

" A HISTORY OF THE YEMENI ARABS IN KENYA:

1895 - 1963 "

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PROFESSOR AHMED IDHA SALIM

## D E D I C A T I O N

To my parents, who love and appreciate education. Because of the many sacrifices they made in order to give me a good education, I affectionately dedicate this work to them.

## A B S T R A C T

This thesis is a survey of the economic, socio-cultural and political life of the Yemeni Arabs in Kenya during the Colonial Period, 1895 - 1963. The Yemeni Arabs are a fairly distinct group of Arabs who migrated from Southern Arabia. The term Yemeni or Yemeni Arabs in this study will be used to refer to those people who came from both the Yemens - the present day People's Democratic Republic of South Yemen and the Republic of North Yemen. However, when direct reference is made to those Yemenis who came from Hadhramaut in South Yemen, they will be referred to as Hadhramis.

There has been very long-established relations between the East African coast and South Arabia. The East African coast was visited by people from the Southern Arabian coast from pre-Islamic times. Traders plied the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the East African coast in search of trading commodities before the birth of Islam. With the advent and spread of Islam, and subsequent settlement of Muslims on the East African littoral, Islam was introduced into the region. By the 14th century, as the rapid commercial, immigration and cross-cultural contacts between the two regions intensified, a "civilization" was born on the East African coast when the Yemenis contributed significantly. Although the Portuguese

disrupted this development, Mombasa and Pate became new centres of commerce, trade, Swahili civilization, coastal Islam and resistance to the Portuguese.

With the Busaidi restoring peace in the Indian Ocean, with the help of the British, the Yemeni Arab permanent settlement in East Africa increased. They were employed in the Sultan's services in commerce and in manual labour, so that by the 19th Century, the Yemenis formed an important section of the Arab population along the coast of East Africa.

The Hadhrami sharifs played an important role in the spread of Islam in East Africa. Islam spread into the interior from the coast with a predominance of the Shafii madhab in all the religious ceremonies and rituals, in spite of the fact that there was a large settlement of Ibadis from Oman as a ruling class. As the Yemenis migrated and settled in East Africa, they brought along with them their social and cultural values. They tried to preserve a distinct cultural identity, by maintaining strong ties with their homelands. Their conservativeness helped to preserve and cement these values and identity.

However, with the advent of colonialism after 1895, and through the process of assimilation and cultural interaction

with the local communities at the coast, the Yemenis experienced a degree of social change. But the large influx of a labour-migrant class from Hadhramaut at the turn of the century, helped maintain their socio-cultural values. The Hadhramis have maintained a distinct cultural identity over the centuries, especially in wedding ceremonies, music, dance, dress and preservation of Arabic.

Colonialism brought modern western values which not only affected the Yemeni community, but the entire Arab and Swahili population at the coast, so that by the 1960's, although still distinct in some aspects, the Yemenis had come to terms with western education and a significant degree of modernisation in general.

During the Colonial period, the Yemenis became an important economic factor in the commercial and economic activity of the country. They managed to represent a competition to the Indian traders and embarked into more sophisticated and lucrative economic and commercial activities, such as transport, export and import trade. The earlier labour-migrant Yemeni Arabs had come in search of a better life in East Africa and were attracted to Mombasa because of new opportunities, thus becoming an important labour force in the port. Their lack of hobbies, very modest life-style and high degree of thriftiness

and industry enabled them to compete with the more sophisticated Indian traders. Lack of capital in the early years of colonial rule prevented them from embarking into more ambitious enterprises. However, their high propensity to save later contributed towards capital formation and enabled them to venture into more lucrative economic and commercial sectors of the economy of the country.

The Yemenis remained apolitical for long. They were not actively involved in local politics till after the Second World War. As the Yemeni had come in search of a better life, he was more concerned with the local tribal, social organizations or associations which had evolved in order to cater for the basic needs of the new immigrant. These jumiyas worked as social-welfare organizations, thus acting as a barrier to their involvement in national politics. The Yemenis were content to be led by their Mugaddams, traditional leaders, who were also recognised by the colonial authority, as such.

However, as more of their youth attended secular schools and interacted with other communities at the coast, they became more and more politically aware and, thus, involved in local politics. During the Mwambao episode at the coast, when Kenya was fighting for her political independence, the Yemeni Arabs were caught in the political wind of the time. There were

those who believed that as a predominantly migrant community, they should not get involved in the local politics, while there were some who felt that they could not remain as on-lookers, since they were locally born and knew no other home save Kenya.

The study ends with an appraisal of the status of the Yemenis in post-independent Kenya.



G L O S S A R Y

Abd (plural Abid)	-	slave.
Alim (plural Ulama)	-	scholar
Bedu	-	tribesmen.
Bida'h	-	innovation with no doctrinal basis.
Bui bui	-	a black cloak worn by muslim women.
Dhaif (plural Dhuafa)	-	weak.
Debe	-	tin.
Diwani	-	title used by the Vumba for their rulers.
Duka	-	Swahili for shop.
Duka-walla	-	shopkeeper.

Dukhul	-	consummation of the marriage.
Gabilah (plural Gabail)	-	tribe.
Hadhr	-	"civilized" urban people.
Hamali	-	one who carries goods usually in a cart, from one place to another.
Ibadhi mad-hab	-	A Muslim school of thought, its followers to be found in Oman and parts of North Africa.
Ihtiram	-	respect.
Jol	-	plateau.
Kadhi, (also spelt Qadi)	-	judge, usually only in matters concerning Islamic law.

Kafa'ah	-	compatibility - refers to the compatibility of marriage partners.
Kesha	-	an all night party for a wedding.
Khadim (plural Akhdaam)	-	servant.
Lelemama	-	A Swahili traditional dance performed by women.
Liwali	-	Arab administrator used by the Sultan of Zanzibar and later by the British.
Mad-hab	-	School of thought.
Madarah	-	arena for performing wedding dances.
Madrassa	-	Quranic School.

- Mansab** - Sharifian Chief. A member of the Prophet's family (Sharif) who has developed politico-religious influence and authority.
- Miskin (plural Masakin)** - "poor" refers to the free labouring class.
- Mfungo - sita** - the Swahili name for the month in which the Prophet Muhammad was born. (Arabic - Rabi - ul - Awal).
- Mikeka** - straw mats.
- Muqaadam (plural Muqadimah)** - a traditional Arab elder.
- Nikah** - religious and legal ceremony of the

	-	wedding performed by a Kadhi or a religious teacher.
Ni'ma	-	blessings.
Nisba	-	geneological tree.
Rubut	-	the ceremony of "roping" a girl for marriage.
Sabiy (plural Subyan)	-	"house boy" or servant.
Saiyid	-	"master or "lord".
Sharif (plural Sadah)	-	in South Arabia, descendants of the Prophet Muhammad.
Sawahilia	-	coastalists.
Shafii	-	one of the four orthodox schools of thought.

- Shaib (plural Shuyuba) - traditional elder.
- Sheikh (plural Mashaikh) - scholar or holy man.
- Ustarabu - civilization.
- Wadi - valley.
- Wakf - property bequethed by its owner for charity.
- Ziyara - visit to holy shrine to seek blessings.

C O N T E N T S

	Page
ABSTRACT	i - v
GLOSSARY	vi -xi
CONTENTS	xii - xiii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	xiv - xvi
INTRODUCTION	1 - 12
MAP	13
CHAPTER 1	14 - 60
THE YEMENI ARAB FACTOR ON THE COAST AD 100 - 1890	

CHAPTER 2	61 - 130
A SOCIO-CULTURAL SURVEY	
MAP	131
CHAPTER 3	132 - 219
THE ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF THE YEMENI ARABS IN COLONIAL KENYA	
CHAPTER 4	220 - 273
YEMENI POLITICAL ACTIVITIES 1900 - 1965	
CONCLUSION	274 - 278
BIBLIOGRAPHY	279 - 300



- XIV -

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

It is my pleasure to acknowledge the debt that I owe to many people who helped me. Without their aid, this task would have been impossible.

My thanks first go to Professor A.I. Salim who supervised the writing of this thesis. For his guidance, criticism, stimulation and encouragement, I am extremely grateful as a more amiable, patient and dedicated supervisor would be difficult to find. I cannot thank him enough for the genuine interest he has shown in my research and personal interest in my well-being.

For valuable assistance, I would like to thank Dr. Karim Janmohammed of the Department of History, whose criticisms of the first draft were very constructive and useful. I cannot thank him enough for patiently listening to my renditions and discussing my work with me all along.

I wish to thank all the informants and friends up and down the coast, whose help, hospitality and kindness during my field work will always be remembered. Thanks are due also to my sister Noor, and her husband, Abdul-Aziz Bajaber, who made my stay during my field work with them a pleasant and memorable one. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to them. My close friends, Ms. Beth Mbaka, helped in proof-reading the final draft, Ms. Arfa Yakub helped me in typing the first drafts and Mrs. Dorothy Buyu was always there when I needed moral support. To them I express my gratitude.

I am also indebted to the History Department for recommending me for a scholarship and the University of Nairobi for granting it to enable me to do my research. Thanks are also due to the Librarians and staff of the Kenya National Archives, the University of Nairobi, Main Campus Library and the MacMillan Library, who traced and made available documents for my inspection.

I also thank Miss Shamis A. Bauzano, who beautifully typed this thesis. For her patience and good cheer, I am grateful.

Finally, I want to thank my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Salim Ahmed Jeizan and my family, for bearing with me throughout the period of writing. Their encouragement and assistance will always be cherished.

If this thesis contains anything of value, I would like to share the credit with all the individuals and institutions mentioned above. However, I take all the responsibility for errors, omissions and distortions that the reader may find.

SWALHA SALIM

NAIROBI

JUNE, 1983

I N T R O D U C T I O N

This dissertation aims to survey the history of the Yemeni Arabs in Kenya during the colonial period. The Yemenis, who have had a long history of association with the East African coast, have not been a subject of research per se. There have been studies on, or description of, the coastal Arab community in general by historians, social scientists, colonial government officials and even travellers who visited the coast of East Africa. However, a study of the Yemenis' economic, socio-cultural and political contribution has not been undertaken so far. They have been studied within the context of the whole coastal community. Their historical contribution to Kenya can not be under-estimated and as such a study of this community is long over-due so that one may see them as a distinct society, separate in many important ways from the Omani Arabs and the Swahili-speaking peoples of the Kenyan coast. This is what this dissertation sets out to do.

In spite of a large degree of interaction with the people at the coast, over a long period of time, the Yemenis have maintained, to a large extent, their distinct cultural and social traits, that set them apart from the rest of the coastal community. They shall maintain ties with their relatives in

South Arabia, many speak Arabic in their homes, and still adhere to their original culture and customs, especially in marriage ceremonies and manner of dressing. They are well-known for their strong clannish loyalties and extended family ties that have helped them preserve their distinct Yemeni characteristics and behaviour.

The Yemenis came to East Africa as a labour migrant-group, soldiers or traders in search of a better life, unlike the Omani Arabs, who were the "rulers" and the landed gentry. The Yemenis worked as soldiers, shopkeepers and labourers and were able to better themselves in the process. Their historical contribution to Kenya has been lost sight of under the shadow of the Omani Arabs domination and the overwhelming majority of the Swahili-speaking peoples at the coast. Thus, there is a need to focus on them for this study.

This study will attempt to show how the Yemenis became an important economic force and why they were not interested in politics for a long time. It will attempt to highlight the most important features of their commercial life and the larger economic system which they were part of. The study will also aim at contributing towards an understanding of the Yemenis in Kenya history. It will also highlight the response

of the Yemeni arabs in the colonial period; how active or otherwise they were in politics, during the period under review, and seek to demonstrate the kind of initiative which they displayed.

Most of the social, economic and political history in this study will be reviewed within the context of that of the whole country. They cannot be studied in isolation and whenever necessary, their interaction with other communities especially the coastal one, will be discussed and analysed.

The two dates have been chosen because the study deals with the Yemenis' history in Kenya during the colonial period. The date 1895 is important because it was the time when the Sultan of Zanzibar, Seyyid Hemed bin Thuwain, was prevailed upon to sign the agreement with Great Britain (on 14th December, 1895) by which the Sultan's subjects now became British "Protectorate Persons".

The significance of the second date, 1963 is that it marks the end of colonial rule in Kenya. Political independence was given on 12th December, 1963 and a large number of the Yemeni Arabs who were holders of South Arabian passports, chose to be Kenyans, while others opted to go back to their homeland. Thus it marks an important turning point in their lives.

The significance of the two dates, therefore, lies in the fact that the study of the Yemeni is undertaken for the colonial period. However, it does not mean that these two dates have been observed strictly. Their history before 1895 and a brief survey after 1963, has also been included.

As observed earlier, the immigration, settlement and subsequent history of the Yemeni Arabs in Kenya during the colonial period has hardly been the subject of any major historical study. A number of published as well as unpublished works deal broadly with the Arab community, but none can be defined as a special study of the Yemenis. There is a tendency by historians and other social scientists to group all Arabs as one single ethnic entity. This has led to the study of Arabs as a homogeneous society. The Yemeni Arabs are one of the two Arab groups that are present in Kenya. The other group is the Omani Arabs.

From the existing literature on the history of Kenya, there is no study of the Yemenis per se. The only two works that to some extent touch on the history of the Yemenis of Kenya, are Ahmed Idha Salim's Swahili-Speaking Peoples of Kenya's Coast, published in 1973,; and Abdul Hamid M. el-Zein's, The Sacred Meadows, published in 1974. A.I. Salim's work provides a most

valuable framework for the history of the coast, but his study is general with regard to the Yemenis. It is indeed a pioneering study of the Arab-Swahili community at the coast, but because of its nature, he hardly discusses the Yemeni Arabs except in passing. However, he points out the fact that the Yemenis represented a competition to the Indian monopoly of the retail trade. Mention is also made of their ability to better themselves in times of economic and political decline at the coast. Their political activities are overshadowed by the Omani Arabs' activities, so that they are discussed as part and parcel of Arab politics after the second world war. A.I. Salim's work is a mine of information but because of its nature as a pioneering work on coastal history, the history of the Yemenis although mentioned, is within the context of the entire Kenya coast.

El-Zein's work, on the other hand, is nearly completely focussed on the religious life of the Muslims on the coast, especially Lamu. The book is divided into two parts. Part one deals with Lamu history, and here he brings out much useful information about the houses of Arab Salyids and Sharifs of Hadhrami origin, but resident in Lamu for some centuries.

Part two of el-Zein's book is a detailed account of the religious revolution worked out by the Jamalilel sharifs,



especially Habib Saleh. He discusses the Rikadha Mosque and the annual maulidi in detail. In his treatment of the society of Lamu, he has looked at their relationship within the context of the "Wangwana" ideology in Lamu. He has however, analysed their economic position in detail, but because it is a study on the religious aspect of the people of Lamu, again the history of the Hadhramis is over-shadowed.

Hyder Kindy's autobiography, Life and Politics in Mombasa, published in 1972, sheds light on the Arab-Swahili inter-relationships and the hostility that was prevalent at the coast. He narrates the story of his life and how he became involved in Mombasa's political life and its social and cultural activities. Kindy discusses the formation of the Afro-Asian Association in opposition to the coast Arab Association. The account is very interesting, but for the purpose of the subject of this thesis, his discussion of the Yemeni's is very minimal.

Karim Janmohammed's unpublished Ph.D thesis, "A History of Mombasa C1895 - 1939" is a mine of information on the economic and social life in Mombasa. Although he has very ably illuminated the role of the Indian trader, the African labourer and the social change in Mombasa, very little is said about the

Yemenis, who, he agrees, were an important element in the town's urban life. He explores the responses of the workers to the condition of urban life. The role of the Hadhrami Arab is however not discussed in any detail.

A detailed and completed study of Muslim women in Mombasa was undertaken by Margaret Strobel in her scholarly work, Muslim Women in Mombasa 1890 - 1975, published in 1979. Her book is based on extensive oral and archival research. In it, she explains the socio-economic changes that took place within the community during the colonial period and, to a lesser extent, during the post-independence years. In her study, she summarises the role of women in all fields - economic activities, education, "lelemama" dance, initiation rites, wedding celebrations and "improvement" associations. The role of the Hadhrami women is studied but within the general context of Muslim women's activities in Mombasa.

E.B. Martin's book, The History of Malindi: A Geographical Analysis of an East African Town from the Portuguese Period to the Present, published in 1977, is a detailed account of Malindi. In this work, Martin has described and analysed the historical development of Malindi with regard to the economic, social and political development. The section on trade, the dhow trade and retail trade both in Lamu and Malindi, are very

informative with regard to the Hadhrami Arabs who, according to him, had monopolized the retail trade and filled-in the place that the Indian traders vacated. His work sheds light on the economic activities of Hadhrami Arabs in Malindi and contains valuable statistics.

