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Space on the Move. Transformations of the Indian Ocean Seascape in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century

■ Edited by Jan-Georg Deutsch
and Brigitte Reinwald

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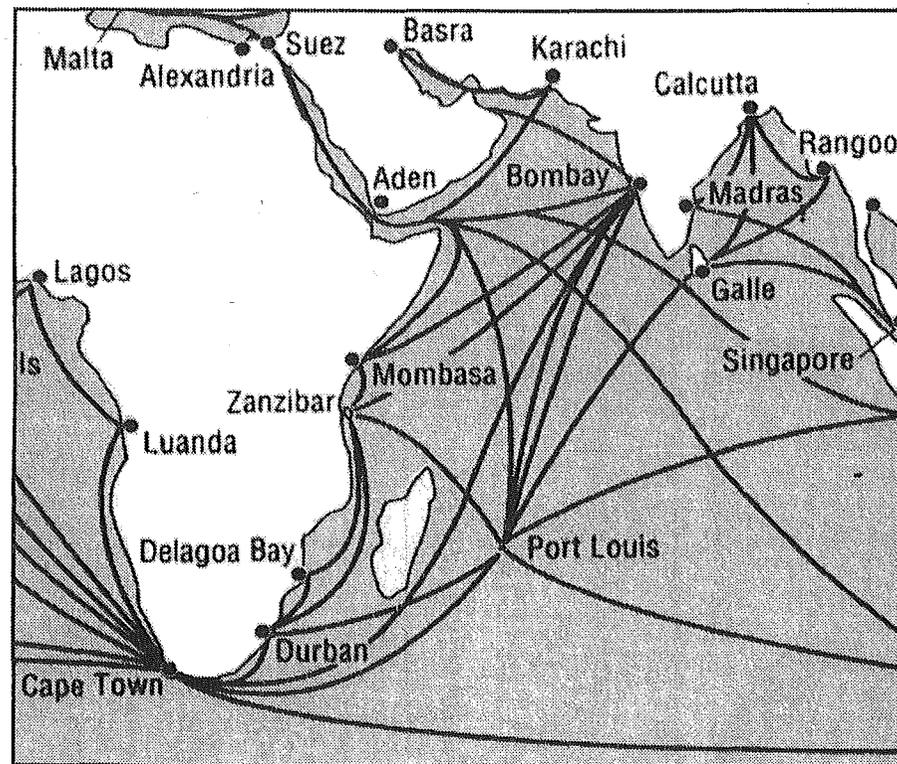
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Principal steamship roads (adapted from: Andrew Pope (ed.), The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century, Oxford 1999, p. 253)

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Editorial: Discerning Structures – Recovering Meaning

In August 2001, the Indian Ocean Research Group at the Centre of Modern Oriental Studies received an invitation to participate in an international conference on 'Cultural Exchange and Transformation in the Indian Ocean World' to be held at the University of California, Los Angeles, 5th – 6th April 2002. The members of the research group took this opportunity to present initial results of their individual research projects. Moreover, the group used the occasion to critically review and evaluate the theoretical perspectives and assumptions which had guided the work of the research group on the 'Indian Ocean Seascape' since its establishment at the end of 1999. The papers collected in this booklet reflect both concerns.

The question as to what extent the research group has succeeded in illuminating the elusive term 'seascape' must be decided by the reader. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that the papers in this volume represent preliminary research results. They are part of wider research projects and are thus likely to change as research and writing proceeds.

Balancing the twin demands of discerning the major components of structural macro-historical change and giving due weight to recovering the micro-historical meaning of this change in the eyes of those who were concerned by it was perhaps the greatest challenge that emerged in conceptualising such a daunting subject as the 'Transformations of the Indian Ocean Seascape in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries'. Each of the papers in this volume attempts to provide its own solution to this problem. Those who are looking for uniformity of style and theoretical answers will be sadly disappointed. We would claim, however, that this is precisely the strength of collaborative – interdisciplinary as much as inter-regional – research projects.

The authors make use of a broad range of historical sources, including archival sources, newspaper articles, oral testimonies, photos and other visual material such as maps and films. Research was carried out in Britain, the USA, Germany, Switzerland and France as well as in Tanzania, Zanzibar, Jemen, and India. The members of the research group would like to extend their sincere thanks to both the Centre for Modern Oriental Studies and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Council) for the generous financial support they afforded members of the group over the last two years. They also would like to thank the organisers of the Los Angeles 'Indian Ocean World' conference, Edward A. Alpers and Allen F. Roberts. Without their help and inspiration this little volume would not have seen the light of the day.

Space on the Move. Perspectives on the Making of an Indian Ocean Seascape

Brigitte Reinwald

Jahazi hakiendi ila kwa nyenzo. A ship does not sail if nobody sails her (Lamu Proverb)

Introduction

In a recently published article, the African historian Frederick Cooper seriously questioned the validity of the globalization paradigm for analyzing cross-border processes in a historical perspective. In this respect, he criticises the shortcomings of a concept that leaves crucial questions unasked such as 'the limits of interconnection, (...) the areas where capital cannot go, (...) and the specificity of the structures necessary to make connections work' (Cooper 2001: 189), and cautions against the pitfalls of 'writing history backwards': by either considering the present to be the most inclusive and 'latest of a series of globalizations' or by discerning ours as a 'global age distinct from a past in which economic and social relations were contained within nation-states or empires and in which interaction took place among such internally coherent units' (ibid.: 204-05). Notwithstanding the impression that Cooper's somewhat sweeping blow against all-inclusive and hence void 'ization' concepts resembles shadowboxing in so far as the methodological and operational problems related to the paradigm have meanwhile been more relevantly addressed than his article accounts for,¹ his argument for bringing process-oriented historical analysis back to the fore in order to better understand 'the changing meaning over time of spatial linkages' (ibid.: 195), strikes a chord with the contributors to the present volume. Focusing on the entangled history of African, Arabic, and Asian societies that evolved from centuries of economic, social, and cultural interconnection via the Indian Ocean, the authors agree in particular with Cooper's call for greater sensitivity in dealing with the 'time-depth of cross-territorial processes' (ibid.: 190) as well as with his related appeal for a historical exploration of the (re)organisation of space, the 'forging and unforing of linkages' (ibid.: 206).

This also holds for Cooper's critique of 'presentist' currents in the post-modern and post-colonial debate on 'fragmentation' and transnational 'flows', which fail to observe the repeated reconfiguration of the relationship between 'territory' and 'connectivity' that has occurred in the course of history (ibid.: 193) and thus contribute to widening the gap between 'a past of territorial boundedness (and) a present of interconnection and fragmentation'. His counter-argument for considering this relationship 'a more back-and-forth, varied combination of territorializing and deterritorializing tendencies' (ibid.: 191) is in a way followed up by the contributions in this volume. As will be shown, they inform different ways of exploring structures and processes which shaped cross-border relations and long-distance networks in the Western Indian Ocean region in the course of the 'long' 19th and 'short' 20th centuries. The presentation and short discussion of these individual 'gateways' to the Indian Ocean *seascape* will be preceded by a brief summary of conceptual and methodological questions pertaining to the research project in general.

Indian Ocean – Space on the Move. Outlines

Launched in January 2000 at the *Centre for Modern Oriental Studies*, the Indian Ocean research project shares the Centre's main interest in connections that have cut across spatial, political, cultural, and social boundaries within and among Middle Eastern, African and South Asian societies and polities over the last two centuries. With the intention of questioning the 'a-area studies' approach that presupposes rigid continental frontiers and territorially-defined systems of economy, culture, and society, and of critically evaluating theories and historiographies that associate non-European societies with bounded localness and homogeneity, three distinct but related thematic lines of research are addressed: translocality, public sphere (*Öffentlichkeit*), and 'cultures of history' (*Geschichtskulturen*).

Based on the hypothesis that culture, society, and economic and political spheres do not necessarily concur with physical territories and nation states, and inspired by the recent discussion on new social and/or cultural geographies (see, e.g. Lewis & Wigen 1997), the focus here is on cognitive and material practices that generated non-territorial 'spaces' and 'translocal discourse communities' of merchants, workers, and religious scholars. This implies developing new approaches to conceptualise interregional and intercultural connections within and between the areas that are being studied at the Centre, notably those that created the Sahara and the Indian Ocean as

the Centre, notably those that created the Sahara and the Indian Ocean as historical and/or contemporary 'landscapes', but also translocally constituted political, social and cultural entities such as Lebanon and Palestine.²

As part of this parcel, 'Indian Ocean – Space on the Move' attempts to unravel the complex heterogeneity of the societies on the Indian Ocean rim which have been profoundly affected by the long-term exchange of people, goods, and ideas via the seaways that engendered translocal processes of accommodation and interaction, as well as of conflict and dislocation. Concentrating on the western part of the Greater Indian Ocean, the project focuses on the making (and unmaking) of historical and symbolic spaces and the multiple patterns of social interaction that have evolved in the interstices of land and sea, thus favouring an analytical approach that assumes the existence of historically changing frames of reference. In the case of the Indian Ocean these frames were shaped – inter alia – by shipping routes, 'maritime traffic rhythms', and migration movements within which the coastal towns and villages of the Indian Ocean rim and its islands emerged as nodal points of social, cultural and symbolic contact and communication.

The idea of exploring the historical transformation of these transoceanic relations in the context of colonial expansion and the further integration of the region into the capitalist world economy, will, however, not be pursued with the intention of presenting an encyclopaedic study of the western part of the Indian Ocean World, but rather of looking closely at certain points of intersection that are historically characterised by a high degree of economic, political, social and cultural plurality. At the present stage, there are five researchers working within the wider project, examining working patterns and networks of maritime labourers (Ahuja), social biographies (Deutsch), diasporic family histories (Hartwig), perceptions and constructions of ethnic and cultural difference (Bromber), and the processing and representation of intercultural relations in the pictographic media (Reinwald).³

Conceptual Frame(s) and Analytical Problems

Despite the fact that these individual undertakings pursue different strands in the historical evolution of the sub-region, its people and its 'sites', our aim has been to develop a common conceptual framework. The key idea and our greatest interest in this context was to give meaning to the specific material and imaginary modes of cohesion which made the Indian Ocean region a historical and symbolic space, structured and organised by peoples' move-

ments and experiences, as well as their perceptions and narrative/visual representations. Focusing as we do on agency in the actuality of every-day social life (working patterns and networks, migration movements) on the one hand, and its perceived potentiality (topography of historical experiences and social memories, discursive strategies of identity and difference, and symbolic representations of intercultural relations) on the other, the idea of 'landscape' caught our interest.

The potentialities of the 'landscape' paradigm as a new focus for African studies have been explored in a seminal article by Ute Luig & Achim von Oppen (1997). Following up the added attention 'landscape' has received from historians and anthropologists since the late 1980s, Luig & von Oppen elaborate a 'historical phenomenology' of this European paradigm (ibid.: 8) and subsequently discuss its 'transfer' qualities concerning the conceptual understanding of material and imaginative practice, by which 'natural' and 'cultural' environments are appropriated in the African context (ibid.: 15). In this regard, they demonstrate⁴ that despite differences in content, in practices and in the prevailing cultural and imaginative evaluations of the relationship to 'nature' (ibid.: 41), 'landscapes' are 'being 'made' and contested through physical, social and political practice', a process which should not be considered 'a sedimentation of history, but ... a continuous reworking of past experience and future potentialities' (ibid.: 7).

This allows, in the first place, for a general comparative analysis of different – conflicting or converging – 'ways of seeing' and relating to 'landscape' – in its double meaning of a materially and socially shaped 'natural' environment and an 'aesthetically transformed every-day reality' (ibid.: 19).⁵ Moreover, relating to 'landscape' as both a material and an imaginative practice, or experience of places, is also relevant in another aspect that has been stressed by Hirsch (1995). He demonstrates how these two interwoven and interdependent, but yet distinct spheres of human agency relate to each other and thus create a 'productive tension' between everyday practice and a potential social 'beyond'.

According to Hirsch's definition, 'landscape' allows us to examine both the 'foreground' and 'background' of social life as it 'unit(es) in a single place what are otherwise seen as mutually exclusive alternatives an ordinary, workaday life and an ideal, imagined existence, vaguely connected to, but still separated from, that of the everyday' (Hirsch: 2-3). A relationship 'between these two poles of experience' (ibid.: 5) – and accordingly, between 'place' and 'space', 'inside' and 'outside', 'image' and 'representation' (ibid.: 23) – is always involved when people conceive of, or give meaning to

their physical and cultural surroundings. This accounts for the transformative and contextual nature of 'landscape' and a wide range of possibly diverging – but not necessarily pictorial – 'ways of seeing' that mould the experience of space and through which space moulds social relations' (Green 1995: 41).

What kind(s) of 'landscape' are we then considering in the case of the Indian Ocean region? Since there seemed no doubt about its maritime connotations, the variant form of 'seascape' was adopted by the group as a central working concept. How individual case studies attempt to give meaning to this arguably ambiguous notion will be discussed in the following section. The focus here is on the epistemological and terminological questions which are inevitably raised as a result of its usage. As the historian Michael Pearson recently underscored,⁶ to discern a historical entity such as the 'Indian Ocean' or, as in our instance, its 'Western' part, means implicitly assuming particular commonalities which have yet to be proven. In a related way, the very question of the maritime connotation of 'seascape' has to be tackled by exploring its semantic field and thus critically assessing similar notions such as 'maritime culture'.

The classic study *Sailing from Lamu* (1965) by the Dutch anthropologist Prins is a rare example of an integral depiction of this 'maritime culture'. For him, the 'relation between people and the sea: shipping, trade and fishing' (ibid.: X) is the skeleton key to the proper understanding of life style, cultural practice, perceptions and representations in the 'little world of Lamu'. Conceptualising as he does Lamu local culture as shaped by tidal and seasonal maritime rhythms on the one hand, and as mastering the movement of shipping on the other, he depicts a maritime-structured microcosm which by virtue of the term is potentially open to and interrelated with every single stretch of land within ship's reach, as

its very boundaries reach out across the seas. In other words the culture must be thought of as an open system, not a closed one. (...) The upper ten have their connections with the well-to-do in Zanzibar; the *imams* are one with the spiritual elite in the Hadhramaut and the Comoro Islands. The merchants and skippers have common interests with mercantile enterprise in other parts of the world and the market for dates in Basrah and for timber in Kuwait influences Lamu activity. And also seafarers and gentry alike have wives or girl friends in each and every little port all over the coast (Prins 1965: 57).

He furthermore argues that this simultaneity of inhabiting one locality and partaking of several others in the larger maritime bound space is also reflected in a more general characteristic of this culture (what we would nowadays perhaps call its translocal constitution):

If one is therefore to think of Lamu culture in more general terms, it seems advisable to characterise it not only as maritime and Islamic, but also as a part culture in a double sense. It represents the local 'little civilisation' corresponding with the 'great civilisation' of Arabia and Persia, but also it is the 'little' one with respect to the 'great' one of Mombasa and Zanzibar, both so very much more influenced by western culture than Lamu itself. Thus its cultural focus is a double one, reflecting two 'great civilisations', but mirrored in one glass. (ibid.)

Prins' notion of 'maritime culture' as part cultures interrelated by social practice is inspiring for two reasons. There is the prominent role he attributes to the combining and overlapping of transoceanic, littoral and interior flows in the mediation of culture on the one hand, and to people's appropriation and blending of diverse cross-bordering cultural elements on the other. To conclude from this, however, that 'it is as if maritime events produce (or cause, or unfold) a certain style not only within the context of maritime events, but a style which permeates [...] the whole culture' (ibid.: 264 f.), runs the risk of overstressing certain observed cultural features, if not of essentialising the whole process altogether. In other words, although Prins' approach of conceptualising culture as being shaped by human action or practice admits a certain diversity within a social group as to whether the whole or only parts of this distinctive group share all the cultural patterns involved, he is nevertheless applying a model based on the assumption that social groups actually agree on the values expressed or mirrored in all of their cultural activities. Arguably, this model neither accounts for those who turn their backs on the sea but are nevertheless part of the polity, nor for the impact of internal social divisions that generate conflicting – in the sense of differential or dissident – cultural narratives (see Glassman 1995: 17).

A further lesson to be learnt from Prins *ex negativo* pertains to his detaining the wider 'Lamu world' in an 'anthropological present'. In other words, our subsequent research confirmed the need for a more rigorous periodisation and historicisation of the 'flows' and 'sediments' of transoceanic cultural encounters. One of the key questions is, to reiterate Cooper's argument, the extent to which the historical, social and cultural space of the Indian Ocean has been reorganised and redefined in the context of the further integration of the region into the capitalist world economy, colonial expansion, and the emergence of the post-colonial nation state. This obviously involves measuring the impact of technological and infrastructural transformations, accelerated urbanisation and the rapid expansion of new means of mass communication on the one hand, and of political and juridical interventions aimed at controlling and regulating the movement of humans, goods and ideas on the other.

The four articles presented here examine specific contours and dynamics of this process that is characterised by expanding incorporation and simultaneous differentiation (see Ahuja). Although the evidence is drawn from divergent fields of investigation – South Arabian migration versus restrictive colonial immigration laws (Hartwig), social infrastructures and networks of South Asian steamship labour milieus (Ahuja), a Zanzibari micro-locality's linkage with the global drug trade (Deutsch), and the discourse on Zanzibari identity in conflicting projects of citizenship (Bromber) –, these case studies converge in one basic point. By focusing on agency, they work at the intersections of macro-structural frames and hegemonic power scenarios, and (trans-)local processes of adaptation and re-organisation. Thus the findings, which are briefly discussed in the following section, highlight different strands of the transforming historical, social, and imaginary linkages of this 'space on the move' that is the Indian Ocean region.

Seascape – Contours and Gateways

Friedhelm Hartwig shows how the 'flows' of Hadhrami and Omani labour migration and settlement patterns of diasporic families on the East African coast were increasingly restricted by British immigration and passport regulations from the 1930s. Although these measures did not succeed in severing long-established translocal links between the Hadhramaut, Oman, the Comoros and Zanzibar, they did feed on redefinitions and differentiations of status and identity, with 'Arabs' gradually becoming 'aliens' in the localities they had made their (temporary) home. His paper cautions against ready-made conclusions concerning both the implementation of colonial power politics and the internal dynamics of migration. Hartwig not only identifies distinct stages of the colonial administration's enforcement of immigration control and restriction, but also stresses the British representatives' ambivalent discourse, oscillating between the safeguard of the commercially viable inter-regional flux of humans and goods on the one hand, and segregational and racial strategies to prop up their *divide et impera* politics on the other. He furthermore hints at the internal hierarchy in the history of these migration 'flows': notwithstanding the quite unrestricted political and legal freedom of inter-regional movement, migrant prospects depended on social status and patron-client relationships. This also reminds us that neither 'homelands' nor diasporic milieus were unconditionally unified, solidary and peaceful worlds to be set against a restrictive colonial situation.

Hartwig's illustration of the 'seascape' is informed by the economic and social options of seasonal and long-term migrants to compensate for the deficiency of living conditions in South Arabia and by the latter's strengthening of inter-regional links with intermarriage and the establishment of diasporic families. The biographical data presented by the author underlines that the very survival of translocal patrimonial 'traditions' which were, in the long run, generated by a careful strategy of arranging and safeguarding long-distance relations, was put at stake by colonial immigration regulation. In other words, the translocally constructed 'seascape' of Hadhrami and Omani migrants – with its integral prerequisite of 'free' movement across natural and political boundaries – was progressively segmented by colonial strategies of territorialisation.

In apparent contrast to this gradual disclosure of a historical and social space, *Ravi Ahuja's* paper focuses on the increasing integration and incorporation of South Asian coastal and 'hinterland' regions under British imperial rule between the 1890s and the 1940s. His main argument is that in the steamship age, the rapidly expanding maritime labour market cannot be considered a homogenising force which enabled the creation of an integrated Indian Ocean working class. The experience of wage labour and industrial working conditions rather promoted strategies of differential incorporation and the (re)production of 'ethnic' segmentation. Ahuja's case study on South Asian seamen and dock workers shows in detail how the social 'space' of maritime labour – formerly dominated by coastal seafaring communities – was redefined and 'ethnically' stratified due to new recruitment patterns employed by the British. These connected interior agrarian regions in India to the maritime labour market, regulating access to it with legal provisions that restricted the freedom of movement of these occupational groups. Finally, the paper reveals how by creating 'subaltern networks' maritime workers tried to appropriate the conditions of this highly contradictory process of colonial capitalism, commodification and spatial reorganisation to their own purpose.

