July 1894 the Methodist missionary at Golbanti, R. M. Ormerod, visited the Witu Oromo. Their chief, Godana, asked him for help against the Somalis. *The Missionary Echo*, I (1894), 162; see also *ibid.*, II (1895), 6-8.

Witu. The porters were Sanye. A follower named Nasoro then went to live at Milele to guard the cache.[76] Fumo Omari sent several more barrels to be placed with the rest when he returned from Zanzibar, apparently undaunted by his recent meeting with the Omani sultan. He then instructed Nasoro to move all of the barrels to a safer place where the rubber collectors of Milele would not come across them. When Fumo Omari was asked by the British about the gunpowder he stated that it was true he had hidden it, but only because Witu houses were not watertight, because he feared fire in the town, and because he feared the Somalis would seize it in Witu.[77]

A Boni named Bashorah, however, told of Fumo Omari's sending for him secretly to confirm that Somalis were within eight hours of Witu in the direction of the Tana. He then sent Bashorah to bring two of the Somali elders to Witu in Boni disguise, carrying bows and arrows, that he might confer with them. Bashorah, frightened, told the chief of the Witu Oromo, Godana, and Godana in turn told Omari Madi, Fumo Omari's former military officer, who had recognized the advantages of serving the British and had become liwali of Witu for the Zanzibari Protectorate.[78]

On another occasion an alarm was raised that Somalis were outside Witu. All of the Witu people except Fumo Omari and his immediate following ran to the Government *boma*. Fumo Omari and his men headed for the forest behind the *boma*. Although it proved a false alarm, Fumo Omari was believed to have arranged with the Somalis that they should remain outside the town, and when Government troops went to disperse them, he and his followers would overpower the guard of the magazine, seize the ammunition, and join the Somalis.

An Oromo woman from Kulesa had been seized by the Somalis who attacked that Tana River community in October 1894, but had escaped. She reported that the Somalis had arranged to go to Witu after Kulesa, but upon being told by a Boni that Fumo Omari had been taken into custody had hurriedly left the river for their own country.

[76]FO 107/24, Rogers to Mathews, 30 November 1894. Rogers had noticed that a number of Boni and Sanye had come into Jongeni, but Fumo Omari explained that it was out of respect for Rogers. An informer told Rogers that Fumo Omari sent Sanye to hide the gunpowder because he could no longer trust his own people.

[77]*Ibid.*, Rogers to Mathews, 4 November 1894, Evidence of Nasoro wa Mwana Gongwa Binti Sultan Ahmed, Evidence of Mtondo wa Fumo Omari bin Sultan Ahmed; Rogers to Mathews, 30 November 1894.

[78]FO 107/24, Rogers to Mathews, 4 November 1894, Evidence of Bashorah Mboni.

She gathered that Fumo Omari and the Somalis had come to some understanding.[79] The evidence was heavy against Fumo Omari. He was arrested by the British in November 1894 and exiled to Zanzibar.[80]

About the time the British noticed Fumo Omari's "restless and dissatisfied state of mind," they also found "Mzee Seif is a good deal too powerful, and his power wants breaking."[81] In early 1895 Mzee bin Seif, who had ruled the Bajun coast for thirty years, always appearing to bend with the wind and to prosper considerably from his lip service to the Omani Arabs and the British, was interned at Zanzibar as "dangerous and unfriendly to British influences."[82] He was almost eighty years old.

Omari Madi, who had earlier worn the Prussian artillery uniform and now was draped in British respectability, came to Lamu to be sworn in as Sultan of Witu, "with suitable, but not too marked honours."[83] Four unidentified elders of Witu accompanied him, and agreed to obey British orders. Rasini and the adjacent mainland were to be administered by the Bajun Sheikh Tiro, "who depending upon us [the British] for support, is trustworthy."[84] Concurrent with these events was the July 1895 takeover of the administration of the Witu sultanate and the rest of the coast and the islands by Her Majesty's Government.

Thus the decades of political and economic competition among equals or near-equals in Lamu district were to end with unification, even if superficial, by a powerful foreign overlord. This unification, with not dissimilar aims, had been the elusive goal of the Omani Arabs, who had not been able to achieve hegemony over the unwilling inhabitants of the Lamu archipelago and mainland. Now for the first time the port and capital of Lamu would have political control over, and access to the wealth of, the entire hinterland. Here was the opportunity for the flowering of the district.

[79] FO 107/24, Rogers to Mathews, 4 November 1894, Evidence of Bashorah Mboni and of Wenedeh, Galla of Kulesa.

[80] FO 107/24, Hardinge to Kimberley, 13 November 1894; Mathews to Hardinge, 30 June 1895.

[81] FO 107/23, Hardinge to Kimberley, 1 October 1894.

[82] FO 107/36, Hardinge to Salisbury, 12 July 1895.

[83] *Ibid.* Omari Madi married a Nabahani as a means of adding legitimacy to his accession.

[84] FO 107/36, Hardinge to Salisbury, 12 July 1895. Sheikh Tiro, like Mzee bin Seif, had held large mainland plantations. Bwana Maalimu Kame, interview in Lamu, 29 March 1971.

CHAPTER 10

EPILOGUE: THE BEGINNING OF BRITISH RULE

> The conditions of the whole Province resemble those of a piece of land which has for years been producing crops but which has never received any return into the soil.... Yet, from a point of view of potentiality, this Province is, in our opinion, second to none in the Protectorate.[1]

British rule over the Lamu archipelago and mainland began in 1895 in the shadow of the three destroyed political systems which had coexisted in this area for roughly thirty years--namely, those of the Nabahani sultanate at Witu, Mzee bin Seif's sheikhdom at Rasini and on the Bajun coast, and the chiefdom of Avatula and his successor Mahathi over the Boni and watoro. While these small states had not the fiber to last indefinitely, the sudden removal of the three mainland powers left the British with political responsibilities which until then had been shared by these rulers and the Arab administration at Lamu.

One of the problems confronting the British was not a new one to the Lamu area, having existed since the Oromo-Somali wars of 1867-1869. The increasing presence of Somalis in Lamu district was, however, affected by the fact of British rule, and also by the vacuum created by the removal of the mainland states. The Somali situation, sometimes viewed as static by the British at the coast, was in fact seething with movement, with conflict among its various tribes, and with population pressures.[2] As in earlier decades, access to the Tana River remained a major objective of the pastoral Somalis of Jubaland.[3]

A second issue which required British attention after 1895 was the abolition of slavery. Although its terms provided for the gradual emancipation of slaves, the 1890 decree had certain immediate effects. In the long run, the decree bore on many aspects of Lamu district's economic life, especially on the mainland.

The efforts of the British to stimulate agriculture and trade in Tanaland Province, as the region was now called,[4] were tied both to the Somali issue and to the difficulties surrounding the end of slavery. In both the economic and political spheres, the British administration had to deal with the effects of policies established during the previous thirty years. As with the political vacuum

[1]Ainsworth and Hollis's Report, 42.
[2]Turton, "Pastoral Tribes," 265.
[3]Ainsworth and Hollis's Report, 70.
[4]Tanaland Province comprised three Districts, Tana River, Port Durnford, and Lamu. It was administered from Lamu. Arthur H. Hardinge, *A Diplomatist in the East* (London, 1928), 143.

created by the removal of the dissident states, the destruction of a whole economic system based on slavery had to be followed by a creative new administration if the area's economy was to survive.

The Somali Issue

The Abdullah Somalis, a sub-tribe of the Ogaden, considered their homeland to be the Juba area, but their grazing lands extended much farther south, including the Biskaya plains northwest of Burkao. Under their leader Hassan Burghin (remembered in the Lamu area as Hassan Barjid or Hassan Baridi) the Abdullah maintained a belligerent independence from the chief of the Ogaden, Murgham (or Maghan) Yusuf. In addition, there was strife between the various Ogaden tribes and the Herti of Kismayu.[5] Yet the Somalis of various tribes and sub-tribes sometimes cooperated at the expense of non-Somalis.

Hassan Burghin had signed a treaty of friendship in 1890 with R. T. Simons, the Lamu IBEA agent, and had received permission to establish a Tana River camp at Korokoro as a means of bypassing the Afmadu wells held by his competitors. During the next years the Abdullah raided the Pokomo downriver from Korokoro, endangering the European missions, and presenting the possibility of intrigue with Witu.[6]

In late 1895 a British expedition was made to Afmadu in order to retaliate for attacks on the Tana River populations, and also because large numbers of slaves were held there as cultivators for the Ogaden. Both Murgham Yusuf and Hassan Burghin fled, but after a second expedition in March 1896 they promised obedience to the British. Murgham Yusuf died in May 1896, however, and was succeeded by a son, Ahmed Murgham, whose position Hassan Burghin and other Ogaden refused to recognize. A period of increasing unrest followed.[7]

The Bajun coast felt the effects of this unrest. In June 1896 Hassan Burghin led the Abdullah in an attack on the Oromo living near Burkao, killing thirteen men and carrying off women and children. A few days prior to this raid, Ahmed Murgham, who had been in the forest inland from Kiunga seizing ivory from the Boni, had traveled north and allegedly instigated the massacre of the Oromo because they had refused his demands for ivory. Ahmed Murgham also attacked villages

[5]For details, see Turton, "Pastoral Tribes," ch. 4; for a brief overview, E. R. Turton, "Somali Resistance to Colonial Rule and the Development of Somali Political Activity in Kenya, 1893-1960," *JAH*, XIII, 1 (1972), 119-127. See also Gabriel Ferrand, *Les Çomalis* (Paris, 1903), 175.

[6]Hardinge's Report, 12.