An earlier book, The Swahili-Speaking People of Zanzibar and the East African Coast, by A.H.J. Prins, is an ethnographical survey published by the International African Institute in 1961. A.H.J. Prins worked among the Swahili-speaking peoples in 1957 and 1959, and produced a comprehensive study of that section of the community. He has treated the whole society as a single ethnographical unit. He has described and analysed the economic and social structure, political organization, law and religion in the area. However, Prins is very general in his analysis, and the Yemenis are distinguished from the rest of the study, only where necessary, which is not often.

Officials of the colonial government who have written about the history of the coast, have paid little attention to the history of the Arab community, except about their decline in power and economic prosperity. Officials like A.H. Hardinge, C. Eliot and F.J. Jackson paid little attention to the coast, except briefly authorising the history of the East African

coast, from early times to the termination of their terms of office. It should be noted that an exceptional source in the work of the colonial official, W.H. Ingrams, who deals with the Yemenis' history, thanks to his official work in South Arabia. His works are very valuable, dealing with the Yemenis' pre-colonial history, and their situation as it was at the time of writing.

Once the interior was opened, the coast was hardly a subject that commended any attention from the officials, settlers or traders. Unfortunately, even latter-day historians have followed the same trend set-up by the officials, in their writing. Thus, the existing literature relating to the Arabs in Kenya or East Africa in general, leaves important gaps in the overall assessment of the economic, social and political implications of their immigration to, and settlement on, the East African coast over a large period of time. This study therefore, attempts to rectify matters by throwing light on the economic, social and political history of the Yemeni Arabs in Kenya during the colonial time.

Something must be said concerning the sources used to arrive at the conclusions and findings of this study. As always, this study has been restricted by the nature of the sources available. The sources for the first chapter, for

instance, are almost wholly archaeological or published accounts. Later chapters, however, draw upon more abundant oral and written accounts, unpublished archival material and newspapers. It can, however, not be claimed that all possible sources have been tapped for this dissertation.

It will be seen that I have worked with comparatively few informants - thirty one to be exact - and that I rely more heavily on some than on others. The reason for this is quite simple. During my five (5) months of field work, these were the people whom I found to know something about the history of the Yemeni Arabs in colonial Kenya. Initially, I was asked to get a list of informants from my Advisor, Prof. A.I. Salim. I was introduced to the elders of the community by Prof. A.I. Salim and Mr. Abdul-Aziz Salim Bajaber. At first, I encountered some problems in the field, basically because the conservative elders of the community were suspicious about being questioned. However, after being assured of the aims of the research, their attitude changed and their information proved most valuable. Once in the field, I found that some informants who possessed valuable information were very valuable, while other possible valuable informants were too fearful, suspicious or resentful to volunteer information. This was especially so in Malindi and Lamu. I was able to get names of more informants from those interviewed, in response to questions which they did not have any knowledge of.

I was able to compare the oral information gathered from the field research with the official unpublished archival material. It must be noted that the information gathered corroborated, to some extent, the official archival material and thus helped to inter-check each other. By using both, I was able, to some extent, to rectify the official bias formed in the unpublished official archival material and some exaggerations in oral evidence gathered from informants.

It would be in order to pinpoint the major limitation of this dissertation. It lies in the fact that this is not a straightforward social history of the Yemenis per se, and is not based on any particular model of social change. However, the reader may find discussions of some important social change along the coast based on the connection between the coast and South Arabia, over many centuries.

The study deals with the economic history in particular areas, such as the Indian Ocean dhow trade, the import and export trade, capital, entrepreneurship, and the different kinds of economic and commercial activities.

In the political field, the study touches on the Yemeni Arabs involvement in politics, especially after World War II.

But this is discussed within the general framework of the entire Kenyan political development. Given these limitations it would not be possible to satisfy all the different branches of history and this study does not in any way pretend to be a comprehensive social, economic and political history of the Yemeni Arabs. Rather, it is a pioneering attempt at focussing on this community and its socio-economic and political history, during the colonial period in Kenya.





CHAPTER 1

THE YEMENI ARABS FACTOR ON THE COAST

A.D. 100-1895

There are grounds for believing that the tropical parts of the East African coast have been settled in for many centuries past by people coming from the Red Sea, South Arabia and the Persian Gulf. Nothing has come to light as to who were the first strangers to settle in this part of Africa, but there is evidence that there has been a continuous connection between the East African coast and the Yemenites, going back to pre-Islamic times. According to C.H. Stigand, the East African coast was known to the Arabs of South Arabia in pre-Islamic times. He concludes that,

".....Although the limited accounts of the African coast left to us from this date are chiefly from European sources, it is probable that the coast was well known to the Arabs of South Arabia, and had already at this date for a long time been settled by them, and probably also Arab settlement had sprung up already on some of the islands."<sup>1</sup>

Nothing is known of the Arabs in East Africa before the Hellenic conquest of the Near East. The periplus of the Erythrean Sea (c.120. A.D.)<sup>2</sup> is the earliest surviving

document on the coast of East Africa based on the accounts of the author, and written as a guide to the ports and trade of the Arabian Sea, East Africa, India and China.<sup>3</sup> The Periplus makes reference to the existence of several ports on the East African coast, all carrying out a flourishing maritime trade with the Indian Ocean. It describes in some details the ports along the shores of present-day Somali Republic. The author describes the trade as fairly organized and that ships from western India sailed directly to these ports bringing cotton cloth, grain, oil, sugar and ghee. From the Red Sea, dyed cloaks, tunics, copper, tin and silver were brought in exchange for cinnamon, frankincense, ivory and tortoise shells.<sup>4</sup> The Periplus further states that,

"voyages from Egypt to all these further market-towns are made in the month of July..... The ships usually fitted out in the inner ports Arieke and Banigaza; and they bring the further market-towns the products of these places..... Some make voyages directly to these market-towns, others exchange cargo as they go....."<sup>5</sup>

And the inhabitants are described as,

"men of the greatest stature, who are priests, inhabit the whole coast and at each place have set up chiefs. The chief of Ma'afir is the sovereign, according to an ancient right which subordinates it to the Kingdom which has become the first in Arabia. The people of Mouza hold it in tribute under his sovereignty and send there small ships, mostly with Arab captains and crews who trade and intermarry with the mainlanders of all the places and know their language."<sup>6</sup>

There is evidence that a very ancient and a very advanced civilization in the south-western corner of Arabia existed

before the Christian Era. The early home of the Sabaeans flourished into an advanced civilization because of a number of factors; the abundance of rain, its proximity to the sea and its strategic position in the Indian trade-route all favoured its development. Here, all the highly-priced commodities of the trade such as incense, spices, myrrh and other aromata for seasoning foods and products such as pearls from the Persian Gulf; fabrics, swords from India; silk from China; slaves, monkeys, ivory, gold and ostrich feathers from Ethiopia found their way to the western markets from the trading town of "Mouza"<sup>7</sup> (present-day Mukha). A description by the author of The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, of the market gives a picture of the flourishing trade at the time.

"The merchandise imported there consists of purple cloths, both fine and coarse; clothing in the Arabia style, with sleeves; plain, ordinary, embroidered, or interwoven with gold; saffron, sweet rush, muslins, cloaks, blankets, some plain, and others made in the local fashion; sashes of different colours, fragrant ointments in moderate quantity, wine and wheat not much."<sup>8</sup>

The Yemenis' ability to master the monsoons, and their knowledge of the sea-routes, reefs and harbours made them the phoenicians of Southern Arabia, and thus enabled them to monopolise the trade during the last millenium and a quarter before Christ. Not only did they develop the sea-route to the coast of Middle Egypt, they also developed land-routes between al-Yaman (Yemen) and Syria along the western coast of the peninsula to North Egypt.<sup>9</sup> From Hadhramaut, which was

particularly rich in frankincense, a caravan route led to Ma'rib, the Sabaean capital where it joined the main northern route and along these routes a number of Sabaean "colonies" flourished. From the sources, such as semitic and Greco-Roman writings and semi-legendary traditions preserved in the early Islamic literature,<sup>10</sup> it can be argued that the first major Kingdoms extended from about 750 B.C. to the third pre-Christian century, with the priest King as the head of the State. In their heyday the King of Saba extended his hegemony over all South Arabia, sometimes reducing the Minaean Kingdom to a state of vassalage. Ma'rib was the capital, which was the meeting place of trade routes connecting the frankincense land with the Mediterranean ports, particularly Ghazzah (Gaza). Ma'rib was particularly famous for its dam - Sadd Ma'rib. According to P.K. Hitti, "this remarkable engineering feat, together with the other public works of the Sabaeans, reveals to us a peace-loving society highly advanced not only in commerce but in technical accomplishments as well."<sup>11</sup>

Two other small "states" arose in South Arabia besides the Sabaean and Minaean Kingdoms, the states of Qataban and Hadhramaut, one east of the site of Aden and one where present-day Hadhramaut lay. Although these states were under the hegemony of the Sabaean Kingdom, it is the people of

Qataban and Hadhramaut who organized the spice trade, undertook amazing public works, and it is their inscription that extended from North Arabia to Ethiopia.<sup>12</sup>

From 115 B.C. onwards, the whole of South Arabia fell under the control of Himyar tribe, who were close kinsman of the Sabaeans. This Himyarite civilization lasted until 300 A.D. This civilization was based on the Mineo-Sabaeen culture and trade, and as long as they monopolized the maritime trade, they prospered. Although the over-land route was threatened by the Romans, the sea-route remained in their hands until almost the first century after Christ. Their task was collecting the products of their land together with those from East Africa and India and carrying them over-land by camels northwards from the trading centre of Ma'rib. And as the people of the West developed more and more the taste for oriental clothes, spices and perfumes, the South Arabians raised the prices of their own products and increased the tolls on foreign goods which passed through their hands. Also at this time, the South Arabians from al-Yaman (Yemen) and Hadhramaut established a colony in the "land of Kush" where, according to P.K. Hitti, "they laid the foundation of the Abyssinian Kingdom and civilization and ultimately developed a culture which the local people could probably have never achieved."<sup>13</sup>

With the control and supremacy of the sea-route and trade, the Himyarite civilization flourished. However their control was threatened from the time when Egypt, under the Ptolomies, became a world power. Their supremacy of the sea was also threatened by the Romans who had captured Egypt from the Ptolomies in the middle of the first century B.C. In their desire to free Egypt from commercial dependency on South Arabia, the Romans "discovered" the route to India, thus contributing to the final break-up of the Arabian monopoly of the trade. The invasions of Yemen by the Abyssinians, after the introduction of the new religions, Christianity and Judaism, dealt the last blow to the control of the trade by the South Arabians. The influence of the new religions led to rivalry between the South Arabians and the converts, who called in the Abyssinians in 252 A.D., to help them. The Abyssinians remained in South Arabia as "conquerors" till 575 A.D., when the Persians drove them out. The bursting of the great dam at Ma'rib followed by the great flood, led to the final disintegration and downfall of the South Arabian Kingdom.<sup>14</sup>

From the above analysis, it can be seen that the Yemenis were a trading community from very early times and had the control over the southern maritime routes to India. The products of their land and those from across the seas were transported on camels over the land-routes from trading markets

such as "Mouza" and Ma'rib to the Mediterranean ports and finally to the markets in the West. Europe and the Neareast were too occupied with their own troubles to give any attention to those of an outpost of the Himyaritic empire which was already in its economic decline.<sup>18</sup> However, Islam provided a further cross-culture bond in the Indian Ocean trade. Islam reached South Arabia and the Persian Gulf before the end of the 7th century.<sup>19</sup> During the spread of Islam, important trade-routes emerged as a result of the commercial interests of the Umayyads and Abbasids Caliphates. The wide extent of the Muslim empire and the high level which its civilization attained, involved extensive international trade. Muslim traders ventured as far as China, where they traded in "China's magnificent gift to the West - silk"; and from Africa they traded in ivory, ebony and slaves; and from India, spices, campon and fabrics were exchanged with dates, cotton, sugar and steel tools that came from the Muslim world. East Africa was involved in this trade because of the products available and needed in this lucrative trade. The Periplus also makes reference to the fact that Arab traders spoke the language of the Zanj.<sup>20</sup>

The undoubted early connections between the South Arabians and East Africans are supported only in the most cursory fashion by the written reports of Arab writers (Arabic Sources)

of the regular 13th century concerning trading routes from Aden to Mogadishu, Kilwa and Madagascar. Al-Masudi (d.945 A.D.) made at least two journeys to the East African coast. His book, Muruju'al Dhab (The Meadows of Gold), describes the trade and the towns along the coast from Berber land; The Zanj land extending down to Sofala; and he referred to the region south of Zanj as "Waq-Waq". We know from Al-Masudi that the trade in ivory flourished at this time and that it was exported to Oman, India and China. It also states that the people of Qambalu were of a mixed population of Zanj pagans and Muslims and that the ruling family, was of the Muslim group but they had adopted the Zanj language.<sup>21</sup>

Writing in about 1154 A.D., al-Idrisi describes the trade between the Arabs and the inhabitants of the East African coast, where the island of what is probably Zanzibar, exported slaves to Muscat. Yakut bin Abdallah, the author of Mujam-al-Buldan, presented Mogadishu as the most important Muslim town on the mainland where Arabs traded in gold and slaves.<sup>22</sup> A century later, Ibn Battuta, the famous Tangierian geographer and historian, described Mogadishu as "a town of enormous size living by trade with many merchants", ruled by a single Sheikh, "who walked through the town with a four-tiered canopy carried over him and accompanied by a band of drums, trumpets and pipes."<sup>23</sup> The towns of Mombasa and



Kilwa are also described. He was however most struck by "the piety of the Sultan of Kilwa, who was being visited by a number of Sharifs from Hejaz".<sup>24</sup> What was most striking to him, was that he was conscious of the fact that inspite of being in the land of the Zanj, he felt at home because he was still in Islam where he met learned men from Hejaz, in the mid fourteenth century, and the inhabitants were pious and devout followers of the Shafii persuasion, one of the four orthodox Sunni schools of thought in Islam.

From the African sources, the Swahili Chronicles, give accounts of those who are said to have been Arabs from Himyar, Yemen, and who "founded" most of the important towns of the coast. According to the Kitab-al-Zanj, a number of pre-Islamic Arab settlements flourished from Mogadishu to Kilwa and that Islam was accepted by the local inhabitants. It also states that the coast had become "Muslim" in the 7th century under Khalifa Omar ibn al-Khattab. The Chronicle of Lamu claims that Abdul Malik ibn Marwan was the city's founder. The Chronicle of Pate, adds that Abdul Malik ibn Marwan sent his Syrians in 696 A.D., where thirty five coastal towns were founded. However, the Chronicle of Kilwa tells the story of the immigrations of the seven princes from Shiraz who "founded" the settlement on the East African coast and the islands.<sup>25</sup> "Shiraz" migration traditions are diverse, but all state that

people from the Persian Gulf area went by sea to the East African coast, settled there, and "founded" towns. However, none of the details of the various traditions actually correspond. There is almost no agreement on dates which range from after A.H. 122 to post-Portuguese times. One tradition has it that in the 2nd Islamic century, the followers of the Shi'a leader, Zaid, executed in A.H. 122, took refuge in East Africa at Berber and Shanga, near Manda Bay. A second tradition is that in A.H. 295, there was a migration, usually referred to as that of the seven brothers who are credited as "founders" of the towns along the coast from Mogadishu to Kilwa.<sup>26</sup> Serious historians' contributions to the historiography of the Eastern coast of Africa have passed serious doubts upon early notions of a "Shiraz" period Dynasty, conceived of as preceding an "Arab" one and being a major component of coastal society and culture up to the present day.<sup>27</sup>

With the spread of Islam to East Africa and the settlement of Muslims along the coast, a distinct Islamic culture evolved. There is evidence from pre-Islamic times that there were coastal settlements founded by the Zanj people and the Yemeni Arabs not only traded with them but they intermarried with the local people and spoke their language by the first two centuries of the Christian era. The settlement of these Yemeni

Arabs along the coast was the beginning of the ethnic and linguistic differentiation that took place on the coast. Important questions have been asked by A.I. Salim that need to be researched into by historians, as to whether the pre-Islamic interaction between the Yemeni Arabs and the Zanzi people "contributed to, and formed part of the emerging Swahili people?"<sup>28</sup> However before research has proved the above, it can be argued that Yemeni Arabs' pre-Islamic interaction with the Africans was the beginning of the ethnic and linguistic differentiation and thus contributed to the evolution of the Swahili culture.