Ahuja shows the spatial redefinition and reorganisation of the 'seascape' constituted by South Asian maritime labour networks that occurred as a result of far-reaching infrastructural and organisational transformation, such as the emergence of modern colonial port cities like Calcutta, Bombay, Aden, and Mombasa – the novel 'gateways' to the ocean –, as well as the increasing incorporation of inhabitants from areas of the interior into the maritime labour market and the simultaneously declining maritime links of certain coastal regions. Similar to Hartwig, the author concludes that in the period concerned the Indian Ocean seascape was characterised by progressive seg-

mentation and the marginalising of subordinate maritime worker milieus as they were confronted with progressively advancing colonial centralisation, as well as bureaucratic and legal enforcement. Yet, by drawing our attention to household strategies, to social and organisational services performed by subaltern networks, he demonstrates how this process was shaped by all the social forces concerned. In other words, if this spatially extended and differentially constructed 'seascape' was responding to the exigencies of colonial capitalism, it also contained a potential for co-ordinated and co-operative action by subordinate occupational groups.

By uncovering the hidden connection between the international drug trade and local heroin consumption habits, *Jan-Georg Deutsch* locates the history of a few blocks of houses in the lower part of Soko Mhogo Street in Zanzibar Stone Town both in the post-colonial history of the island and the wider political history of the Indian Ocean. Largely based on oral historical sources, his paper explores 'Peshawar', as this neighbourhood of Soko Mhogo Street is called, by tracking down its name, historical origin and current meaning. By drawing on social, economic and political processes that exceed the narrow territorial confines of the street, Deutsch argues that translocal and macro-historical events and developments are not external phenomena but rather integral parts of the history of a 'locality' such as 'Peshawar'. He presents a 'composite' history based on different, but intimately connected spatial and temporal sources.

Consequently, 'seascape' is conceptualised here as a simultaneously 'locally' and 'globally' constructed historical narrative, unfolding in a continually changing frame of reference that constitutes the 'Indian Ocean World'. Deutsch argues that the 'local' and the 'global' not only intersect in various ways, but that they are constituent of each other.

Katrin Bromber focuses on the related questions of 'who belongs where' and 'what belongs to whom' in the context of newspaper debates on identity and difference in Zanzibar during the 1940s and 1950s. Her analysis of discourse strategies reveals that the mental appropriation of 'space' is increasingly attached to the issues of political self-determination and power relations. A second aspect is the articulation of conflicting 'geographical' perceptions: while the proponents of an integrative concept of Zanzibar nationalism somehow retain the idea of the cosmopolitanism of the island in the Indian Ocean and therefore strongly oppose immigration regulations, the advocates of the 'African' option simply declare Zanzibar an integral part of the continental 'landscape' by stressing the birth-rights of the 'sons and daughters of the soil'.

From the conflicting arguments and identity concepts of Zanzibari intellectuals, 'seascape' emerges as a contested 'space'. It is given a highly ambivalent meaning by both opponents, who perceived it as a 'deterritorialised' or – conversely – as a 'territorial' concept, with neither party in fact promoting an overall integrative notion of citizenship. This accounts for the double strategy employed by the opponents of both renegotiating the historically deep-rooted economic and political divide of the Zanzibari population, and exacerbating political competition for the appropriation of future potentialities. It was only in the context of the subsequent 'revolutionary' cataclysm that these intricately woven strands were violently 'disentangled'.

The aim of this introduction was to put forward some preliminary ideas and initial results of a process-oriented historical approach to what we consider to be continually changing frames of reference rather than to give a sharp definition of the 'seascape as it really was'. Evolving from the material and cognitive practice which shaped long-distance networks and cross-border relations constituent to the history of the wider Indian Ocean region, 'seascape' accounts for different – converging and conflicting – ways of relating to and representing this historical, social and cultural space. Conceptualising the Indian Ocean as a 'space on the move' not only means recognising the multiperspectivity of 'views' and 'designs' of this space, but also acknowledging the impact of changing economic power relations leading to its reorganisation in an economic, political, social and cultural sense.

In this respect, the evidence collected in this volume underlines that we would gain a better understanding of the dynamics inherent in the 'making' of a 'seascape' if we were not only to assess the particular 'structures necessary to make connections work' (Cooper, loc.cit.: 189), but also examine more closely the agency of the social forces involved in the process of (re)constructing space. We are still in the process of refining our 'navigation' instruments, but we hope the papers will show the first contours and gateways of the particular Indian Ocean seascape that emerged in the 'imperial' context.

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Notes

- 1 Cf. McClintock 1993 for an inspiring conceptual critique, and see Füllberg-Stolberg *et al* 1999 and also Fürtig 2001 reporting on the five year overall research theme 'Appropriation and Dissociation in Response to Globalization: Asia, Africa and Europe since the 18th Century' at the Berlin Centre for Modern Oriental Studies. Here, the globalization paradigm was put to the test with a series of historical and comparative case studies which addressed local or regional perceptions, adaptations and consequences of global processes and discourses.
- 2 'Trans-Saharan relations between Morocco and Sub-Saharan Africa' and 'the (re-)construction of the Lebanese and Palestinian nation-states through translocal community building' are the topics of two similar approaches which are currently being pursued at the Centre.

- 3 This volume contains case studies that evolved from four projects (see Ahuja, Bromber, Deutsch, and Hartwig), a fifth undertaking (Reinwald) had to be temporarily delayed due to other academic obligations.
- 4 Their theoretical arguments are illustrated by the discussion on recent contributions, among them several articles included in their edition which deal with African and colonial perceptions of 'landscape'. Although the respective case studies relate exclusively to Africa, Luig's and von Oppen's approach is also challenging in a wider geographical sense; see therefore Christopher Pinney 'Moral topophilia: the signification of landscape in Indian oleographs (in Hirsch & O'Hanlon 1995, pp. 78-114). For further contributions to this topic, see also Deutsch & von Oppen 1998.
- 5 The discussion of aesthetic dimensions of 'landscape' (ibid.: 16-19) draws on the systemic approach of the philosopher Martin Seel ('Eine Ästhetik der Natur', Frankfurt/M. 1996, first published in 1991). One of the important points marked here is the universality of aesthetic perceptions of nature, a prerequisite for transcending dichotomous constructions such as 'inside-outside', 'nature-culture' and, in plain language, a colonial/eurocentric gaze at 'indigenous' people merging with nature.
- 6 In a paper given to the workshop „Reasserting connections, commonalities, and cosmopolitanism: the Western Indian Ocean since 1800, Yale University, 3rd – 5th November 2000.

The Segmentation of the Indian Ocean Region. Arabs and the Implementation of Immigration Regulations in Zanzibar and British East Africa

Friedhelm Hartwig

Introduction

Trade diasporas, labour migration and translocal family networks connected the East African coast with Arabia, India and South East Asia as far as China. The changing flows of humans, commodities and ideas formed an integrative feature of the Indian Ocean Region. Migration not only meant survival for most of the South Arabian population, but was often the key to social advancement. Poor natural resources and the many droughts in Oman and the Hadhramaut made the option to migrate and send subsidies back home a vital factor in the history of these regions. On the other hand, freedom of movement and free access to markets in the Indian Ocean Region one of the main pillars of the commercial success and prosperity in Zanzibar and the towns along the East African and South Arabian coast. Countless peddlers and migrant workers were on the move, season for season, in an attempt to strike a bargain or at least survive.¹

South Arabian migrants and diasporas in the Indian Ocean Region were confronted with attempts by the British administration to restrict or even eliminate the wide range of migration opportunities, uncontrolled travel and free choice of settlement that took place in their sphere of influence. Apart from the initial, often fruitless endeavours of colonial administrations to restrict migration in the early 19th century, migration options, emigration and free travel between Arabia, Africa and Asia became more restricted after WWI. This caused consternation and provoked resistance in certain segments of the indigenous population as members of the Arabian diasporas in East Africa, India and elsewhere were gradually forced to accept citizenship and status as defined in the bills and decrees of the colonial empires. Furthermore, migration control became a real barrier to the freedom of movement and settlement enjoyed for centuries by the population of South Arabia in the Indian Ocean Region.

This paper examines the mechanisms by which British authorities tried to control the movements and settlement of the Arab population. Families who

had lived for generations in Zanzibar and established ties to other islands such as Lamu or the Comoros were - according to bureaucratic definitions - suddenly regarded as aliens or undesirable subjects.

The overview of British restrictions and their implementation will then be contrasted with individual case studies and articles from indigenous newspapers and memorandums of local associations. The analysed material provides ample information about British regulations and Arab migration, as well as about the changing social conditions in Zanzibar, the connections between Arabia and its diasporas, the inter-regional links between communities of Arabian origin in the Indian Ocean, and the importance of the dhow-traffic. The case studies in particular illuminate the transformative aspect of the term *seascape* which is the focus of cooperation in the interdisciplinary Indian Ocean Research Project at the Centre of Modern Oriental Studies in Berlin.

The first bills, decrees and amendments, 1909-1938

The first steps taken to regulate immigration in the Zanzibar Protectorate were implemented by laws and emergency legislation between 1909 and 1918. These early measures were mainly developed in the context of the First World War and the implementation of immigration regulations throughout East Africa. In 1912, Zanzibar was the only place left in East Africa with uncontrolled immigration. The Public Order Decree of 1914 provided '...that the master of every vessel arriving in the Protectorate should furnish a list of passengers and that no passenger should land in the Protectorate without the British Resident's permission...'. The Office of Immigration and Embarkation was created under Martial Law in 1915. A series of regulations followed, dealing with the fact that most of the passengers arrived without passports or permits, and with the right of the Immigration Officer to board every vessel and inspect its passengers.²

These laws were reviewed in 1919 with the intention of replacing them by an entirely new set of regulations, duly passed as 'The Immigration Regulation and Restriction Decree, 1922' and '..., 1923'. The decrees fixed the main categories of passport-holders and the classification of travellers and immigrants.³ The framework of the passport and visa system can be described as follows: no fewer than six different categories of passes could be issued to anyone wishing to enter and remain temporarily in the Zanzibar Protectorate.⁴ Those who intended to immigrate to or work temporarily in the Zanzibar

Protectorate had to apply in advance via telegram for an 'Entry Permit' or a 'Temporary Employment Pass'. The 'permit' and the 'pass' were only issued if certain conditions had been fulfilled (deposit of a sum of money, guarantee of reputation by a 'protector of an emigrant', contract and application of a company, etc.). Visa regulations classified travellers in different categories which, in turn, provided further criteria for the decision to grant or refuse passports or visas.⁵

New decrees and notices were added almost annually to the existing set of rules that regulated the form of documents, the amount of deposit, the period of validity, penalties, the liabilities of the master and the owner of ships, and details of the procedure.⁶

The Question of Passports

All subjects of His Highness the Sultan (Zanzibar) and the Sultan of Muscat were exempt from these regulations and provided with a British passport. Omani subjects in the Sultanate of Zanzibar could be provided with a British passport if they changed nationality and became naturalized subjects of His Highness. British passports were confined to British and British Indian subjects and to 'natives' of certain British-protected states on the Southern coast of Arabia who resided in Zanzibar.⁷

A petition from the head of the Shehiri Arab Community⁸, Said Aboud Ibn Humeid, to the British Resident in 1921 revealed a different practice with regard to the latter group. Up to the 1920s, Hadhramis were provided with a temporary travel permit only. This caused much inconvenience, especially for those who traded and travelled several times a year between the ports of East Africa and Arabia. Due to the status of the Sultanate of Mukalla as a British Protectorate, the head of the Shehiri Arab Community asked for the 'privilege' of British passports for the members of the community, a petition that was crowned with success. As of August 1922, passports could be issued to members of the Arab Shihiri community who were permanent residents of Zanzibar. Hadhramis in Zanzibar were regarded as 'British-protected subjects' and could claim a British passport if they were able to prove that they were natives of the Aden Protectorate. This also applied to passengers from the Aden Protectorate, Bahrain, Muscat, Oman, and the Trucial Sheikdoms.⁹ However, legal requirements and actual practice differed. In 1933, a British official estimated that 99 percent of the dhow passengers travelled without documents, preferring to apply for travel permits in Zanzibar on their return voyages, a much cheaper undertaking than having to pay passport fees on the mainland.¹⁰ The status of Hadhramis as potential British-protected subjects

had already been discussed and largely decided upon by the British administrations in Aden and Egypt in 1914. Further discussions took place in 1930. Incidentally, these discussions highlight the apparent confusion prevalent in the British colonial apparatus about the status of different ethnicities, the exact legal meaning of the various treaties agreed upon with local rulers, as well as the complex assessment of changing political connections and alliances built up by the British and maintained throughout the Indian Ocean Region in the period concerned.¹¹

The status of a British-protected person and the possession of a British passport did not prevent delays and complicated procedures of examination and approval. When the Chief Commissioner's Province of Aden (i.e. the settlement of Aden) took on the status of Colony in 1938, visas for Hadhramis applying to enter the Aden Protectorate (i.e. the Hadhramaut hinterland, the ports of ash-Shihr or al-Mukalla) were only granted after a careful check and prior consultation with the Aden Government and officials in Hadhramaut. This included a telegraph request to the authorities in Aden and Hadhramaut. The same procedure had to be adopted by passengers who intended to return from Hadhramaut to Zanzibar. The heads of the two Hadhrami communities – one for the coast and one for the hinterland – were usually helpful with quick confirmation of an applicant's identity, but the overall bureaucratic procedure caused delays and a great deal of lost time.¹² For the mass of the South Arabian migrants, who were mainly peddlers and seasonal labourers, the simplest solution was to avoid bureaucratic regulations altogether. As long as there were still gaps in the ports of embarkation on the East African coast, they travelled without permits as they had done for centuries.

When British East Africa moved towards independence in the early 1960s, the passport issue raised further discussion in Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda. A document describing the passport-holder as a British-protected person would no longer be of any use under these circumstances. Similar to the classification system employed in Zanzibar, Arabs residing on the mainland were previously regarded by the administration as 'Asians'.¹³ The majority of them did not possess passports or certificates of identity. People of Hadhrami origin were now asked to decide between applying for citizenship of one of the new states or receiving a Hadhrami document of identity. Between 1963 and 1964, increasing numbers of Hadhramis in Kenya availed of the additional option of requesting a British passport.¹⁴ Opinions were divided. The Hadhrami League of East Africa asked for national minority status, in anticipation of difficulties when East African countries eventually gai-

ned independence.¹⁵ The sultanate of al-Kathīrī took the position that while it was necessary in many cases for emigrant Hadhramis to accept African nationalities, they would still be regarded as subjects of Hadhrami origin and could expect sympathetic consideration should they ever return to Hadhramaut.

Accompanied by officials, Sultan Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, the ruler of the sultanate of al-Kathīrī, undertook a round trip of several East African countries in November 1963 during his so-called 'holidays'. The journey was carefully planned by representatives of Hadhrami associations in East Africa, but the influence of the sultan of al-Kathīrī was ultimately restricted by treaties with the United Kingdom.¹⁶ Hadhramaut was still part of the British Eastern Aden Protectorate, roughly divided into sultanates such as al-Quayṭī and al-Kathīrī that were recognized and supported by the British government. Their foreign affairs were conducted by the British government in Aden and London. Thus, since there were no official representatives of these Hadhrami sultanates present in East Africa or indeed elsewhere to whom Hadhrami subjects could apply for certificates of identity, the journey of the sultan was of minor importance only. To complicate the situation even further, only the sultanate of al-Quayṭī maintained a rudimentary bureaucracy capable of issuing a limited number of passports. Under no circumstances could this administration have been in a position to issue thousands of documents at the request of emigrants in East Africa.¹⁷

Within a short space of time, British officials had created a bureaucratic structure to transform Hadhrami official identity. The Hadhrami population of East Africa was artificially divided into subjects of the sultanates of al-Quayṭī, al-Kathīrī, Wahidī and Mahra, in accordance with the 'native' states recognised by the British in the Hadhramaut. An employee of the al-Quayṭī administration was sent to East Africa to issue passports. Offices were installed at the British residency in Nairobi and in several other major cities. Further assistance in registering applicants and issuing documents was provided by the British local administration.

Neither in East Africa nor in Hadhramaut was the Hadhrami population asked if they regarded themselves as subjects of the sultanate of al-Quayṭī or of al-Kathīrī. These sultanates were merely family ventures maintained by a few noble families and more or less loyal tribes in the Hadhramaut. There had always been strong opposition, albeit divided, to the government of these sultanates, and in most parts of the Hadhramaut their influence was strictly limited, if not non-existent.¹⁸ The voice of Hadhrami associations in East Africa, such as the Hadhrami League of East Africa that claimed to represent the Hadhrami population, was disregarded. Its influence was limited by the

British authorities to a collaboration which included the collection of applications, the judgement of their truthfulness and the subsequent forwarding of documents to British officials. The issuing of passports was kept entirely under the control of the British administration, and any involvement or activities of local representatives was discouraged.¹⁹

Unifying the immigration laws in British East Africa and further restrictions during World War II

One of the main topics discussed by the Zanzibar administration in the 1930s was a unified system of immigration laws governing inter-territorial travel between Uganda, Kenya, Tanganyika and Zanzibar, as well as rules to regulate journeys between other regions.²⁰ At first sight, the new standardized law might appear to have solved some of the problems arising from a confusing plethora of procedures in the British possessions. But the invention of controlled travel and immigrations laws to certain regions implied making new distinctions between geographic segments of the *seascape* – India, Arabia and East Africa – which had been connected for centuries by economic, cultural and social exchange without restriction. Travellers were now confronted with new artificial distinctions created by the British authorities. According to the interpretation of the British authorities, 'inter-territorial travels' meant travel in British East Africa between Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Zanzibar. Travellers to and from British East Africa were forced to observe different rules. The former unity of the South Arabian and East African coast, where entrance to the ports was almost free to any traveller, was gradually dismantled.

Another topic in the 1930s was the demand of the British Government that every passenger produce a permit or a document of identification. Zanzibar was still a place where hundreds of passengers from Arabia could arrive each season without any documents and be allowed to stay after leaving a deposit regarded as security for their return journey. The deposit was much smaller in Zanzibar than on the mainland, which led to suspicions about the increase of passengers to Zanzibar who were said to be avoiding the higher charges on the mainland. British authorities were even afraid that raising fees in Zanzibar to the same level and enforcing regulations in practice on the mainland would cause serious trouble. Although the intention to implement more effective control was never questioned by the British authorities, British bureauc-

racy was, nevertheless, forced to find a viable compromise between this idea and the compelling social conditions of the population they tried to rule.²¹

For the sake of convenience, certain practices were established in Zanzibar which had no basis in legal decrees and even ignored the instructions of the Foreign Office. To give one example, travellers to Arabia were provided with permits originally intended for travellers to the East African mainland only. In addition, a certain *laissez-faire* was practiced throughout the harbours of the Indian Ocean till the 1930s, when Arab passengers were accepted without identification documents. Consequently, it was easier to enter Zanzibar than to leave the protectorate!²²

The political intention behind bringing the administrative practices and decrees into line was clearly stressed in these discussions. A limitation of Arab immigration to the Sultanate was to be afforded by unified immigration regulations, leaving no gaps for immigration to other regions of East Africa. Instead of allowing a seasonal influx of poor peddlers and migrants without means, immigration was to be confined to the rich or moderately wealthy, '... to the better type ...', as Immigration Officer Ingrams wrote,²³ i.e. persons who enjoyed wealth or had possessions in Zanzibar and were thought to be able to contribute to the prosperity of the protectorate.²⁴ A new tendency in the strategy of British officials was introduced in particular with the restriction of Arab immigrants to 'the better type'. It was to be rigidly enforced under the conditions of the Second World War. Regulations became more and more restrictive and seemed to be a turning point in British immigration policy. The official argument for these regulations was the lack of housing and a diminished food supply in Zanzibar during the Second World War. In general, Zanzibar was not regarded as a suitable destination for refugees. The economy was suffering from a major depression, due to the almost complete collapse of the copra trade and the effects of the war. About 121 Arabs had to be repatriated during the dhow season in 1939 because they were not able to earn enough money to pay for their return passage. Subsequently, the situation became even worse. Hundreds of Arabs in Zanzibar became destitute in 1940. The Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Aden were asked to discourage Arabs, '... who have not established business connections or property in Zanzibar from leaving for this Protectorate during the next dhow season'.²⁵ In a letter to the Arab Association of Zanzibar, the British Government explained its intent to enforce more restrictive rules as a result of the war, lack of food and fuel supply, and the spreading unemployment and poverty among the population. In the opinion of the British officials in Zanzibar, neither the Government nor the local population were able to save destitute immigrants

from hardship. As there were still many Arabs leaving unmonitored by the authorities from the harbours of the Persian Gulf and the South Arabian coast, the Arab associations in Zanzibar were asked to use their contacts to inform the population in Arabia of the difficult conditions in Zanzibar and prevent them from travelling. It was underlined that these measures were to be regarded as war measures and that the British Government did not intend '...to weaken the close ties of common origin and interest which happily linked these territories together...'.²⁶

The negative, even deadly effects of the restrictive administrative policy became apparent when Hadhramaut's population suffered from drought and starvation during the war. Communication with the important Hadhrami diasporas in South-East Asia was severed at this time, so that it became impossible for them to supply their relatives in Hadhramaut with food and subsidies that had previously been so crucial to their survival. Furthermore, the emigration possibilities which might compensate for much of the social and economic difficulties in Hadhramaut were limited. In this situation, the Government of Aden directed an appeal to British officials in East Africa to relax the restrictive Immigration (Control) Regulations implemented during the war.²⁷ The officials in Aden hoped that, '... it would greatly help in the critical situation if a number of Hadhramis could be temporarily absorbed by immigration and employment in East African territories where they are known as tough and industrious unskilled workers'.²⁸ The appeal was refused with the same arguments originally used to enforce the rigid Immigration (Control) Regulations between 1940 and 1943 in East Africa: lack of food and housing. A second appeal which stressed the deterioration of the grave situation in the Hadhramaut was again refused in the following year.²⁹

A report comparing Arab immigration to Zanzibar and Tanganyika was drawn up in 1940 by W.H. Ingrams, on a visit to Dar-es-Salaam. He reached the conclusion that the immigration of Arabs to Tanganyika differed to that of Zanzibar. Only Arabs of the, 'superior type'³⁰ made an attempt to enter Tanganyika, especially since the rigid enforcement of immigration regulations. Aware of these restrictions, they were ready to comply with them on arrival by making deposits of Shs. 100 each and contacting the Arab Association which worked closely with the Immigration Department. Visitors were furnished with a temporary visitor's licence. In contrast to non-natives, whose maximum deposit was Shs. 2,000, Arab visitors were required to deposit Shs. 75 to 200. A system of granting probationary trading licences was in force and a dossier was opened for each new 'non-native' immigrant. Similar to Zanzibar, immigrants without travel permits were not allowed to land in

Tanganyika. However, the number of Arabs who arrived seasonally in Tanganyika was in any case – according to W. H. Ingrams – rather small.³¹

Several other aspects came to light in a discussion on editorial comments in the local Zanzibar newspapers *al-Falaq* and *Zanzibar Voice*, where fears were expressed about the rigid enforcement and consequences of the Immigration Regulations in 1944. One fear concerned the interruption of the influx of 'new settlers from Arabia' and consequently the disappearance of a key factor of economic prosperity in Zanzibar.³² A second fear referred to the dwindling of the dhow trade as a consequence of the harsh treatment of passengers from Oman in the previous year (1943), and its shift to Mombasa.³³ In a British investigation of the dhow trade no evidence was found to support this last allegation, as the same rigid restrictions were pursued in both Kenya and Zanzibar to stop '...any increase in the non-native population...'.³⁴ The British strategy was not openly attacked by the editors of the newspapers, but an awareness of it could be indicated by the expression of fear that new immigrants from Arabia would be prevented from entering Zanzibar.