[7]*The Missionary Echo*, II (1895), 8; Turton, "Pastoral Tribes," 206-210; T. S. Thomas, *Jubaland and the Northern Frontier District* (Nairobi, 1917), 25; Hardinge, *Diplomatist*, 217.

near Kiunga. Another attack on Oromo and Boni in August 1896 sent the survivors fleeing to Burkao, begging the Protectorate's officials to take steps to recover their kidnapped relatives and the stolen ivory. Many Bajun fled to the offshore islands.[8]

During late 1896 the Abdullah continued their raids on the Oromo, and also attacked and robbed Swahili traders who had gone from Wange into the Boni forest to barter for indiarubber. Moreover, the Pokomo abandoned cultivation on the left bank of the Tana, the Oromo feared to collect their cattle because the Somali would take them, and the Boni were compelled to pay tribute in ivory to the Somalis. A. S. Rogers, now the Protectorate's sub-commissioner in Lamu, pressed his superiors for an attack on Afmadu and Biskaya during the dry season, when the Abdullah would be concentrated in these watering places.[9] An 1898 expedition, although successful at Afmadu, brought no real control over the Ogaden.[10] Hassan Burghin and his followers undertook several raids on the Tana River Oromo in November of that year. An increasing number of raids on the Boni and Bajun of Lamu district seem to have resulted from a gradual Abdullah retreat toward the Tana due to the trespassing of another Ogaden sub-tribe, the Mohamed Zubeir, on Abdullah grazing lands. Small bands of Abdullah, along with Oromo who had converted to Islam, broke away from Hassan Burghin and lived exclusively by raiding the Boni and Bajun.[11]

Pate cultivators at Mgine were the victims in early 1901 when the Abdullah Somalis raided the south bank of Wange creek, only twenty miles north of Lamu.[12] Since this was the third raid in the Wange area, and the population was in a panic, Rogers immediately patrolled the country as far as the Somali encampment, beyond the Boni forest. There he surprised Hassan Burghin's followers, capturing twenty-three of them, along with 800 head of cattle and 400 sheep and goats. He also returned to the coast with a Mambore woman, Mwana Bule Mahathi, who had been kidnapped years before.[13]

[8]KNA/CP/1/68/20, Rogers to Crauford, 5 August 1896; Osmani Suwo, interview in Kiunga, 23 July 1971; Mohamed bin Haji bin Bwana Heri, interview in Lamu, 31 March 1971.

[9]Turton, "Pastoral Tribes," 222.

[10]*Ibid.*

[11]*Ibid.*, 244-245; KNA/CP/69/22, Rogers to Crauford, 2 June 1899. Mbwana Tora, interview in Kiunga, 15 April 1971, stated that Oromo and Somali agreed to fight the Bajun together and attacked Kiunga, Mambore, Omwe and other coastal villages. Also Osmani Suwo, interview in Kiunga, 23 July 1971.

[12]Haji Hamisi, interview in Lamu, 25 April 1971; Thomas, *Jubaland,* 26; *PP* (1901), XLVIII, C. 591, No. 41, Eliot to Lansdowne, 3 February 1901.

[13]*Ibid.*, Eliot to Lansdowne, 27 February 1901; Mbwana Tora, interview in Kiunga, 15 April 1971; Ali bin Suleman Riyamy, interview in Lamu, 29 October 1971.

The Ogaden were fined for having conducted these raids, but to collect the fine the British deemed it necessary to prohibit all Somalis from trading at Lamu, Kismayu, and the two Juba River ports of Yonte and Gobwen. Administration of most of the Somali population in the area was subject to martial law administered from Kismayu as far south as the Tana. The blockade of Somali trade backfired, however, on the Protectorate administration and ultimately on the prosperity of the whole Province, which depended upon these consumers of luxury goods to stimulate imports, and on their export of cattle, hides, and ivory. Despite these drastic efforts and seasonal respite, Somali raids at the turn of the twentieth century were causing mainland cultivators from Kiunga to the Tana to flee to the archipelago, leaving the mainland to fall out of cultivation.[14] Moreover, the rubber industry was being ruined, for it was necessary for tappers to go as far as three days inland to get the best rubber. Yusuf Hassan and Shongolo Murgham, sons of the two Ogaden leaders, headed groups who preyed upon the Dodori rubber tappers, who were both Boni and Bajun. Half of the rubber and ivory obtained by the Boni was turned over to the Ogaden.[15] In addition, coastal people sometimes played a role in rivalries within the Abdullah group. In 1903-1904, for instance, Ahmed Murgham attempted to regain lost power by buying the allegiance of the Bajun. As a result the Bajun at Kiunga feasted him publicly and gave him a Bajun wife. The two hundred and fifty guns distributed to the Bajun by Ahmed Murgham, however, were collected by the Lamu sub-commissioner.[16]

A study of inter-tribal Somali rivalries and Somali-British relationships is beyond the scope of this discussion. The Somali presence in Tanaland Province, however, was a continuing and basic problem which was often misunderstood and which was not solved. An inconsistent British policy varied from subsidizing them to driving them into the far hinterland to blockading their ports. As late as 1909, a commission appointed to study Tanaland admitted that, although the "Tanaland Somali question" had existed since the British Government had assumed control, it had never been faced squarely.[17]

[14]Thomas, *Jubaland,* 34-35. By 1907, about half of the island residents who had formerly cultivated on the mainland had abandoned their cultivation. KNA/JUD/1/319, MacDougall to Hamilton, 21 March 1907.

[15]Thomas, *Jubaland,* 44-45; KNA/JUD/1/310, MacDougall to Hamilton, 21 March 1907; KNA/CP/1/109/89, Kismayu 27-4-99 to Crauford.

[16]*PP* (1905), LVI, C. 2331, Report on the East Africa Protectorate for the Year 1903-1904.

[17]Ainsworth and Hollis's Report, 14. For full discussions of the Somali issue see G. H. Mungeam, *British Rule in Kenya, 1895-1912* (Oxford, 1966), 29, 44, and *passim;* Rowlands, "Outline," *passim;* Sir Charles Eliot, *The East Africa Protectorate* (London, 1905), 119-121; Peter Thomas Dalleo, "Trade and Pastoralism: Economic Factors in the History of the Somalis of Northeastern Kenya, 1892-1948" (Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1975), chs. 1 and 5.

The End of Slavery and Related Economic Problems

In August 1895, Rogers reported that the anti-slavery decree of 1890 had been rigidly adhered to and enforced in the area between Kipini and Burkao, including the islands but excluding the tract of country which the Somalis frequented. Slavery among the Oromo also continued for a number of years because of slight Government contact with them.[18] With these exceptions, however, the slave trade had been checked, and the status of slaves improved. Instances of the sale, mortgaging, and transfer of slaves and of their harsh treatment were rare. Rogers did not recommend the abolition of slavery immediately. Judging by the marked change shown over the past five years, he believed that another five years would bring about the abolition of almost all slavery in these parts. People who possessed fifty or sixty slaves in 1890 had in 1895 only half that number, due to the granting of freedom to many and the desertion of others. Rogers had freed eight hundred slaves in the Witu protectorate alone. Witu and Pangani, the latter a settlement which had grown to eleven hundred souls after the defeat of the forest villages, were virtually freed-slave settlements now, their inhabitants among the most industrious cultivators in the hinterland.[19] The Pokomo of the Tana and the Boni from the forest frequently visited both Witu and Lamu.[20] A certain freedom of movement had been achieved with the British defeat of Witu.

The hope of the Protectorate lay in the mainland, which showed great promise. In 1897, the Tanaland Province was exporting to Arabia simsim and mtama in large quantities, maize to Zanzibar, mangrove poles to Zanzibar and India, cowrie shells to Calcutta, and ivory to India, Europe and elsewhere. Its indiarubber, copra, hippopotamus teeth and rhinoceros horn were shipped to India, Zanzibar, and Europe. Most of these products came from the sultanate of Witu, the western portion of which was populated by watoro and their descendants, the eastern portion largely by Bajun.[21]

Although a few Bajun had lived for decades in Witu, in southern Lamu district, and even south of the Tana, the movement of the Bajun population southward into the villages closest to Lamu seems to have occurred after 1890. The reasons were probably associated with the Somali problem, the lack of slaves on the formerly large north-coast plantations, and the general aridity of the Bajun coast. A breakdown of village land tenure with the disruptions of the 1890s and the

[18]It was left to missionaries to enforce an 1898 Government notice abolishing slavery among the Oromo beyond the ten-mile strip. R. M. Ormerod, "Slavery in Galla-Land," *The Missionary Echo*, V (1898), 161-162.

[19]*PP* (1896), LIX, C. 8275, Inc. 8 in No. 10, Rogers to Hardinge, 28 August 1895; MacLennan to Hardinge, 16 August 1895; KNA/CP/1/68/20, Rogers to Crauford, 17 March 1899; Swaleh Bahamfusi, interview in Mkonumbi, 14 September 1971.

[20]*Ibid.*, MacLennan to Hardinge, 16 August 1895.

[21]Hardinge's Report, 16.

growing lack of labor in the Lamu hinterland may have been further inducements.[22] In addition, the Bajun may have wished to exploit the rubber in forests which were safer from Somali raids than were those near Wange and Kiunga. With some encouragement, the Bajun influx and the watoro settlements of Witu and Pangani could have formed the core of a progressive agricultural community in the mainland opposite Lamu. Moreover, some two thousand Giriama and other agriculturalists from south of the Tana moved across the river in 1899 due to famine in their own country.[23]

Several attempts were made on the mainland in the early years of the twentieth century to ascertain agricultural possibilities for European planters.[24] The most valuable areas were thought to be the banks of the Tana River, which had the best soil; the Bajun coast, where development of the indigenous cotton industry was considered; and parts of the Witu sultanate which had good rainfall. At the Tana River and in Witu the problem for any large-scale plantation scheme was labor. Also, the normal two floods of the Tana made it necessary to plant crops there which could be harvested within six months, which ruled out cotton. At the Bajun coast, the chief drawback was "the almost total want of fresh water in the district," even if labor could be obtained.[25] The few Europeans who initiated plantations concentrated on rubber and cotton.[26]

An industry which had received its impetus from the sultan of Witu in the years before the *pax Britannica* and which showed promise after 1895 was the collection of wild india rubber (*mpira*). Some former slave-owners considered cultivating beneath them, but they were willing to tap rubber. The need in Lamu district for income alternative to that which had been gained from agricultural surpluses coincided with an increased world demand for rubber at the turn of the twentieth century.[27]

[22]Mohamed bin Haji bin Bwana Heri, interview in Lamu, 1 April 1971, stated that Bajun sometimes moved with their slaves. His uncle moved from Rasini to Mkonumbi at this time and had no difficulty in acquiring land.

[23]KNA/CP/69/22, Rogers to Crauford, 22 July 1899. See also Smith, "Giriama Rising," 29-32.

[24]See Whyte's Report (1902) and Report on the Possibilities of Cotton-Growing in the East Africa Protectorate for 1904.

[25]*PP* (1905), LVI, C. 2406, Inc. 1 in No. 2, Linton to Stewart, 25 January 1905.

[26]Ainsworth and Hollis's Report, 32-35. The East Africa Cotton Syndicate at the mouth of the Tana began in 1905 to plant forty acres of cotton and a number of rubber trees. A Mr. Rayne planted 40,000 rubber trees near Witu, and Herr Tost at Kipini planted rubber trees along with other crops.

[27]See Richard D. Wolff, *The Economics of Colonialism: Britain and Kenya, 1870-1930* (New Haven, 1974), 22, 83.