Thus, from the brief survey of East Africa from the pre-Islamic times to the time prior to the Portuguese intervention in East Africa, it can be concluded that there has been a continuous interaction between the Arabs of Southern Arabia and the Zanzi people on the East African littoral.<sup>29</sup>

The Portuguese presence in East Africa from the mid-fifteenth century up to the time when the Omani Arabs consolidated their authority, had few positive results politically or in an economic sense. The main aim of the Portuguese intervention in East Africa had been to seek some means to reach the Eastern markets to "outflank" Islam. The religious aspect of what was primarily a commercial matter must

not be overlooked since it justified placing "infidel kings" under tribute, the seizure of their land and, finally, the control of their trade. The Portuguese in the Indian Ocean were ruthless, aggressive and exclusive: They meant to get for themselves as much of the trade of the Indian Ocean as their forces could secure.<sup>30</sup>

Vasco Da Gama's mission of 1498 to discover the sea-route to India and the rich gold mines of Sofala, was followed by a general assault on the then prevailing system of eastern trade. In 1502, on his second voyage, Vasco Da Gama was able to bring Kilwa under tribute, and in 1503, Rey Lourenco Ravasco imposed tribute on Zanzibar. Under Francisco d'Almeida, Sofala was occupied in 1505. Sailing north to Mombasa, d'Almeida anchored off Mombasa with 16 ships. Heavy fighting broke out between the local inhabitants of Mombasa and the Portuguese. However, the Mombasans were overpowered and Mombasa was stormed and burnt down by the Portuguese. Men were ruthlessly killed and looting took place before the town was set on fire. The main reason for attacking Mombasa was to break the power and prosperity of the town in order to "create more favourable conditions for the Portuguese settlements in Kilwa",<sup>31</sup> where a fort had been constructed by force. The destruction of the town was so great that the King of Mombasa wrote to the King of Malindi saying,

"I have to inform you that we have been visited by a mighty ruler who has brought fire and destruction amongst us. He raged in our town with such might and terror that no one, neither man nor woman, neither the old nor the young, nor even the children however small, was spared to live. His wrath was to be escaped only by flight. Not only people but even the birds in the heaven were killed and burnt. The stench from the corpses is so overpowering that I dare not enter the town, and I cannot begin to give you an idea of the immense amount of booty which they took from the town".<sup>32</sup>

Such was the ruthlessness of the Portuguese intervention in the East African coastal towns. After burning down Mombasa, the Portuguese sailed to India. However in the following year 1506, the Portuguese returned to East Africa, with the intention of bringing down Lamu, Oja<sup>33</sup> and Barawa. Alfonso de Albuquerque, who later became one of the most famous Indian viceroys, made this voyage. It is said that he personally struck down the King of Oja after the King had refused to "make arrangements with the King of Portugal".<sup>34</sup> The town was looted and burnt down and many people ruthlessly killed by the Portuguese. From Oja, the fleet sailed to Lamu, but the King of Lamu perceiving the dangers, surrendered to the Portuguese and promised to pay an annual tribute of 600 maticals, of which he immediately paid the first installment, so as to escape the wrath of the Portuguese whose forces could bring flourishing towns to ashes. Northwards, the fleet sailed to Barawa where a party of 1000 men landed. However, in spite of the energetic defense that the local inhabitants of Barawa put up, which the

Portuguese had not yet seen on the coast, Barawa was destroyed, looted and burnt with reports that, "more than 800 women had their hands and ears cut from their living bodies so that bracelets and earrings could more quickly be snatched from them",<sup>35</sup> and casualties of the town numbered over 1,500, with over 50 Portuguese dead and many wounded.<sup>36</sup>

From Barawa, the Portuguese sailed to Mogadishu. However, the inhabitants of Mogadishu were well prepared for the arrival of the Portuguese, with armed men on the beaches and most of them on horseback. In the face of the threat, the Portuguese withdrew, whereupon they sailed to Socotra, the island off the coast of Southern Arabia.

Off the coast of Southern Arabia, the Portuguese were as ruthless and destructive as they were on the East African coast. According to R.B. Serjeant, Portuguese penetration into the Indian Ocean was but the result of a long preparation of a carefully matured plan. They made the important policy decision of blocking the Red Sea to Arab and Muslim shipping from India to Egypt. In 1507 Socotra Island was captured by Albuquerque so that it could be used as a depot from which to stop the trade from the Gulf to Aden. Similarly Hormuz was captured in 1515 so as to cut off the trade from India via the Persian Gulf. The portuguese attacked Aden with twenty vessels

and 1,700 Portuguese troops and 1,000 Malabaris from India, under the leadership of Albuquerque.<sup>37</sup> At this battle, 200 Portuguese were killed by the Arabs but Aden was overpowered and a fort was built there. Al-Shihr, or the port of Shihr, the next most important port on the South Arabian coast, was also attacked by the Portuguese in 1533. A description of the battle from the Hadhramaut Chronicle describes how the Portuguese destroyed Shihr, which was burnt down and looted. The Chronicle states, "the town was shamefully plundered, the Franks (Portuguese) looting it first, then after them the musketeers, and the soldiers, and the hooligans of the town, in consequence of which people were reduced to poverty."<sup>39</sup> It was also reported that "the Franks setting out to cut the sea route to al-Mishles and al-Shihr from al-Swahil" (the East African sea board) and elsewhere", disrupted the well-organized trade in the Indian Ocean. Everywhere they went, the local people suffered at their hands. In 1508, the Portuguese attached Dabul on the western coast of India, looting and burning it. They also made an expedition against Gujerat and Diu, where many Muslims were slaughtered and they only left Diu after the Emir of Diu gave them a lot of money.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, it is to be seen that life in East Africa and Southern Arabia, for so long linked together, was disrupted by the Portuguese. Trading centres suffered the same fact of

destruction and looting at the hands of the Portuguese. The merchants suffered great losses due to the Portuguese blockade of ports and pillaging of the sea, especially after Lopo Soares, the successor of Albuquerque, granted permission to all Portuguese to engage in trade. As a consequence the seas were filled with so-called traders, who were in actual fact pirates who plundered the waters and no Arab or Muslim ship or dhow was safe from them even if they carried a Portuguese "safe-conduct."<sup>40</sup>

A result of the close connection between East Africa and South Arabia was that news of what had happened in East Africa quickly arrived in Southern Arabia because of the traders who requested the trading towns. When the Portuguese first arrived in Kilwa, it was reported in South Arabia from the port of Shihr. The quotation below from the Hadhramaut Chronicle is quoted in full to show the extent of the interaction between the people of East Africa and Southern Arabia. the Chronicle reported in this source that,

"The first appearance of the Franks was at the island of Kilwa, a large island of Swahili land on the trade route. They returned to their country, coming a second time with presents, strange documents, and formal proposition to the Lord of Kilwa. Then he (the Frank) left there for the (African) coast, and hence for the land of India. His first appearance in the land of India was at Calicut, Malabar and Goa at the beginning of the 10th century (H.) So, too, his first appearance off the Arabian coast..... at Husn al-Ghurab near al-Shihr in the beginning of the 10th century (H.)."<sup>41</sup>



Even when Mombasa was destroyed and burnt in 1528 by the Portuguese, news reached Shihr where it was reported,

"In this year in the month of Shaban news arrived from al-Sawahil that a reinforcement of the Franks had arrived from al-Rumi and taken Mombasa, destroying it greatly".<sup>42</sup>

The Indian Ocean world of trade was so organized that the merchants knew exactly when ships would arrive either from East Africa, India or the Persian Gulf. The merchants relied on the solar year to determine when ships would arrive. They also had a well-established network of agents in all the important ports for trading in the Indian Ocean. Close connection existed not only amongst the sea-faring community, but also between the ulama class of mashaikhs and saiyids who were interested in religion and sharia.<sup>43</sup> They were well instructed on current events in the countries of Africa and India where a large muslim population had grown due to immigration and settlement of the South Arabians, especially the Hadhrami ulama class, who kept in constant touch with their kinsmen in Southern Arabia.

However, this well organized trade pattern and interaction in the Indian Ocean were ruthlessly destroyed by the Portuguese forceful entrance into trading waters. The Portuguese hoped to control the trade and to ensure this, they destroyed any state

or sultanate on their way unless it accepted their suzerainty and agreed to pay tribute. They built a chain of forts along the coast in East Africa, forts were built in Kilwa and Mombasa and garrisons placed at different points along the littoral. In Southern Arabia, forts were constructed in Socotra, Aden, Mukalla and Hurmuz; on the Western coast of India, forts were built in Goa, Diu, Gujerat and Calicut. The disruption of the trade had the effect of creating food-shortages for the local people, especially in South Arabia, where they imported a lot of grain from East Africa. Also, important local industries fell due to Portuguese destructive policies. For example, the town of Sofala and Kilwa declined in prosperity because of the decline in the gold trade; in Aden, the glass industry on the Aden littoral also declined, although this could have been due to the competition from Venetian glass.<sup>44</sup> Merchants suffered great losses due to Portuguese piracy at sea, where no Muslim or Arab was safe. So haunted was Arab shipping that even the coastal crafts had to "steal from creek to creek". The system of trust on credit used by merchants was completely destroyed, since the merchants never know whether the goods they were carrying would be looted from them by the Portuguese pirates.<sup>45</sup>

By the time the Portuguese were firmly established in East Africa, commerce was virtually restricted to a brisk coastal

trade and an exchange of goods with Arabia occurred whenever a ship or a dhow managed to escape being looted and captured by the Portuguese. The long established contact with Southern Arabia was virtually broken. The effect of their ruthless policy was to ruin the prosperity of the local people, and at the same time, it was costly to the Portuguese who had too few men to hold so large a stretch of the coast. Trade in the towns came to a virtual standstill. The portuguese inability to be sympathetic and understanding towards the local inhabitants led to a policy of judicious non-co-operation and smuggling by the local people. The Portuguese officials too contributed towards their final downfall and failure to administer their "possessions" due to corruption. It is reported that even the highest officials "quite shamelessly robbed the government and their subjects, and twisted the law to enrich themselves".<sup>46</sup>

All the above factors combined to make the Portuguese period little more than a change of dominion with devastating results to the ancient trade between East Africa, Southern Arabia and India. They were content to remain at the coast and "conquer" the already settled towns which were limited to a small number of widely scattered possessions. Since the Portuguese rule in East Africa was based on their superiority of forces and naval power, it was destined to fall in the face

of a stronger power when it appeared. Thus, when the Dutch and the British naval forces moved into the Indian Ocean, the Portuguese were pushed out and only remained as a superior force in Goa, Western India. However, the Portuguese remained in East Africa till the time when the Omani Arabs consolidated their power and kicked them out of East Africa. In spite of nearly 200 years of Portuguese predominance in the Indian Ocean, in East Africa there is little "tangible evidence" of their influence along the coast, besides the Vasco Da Gama pillar in Malindi, the remains of the fort in Kilwa and Fort Jesus in Mombasa. To quote J.S. Strandes who has described their occupation on East Africa as having "no lasting influence and the coast would appear the same even if there had been Portuguese in her past".<sup>47</sup>

Another factor that contributed to the decline of the trade in East Africa beside the Portuguese destructive policies, was the inland human migration, which appears to have started soon after the Portuguese arrival, perhaps by the middle of the sixteenth century. According to Thomas J. Spear, the Galla expansion lead to the migration of the Mijikenda southwards into the Kenyan coast. Accordingly to oral traditions, this migration started after "the Mijikenda had killed a Galla and refused to pay compensation to the dead man's kinsmen, so the Galla took retribution on any Mijikenda they found".<sup>48</sup> Since

the Mijikenda were unable to defend themselves, they were forced to flee to the South. The Galla who were expanding overran a number of coastal towns at the turn of the seventeenth century and reached Pate and Malindi by 1624.<sup>49</sup> They plundered fields and towns and disrupted the inland trade that was carried on by the local Africans and the coastal trading towns. The Galla demanded tribute from all the Mijikenda trading in the area or anyone wishing to trade with them. They also received steady payments from the Swahili. There can be no doubt that the Galla were a major destructive factor on the coast. The already declining trade at the coast suffered further pillage inland from the Galla raids which kept Swahili traders from reaching the required goods. The overall effect of the Mijikenda migrations to the area adjacent to the coastal towns and the Galla invasion was to intensify the destructive impact of the Portuguese on Swahili trading towns and the trade in general.

Beside the widespread insecurity on the mainland and the seas, the decline of the Muslim world also contributed towards the decline of the trade in East Africa.<sup>50</sup> The discoveries of new markets transferred the world's trade to new routes, and the entire realms of the Eastern Mediterranean began to sink into the background. The discoveries of the America's shifted the trade from the hands of the Arabs to the hands of the

Europeans. The Arab Caliphates and Muslim dynasties that rose in medieval times began to decline in the face of more superior forces, thus bringing the supremacy of the Arab world to an end.

From the above analysis of the Portuguese predominance in East Africa it can be concluded that the ancient trade with Southern Arabia among other places was disrupted to the point where there were shortages of essential food-stuff, and this greatly affected the local people. The connection between Arabia and East Africa was almost cut off because of Portuguese piracy in the waters of the Indian Ocean. Their ruthless and destructive policies led to complete disappearance of trading towns and decline of many sultanates and trading towns. Although we do not have documented evidence about the Yemeni and Hadhrami Arabs who came to East Africa during the Portuguese reign in East Africa, it can be concluded that trade did not come to a complete standstill. People traded but on a very small scale. Whenever the dhows could avoid being looted and captured by the Portuguese, the traders managed to reach the shores of East Africa. J.S. Strandes makes reference to Hadhrami sailors who had learnt to make wide detours to avoid the patrol ships of the Portuguese, especially when carrying their forbidden cargoes of spices.<sup>51</sup> Also towards the close of the sixteenth century, the arrival of Dutch and English shipping in the Indian Ocean meant that Portuguese monopoly of

trade was over, since the European rivalry left the Yemeni and Hadhrami Arab sailors and traders free to carry on trade along their former trade routes. The Arabs had by then also learnt from the Europeans that art of war and had gradually acquired firearms, and when they were confronted in battle, their defense was sometimes stronger than the Portuguese.<sup>52</sup>

There is scanty evidence on the activities of the Hadhrami and Yemeni Arabs on the coast of East Africa during the Portuguese period, but it can be safely argued that they were not cut off completely from coming to East Africa as traders and settlers, although their numbers must have been small. However, their activities and numbers increased when the Omani Arabs finally managed to oust the Portuguese from East Africa to just South of the Ruvuma River, and from Southern Arabia, and established the former prosperity of the trade between the Arabs, Swahili and African Inhabitants.

Before the Omani family established themselves in East Africa, they had to kick out the Portuguese from Oman and South Arabia. In 1624 the Yarubi dynasty in Oman came to power and its first powerful Imam, Sultan bin Nasir bin Murshid overthrew the Masiks, and managed to unite the country's forces. In 1648, he successfully besieged Muscat and forced the Portuguese to come to terms with him, which included

demolishing the forts at Kuriate, Matera and Dobera on the Eastern coast of the Persian Gulf; to exempt all the subjects of the Imam from paying custom dues; and to grant freedom of trade and commerce in the Arabian seas. In 1650, the nephew of Sultan Nasir, Imam Sultan bin Seif, besieged Muscat again and this time the Portuguese in the garrison, together with the Arab mercenaries were allowed to withdraw to Diu on the Western coast of India, thus finally breaking the influence of the Portuguese in the Persian Gulf. In Socotra, the Portuguese were overpowered by the Mahra in 1510 when the fort was besieged till all the Portuguese died. The Mahra then rebuilt their fort after the departure of the Portuguese. In Aden, the Portuguese were overpowered by the local people with the help of the Turks.<sup>53</sup>

From then onwards, Oman turned herself into a maritime power and because of the close connection between Muscat and the East African towns, the war between the Portuguese and the Arab spread to East Africa. It is very likely that once the Omanis were firmly established in Muscat, they went to East Africa. In 1652, the Omanis made a devastating attack on Zanzibar and killed a number of Portuguese, including some of Augustinian towns and their inhabitants called upon the Imam to help them against the Portuguese tyranny. It was the beginning of the Omani intervention in East Africa. Resistance to



Portuguese rule eventually centered on the Nabhani state of Pate. It became the base for Portuguese resistance. Pate revolted against the Portuguese several times, in 1637, 1660, 1678, 1686 and 1687.<sup>55</sup> All these rebellions were suppressed although each time it proved more difficult for the Portuguese, since the Imam of Oman supplied aid to Pate.

The Portuguese stronghold on the East African coast - Mombasa Fort Jesus - was finally overrun by the Omani Arabs with help from the local inhabitants, in 1698 after a siege of three years.<sup>56</sup> Under an army from Oman and Pate, Zanzibar, the only surviving ally of the Portuguese, fell to the Omani troops a few years later, thus bringing the most important town on the East African coast under Omani performance. However, the expulsion of the Portuguese from Mombasa was not the beginning of Omani ascendancy in East Africa.