British officials tried to counter public discussions on the economic consequences of the restrictive migration policy in the course of several meetings with leading personalities of the Arab and Indian Associations, asserting that, '...this Government is anxious to interfere as little as possible with the free movements of those who have established connection with Zanzibar and that the people who are not wanted here are those of no substance and those who have no connection with Zanzibar'.³⁵ In a directive for his meeting with the communities, the Provincial Commissioner was even instructed to refer to, '... the historic trade between Zanzibar and Arabia...',³⁶ and the, '...anxiety to preserve the connection, compatible with the interest of this Protectorate and of the immigrants themselves'.³⁷ British officials insisted on support for the current measures, arguing that these were helping to overcome the difficult economic situation of the war. Yet their arguments ignored the fact that seasonal migration of the poor segments of the Arabian population was one of the most important characteristics of these connections. It was ignored, too, that the British distinction between the native and non-native segments of the population was diametrically opposed to the self-perception of the Arab and Indian population of East Africa, as the protest against restrictive immigration measures arguably shows. But the whole debate had touched on a much greater problem, against a background of national movements and racial prejudices in Zanzibar. The question of immigration became a political issue of some magnitude with both Arabs and Indians. After several talks with local Arab notables the British Provincial Commissioner stated that 'The

measures of control under Defence Regulations are being misconstrued as a deliberate attempt by Government to keep out Arabs and Indians to favour local elements and is in fact a challenge to their very position and life blood in so far as the Arabs are concerned'.³⁸ Thus it appears that the question of nationality and the right to citizenship cropped up before the Second World War and contributed to the acrimonious debates and conflicts that emerged during the war, and continued in the post-war years.³⁹ The restrictions contained in the Immigration Regulations of the British authorities contributed to the perception of the illegitimate status of migrants as non-natives with a limited right of residence. Seen from a wider perspective, the regulations transformed people's relative freedom of movement, which had long been an established characteristic of the Indian Ocean Region.⁴⁰

Who is a Comorian, Zanzibari or Tanganyikan Arab?

The gradual enforcement of Immigration and Naturalization Regulations by the British authorities in the post-war years will be demonstrated in three case studies illuminating the situation of individuals of Arab origin, whose families had resided in the region for generations and had established long-lasting historical links between the mainland, Zanzibar and the Comoros.⁴¹

In May 1952 an appeal was submitted to the British Resident in Zanzibar to issue a certificate of permanent residence in Zanzibar. The reason for this was the refusal of the Deputy Immigration Officer, Zanzibar, to issue the aforementioned certificate under the Immigration (Control) Regulations of 1948. The applicant stated that he was a Comorian from Moroni. According to his testimony, his father was born in Zanzibar and his mother in Moroni. He came to Zanzibar in 1929 after the death of his mother and lived with his father's father. He attended school in Zanzibar successfully until 1940. Because of the difficult employment situation in Zanzibar, he entered the East African Naval Service in Mombasa. The applicant stated, 'I came to Kenya with only one intention and that is to look for work and return home [Zanzibar] and live with my parents as I have no relatives either in Kenya or Comoro'.⁴² He was reported to have said that his father was still living in Zanzibar as were the families of his aunts and uncles. He finished his appeal with the words: 'As I consider Zanzibar to be my place of permanent residence for the reasons stated above, I respectfully beg to request His Excellency to exercise his powers under the provisions of the Immigration Regulations to grant me the certificate of permanent residence'.⁴³ Finally, the deci-

sion of the Immigration Office was approved with the argument '(N.N.), a Comorian, is clearly not entitled to a certificate of Permanent Residence as he was not born in Zanzibar nor has he the necessary residential qualifications, ...'.⁴⁴ The period he spent in Zanzibar was too short to qualify him as a Zanzibari in the eyes of the British administrators.

The second example is the case of a young woman from the Comoros who was married by betrothal to a man in Zanzibar in 1952. She was accompanied by her mother (French passport) on the journey from the Comoros to Zanzibar and received a visitor's pass (British) for two months. As her mother wanted to leave soon for the Comoros, her father-in-law appealed for a Dependant Pass which would allow the girl to stay with her husband's family in Zanzibar until the marriage could take place two years later. This family had already established deep links with the Comoros. The father-in-law stated that he himself was '... a Zanzibari Arab by birth and of Comorian Arab descent by origin'.⁴⁵ His son (the proposed husband) was born on the Comoros and had moved with his father to Zanzibar when he was a boy. He went to school in Zanzibar and left the island to work in Mombasa where he was living at the time. The fact that the father-in-law who was making the application was not living in Zanzibar but in Dar-es-Salaam for business reasons, complicated the case even more. According to the argumentation of the British Immigration Regulations, a Dependant Pass could not be issued because the husband of the girl did not reside in Zanzibar. Likewise, her father-in-law was a resident of Dar-es-Salaam. The only solution to the case was either to return to the Comoros with her mother or apply for a Dependant Pass in Tanganyika and remain in Dar-es-Salaam with her father-in-law.

The third case involves the refusal to issue an Arab passenger an Entry Permit for Zanzibar in 1955, circumstances which were regarded as so complex that the decision could not be left to the Deputy Principal Immigration Officer alone. The Arab applicant's curriculum vitae reveals the complexity. He was born on the Comoros in 1915, but had moved to Zanzibar where he served in the Royal Navy. He went to Lorencos Marques (now Maputo) in 1921 and returned to Zanzibar in 1924. In 1925 he married a Comorian woman in Zanzibar. The two sons from this marriage were still living and working in Zanzibar. The applicant went to the Comoros in 1950 and returned to Zanzibar in 1954 to live with his sons. He could prove his many family connections in Zanzibar and even owned a house there at the time. Between 1939 and 1948 he had stayed in Zanzibar for various lengths of time. On his arrival there in 1954 he was issued a visitor's permit after paying a cash deposit of Shs. 400. His application for a Certificate of Permanent Residence was refu-

sed because '... he resided in the Protectorate for an aggregate period of one year and 5,5 months only...'.⁴⁶ According to the existing regulations he neither qualified for a Certificate of Permanent Residence nor an Entry Permit. The Chairman of the Immigration Control Board suggested the case be forwarded to the Attorney General because the term 'resident' was difficult to define in legal terms, whereas the term 'permanent resident' had been unequivocally laid down in the Immigration Control Decree, 1954. Unfortunately no document about the final outcome of the case has yet been found.⁴⁷

Conclusion

So far three periods of *seascape* segmentation could be distinguished from the perspective of legal and political development in British East Africa. Firstly, the initial phase that introduced rudimentary immigration regulations which were apparently widely ignored or evaded. It was a period of severely limited feasibility of official migration control (1911-1930s). Existing regulations were not strictly followed by the administration, largely for practical reasons. The second period that spanned the Second World War was dominated by serious economic hardship in Zanzibar and elsewhere. These conditions led to more restrictive decrees and stricter immigration control. Even appeals by British officials in Aden and Hadhramaut to relax restrictions because of hunger in the region were met with refusal. British official arguments were highly ambivalent. Long-established historical trade relations between Arabia and East Africa were generally accepted. British officials had always underlined their intention not to interrupt or interfere with these connections. At the same time, however, they defined the kind of connections they regarded as illegal or wished to favour. The continuous enforcement of these rules after the war signifies the final shift towards a policy away from the traditional free flux of relations between Zanzibar and the Indian Ocean Region (1938-1948). Instead of honouring the promise to loosen restrictions after the war, a policy of further separation and segmentation was carried out in subsequent decades. In Zanzibar, the population of Indian and Arab origin were increasingly treated as 'aliens', with the result that their movements, relations and activities regarding other parts of the Indian Ocean Region were seriously hampered. The status of these communities, their privileges, and the question of nationality and race dominated the debates of the period 1948-1964.

The effect on the Indian Ocean *seascape* throughout this period was its gradually increasing segmentation into distinct geographic unities, diverse populations and economies. Instead of accepting an extensive and complex unity of exchange and connections between different geographical, economic and cultural distinctions, a line was drawn between Africa and Arabia in colonial categorical and legal terms. Thus, the movements of people were divided artificially between 'inter-territorial travels' and travels from regions other than British East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zanzibar). With the system of passports and permits, uncontrolled movement of the population was gradually forced into the gateways of British colonial administrative control.

One feature of Hadhrami self-perception in the seascape of the Indian Ocean Region was not being required to obtain any certificate of identity. Other aspects were of far greater importance than those invented for bureaucratic convenience by the colonial government. The identification with a certain government, its policy and a defined territory was not necessary for the population of the *seascape* before British intervention. It could be even argued that a certain ambiguity and openness defined the pre-colonial space of the Indian Ocean Region. First of all, the local rulers of the statelike unities of the Hadhramaut and elsewhere in the Indian Ocean Region had only a limited interest in exercising strong control over the movements of people, goods and ideas. Their propensity for implementing administrative structures to increase their responsibilities and state expenditures was rather low. Secondly, coming from the Hadhramaut or India, it was probably more important to belong to a certain 'tribe', family, valley or village to find support from Hadhramis abroad. The question of how Hadhramis conceptualized their identity or were identified by others must be analysed in the context of further studies about the transformation of the 'Lebenswelt' in the Indian Ocean Region. These studies might give some more detailed answers to the question of how the Indian Ocean seascape was perceived by its inhabitants.

One final caveat seems to be appropriate: The precolonial seascape of the Indian Ocean Region was not at all the peaceful open world this study might imply. Katrin Bromber's contribution in this publication underlines the deep-seated racism and tensions in the population, which emerged over time in Zanzibar.⁴⁸ Neither was there as strong a consciousness of unity or solidarity among the Hadhrami population of East Africa, for example, as one might expect. There were at least two associations in East Africa claiming to represent Hadhramis from the coast and Hadhramis from the interior, while the

Hadhramis themselves distinguished between newcomers and those who had resided in East Africa for a long time.⁴⁹

One last argument: the fearful attitudes of Arab notables towards British officials and the surprise and irritation expressed in the petitions of the three individual case studies gave an insight into the indigenous self-perception of a unity of the Western Indian Ocean Region. Arguably, its seascape was characterized by intermarriage and family relationships which were arranged and maintained over great distances. Moreover, the openness of the seascape provided an option to compensate different regional economic conditions and resources as was shown in the case of seasonal labour migration from South Arabia to East Africa. This 'safety valve' enabled people to flee from drought and catastrophes to more prosperous areas in the region.

The case studies show the continued importance, intensity and dynamics of interregional connections and how these were regulated or restricted by governmental interventions, but they also show the inadequacy of the political and ethnic presumptions which guided official policy.

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Notes

- 1 The importance of the Hadhrami diasporas in India, Indonesia and East Africa have already been the topic of several studies. For a general introduction see Freitag, Clarence-Smith (1997). For new studies relating to Hadhrami history and migration see Freitag (1999, 2001), Bang (2000), Lekon (2000) and Hartwig (2000), (2001). For the character of the Indian Ocean trade see, Sheriff (1987), Bhacker (1992). Coming from Arabic and Islamic studies, the author was also looking for Arabic sources to support his arguments. Surprisingly, neither the relevant literature nor local newspapers such as *al-Falaq* and *Nahda* give further information. The author would be grateful to the reader for any new references relating to this issue, especially the role of Hadhrami Associations. The references mentioned here were found in the Zanzibar National Archive (ZNA), the Public Record Office London (PRO) and the Oriental and India Office Collection (OIOC) in the British Library in London. The author would like to extend special thanks to the employees of the archives in Zanzibar and London who have him such tremendous support.
- 2 ZNA: AB 26/15, 1919, (1) Consolidation of Laws Decree No. 7 of 1909 Chapter XX, (2) Proclamation 62 of 1915 (with Amendments), (3) British Protectorate Defence Order-in-Council of 29.04.1918. See also ZNA: AB 26/15, Memorandum on Immigration into the Zanzibar Protectorate. ZNA: AB 26/40, 1914, The Zanzibar Ports Decree, 'The Zanzibar Port Decree 1911' and 'The Zanzibar (Provisional) Administration Decree, 1914' obliged all travellers from Zanzibar in a native vessel on the way to the Persian Gulf, Arabia and Muscat to obtain a passport. The subjects of His Highness the Sultan of Muscat were exempt from these rules. The ports of embarkation and disembarkation were confined to Zanzibar and Wete where every passenger was supposed to contact the authorities ZNA: AB 26/39, 07.10.1916, Embarkation and Disembarkation Regulations.
- 3 ZNA: AB 26/15.
- 4 (1) An In-transit Pass, (2) a Dependant's Pass, (3) a Temporary Employment Pass, (4) a Pupil's Pass, (5) a Special Pass, and (6) a Visitor's Pass, ZNA: AB 26/1, 1948 Regulation 19(1) of G.N. 84/48.
- 5 (a) Exemptions which meant the holder of a valid Zanzibar Certificate of Permanent Residence, a serving member of his Majesty's Forces, accredited representative, etc. and a member of an African tribe indigenous to Tanganyika, Kenya, Uganda or Zanzibar, (b) Residents, (c) Visitors, (d) Immigrants, (e) Prohibited Immigrants, such as those who were destitute or suffering from mental disorder, persons with criminal records, prostitutes, persons deemed to be undesirable immigrants, persons who are not in possession of valid passports, ZNA: AB 26/1, 1948 Regulation 19(1) of G.N. 84/48.
- 6 ZNA: AB 26/1, 1952 Appendices, Immigration Requirements. ZNA: AB 26/7, 1938, ZNA:

- AB 26/15, see the 'List of Immigration Legislation', between 1923-1940, at least 12 decrees and notices were enacted.
- 7 ZNA: AB 26/39, the Decree No. 12 of 1911 regulated Zanzibar nationality. Subjects of the Sultan are only persons who were born in his Dominions or have become naturalized there by virtue of residing in Zanzibar for three consecutive years or for five years in all. ZNA: AB 26/39, 31.03.1931, G.H. Shelswell-White. The status of a British subject was of some advantage but it was also utilized by the British authorities to gain influence, Bhacker (1992), pp. 165-178. In the 1930s, Arabs were regarded as Asians by the British administration in the Zanzibar Protectorate. PRO: 6/8/60/15 A Memorandum by the Arab Association of Zanzibar Addressed to the Right Hon. The Secretary of State for the Colonies. Zanzibar. 05.02.1934.
- 8 Shehiri: Name for the Hadhrami community in Zanzibar, who originated mainly from the coast of Hadhramaut.
- 9 ZNA: AB 26/39, Petition, Zanzibar, 14.09.1921, Said Aboud Ibn Humaid, 19.07.1921, British passports are not as a rule granted to subjects of British-protected states, 23.12.1921, High Commissioner, British East Africa, 7712, 30.11.1921, Winston S. Churchill. 23.11.1920, Foreign Office, G. H. Villiers, 22.06.1922, Foreign Office, George Mounsey, 22.06.1922, Foreign Office, George Mounsey, 29.08.1922, Senior Commissioner's Office, Zanzibar, L. A. Andrade, Senior Commissioner; 10.03.1932, Foreign Office, Travel Documents for Persons proceeding to, and Natives of certain British Protectorates and certain Arab States.
- 10 ZNA: AB 26/39, 15.03.1935. The Commissioner of Police in Zanzibar remarked in his report in 1940 that for the first time nearly all dhow passengers from Arabian ports were carrying identity travelling passes. ZNA: AB 26/39, 14.03.1940.
- 11 Among the many documents see, for example, the correspondence in OIOC: R/20/A/3397, National Status of Hadhramaut.
- 12 ZNA: AB 26/35. In some cases applicants had to wait an entire season for their journey from Zanzibar to Hadhramaut. ZNA: AB 26/35, 28.11.1942. Lists of Hadhramis who intended to travel to the hinterland were prepared by the Hadhramaut Arab Hinterland Association, ZNA: AB 26/35, 1943, ZNA: AB 26/35, 04.01.1947, a request by a businessman from al-Mukalla for a permit for Zanzibar.
- 13 PRO: WO 224/136. 1948. Report.
- 14 OIOC: R/20/C/2010, September 1964, 209.
- 15 The Hadhrami and the Arab population in East Africa had good reason to be worried. Large numbers of people from Hadramaut, Aden and South Arabia had been naturalized in Zanzibar during the 1950s, OIOC: CO 537/7604 Naturalization Policy Zanzibar 1951. In contrast, many Hadhrami inhabitants were killed, their properties pillaged and destroyed, and most of the survivors forced to leave the island immediately after the independency of Zanzibar during the revolution in 1964. Many of them settled in Tanzania. Others returned to Hadhramaut or proceeded to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States where they found employment in the oil industry. See in general the correspondence in OIOC: R/20/C/831.
- 16 OIOC: R/20/C/1944, 23.11.1963. OIOC: R/20/C/2009.
- 17 See in general for these processes OIOC: R/20/C/831.
- 18 For the foundation of the al-Qayṭī or al-Kathīrī sultanates in Hadhramaut in the 19th century, see Hartwig, Expansion, State Foundation and Reform: The Contest for Power in Hadhramaut in the Nineteenth Century, in: Freitag/Clairence-Smith, 35-50, see also Hartwig 2000, 255-285. For information about the sultanates in the 20th century see the Lekon's forthcoming study. See also: OIOC: R/20/A/3316.
- 19 OIOC: R/20/C/2010, June 1965, No. 6, 232; May 1965, No. 5, 168; April 1965, No. 4. OIOC: R/20/C/831, 147a, 01.11.1966.
- 20 ZNA: AB 26/9, 1935. ZNA: AB 26/9, 1935, ZNA: AB 26/9.
- 21 ZNA: AB 26/9, 15.03.1933, 23.10.1939, Travelling Permits, Commissioner of Police.
- 22 ZNA: AB 26/39, 1940. ZNA: AB 26/39, 1940.
- 23 '...to the better type...': ZNA: AB 26/39, 17.04.1940, Visit of Immigration Officer to Dar-es-Salaam. W.H. Ingrams, Immigration & Embarkation Officer.
- 24 ZNA: AB 26/92, 14.08.1944, immigration officer, memorandum. 'These immigrants are at present of no economic value to the Protectorate; they are mostly of the petty shopkeeper class and, since they dwell in Zanzibar Town, are a drain on the town's food resources'.