On the northern coast, the Bajun and Boni became specialists in the collection of *mpira (landolphia kirkii)*.[28] The Boni showed the Bajun where to find the vines and in return received food from the Bajun. A group of twenty to thirty Bajun, with a foreman, entered the forest together, built *bandas* to live in, and stayed for three or more months during the *kusi* rains, which was considered the best season for this work. To collect the rubber, a vertical slice was cut in the vine, salt water added, and a ball formed from the rubber which was bled from the vine. If not carefully done, the vine could be damaged for future accumulation.[29] Each collector would store the balls of rubber which he collected in a hole dug in the ground, and at the end of the season he would carry them to the coast and sell them by the *frasila* to the shopkeepers.[30] All of the small villages opposite Pate Island, such as Itembe, Wasi, Mwazi and Kiduruni, had shops which purchased rubber.[31] At Witu, Sultan Omari took advantage of his position to channel into his hands all the rubber collected by the Witu Boni. He forbade all Swahilis to go into the forests to trade directly with the Boni; he had ordered the latter to sell all their rubber in Witu, ostensibly in order to collect the hut tax instituted in 1905.[32] In 1906, over two thousand *frasila* of rubber were exported from Lamu.[33] The rubber industry in Lamu District and the rest of East Africa declined rapidly, however, with the expansion of southeast Asian rubber production and with world price reversals after 1912-1913.[34]

Many Bajun also collected *marere* (orchella weed) and *magome* (mangrove bark). The bark collectors worked in large groups during the *kusi* rains. Like *mpira* collectors, some of these Bajun would cultivate or cut mangrove poles during other seasons. Their pay, as with *mpira*, depended upon the amount collected.[35] Gustav Denhardt held a concession in the bark industry until 1909, when Smith Mackenzie and Company took it over.[36]

[28]In Lamu District, the term *mpira* is used to cover all varieties of rubber. Williams, *Plants*, 23-25, discusses the various vines. See also Greenway, *Dictionary*. *Landolphia kirkii* is strictly termed *mbungo* in southern Swahili dialects.

[29]Mohamed bin Haji bin Bwana Heri, interview in Lamu, 22 April 1971; KNA/CP/69/22, Rogers to Hardinge, 3 February 1898; Eliot, *East Africa Protectorate*, 161.

[30]Mohamed bin Haji bin Bwana Heri, interview in Lamu, 22 April 1971; C.W. Hobley, *Kenya: From Chartered Company to Crown Colony* (London, 1929), 249.

[31]Mohamed bin Haji bin Bwana Heri, interview in Lamu, 22 April 1971; Osmani Suwo, interview in Kiunga, 24 July 1971.

[32]KNA/JUD/1/319, Lamu District Court Criminal Case 14 of 1907, Crown vs. Ahmadi Bisharo. A hut tax of three rupees per hut was first collected in September 1905. Ainsworth and Hollis's Report, 70.

[33]KNA/JUD/1/319, MacDougall to Hamilton, 21 March 1907.

[34]Wolff, *Economics*, 83.

[35]Mohamed bin Haji bin Bwana Heri, interviews in Lamu, 22 and 23 April 1971.

[36]Ainsworth and Hollis's Report, 47; [N.J. Robinson], *The History of Smith Mackenzie and Company, Ltd* (London, 1938), 58.

New Government restrictions influenced trade. The ivory trade, for example, decreased after the 1896 proclamation of a regulation requiring elephant hunters to deliver half their ivory to the Government. This regulation applied only to Tanaland Province, where it was believed the Oromo, Boni, and Sanye hunters would not otherwise have been able to pay for a license, which was required in other provinces.[37] In addition, the Tana River was closed to all but licensed traders, who had to deposit a sum of money as a guarantee of good conduct. This was an effort both to save elephants and to curb the Arab and Swahilis, the main traders up the river, from exploiting the Pokomo. Officials urged cultivation along the Tana for export to Lamu, and widened the Belezoni canal in 1898 or 1899.[38]

In 1907 the abolition of the legal status of slavery was proclaimed throughout Tanaland Province. Between 1 October 1907 and 1 August 1909, compensation was paid in 1600 cases out of 2300 claims made.[39] By 1909 very few slaves were continuing in their former masters' employ. Many of the former masters considered abolition their death blow, and lived off their compensation. Plantations suffered, although most of the freed slaves squatted on the mainland estates of their former masters, cultivating enough to live on. A few went to colonies of freed slaves on the Sabaki River. Most of the freed slaves, who rarely had children, were past middle age. Because Muslim law held that slaves could own no property, many freed slaves started out as paupers, even borrowing the seed they needed to plant their first season's crops. The system of loans at high rates of interest became more intense and widespread.[40]

As early as 1895, the coconut shambas on Lamu Island were overgrown and rapidly going out of cultivation. The value of shambas generally had depreciated by half in the preceding eight or nine years. Sometimes it was difficult to find a purchaser at all.[41] By 1897 Lamu was already considered by the Protectorate's officials to be in decline. There was no expectation that the population of Lamu town, which had about seven thousand inhabitants, would increase.

[37]*PP* (1899), LXIII, C. 9125, Report by Sir A. Hardinge on the British East Africa Protectorate for the Year 1897-98; KNA/CP/69/22, Rogers to Crauford, 9 April 1899; Rogers to Hardinge, 3 February [1898].

[38]R. Ormerod, "A Golbanti Palaver," *The Missionary Echo*, 5 (1898), 136; *ibid.*, 6 (1899), 102. The coastal people had often made loans and advances on crops to Pokomo at rates which the British considered exorbitant. They had also traveled in Pokomo canoes at "ridiculously low rates."

[39]Ainsworth and Hollis's Report, 21.

[40]Ainsworth and Hollis's Report, 23; Beech, untitled manuscript on Swahili life. See also Cooper, "Plantation Slavery," ch. 6, *passim*.

[41]*PP* (1896), LIX, C. 8275, MacLennan to Hardinge, 16 August 1895; R. M. Ormerod, "Work on the Tana River," *The Missionary Echo*, 6 (1899), 154, reported, "a wealthy British Indian tradesman told me recently he would gladly sell his extensive property for a quarter its original cost and clear out of Lamu."

Its trade had been diverted to Mombasa, where the railway to the interior was to start.[42] In the two years 1907-1909, Indians, who controlled the import-export trade and most of Tanaland's wealth, purchased from Arab and Swahili owners twenty-eight shambas, thirty-two houses and eighteen plots of land on Lamu Island alone.[43]

John Ainsworth and A. C. Hollis, two perceptive Government officials sent to study Tanaland Province during July and August 1909, were quick to see the possibilities of the area--even after the end of slavery--and shocked at the "neglect and disadvantages" which the Province had suffered under British rule. These commissioners did not attribute declines which occurred after 1907 to the abolition of slavery, but rather to restrictions preventing the shipment of cattle, stemming from a cattle plague; the regulations against free ivory trading; and a decline in the export of copra, due to a price reversal as well as lack of labor. The Government spent no money whatsoever on Tanaland Province until 1907-1908 when 100,000 rupees were spent in liberating slaves.

Between 1905 and 1909 the ivory trade declined considerably. The Government held a monopoly on it, trying to purchase all ivory which could not be proved to have been obtained in accordance with the game ordinance. The restrictions tended to cause hunters to bring their ivory to the Benadir ports, which had been under Italian rule since 1892. In addition to the decline in trade, the unrestrained elephants damaged mainland fields and led to the depopulation of villages because inhabitants were not allowed to kill them.[44] Oddly enough, the Tana River, which had twenty years before been considered a main artery of potential trade, became a neglected area. Beyond Kau, it could not be said "to be a factor in the existing trade of the country."[45] The Commission of 1909 could not understand why the administration had not long before brought the Tana into the scope of the trade resources of the province. Instead of being a highway to the interior, it was a closed district.[46]

While steamship calls serving the import-export trade of Lamu were erratic, trade communications between Lamu and the mainland were even more discouraging. Anyone wishing to take produce of a dutiable nature from any point in the province to Lamu had to declare the goods at the point of embarkation and pay the export duty on the local valuation. Should the articles remain in Lamu, no refund was made for the export duty already paid. Thus a trader sending leather sandals from Siyu, where they were made, to Lamu paid a duty at Siyu even if the sandals ended up on the feet of a Lamu resident. Sandals were not included in the list of dutiable articles, but, because they were made out of hide, which was dutiable, a charge was made. The

[42]Hardinge's Report, 14.
[43]Ainsworth and Hollis's Report, 23.
[44]Ainsworth and Hollis's Report, 42-43, 46.
[45]*Ibid.*, 55.
[46]*Ibid.*, 54-55.

effect of this arbitrary system was that one port was charging duty against another in the same territory. Should such goods be exported from Lamu, the original customs receipt was produced, but the goods were revalued and brought up to Lamu price for further duty. There was discontent also because people of Ndao and other places north of Rasini were compelled by customs officials to call in at Rasini before proceeding to Lamu. This caused them to lose a tide through the Mkanda channel, and added to the expense of the journey. "The procedure appears crude," stated the Commission about the whole customs system.[47]

The policy of extracting all possible revenue from a population which was both diminished and poor even extended to the short journey from Lamu to the mainland. A local inhabitant had instituted a ferry service from Lamu to Mokowe. After it was established, the Government demanded royalty. This resulted in the ferry being leased and the holder of the lease being required to pay a sum to the Government, which did nothing in return. The charge was, of course, recovered from the traveling public, whose produce gave them little net profit when sold in Lamu.

The hut tax of three rupees collected after 1905 formed about one-fourth of the total revenue of the Province by 1909. Each adult in excess of one per hut was liable, so it was in effect a poll tax. The tax was unpopular with the urban populations, who said that they did not like being taxed like *washenzi* (savages). The occupants of stone houses in Lamu thus usually paid only three rupees per house. British Indians, who possessed most of the wealth of Lamu and who were often second- and third-generation residents and as much "native" as others, were exempt from any sort of property tax.

The problems of the British administration in Tanaland Province were in part a legacy of decades long past when Omani Arabs had set the policies. British strategies of the 1890s, largely destructive, could not be undone. Many uncontrollable factors, such as the decline in demand for grain imports in Muscat in the early twentieth century, contributed very basically to the difficulties of Tanaland Province.[48] On the other hand, many rather trivial failures of administration at the turn of the twentieth century, a time when Lamu and much of the province was undergoing deep socio-economic change, might have been corrected during the following years, allowing the Lamu archipelago and hinterland to keep pace with the rest of the Protectorate. Through indifference, as much as through deliberate intention, the Tanaland Government allowed the system of indigenous administration to break down. There was no definite policy; rather, a vague idea of setting European control in its place.[49] British interests were absorbed elsewhere, particularly along the railway line heading from Mombasa to the highlands. Mombasa attracted any attention that was devoted

[47]Ainsworth and Hollis's Report, 55-57.

[48]See Rowlands, "Outline," 102-107, who elaborates on District Commissioner Clive's 1930 comments on the decline of Tanaland.