Civil war in Oman and the Persian invasion of the region kept the Omani Omans occupied for nearly a century at home, leaving the East African towns "free to forge their own destiny."<sup>57</sup> This led to a continuing involvement with East Africa. Individual Arabs and, at times, families remained at the coast especially after the Imam's authority had been firmly established. More immigrants from South Yemen and Oman began to settle permanently at the coast. The effect of the

reinforcement from South Arabia and Oman in the early eighteenth century is difficult to ascertain, but by the end of the century a definite "process of re-Arabization seems to have begun on the coast in which Arab kinship, values and some element of material culture gained prestige at the expense of Swahili culture. In the long run, Swahili society was considerably modified by this process, a process that gained impetus after Omani authority was reasserted in the 1820's and 1830's.<sup>58</sup>

By 1750's, the result of the civil war in Oman left the Binsaidi in control. Imam Seyyid Ahmed bin Said al-Busaidi (1744-84) managed to wrest the power from the Yarubis and after feeling secure enough at home, his successors turned their attention to East Africa. After the death of Seyyid Ahmed of Muscat in 1804, there followed a struggle for power in Oman in which Seyyid Said emerged victorious.<sup>59</sup> Seyyid Said bin Sultan had a long struggle to establish himself in a position of real power. By 1808, he had lost much of the influence he had possessed and held only the sea coast. But with assistance from the British, he was soon to strengthen his position in Oman. After consolidating his power at home, he began to turn his attention to East Africa.

In 1840, Seyyid Said bin Sultan al-Busaidi transferred his

capital to Zanzibar. His foresightedness enabled him to make Zanzibar an international port, from where trade developed and flourishing caravan trade in ivory and slaves brought prosperity to the coast. The islands of Zanzibar and Pemba developed plantations of cloves that attracted not only the Yemeni traders, but also the Indians who were trading with East Africa and those who were employed in the Sultan's services. Within a short period of time, Seyyid Said managed to make Zanzibar the "greatest single emporium on the Western shores of the Indian Ocean".<sup>60</sup> Zanzibar carried on a significant commercial traffic with the mainland ports as well as across the Indian Ocean with Arabia and India. The expansion of a commercial network centered in Zanzibar in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries led to the foundation of the development of plantation agriculture that depended on the slaves from the interior. The growth of the dhow and caravan trade linked the East African coast with the sources of slaves in the interior of East Africa to potential markets around the Indian Ocean. The slave trade continued and certainly increased in the nineteenth century, as the trade routes into the interior of East Africa developed.<sup>61</sup>

This trade made Zanzibar a very important trading centre for traders all around the Indian Ocean and an important international port. It attracted traders and labourers from

Arabia. In fact it was during Seyyid Said's reign that more Yemenis began settling permanently at the coast. They formed an important section of the Arab population of Zanzibar. Writing in 1857, R. Burton observed that "the poor Arabs who flocked Zanzibar during the seasons are Hazramis, and they work and live as hard as the Hammals of Stanboul. These men club and mess together as gangs under an Akida, who supplies them with rice, ghee and scones, and who keeps the account so skillfully that the labourers receive annually about Pounds 36, though he may gain four times that sum."<sup>62</sup> Speaking at the same time, Colonel Rigby writing in 1860, observed that, "a considerable number of Arabs from Hadhramaut coast also come to labour as porters and carriers, they are a patient industrious people and most useful to the merchants in loading and unloading ships."<sup>63</sup>

Seyyid Said also employed many Hadhrami soldiers to man his garrisons. All of his soldiers were either Baluchis or Hadhrami Arabs. One such Hadhrami soldier was Abdallah bin Mbarak Bakhshwein who came to East Africa from Dauan in Hadhramaut. He was made the Akida of Fort Jesus in Mombasa in 1842. According to the system of allegiance at the time, all loyal subjects of the Sultan had to raise volunteers to assist the Sultan whenever he asked. Abdallah led a body of twenty-five Hadhrami volunteers to assist the Sultan's army in

its attack upon the Mazrui stronghold in Mombasa. The Mazrui family of Mombasa was opposed to the Busaidi overlordship at Zanzibar and on the mainland. They had always been a source of rebellion against the Sultan of Zanzibar. The attack against them was unsuccessful, but in 1839 the Mazrui were finally defeated by Seyyid Said's army. His first act after the victory was to appoint Abdallah bin Mbarak Bakhashwein as the Akida or commandant of Mombasa. Around 1837-8 Muhammad, the son of Abdallah was born in Fort Jesus. While still a child, his father died, leaving him under the care of a Baluchi military commander, Jemedar Tangai, to fill the post of Akida. Seyyid Majid who had succeeded Seyyid Said after his death in 1856, appointed Muhammad as Akida, but under the direction of Jemedar Tangai. Muhammad was very active in the Sultan's service. He sent expeditions against Sheikh Mbaruk bin Rashid, the last of the Mazrui chiefs opposed to the Busaidi Sultan's overlordship. Muhammad Abdallah was successful in driving off Sheikh Mbaruk out of his stronghold in Mwele Hills.

Not surprisingly, there developed a rivalry between the Hadhrami Arabs and the Mazrui (Oman) Arabs in Mombasa. It is said that the Akida (Muhammad Abdallah) antagonised a large and influential section of the Mazrui notables. The Mazrui of Mombasa sympathised with their kinsmen Mbaruk bin Rashid. Most of them could not reconcile themselves to the fact that a

Hadhrami Arab had been appointed by the Sultan of Zanzibar to be in charge of the garrison at Fort Jesus, their old symbol of power. The antagonism between the Mazrui Arabs and Hadhramis intensified after the Akida unsuccessfully held off Mbaruk. As a result of this antagonism, the Mazrui Arabs started to refer to the Hadhramis with such derogatory terms as virobotos (fleas) and Washihiri, (although for a long time all Hadhramis were known as Washihiri - meaning those who came from al-Shihr).

The Sultan of Zanzibar ignored all this, because the Akida was working for his interest - to crush the Mazrui of Mombasa; when the Akida drove off Sheikh Mbaruk from Gazi, he was made the Wali of Mombasa.<sup>65</sup> The appointment intensified the rivalry between the sections of the population, but because of continuous complaints to the Zanzibar courts, the Akida was summoned by Seyyid Bargash to Zanzibar.

However, Seyyid Bargash pardoned and allowed him to return to Mombasa as the Akida. It is said that the Akida became more tyrannical after his return from Zanzibar. The Sultan then proclaimed that he had deposed him of his office as the Akida of Fort Jesus. Muhammad bin Abdullah defied the Sultan's orders and barricaded himself and his followers in the fort. The Akida was finally defeated after the Sultan sent two British men-of-war, H.M.S. "Rifleman" and H.M.S. "Nassau" to

evict him. Muhammad bin Abdullah was taken prisoner to the courts of Zanzibar and was deported to Mukalla, Hadhramaut. However, he returned to Zanzibar in 1888 and died there a broken man in 1894.<sup>66</sup>

Here was a Hadhrami Arab in the service of the Sultan, but because of the rivalry between the Mazrui Arabs from Oman and the Hadhrami Arabs, he was brought to his downfall. What is interesting to note is that, this rivalry between the two sections (the Omani and Yemeni Arabs) has continued right to recent times. The Omani Arabs as the ruling aristocracy and the other Swahili families looked down on the Hadhramis because according to them, the Hadhramis were not "wangwana" since they even accepted menial jobs, as water carriers,, labourers, unlike the Omani who were from the aristocracy and who owned tracts of land at the coast. The Omani Arabs and Swahili always referred to the Hadhramis as "Washihiri" in a derogative manner, but because of their ability to ignore such remarks, the Hadhramis have been able to better themselves, at the coast and were later to thrive at a time when the Omani Arabs and Swahili suffered decline after the abolition of the slave trade which hit their plantation economy.

The majority of the Hadhrami Arabs came to the Sultanate for a short period in order to earn money and return to their

homeland in Arabia. However, some of them had made Zanzibar, Mombasa and Lamu their permanent homes. A considerable number of them came as labourers, porters and water carriers. They worked in the ports loading and off-loading ships, and they were in great demand as stevedores up and down the coast, performing their work with "assiduity" and "tirelessness".<sup>67</sup> Writing in 1919, F.B. Peace, a British Resident in Zanzibar stated that the Hadhramis formed an important section of the Arab population of Zanzibar, who were hard working and willing workers, keeping much to themselves, and living together in a special quarter of the town.<sup>68</sup>

Many of them entered the service of the Sultan as soldiers and government officials. In 1824, there were 45 Hadhramis employed in the government service. Guillain writing in 1856, stated that, the Sultan maintained a fairly large number of Hadhramis in the garrison of East Africa and Oman.<sup>69</sup> In 1877 Seyyid Barghash called General Lloyd Mathews to re-organise his army consisting almost entirely of Persians and Hadhramis.<sup>70</sup> In addition, the Hadhramis were employed for many years as captains and officers in the Sultan's ships.

Although the Hadhramis were poor and as a rule did not own slaves, reference has been made to some Hadhrami Arabs at the coast who owned slaves. There is no doubt that slaves were



exported to South Arabia from the East African coast, since there is a distinct class of slaves that formed an important section of the society. However, most of the Hadhramis who settled in East Africa did not participate in the slave trade, as their Omani counterparts.

It was during the time when traders retired into the interior, that Islam spread into the interior. It was the Hadhramis and Islamised Swahili who took upon themselves the task to spread Islam into the interior. Islam had spread as far as Mumias in Western Kenya by 1882. The spread of Islam in Kenya was carried on by coastal traders who were the fore-runners to travel into the interior. These individual traders whose aims were twofold - trading and spreading Islam - were responsible for the spread of Islam, into the interior.

The spread of Islam in the interior was not accidental, as J.S. Trimingham suggests in his book, Islam in East Africa.<sup>72</sup> Rather, there was a deliberate attempt on the part of certain individual traders to introduce Islam in the interior. When the trade links between the coast and the interior was established, trading posts and "colonies" were started in the interior by the Arab-Swahili traders. The history of Islam in Africa shows that the spread of Islam was the work of the traders who were at the same time the clerics.<sup>73</sup>

The spread of Islam in Kenya was carried on by traders who were the first to travel into the interior. The Pokomo in Tana River District seem to have been in contact with the Muslims, particularly the Swahili of Barawa and Lamu since the seventeenth century.<sup>74</sup> In Pokomo land, Chara was an extremely rich trading centre which attracted many traders from the coast. These traders sold cloth, sugar, salt and beads in return for rice, maize and beans. The traders exported their goods to Mombasa, Lamu, and finally to the Persian Gulf. These traders were described as "white Arabs" from Arabia as well as Swahilis, so they probably included not only recent immigrants from Oman and Hadhramaut, but also the old established Arabs and Swahilis.

In order to have good relationship with the Pokomo, these Muslim traders seem to have spread Islam to their Pokomo trader partners. Islam was attractive to the Pokomo in Chara for two reasons: a Muslim earned the privilege of wearing the dress Kanzu, which in traditional society was reserved only for the elders. Islam also offered all adult males a part in rituals to bring blessings on the participants and his family, whereas in traditional religion, only elders of the society could invoke God in prayers. In embracing Islam, one could attain the social equality with the traders who came from the coast to

trade in Chara. Thus, Islam was embraced by many Pokomo as a "rebellion" against the elders and as a part of a process of social change. Among those who converted the Pokomo in Chara were Fumo Luti al-Nabhani, Ma'alim Awadhi Nasib - a Hadhrami from the Comoro Islands, Sheikh Osman, a Hadhrami Arab and Ahmed al-Nabhani, a well-known trader from Pate.<sup>75</sup>

In Western Kenya, Islam was initially spread by the traders who traversed the interior in search of their trading commodities. In Mumias in particular, and in the surrounding areas, Islamic influences were carried by deliberate agents - the traders. There is a general agreement that the first arrivals in Mumias were the Arab and Swahili ivory traders from the coast.<sup>76</sup> Mumias became an important base for trade in ivory and slaves, since there was an abundance of ivory in the surrounding areas of Turkana and Ngabatak.<sup>77</sup>

Sharif Hassan Abdallah al Mahdally came to Mumias to trade in the early 1880's. He became a prominent Muslim leader in Mumias and after his death, was regarded as a saint. His brother, Sharif Omar, came to Mumias in the early twentieth century. They were Hadhrami Arabs who came to Mumias from Pangani on the coast. Sharif Hassan (d. 1939), was the first Kadhi in Mumias, who by virtue of his office gained official recognition as a leader and spokesman for Muslims in Western

Kenya. He was succeeded by his brother, Sharif Omar (d.195. Sharif Ahman Omar was appointed the next Kadhi, with his courts in Kisumu. He was the next Kadhi for Western Nyanza and Rift Valley Province.

The spread of Islam was facilitated by the depth of islamization and also by the spirit to propagate the new faith, especially among the converts. Sharif Hassan is known to have sent out people to preach Islam. His brother Sharif Omar encouraged madrassa teachers from the coast to preach Islam in Mumias. Sumba Juma and Muhammed Abdallah, both from Pangani, were sent to Karamoja to preach Islam. Muhammed Kombo was sent to Morato. Seif Malonaza Mbwana Diwani and Mzee Majembe, all from Pangani, came to Mumias to preach and teach Islam. Other ma'alim were known to have gone as far as Mbale, Kampala and Soroti in Uganda.<sup>78</sup> Also a large Muslim population existed in Kendu Bay in Western Kenya before the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>79</sup>

Thus, Islam was spread from the coast by the early traders who ventured into the interior in search of trading commodities such as grains, ivory and slaves as we have seen in the cases of the traders in Pokomo land and in Western Kenya. The strength of the coastal influence of Islam is clearly seen in that the Muslims followed the Shafii school of thought which

emanates from the influence of Hadhrami immigrants at the coast, especially the Sharifite immigrants, who have greatly influenced the religious orientation of the people at the coast. They also influenced "the Swahili culture and literature, the methods of teaching religion, the manual used, the saint cult and the respect for the Sharif families".<sup>80</sup>

During the years following the "scramble" for territories in East Africa by the European powers in the early 1880's,<sup>81</sup> Zanzibari political and military power along the East African coast began to crumble. Zanzibar gradually became, like other colonial territories during the era of British overlordship, an administrative state with ultimate control in the hands of the British official. In 1886, the first Anglo-German Agreement was signed, towards the end of October, by Britain and Germany and the Sultan of Zanzibar. This treaty divided East Africa into the German and British "spheres of influence". The Sultan of Zanzibar retained the islands of Zanzibar, Lamu and the ten miles coastal strip.

In July 1890, another Anglo-German treaty was signed and it provided for British Protectorate over Zanzibar, the ten miles coastal strip and the withdrawal of the German Protectorate over Witu. The British East Africa Association had been given a concession by Seyyid Barghash to administer in the Sultan's

name, and to develop the coast between Vanga and Kipini, in May 1888.<sup>82</sup>

However, the Imperial British East Africa Company (the successor of British East Africa Association), chose to withdraw from the coast in 1895 because of the rebellions, political uncertainty, economic fears and religious discontent. The British government therefore decided to inherit its authority rather than return it to the Sultan.<sup>83</sup> The coast was to be linked to the rest of the British sphere of influence to form a British East Africa protectorate with the Sultan's nominal suzerainty maintained, but the British government was to assume sole responsibility. The Sultan was forced to sign an agreement in December 1895, whereby the coastal strip was to be entrusted to officers appointed by the British government. The traditional Muslim authority was to be maintained but accommodated within the British administration, so that Liwalis, Kadhis and Akida would be agents of the British authority, instead of the Sultan's.<sup>84</sup>

The supremacy of the British rule was finally achieved in British East Africa Protectorate, after crushing all rebellions from the local chiefs.<sup>85</sup> By the end of 1895, the coastal people had to resign themselves and their lot under the British protection.

Thus, from the evidence gathered, it can be concluded that there has been a close ethnic and commercial interaction between the people of East African coast and South Arabia from pre-Islamic times, which has continued right up to the twentieth century. The interaction and the intermarriage between the Yemeni traders and the Africans at the coast, was certainly the beginning of the ethnic and linguistic differentiation at the coast and contributed towards the evolution of the Swahili culture, except that examples of this interaction has not been meticulously spelt out.