- 25 ZNA: AB 26/39, 19.07.1940, British Resident Hall.
- 26 ZNA: AB 26/39, 16.07.1940, Secretariat Zanzibar.
- 27 ZNA: AB 26/15, 'A Decree to Amend the Immigration Regulation and Restriction Decree, No. 8 of 1942.' ZNA: AB 26/9, 26.10.1943. British authorities in Hadhramaut and Aden were constantly concerned about the social and economic significance of emigration for Hadhramaut. See for example OIOC: R/20/A/3689, Report on Hadramaut, Ingrams, 1935. OIOC: R/20/C/1978, Social and Economic Report, 1957-1964. Information on drought and famine in Hadhramaut during WWII can be found in OIOC: R/20/C/1441.
- 28 ZNA: AB 26/92, 26.10.1943, Office of the Conference of East Africa Governors, Chief Secretary to Governors Conference, Telegram British Resident, No. 17.
- 29 ZNA: AB 26/92, 31.03.1944, Office of the Conference of East African Governors, Nairobi. ZNA: AB 26/92, The Governor of Aden. ZNA: AB 26/92, 15.11.1943. ZNA: AB 26/92, 16.03.1944, Governor Aden. ZNA: AB 26/92, 30.06.1944, Immigration Officer, Extract from Political File.
- 30 ZNA: AB 26/39, 17.04.1940, Visit of Immigration Officer to Dar-es-Salaam. W.H. Ingrams, Immigration & Embarkation Officer.
- 31 ZNA: AB 26/39, 17.04.1940, Visit of Immigration Officer to Dar-es-Salaam. W.H. Ingrams, Immigration & Embarkation Officer.
- 32 ZNA: AB 26/92, 25.02.1944, Provincial Commissioner.
- 33 Al-Falaq, Saturday, 26th February 1944, 'Our Trade with Arabia and Persian Gulf. Threats were not altogether idle.', ZNA: AB 26/92, Zanzibar Government, Memorandum 25.02.1944. Zanzibar Voice, 27.02.1944, 'Immigration from Oman'.
- 34 ZNA: AB 26/92, 23.02.1944, Acting Chief Secretary.
- 35 ZNA: AB 26/92, 29.02.1944, Acting Chief Secretary.
- 36 ZNA: AB 26/92, 11.03.1944, Provincial Commissioner.
- 37 ZNA: AB 26/92, Confidential, Directive to the Provincial Commissioner for his meeting with the communities to explain the policy of government in regard to immigration, Provincial Commissioner, 11.03.1944.
- 38 ZNA: AB 26/92, 11.03.1944, Provincial Commissioner.
- 39 For this topic see the contribution by Katrin Bromber.
- 40 ZNA: AB 26/92, 11.03.1944, Provincial Commissioner.
- 41 To protect the privacy of the individuals and their families, names will not be mentioned in the following cases. The documents can be found in ZNA: AB 26/1 and AB 26/2.
- 42 ZNA: AB 26/1, 17.05.1952, N.N. to Chief Secretary to the Zanzibar Government.
- 43 ZNA: AB 26/1, 17.05.1952, N.N. to Chief Secretary to the Zanzibar Government.
- 44 ZNA: AB 26/1, 22.05.1952, Assistant Secretary.
- 45 ZNA: AB 26/1, 22.02.1952, N.N. to Chief Secretary Zanzibar.
- 46 ZNA: AB 26/2, 20.01.1955, Zanzibar Immigration Office:
- 47 ZNA: AB 26/2, 10.02.1955, Petition N.N. to Chief Secretary to the Government Zanzibar, 21.01.1955, Zanzibar Immigration Office and 24.03.1955, Chairman Immigration Control Board, High Court Zanzibar.
- 48 See also some of the reports of the British administration documenting outrages between Hindus and Shihiris, Washihiri against Ismaili, Somali, Suri and Manga Arabs: ZNA: AB 70/1, Reports 1923-191927. ZNA: AB 70/3, Report 1928. ZNA: AB 70/4, 1928-1929, Lethal Weapons Decree of 1925. ZNA: AB 70/5, 1935. ZNA: AB 70/6, 1936.
- 49 ZNA: AB 12/22, Circular Memorandum, 1941.

Subaltern Networks under British Imperialism. Exploring the Case of South Asian Maritime Labour (c. 1890-1947)¹

Ravi Ahuja

I. Introduction: The 'Lascar' and the Empire

South Asian sailors had toiled on sailing ships of the English East India Company even before the nineteenth century, but it was the combined expansion of British imperialism and steam navigation in the Indian Ocean region that boosted employment figures. As early as 1855, it was estimated that between 10,000 and 12,000 'lascars' were engaged in the British merchant marine on ships plying the seas of Africa and Asia, and about 60 per cent of those 'native seamen' originally came from South Asia (Visram:52; Ewald:76-7). The five decades between the opening of the Suez Canal and the end of the First World War were not only the age of 'high imperialism' but also a period when 'lascar' employment rose continuously. Maritime census figures are available from 1881, when 16,673 or 8.2 per cent of 204,470 sailors on British merchant vessels were said to be lascars. In 1914, the merchant marine's total employment figures had risen to 295,652, of which 51,616 or 17.5 per cent were lascars (Dixon:281). Thus, if total employment had increased by about 50 per cent, lascar employment had trebled. From about the turn of the century, the Indian Ocean labour market was also tapped by shipping companies from other European states, namely the German 'Hansa Linie' (Küttner:10; Balachandran 1997:2). While the long-drawn out crisis of British merchant shipping and technological changes resulted in a drastic decline of maritime employment in the 1920s and 1930s, the figures for lascars were more stable. Hence in 1938, 50,700 or 26.4 per cent of the 192,375 sailors employed on British merchant vessels were lascars (Tabili:47). With the end of British rule in India in 1947, the number of South Asian sailors declined due to partition and the emerging container shipping. The 'age of the lascar' thus lasted from about the 1890s until mid-twentieth century. This paper focuses on the employment of Indian Ocean sailors on British merchant steamships during this period.

But let us first ask what precisely a 'lascar' was and what rendered these maritime workers so attractive to European shipping companies? In the

eighteenth century, the Persian word 'las(h)kar' was used by the British as a denomination for South Asian sailors as well as for non-fighting military personnel (such as the 'gun lascars' who moved artillery equipment). By the nineteenth century, the phrase had entered the European maritime language as a generic term for sailors from the colonies in the Indian Ocean region. In Indian languages, there are various words to designate a sailor, and in twentieth-century sources it appears that South Asian seamen preferred to call themselves 'jehazis' (ship people) or, more often, 'khalasis' – another Persian word literally meaning 'freed person' and referring to maritime labourers of superior status. In the engine rooms of the steamers, workers appear not to have referred to themselves as seamen but rather as 'ag-wallahs' (Hindustani: agvala, 'fireman'). The term 'lascar', on the other hand, one of several categories of colonial 'native' labour, carried connotations of a low, subordinate status and inferiority to white workers. If an unskilled Asian labourer was not a worker but a 'coolie' and an Indian infantryman not a soldier but a 'sepo', an Indian Ocean sailor was not a seaman but merely a 'lascar'.

This 'inferiority' became legally inscribed as of 1814 when the first legal provisions regulating the employment of Indian Ocean seamen on British ships were enacted, rendering the generic expression 'lascar' a legal term distinguishing 'native' maritime labourers from white 'seamen' (Sherwood:230). Discriminating legislation concerning South Asian seamen was passed by British governments well after the end of the colonial period, which reflected and reinforced the attraction the employment of lascars held for British shipping companies. Lascars were much cheaper and had less rights than their European colleagues. The low price of their labour power low price was not purely a matter of lower wages, which amounted to between a mere third and a fifth of the pay for European sailors. Engaging crews under so-called 'Asiatic Articles', the special contracts for 'lascars and other native seamen', had further material advantages for employers (see especially Ewald). Over much of the period under review, a 'lascar' was deemed to 'require' only half the accommodation space on board that a 'seaman' was entitled to (36 instead of 72 cubic feet); regulated food rations were far cheaper for lascars than for Europeans; compensation in the case of accident was less and even their war bonus was much lower. Their inferior legal status further reduced the cost of their labour power. For 'lascars' were not engaged for single voyages, but for a period of up to 18 months, thereby reducing recruitment costs and lay days; Indian sailors were not entitled to terminate their agreement outside South Asia; in British ports they could be 'transferred' against their will to another vessel, even one from a different

company; they were often denied the right to shore leave when in port. As trade unionists began to point out in the 1920s, their legal status resembled, to some extent, that of indentured plantation 'coolies' whose freedom to terminate a contract with their employer was likewise restricted. Reduced labour costs enabled shipping companies to hire lascar crews that were on average about fifty per cent larger than a European crew would have been on a comparable vessel. This manning scale was justified in both official and unofficial documents, as were many other special arrangements for the regulation of lascar labour, in terms of a racially determined inferior 'Asiatic' efficiency. Yet shipmasters admitted that the quotidian tasks on steamships could be handled with much greater ease with a 'lascar crew' than with a 'white' and correspondingly much smaller crew. When the generic designation 'lascar' became a legal term, the definition of who exactly a 'lascar' was turned into a contentious issue. The legal content of this term changed repeatedly and its coverage was increasingly reduced from Indian Ocean steamship labour in general to sailors born on the Indian subcontinent or residing in Aden.

The social history of lascars has been explored in the last two decades in a number of excellent articles and monographs. The studies of Frank Broeze, Gopalan Balachandran, Laura Tabili and, most recently, of Janet Ewald in particular provided a solid foundation from which the present author was able to proceed. Thanks to the work of these scholars and on the basis of new sources it is possible to confront a crucial theoretical problem that arises in the study of maritime labour networks under British imperialism.

II. The Problem: Maritime Labour Networks in the Indian Ocean

'Lascars' on European steamships were possibly among the first wage labourers and surely among the first industrial workers in the Indian Ocean region (Ewald:72). They moved between cosmopolitan port cities and organised themselves, at least in South Asia, in trade unions earlier and in greater proportion than most occupational groups in modern industry (Broeze). So one could easily be led to assume that the age of the steamship moulded maritime labour into a socially and culturally integrated (if not homogenous then at least syncretistic) industrial workforce, into a nucleus of an integrated Indian Ocean working class. This was, however, not the case. The 'modern sector' of the maritime labour market was created along ethnic lines and remained highly exclusive and segmented. Not all seafaring communities of the Indian Ocean region gained access to this sector and some were apparently

sidelined in the period under review. Moreover, new entrants into the world of steamship labour were not usually recruited from the supposedly cosmopolitan lower classes of the port cities but, at least in the case of South Asia, from a surprisingly restricted number of rural 'labour catchment areas'. There is no denying that the massive expansion of European merchant shipping in the age of high imperialism incorporated a very large number of working men from the Indian Ocean region into an increasingly international maritime labour market, but there is little evidence for the emergence of a socially and culturally homogenous class of Indian Ocean seamen and port labourers. Consider, for instance, the case of Sylhet, a rural district in Eastern Bengal (now Bangladesh) and one of the most important recruitment areas of the British merchant marine in the period under review. If Sylhetis are one of the major South Asian immigrant groups in Britain today, their immigration terrain has been prepared by lascars since the late nineteenth century. The incorporation of Sylheti smallholders into an international labour market has, however, not resulted in any 'rubbing off' of Sylheti 'identity' but rather, as Katy Gardner has pointed out, in a redefinition and even in a heightened awareness of this subregional 'identity' (Gardner:269-81; Adams).

Similar processes have, of course, been discussed extensively in many other fields of labour and migration history. But how do we conceptualise this dual phenomenon of expanding incorporation and simultaneous differentiation? More often than not, historians and anthropologists have dealt with this duality in rather vague terms – 'on the one hand' incorporation, 'on the other' differentiation – without attempting to understand the interdependence of the two processes. Others ascribe the persistence of cultural difference to an alleged 'homeostasis' of 'primordial identities' that proved to be immune against the onslaught of colonial state intervention and market incorporation. Yet others, who fail to appreciate this type of unhistorical construction of 'culture', have considered the assertion and/or redefinition of 'difference' as reactive as well as proactive subaltern strategies of coping with incorporation into the modern state and the capitalist world market. In this view, the various culturally distinct networks of maritime labourers in the Indian Ocean would appear as modes of resistance against the levelling forces of commodification and colonial state formation or at least as modes of appropriating the new realities created by these forces. Much evidence can be marshalled in support of this view, which catches, however, only one side of the interdependence of the dual processes of incorporation and differentiation. Let us reconsider, therefore, some suggestions by Eric R. Wolf that hint at a more comprehensive framework of analysis. 'Capitalist accumulation [...] contin-

ues to engender new working classes in widely dispersed areas of the world', wrote Wolf in his 'Europe and the People Without History' and continued:

It recruits these working classes from a wide variety of social and cultural backgrounds, and inserts them into variable political and economic hierarchies. The new working classes change these hierarchies by their presence, and are themselves changed by the forces to which they are exposed. On one level, therefore, the diffusion of the capitalist mode creates everywhere a wider unity through the constant reconstitution of its characteristic capital-labour relationship. On another level, it also creates diversity, accentuating social opposition and segmentation even as it unifies [emphasis added, RA]. (Wolf 1997:383)

In one of his theoretical essays, Wolf identified the forces creating this interdependence of the processes of differentiation and incorporation more clearly. He argued that the continuously reproduced 'division of the capitalist labor market into segments *both creates and feeds on* [emphasis added] differentiations of identity by gender, ethnicity, and social race among the labor force' (Wolf 2001:357). In other words, when various groups were incorporated into an international labour market, they were incorporated into a segmented and continuously resegmented structure, which integrated differential ethnic or other identities and even created new ones – Justin Willis' recent study of the changing labour system in the port of colonial Mombasa and its impact on the formation of a new Mijikenda ethnicity is a particularly impressive illustration of the latter case. To sum up the argument, 'differentiation' will be understood in this paper not as being inconsistent with 'incorporation', but as the very process in which incorporation is articulated and materialised in an infinite variety of concrete forms.

In order to understand how this 'differential incorporation' into an international maritime labour market worked in the case of South Asian seamen, we need to look closely at various institutional arrangements such as kinship, locality, law and, very importantly, debt that linked up villagers of the Indian Ocean region with the international maritime labour market. The specific combination of such institutional arrangements that linked a particular group of maritime labourers to the international labour market will, in this paper, be called a 'network'. The phrase 'network' is thus used in the sense of an *infrastructure of differential incorporation* that is produced and reproduced by historical actors over a longer time-span.²

Such networks should, however, not be understood as unidirectional conductors in a smooth functional system of labour supply – 'subaltern networks' were constituted through strained and contradictory relations between historical actors with widely differing interests and could, therefore, be used

for a variety of often conflicting purposes. This gets clearer if we look at one of the key actors in maritime labour networks, the so-called 'serang'. Derived from the Persian word 'sarhang' (commander, overseer), this term was used almost everywhere in the Indian Ocean region from Mombasa via Bombay and Calcutta to Singapore as a denomination for intermediaries in the maritime labour market, for labour subcontractors, recruiters and foremen of seamen and port workers. On steamships, the *serang* was the Indian equivalent of a European boatswain. Yet, as Balachandran has rightly observed, colonial records and other sources describe the *serang* in strikingly ambivalent terms (Balachandran 1996). He is represented as a crimp, who was often said, however, to be related to members of his gang or to hail from the same village. He figures as an exploitative moneylender or corrupt middleman at one time and as the lascars' spokesman at another. He was obstinately defended by employers and officials as indispensable for imposing discipline on lascar crews and simultaneously decried as a potential strike leader. He was believed to be a traditional, pre-capitalist institutional form of organising social labour in South Asia but if trade union leaders rose at all from the ranks of the lascars, they were likely to have established their standing by functioning as *serangs*. We will return to this interesting social figure in greater detail below, but what should be underscored here is this: The *serang's* ambivalent position reflects the fact that maritime labour networks functioned in both ways – as an organisational infrastructure for the recruitment and subordination of labour and as an organisational infrastructure used by the lascars to appropriate their employment conditions to their own purpose and even as a means of combining against their employers. Networks of subalternity could thus, at least temporarily, be turned into networks of the subaltern.

Infrastructures of differential incorporation can be studied in various ways, but the remainder of this paper focuses on aspects of social space, on the changing 'seascape' of the Indian Ocean in so far as it was constituted by maritime labour networks. It is argued that this 'seascape' was spatially redefined under British imperialism during the six decades before South Asia's partition and independence when modern colonial port cities emerged as novel 'gateways' to the ocean, when areas in the interior of the subcontinent were newly connected to the sea while the maritime links of some coastal regions deteriorated. The networks under research extended from India's interior regions well beyond the subcontinent, to ports elsewhere on the Indian Ocean Rim, as well as to the metropolises of global capitalism. Yet, for practical reasons, this paper examines only those sections of maritime labour networks that lay within South Asia. Section III identifies the relocation of

maritime labour networks under colonialism, Section IV examines the rural origins of lascars and Section V analyses household strategies that combined agriculture and seafaring. Section VI discusses the emergence of networks that spanned the distance between recruitment ports and 'labour catchment areas' and Section VII draws preliminary conclusions and sketches perspectives of further research.

III. Redirecting Maritime Labour Networks: Colonial Recruitment Ports

One of the most permanent and irreversible effects of colonial rule in South Asia was, in the words of the geographer David Sopher, the 'spatial reorganisation' of the subcontinent. This included a changed pattern of urban development according to which many older centres, usually located in the interior, declined, while large colonial metropolises like Bombay, Calcutta and Madras emerged on the shores of the Indian Ocean. According to the needs of the imperial economy (such as extraction of natural resources and tropical products, establishment of markets for English industrial products) the communications infrastructure was not only technologically revolutionised and quantitatively expanded but also spatially redirected towards these imperial port cities which came to be the termini of trunk roads and railway lines. It is not that Indian sailing vessels lost all importance after the rise of imperial steam navigation – Indian coasters were, for instance, rather successful in opening up a space for themselves within the imperial transport system, especially in Western India where the total tonnage of 'native craft' merely declined by ten per cent between the 1870s and 1915 (Pope:14-5) and where the number of these sailing vessels (excluding lighters and other harbour boats) was estimated at about 10,000 in the early 1920s. However, the rise of steam navigation in the Indian Ocean region, no less connected to the exigencies and institutions of imperialism than railway construction, resulted in the massive centralisation of trade and shipping in a small number of colonial port cities. This was also due to the technological transformations of the steam age, since steamships required large investment in harbour and dock facilities, which were provided in the late nineteenth century in only a few colonial port cities. Correspondingly, the recruitment of lascars was not organised along the established lines of South Asian ocean transport. While dhonis, phatamaris, baghalahs and other Indian sailing vessels were based at and continued to draw their workforce from numerous small ports along the subcontinent's coastline, the recruitment of crews for steamships was highly central-

ised and relied fully on Calcutta and Bombay. Crews were almost exclusively hired in these two colonial metropolises, while other South Asian ports were (with the temporary exception of Karachi) only used to replace lascars who had jumped ship or had died during the voyage. To give an idea of the quantitative dimensions, it may be mentioned that lascar recruitment from 1926 to 1929 amounted on average to annually 58,300 in Calcutta and to 34,600 in Bombay. Unemployment was notoriously high among lascars. Seamen's organizations thus estimated in 1930 the total number of seamen 'belonging' to (but not necessarily always present at) the ports of Calcutta and Bombay at 140,000 and 70,000 respectively.

Spatial centralisation of lascar recruitment was paralleled by centralisation in organisational terms. Before the foundation of the Scindia Steam Navigation Company in 1919, transcontinental and even coastal steam vessels were almost invariably owned by large British liners. Nearly half of the Indian seamen recruited in Bombay were employed by the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company (P&O) which dominated the long distance trade, while about half of the crews hired in Calcutta worked on vessels of the British India Steam Navigation Company (BI) which controlled much of the steamship business across the Indian Ocean and along South Asia's coasts. These two giant shipping firms merged into a single, almost monopolistic company in 1914, but even earlier both had been deeply interwoven with the colonial bureaucracy and had been subsidised by mail contracts. Both companies had their own recruitment organisations, which were left largely unchecked by any state agency. The other liners got their crews with the assistance and under the supervision of colonial officials, the Shipping Masters of Bombay and Calcutta, who had often been shipmasters of P&O or BI steamers for many years before their appointment. Lascar recruitment was a profitable and, once again, highly centralised business in itself. In Bombay, a Parsi entrepreneurial family, the Chichgars, entered this line of business as early as the mid-nineteenth century, establishing themselves as the only legal recruitment agency for the merchant marine and continued to operate as 'licensed shipping brokers' up to the 1930s. In Calcutta, recruitment was organised on slightly less monopolistic lines. Here, a number of 'licensed shipping brokers' who were usually designated as 'ghat serangs' (i.e. port serangs) had divided up the recruitment business between themselves (Balachandran 1996).