[49]Ainsworth and Hollis's Report, 57, 66, 78-79.

to the coast, while Lamu's harbor, once considered among the finest on the whole East African littoral, would not be developed.

What was evident at the turn of the century would be seen ten, twenty, and thirty years later. Frederick Jackson returned in 1903 to tour the district he had first visited in 1884. The familiar Abdulla bin Hamed was liwali of Lamu again, but not much else was the same. The Indian community was greatly reduced; "native" quarters in Lamu were less than half their former size. Young Swahili men were listlessly roaming about.

On the mainland, large areas lay derelict. The country between Mashundwani and Jipe, not far from Lamu, had reverted to bush. In one location a couple of old slaves, valueless, were eking out an existence in a small field of mixed food crops, protected by a stockade against bush pigs. Jipe, once a flourishing village cultivated for miles around its lake, was reduced to a small group of huts inhabited by old slaves and protected by a strong stockade against Somalis. The once prosperous mainland, wrote Jackson, "must still be remembered by many Indians...who made fortunes out of a variety of slave-grown grain, beans, peas, rice, simsim and what not, before they ever thought of moving to Mombasa...."[50]

[50]Jackson, *Early Days*, 353-355.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has focused on the internal forces which shaped the nineteenth-century history of Lamu district. During this century, its peoples were faced with the intrusion of an alien power, Zanzibar. Many political and economic activities which took place appear to be in response to this foreign element, and this view will form one basis of the following analysis. Another approach, however, will also be considered: that local and regional conditions were just as important as the imposition of outside political power to developments within Lamu district.

At the opening of the century, the bases of power in the archipelago were centered in the four main cities of Lamu, Pate, Siyu, and Rasini. Varied political undercurrents were prevalent within the town walls, however. Factions splintered the town populations and linked them with other ethnic groups and urban centers. It is therefore misleading to speak of the town of Lamu, for example, as singlemindedly competing with Pate, Siyu, or Rasini for economic and political gain. Although traditional rivalries may have been maintained among these city-states, competition was exercised through clans, *jamaa* (personal networks of relatives and friends), and special interest groups.

Similarly, the ethnic groups of the mainland were often split into sub-groups and factions which were, like those of urban populations, based on genealogical factors and constantly changing economic and political conditions. This tendency among the mainland peoples is clear from their connections with peoples of the archipelago in the nineteenth century when some of the town factions were motivated to align with their mainland neighbors. Through the Nabahanis, Pate had long-term associations with sections of the Oromo. In Siyu, a Somali group lived within the town as the result of a seventeenth-century alliance. Rasini and Lamu controlled large cultivated areas on the mainland, as did the other towns, and were obviously in contact with mainland peoples. In view of their oft-expressed independence from the islands, the large permanent mainland Bajun population, the *wakariani*, can in some contexts be considered a mainland people. At least some of the *wakariani*, however, aligned themselves with Rasini. Early in the century, every island city except Lamu is known to have had a connection with a mainland people which could be made effective.

Residents of both Pate and Lamu sought the assistance of outside Omani Arab groups during the second decade of the century. This far-reaching episode served to strengthen certain existing alliances and also to create new ones. Mazrui Arab aid proved insufficient for the Nabahani of Pate in the face of the Busaidi assistance given Lamu. Subsequently, the deposed sultan of Pate strengthened his ties with Bwana Mataka of Siyu. This leader had likely been a rival of the Pate Nabahani in earlier years, but at this time he was apparently attempting to gain power over the Somali section of the Siyu population. This was a development which began independent of the Omani presence but which was eventually complicated by it. In this effort, Bwana Mataka and his followers were in

touch with other Somali groups, particularly those centered at Geledi in southern Somalia. The Nabahani sultan in turn cemented his relationship with the Oromo. While interest in the ivory trade was probably a factor in both alliances, antagonism for the puritanical Islam of the Omani Arabs no doubt played an equally important role. Both of these factors were involved in Bwana Mataka's ties with the unorthodox sultan of Geledi, and in the toleration shown by the Muslim Pate people in their dealings with the non-Islamic Oromo.

From what we know of the participants in these alliances, ethnic boundaries persisted. Although Oromo had been observed to speak the Swahili language early in the century, there is no indication that the Oromo of Witu gave up their traditional religion even while living in the environs of the Islamic town which flourished under Sultan Ahmed. If they altered their nomadic life because year-round pools near Witu made a more stationary existence possible and the conditions of the times limited the range of their grazing, they continued to be cattle-keepers and evidently prospered from trade. Late in the century, their dress was still recognizably in the Oromo style.

Similarly, Nabahani society in Witu maintained the stratified way of urban Swahili life. Nabahani wangwana kept slaves, built houses in the Swahili style, and consumed a coastal diet. The Nabahanis' constant striving to achieve an urban Islamic milieu far from other such centers may have been a conscious effort toward ethnic preservation. Despite some intermarriage and much intermingling, the Witu Swahili and the Oromo occupied distinct ecological niches and did not compete for resources. Their ethnic identities were maintained over many decades of interdependence.

The forest north of Witu also became the site of multiethnic settlements, which initially depended upon the reception given newcomers by the Boni people. These hunter-gatherers, who resided in the forest prior to the coastal influx, may have actively sought an alternative to their relationship with the Oromo. This relationship involved a tribute paid in ivory and duties performed by the Boni in return for Oromo protection, which may have been increasingly difficult for the Oromo to provide. The Boni appear to have long been in contact with the coastal Bajun, whose agricultural lands sometimes abutted Boni territory. In previous decades, this may have created a situation of subservience on the part of the Boni. Moreover, the relationship between the Boni people's patrons, the Oromo, and the *wakariani* does not seem to have been a peaceful one, judging from Avatula's personal attitude toward the Oromo and also from strife between northern Bajun villages and Oromo who escaped from Somali enslavement toward the end of the century.

Around mid-century Avatula and his followers from the northern coast chose to settle with the Boni in forest communities. The move was undertaken by Avatula in order to gain independence from Arab control. This may have taken the form of increased power for Mzee bin Seif along the Bajun coast, for the Rasini leader must have been

recognized by Zanzibar as the chief of most Bajun in return for his nominal loyalty. In addition to seeking a secure base of operations, Avatula may well have sought to seize an economic opportunity by occupying a position closer to the source of ivory. In the ivory trade, the Boni were instrumental.

Other coastal residents also found a haven in the forest communities. Runaway slaves from Arab plantations along the coast fled inland during the middle decades of the century. For the watoro, the choice was obviously prudent: the area provided rich soil for cultivation remote from their former owners. A number of disaffected Siyu emigrants settled on the coast during Bwana Mataka's time; in the vacuum of leadership that followed his death, some of them may have made up a portion of the population in the forest villages. Siyu families, alienated from their island town, may have rallied to a Bajun coastal chief such as Avatula out of a traditional rivalry with Mzee bin Seif of Rasini, with whom Avatula was at odds.

From the beginning of the move inland by coastal peoples, a stratified multiethnic society may have been created in the forest communities. This would not be unexpected, given previous Bajun-Boni associations and the stigma normally attached to the slave or ex-slave status of the watoro. On the other hand, considering the special conditions which brought the Bajun and the watoro to the forest--need for a safe residence--the newcomers would have been in no position to pull rank on the Boni, or on one another.

Even in the late 1880s each of these groups resided in its own village separate from other ethnic groups within the same cluster. Each group may have fulfilled a particular role in these more populated conditions, and no single group controlled land, which was plentiful, or the ivory trade, an asset valued by all of the groups. It is likely that the watoro continued a life of sedentary cultivation, going out from village to field each day as they had done on Arab plantations. Similarly, the Bajun followers of Avatula carried on cultivation. Bajun individuals may even have been able to continue the coastal combination of seasonal cultivation with a marine occupation, provided contacts with dhow-captain cousins were maintained. Like the Witu Swahili, the Bajun build coastal-style houses in their villages, and ate a coastal diet. The Boni avoided cultivation and continued their hunting deep into the forest. From a military aspect, each group also contributed. The influence of the watoro, who often had roots in the Lake Nyasa region or the mainland opposite Zanzibar, was seen in the design of the village fortifications, while the Boni furnished military prowess with their skillful use of bows and poisoned arrows. With their bushmanship, the Boni were also adept at ambushes and slave-stealing. The Bajun, with their knowledge of the northern coast, probably provided outlets for ivory and other trade goods, and succeeded in obtaining firearms.

Like Sultan Ahmed's alliance with the Oromo, Avatula's affiliation with the Boni and watoro was a pragmatic agreement which

overlooked customary barriers in order to surmount difficult conditions. With Avatula, as well as Ahmed, religious and other cultural differences were secondary to the practical advantages to be gained from collaboration. Moreover, both leaders may have expected their inland stays to be short-lived.

The Arabs who occupied Lamu from the second decade of the century soon found that the surrounding district, which was in their view a frontier, could not be controlled without accepting a role in mainland affairs, which other island participants had long taken for granted. The islands were inextricably tied to their hinterland, which was demographically different from the more southern Zanzibar mainland. Ecological factors as well as political and economic conditions in Lamu district created relationships among pastoralists, cultivators, hunter-gatherers, and town-dwellers.

In the 1840s the Arabs reached an agreement with the Somali residents of Siyu, a move which was instrumental in subduing Bwana Mataka. They also saw the necessity of acquiring the cooperation of Mzee bin Seif, whose influence extended over much of the Bajun population. Mzee bin Seif may have emphasized his ethnic identity in his encounters with the Arabs, who were not completely familiar with Bajun numbers or their split allegiances. They dealt with him very carefully, overlooking such breaches as occurred in the 1870s.

It soon became clear to the Arabs that local power bases were not stationary and that dissidents were as apt to disrupt Arab goals through guerrilla warfare on the mainland as through more conventional means on the islands. In their attempts to destroy the mainland bases of power, the Zanzibaris established themselves on the mainland, through military garrisons. They forced the Nabahanis to retreat from Kau and later attacked them in the forest. Although they managed to gain control of the Tana-Ozi river system, military expeditions into remote areas proved futile because of the difficulty of fighting in unknown terrain far from the coast.