The close maritime link between East Africa and Southern Arabia was disrupted by the Portuguese predominance in the Indian Ocean from the early fifteenth century. Both areas suffered the same fate of ruthlessness and destructions at the hands of the Portuguese. Trade was disrupted in the Indian Ocean, with traders living in fear of being plundered by the Portuguese. However, with the arrival of the Dutch and British in the Indian Ocean together with the consolidation of Arab power in the area, the Portuguese were kicked out of the East African coast as well as Southern Arabia.

It was during the reign of the Busaidi Sultanate in East Africa that most of the Yemeni Arabs made East Africa their permanent home in towns like Zanzibar, Lamu and Mombasa.

However, a large number of their population was temporary residents who paid frequent visits to the East African trading centres for the purpose of trade. As traders and labourers, they came to East Africa in search of a better life. They depended on the monsoon winds, which facilitated their movements up and down the littoral. The Yemenis became an important section of the population and the Sultan employed them in his garrisons. In fact a large number of the forts were manned by these Hadhrami soldiers and Akidas. As labourers they were important workers in Zanzibar, Mombasa and Lamu, loading and off-loading dhows at the ports. By the end of the nineteenth century the Yemenis formed an important section of the Arab population along the coast of East Africa. They played an important role in the spread of Islam in Kenya.



FOOTNOTES

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4. G. Mathews, "The East African Coast until the coming of the Portuguese", in Oliver R. and Mathew g. (eds.) History of East Africa Vol. 1. Oxford, 1963, pp. 94-95.
5. G.S.P. Freeman-Greenville, The East African Coast Select Documents from the First to the Earlier Nineteenth Century, Oxford, 1962, p. 1.
6. Ibid., p. 2.
7. P.K. Hitti, History of the Arabs: From Earliest Times to the Present. 8th edition. London, 1964, p. 49.
8. Quoted in Ibid.
9. Ibid., pp. 49-50
10. Ibid., pp. 50-52
11. Ibid., p. 54
12. Ibid., p. 55
13. Ibid., p. 56
14. Ibid., p. 65. For more details on the bursting of the great dam at Ma'rib, see Hitti, op.cit., pp. 64-66.
15. Freeman-Greenville, op.cit., p. 2

16. H.N. Chittick, Discoveries in the Lamu Archipelago", in Azania Vol. 2 No. 1. 1967, p. 55. Also see, Mathews, "The East African coast until the coming of the Portuguese", op.cit., p. 95.
17. Mathews, op.cit., p. 95
18. H.W. Ingrams, Zanzibar: Its History and Its People. London, 1967. p. 69.
19. For information on the spread of Islam to South Arabia and the Persian Gulf, see Hitti, op.cit., Chapter VIII to XV, pp. 111 to 178.
20. H.N. Chittick, "The Coast Before the arrival of the Portuguese", in Zamani, B.A. Ogot (ed), Nairobi, 1973, pp. 104 - 105. See also Ingrams, op.cit., p. 81; Freeman-Grenville, The East African Coast, op.cit., p. 2.
21. Chittick, Ibid., pp. 104 - 105.
22. Ibid., pp. 111
23. Ibid., "The Peopling of the East African Coast", in Chittick and Rotberg (eds), East Africa and the Orient p. 11.
24. Ibid., p. 3
25. For more details on the African sources, see Oliver, R. and Mathews, G. (eds.) History of East Africa. Vol. 1. op. cit., B.A. Ogot (ed.) Zamani op.cit.
26. W.F. McKay, "A Pre-Colonial History of the Southern Kenya Coast", Ph.D. Thesis 1975, Boston University.
27. For the debate on the "Shirazi" dynasty, see the works of Ingrams, Zanzibar; Its History and Its People. London, 1967. F.B. Peace, Zanzibar: the island Metropolis of Eastern Africa. London, 1967. L.W. Hollingworth, Short History of the Coast of East Africa. London, (revised ed.) 1974

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28. A.I. Salim, "The Elusive 'Mswahili' - some reflections on his identity and culture". Paper read at the Swahili workshop on Swahili language at SOAS, London University, April, 1982.
29. See Chapter 2 below, pp. 76 - 89, on the Sharifs of Hadhramaut and their impact on the East African coast.
30. See J.S. Strandes, The Portuguese period in East Africa. Translated from the German by J.G. Walwork, Nairobi, 1961. And R.B. Serjeant, The Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast: Hadhrami Chronicles, with Yemeni and European Accounts of Dutch Pirates off Mocha in the Seventeenth Century. Oxford, 1963. Also see R. Oliver and G. Mathews (eds.), History of East Africa. Vol 1. Oxford 1963. B.A. Ogot, Zamani: A survey of East African History. (New edition), Nairobi, 1973.
31. Strandes, op.cit., pp. 72 - 73.
32. Quoted in Strandes op.cit., p. 73
33. Oja was probably a village near the mouth of Ozi River (Tana River) and now has disappeared under the delta of the River.
34. Strades, op.cit., p. 75
35. Ibid., pp. 77 - 78
36. Ibid., p. 75

37. Serjeant, op.cit., p. 47
38. Ibid., p. 53
39. Ibid., p. 44
40. Ibid., p. 14
41. Ibid., pp. 42 - 43
42. Ibid., p. 55
43. For more details on the ulama class in East Africa, see chapter 2 below pp. 80 - 82
44. Serjeant, op.cit., p. 35
45. Ibid., pp. 36 - 37  
Also see Serjeant op. cit., for more details on the nature of the struggle against the Arabs and Turks in the Arabian Seas. One reason for the Portuguese determination in discovering the trade routes to India was to "outflank Islam". Thus, their wars assumed a religious character.
46. Strandes, op. cit., p. 307
47. Ibid., p. 320
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49. Ibid., p. 24
50. See Hitti op. cit., on the decline of the Muslim World especially after the 16th century.
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52. Ibid., p. 143. Also see Serjeant, op. cit., pp. 24 - 25

53. Strandes, pp. 157 - 159
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57. F.J. Berg, "The Coast from the Portuguese Invasion to the Rise of the Zanzibar Sultanate", in Zamani, Ogot, p. 126
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65. Ibid., p. 40
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71. Ibid.,
72. J.S. Trimmingham, Islam in East Africa. London, 1954, pp. 24 - 25
73. R.L. Bunger, Jr., Islamization Among the Upper Pokomo. New York, 1973, p. 68
74. Ibid., p. 65
75. Ibid., p. 70
76. M.A. Abdallah, "Some Aspects of Coastal and Islamic Influence in Mumias from the late 19th century to early 20th century". B.A. Dissertation 1971. University of Nairobi, p. 20 - 24
77. Ibid., p. 25 and p. 29
78. Ibid., p. 20
79. A.S. Said, "The Influence of Islam in Kendu Bay". B.A. Dissertation 1970, University of Nairobi.
80. See Chapter 2 below, pp. 65 - 66 and 82 - 89, on the role of the Sharifs in East Africa, especially their impact on the spread of the Shaffi madh-hab in East Africa in general.
81. For information on the "scramble" in East Africa, see Salim, op. cit., R. Coupland, East Africa and its Invaders. Oxford, 1938. Nicholls, op. cit., Ingrams, Zanzibar.
82. Salim, op. cit., p. 71

83. Ibid., pp. 72 - 73

84. Ibid., p. 73

C H A P T E R 2

A SOCIO-CULTURAL SURVEY

Before giving the details of the socio-cultural history of the Yemenis in Kenya, it would be appropriate to give a description of the socio-cultural history of the Yemeni's in Southern Arabia and the topography of North Yemen and Hadhramaut, South Yemen,<sup>1</sup> because it would enable us to understand why the Yemeni's migrated and settled in distant lands.

The two South Arabian States of the Qaaity and Kathiri Sultans, known as Hadhramaut before 1968 and the fourth and fifth provinces of the New People's Republic of South Yemen falls roughly within longitude 47 to 50 east and between latitude 15 to 17 north. In the north, it is bounded by the great Rub'al Khali or the 'Empty Quarter' and in the south by the Indian Ocean; and by the Mahara mountains in the east and the Awlaqi in the west. South Yemen has two basic physical features. One is a range of mountains just behind the coast that rises to a height of over 5,000 feet. This southern plateau or Jol, extends northwards for about 150 miles into the wadi system (valley systems). Beyond the Wadi rises the northern plateau which continues into the Empty Quarter. These



two plateaus make up 90 per cent of the land area of Hadhramaut, with the northern plateau being more barren and more sparsely populated than the southern plateau, because it merges into the desert in the north.

The Wadi system is the second physical feature of South Yemen. Wadi Hadhramaut, the key feature of the geography of the country to which it gives its name, makes up less than 10 per cent of the total area of Hadhramaut, but is densely populated. Wadi Dow'an , wadi Al-'Ein and Wadi 'Emd, all form one channel at Al-Qasr, just before Wadi Hadhramaut. All these valleys have major tributaries. Throughout the length of the wadis and the major tributaries are villages and towns scattered, mostly less than a mile apart. Wadi Hadhramaut is the most densely populated, with the towns of Shiba, Seiyun and Tarim, each with a population of about 2,000 people.<sup>2</sup> The northern and southern plateaus form the water-sheds, with water flowing into the valleys, where every town and valley then diverts some of this water along a canal and directs it to its own cultivated area, where it is further re-distributed by a complex canal system to every plant and palm date.<sup>3</sup> Since floods are the only source of water and they come rather frequently, their distribution is very important, thus the whole canal system is intricately designed to distribute the water to every farmer. The average annual rainfall in the

country is less than two inches.<sup>4</sup> Therefore cultivation in the wadi system depends entirely on the amount and location of rainfall. Because of the small amount of rainfall over the plateau and the wadi system, droughts are frequent throughout the country, inflicting a heavy burden on the limited arable land which also has to feed the domestic animals. Thus, the general climatic conditions of the country, coupled with the limited resources of arable land, made agricultural scarcity a permanent feature of the general economy of Hadhramaut. Hence, the hard life led to immigration to greener pastures - East Africa, East Asia and the Far East.

North Yemen on the other hand has a sufficient periodic rainfall that allows a systematic cultivation of agriculture. Perennial vegetation is found in valleys to a distance of about 200 miles from the coast. San'a, the modern capital of North Yemen is over 7,000 feet above the sea. Tracts of fertile land are found near the coast in South Yemen. A range of mountains that run parallel to the western coast starts from Medina, at 9,000 feet and ends in North Yemen, where it rises to over 12,000 feet. Besides the mountain ranges, North Yemen boasts of more steppe land than South Yemen and is therefore able to support more of its population. It must be noted that there is

less emigration to East Africa from North Yemen. One main reason is that, North Yemen is more fertile and can support its population better. Hence the "push factor" is weak.

The people of Hadhramaut are generally referred to as Hadhrims (singular - Hadhrami). People from North Yemen are referred to as North Yemeni's. The Hadhrami's have often been described as the "most sophisticated and enterprising people in South Arabia",<sup>5</sup> due to a number of reasons. First, the material culture of the Hadhramis is more developed than of any other people in South Arabia. R.B. Serjeant is quoted in full to show the development of the Hadhramis in Southern Arabia. He states that in Hadhramaut,

"each province is a distinct entity, though..... whereas al-Shihr and the minor anchorages of the sea coast have played their role in world commerce, the wadi has been a back-water, a reservoir of men, warriors and scholars, but the latter, have been influential in spreading the shafii school of Islam far and wide in the diverse littoral provinces of the Indian Ocean. The ruined state of so much of the formerly cultivated areas of the wadi cannot disguise how much more populous and important it was to Arabia itself in antiquity, for the wadi looks inward to Arabia as well as outwards to the southern seas. Hadhrami history, ..... has an importance quite disproportionate to the size or position of the country, firstly because it was the fount of Islamic learning for so many lands, and secondly because its peculiar, ancient, and still surviving institutions can by the comparative method, throw light upon many an obscure aspect of Islamic and Arabian history. In the principal towns of Hadhramaut a literacy and legal society survives, of a type even more archaic than one could find in such a city as Fez in Morocco, ..... The chief centres of intellectual activity are the holy city of Tarim, very similar to medieval Mecca, Saiyun, to a much lesser extent Shibam

which is largely mercantile, al-Mukallah and al-Shihr, but certain villages are celebrated for families of scholars such as Hunaidah and Ba-wazir, to mention two only of many, and nearly every village has at least one or two scholars trained on traditional lines."<sup>6</sup>

From the above quotation, it can be seen that Hadhramaut played an important part in Arabian history. Some of the towns had a large population of up to 20,000 with tall buildings dubbed "sky-scrapers". The town people of Hadhramaut were the more sophisticated and enterprising people as opposed to the tribesmen, who lived outside the town. Indeed, Hadhrami's have traditionally seen and accepted the division in their society as those "civilized" (urban) people hadhr, of the town, and the "primitive" bedu in a community that speaks the same language, has one religion and subscribed to the same general values.

Hadhramaut has had a long history as an important centre of learning. Its "university" town of Tarim is perhaps the most highly regarded in the whole of South Arabia. Intellectual and religious life has traditionally been highly developed, by a large number of holy-men whose influence and reputation extended in Hadhramaut, and beyond, as will be seen, on the Kenyan coast.

Also, Hadhramaut has had a long history of immigrations to nearby Arab countries as well as the distant countries of East Africa, India and the Far East. In 1938, W.H. Ingrams estimated that at least half as many Hadhrami's lived outside Hadhramaut as did inside, where they formed important settlements in Saudi Arabia, Aden, East Africa, India, Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia. In all these countries, Hadhrami's have specialized in commerce as merchants and in religious activities, as missionaries and holy-men. In addition, Hadhramaut has been economically dependent on remittances from migrants from as far back as people can remember.<sup>7</sup>

The most important aspect of the Hadhrami society is the social stratification. Hadhrami society has a system which divides all people into social classes, almost castes. Stratification pervades almost every aspect of the social life of the whole Yemeni population. The Hadhrami's are divided roughly into seven social classes within three broad social groupings, but all these classes are not necessarily represented in every part of the country. In North Yemen, the social divisions among its population are not as many as those found in South Yemen.

The Saiyids or Sadah, meaning masters or lords form the highest stratum, consisting of people who claim to be descendants of Prophet Muhammad. They are regarded as having the noblest descent and religious status in the society. Many of the families of sadah are hereditary chiefs bearing the title of mansab (chiefs). Until the revolution that brought independence they were recognised as spiritual leaders by the surrounding tribes and even by tribes far away. In Hadhramaut they were very influential, though in the tribal districts there and in the former Aden federation their numbers were small. In North Yemen, the great Saiyid houses belong to the Zaidi school of moderate Shia, whereas in Hadhramaut they are orthodox Shafii, although there are also Shafii Saiyids in North Yemen, who are held in great respect (ihtiram). In both Yemens, they had great influence over the people and wielded great power as a religious aristocracy. To maintain their authority, they relied on their descent from the Prophet and the reverence of their ancestry. In Hadhramaut, the saiyids did not carry arms, but the Saidi Saiyids bore arms and their Imam was always a military figure, unlike the Hadhrami Saiyids who had given up carrying arms and relied on their spiritual prestige to maintain their position in the society. They were extremely "jealous" of their priviledges as saiyids, and guarded their positions by adhering to such customs as the kissing of

their hands and avoiding any form of manual labour. In the Yemen, the saiyids formed a vital part of the intellectual elite and much of the official governing class and, therefore, exercised considerable influence on this account.

Some of the prominent sadah families were the Ba-Alawi, Al-Attas, Al-Aidarus, Al-Saggar, Al-Haddad, Al-Sheikh Abubakar bin Salim and Al-Ahmed bin al-Faqih ash Shahid. The families of these sadah had influence over a large number of tribes near their residence. For example, the Ba-Alawi families wielded influence over the tribes around Du'an, Tarim, Fughham, Yuwan and Tarim; the sadah family of al-Aidarus had influence over the tribes around Tarba, Tarim, Shihr, Salibia, Ramula, Bur and Hazm; the sadah family of Sheikh Abubakar bin Salim have influence of tribes around Einat, Duan, Hureidha, Tarim and Tarba, Leisar and Amd,<sup>8</sup> and so on. These sadah occupied a position which was not questioned by others, forming a theocracy with which even the rulers of the country interfered very little until independence and the republic arrived. On the whole, their influence was on the side of law and order.