IV. Villages and Steamships: The Lascars' Rural Origins

Although lascar recruitment was focused on Bombay and Calcutta, it should not be assumed that maritime labour networks originated in these cities. South Asian sailors were, as a rule, not permanent city dwellers and the social networks that connected them to the maritime labour market extended to minor port towns and rural villages sometimes hundreds of miles away. Before we turn to identifying the major 'catchment areas', it is necessary to point out that steam navigation created somewhat different demands on skill and organization of labour than sail navigation. Only part of the crew on a steamship required some of the hereditary occupational knowledge of seafaring communities, while those working in the engine room as trimmers and stokers or the numerous stewards, cooks and 'pantrymen' of large passenger vessels needed quite different skills. Moreover, along with the bridge, the engine room emerged as a second centre of authority on steamers, and in order to avoid conflicts between shipmaster and chief engineer, the navigational crew was strictly divided into a 'deck' and an 'engine' department, while the 'purser's' (or stewards') department formed a third distinct element. Accordingly, the workers of the three departments were often recruited from different social and even ethnic groups in South Asia. While most lascars hired in Calcutta were Muslims from the districts of Sylhet, Chittagong and Noakhali and could, therefore, communicate in Bengali, the Bombay crews were far more segregated in religious, linguistic and ethnic terms: Punjabi Muslim 'ag-wallahs' in the engine department would have found it difficult to make themselves understood by the Christian Goanese stewards who would, in turn, have had little in common with Hindu khalasis from Gujarat. This ethnic heterogeneity was, however, of a controlled kind – 'mixed crews' were not appreciated and suspected by shipmasters to be troublesome, while a combined crew of Indian lascars and seamen from East Africa and Arabia was considered to be particularly undesirable. Yet there was a preference for cultural homogeneity in each of the three steamship departments and both work places and living quarters were separated on board ship so that in terms of ethnicity, crews were more segmented than cosmopolitan.

Turning to the sources of recruitment, it is clear that only the 'deckhands' or khalasis were predominantly (but not exclusively) recruited from seafaring communities. Many of these workers had already acquired skills of handling a boat either on coasters or, especially in Bengal, on riverboats. However, not all of the communities plying South Asian sailing vessels were represented on steamships, indicating again a major transformation of the maritime la-

bour market and of the Indian Ocean 'seascape' in general. Hence the Coromandel Coast in the subcontinent's Southeast that had been a main area of shipbuilding and coastal as well as transcontinental shipping for many centuries is virtually never mentioned as a recruitment area for Calcutta in contrast, for instance, to the Laccadive and Maledive islands which were even further away. Calcutta deckhands were, however, predominantly Muslims from Noakhali and Chittagong, the coastal districts of Eastern Bengal. About three-quarters of the Bombay khalasis were reported to be Muslims, too, though a Gujarati Hindu fishing caste, the Kharwas, was also among the communities most favoured by recruiting agents and shipmasters. On the west coast, recruitment focused on specific coastal settlements. North of Bombay, recruitment towns were in the region of Gujarat and included Diu and Ghogha on the peninsula of Kathiawar as well as Surat and Daman on the opposite side of the Gulf of Khambhat. The most important recruitment area for Khalasis was, however, the Konkani coast south of Bombay and more specifically a number of coastal towns in the Ratnagiri and Kolaba districts and the princely state of Janjira. The two communities of Konkani Muslims who are reported to have migrated to Bombay to be employed as seamen claimed Arabic descent and combined seafaring with agricultural occupations, although high-status Jama'tis also engaged in trade while Daldis appear to have relied more heavily on fishing for their subsistence. Ratnagiri district was one of the major recruitment areas for industrial labour in Western India; about twenty per cent of Bombay City's population originated from this area in the early decades of the twentieth century (Yarmin 1989). The specific pressures created by the system of land tenure in this district may also have induced members of its Muslim communities to seek employment with the Royal Indian Marine and the British merchant navy as a supplementary source of income. The hypothesis needs to be substantiated by further research, though there is evidence that at least some Muslim khalasis from Ratnagiri were smallholders.

The connection between local systems of land tenure and maritime recruitment is, however, more apparent when we turn to the 'catchment areas' for stewards and engine-room crews. Catholic villagers from Goa appear to have been the first non-seafaring people to gain access to the newly emerging market of steamship labour as early as the middle of the nineteenth century. The Portuguese colonial administration increasingly interfered with the corporate land rights of the 'comunidades' (village communities) and created a growing fragmentation of the land held by Catholics through new inheritance laws, thus inducing them to seek supplementary sources of income else-

where. As Christians they had distinct advantages over Hindus and Muslims in getting jobs in the services sector of British colonial settlements (Macarenhas-Keyes 1987). In Bombay, many Goan (and also some Kanarese) Christians found work as cooks, tailors, and also as stewards on steamships. By the turn of the century, they had succeeded in almost totally excluding all other competitors from this segment of the city's maritime labour market, and British shipmasters labelled Goa a 'land of servants'. Even in distant Calcutta, 2,060 Goan Christians were hired for the 'purser's department' of British steamships in 1922/23, though here the majority of stewards appears to have been recruited from the Muslim population of Dacca and Calcutta³ as well as from the 'Anglo-Indian' community.

As for coal trimmers and firemen, they were by no means recruited from the urban poor. As a rule, they were Muslims from rural areas where a fragmented structure of property coincided with low agricultural productivity, and were more often small landholders than agricultural labourers. It has been argued that the absence of a 'permanent' revenue settlement and, correspondingly, of big landlords as well as the need for smallholding households to open up supplementary sources of income distinguished Sylhet district from most other districts of Bengal, and rendered its less fertile areas the main 'catchment area' for Calcutta lascars (Adams; Gardner 1995). While inland navigation at least was extensive in Sylhet, the firemen and coal trimmers hired in Bombay originated increasingly from northern Punjab where a link to seafaring had never existed. These 'ag-wallahs' were Punjabis or Pathans, mostly Muslims and, once again, often the younger sons of smallholding families. From the early twentieth century onwards, they appear to have increasingly supplanted the previously dominating 'Sidis' (or 'Africans') from Somalia and Zanzibar in the engine rooms of the western Indian Ocean. Thus, reports on seamen and dock workers in Bombay during the last quarter of a century of colonial rule mentioned very few Africans, while their number was said to have amounted to about one thousand in 1864 (Ewald:84). Reasons for this development still need to be explored. However, Attock and Rawalpindi, the main recruitment areas of the colonial Indian Army for Punjabi Muslims, especially during the First World War (Omissi 1994), were expressly preferred as recruitment grounds for engine-room crews, and many demobilised sepoy found employment with the British Merchant Marine in the post-war period. However, a sizeable proportion of the Bombay agvalas also originated from other parts of northern Punjab and especially from Mirpur, an area belonging to the princely state of Kashmir (Ballard 1983). In sum, it is clear that access to the maritime labour markets

of Bombay and Calcutta was restricted to workers from certain regions. These 'labour catchment areas' were not solely determined by the availability of specific seafaring skills or necessarily by spatial proximity. The colonial political economy of the recruitment areas (and particularly their revenue system and agrarian structure), its administrative infrastructure (e.g. the recruitment officers of the colonial army in northern Punjab) and the cultural framework (such as the prevalence of Catholicism in many of Goa's villages) were further determinants of the propensity and ability of specific socio-cultural groups in a certain town or area to gain access to the maritime labour market.

V. Agriculture and Seafaring: Tracing Lascar Household Strategies

We have thus identified sets of nodal points between which recruitment networks for South Asian steamship labour were established: Firstly, a number of coastal and inland districts and secondly, the colonial port cities of Bombay and Calcutta. Recruitment networks between these nodal points often displayed a remarkable durability, for instance in the case of Goan Catholic villages, some of which were apparently continuously linked for about a century to the Bombay labour market for stewards. This stability reflects the enduring village links of maritime labourers and the efforts of kinship groups and village communities to exclude 'outsiders' from the labour market segment they had gained access to – the reason being, of course, that a reduction of competition turned maritime labour into a more reliable source of income. Strategies of specific kinship groups or (stratified) village communities of combining rural and urban income sources could, however, only be successful because they coincided with employer interest. As in other colonial industries, shipping companies preferred labourers who had additional but insufficient means of subsistence that rendered higher wages and more permanent labour relations dispensable.

The availability of agricultural sources of income, the question of whether the lascar was 'essentially a peasant' or an industrial worker striving for regular employment on steamships was, however, a constant matter of dispute between employers and colonial state agencies on the one hand, and seamen's trade unions on the other. There is unfortunately, although perhaps not accidentally, little documentary evidence concerning the economic activities and situation of lascars outside maritime employment. Shipping companies and colonial administration, as Balachandran has pointed out, made little ef-

fort to screen this segment of the labour market, which was usually well supplied and created few problems despite low material standards. It was left to social reformers and trade unionists to survey the situation of Indian seamen but even they had little interest in emphasising their clients' non-maritime income sources in their reports, since this would have made their demands for subsistence wages, more regular employment and social insurance schemes appear less urgent. Even Balachandran's otherwise excellent studies on Indian seamen have not questioned this image of the lascar as a fully proletarianised worker who had no means of subsistence other than steamship wage labour. Fragmentary evidence from colonial records as well as the admirable oral history accounts of Sylheti lascars provided by Caroline Adams and several anthropological studies hint, however, at a rather different picture.

First of all, it is evident that the income from steamship labour was way below a subsistence wage even for a single person. Hence, it was stated to the 'Royal Commission on Labour in India' (RCLI) in 1929 that Indian seamen could live from the wages of a year's maritime employment for up to four to six months in their villages at the end of their contract, but that they only succeeded in being hired as lascars every third year on average. Working on steamships thus covered only about half of their subsistence needs and forced them to look for other sources of income both in their home villages and in town.

Secondly, and this is where the networks come in, Indian seamen cannot be construed to have been autonomous economic actors but have to be understood as parts of households combining multiple subsistence strategies. For one, lascars had parents, siblings, wives and children who usually lived in their home village where they tilled family land, were employed as field labourers or processed agricultural produce. As can be demonstrated most clearly for the 'agvalas', Indian seamen were often younger sons of smallholders who did not inherit the land but still remained part of the household. On the one hand, a maritime income could be an important contribution to maintaining the family's property or to increasing the households' status and land holdings in the village. On the other hand, unemployed lascars were able to find some work in their home villages. This became most apparent during the harvest seasons when the maritime labour supply in Bombay and Calcutta was less ample than at other times. Their households also covered most of the reproductive tasks of taking care of maimed, sick and aged seamen, but a lascar who stayed on in his village beyond a certain period ceased to be an esteemed contributor to his family's welfare and became a burden. Yet steam-

ship labour appears to have been considered more an opportunity than a risk, more a source of pride than of deprivation, even by households of traditionally non-seafaring communities. Hence it was reported in 1949 that photographs of steamships on which family members had worked were to be found in many houses in Sylheti villages. The 'serang', the recruiter and boatswain, was an important social figure not only in Calcutta's Kidderpore Docks area and around Bombay's Shipping Office but also in numerous distant villages for this very reason. A rural community that was the home of more than one serang was likely to be more prosperous; and Katy Gardner found that even a generation after the link to seafaring had broken off in one of her field work villages in Sylhet, the home of an influential family was still known as 'the serang's house'. This reflects the importance of the serang in constituting maritime labour networks spanning villages and colonial port cities. We will now turn to the ways and means of meshing these networks.

VI. From Village to Ship: Networks of Recruitment

The numerous nodes of maritime labour networks were economically linked up with each other through a myriad of minor monetary transactions. Before a lascar could hope to join a steamship crew, various expenses were incurred and numerous payments had to be discharged. This required savings or access to credit, which accounts for the fact that Indian seamen were generally not recruited from the classes of the urban poor or landless agrarian labourers but from the smallholding peasantry. The institutions involved in the process of recruitment can be perceived in the payment pattern that connected villages with ships in various ways.

When steamship crews were needed in the colonial recruitment ports, serangs were often contacted in their home villages by recruitment agents. Hence, the Royal Indian Marine was said to 'almost commandeer' maritime labour directly from certain villages of the Ratnagiri district for generations. Similarly, Bombay's licensed shipping brokers, the Chichgars, sent out agents even to remote areas of Northern Punjab for the recruitment of gangs of 'agvalas'. The serangs were required to propose suitable men for employment, and employment opportunities were best for those who could approach a serang from their own or a neighbouring village – for non-relatives, this became the first instance of a necessary monetary transaction.

Gaining the support and advice of a local serang was, however, also a worthwhile investment for the majority of intending seamen who had to

travel to Bombay and Calcutta on their own, since assistance of this kind could facilitate their hunt for employment. These men also needed cash to pay for the journey. Once they reached the port of recruitment, lascars met with a wide range of further expenses which could not usually be covered by their savings but required credit. This credit might already have been obtained in the village from the local moneylender or, alternatively, from an urban 'Marwari', but was often provided by a lodging-house owner, who was every so often as a prosperous serang (active or retired) or petty entrepreneur with no personal links to seafaring. Whatever their background, most lodging-house owners preferred to accommodate and give credit to men from their own village or area, thus facilitating the recovery of debts. However, not only accommodation and food were expensive in the city, getting a temporary job also required payments to an intermediary. In Calcutta, for instance, the ghat serangs controlled the recruitment of lascars as well as the distribution of jobs in the repair docks, which could only be had after ceding the best part of the wages to these intermediaries. Even prior to recruitment, clerks in the Shipping Office demanded fees for the provision of a new 'nullie', as the seamen called the 'Permanent Discharge Certificate' – an important document that had to be produced before the 'articles' (the contract) were signed. A lascar needed new 'nullies', for instance, if he had failed to join his crew before the departure of the vessel, if he had jumped ship on a previous journey or if his old certificate contained unfavourable entries by one of his former shipmasters, thereby reducing his chances of employment.

In order to be entered into a crew list, the intending lascars had to make a payment to the serang who then recommended him to the shipmaster or chief engineer as a member of the crew. If the lascars did not possess enough cash, as was frequently the case, he could also incur a debt with the serang that had to be repaid with interest after receiving the advance on recruitment and/or after the payment of full wages on being discharged at the end of a voyage. Once again, the serang preferred kinsmen and fellow villagers if only because of the reduced risk of being unable to recover his claims. If debts accumulated there was also the possibility that the relationship between lascars and serangs turned into one of long-term dependency or 'bondage'. The serang, for his part, had to 'bribe' various levels of intermediaries starting from the licensed shipping brokers, ghat serangs and their subordinates, continuing with the clerks of the shipping office and ending, in the case of the engine department, very frequently with the First Engineer who was always a European. The financial demands on serangs were considerable, and they tried to pass them on to their subordinates. According to an informally determined

scale, old hands had to pay less than newcomers and we can assume that relatives were charged less heavily.

After the contract had been concluded under the supervision of the Shipping Master, the seaman received the first monthly wage as an advance. This advance was, however, immediately appropriated on receipt by the subordinates of the shipping broker or ghat serang as security against the lascars' possible desertion in the few days before the ship left port. Since the seamen now urgently required cash, part of their advance was returned to them by the subordinates of the shipping broker/ghat serang or, to reduce the latter's risk, by further intermediaries (such as lodging-house owners and other urban moneylenders) as credit, for which, in turn, a high interest rate was demanded (for a detailed analysis of these arrangements, see Balachandran 1996). The lascars now paid the serang, discharged the bills at the lodging house and bought provisions to top up the insufficient food rations on board. The crew also purchased, individually or cooperatively, curios, parrots, coconuts and other foodstuffs with a view to improving their wages by hawking in ports outside South Asia – a customary practice of Indian Ocean sailors (Ewald 2000:72) much condemned by shipmasters and port officials but apparently quite hard to suppress.

In sum, access to the maritime labour market was far from free to all those with the required skills, and the contract between employer and employee was merely one of many financial transactions through which steamship labour relations were established. Access to the maritime labour market was channelled through a system of financial transactions. Participation in this system (most importantly the access to credit) was largely restricted to members of specific areas, villages, and kinship groups. Throughout the period under review officials of the colonial administration and of shipping companies explained the prevalence of this system of financial transactions in terms of civilisational backwardness – a view that was uncritically accepted by the ILO's James Mowat as late as 1949. The system was thus represented as a result of the Orientals' special propensity for corruption and bribery, as an articulation of the deeply ingrained custom of giving 'dasturi' (a commission) for services rendered – a custom that could not be abolished since it was voluntarily conformed to by the lascars, although it would eventually fade away with the progress of civilisation. This narrative is misleading not merely because colonial institutions were part and parcel of the system, in which even British officers were implicated. If shipping companies, colonial chambers of commerce and most colonial administrators tenaciously defended this system against criticism from trade unions and some state officials up to the 1930s,

the reason was not their respect for 'native custom' but rather the substantial advantages the system offered to employers. It was precisely this system of payments and dependencies that limited the lascars' 'freedom of contract' decisively and turned him into the 'docile' and 'reliable' workman that shipmasters and companies celebrated in numerous eulogies throughout the period, into a labourer they deemed so much easier to handle than the notoriously insubordinate, ill-disciplined, riotous and permanently drunk English 'Jack Tar' who had become a source of constant complaint on the part of employers for decades. Consider for instance the role of the licensed shipping broker whose main function was, as stated by employers time and again, to prevent lascars from absconding after receiving their advance. They fulfilled this function by implicating the seamen in debt relationships that could not easily be evaded since their immediate creditors (e.g. lodging-house owners) relied on coercion if necessary and often came from the same village or a neighbouring one and could, therefore, hold the debtors' families responsible as effectively as a village moneylender in case of default. These relationships reduced recruitment costs for the steamship companies as well as the costly time a steamship had to lie idle in port.

This example might illustrate that the networks spanning villages and port towns were, in fact, 'networks of subalternity' or, more precisely, infrastructures of subordinating labour. Yet they did not work all that smoothly, were ridden with contradictions and constantly subject to social conflict and renegotiation. Significantly, the most substantial conflicts arose concerning the nodes of maritime labour networks that were most unambiguously in the shipping companies' interest. There were no doubt many instances of lascars clashing with their serangs, but the latter's ambivalent position as the employer's foreman and moneylender on the one hand and kinsman, fellow villager, patron and spokesman on the other contributed to individualising these conflicts and prevented a broad-based campaign against the serang. Lascars and serangs were, however, united in their opposition to the 'licensed shipping broker' or 'ghat serang', the most valuable institution for the shipping companies and colonial officials. The incomes of both serangs and lascars were considerably reduced by the establishment of this higher echelon of intermediaries, who thus became the major focus of conflicts in the early twentieth century and especially in the 1920s when seamen's trade unions established themselves rather effectively. The internal power structure of the seamen's unions arguably reflected this alliance of unequals, since serangs tended to dominate them especially during their early years. While 'outsiders' (especially lawyers and politicians) frequently headed these early unions

and represented them in public, there are indications that their cadre consisted mainly of serangs. Tension between lascars and serangs in the seamen's unions became clear in Calcutta in 1933 when a faction broke away from the 'Bengal Mariners' Union' on the grounds that it was firmly controlled by a group of serangs who had even restricted lascar union membership to a certain quota. As for the 'licensed shipping brokers', the unions only achieved their ultimate abolition in the 1930s after obdurate resistance on the part of employers and government officials despite moderate international pressure against such maritime recruitment practices after the foundation of the ILO in 1919 and although a commission installed by the Government of India had recommended radical change of the recruitment system as early as 1922 (for details see: Broeze and Balachandran 1996).

Fissures within the maritime recruitment networks did, however, not necessarily lead to open conflict. The character of the institutions constituting the nodes of these networks was to some extent open to negotiation and they could, therefore, acquire a wide variety of local forms. This is clearly borne out by the case of one of the core institutions of these networks, the seamen's lodging house. Here, the Bombay case is of particular interest as the greater ethnic segmentation of the seamen recruited in this city was reflected by the organisation of lodging houses on strictly ethnic lines. Thus Punjabi agvalas lived under particularly poor conditions in so-called 'dera/s' while Kharwas, Konkans and Muslims from other parts of India each had their own slightly better 'latti/s' or lodging houses. As in Calcutta, many of these cheap and often small establishments were run on commercial lines and the owner was sometimes a former seaman. The lodging houses of Goan Christians, the 'kur/s', were different in more ways than one. According to several reports, 'kur/s' were not commercial enterprises but rather cooperatives based on village communities. The members of a 'kur' usually belonged to the same village, were not necessarily seamen, but men who sought work as cooks or tailors in Bombay. Some 'kur/s' were large enough to occupy spacious buildings that provided shelter and meals, and where the housing conditions were usually superior to those of latti/s and dera/s. They were reportedly administered by elected councils, charged regular membership fees, which in some cases even had to be paid when the respective member was absent. 'Kur/s' were often called 'clubs' and, in fact, many of them were far more than mere lodging houses. They were co-operative societies that provided benefit schemes in the case of death and loans at a modest interest rate; they were cultural centres that served as chapels, contained shrines of village saints and celebrated the festivals of their respective villages; they may even have con-

stituted the organisational focuses from which the first seaman's unions emerged in Bombay in 1896, accepting Goan stewards only as members well into the 1920s. This phenomenon merits closer examination. It is likely that relations within the 'kur/s' were less egalitarian than the accounts presently at hand would have it and that the social hierarchies and contradictions of the village were reproduced in them. However, the case of the 'kur/s' still demonstrates how an institution that was crucial to the subordination of labour could be renegotiated by communities of maritime workers, how a 'network of subalternity' spanning village and port for purposes of recruitment and control could be appropriated to serve as a 'network of the subaltern', too.