A more effective strategy, and one which closely followed the pattern established by other groups in the district, was the connection the Arabs formed with the pastoral Darod Somali of the mainland, an alliance which brought the political affairs of the district to a climax in the Oromo-Somali war of the late 1860s. In contrast to the alliances made by Ahmed and Avatula, which overlooked religious diversity in order to achieve their goals, the Arab connection with the Somalis was strengthened by the two parties' mutual adherence to Islam. Undoubtedly, the Zanzibari governors of Lamu used this tie to its fullest advantage, sometimes stressing this feature of their ethnicity in contrast to the unbelieving Oromo. One example of such action was Sud bin Hamed's enforcement of harsh Islamic law when dealing with the Oromo. The Arabs were also aware that Somali pastoralists were the only means at their disposal for attacking the Oromo, the key to political resistance in the district, who must be punished for aiding the Witu Swahilis. The Zanzibaris

and the Darod Somalis were natural allies in another sense as well. While some individuals had lived or traded in Lamu district in previous decades, both groups were essentially outsiders, new elements in old conflicts which involved all peoples of the area. The Arabs eventually succeeded in upsetting the balance of power in the district, through the Somali defeat of the Oromo. Unfortunately this disruption of the balance of power also upset the economic benefits which the Zanzibaris hoped to reap.

Nineteenth-century conditions as well as the types of political systems found in Lamu district permitted an unusual degree of mobility in leadership. On the mainland, stateless societies such as those of the Oromo and pastoral Somali allowed forceful individuals to wield extensive power in practice if not in theory. Moreover, the social structure and situations of the Boni and watoro invited the direction of an aggressive outside leader. On the islands, the town governments had histories of sporadic succession crises and family rivalries often leading to violence and disruption. During the nineteenth century, when Arab rule threatened Swahili society and the economic advantages of island-dwellers, loyalties were drawn to strong personages who could help the islanders retain their institutions--on the mainland, if necessary--just as earlier allegiances had been centered on stationary communities. Opportunities existed for individual leaders to gain power over multiethnic amalgams as well as over traditional communal groups and the factions within them.

Ahmed, Bwana Mataka, and probably Mzee bin Seif were all members of leading families of their respective island towns. As such they would have competed for primacy with scions of other families, even under relatively peaceful conditions. During the nineteenth century, their strong personalities, qualities of leadership, and resilient natures enabled each of them to gain followings far beyond the island towns of their original residence. Less likely as a major participant in district conflicts was Avatula, the headman of a small coastal village situated far from the major island towns, yet he too gained multiethnic support. The ability of each of these leaders to direct culturally diverse peoples attests to their political shrewdness as well as to situations which fostered independent action.

In some ways, the position of the Arab governor of Lamu resembled that of other leaders in the district. Although part of a larger political dominion and backed by his sultan in Zanzibar, he was isolated and consequently independent to a large degree. Like other local leaders, the governor of Lamu directed a composite society, in his case in an urban setting. He also had to influence the leaders of his powerful Somali allies in the same way that Ahmed, for example, had to maintain good relations with the Oromo. The position allowed much scope for a talented individual.

Some residents of the district considered the sultan of Zanzibar merely a relative of the governor of Lamu, a view which gives some

indication of local priorities. This attitude toward the Zanzibari government may have been widespread among local residents. Because the governor of Lamu was the Zanzibari man on the spot and his role was apparently parallel to that of other local leaders, residents of the district may have paid little attention to his being a representative of a larger entity. His policies, including that of alliance with the Somalis, often conformed to local patterns. Only those residents who remained in Lamu, collaborated with the Zanzibaris, and benefited from the economic advantages of being within the larger Zanzibari sphere would have been fully aware that the scale of the Zanzibari political and economic structure dwarfed that of the local states. This became clear to all when the British in Zanzibar began to enforce their decrees.

The Arab-Somali defeat of the Oromo and the eventual application of British power exercised through Zanzibar were far-reaching developments in Lamu district. The repercussions of anti-slave trade agreements were deeply felt. British weight also prevented the success of the Egyptian invasion of 1875-1876, an episode with much appeal for many local residents. Yet even through these crises, a certain continuity can be seen in the politics of the district. The pattern of island-mainland alliance, although probably shifting more than records have revealed, did not break down in favor of Zanzibar. Nor did the German presence in Witu in the 1880s cause a sudden disruption of older alliances. Ahmed of Witu viewed the Germans, who had limited resources, as new allies in the long series of allies whom he had cultivated; they were especially valued because they could supply him with firearms when other sources had failed.

Nevertheless, the advent of the Germans, whose alliance with Witu was not out of proportion to other local alliances, led to direct British intervention in the district. And this British involvement, leading to the establishment of the protectorate in 1895, marked the end of any patterns which had been discernible in the district's political affairs. In order to achieve their own hegemony in the area, the British deemed it necessary to march miles into the mainland forest to destroy villages within whose stockades had been laid many plans involving both the mainland and the archipelago.

Estimating the depth and direction of cultural interchange in an area of such demographic diversity, and in a time of much interaction, is beyond the scope of this study. From the particular features of coastal culture which this volume has concentrated upon, however, there is sufficient evidence to permit some conclusions about the cultural influences at work in Lamu district during the nineteenth century. One of these cultural components was the ritual attached to agricultural pursuits, which occupied various peoples of the district--the Pokomo, watoro, free-born Swahili and Bajun, and rural slaves. Moreover, Arab, Swahili, and Bajun plantation proprietors were indirectly involved because they depended upon participants in mainland ritual who cleared their land, and cultivated, harvested, and transported their crops to dhow ports.

These rituals may have been vestiges of more completely communal agricultural activities which preceded the application of Islamic practice to agricultural lands. In the preceding centuries, Swahili and Bajun peoples may themselves have pursued agriculture in the communal manner followed by their mainland neighbors. These neighbors included the Bantu-speaking Pokomo, who had probably lived in closer proximity to Pate cultivators in times past. Other Bantu-speaking cultivators, migrating south from Shungwaya, may also have lived in Lamu district in close contact with coastal peoples.

In the nineteenth century, two strong influences met on the Lamu mainland. On the one hand, increasing Arab control of land during a time of expansion and individual profit through export probably brought changes in communities' attitudes toward their agricultural land. Cultivation was no longer seen as a communal effort, even though it may have been pursued within a town's customary *bara*. On the other hand, the slaves who worked this land were imported from areas in the south where agriculture was surrounded by communal ritual. They inevitably brought agricultural customs with them. In Lamu district African ritual took on the form of Islam. Muslim clerics participated in the ceremonies of the agricultural year. Moreover, agricultural ritual, which included the sacrifice of an animal on the land which was to be tilled, seems also to have been reflected in the mosques of the island towns, where Islamic clerics not only conducted prayers for rain, but also helped to perform the communal ritual of circulating a bull through the town of Lamu before its eventual sacrifice.

Local ritual surrounding agriculture remains to this day more prevalent among the Bajun people than among other coastal peoples in Lamu district. Perhaps the Bajun have remained the most isolated of the coastal agriculturalists in recent times and this accounts for their retention of old customs. Nevertheless, one can speculate that their ties to the land have in the past been closer than those of other Swahili-speakers and that they have been in longer contact with Bantu-speaking mainland cultivators, while remaining relatively remote from the influences brought by Arabs in the nineteenth century. Moreover, it has been said that an urban language on the coast tends to draw its agricultural vocabulary from the dialects of neighboring rural peoples.[1] There is much evidence in the Swahili vocabulary of the northern coast, and particularly in the Bajun dialect, to support this suggestion.

From the evidence examined in the course of this study, there is no reason to conclude that the currents of cultural change in the nineteenth century flowed more freely from island to mainland rather than the reverse. The Zanzibari weight was undoubtedly felt in such areas as Islamic law, even on the mainland. Nevertheless, in this period when Arabs and other foreigners were relatively few in number and their interaction with local peoples, outside the

[1]P. J. Greenway, *A Swahili Dictionary of Plant Names* (Dar es Salaam, 1937), v.

island towns, was infrequent, the influence of their culture upon the district as a whole seems to have been limited. The Zanzibaris who remained in Lamu may have absorbed as much of local cultures in the nineteenth century as they shared of their own. The impact of cultures brought from overseas, including those of both Omani and Hadhrami Arabs, was probably felt more deeply by local Swahili and Bajun during the colonial period with the fuller integration of society in Lamu district. During that period, moreover, there existed new motivations for the alteration of institutions and social structures.

In the nineteenth century, the chances for cultural exchange were more frequent between coastal societies and their mainland neighbors than they were between these groups and the Zanzibaris. The multiethnic alliances of this period provided the opportunities for cultural interaction. Maintenance of ethnic identities did not preclude the assimilation of ideas. Indeed, such interchange was the continuation of a centuries-long process in the development of the diverse coastal civilization.

Similarly, the political and economic sphere can be viewed as one of interaction. The Zanzibaris arrived with certain economic goals which could only be achieved through political control. They found complicated processes at work which prevented them from achieving their goals without exercising heavier control. As a result, they initiated strategies which conformed to local patterns and which involved them in the affairs of the mainland as well as those of the islands. While the Zanzibaris did modify local processes, they often did so in response to local developments, just as indigenous peoples reacted to the Zanzibaris as a new element in an already complex setting.

Appendix A

A Glossary of Lamu District Swahili Agricultural Terms

The words included have a usage in the Lamu area different from that elsewhere, or are of the dialects of the Lamu area, and not found in modern Swahili dictionaries. The list is by no means an exhaustive one of agricultural terms in use in Lamu District now or in the past.

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bara - used in the sense of "the mainland," and also as in Sacleux, a region which is deserted, or simply not cultivated, as opposed to cultivated land. Krapf, *Nika Dictionary*, cites a usage of *bara* as the unplanted intervening spaces between plants. Lamu usage included both meanings. An Mkonumbi farmer pointed to the country north and west of the town and stated, "*bara yetu*," in effect, our area; the land, now uncultivated, which we of Mkonumbi can by tradition cultivate when we choose to do so. All island towns and some mainland towns had what they deemed "*bara yetu*." See also *wangwa*.

buru - properly, *mtama buru* or *mtama wa buru*. Maize. *Mahindi* in southern Swahili dialects.

jowari - Pickering, *Races of Man*, 343, 348, calls "juari" the Indian name for *Sorghum vulgare*, the principal grain of southern Arabia. Burton, *Zanzibar*, I, 243: *Holcus Sorghum*, called by the Arabs *ta'am* (food) and by the Swahilis *mtama*, the wheat of the poorer Arabs." Oscar Lewis, *Village Life in Northern India* (New York, 1958), 37, notes the modern cultivation of *jovar*.

kambaa - Patterson, "Notes on Ecology," 12: a strip of cultivated land 200 yards long by 100 yards wide. Sacleux: an agricultural measure 40 feet by 400 feet. Guillain, *Documents*, III, 402: *oukambaa* equals one-fourth of an *mlia*. The area of a *kambaa* varied, for it was measured in *hatua*, paces, its size adjusted according to the soil. The derivation is from *kamba*, a rope, which is made up of several *ungwe*, strings. This customary measurement may have originated when one slave had instructions to cultivate one *ngwe* per day, an area about 200 yards by 5 yards, so that in twenty days a slave had cultivated one *kambaa*. See also *mlia* and *ngwe*.