The second stratum is that of the Mashaikh and Gabail. The Mashaikh (singular Sheikh, meaning scholar and holy man) are people who claim descent from well-known and reputed Hadhrami scholars and holy families of the past. They differ from the gabail, (singular Gabilah meaning "tribe" and gabili

tribesmen), by a certain hereditary virtue inherent in each member of any given family such as healing, divination for water and so on. The mashaikh family are found in the Aden area and in Hadhramaut in South Yemen. In North Yemen, in the Zaidi part of the Yemen, a similar class to the mashaikh known as qadi is found. They do not differ from the saiyids in dressing and also have an ascribed religious role and form part of the traditional administrative class of the Yemen.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, the gabail who are of the same descent status as the mashaikh, are extremely conservative and "never depart from their tribal customs".<sup>10</sup> The traditional image of a tribesman was of one who always carried a jambia (dagger) ready to fight in defense of his sharaf (honour), his property or any unarmed person with whom he has a protective relationship. The gabail had a reputation of never violating a pledge or agreement, but he was also capable of robbing any stranger he encountered on the road.<sup>11</sup> They were feared and respected because of their capabilities as fighting men and their monopoly of arms. However, when the Quaitiy state was established in 1918, the tribesmen were disarmed and forbidden to carry rifles although they were allowed to carry their jambias (daggers). However they still moan the loss of their "power and honour".<sup>12</sup> Both the mashaikh and the gabail have



an equal descent status, although the mashaikh are given a higher rank because of their religious status and role. The gabail, however, have been responsible for the intense and continuous feuds in Yemen society.<sup>13</sup> If a man is killed in war, his kinsmen take retaliation for him. If a man killed another during peace time, the debt which is payable, life for life, can only be paid by his life or by that of one of his kinsfolk. If it is not done, a feud starts between the murdered man's kinsfolk on the one hand, and the kinsfolk of the murderer. It is not strange to find a grandson, whose father died before the claim was settled by retaliation, making a claim for the life of his grandfather, killed many years before. There are accounts of some tribesmen who have not been outside their houses for nearly twenty years for fear of being killed by neighbours with whom they are feuding.<sup>14</sup>

The Masakin or Dhuafa (singular Miskin, meaning poor, and Dhaif, meaning weak), form the third stratum. They have the lowest descent status because they do not belong to the line of the Prophet nor to the line of ancestors who were religious leaders. However, within this stratum there are sub-divisions. Traditionally the main criterion for distinguishing between the different masakin people has been their different occupations. The highest within this stratum are the townsmen, among whom are the farmers, merchants, workers, artisans, labourers and servants. They live in towns

or villages, do not carry arms and are the principal tax payers. The economic life of the country depends to a large extent on them, as they are the main link with the outside world. Many of them are wealthy and sometimes exercised considerable political influence in the towns. Some of the more important families are Al-Bakhashwein, Al-Ubeid Yamani, Al-Bashaufar, Al-Tarmum, Al-Basharaheil and Al-Baabbad.<sup>15</sup>

The Akhdaam (singular Khadim), meaning labourers or servants were a weak men who were not allowed to carry nay arms, and had very few kinsmen. They were the ones who had little or no capital and only their labour to offer. Manual labour, smithing and carpentry for example, were all considered undignified. The Khadim was always a client of either the rulers of the towns or of the tribesmen, and always moved from one town to another in search of work. Because of the economic role ascribed to them the akhdaam-are a flexible community, expanding in times of economic prosperity and contracting during depressions. The akhdaam are distinguished from the Arabs by the dark colour. According to R.B. Serjeant, the akhdaam were probably the original inhabitants of South Arabia who could have formed the pre-Arab population or probably the descendants of the Abyssinians of antiquity.<sup>16</sup>

The Akhdaam were not allowed to own land nor were they allowed to work on the land as hired labourers for the agricultural landowners. Although the Akhdaam are free, slaves received better treatment than they did from the Arabs. According to Doreen Ingrams, "other classes will not associate with them socially nor will they eat with them"<sup>17</sup> This is probably due to the fact that they were the descendants of the Abyssinian invaders of the third and sixth centuries A.D.<sup>18</sup> The akhdaam were organized under their own headmen and had their own customs.<sup>19</sup> They were the "sweeper" classes of Western Aden Protectorate and they are to be found in the Yemen, in Aden and in areas near Aden. Although no one ate with them, they were allowed to pray in the mosque.<sup>20</sup>

The Subyan (singular Sabiy) meaning a house boy or servant, are the third in the masakin category. Traditionally a Sabiy was a man always present at ceremonies or rituals, performing jobs that were considered menial and low. He was the man who always served people and therefore had the lowest status in the society.<sup>21</sup> In Hadhramaut, the dark coloured Hijris or Wadi Hajr, are called the subyan. They are traditionally cultivators and as such the majority of them have had long-standing relationships with "higher" groups, but, like the rest of the masakin groups, they are not politically organized and have no ascribed religious role.

The Abid (singular Abd), meaning slaves or ex-slaves formed an important category within the Hadhrami society. Slaves were principally owned by the rulers of the two States, although private ownership did exist. However, apart from the fact that they were slaves, there was very little that distinguished them from the rest of the community in their social life, except their visible African features. They performed menial jobs and were traditionally the khadims in the houses. They formed a large part of the forces of the Sultans and are said to have been the most trusted part of the forces. They are the equivalent of the Maluks, or the so-called "slave armies of Egypt". Slaves in Hadhramaut were well treated and some of them rose to high positions in the country. They were set free in 1918, when the two States were formed by the treaty between Great Britain and the two Sultans of the Quaiti and Khathiri States. For example, the Governor of Shibam in 1930 was an ex-slave and so was the Magistrate of Mukalla.<sup>22</sup>

As we have seen above, Yemen society divided all people into social classes - almost castes - which are expressed in many symbols, both physical and behavioural. People's ranks simply depended on the basis of their descent. Hadhrami's recognize two lines of ancestry - that of the Prophet and that of Qahtan. Those who were their descendants were given higher

ranks in the value system and all those were not descendants of either were classed in the lowest strata. However the system is not as simple as it sounds, since within the three general strata, there are sub-divisions. For example, both the sadah and mashaikh have an ascribed religious role, but the sadah are ranked higher than the mashaikh. Similarly, the mashaikh are internally divided and ranked.

The importance of the principle of descent status is that it provides for a general categorization of people and its effect is to provide a broad limitation on marriage choices. As a rule, the ultimate preference is always for marriage to a person of equal descent status or higher. However, an exception is made for the men to marry women of lower descent status since as a patrilineal society, the off-spring of such a marriage took the descent status of their father. But this too is a broad limitation. The pattern of marriage is more an expression of their internal ranking than it was based on descent status. Traditionally one inherited the roles and attributes of one's immediate ancestors, although, since after establishment of the Qu'aity Government, under the aegis of Britain, all people of Hadhramaut acquired legal equality and poor people could become important and wealthy by using new economic opportunities or by joining the Government as administrators.

Thus, was the society of the Hadhramaut socially stratified. As they migrated and settled in distant areas, they took with them their social values and tried to reproduce and maintain them. There are few countries in the world where large proportions of their populations lie abroad, one such country is Hadhramaut. In 1936, it was estimated that about 30 per cent of the population of Hadhramaut lived in East Africa, East Indies, Egypt and the countries bordering the Red Sea.<sup>23</sup> Many of these emigrants did not proceed abroad for good, but expected to return home after they had made their fortunes abroad. Long before the advent of Islam, Yemenis migrated and some settled on the East African Coast because of trade. this we know from the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea. After the birth of Islam, migration continued. From the earliest times to the British colonial times in Kenya, Arabs from Southern Arabia - Hadhramaut, Yemen and Oman - migrated and settled in East Africa.

A number of factors favoured migration from South Arabia. One of these was the Hadhramaut and Yemeni Arabs proverbial love of travel.<sup>24</sup> Another was demographic pressure arising from the small amount of arable land in South Arabia, coupled with the arid inland system of wadis in Hadhramaut which experienced unpredictable rainfall, causing long periods of drought and famine. Floods too, caused many to migrate since

there occurred long periods of famine after floods which destroyed crops and animals. Also the intense and continuous feuds amongst tribesmen in Hadhramaut, and long standing wars have been frequent in Hadhramaut history - a major factor for the migrations of many people from South Arabia.

The migrants came from all the section of the population, Peasants, merchants, mercenaries, sayyids (sharifs) and mashaikhs, migrated and settled in distant lands. These holy families were a sizeable contingent among the migrants, especially after 1200 AD due to religious persecutions in their homelands. Wherever they settled, the sadah, or sharifs as they are known in East Africa, enjoyed such tangible benefits as tax abatements, and were often recipients of pious gifts from the non-Sharifs. This was due to their highly ranked descent status and ascribed religious role in Hadhrami and, later, East African coastal societies.

With the settlement of Arabs on the East African Coast, Islam was introduced in three main periods. The Islamic cultural history can be traced to the early settlements of Muslims in the coastal area under the Zanj rulers, observed by Ibn Battuta as early as 1331 A.D. The second period is that of the "Shirazi's", which led to the formation of petty dynasties all along the coast and the Comoro Islands. the third period

was after the Portuguese period which disrupted the pattern of life and trade on the East African coast.

The coast was the centre of Islam and due to its proximity, the "upper strata" of Arab settlers maintained a regular contact with the centres of Islam in Arabia, through commercial relations which brought in new immigrants and cultural elements. This link helped to preserve a consciousness of belonging to another world, which according to A.I. Salim was a "consciousness that goes an appreciable way towards explaining subsequent Arab policies and motivations".<sup>25</sup> The early immigrants from South Arabia had evolved a definite Shafii predominance over the Ibadhi Omanis by the time the Omani were establishing themselves as rulers at the coast. It is said that large numbers of Hadhrami saiyids emigrated to East Africa during the 14th and 15th centuries. R. Burtons reports that in 1430, "some forty-four Hadhrami saints landed at Berberah in Somaliland".<sup>26</sup> It was the work of the Hadhrami saiyids and their descendant as opposed to individuals, which came to determine the Shafii madh hab (school of thought) in East Africa, and greatly influenced Swahili Literature that used Arabic script for writing . In fact the material culture at the coast drew a lot from the legacy of this South Arabian settlement,<sup>27</sup> which was further strengthened by the continued cultural and commercial traffic that linked the East African coast with the Arabian peninsula.



However, it is in this third period that Islam received its definite stamp of Shafii madh hab in East Africa, transforming the "Shirazi" culture and the Ibadhi school of thought to that of the Hadhrami introduced Shafii school of thought.<sup>28</sup> Islam came with a written law from which deviation was theoretically impossible. The indigenous religions on the coast and Islam were in dynamic relationship during the years when Swahili culture was being formed. "The advent of Islam had a profound and long lasting effect on Swahili culture. It must have introduced a whole new set of culture and religious dimensions, assimilating African institutions in a dialectical process where Islam could only triumph. And when assimilation was impossible, African institutions were accepted alongside Islamic institutions".<sup>29</sup>

The intermarriage of these Arab immigrants with the local people contributed to the evolution of a new people the "Sawahilis" or coastalists, whose language became the lingua-franca of the coast and later of East Africa. It must be noted that the immigrants who settled on the East African coast came as individuals or units of families and not as large groups. As such, the interaction between these immigrants and the Bantu speakers was the beginning of the evolution of the

Swahili language and culture.<sup>30</sup> In spite of the strength of the connection with Arabia, the Swahili culture was formed independent of full Arabization. The interaction was dynamic in that the influence of South Arabia and Bantu cultures were reciprocal. Islam dominated the life of the settlement, but the Bantu speakers modified the character and life of the community. The culture, however, reflected the definite stamp of its South Arabian birth place. After the portuguese period in East Africa, the new wave of immigrants and settlers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from Hadhramaut, Yemen and Oman moulded the development and character of the Swahili language and culture.

Much of the Islamization of the East African coast and later the interior was the work of the Sharifs and Sheikhs of Hadhrami origin. The position of these sharifian immigrants from Hadhramaut over many centuries was an important but complex one. Some writers refer to them as a "separate social class" others as "cream of the aristocracy".<sup>31</sup> These migrants were regarded by contemporaries as highly desirable additions to Muslim societies, and if they participated in government, they could lend it a degree of prestige and legitimacy. Those concerned with religion and law and the arbitration in quarrels had a great impact on East Africa, particularly on the Islamization of the coast and the Islands.

Although they were politically eclipsed by the Omani Arabs at the end of the eighteenth century, the sharifs still retained a predominant place among the ulama, the learned class. During this time, the family names of the Jamal-al-layl, the Saqqaf, Abubakar bin Salim, the Bakathir al-Kindi, and Shatry and many others keep appearing in the ranks of the "learned".<sup>32</sup>

The ulama class in East Africa was closely knit and indeed raised many men of outstanding merit to be imams, Kadhis and teachers throughout East Africa. Their services were useful to the Sultan of Zanzibar. Literate and trained in the law and Islamic services, they read widely and created a literature of their own. Many of them spent long periods abroad, frequently in the Hijaz to study or make pilgrimage, or in Hadhramaut for education purposes. The "Hadhramization" of the ulama in East Africa was due to the fact that Shafii madh-hab (school of thought) prevailed since the Ibadis were "a perpetual minority..... many of whom in time were converted to the Shafii sect of the majority."<sup>33</sup>

The art of writing in Swahili culture was an adopted form of Arabic script. Swahili literature has been greatly influenced by Hadhrami migrants who had settled on the coast over the centuries. The families of Abubakar bin Salim at Lamu and Pate played a direct role in the development of Swahili

literature. As R.B. Serjeant says "early Swahili poetry shows the influence of Hadhrami verse form and in some cases was actually composed by Hadhrami Saiyids."<sup>34</sup> The writings of such scholars as Saiyid Aydarus bin Uthman, the author of a Swahili recension of al-Basiris Umm al Qura called the Hamziya, and the author of the famous poem, al-Inkishafi, Saiyid Abdallah bin Ali Nasir, were members of the Sharifian family of Sheikh Abubakar bin Salim based in the Hadhrami town of Inat. It must be noted that these are Hadhrami saiyids who had become integrated and composed in the Swahili language, as distinct from the itinerant saiyids who made periodic visits and still regarded Hadhramaut as home.

In the sixteenth century, the Sultan of Pate asked Sheikh Abubakar to pray for the deliverance of the people of Pate from her enemies. Sheikh Abubakar not only prayed but also sent his two sons to reside in Pate.<sup>35</sup> In fact one of the villages in Pate was named Inati after the home of the "illustrious" ancestor. The family became therefore, an extensive, well-established and influential one in Pate. The author of Al-Inkishafi was the great, great, great grandson of Sheikh Abubakar bin Salim. It is one of the first poems in Swahili literature. Its worth has long been recognised among Swahili speakers themselves. W.E. Taylor called the poem "a great, if

not the greatest religious classic of the race."<sup>36</sup> And Lyndon Harries a scholar of Swahili literature admitted that "to omit (it) from any survey of traditional swahili poetry would be indefensible."<sup>37</sup>

Al-Inkishafi a title translated as "the Soul's Awakening"<sup>38</sup> or "Catechism of a Soul"<sup>39</sup> is regarded as one of the flowers of the Swahili's national literature. It extends over a period of seven centuries, and touches upon every considerable theme and mood within the Swahili history. It is regarded in East Africa in high esteem. Sheikh Mbarak Ali Hinawy, the late Liwali for the coast said, "the leading Muslim theologians in East Africa have greatly valued the poem, and it was the practise of some not only to memorise the whole of it but to carry copies of it with them."<sup>40</sup> The work holds an eminent position in the field of Swahili literature.

Another prominent lineage of saiyids or sharifs found in East Africa in the family of Jamal-al Layl, who are said to have reached Pate in 950 A.H. ~ 1544 A.D.<sup>41</sup> The branches of the Jamal-al-Layl families are found in Zanzibar, Comoro Islands, Somalia, Lamu, Pate and Indonesia.<sup>42</sup> In recent times, the most significant immigrant was Habib Saleh bin Ali bin Abdallah, who died in 1354 A.H./1935 A.D. at Lamu. He was greatly revered there for his saintly qualities and for his establishment of the famous Riyadha Mosque College.<sup>43</sup> Habib

Saleh had hoped that this educational institution would revolutionalise East African Islam. His burial place is situated at the East-end of Lamu, within easy walking distance of his madrassa. An annual maulidi (the celebration of the birth of the Prophet), and Ziyara (visits to the graves of the Sharifs), takes place in the last Thursday of Rabi-ul-Awwal (the month which the Prophet was born), which is attended by thousands of people from all over East Africa and Arabia.<sup>44</sup> Some people regard the lamu maulidi as a substitute for the pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>45</sup> Thus, Lamu has become the centre of learning on the East African Coast because of the presence of the Ribat-al-Riyadha - the Riyadha Mosque College - under the control of the descendants of Hadhrami salyids.