VII. Conclusions and Perspectives

The argument of this paper was that networks of steamship labour based on kinship and ethnicity can neither be understood as surviving elements of pre-capitalist societies and cultures nor solely as modes of resistance against the incorporating forces of the capitalist world economy and imperialism. Rather, they were the concrete realisations of an abstract tendency towards incorporation. Both the spatial location of these networks and the social relations underlying them were shaped at every step by the exigencies of colonial capitalism: the centralisation of steamship recruitment in two colonial port cities; the higher propensity of certain rural areas to develop into maritime 'labour catchment areas'; the segmentation of crews according to ethnicity; the imposition of institutions like the 'licensed shipping brokers' on these networks; the limitation of access to maritime employment through bureaucratic measures like the 'Continuous Discharge Certificate'; the utilisation and defence by both colonial capital and government of a system of so-called 'corruption' that restricted access to the maritime labour market to certain, often ethnically defined networks. Maritime labour networks were thus networks of subordination under colonial capital, infrastructures of differential incorporation into an international maritime labour market. Yet these infrastructures were ridden with contradictions and could, therefore, also be used in ways sometimes clearly at odds with the interests of British shipowners and colonial government when groups of maritime labourers appropriated them for their own purposes. Hence these networks not only competed with each other and tried to exclude 'outsiders' from their respective labour market segment, but could also be used as organisational focuses of trade union development or for social welfare purposes.

Though we have focused on the sections of maritime labour networks that lay within South Asia, they extended, of course, far beyond the subcontinent. The spatial reorganisation of the maritime labour market, the emergence of a new labour 'seascape' is observable for the whole Indian Ocean region where colonial steam-shipping induced the development of a new type of maritime centre and port such as Singapore, Rangoon, Colombo, Aden and Mombasa. Some ethnic groups were privileged over others and the ethnic composition of the Indian Ocean maritime workforce was partly reshaped under the influence of colonial capital. In 1913, for instance, thousands of Indian lascars were said to have been carried annually as 'passengers' to ports on the Western shores of the Indian Ocean including Aden, Mombasa, Zanzibar and Cape Town over the preceding three decades, to be hired there by British shipmasters in preference to local maritime labour. Moreover, the spatial location and ethnic segmentation of these transoceanic labour networks as well as the social relations within them were to a great extent defined by both maritime and immigration legislation in the metropolises of world capitalism. Hence, the legal content of the word 'lascar' was repeatedly redefined in ethnic terms; Indian sailors were first excluded from voyages outside the Indian Ocean and Pacific and later from Northern Atlantic sea routes; non-South-Asian seamen of the Indian Ocean region were partly marginalized but could also reserve or open up certain segments of the maritime labour market for themselves; the lascars' freedom of movement in ports outside South Asia was severely restricted by the British, Australian and US administrations as well as by colonial authorities in Africa. Informal mechanisms, especially those of debt relations, were also used to restrict the mobility of a potentially highly mobile workforce. Despite all these limitations, there were, of course, numerous ways of appropriating transoceanic labour networks for the purposes of Indian Ocean subalterns. But the construction of these elements of a historical Indian Ocean 'seascape' will be the subject of another paper.

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Notes

- 1 This is a first attempt to make sense of material collected for a project on 'Maritime Work Culture in the Indian Ocean Region' conducted at the Centre for Modern Oriental Studies, Berlin, and funded by the German Research Council. The material consists mainly of archival evidence collected at the Oriental and India Office Collections of the British Library and the Public Record Office in London and, to a lesser extent, at the ILO Archives in Geneva, but also of various printed reports and contemporary publications. I apologise that no references are given to documentary evidence in this preliminary version of what is planned to eventually become a more substantial essay. For the relevant literature, see the select bibliography at the end of the paper. I am grateful to Joya Chatterjee, Markus Dächsel and Willem van Schendel who readily shared their regional expertise and pointed out relevant literature to me. Moreover, I owe thanks to Christoph Gabler whose research assistance greatly facilitated writing this paper and to Jan-Georg Deutsch for his critical comments.
- 2 This is rather different from the more situational and short-term use of the concept as an 'action-set' by Justin Willis (Willis: 5-7). My attempt to conceive networks as modes of 'differential incorporation' is inspired by a presentation by Tim Harper, which I had the opportunity to hear in Cambridge in November 2001, though I do not wish to implicate him in my particular development of his idea.
- 3 These are the only groups of permanent townspeople mentioned in the context of steamship labour, but I have not as yet been able to find more precise information on their social and cultural background.

The Indian Ocean World and a Very Small Place in Zanzibar¹

Jan-Georg Deutsch

Introduction

'Peshawar' lies in Zanzibar. It is the name of a neighbourhood located at the lower end of Soko Mhogo Street, a narrow long-winding road that cuts across Stone Town, as the old part of Zanzibar town is widely known (see map).² 'Peshawar' is the 'bad' part of town where in among the ordinary people living there, drug addicts, thieves, thugs and dropouts have found a place to hide from their families and the police.

This paper will attempt to unfold the history of 'Peshawar', revealing its origin and development. It relies primarily on oral history sources.³ Because of the somewhat sensitive nature of the information, much of what is revealed about 'Peshawar' and its inhabitants must remain anonymous.⁴ The paper is divided into three parts. The first part gives a brief description of the area. The second places 'Peshawar' in the postcolonial history of Zanzibar Stone Town. The final part recounts how the area acquired its peculiar name.

'Peshawar' arguably stands for a multitude of similar places and spaces in the Indian Ocean. The paper will show that the pleasant aesthetic of such places obscures a harsh and unpleasant political and social reality. It also illustrates that the meaning of the historical transformation of the Indian Ocean World – its 'seacape' – is created in its various localities, even in such peripheral places as 'Peshawar' in Zanzibar Stone Town.

Locating 'Peshawar' in Stone Town

'Peshawar' is not the best place to be after 11 o'clock at night. Dimly lit, its alleyways and thoroughfares afford many opportunities for people to hide in dark corners or seek a quick getaway. It is widely believed that both Zanzibari citizens and foreigners were relieved of their possessions at knifepoint on several occasions in the past. In contrast to other areas of the town at that hour, there are very few people on the street, mostly 'youths' considered by older people to have 'bad' manners. They do not return the customary greet-

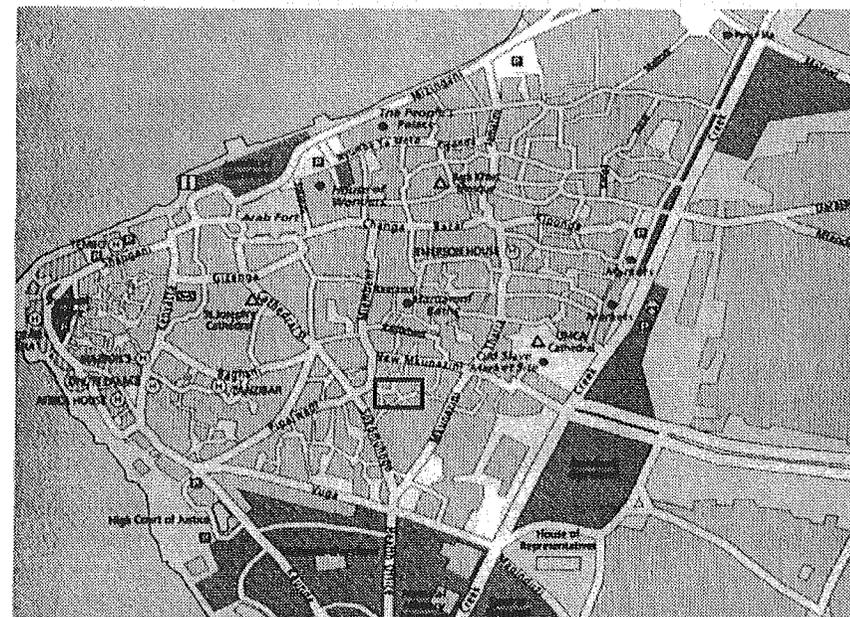
ings extended by passers-by but remain silent. Some of them appear to be in another world, almost as if they were not in the present. Young women are regularly the subject of name-calling and male visitors are greeted with what the caller believes to be an offensive remark. After the 11th September 2001, for instance, a hearty 'Osama' was sometimes extended to foreign visitors. At night, strangers and neighbours alike try to avoid the area.

During the day, however, 'Peshawar' is as safe and pleasant as anywhere else in Stone Town. The ground-floor shops opening onto the street are only slightly less well-stocked than other shops in town. Many of the older shops are owned by Zanzibari of Indian origin, whereas the newer ones tend to be run by immigrants who arrived fairly recently from the countryside, from the neighbouring island of Pemba or from mainland Tanzania. There are specialised shops offering various services, a number of smaller places to eat, shops with carpenters, washers or cleaners, second-hand clothes dealers, and a tourist curio shop. The government party CCM (*Chama cha Mapinduzi*) and the opposition movement CUF (Civic United Front) both have their offices here.

Many of the houses were originally built for individual extended families, but are now shared by several parties. The ground floor is used for commercial purposes, while the second and third floors contain private rooms where people cook, sleep and receive guests. Some houses are severely overcrowded with up to eight people sleeping in one room. There are plenty of children – boys and girls – who play boisterously in the street, especially in the late afternoon and early evening when they have finished school. Similar to other places in Stone Town, the smell of the area changes according to season, but the occasional odour of rotting garbage can be a nuisance for both neighbours and visitors alike.

Many of the older buildings in Stone Town are in a bad state of repair. They still look elegant and very beautiful, especially in the glow of the late afternoon sun, but owing to lack of maintenance, the plaster is falling from the walls and the wooden window shutters have not seen fresh paint, let alone repair for a long, long time. The walls have survived in the hot humid climate largely because they are made of very durable coral stone and lime. Yet, the ceilings, for which mangrove poles were used at the time, are often in a dangerous state of near-collapse. If the roof is leaking or the drainage system is not properly maintained, the poles tend to rot in a relatively short space of time. A number of houses collapse each year, especially during the rainy season, while others are so close to that point that they have to be abandoned by their inhabitants. Up to 150 houses have been lost through negligence since the revolution in 1964 and the town shows many signs of decay. Yet, such

impressions can be misleading. While many houses appear to be in complete disrepair from the outside, the interiors are often kept meticulously clean, and the inhabitants have in small ways tried to preserve the status quo without investing too much time or money. The reasons for this striking lack of care will be examined below.



Peshawar (Zanzibar)

'Peshawar' – like many other neighbourhoods in Stone Town – has its own 'local' mosque though it is not entirely clear whether those who pray there are exclusively or even predominantly 'locals'. According to oral interviews, the mosque is of Ibathi origin, which suggests that its founder and at least its early members belonged to a particularly strict, 'puritanical' group of Muslims consisting primarily of more prosperous families who arrived from Oman and the Hadhramaut during the second half of the nineteenth century. Today, distinctions between the mosques in Zanzibar town have lost much of their erstwhile meaning and importance. But it is noticeable that some people come from other parts of the town or even further afield to visit this particular

mosque. Attendance seems to vary considerably, not least for this reason. During the day the mosque is used as a *madrassa*, a school where younger children are taught to recite the Koran by heart and learn the rudiments of Arabic script. Compared with other *madrassa* in town, only a small number of children seem to attend the school.

'Peshawar' is situated in 'Vuga', an area of Stone Town that borders with another historical quarter (in Kiswahili *mitaa*) called 'Kajificheni'.⁵ The *mitaa* are said to have been founded by (extended) kinship groups. However, due to sustained large-scale immigration, there is little evidence of this today, except perhaps that after a few years of residence people acquire a fierce loyalty to the quarter or extended neighbourhood in which they live.

In social and economic terms, Vuga is perhaps the most diverse part of the town.⁶ The area was fully developed comparatively recently – that is after the British occupation – and thus bears the most obvious colonial imprint. Before that, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the people who lived here were mostly servants, workers, and slaves of the Zanzibar aristocracy. Some early maps of the town show that several houses in the area were actually wattle and mud huts with straw roofs. In the early twentieth century, however, immigrants arrived here from all corners of the Indian Ocean and, indeed, from Europe, a fact that was to change the appearance of the quarter dramatically. The southern part of Vuga is known as Zanzibar's 'Garden Suburb'. Here among open spaces and parks such as the People's Garden (formerly Victoria Garden), major colonial buildings including the High Court and the Public Library were erected according to the orientalist architectural fashion of the day. With reference to John Sinclair, the most influential twentieth-century architect of public buildings in Zanzibar, this style is commonly known as 'Sinclairian Saracenicism'.

Vuga has thus far more to offer than derelict neighbourhoods like 'Peshawar' and can boast of well-kept buildings and substantial structures that include the Embassy of Oman, the Institute of Kiswahili and Foreign Languages (the former Aga Khan Secondary School), the Peace Memorial Museum, and the Zanzibar Medical and Diagnostic Centre. Vuga Road, a two-way street that cuts Vuga into two halves, is lined with government offices, shops, airline and travel agencies and places to eat. Unfortunately, the once splendid premises of the Majestic Cinema and the Culture Club that are located here have not weathered the post-colonial period particularly well. Zibar, currently one of Zanzibar's most fashionable restaurants is also to be found on Vuga Road. It is owned by Shadya Karume, the daughter of the

President of Zanzibar, Amani Karume, and granddaughter of Abeid Karume, former leader of the 1964 revolution and first President of Zanzibar.

Placing 'Peshawar' in Zanzibar's Postcolonial History

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Zanzibar was the centre of a commercial empire that dominated trade and politics in East Africa, at least as far as the coastal towns and certain hinterland areas were concerned. Wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few large landowners and rich merchants who built large stone houses for both private and commercial purposes in a style that has been described as an 'agglomeration of various architectural traditions from the East African coast and the world of the Indian Ocean' (Sheriff 1998: 7). The most prominent buildings – such as the *Beit al-Sahel* (Palace by the Sea) – were owned by the Sultan of Zanzibar.

Colonialism has left a significant architectural imprint on the town. The British ruled Zanzibar for almost three-quarters of a century. In November 1890, following the signing of the Anglo-German Heligoland Agreement, the islands of Pemba and Unguja were declared a British Protectorate. Up to the Second World War, the British made an effort to 'develop' the island. Large-scale building and engineering works emerged, particularly in Zanzibar town. Many of the public buildings currently used by the government were erected during this period.

Zanzibar regained its independence on 10 December 1963. However, the elected government to which the British had relinquished power was to last for only about a month. It was violently overthrown on 12 January 1964 in a 'Revolution' that few people in Zanzibar had anticipated. It is believed that several thousand people died. Many more fled the islands. The newly-established Revolutionary Council immediately abolished all signs and institutions of what it believed had represented the 'Arab' domination of the island, including, of course, the post-colonial constitutional monarchy. The Council nationalised a number of the larger clove plantations, all community-based schools, and the major import/export trading companies. The policy of taking over urban properties that belonged to those who had fled the country or had been killed during the revolution proved to be highly significant for the history of Zanzibar Stone Town. A vast number, perhaps more than half of an estimated 2000 houses in Stone Town, fell into the hands of the government.

Soon after coming to power, the Chairmen of the Revolutionary Council of Zanzibar, Abeid Amani Karume, and the first President of Tanganyika, Julius K. Nyerere, agreed to set up a loose union between the two countries, forming the United Republic of Tanzania (*Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania*), which took effect on 26 April 1964. Zanzibar, however, retained its internal political sovereignty. Abeid Karume was assassinated on 7 April 1972. Since then, Zanzibar has experienced a considerable degree of political and economic liberalisation, albeit at the price of a gradually closer union with the mainland. An important stepping-stone in this process was the merging in 1977 of the two government parties – the Zanzibari based Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) and the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU). The new party, which was called *Chama cha Mapunduzi* (Party of the Revolution) or CCM, has been in power ever since. Further key political and economic reforms were undertaken by the government in the mid-1980s, leading to the establishment of a multi-party system and the liberalisation of trade in the early 1990s.

After the revolution, agriculture, and particularly clove production, experienced a gradual decline. The newly-established small-scale import substitution (shoes, cigarettes) and export-oriented manufacturing industries (clove oil production, fish canning) did not succeed in contributing significantly to the wealth of the islands. In the 1970s, the government invested a considerable sum in the construction of 'modern' housing estates in newly-developed areas of Zanzibar town. Very little money was spent on the maintenance of older buildings in Stone Town.

Since the mid-1980s, Zanzibar has gradually become a popular destination for tens of thousands of European tourists. A substantial number of holiday resorts, luxury hotels, and guest-houses have been built to cater for their every need and whim. Most of these new hotels are located outside Zanzibar Stone Town, largely saving it from the massive tourist development visible on the Kenyan coast, for instance on the island of Lamu. Thus, with the exception of one major development, only a few guest-houses and smaller luxury hotels are scattered throughout Zanzibar's urban landscape.

As mentioned earlier, the property of those who had either fled the country or been killed during the revolution in 1964 came under the nationalisation policy of the government. An estimate of the number of houses currently owned by the government is difficult to come by. In general, tax records and government publications provide a very incomplete picture of the actual situation. Since nationalisation ceased in the mid-1970s, a substantial number of houses have changed hands in unrecorded transactions. At present, possi-

bly less than a quarter of the housing stock in Stone Town is actually owned by the government.

After coming to power, the revolutionary government instituted a flat-rate rent control system for the old houses in Stone Town. Up to the late 1980s, these charges were hardly ever increased and their value had slowly been eaten up by inflation to the extent that they became a form of national payment. However, many tenants have to pay all sorts of unofficial rents and inducement fees in order to stay where they are, but those who receive these payments tend not to reinvest them in the houses.

The population of Stone Town has undergone a dramatic demographic change since the revolution. It first declined in the 1960s, but experienced a revival in the following decade. An increasing number of peasants and labourers, driven from the land by poverty, moved into Stone Town in the early 1970s, occupying houses that had remained empty since the revolution or had been vacated by their owners. By the early 1990s, less than half of the people living in Stone Town were actually born there. These immigrants often paid a nominal rent or none at all. More importantly, they did not have the means to invest in the maintenance of the old buildings. Coupled with the government policy of utter neglect, the result was the considerable decay of the housing stock mentioned above.

'Peshawar' is a prime example of this phenomenon. According to local informants, the government-owned houses had already been empty for some time when they were taken over in the mid-1980s by unemployed youths turned squatters. Most of them were born and raised in the town and initially just sought temporary accommodation. Tourism had got off the ground around this time and the government was beginning to recognise Stone Town as a potential tourist magnet that would bring foreign exchange to Zanzibar. Consequently, a limited number of spectacular redevelopment projects got underway, largely financed by the international donor community and some multinational semi-commercial organisations such as the Aga Khan Foundation. For a time, the town boomed. By the late 1980s, the youngsters of 'Peshawar' were working in the tourist industry, earning their living in the informal sector as guides, casual workers, waiters, beach boys, and temporary cleaners in guest-houses and hotels. According to one informant, the period was great fun while it lasted – music was played day and night, almost a form of continuous celebration that the political and social restrictions imposed on society by the 'revolutionary' government were finally breaking down. Older people in the quarter saw this development with great misgiving. They witnessed their sons and - even worse - their daughters becoming increasingly

attracted to these young men and their carefree life style. The party soon came to an end, however, when 'Peshawar' turned into a drug abuse area with all its unpleasant consequences. Around this time, the neighbourhood acquired its peculiar name and 'bad' reputation.

The Naming of a Neighbourhood

Peshawar is the name of the regional capital of the North-West Frontier Province of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. In the early 1980s it became the premier staging-post for various groups – the *Mujahedin* – fighting the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Lavishly supported by US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Saudi Arabian funds and logistic assistance from the Pakistani special services (ISI), the anti-Soviet alliance channelled enormous quantities of arms into Afghanistan. In return, millions of refugees were allowed to cross from Afghanistan into Pakistan. Many were brought to camps located on marginal lands near the border of Afghanistan, mostly in the North-West Frontier Province. In the 1980s, Peshawar grew in rapid tempo, soon exceeding the one million mark as young male refugees sought employment in the city.

During this period, groups fighting inside Afghanistan and some Pashtun Chiefs in northwestern Pakistan launched a massive expansion of the long-established drug trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Opium has been grown for hundreds of years in the 'Golden Crescent', as the mountainous area between Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan is known. When production declined elsewhere in the early 1980s, particularly in South America, the war in Afghanistan provided a unique opportunity to enlarge production significantly. Largely outside the control of the governments in Pakistan and Afghanistan, huge quantities of opium poppies were transferred from Afghanistan to the northern border regions of Pakistan where they were refined into brown heroin. Peshawar was the commercial centre of the drug trade. At the time, the CIA and other Western intelligence agencies chose to ignore the thriving opium trade, mainly because it was thought to be conducive to the ongoing war effort.