kariani - the term used by people of the archipelago to describe the *bara* of the Bajun which faced Pate Island and extended as far as Shakani. Literally, "in the outposts," it reflected the urban view toward rural life. From the Arabic *qaria*, village, but sometimes used in the sense of a movable campsite. Sacleux: *karia* are hamlets, sometimes habitations on a property, not unlike *kijiji* villages. Hichens, "Chronicle of Lamu," 28, applies the term "*kariya*" to the Lamu mainland town of Mpekatoni. In Bajun country, however, Kariani is a proper noun, a specific location, not applicable to Lamu's *bara*.

kayupe - sugar cane. *Miwa* in southern dialects.

kibaba (pl. *zi-*) - Krapf, *Suahili Dictionary:* a measure which is about a pint basin full, about one and one-half pounds. Steere, *Handbook*, 457: the smallest unit for measuring grain. Stigand, *Zinj*, 86: a *kibaba* is about one and one-half pounds of grain, but the old *kibaba* measured one and one-half modern *kibaba*. Sacleux: a measure of capacity for solids, about a liter or a pint. Krapf, *Nika Dictionary:* a small measure, one-third of a *pishi*. See also *kikunda*.

kitongoji (pl. *zi-*) - a small village or hamlet, tributary to a larger town. *Zitongoji za Amu ni Kipungani na Matondoni.* Also used in the locative sense as the *bara* of Lamu as a whole, *zitongojini,* in the hamlets. Krapf, *Suahili Dictionary:* a village (Lamu dialect). Sacleux: Kiamu for *kijiji,* a village. The *kitongoji* may be considered a settlement without resident *wangwana.*

kikunda - a small measure for grain. Often pronounced *kikanda.* Sacleux: Kigunia for a measure with which one serves to the laborers their ration of the day. It is a measure less than a *kibaba.* Krapf, *Suahili Dictionary: kikunda* is *kibaba* in Kimvita. Johnson: *kanda,* a small matting bag. Steere, *Handbook,* 457, states the *kanda* varied in size. The *kikunda* tax, which so angered Lamu proprietors when Pate collected it, was based on this measure. *Kikunda* can mean "*kiasi,*" just a handful.

Konde or *honde* (pl., *ma-*) - a cultivated plot, without planted trees, shifted from year to year. Würtz, "Kipokomo": *hoonde* is a field. New, *Life,* 228: *kondi* were seen along the Tana River, where Pokomo planted rice and bananas. Krapf, *Suahili Dictionary: konde ya, konde za,* "a cleared spot of land for planting rice, &c." Sacleux: *honde, ma-,* Kigunia for a field for cereals, legumes and rices, but not planted with trees, as opposed to the Kiamu *liwa,* or *shamba.* Middleton, *Land Tenure,* 79: a field in bushland. Taylor, *Giryama Vocabulary,* gives the comparable Giriama term, *munda,* cultivated ground. Fallow or once-cultivated, but not deserted, ground is *munda vue. Konde* is often used in the locative form, *Nendao kondeni,* I am going into the fields, usually meaning mainland fields.

liwa (pl., *ma-*) - Sacleux: Kiamu for a property planted with trees, as distinguished from *konde,* a field without trees. *Liwa la minazi,* property with coconut palms. See *shamba.*

magugu - Kiamu for *nyika,* country too dry for cultivation. At best, grazing land. Steere, *Handbook:* weeds, undergrowth. Sacleux: brushwood, bush.

mawele - bullrush millet. Burton, *Zanzibar,* I, 244: *mawele* is *Bajri panicum spicatum, Roxb.* Grotanelli, *Pescatori* , 129: *mchama wa pembe* or *pennisetum typhoideum.* Lewis, *Northern India,* 37, notes the modern cultivation of *bajra. Mawele* is a popular crop on the Bajun coast. See Taylor, *Aphorisms,* 134.

mbambakofi - a hardwood tree found in the Witu forest, its wood used for building purposes. Williams, *Plants: Afzelia quanzensis.*

mlia - a surface 800 feet by 200 feet, according to Guillain, *Documents,* III, 402. Sacleux: a band or stripe, a longitudinal measure; an agricultural measurement of 4,000 feet long by 400 feet wide (or *kambaa kumi*). Its original meaning seems to have been "stripe." (Johnson, *Swahili-English Dictionary)* See *kambaa.*

mpingo - a tree yielding a heavy black wood, called ebony by most observers, and used for doors, furniture, and carved objects.

msitu - Krapf, *Suahili Dictionary,* and Sacleux: forest. Greenway: thick undergrowth in evergreen forest. See *mwitu.*

mtama or *mtama uti* - a type of millet, of which there were many varieties grown in Lamu district. Krapf, *Suahili Dictionary,* describes the stages of its growth. See *jowari.*

mui - *mji* in southern dialects. A town or city, as opposed to a hamlet, *kijiji.* It is used in reference to the island towns of Lamu, Pate, Siyu and Rasini, but, except for Witu, rarely of lesser places. Use of the term *mji* may depend on a settlement's size, and also whether or not *wangwana,* Islamic clerics, *kadi,* etc. are resident. In Giriama, the comparable terms are *mudzi,* village, and *kadzidzi,* small village. (Taylor, *Giryama Vocabulary)*

mvuli, mvule, or *mfule* - a tree yielding a hard timber of reddish color which is good for shipbuilding. Found in the forests of Lamu district.

mwanda or *mwanza* - a small village, a *kijiji.* Also pronounced "*mwando*" or "*mansa*". Probably related to the Giriama *munda,* cultivated ground. See Taylor, *Aphorisms,* 5. Examples in Lamu district: Mwandampiya, new village, west of Mpekatoni; Mansa Madege, a site north of Witu; Mwanda Munyu, a salt-collecting hamlet near Mokowe; Mwanda Mariamu on Manda island.

mwitu - a thick forest, of which people are afraid. Krapf, *Suahili Dictionary,* 266. *Mwitu* in local usage seems to mean a more dense forest than *msitu.*

ngwe (pl. *ungwe*) - a strip of land allotted to one person for cultivation. Krapf, *Suahili Dictionary:* the portion of land which is measured out to one person for tilling, which piece is marked out by a rope; also, *n'gue,* a small rope or string the thickness of a finger. Several *n'gue* are twisted together to form a ship's rope, *kamba.* The *ugue* are of the same stuff as *kamba,* but a *kamba* is bigger than an *n'gue.* Steere, *Handbook:* an allotment of space for cultivation. Sacleux: *tache* which the master or *nokoa* measures to a man as his part to cultivate, 10 feet long by 5 wide. But see *kambaa.* Taylor, *Giryama Vocabulary,* gives the sole meaning of *lugwe* to be "cord," but the Nyika proverb given in Taylor, *Aphorisms,* 51, indicates that this measurement of land was used in Giriama communities of free men. *Ngwe* may also have been the area reserved for a slave's own cultivation.

nra - a district or *mtaa,* quarter, in the country. Saidi Mohamed Bamasudi, Lamu. No dictionary evidence.

-pisha - to fire an area as part of the preparation of a new field.

pishi (or *pisi*) - Krapf, *Suahili Dictionary:* a measure for solid matters. One *pishi* contains four *kibaba*. Sacleux: the *pisi* weighs about six English pounds. Krapf, *Nika Dictionary:* a Swahili measure, a roughly made bowl, which contains about five pounds of grain. Krumm suggests a possible Persian origin of the word.

pori - in local usage, pori is wild, uncultivated land, with small trees and much brush, but by no means a forest. Greenway: *mapori* are forests, but the word is best applied to uninhabited wilds, forested or not. Sacleux: a deserted plain, a steppe.

sadaka - alms, charity, or offering. In the context of agricultural rituals, it is a feast celebrated when the season begins. It includes a sacrificial offering and prayers for beneficial weather. Krapf, *Suahili Dictionary*, gives a full description.

shamba (ma-) - strictly, a plantation of trees, usually near a town, and usually planted with coconut palms, mango, tamarind, and other permanent fruit trees. Lamu townsmen would retire *shambani*, into the tree-shaded plantations near the town, for cool evenings and holidays. See *liwa* and *konde*. Shamba is now used generally to mean all cultivated areas. But see Krapf, *Suahili Dictionary*, which defines *shamba* as a plantation of grain, as opposed to *kiunga*, one of fruit trees. Krumm suggests *shamba* was the word used for land strangers had acquired and which was cultivated by slave or hired labor. Possibly its derivation is from the French *champs*, by way of Zanzibar.

tambini - the boundary of a *konde*, which borders on *msitu* or *mwitu*, forest, as opposed to *mpakani*, the boundary of a *shamba*, which would usually border on another *shamba*. *Yonda ukimwata tambini ukitua hurudi. Sharuti umpeke mbali* (Don't chase a monkey only to the edge of a field; he will only return. Chase him far away). Saidi Mohamed Bamasudi, Lamu. No dictionary evidence.

tange - a new *konde*, in its first season, the trees and bush just cleared. Steere, *Handbook:* the trees and rubbish cleared off a new plantation. Krapf, *Suahili Dictionary: tange, ma-*, a new plantation *(shamba mpia); tange* signifies the wood or trees cut down and burnt in order to make a new plantation. In Kigunia usage, *kukokea mojo tange* or *kutia moto tange* (to fire a new field). Sacleux: an area cleared to the edge of a forest.

teo - also *taa* or *kichao* (Kigunia). A slingshot used to hit birds and thus keep them away from a field of ripening grain. Krapf, *Suahili Dictionary:* a sling. Taylor, *Giryama Vocabulary: t'ero*, a sort of sling made of a potsherd wielded by a strip of bark passed through a hold in its center. A *teo* was used from the height of an *ulingo*. See *ulingo* and *uteo*. See also Taylor, *Aphorisms*, 65.

-tungua - to harvest a tree crop, such as bananas or coconut. Literally, to cast down. Used also in the locative form: *Nendao matunguzini* (I am going to the shamba).

uwongo - *udongo* in southern dialects. Red loam which can be cultivated only in the rainy season. Also used to mix with lime and sand in making mortar. Found in various parts of Lamu district, including Manda Island, but by no means generally. Krapf, *Suahili Dictionary*, and Steere, *Handbook*.

ulingo - a raised platform in a field of grain from which a watchman, *mlinzi*, scares birds away. Krapf, *Suahili Dictionary: ulingo, ma-*, an erection of four posts on which poles are laid, to serve as an elevated seat for a keeper of a plantation, who scares away birds and animals. It is not covered. *Dungu, ma-*, is a similar platform, but with a covering to protect the watchman from rain or from animals at night. See *utaa*.

upambizoni - literally, at the edge. Agriculturally, the edge of a lake, where rice is planted. Sacleux: *pambizo* is Kigunia.

upovu, upovuni - a *konde* in the second year of use. No dictionary evidence. Sacleux defines *upovu* as the edge of a marsh or of an inundated valley, where rice is cultivated.