Another prominent lineage restricted to East Africa is that of the Al-Masila Ba-Alawi, who lived in Pate, Lamu and the Comoros. According to H. Lambart and W.F. McKay, Sheikh Abubakar Ba-Alawi was invited to Zanzibar from Comoro to help avert an out-break of plague through his prayers. The "miracle" worked in Zanzibar and the people of Wasin-Bumba-kuu of the Southern Coast of Kenya also invited the Ba-Alawi Sharifs to go there and halt another out-break of plague. Here too the 'miracle' worked and in appreciation the inhabitants of Vumba-kuu honoured Sheikh Abubakar by presenting him with a bride, the daughter of the local ruler. The son of this

marriage was the famous Diwan Rugha, later the Diwan of Wasin.<sup>43</sup> the descendants of sayyids continued to rule Vumba-kuu and Wasin and they wield great spiritual influence right up to the present times.

These sharifs both in Lamu and Vumba-kuu integrated with the local inhabitants. The degree of integration is interesting to note; for example, in Vumba-kuu when these immigrants arrived in the seventeenth century, they were classified as Arabs. However, by the beginning of the nineteenth century their descendants had become Vumba, a particular group of Swahili.<sup>48</sup>

The eighteenth century witnessed the growth and consolidation of the Vumba where the Ba-Alawi Sharifs and other Arab clans became the predominant group in Vumba-kuu and Wasin. They adopted and adapted the institution of the "Shirazi's" predecessors, and the techniques and institutions that they brought with them from their Arabian homes and northern Kenya, Pate, to consolidate their power in the unique Diwanate of Wasin and Vumba-kuu.<sup>49</sup> The origin of the element of the diwanate was extremely diverse. The Ba-Alawi sharifs consciously adopted and incorporated many of the "Shirazi" characteristics intact or subtly modified. The "Shirazi" ritual of choosing the jumbe; the beating of the ngoma kuu (the

great drum) of the Diwan on special occasions was also adopted from the "Shirazi." Other symbols and regalias, such as the 'state -umbrella', and the wearing of wooden sandals and the turban were also adopted by the Ba-Alawi Sharifs of Vumba-kuu.

An important aspect of the growth of the Vumba Diwanate was the development of the specific Vumba identity on the South coast of Kenya where local elements were incorporated into its structure after the almost total adoption of the "Shirazi" regalia and symbols, together with "magic" and "magical techniques" that the Ba-Alawi came with from their homes, which led to an important organization of the Vumba polity. In this polity, non-Vumba are not allowed to own land because the Vumba had developed a policy of exclusion of any new member of the Arab clans who immigrated and settled in Vumba-kuu. Migrants such as the Hadhrami or Omani Arabs had to develop a "client-patron" relationship with the wa Vumba in the area before they were allowed to use the land for cultivation, although in principle they never owned the land. According to W.F. McKay, the diwanate in Vumba was unique in that it was "a political institution which consisted of identifiable characteristics. It was an office, filled by a person (he had to be a sharif), who was expected to act in a certain way, wear specific type of clothings, use certain ceremonial regalia, and even walk in a manner different from other people. The diwan



embodied in this person, secular, religious, and magical functions and was looked upon with great respect by his subjects. He was, to a considerable extent, the living embodiment of the various beliefs and institutions which differentiated the Vumba from other Swahili groups.<sup>50</sup> The descendants of these Ba-Alawi sharifs wielded great power, both politically and spiritually during the 18th and early 19th centuries on the Southern Kenyan Coast. They still wield great spiritual influence in the area right up to the present.

In Lamu, the Sharifs played an important and significant part in the spread of Islam along the East African littoral. The first sharifs to come were the Mahdali sharifs who were followed by the Husseini sharifs and the Jamal-al-Layl sharifs. The Mahdali sharifs and the Husseini sharifs were allowed by the "wangwana" of Lamu or the aristocrats of Lamu to live in the northern part of Lamu, a section reserved for the "wangwana" (free men) of the town. The Husseini sharifs, because of their "miracle" and baraka (blessing) were accorded great respect by the people of Lamu. These sharifs integrated with the local inhabitants of Lamu and, where necessary, modified and adopted the social structure of the town. According to el-Zein, "the ease with which the sharifs fitted into the traditional stratification system of Lamu should be stressed. They quickly conformed to the traditional roles of

their respective wangwana groups, and like everyone else, waited first of all to maintain the status quo, the traditional systems.<sup>51</sup> Their ability to fit into the socially stratified system of Lamu was helped considerably by the fact that the Hadhrami society in Southern Arabia was also socially stratified,<sup>52</sup> and thus the sharifs because of their highly placed position in Arabia were accepted by the wangwana of Lamu as their equals. These sharifs were integrated and assimilated linguistically and culturally into Swahili society fairly quickly and because they were respected and venerated, they managed to establish a "niche" for themselves as religious and cultural standards-bearers." The sharifs in Lamu consciously formed a distinctive class of their own from the rest of the other Arab clans or Swahili society by adhering to certain ways of dressing and behaviour and by avoiding any kind of manual labour. Over centuries of immigrations and settlement, these sharifian families, who came to the inclusive Swahili world, were able to carve for themselves an important position in the society.

However, it is not only the sadaqs, saiyids or sharifs, as they are known in East Africa who immigrated and settled in East Africa. Merchants, labourers and mercenaries also immigrated mainly because of economic reasons. These immigrant-labourers were extremely poor and travelled to parts

of the Indian Ocean littoral in search of a better life abroad. Many of them came to East Africa, worked and earned their fortunes and then returned to their homes. However, over the years many of them began to settle permanently, while others lived alternately between the East African Coast and South Arabia. During the Busaidi reign, they were encouraged to settle in Zanzibar and they formed an important section of the Arab population.<sup>53</sup> They worked as porters, water-carriers, and at the ports loading and off-loading ships at Zanzibar, Mombasa and Lamu. In Zanzibar, where the great majority of them settled during the Busaidi reign, they lived in Kipand and Ngambo and the Malindi area of the town. However, the non-settled elements of the Yemeni population that plied backwards and forwards between Zanzibar and South Arabia, either rented lodgings or were accommodated in the houses of those who had made Zanzibar their permanent home. Writing about the Hadhrami in Zanzibar, W.H. Ingrams stated that as a rule,

"he (the Hadhrami) keeps much to himself and,..... takes little part in local life, political, sporting or social. Even his intercourse with his cousin from Oman is restricted..... Hardworking and thrifty, unlike their cousins from Oman, and absorbed in their own occupation, they appear to have few forms of entertainment even amongst

themselves, dancing and sitting in coffee-shops being almost the sole manner in which they seek relaxation, at any rate in public."<sup>54</sup>

The affairs of the Hadhrami in Zanzibar were managed by the associations, Jumia al Hadhramia and Jumia al-shihr whose leaders were Muhsin bin Ghalib al-Yafa and Muhammad Sa'id Aboud Al Humeid respectively. Both were recognised as semi-official even by the British government after Zanzibar and the coastal strip came under the British protection.<sup>55</sup> The Hadhramis in Zanzibar had their own mosque where they congregated for the Juma' prayers. In fact they largely controlled the Juma' Mosque and the Mzaham and Malindi Mnara mosques where the majority of them had settled.<sup>56</sup>

On the other hand, the Hadhramis who settled in Lamu during the Busaidi reign were allowed to settle in the Girzani mtaa in Langoni, the area where the "wangwana" left open for wageni, 'strangers', and ex-slaves and Bajunis and Comorians who did not form part of the "Wangwana" of the town, and therefore had no right to interfere in the town's affairs. they built their own mosque in Langoni which they named Ba-wazir after their own religious leader. This mosque was used by the Hadhramis for all their religious functions. The Hadhramis were despised by the "wangwana" and the Omani Arabs, because they accepted inferior jobs to earn their living. They were known as

Washihiri or people from Shihr, a coastal town in Hadhramaut. However, the name Washihiri received a derogative implication because, as the Omani and wangwana claimed, these Washihiri were "low" and "dirty"; and therefore could have no claim to ustarabu (civilization), hishma and adabu (respect); and they paid little attention to religious affairs.<sup>57</sup> The Hadhramis who came to lamu were in sharp contrast to the Omani who came as rulers dressed in joho, turbans, carried swords and knives, whereas the Hadhrami who were migrant labourers, very poor working for a living, covering only the lower part of the body with a kikoi ( rectangular piece of material), while the upper part of the body was left uncovered. The Omanis were considered urban Arabs while the Hadhramis were considered as nomads who possessed the lowest expression of Arab culture.<sup>58</sup> And because of their "lowly" position, the Hadhramis were not allowed to marry wangwana males. they therefore had to go to Hadhramaut to marry or sent for wives from there.<sup>59</sup>

The Hadhramis themselves were indifferent to the social stratification in Lamu, since it left them free to pursue their economic goals. They were not interested in establishing relations with the wangwana and unlike the wangwana, treated all men as equals, the Hadhramis were the first to extend help to the slaves.<sup>60</sup>

The Yemeni Arabs in general were not affected by the economic decline at the coast at the advent of colonial rule. They were not so hard hit by anti-slavery measures as they did not own plantations that were worked by slaves, as the Omanis did.<sup>61</sup> Thus, because of their ability to better themselves in a period of general economic decline at the coast, the recent Yemeni immigrants were resented. Even the Swahili resented the Hadhrami Arabs and this was expressed in such terms as "these immigrants slip in as they like and slip out again as they like. They are gradually taking our trade from us. They are not East Africans and have not loyalty to the Queen. The strictest immigration laws should be enforced against them....."<sup>59</sup>

An interesting characteristic of the Arab community at the coast is the social cleavages and class distinctions.<sup>63</sup> The Arab is well known for his courtesy and good manners and this characteristic helped to preserve a surface harmony. The recent Hadhrami immigrants tried to keep their separateness by maintaining ties with their homeland to which the majority returned. They had a tendency of keeping much to themselves and living together in well-defined and extended kinship relationships. They were not involved in the political and social activities per se. Some were employed in the service of

the Sultan as troops and recognised as kadhīs and leaders of the Hadhrami community. Inspired by the aim to improve their economic life, the Hadhramis were very cautious with money, very thrifty, and regarded others as wasteful and extravagant. Money was considered as ni'ma or a blessing that a person should accumulate money but must not spend it on luxuries. Thus, their ethics, to "eat and dress moderately and have little more than a shelter to sleep under at night", influenced their social and economic interactions with the other communities.<sup>64</sup>

Socially, the Hadhramis kept much to themselves. Their clannish feeling prevented them from mixing with members of the other communities, unless it was for economic reasons, where they treated all men as equal since they were interested in their purchasing power. Thus, only when it was necessary for the purpose of his trade or calling did the Yemeni Arabs interact with other communities.<sup>65</sup>

Basically, the Hadhramis lived very "simple" lives pursuing their economic interests. They considered trade as their real occupation, and therefore had very few social activities, and no hobbies. Their work was only interrupted during the normal times for prayers and the rest of the time spent on their businesses. They were sometimes described as "nomads" because

they were not paying enough attention to religious affairs.<sup>66</sup> Religious affairs were left to the sharifs and the mashaikh, who also formed part of the immigrants who settled on the coast. Their simplicity influenced their social and religious life. They indicated that "any African who converted to Islam would be considered equal to any other Muslim", and be treated so.<sup>67</sup> This was in sharp contrast to the wangwana ideology which was deeply entrenched in Lamu. The wangwana ideology of the pure and the impure was used (is still used) to define the relationship between the wangwana - the free-born people - and the slaves and ex-slaves. This ideology has greatly influenced the religious affairs of the people of Lamu - in fact it is the cornerstone of their religious ideology.<sup>68</sup> The Hadhramis were not tied down by this "wangwana" ideology and as such treated all customers and dealers as equal who had to be served in the best of ways regardless of their social stratum.<sup>69</sup>

In Mombasa too, the Yemenis clustered around their own people in the poorer, primarily the former African parts of the islands and mainland. Many of them lived in the poorer Majengo area with their families housed behind their small maduka (shops).<sup>70</sup> Some of them lived in the old town in houses rented from Swahili landlords. Although the Swahili despised the Yemeni socially, (since they worked as water carriers, as



hamalis (porters), and as casual labourers at the docks), the Yemeni Arabs were good tenants, since the monthly rents from them were at times the only source of income from the Swahili landlords.

Just as in the case of Zanzibar and Lamu, the Yemenis in Mombasa kept much to themselves, interacting with their own clansmen, staying in one area, usually the same premises containing a small duka where the men folk worked and behind the shop the family lived. Also, there has been a tendency for the Yemeni Arabs to settle in predominantly poor residential area, usually sharing quarters with Africans and Swahilis.<sup>71</sup> In fact, it has been noted that there has been a more social and commercial link between the Yemeni Arabs and the Africans at the coast, in comparison with the Omanis,<sup>72</sup> who were the landlords and the aristocrats at the coast. The interaction between the Yemeni and the Africans was on a regular basis, since the Yemeni Arabs were mostly retail traders and extended credit to their African customers.<sup>73</sup>

At the advent of colonial rule, the immigrant Yemeni were concerned with labour and commercial enterprise. They were not involved in active social or political life at the coast. Politics was left to the Omani aristocracy and ruling class that had been established by the Zanzibari Sultanate and later

by the British Colonial Government. With colonial rule well-established, western culture and influence began penetrating the colony. The impact of western culture on muslim culture of the coast was very superficial and limited to material things at the end of the nineteenth century. However, after A.H. Hardinge's effort of laying the foundation of the British administration, significant changes began to evolve in the Muslim society at the time of economic and political decline at the coast.<sup>74</sup>

In the Muslim society at the coast, the only education that was available to the children was from the Quran schools or madrassa, which merely provided the children with enough education to enable them to read the Quran , without necessarily understanding its meaning. The average Muslim sent his son to a Quran school so as to be trained in the basic tenets of the faith "not so much as to make good in this world as to be prepared for the next",<sup>75</sup> since on the completion of his education in the Quran school, the boy merely pursued the profession of his father. Such a system of education was soon to prove its shortcomings under the new colonial system.

The elders of the society at the coast soon realised the implication of the new order that came in with the new administration. However, a compromise had to be made between

the traditional cultural ways of life and the new order in spite of the fact that the community was experiencing an economic and political decline at the coast. They, unlike the Africans and the Indians "fought a rear-guard action against westernization and modernizations."<sup>76</sup> They insisted that values were more important than material welfare and as such they accepted compromise instead of a complete and total submission to the western civilization.

This attitude is clearly seen in the acceptance of secular education that was being proposed for their children. A.H. Hardinge had proposed in his Report on the Protectorate that some portion of the wakf revenue be used to endow a school at which Arabs and Swahili "of the better class" would receive side by side with their traditional education, a practical secular education. Local Arab opposition to the utilization of wakf monies for the purpose of secular education led him instead to ask assistance from "friends in England of the African Arabs" to assist the government with funds to undertake this project. However, no such friends or funds were forthcoming.<sup>77</sup> These trends have adverse effect on the Muslim Arab and Swahili population since without some western education, they could not hope to maintain their position in the new administration. Before 1912 when the Arab school was opened, the only other alternative for secular education was to

send the children to mission schools. But these mission schools were shunned by the muslim population who feared that their children would be estranged from their own Islamic belief. By 1914 there were less than two dozen pupils at the school mainly because it did not provide Quranic and Arabic teaching in its curriculum. In 1918 fifteen boys left school after five years of schooling, of whom four joined the Kenya African Rifles and two became signallers and others joined various departments of the government.<sup>78</sup> Thus, the impact of the school was negligible in so far as it served only a tiny percentage of the Arab and Swahili population of Mombasa. In 1919 a second school was opened in Malindi and had thirty five boys by 1920. In Lamu it was not until 1929 that a night school was opened. A day school was opened in 1930 only to be closed in 1931, when the Inspector of schools found the school practically empty when he visited Lamu. Secular education did not have a strong base at the coast because of the conservativeness of the Muslim Arab population, especially the Sharifite families. Writing in 1931, the District Commissioner of Lamu lamented that "in spite of every effort to meet the local prejudices, we have been reluctantly compelled to close the Arab day school, which from its inspection some three years ago has met with no support from the local Muhammadans."<sup>79</sup> However the government's decision to introduce Quranic teaching in the schools in 1924 led to a dramatic increase in the intake

of the schools in Malindi and in Mombasa, where the numbers increased from 22 to over 100 and from 92 to over 130 respectively.<sup>80</sup>

By the 1940s, the "sharp conflict of cultures" at the coast amongst the Arab-Swahili population had been reduced as a result of the introduction of Quran studies and Arabic. And by the end of the 1940s the conflict between the traditional values and western cultures had declined. As A.I. Salim put it, "there was every indication that the community had entered the modern age."<sup>81</sup>

The Yemeni Arabs were also affected by this new wave of modernization and western values, although, it was limited to a small minority. They too, generally adopted the same position as the rest of the Arab-Swahili people towards western education and values. Writing in 1936, W.H. Ingrams noted that "there is an increasing tendency, especially amongst the young Arabs and Africans, to adopt European clothing. The Hadhramis, however, are little affected by the prevailing fashion, and it is rare to see one of the community attired in anything but his own national dress. As in the case of clothes, so is his manner of living; the Hadhrami, preferred his own customs, does not easily adopt the manners and ways of those around him."<sup>82</sup> The Hadhramis did not see the need to send their

children to school since they were expected to carry on with their father's occupation which in most cases was hardly sophisticated nor specialised as such. Even those who attended school, after a certain age, were stopped from attending so as to start working in their parents' businesses.