The Soviet army left Afghanistan in 1989, but internal fighting between the members of the former alliance against Soviet occupation continued. The Taliban movement finally emerged as the strongest group among the warring factions and took Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, in 1996. However, this had little effect on the drug trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Produc-

tion in Afghanistan increased in the second half of the 1990s, so that by the end of the decade, the country was believed to account for almost 75 percent of the world's opium production. During the same period, increasing amounts of opium were refined in Afghanistan itself, but Pakistan remained Afghanistan's premier outlet for drug exports. Contrary to expectations in the trade and its Western observers, the Taliban successfully suppressed the export of opium from mid-2000. Since the removal of the regime by American forces in early 2002, Afghan opium farmers are said to be looking forward to a bumper harvest and, now that the enormous opium stocks accrued during the last two years of Taliban rule will finally reach the world market, heroin trading companies expect brisk business.

A substantial quantity of the heroin produced in the 1980s and 1990s was locally consumed, but an increasing amount was exported. The owners of the laboratories operating around Peshawar sent their surplus heroin down south to Karachi and Bombay, from where it was re-exported by ship and air to other destinations. Here, the companies had a major obstacle to overcome. Imports from Pakistan and India were closely monitored by European and North American customs officials. As mounting heroin supplies from Pakistan were pushed onto the world market, drug-trading companies had to seek fresh channels to reach their customers in the US and Europe. This meant hunting for couriers travelling from countries that had previously not been known to export drugs. The problem was solved to a great extent by the kinship networks of widely-dispersed Pakistani and Indian families. In contrast to the American *La Cosa Nostra* organisation, for instance, which more or less operates as a legitimate multinational company, the Pakistani heroin trade was (and presumably still is) dominated by a handful of very powerful and incredibly rich patriarchs.

Almost all African countries gradually became involved one way or another in the worldwide drug trade, with Nigeria gaining a particularly obnoxious reputation. Other countries were also used as staging-posts by the drug-trading companies, including Kenya, Somalia, Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, and - to a lesser degree - Tanzania. The fact that heroin and other drugs can be brought by sea to countries located on the Indian Ocean rim is an additional bonus for the East African drug trade. Local speedboats are said to have little trouble meeting up in international waters with container ships from India, Pakistan or the Far East, where a consignment weighing perhaps only a few kilos can easily be passed between them.

Kassim (not his real name) came to Zanzibar town in 1987.⁷ He is said to have been involved in the Kenyan drug trade, but probably moved further south because of tighter controls in Mombasa where American navy and in-

telligence agencies maintained a strong presence, taking his Pakistani connections with him. He took up residence in a derelict area in Vuga and stayed there until the late 1990s. During this period, he offered local youths huge inducements to travel between various destinations in Europe (Milan, Barcelona, Istanbul, and London), North America (New York, Toronto), southeast Asia (Karachi, Bombay) and southern Africa (Harare, Johannesburg) carrying innocuous-looking packages. In the late 1980s, the Zanzibari per capita income probably did not exceed US \$200 p.a. One round trip alone could bring several hundred, with a bit of luck a few thousands US Dollars. It is not surprising that a number of enterprising youths took up the offer to work for Kassim as couriers. They knew that they were carrying heroin but could not have cared less, mostly because they had only a hazy notion of what it meant to be caught by law enforcement agencies in Europe or the US in possession of substantial amounts of illicit drugs. Kassim's main supply of heroin came from Peshawar in Pakistan and that is why his neighbourhood acquired its peculiar name.⁸

Most addicts in Zanzibar are so poor that they cannot afford syringes so that heroin is smoked or inhaled rather than injected. This may be a blessing in disguise as the practice has so far prevented the rapid spread of HIV/Aids among drug-users. The latter can easily be identified by their thumbs, burned from trying to balance a portion of smouldering heroin goo on a piece of heated silver foil. The majority of the drug-users were born in Zanzibar town, and come from all groups and strata of Zanzibar's diverse, cosmopolitan society. The vast majority of them are young men in their twenties and thirties, very few are older. There are only only tenuous links to the drug trade that cater for tourists, at least as far as 'Peshawar' is concerned. The latter generally prefer to smoke marijuana, and have rarerly asked around for hard drugs such as cocaine or 'crack'. There is a thriving transit trade in psychotropic drugs, such as Mandrax (methaqualone), involving transit shipments from India to South Africa, as well as a substantial hashish (cannabis resin) trade, but both seem to be firmly in the hands of large-scale trading companies, some of which have been in the import/export business for a long time. These drugs arrive in shipping containers and are then repackaged into different containers to conceal the original source of the consignment. Operations of this kind would, of course, depend on the connivance of harbour and customs officials. Many people in Zanzibar believe that its reputation for having a somewhat unorthodox control mechanism in place at the seaport is substantially true.

When Kassim arrived in Zanzibar, he is said to have initially distributed small amounts of heroin almost for free. He would then slowly withdraw his generosity to his 'friends'. By this time, some drug-users had already become dependent on a regular supply, so that he could now easily persuade them to work for him either as local distributors or as drug couriers. It is very likely, at least in the first couple of months of Kassim's activities in Zanzibar, that the government was not aware of what was going on in 'Peshawar', or did not want to know. In many ways, Zanzibar Stone Town resembles a small village whose inhabitants know only too well what their neighbours are doing, and since gossiping is a favourite Zanzibari pastime, rumours about 'Peshawar' began to circulate around town. Nevertheless, it took over two years for the police to send the anti-drug squad to search Kassim's house. To everybody's surprise, nothing was officially found. Many informants believe that from then on Kassim bribed members of the police to give him advance notice of police searches. It is impossible to establish whether this is true or not. For the rest of his time in 'Peshawar', however, Kassim was never caught or charged with a drug-related offence. In 1998, he is said to have retired from the heroin trade and left the town to live in one of the many properties he had acquired during his brief career as Zanzibar's premier heroin dealer. Many believe that he is, in fact, now living in Dar es Salaam.

In his wake, he left the youths, squatters and dropouts who had nowhere else to go, many of whom were drug addicts by that time. Kassim's place was taken by other dealers, but they charged higher prices or would not provide heroin on credit. Consequently, some of the youths began to seek more immediate funds for their addiction than were legally available. The crime rate began to rise in the area. Many informants said that mugging and thieving was previously unheard of in Stone Town and that people used to leave their doors open, even at night. This is probably an exaggeration, but there can be little doubt that drug-related offences have substantially increased over time and are the reason why the area gained its particularly 'bad' reputation.

By Way of Conclusion

In this paper an attempt was made to elaborate the historical origins of the popular name of a small neighbourhood in Zanzibar Stone Town. It was shown that 'Peshawar' actually lies at the intersection of diverse histories, ranging from the parochial of Zanzibar Stone Town to the global of the Indian Ocean drug trade. Their trajectories came together to make the name and

its history. There was certainly nothing inevitable about that particular neighbourhood becoming the focus of the international drug trade. Yet, from the account above it appears that these histories, representing different spatial and temporal frameworks, are so intimately connected that they are constituent of each other. The history of Indian Ocean 'localities' such as 'Peshawar' can obviously not be understood with reference to the 'local' alone. Yet, conversely, the history of the wider Indian Ocean World – the manifold transformation of its 'seascape' – only makes sense if it can be related to 'local' histories, including those of such very small places as 'Peshawar' in Zanzibar Stone Town.

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Notes

- 1 The title of this paper was shamelessly taken from Donald Wright's excellent study on the Gambian kingdom of Niumi, 1450-1996. See Donald Wright, *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa*, Armonck/NY: Sharpe, 1997. Otherwise there is no connection between his work and this paper. The author would like to thank Prof. Abdul Sheriff, Curator of the Zanzibar Museum for sharing his extensive knowledge of Stone Town and Zanzibar history with

- the author. He is also grateful for the advice he received from Bernt Glatzer on opium production in Aghanistan and heroin refinement in Pakistan.
- 2 Stone Town's history goes back to the 16th century. The other parts of the town are of more recent origin, mostly 19th and 20th century. In terms of space, Stone Town occupies less than five percent of what now constitutes the total urban area of Zanzibar municipality. Yet, roughly a sixth of its 240,000 inhabitants – perhaps as many as 35,000 to 40,000 people – currently live in Stone Town, making it the most densely populated area in the whole of Zanzibar. These figures are crude estimates and could be wrong by a considerable margin. The last official census was taken in 1988, showing that in the thirty years between 1958 and 1988 the populations of Zanzibar Town tripled from 57,923 to 167,318. The population of Zanzibar town is said to have grown by more than 3 percent each year since 1988.
- 3 This paper is the first tentative attempt to make use of research material collected for a wider reasearch project ('Soko Mhogo Street. The Social Biography of a Street in Zanzibar Stone Town in the Postcolonial Period') which the author is carrying out at the Centre for Modern Oriental Studies in Berlin. Field research in Zanzibar in 2001 was funded by the German Research Council whose generosity the author gratefully acknowledges.
- 4 The transcripts of the relevant interviews can be consulted after permission has been granted by the informants. Research for this paper was carried out in the first half of 2001.
- 5 The names of town quarters and their geographical extension have changed over time. The question of whether a particular group of houses belongs to this or that area can provoke lengthy arguments. Thus, for instance, some older people believe that 'Peshawar' actually used to belong to 'Mkunazini'. Younger people, however, tend to locate the area in 'Vuga'. The historical name 'Kajificheni is hardly ever used in current discussions, although it is shown on early colonial maps.
- 6 As in other parts of Stone Town, a large proportion of Vuga's inhabitants are of Indian origin, in the case of Vuga itself mostly poor immigrants from Gujarat in northwestern India. This is probably why early colonial maps showing the ethnic and racial divisions of the town portray a sizeable part of Vuga as a 'Khoja' area, i.e. a predominantly Hindu Indian settlement. However, these classifications were at best imaginative guesswork and do not fit in at all with what is remembered about the original inhabitants of the area.
- 7 It must be emphasized that since it is impossible to confirm the information on Kassim and his business activities, it has to be taken at face value.
- 8 On the naming of neighbourhoods in Zanzibar Town, see the instructive article by Myers (1996).

Who are the Zanzibari? Newspaper Debates on Difference, 1948-1958

Katrin Bromber

Wazanzibari? Wapo! Wazanzibari na Wazanzibara .('Zanzibaris'? They exist! People of 'Zanzibari' origin and people of mainland origin)¹
(Manager, Zanzibar, 2001)

Introduction

The blending of key words is a rhetorical device suited to both amusement and critique. By changing the final vowel, the speaker ridicules people from the mainland (*bara*) who have become permanent residents of Zanzibar and call themselves *Wazanzibari*. The word-game, however, hints at the concept of difference between 'genuine' *Wazanzibari* and those of *bara* origin who, and here lies the rub, are entitled to the same rights. Furthermore, it indicates that discussions of identity are generated especially in places of intense cultural exchange such as Zanzibar – an important economic and cultural centre in the Indian Ocean region.

The discussion itself is rooted in pre-independence debates on 'Zanzibari' citizenship in the various communities of the Sultan of Zanzibar's dominions – Unguja, Pemba, and the coastal strip of Kenya. Regulated for the first time in 1911 by Decree No. 12, conceptualising the 'Zanzibari' was an important element in the intellectual controversy between the two mainstreams of Zanzibar nationalism – the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP, 1956) and the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP, 1957). Although the term 'Zanzibari' appeared much earlier in the press – Khalil Ali Khalil, the owner of Zanzibar's first daily newspaper *Ruta*, had even published a weekly broadsheet in 1939 called *The Zanzibari* – the nationality and citizenship issue first became the subject of vigorous debates in the late Forties and Fifties.

Important political events such as Zanzibar's first elections on a common roll basis in 1957 and the Census in 1958 created the need for a clear definition of the 'Zanzibari' concept of nationality/citizenship. Yet, fragments of the discourse in the form of newspaper articles indicate that single political

events were not the sole trigger of debates on the 'Zanzibari' issue. It was rather the permanent repetition of the concept's main ideas and arguments that reinforced the pros and cons in the reader's mind. However, these arguments were to a large extent channelled through the press. Despite the fact that many of Zanzibar's newspapers contributed to the debate, this paper will concentrate on *Mwongozi* and *Afrika Kwetu*, the mouthpieces of the strongest political movements in pre-independence Zanzibar, that consequently played a leading role in the discussion on *who the Zanzibari are*.

Jonathon Glassman (2000a) has shown that *Mwongozi*, *Afrika Kwetu* and other Zanzibar newspapers fought 'newspaper wars' on various political issues, but that where necessary, they also forged alliances. The concerted action against *Kijumbe cha Agozi*, the Young African Social Union (YASU) newspaper vigorously opposed to the ASP/ZNP alliance in 1959, is only one example. Arguably, the argument-is-war metaphor should not be reduced to verbal attacks, but should also include verbal alliance. As the paper shows, this was true for the initial phase of the 'Zanzibari' discussion, where both sides made attempts to reach a common ground.

The 'Zanzibari' citizen/nationality debate was part of a broader discussion in both newspapers on ethnic diversity and socio-economic inequality along racial lines, and on methods of dealing with them in the struggle for independence and nationhood.² Here, recent studies on media discourses in European countries are helpful, especially those on topics such as diversity, racism and nationalism. They employ what has been termed as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as their main methodological approach.³ Siegfried Jäger (1999: 132) strongly emphasises the historical perspective(s) of CDA and defines discourse as the *flow of social knowledge through time*. Thus, examining the communication of difference in Zanzibar's pre-independence newspapers, of which the discussion on nationality/citizenship is an important aspect, seems to be a useful approach.

The debate on 'Zanzibari' nationality/citizenship reveals remarkably opposing perspectives as to who can claim legitimate belonging to the islands. The paper shows that different views about immigration from various parts of the Indian Ocean World correspond to different notions about the 'true' shape of its imagined *seascape*.

Mwongozi – The Guide

Launched on 3rd February 1941 as a weekly newspaper that came off the press every Friday, *Mwongozi* became the strongest advocate of the 'Zanzibari' concept of citizenship/nationality. The owners, Ahmed S. Kharusi and Masoud M. Riami, edited the newspaper along with the prominent politician Ali M. Barwani who later became editor-in-chief (Sturmer 1998: 307). *Mwongozi* published articles in English, Ki-Swahili and Arabic, and although Arabic disappeared almost completely in the Fifties it was partly reintroduced in the early Sixties. The paper had a circulation of 1,000 copies by 1959 but ceased publication in 1964.

Mariam M. A. Hamdani (1981: 14) has argued that with regard to its content and direction, *Mwongozi* strongly supported the Arab Association and 'its party, the Zanzibar Nationalists (ZNP)'. Exclusive support for the Arab Association might have been true for the Forties. There was, however, a definite shift in the Fifties when nationalist ideas began to advocate a non-racial policy and the development of a Zanzibari nation under the supremacy of the Sultan of Zanzibar, free from British domination. In the mid-Fifties, *Mwongozi* was very much the mouthpiece of the ZNP, of which the editor-in-chief Ali Muhsin Barwani was a leading figure, but by that time it was no longer exclusively an Arab Association newspaper. Supporting the unifying approach of the ZNP, articles addressing political issues were directed at the entire population of Zanzibar, Pemba and the Kenyan coast, regardless of race, communal affiliation or social status. Around the mid-Fifties there was an ostensible change in attitude when editorials and important articles began to appear in Ki-Swahili instead of English. Furthermore, the disappearance of the Arabic section of the newspaper may have served as a non-verbal argument against its alleged affiliation to the Arab Association. Islamic issues, which had a large scope in the newspaper, were mainly discussed by Abdallah Saleh al-Farsy, whose authority on religious matters was unquestioned by a wide range of Zanzibar communities. A further argument against the purported pro-Arab stand of the newspaper is that *Mwongozi* openly linked Zanzibar nationalism to similar movements on the African continent - especially Ghana, Egypt and Tanganyika - as well as those in Arab countries and in Asia. Numerous articles in early 1958, for example, stressed fullest support for Nyerere's (TANU) non-racial policy and the demand for immediate independence.

On the 16th anniversary of *Mwongozi* in 1958, the editors described the role of their newspaper as follows:

(1) The Mwongozi served as the mouthpiece of the intellectual revolution that was taking place in Zanzibar – the revolution that always precedes the political awakensness of the masses. (Mwongozi is Born Again, *Mwongozi*, 31 Jan. 1958)

The role of Zanzibar's intellectuals in debates on the nationalist project has already been discussed by Jonathon Glassman (2000a: 398-400). In the course of these debates, *Mwongozi* was far from being simply a medium to transmit Nationalist Party ideas to the readership. On the contrary, the editors and contributors saw themselves as conscientious teachers. An open letter from A.M. Babu, who became a leading figure of the ZNP but later left to found the UMMA Party, shows this quite clearly:

(2) 1. The Mwongozi should try and teach its readers to think in terms of national pride – ZANZIBARI – and not groups of races' 2. To provoke interest in and a sense of responsibility for, political activities which will eventually lead to nationalization. 3. To win the confidence of the part of our society which styles itself 'African' [...] and find for them an outlet for their passion for unity [...] 4. to persuade that section of our society which styles itself 'Arab' into accepting the principle of Zanzibar Nationalism without letting their burning pride go cold [...] (Correspondence, *Mwongozi*, 6 March 1953)

The verbs and phrases 'to teach', 'to think', 'to provoke interest', 'to win confidence', 'to persuade' indicate an asymmetrical teaching context. The readership is usually asked to 'learn' and 'understand' or, as the first quote demonstrates, to 'awake'. However, several translations of English texts into Ki-Swahili show that *Mwongozi* editors were well aware of differences in the intellectual horizon of their readership. Thus, the Ki-Swahili versions often contain additional explanations of terms and examples or lack entire passages of philosophical thought present in the English text.⁴

The debates on 'Zanzibari' identity between 1948 and 1958 were part of wider discussions on the formation of an independent, 'modern' Zanzibari nation. These debates were particularly linked to citizenship, immigration, education, employment/access to material resources, racism/communalism and the formation of political parties. The following example, a complaint about an immigration ruckus at Dar es Salaam airport, demonstrates just how close these issues were linked to one another:

(3) In matters like these we cannot understand why race should be the deciding factor, where all over the world it is nationality that counts. An Arab of Zanzibar who by law is a subject of His Highness the Sultan of Zanzibar, and hence a Zanzibari and an East African, should have the same freedom of movement in East Africa as any other East African.

But we find that even in His Highness's dominions His Highness's subjects are subjected to a good deal of restriction. According to our Nationality and Naturalization Decree a person born in His Highness's dominions of parents born in His Highness's dominions is automatically a subject of His Highness the Sultan of Zanzibar. According to the decree again the word 'Zanzibari' means His Highness's subject. Is it not fatuous then to find that Zanzibaris from the Sultan's dominion of Kenya being subjected to immigration restrictions in Zanzibar as if they were foreigners from Siberia? (Iron Curtain in East Africa, *Mwongozi*, 8 Oct. 1953)

(4) Mambo namna hii kwa nini yakatazamwa mtu kabila yake, na isitamwe uraia wake? Na ilhali ulimwengu mzima yanayotazamwa katika safari ni kuwa mtu ni raia wa nani na anatoka nchi gani? Mwaarabu wa Unguja kwa mujibu wa kanuni ni raia wa Seyyid, basi ni Zanzibari, kama ilivyosema Decree. Basi kwa nini anaposafiri akakhitalifishwa na wenyeji wengine wa Afrika Mashariki katika safari zao? Isitoshe taabu ya hapo Daressalaam, kuna ya huku huku katika nchi zake mwenyewe Seyyid. Kwa mujibu wa Decree mzalia wa katika mamlaka ya Seyyid mwenye kuzaliwa na wazee waliozaliwa katika mamlaka ya Seyyid, naye ni Zanzibari. Basi si jambo la kuchekesha kuwa Wazanzibari wanaotoka katika mamlaka ya Mfalme wetu ya Kenya wakija hapa Unguja waadhibiwe kwa mashuruti ya Immigration kama kwamba wametoka ulimwengu wa pili? (Pazi la Chuma katika Afrika Mashariki, *Mwongozi*, 8 Oct. 1953)

The first step of the argumentation links nationality/*uraia* to the question of race/*kabila*, not only giving priority to the latter but placing the whole issue on an international level ('all over the world/*ulimwengu mzima*). In other articles on racialism in Zanzibar, *Mwongozi* had made it unmistakably clear that the racial division of the population had a disastrous effect on development in general and, worse still, was an obstacle to the achievement of independence. The editors then propose citizenship as the legal basis for 'Zanzibari' nationality, to be defined by birth/*kuzaliwa* or naturalisation. Both possibilities lead to a definition of 'Zanzibaris' as subjects of His Highness the Sultan of Zanzibar/*raiya wa Seyyid*. By constantly repeating the key-terms (subjects/*raiya*, His Highness the Sultan/*Seyyid*, born/*kuzaliwa*, 'Zanzibari') and their linguistic variations, the text emphasises the important points of the argument and calls to mind, yet again, a classroom situation. The final argument links nationality to space, or more precisely, to movement. Immigration regulations are characterised here in exclusively negative terms as pressures (restrictions/*mashuruti*) to which the Zanzibaris are subjected/*kuadhibiwa*. For semantic reasons, the Ki-Swahili version comes across more powerfully

since *kuadhibiwa* means to be punished, corrected or persecuted. The argumentation culminates in the statement that immigration alienates Zanzibaris (foreigners from Siberia/*wanaotoka ulimwengu wa pili*) who belong to the same administrative unit (dominion/*mamlaka*) or, as stated at the beginning of the text, to a common geographical context (East Africa).