-tema - to cut *mwitu* in preparation of a new field. Krapf, *Suahili Dictionary:* to fell a large forest, to slash as with a sword. It is not applied to the cutting of one tree, which is *kukata mti mmoja*. Sacleux states that *kutema*, to cut, is archaic. See Taylor, *Aphorisms*, 34.

utaa, mtaa, or *mataa* - a raised, covered stage for grain which might also be used as a watchman's sleeping place. Local usage prefers this to *dungu*. See *ulingo*.

uteo (pl. *teo*) - a flat, round basket for sifting rice or gain. *Kuteo*, to shake, but also to shoot a slingshot at birds. There is a slight difference in pronunciation, the basket being "theo." See *teo*.

-vumbikia mbegu - to plant seeds in the ground and await the rains.

wangwa - unused parkland, not part of any town's *bara*. Steere, *Handbook:* desert, a bare waste space. Krapf, *Suahili Dictionary:* a level tract of white sand, which stretches from the sea, or from the creeks of the sea, into the mainland and is overflowed by the sea at high water, but gets dry again soon afterwards. Sacleux: a lagoon more or less inundated at high tide. Werner, "Swahili History of Pate," 393, also states that *wangwa* is a sandy area along a tidal creek. Taylor, *Giryama Vocabulary: lwanda*, a bare desert; a

district once devastated by war or pestilence, and no longer inhabited. In Zanzibar, *wanda* was unoccupied land not forming part of a shamba.[1]

wimbi - *Eleusine coracana; ragi* in Hindi. A grass cultivated widely in Lamu district for its edible grain.

[1]M. Leake, "Further Studies in Tropical Land Tenure. III. East Africa. Zanzibar," *Tropical Agriculture. The Journal of the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture,* XV, 10 (1938), 231.

Appendix B

Rainfall in the Lamu Area

Rainfall was not recorded regularly until recently, but in the 1890s A. S. Rogers and others recorded a series of yearly rainfalls which gives an indication of the amount received in Lamu compared with points north and south on the coast. The Bajun coast averages, if recorded, would have amounted to something between the Lamu and Kismayu averages.[1]

(Rainfall in inches)	1896	1897	1898	1899	Average
Malindi	53.6	58.0	14.4	33.4	39.8
Lamu	41.3	32.3	12.4	22.0	27.0
Kismayu	19.5	19.9	10.9	12.4	15.7

The following rainfall averages recorded at several sites over the twelve years 1943-54 show local variations:[2]

Witu	40 inches
Mkonumbi	35
Kipini	32
Lamu	31

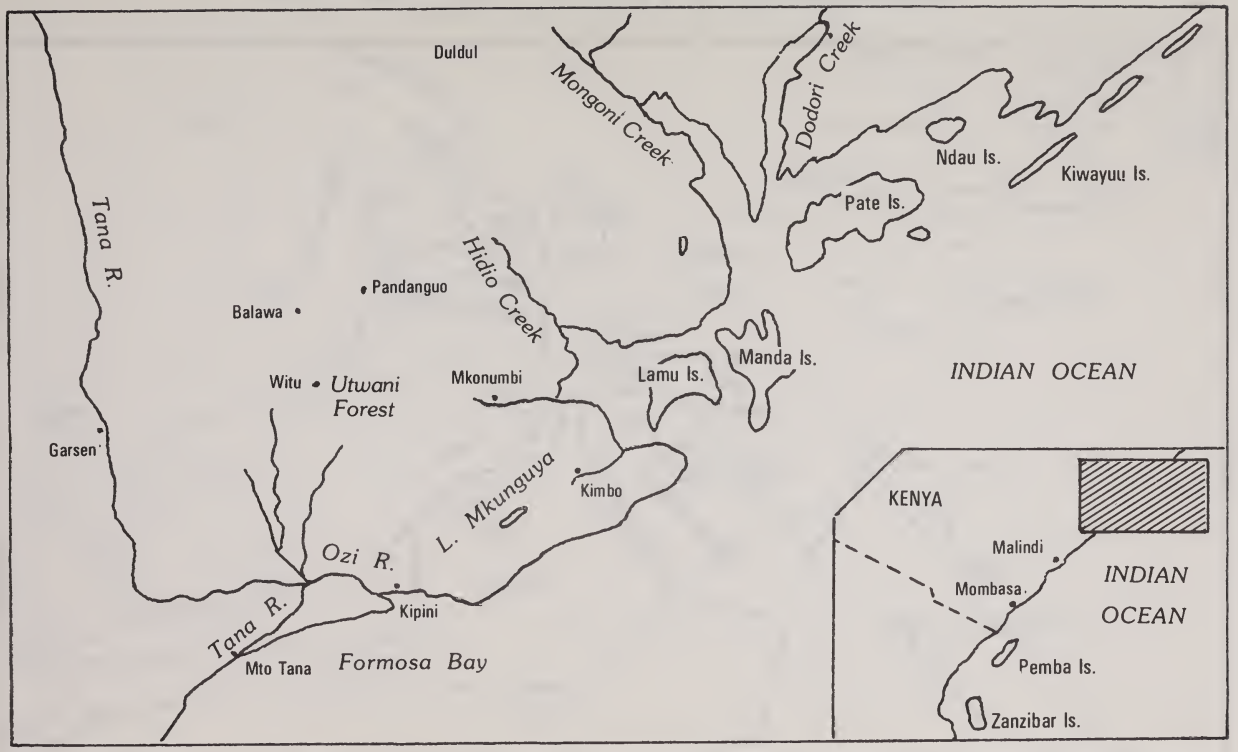
Averages for scattered Lamu District sites recorded by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1966:[3]

Hindi	54.47 inches
Witu	52.41
Lamu	44.31
Mkonumbi	44.85
Mpekatoni	43.60
Siyu	39.97
Faza	39.97

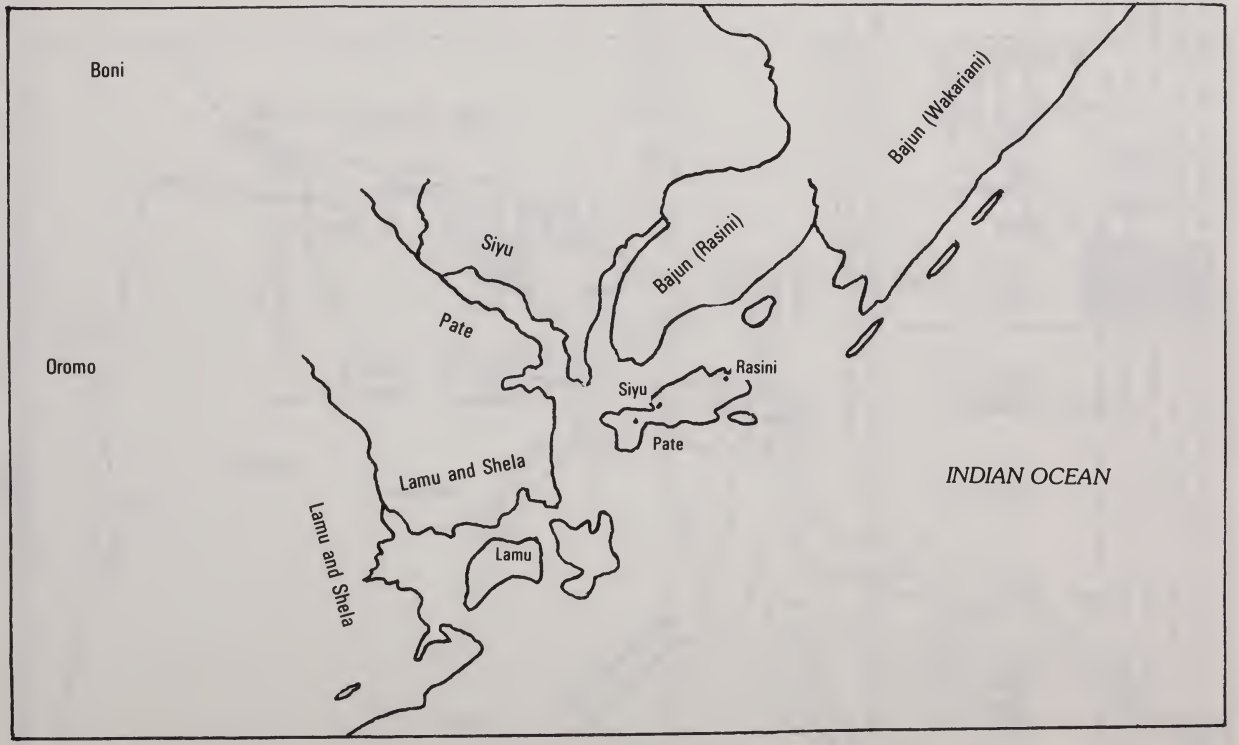
[1]Whyte's Report, 14; and Report on the Possibilities of Cotton-Growing in the East Africa Protectorate for 1904, 4.

[2]Patterson, "Notes on Ecology," 8.

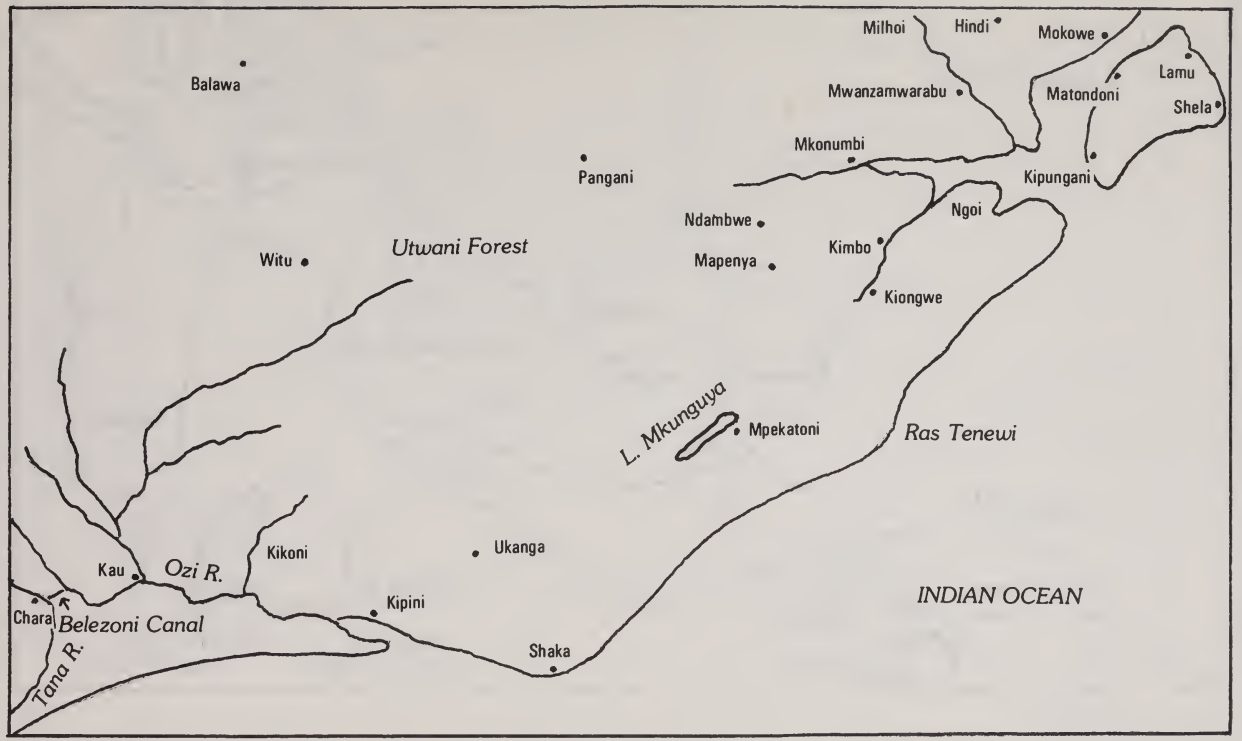
[3]Ministry of Agriculture, Annual Report 1966, Lamu and Tana River Districts, 12.



LAMU ARCHIPELAGO AND HINTERLAND

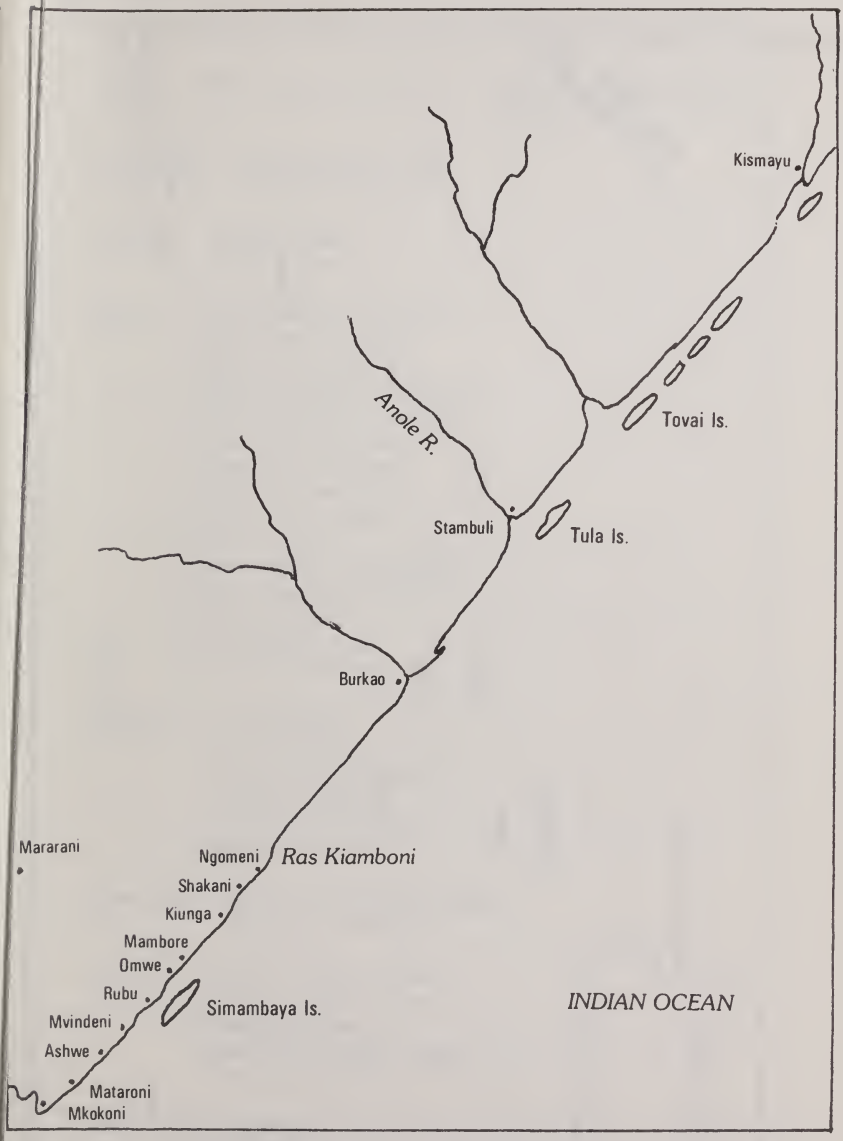


Mainland Cultivated Areas Controlled by the Islands (Approximate)

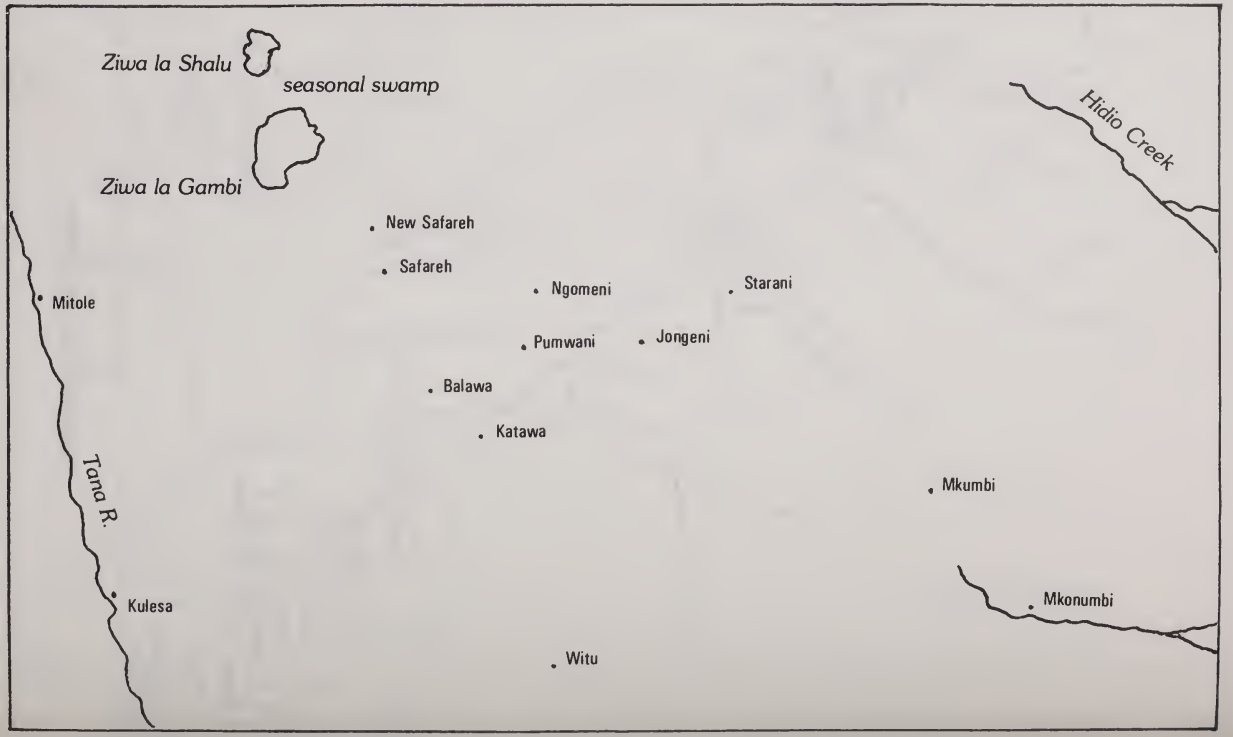


The Ozi River and Southern Lamu District

Pate Island and Environs



The Bajun Coast to Kismayu



The Forest Settlements (Approximate Locations)

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(listed by place of residence, all in Lamu District unless noted)

Kipini (Tana River District): Awadh Abdulla Heliman
Shaibu Fumo

Kipungani: Mohamed Ali Pame
Othmani Mabruku

Kiunga: Mbwana Tora
Osmani Suwo

Lamu: Sheikh Abdulla bin Ali
Abdulla Ali Skanda
Abdulla Mohamed Ali
Abdulla Mohamed (Kadara)
Ahmed Mohamed Jahadhmy
Awadh Said Timimy
Bwana Maalimu Kame
Feraji Bwana Mkuu
Husein Ali Shamuti
Omari Boroso
Saidi Mohamed Bamasudi
Salimu Ahmed Basaida (Mackenzie)
Salimu Bakeli
Seif Siaka Sizi
Sud bin Hamed bin Sud

Mapenya: Ali Male
Ali Mjana
Ali Mohamed Masudi
Bakari Abdulla
Bakari bin Hamis
Mohamed Hasan

Mkonumbi: Ali bin Suleman Riyamy
Swaleh Bahamfusi

Mokowe: Abdulla Ahmed Kombo
Fundi Harafa Jumaa
Kassim Daimus
Omari Ali Omari Mzee
Saidi Mchomo

Pate: Haji Hamisi
Jambeni Mohamed

Rasini: Mohamed bin Haji bin Bwana Heri

Witu: Mbwana Othmani Bwana Vodhi Shaaly
Omari Atiki Mohamed

UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

A. Archives

1. Kenya National Archives, Nairobi

   The following files were consulted:

   Coast Province 1
   DC/Lamu 1 and 3
   Judicial 1

   Lamu Court Correspondence, consulted in Lamu in 1971, was then in process of being incorporated into the Kenya National Archives.

2. Public Record Office, London

   The following files were consulted:

   Admiralty 52, 54
   Foreign Office 54, 84, 96, 97, 107

3. British Museum, London

   Add. Mss. 8958. Report of Lieutenant Hardy

4. Royal Commonwealth Society, London

   Fitzgerald, W. W. A. "The Agricultural Resources of the Coast Lands of British East Africa" (paper read at the Imperial Institute on 29 January 1894).

   Fitzgerald, W. W. A. "Planting. Mr. Fitzgerald's Reports, September and October, 1891. Suggestions and Notes, February 1892."

   Fitzgerald, W. W. A. "Report on the Native Cultivation, Products, and Capabilities of the Coast Lands of the Melindi District" (August 1891).

   Imperial British East Africa Company, Ltd. "Report of the Court of Directors to the Shareholders" (31 July 1893).

   Imperial British East Africa Company, Ltd. "Report of the Fourth Statutory Annual Meeting" (31 July 1893).

5. Royal Geographical Society, London

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The author in the doorwey of her home in Lamu.

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