Apart from the legal side of the 'Zanzibari' concept of citizenship/nationality, *Mwongozi* frequently refers to a more 'common' mode of identification, namely to 'people':

(5) If any group of people has any right to call itself 'a people' the Zanzibaris have. With their mixture of blood, with their one religion, with their single cultural background, with their common spoken language, Swahili, and a common cultural language, Arabic, in their unswerving devotion to the same sovereign, it is difficult to imagine what one wants to unite any group of human beings. (National Manifesto IV, The Racial Question, *Mwongozi*, 4 Feb. 1955)

It is quite evident from this example that *Mwongozi* had enlarged its frame of reference; 'Zanzibari' is no longer purely a concept of nationality but one that defines a people connected by blood ties, language and culture. Topicalisation through dislocation, as applied here, is an effective linguistic device to stress the significance of each part of the argument. Furthermore, the repetitive use of the qualifier 'any', despite its vagueness, transmits the fulfilment of truth conditions of the entire argument.

The link between the 'Zanzibari' concept of citizenship/nationality and race was remarked on in the elaboration of example (3), where *Mwongozi* left no doubt that giving preference to nationality (*uzanzibari/uraiya*) was the only way to overcome the division of the population along racial lines (*ukabila*) and, hence, to prevent disastrous racial clashes. It is interesting to note that in this respect the newspaper gradually replaced 'race' with 'community' around the mid-Fifties.⁵ The (racial) communities, not their associations (!), were seen as advocating racial thought and as obstacles to 'universal elections', since they prevented citizens from thinking in national terms and were thus unsuitable as representatives of 'modern' political thought (Need for Guidance, *Mwongozi*, 23 March 1956; Haja ya Uongozi, *Mwongozi*, 23 March 1956). In 'National Manifesto V. Demands' (*Mwongozi*, 11 Feb. 1955) *Mwongozi* went even further, urging that 'to play on communal feelings might also be made an electioneering offence'. The inappropriateness of race as a category was also stressed in the debates on the 1958 census. Apart from demanding that nationality (*uwananchi*) be added to the census questionnaire, the editors made a further distinction between *makabila* (races) and

vikabila (tribes) - terms they characterised as not useful (*hazitoleta faida yo yote*) for the census (*Mzanzibari, Mwongozi*, 28 Feb. 1958). However, letters to the editor clearly show that *kabila* was not always understood as 'race', but as clan or a family name (*mwisho wa jina la mtu hutwiwa kabila*). Thus, a certain A. Nassir from Mombasa proposed that Sheikh Ali Muhsin Barwani change his name to 'Sheikh Ali Muhsin Zanzibari' (Barua, Afrika Kwetu, 25 Nov. 1957).

'Zanzibari' defined in terms of nationality or people also implies the 'other': Who is not a 'Zanzibari'? Here, *Mwongozi* was rarely straightforward, speaking vaguely of 'aliens', 'foreigners', *wageni* (guest, foreigner) or *watu maalum* (certain people). In discussions on such delicate issues as immigration, vagueness functions characteristically as an impression management or face-saving strategy (Dijk 2000: 65). Thus, articles complaining about the ineffectiveness of the revised Immigration Decree (1947) remain imprecise:

(6) We have nothing against any people as a race, but it simply is not right in the interests of the Zanzibaris - and of the many Indians who have made this country their home - that foreigners be allowed to pour in under one pretext or another to come and compete for the limited means of making a living here. (Circumventing the Decree, *Mwongozi*, 30 June 1950)

Again, *Mwongozi* did not specify the origin or nationality of 'foreigners'. The language is even more interesting. At the outset, the author makes a semantic move - a disclaimer. The apparent denial (We have nothing against X, but...) implements the possible contradiction between self-representation and negative other-representation. The frank differentiation between 'Zanzibaris' and 'Indians' was only possible because the newspapers were full of statements by prominent Indian politicians and religious leaders such as the Aga Khan, for instance, who urged 'Indians' to apply for naturalisation in the East African countries of their permanent residence. Furthermore, the phrasal verb 'pour in' refers to the threat-metaphor of a 'tide of immigrants'.

As the power of the Nationalist movement increased, *Mwongozi* chose less ambiguous expressions with regard to foreigners, or more precisely, expatriates in the civil service. In 'Correspondence' (*Mwongozi*, 7 Dec. 1956), the author complains about the 'inflation' of foreigners who come in 'tides' and form a 'threat' to the welfare of the state as they consume 'more than half' of Government expenditure, thereby 'strangling the political power of the people' by 'destroying their economic wealth'. The critique itself was probably justified, but it should be recognised that both articles use rhetorical de-

vices currently found in racist discourses in Europe (Dijk 2000: 72-75; Jäger 1999: 313-15).

Quite similar discourse strategies were applied to the subject of 'mainlanders', especially coming up to the 1957 elections. 'Zanzibar in Parliament. Supervision of Election Criticised, Minister to Make Inquiries' (*Mwongozi*, 10 May 1957) cited Eirene White (MP) as stating that according to a letter dated 2nd April 1957 written by Ali Muhsin Barwani to Mr. Penny, the Supervisor of Elections:

(7) [...] some of these people who have come from the mainland fairly recently, or who may have come over a considerable time ago but who are nevertheless not Zanzibari, have been registered or have attempted to get themselves registered as electors in the forthcoming elections.

On the same page, the editors added that:

(8) [...] elements [...] who were reluctant to regard Zanzibari nationality, and by implication, the sovereignty of the Sultan [...] have in their hundreds come forward to claim Zanzibari nationality that they are the humble and loyal subjects of His Highness the Sultan, [...] that they were born in His Highness's dominions, even, [...] when many of them have not been so born. (Nationalists' Achievement, *Mwongozi*, 10 May 1957)

The threat-metaphor of a 'flood' of 'mainlanders' intent on changing the outcome of the elections is applied here. This argument is implicitly validated by intertextuality with the 'Zanzibar in Parliament' article. *Mwongozi* began to use nominal qualifiers such as 'genuine', 'true', and 'self-respecting' to define those who could verify their nationality by birth. Naturalisation was not mentioned at all.

However, the examples are not meant to prove that *Mwongozi* transmitted racist ideology, which would have been contrary to the whole idea of Zanzibari citizenship or nationality, but they do indicate that although *Mwongozi* was not free of racist language, its pages were not dominated by stereotypes and racist arguments.

Assertions of race and blood as qualifiers of 'African' nationality are found more frequently in *Afrika Kwetu*. With race and origin as the key-concepts, it is not surprising that the racial card was deliberately played to counter the idea of non-racial Zanzibari nationality.

Afrika Kwetu – Africa Our Home

Afrika Kwetu was launched on 15th October 1948 and published articles in Ki-Swahili and English. Its founder and editor-in-chief, Mtoro bin Abdureihani bin Kingo, was a political activist in the African Association and later belonged to the ASP leadership. For ideological reasons, he underscored his mainland origins and called himself Mtoro bin Reihani Mzigua, thereby establishing a link to the Wazigua in north-east Tanganyika. The newspaper reached a circulation of 2,000 copies in the late Fifties and was mainly distributed in Ng'ambo, the 'African' quarter of Zanzibar Town, and the rural areas of Unguja. It ceased publication in 1964 when Mtoro Reihani became mayor of Zanzibar (Sturmer 1998: 280; Hamdani 1981: 17).

Afrika Kwetu's main objective was to represent the interests of Zanzibar's supposedly 'African' population. Thus, it first supported the African Association, established in 1934, and went on to become the principal voice of the ASP. Although the teacher-metaphor was employed, intellectual guidance of the readership was not the main intention of this newspaper. The editor saw himself as a champion of 'African' rights, which was evident from the frequent use of the verb *kupigania* (to fight for sb./sth.) whenever *Afrika Kwetu* described its purpose. Its exclusive support for 'Africans' drew massive critique from other communities and newspapers and led to the following disclaimer:

(9) Asidhani mtu kama Afrika Kwetu inapigania Waafrika tu. La! Pili gazeti la Wana nchi, haki yetu kutekeleza wajib wa kupigania mji na kuwapigania watu wote wakazi wa Afrika bila ya mpembuano; ingawa Waafrika mara nyingi wanajivutia kwao si vibaya; kama mnajuavyo Waafrika bado hali zao sio njema basi ule mzinduo ndio unaoleta ikhtilafu kidogo. (*Afrika Kwetu*, *Afrika Kwetu*, 25 March 1954)

(Nobody should think that *Afrika Kwetu* only fights for the Africans. No! Secondly it is the newspaper of the inhabitants. It is our rightful duty to fight for the interests of the town and to fight for the rights of all the inhabitants of Africa without making any distinctions. Although it is not bad if Africans often voice their pride in their home, because, as you may know, the living conditions of Africans are miserable and this awakening causes a little discord.)

Here, the apparent denial of being strongly biased in favour of one particular group is used once again to differentiate between the *wananchi* or children of the soil (who should have full citizen rights) and the *wakazi* or residents (who are allowed to stay on the islands but do not enjoy citizen rights). The claim

'Africa for Africans!' is buttressed by the argument that where both groups – 'Africans' and 'Arabs' – live is the 'Africans' home'.

To emphasize the common ground, *Afrika Kwetu* also used the phrase *kuingizana na ustaarabu* (to promote civilisation) (*Afrika Kwetu* Inaingia Mwaka wa VI, *Afrika Kwetu*, 12 Nov. 1953). It is interesting to note that in this context *ustaarabu* takes a moral meaning on board, criticising misbehaviour towards women. Thus, fair elections were also called 'Uchaguzi wa Ustaarabu' (*Afrika Kwetu*, 28 Feb. 1957). Compared with earlier writings, newspaper language of the Fifties shows that *ustaarabu* had changed its semantic content from the literal meaning of 'Arabness' to 'civilisation', which implies a much broader concept of good – i.e. morally acceptable behaviour.⁶

By restricting the common ground among those it considered to be 'Africans', the newspaper instrumentalised the well-known metaphor 'sons and daughters of the soil' and the more concise Ki-Swahili versions *wananchi* and *wenyeji*. This phrase had already appeared in newspapers in the Thirties (see, for instance, Ground Rent Decree, *Samachar*; 10 Jan. 1937), but had never been used as a unifying concept.

In their definition of precisely who the 'children of the soil' were, *Afrika Kwetu* resorted to classifications of geography, origin (*asili*) and, indeed, skin colour (*ngozi*) (Glassman 2000a; 2000b). It argued that Unguja and Pemba were geographically part of *bara* (the mainland) and that their original inhabitants must therefore be considered mainland 'Africans' whose physical appearance entails black skin (*ngozi nyeusi*) and curly hair (*nywele kipundi*). Later, the notion of 'Bantuism' gave the argument a more 'scientific' backing (Furnish us with the Zanzibar History III, *Afrika Kwetu*, 10 Feb. 1955). The non-*wananchi/wenyeji* were summarised as *watu weupe* (white people) and included *Waarbu* ('Arabs'), *Wahindi* ('Indians'), both of whom are sometimes classified as *Waasia* ('Asians'), and *Wazungu/Waoropa* ('Europeans').

Morover, *Afrika Kwetu* insisted on purity of origin ('Sisi Waafrika wa Zanzibar na Pemba hatuna asili ya mchanganyiko wo wote [...]') and cultural practice, supposedly shared with the mainland (Usivamie Neno Usiolijua Maana Yake, *Afrika Kwetu*, 3 Jan. 1952). Arguably, ties of this kind were emphasised during the economically depressed late Forties and early Fifties, to counter anti-*bara* sentiments among the dock workers and peasants who saw mainlanders as competitors in a limited labour and produce market (Bowels 1991: 91, 98; Babu 1991: 221-225).

In 1955, when the 'Zanzibari' concept of nationality/citizenship grew to be a pillar of ZNP policy, the notion of 'racial' purity became *Afrika Kwetu's*

main counter argument. It was repeated several times, for instance, in an editorial on the history of Zanzibar's racial composition:

(10) [...] we Africans in Zanzibar have no degree of mixture, and that is why we will never agree to the term 'Zanzibari'. (Furnish us with the Zanzibar History, *Afrika Kwetu*, 27 Jan. 1955)

In promoting 'Africanness' as an integrating factor, *Afrika Kwetu* saw the 'Zanzibari' concept of citizenship and nationality as an interim solution only:

[...] hatutaweza kuiondoa sehemu ya Africa kujita Zanzibari, Zanzibar ni jina la kupita; Africa ni sehemu ya maisha haiondoki. (Sehemu gani ni Bora? Kujundesha ni Jambo la wenye Mawazo, *Afrika Kwetu*, 12 March 1953)

([...] we can not remove the African aspect by calling ourselves Zanzibari. Zanzibari is a passing term. Africa is an aspect of life, which will not vanish.)

Another important linguistic device used to reject the 'Zanzibari' nationality/citizenship concept was the (self)-representation of 'Africans' as an oppressed and neglected section of the Zanzibar population, especially in terms of representation on the Legislative Council, as well as in education, housing and employment. Hence, inequality became the main argument:⁷

Waafrika hawakupata Elimu za juu na kuwatosheleza hasa kuwa uwezo wa kuweza wawe na mchanganyiko wa watu wote walio weupe kwa kukiendesha pamoja, na hasa vile ule usemo wa watu weupe wenyewe kusema kama hawa Waafrika tusiwape mbele; sababu hiyo ndipo yaliyotakiwa kujiunga pamoja kwa jina la Zanzibari [...] (Zanzibari, *Afrika Kwetu*, 16 June 1955)

(The Africans did not receive Higher Education to that extent that it enables them to join with all the white people in leading it [Zanzibar – K. B.]. And especially the argument put forward by the white people themselves that one should not give Africans higher posts is an obstacle, since this would be a prerequisite for unifying under the label Zanzibari [...])

The article closes by saying that access to higher education would not only remove the fear (*kuogopa*) of unification among 'Africans', but would also make them ready for the 'Zanzibari' nationality/citizenship project. It could be argued that *Afrika Kwetu* legitimately rejected the unifying concept for reasons of apparent social and economic inequality. Or the reverse, it was not at all helpful that *Mwongozi* argued from a more liberal point of view, while at the same time completely neglecting these differences. Consequently, attempts by Ali Muhsin Barwani and Abdallah Saleh al-Farsy to convince the

Afrika Kwetu readership to concentrate on the unifying elements in Zanzibar's communities were negatively commented: 'Waafrika bado hali zao si njema kwa namna yoyote.' (Yet the situation of Africans is miserable in every aspect.) (Usawa Kama Haupo, *Afrika Kwetu*, 18 March 1954; Usawa Kama Haupo II, *Afrika Kwetu*, 25 March 1954)

Apprehension of the future was not solely an 'African' concern, however, since *Afrika Kwetu*'s racialist language created fear and resentment in other communities as well. It applied face-saving strategies to counter these feelings in the early Fifties: first of all, the paper agreed in principle with the 'Zanzibari' nationality/citizenship concept - 'Zanzibari ni msingi mzuri wa kuwaunga watu wote bila shaka [...]' (Zanzibari is a good basis to unite all the people of Zanzibar [...]) (Zanzibari, *Afrika Kwetu*, 16 June 1955) – and followed up with the statement that African self-government would respect the principles of democracy with regard to 'immigrant minorities'.

However, 1955 brought a dramatic shift in the rhetoric of *Afrika Kwetu* towards a total rejection of the Zanzibari concept, which was linked to the 'minority-majority' question. In response to the 'Slow, Slow, Zanzibar!' article published in the *Zanzibar Voice* (24 July 1955), in the course of which 'Indian' residents of Zanzibar were urged to adopt 'Zanzibari' citizenship, *Afrika Kwetu* asked quite resolutely: 'Is a so-called Zanzibari to mean an up-to-date self-styled immigrant multiracial-race?' Here, the use of 'Zanzibaris' as a container-metaphor for immigrants clearly emphasises that 'Zanzibaris' are not *wenyeji* (sons and daughters of the soil) but *wakazi* (residents) (Slow and Sure is Quick Enough, *Afrika Kwetu*, 4 August 1955). Interestingly, the author ended his article with a face-saving strategy, painting an ideal picture of the relationship between the Sultan and the 'African' population. The readership is reminded that in 1938 the African Association presented His Highness with the Medal to Our Beloved Sultan as a token of loyalty to the throne. Hence, 'Africans' are not 'Zanzibaris' but loyal citizens.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that the 'Zanzibari' nationality/citizenship concept was an attempt to define political obligations and entitlements. It was also an important means of conceptualising a non-racial 'Zanzibari' identity as one building block of an independent nation. Addressing all communities living in Zanzibar, *Mwongozi* promoted this identity as a unifying force and as a 'modern' approach to the task of nation-building, similar to independence

movements in other parts of Africa and Asia. On the other hand, *Afrika Kwetu* rejected the notion of a non-racial 'Zanzibari' citizenship, believing that it did not take into account the unequal opportunities for 'Africans' to state recourses, especially in education, which excluded them from fully participating in the future administration of the country.⁸

Despite the many differences in their argumentation, the discourse in both newspapers centred on the dichotomy of who is alien and who is not, thereby provoking the question of full or limited citizenship rights. Both used vague terms when referring to the former: *Wageni*/aliens/foreigners or *weupe*/immigrants. Furthermore, both applied rhetorical strategies in the form of 'We have nothing against X, but...' as a face-saving device. Last but not least, *Mwongozi* and *Afrika Kwetu* both emphasised loyalty to the throne as an indicator of good citizenship.

The debate on citizenship, identity and who 'truly' belongs to the island establishes Zanzibar as a debated 'space'. While *Mwongozi* perceived the Indian Ocean *seascape* to be an integrating factor, implying that all immigrants from its shores (not just from the adjacent mainland!) who became citizens of the Sultan were 'Zanzibari', *Afrika Kwetu* emphasised the geographical and historical connection between Zanzibar and the African mainland and its inhabitants. *Afrika Kwetu* did not consider Zanzibar as part of the Indian Ocean *seascape* but as part of an East African *landscape* which includes the islands.

Arguably, *Afrika Kwetu* discussed the 'Zanzibari' citizen/nationality concept, but it never really engaged with it. The editor of the paper merely intended to prove its ultimate inappropriateness. *Mwongozi* presented the concept as an idea designed and promoted by 'Zanzibari' intellectuals, and certainly Ki-Swahili translations of English editorials indicate that it was not possible to transmit this idea to a readership with a non-homogenous social status and intellectual horizon. Hence, apart from deep-rooted political and economic differences which divided Zanzibar's population, the communicative deficits of its proponents made the concept ineffectual as a unifying force in the broader struggle for independence, thus contributing to the factors which ultimately led to the disastrous politics of the revolution in 1964.

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Notes

- 1 Since ethnic terminology implying a racial paradigm would be inappropriate to describe Zanzibar's social context, all ethnic labels have been put in single inverted commas.
- 2 The project *Communicating Difference. A Textlinguistic Study on Verbal Strategies of Cultural and Social Exclusion in Printmedia of Colonial Tanzania* elaborates further on the representation of the 'self' and the 'other' in Zanzibar's pre-independence political context, of which the 'Zanzibari' nationality/citizenship concept is simply one aspect, albeit an important one.
- 3 The studies by Wodak et al. (1998), Wodak/Dijk (2000), Dijk (1991, 1998, 2000), Blommaert/Verschueren (1998) and Jäger (1999) provide an insight into the methodology and, as far as the comparative level is concerned, contain extremely useful language data for the *Communicating Difference* project.
- 4 Glassman does not take into account that by changing the language and style of their editorials, the editors of *Mwongozi* were attempting to cope with a non-homogeneous readership. The translation of 'Siberia' as 'ulimwengu wa pili' (second world) in quote (4) and (5) serves as an example.
- 5 Arguably, *Mwongozi* favoured the racialism/communalism change not only as a signal against sectarian tendencies, but also as an assurance that they themselves do not use racist language.
- 6 For a different interpretation of *ustaarabu* and its application in intellectual debates, see Glassman (2000a: 406).
- 7 The shortcomings of this race-cum-class paradigm, which was rigidly applied under colonial rule and had a strong influence on newspaper debates and the academic discourse after 1964, were recently discussed by Abdul Sheriff (2001: 301). He argued that 'none of these ethnic categories were undifferentiated' and 'were undergoing very fundamental economic and social transformations triggered by the imposition of colonial rule'.
- 8 The rhetoric of the Pan-African movement very probably influenced the language used in *Afrika Kwetu*.

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