A conflict of culture during the colonial period manifested itself between the sharifs of Lamu and Sheikh Al-Amin, then Kadhi of Kenya. The sharifs became the defenders of conservative thought as they were influenced by, and still looked towards, Tarim and Inat in Hadhramaut for scholars and ideas, while Sheikh Al-Amin was influenced by the more liberal ideas coming from Cairo's, Al-Azhar University and the Middle East. Quarrels and polemical exchanges between them developed especially on the question of secular education for girls and the criticisms of bidah or innovation with no doctrinal basis,<sup>83</sup> which was the practice of the sharifs in East Africa and especially the Riyadhha sharifs of Lamu. These debates appeared in the weekly newspaper of Al-Islah (Reform), printed both in Arabic and Swahili, of Sheikh Al-Amin's. The sharifs were completely opposed to any kind of reform from the western world whereas Sheikh Al-Amin became the champion for the cause of secular education for the Arab Muslim children at the coast. He realised that secular education was important for the Muslim children but if left to the westerners, the children

produced by such a system of education, would grow up fearing and admiring Britain and at the same time forgetting or ignoring their own Arab-muslim civilization.<sup>84</sup>

So although he championed the cause of secular education for the Muslim children, he also championed the cause of Arabic and Quran studies to be taught in the schools so that the children could grow up with the knowledge of their own schools and not to rely completely on the British Colonial Government for the betterment of their own community. Sheikh Al-Amin revolutionalised the idea of teaching Islam through his liberal thoughts. He was caught in a bitter debate with the Riyadha sharifs because of his criticisms of some of the established customs by the sharifs which he considered as bidah. His disciples such as Sheikh Abdallah Saleh Al-Farsy and Sheikh Muhammad Kassim Al-Mazrui, through their own efforts, helped the spread of Islam and to a certain extent, cleansed it of the misrepresentations that had grown around it in East Africa.<sup>85</sup>

Right up to the Second World War, the number of Arab and Swahili children in secular schools remained very small. It is unfortunate that the figures for the number of Arab children is not available since the children who were officially registered at the beginning of the year did not stay till the end of the year in school. Also, the figures available do not distinguish

between Omani, Yemeni or Swahili children in the schools. One, therefore is left to rely on oral evidence for the information on Hadhrami children attending schools. According to oral evidence, the number of Hadhrami boys attending school was very small especially before the Second World War. In fact, it was the opinion of most of those interviewed that the Hadhrami boys who attended school were the ones who were fairly Swahilized and had been at the coast for a number of generations. The Omani Arabs, especially the ruling aristocracy were encouraged by the Late Liwali for the Coast, Ali Bin Salim, to send their children to school. He personally provided premises for a school in Malindi and endowed it with a trust fund. He also paid fees for some of the students studying in the school - named the Ali Bin Salim School, after him. In fact, Ali bin Salim lamented the apathy and lack of enthusiasm amongst the Arab community towards the education of their children. In 1933, in the course of his speech at the Arab school, he did not hesitate to tell the pupils that unless they were prepared to discard their dignity and begin to work seriously, it would be a matter of a few years only until they would find the Akikuyu and the Wakavirondo occupying the more important position in the colony.<sup>86</sup>

Although the Arabs were encouraged to send their children to school, the Hadhrami preferred to send their children to the



Quran school. Some boys were sent to Hadhramaut for some years to study in their renowned schools especially in Tarim.<sup>87</sup>

This habit of sending their children to Hadhramaut ensured that they acquired their traditions and customs from their homeland. Also, it ensured that their children were Arabic-speaking as opposed to the Swahilized families. The phrases "Walad Mama" or "Iyal Al Bilaad", began to be used by the Hadhramis to refer to children of mixed blood or Swahili born, from whom they wished to distinguish themselves.

Secular education for the girls was hardly considered in the Hadhrami community. Girls were sent to Quran schools and at puberty were removed and often placed under strict seclusion in preparation for a very early marriage. In fact as late as 1955, the Hadhrami children (especially girls) did not attend school. The Arab elected member of the Legislative Council, Sheikh Mahfudh Mackawi, of Yemeni origin, embarked on a campaign to raise a communal fund for Arab education. Addressing a large gathering at a meeting called by the Protectors of Arab Rights League - <sup>88</sup> a society mainly for the Hadhramis - Sheikh Mahfudh Mackawi lamented the degradation of the Arab community at the coast. "It pains me" he said. "to think how far down the ladder we have descended..... we have now become a liability ..... this is a state of affairs that we simply cannot afford to allow to persist."<sup>89</sup> He

personally donated a gift of Pounds 500 towards the education fund. This was then the situation that prevailed in the Hadhrami community towards the education of their children, especially girls.

In his rear guard efforts to preserve his identity, the Hadhrami tried to portray and duplicate the same kind of social life that existed in Hadhramaut. The social stratification found in Southern Arabia, discussed earlier in the chapter, was strongly observed by the Hadhramis who came to settle at the coast. Clan and kinship ties were very strongly entrenched in their mode of living. For a long time clannish feelings prevented them from mixing with the members of the other community more than was necessary for the purpose of their trade or calling. They kept much to themselves and as a rule took little part in local life - political, social or sporting. They were organised under their own elders called Shiyuba (singular shaib) or muqaddam. They fell under the leadership of the shaib who came from their own area in Hadhramaut, and from the traditional class of tribal elders. These traditional elders wielded a lot of power over their people. In 1914 the colonial administration nominated two elders as the official spokesman for the Hadhrami community. They were Sharif Hussein Shatry and Sheikh Abdul Hadi bin Salim.<sup>90</sup>

It is interesting to note that until 1920, when Sheikh Abdul Hadi bin Salim returned to Mombasa from Hadhramaut, the Hadhrami Arabs had looked up to a former slave of this elder as their leader in Mombasa. Mbarak A. Afandi (or Effandi) was first recruited by the British to serve in the Nandi expeditions, and later helped in recruiting Yemenis for the Arab Rifles during the First World War. His distinguished military services earned him the title "Effandi" and leadership of the Hadhrami community under an influential person with the administration. In 1920 when his former master, Sheikh Abdul Hadi, returned from Hadhramaut, Mbarak Al-Affandi handed over the leadership to him. This leadership covered all Hadhramis from Eastern Hadhramaut, including a large number of former slaves who formed a significant part of the Hadhrami community in Mombasa.

The Muqaddams officiated over all matters of dispute or misunderstanding among the Hadhramis, who did not like to go to the British administrators to settle their little differences. They preferred to present their cases in front of these muqaddam, where each injured party would place his evidence before the elders of the community and the judgement arrived at the meeting would be considered the "last word". However, if one party was still not satisfied, then only would he go to the colonial court to present his case. But this rarely took place

because the Hadhramis had a lot of respect for their elders especially the sharifs and sadah, because of the social stratification which places the sharifs and sadah in the highest descent status. Also, the strong clannish feeling among the Hadhramis prevent them from going outside the community and to settle their quarrels. The Hadhramis also feared social ostracisation from the community if one went outside this traditional social framework. By the early 1930's, there were four headmen who represented all the Hadhramis who had come from different parts of Hadhramaut. They were Sheikh Abdul Hadi, Sheikh Ali al-Amry, Sheikh Faraj bin Sherman and Sharif Hussein Shatry.<sup>91</sup>

This system of having muqaddams was an instrument that kept Hadhramis out of the local politics for a long time. After World War II, when modern political consciousness had developed amongst the younger generation of the Hadhrami families, the authority of these traditional elders began to be questioned.<sup>92</sup> These headmen, as they were known by the officials, were satisfied with the administration as long as it facilitated their economic pursuits. The Hadhrami labour-migrants were known to be law-abiding and loyal people, giving little trouble to the government. They always gave support to the authority that would best safeguard their economic interests. This is clearly seen in the Witu

Sultanate, in the early 1900's, when the Hadhramis supported the Zanzibar Busaidi authority against the Sultan of Witu in spite of the fact that it was the Sultan of Witu who helped them open up their small retail shops in Lamu and Witu.<sup>93</sup> They were interested in the maintenance of peaceful conditions in which to sell and transport their goods and to carry on business and as such needed a well-established and stable system of government. And in the Busaidi sovereignty, they saw better and more peaceful conditions in which to trade, thus they supported the Busaidi Sultan against the authority of the Sultan of Witu. Generally speaking the Hadhramis did not take sides in political matters but preferred to sit on the fence so to speak and very ably summed up a situation before committing themselves. However, there have been instances when they have taken sides against an enemy or a person who they felt threatened their economic and commercial activities. This is one reason why the twelve tribes of Mombasa accused the Hadhrami immigrants of being "disloyal to the Queen" and advocated the "strictest immigration controls against them."<sup>94</sup> But the colonial administration encouraged the settlement of these Hadhramis as they were considered the ones who would be able to uplift the declining economic situation at the coast. However, this policy of encouragement changed suddenly after World War II because of the economic depression that had hit Mombasa and the coast at large.<sup>95</sup>

The traditional elders wielded a lot of power on their community, their authority hardly being questioned by those whom they lead. But with the advent of modernisation and western values, especially the impact of secular education, the authority of these elders began to be questioned by the younger members of the community. They felt that these headmen together with the Liwali for the coast, Mbarak Ali Hinawy, were obstacles to the betterment of their community.<sup>96</sup> They felt that the community welfare had been overshadowed by the presence of these headmen as agents of the colonial government. Many of them began breaking away from the traditional organization and joined political associations at the coast. This led to a considerable decline in the authority of their muqaddams who had been their official spokesmen and representatives with the colonial government.

The situation in Kenya can be compared to that which developed in the Far East where a large number of Hadhramis had migrated and settled. The political conflict in Indonesia in 1914 known as the Alawi/Irshadi conflict developed because of the rejection by the younger generation of the traditional political authority of the sadahs in Hadhrami society.<sup>97</sup>

Modern political awareness transformed the Hadhrami community from a docile and subservient, to a more outspoken

community. This was the result of the social change that they experienced from a significant degree of integration and interaction with the other communities at the coast. Modern values and western secular education went a long way in transforming the Hadhrami society after their realisation of the material benefits that would accrue to them through western education. By the 1950's the Hadhrami society had been transformed from the one that existed in the early twentieth century.

Before the outbreak of the Second World War, the Hadhrami community in Mombasa was not organised under any central political party, association or even a welfare organization, although each clan had its own parochial society. In 1940, the Arab welfare society - Jumiyat-ul-Isaaf or Jumiyat-ul-Muawanatul Islamiya - was founded in Mombasa by Sheikh Muhammad bin Abud.<sup>98</sup> This society was founded to enable those muslim who died in hospital and had no relatives or were unable to meet the expenses, to be buried according to the Islamic rites. The society was formed voluntarily by the Arab community to help bury these destitute Muslims since there was no welfare organization for the Arabs and Muslims. The society depended on the members' subscription and aid and by charitably-minded individuals all over the country. The work done by this welfare society was praiseworthy. It aided Arab

victims of tuberculosis and other illnesses at the Port Reitz and the chest and Infectious Disease Hospitals. It also helped in the washing and preparation of the dead person for burial, when he or she had no relatives or was unable to meet the burial expenses.<sup>99</sup> The President of the society, Sheikh Mbarak Mahfudh bin Dohry, although bed-ridden due to some ailment of his legs did some benevolent work in collecting funds for the society by appealing to the Muslim population.

Other activities of the society included helping the immigrants who arrived in Mombasa, especially after the Second World War. There was a large influx of Hadhrami immigrants at this time due to the economic hardship that Hadhramaut was experiencing. The regular remittance by the Hadhrami communities in the Far East to their homeland had been but off because of the Japanese occupation of those distant lands. With their source of livelihood literally cut-off, the Hadhramis turned to East Africa for relief. The authorities at Mombasa had however sent word to Aden with regard to the prohibition and restriction of these migrants, since Mombasa was already experiencing an economic recession and there was acute unemployment.<sup>100</sup> To limit their number, it was suggested by the Mombasa District Commissioner that a deposit of Pounds 10 be demanded from all Hadhrami immigrants who came to Kenya.<sup>101</sup>



This policy was not effective in keeping out these migrant - labourers; instead, it created problems for the authorities because the immigrants kept coming and without the Pounds 10 deposit. The Arab elders then approached Sir Mbarak Ali Hinawy, the Liwali for the coast, to present the case of their kinsmen to the authorities because it proved very difficult to turn away the immigrants once they arrived in Mombasa, as most of the immigrants were on the verge of starvation and needed medical care.<sup>102</sup> A committee consisting of the Liwali for the coast, Mbarak Ali Hinawy, the four official Hadhrami headmen and Sharif Abdallah Salim, the Arab member of the Legislative Council, was appointed to deal with the situation.<sup>103</sup> The committee was to decide on the genuine cases among those immigrants who could not pay the Pounds 10 deposit as surety for the people who came from the area in Hadhramaut they represented. Sharif Abdallah Salim recalls that it was a very difficult period for the immigrants and for the committee, since they could not on humanitarian grounds turn away any of those who arrived in Mombasa. The immigrants were mostly sick and needed medical care.<sup>104</sup>

The welfare society which was founded in 1940, came in to assist in the situation. Those immigrants who did not have relatives were looked after by the jumiya till they were able to help themselves. These times of hardship were known as

"ayam-al-shurbah", the days of porridge, because the Jumliya fed these immigrants literally on porridge only. Those who needed medical care were taken to hospitals and the society paid for them.<sup>105</sup>

The welfare organization extended help to those who needed it even outside Mombasa. At times, relief operations were organised to help their relatives in their homeland. In 1957 the society collected funds for the victims of floods in Hadhramaut. About Shs. 10,000/= (Ten Thousand Shillings) was collected for this purpose. The money was sent to Sultan Hassan Bin Ali Kithiry of Seiyun, who was the chairman of the relief organization founded in Seiyun to help the flood victims. The local committee formed in Mombasa to help those unfortunate people whose homes had been damaged by floods, consisted of Sheikh Amer Neheid Nahdy, as the chairman, with Sharif Salim Omar al-Attas, Sheikh Abubakar Muhammad Zubeidi, Marii bin Saleh Al-amry, Ahmed Abdulhadi and Saleh Amir bin Shaaban.<sup>106</sup> This gesture of good-will by the Hadhramis of Mombasa clearly showed the strong ties that existed between the Hadhrami community in Mombasa and their relatives and kinsmen back home in Hadhramaut, because many of the Hadhramis always planned on going back to their homeland one day for retirement.

By the end of 1959, the welfare society was experiencing financial problems. An appeal was sent out to the community to assist with generous donations. Those empowered to receive donations and issue receipts on behalf of the society were Sharif Omar al-Attas, Sharif Abdulrehman A. Shatry, Messrs Mohammed Suleiman Mazrui, Bwana Obo bin Dini, Maalim Said bin Ahmed, Ali bin Abdullah bin Hassan and Abdulkarim bin Ali.<sup>107</sup> The East African Muslim welfare society gave a generous donation to the society. A house worth Shs. 30,000/= (Thirty Thousand Shillings) was purchased in the name of the society, the monthly rent of Shs. 250/= (Two Hundred and Fifty Shillings) was to benefit the society. From then on, the society had a regular source of income, together with the membership subscription and donations from individuals, to enable it to carry on with the benevolent work it was doing for the Muslim community in Mombasa.

Basically the Hadhrami Arabs lived very 'simple' lives pursuing their economic activities with very few social activities. Religious life too was 'simple' and according to the people of Lamu they "were not paying enough attention to religious affairs."<sup>108</sup> Although the Hadhramis came from places where sharifs, sadahs and saiyids have well-defined ideological and social role to play in the society, with their claim to supernatural power never being doubted, the sharifs at

the coast were unable to replace the sharifs of Hadhramaut in spite of the fact that these sharifs were descendants of sharifs who originally came from Hadhramaut. This state of Affairs developed because of the degree of integration and Swahilization of these sharifs and as such Hadhramis did not regard them as their real sharifs.

The Hadhramis in Lamu looked down on the Lamu sharifs and considered them inferior to their sharifs in Hadhramaut. They called them (Lamu sharifs) the "sharifs of Barawa" a derogatory name, because the Hadhramis say that everyone in Barawa called himself a "sharif", without showing any sign of his sharaf, that is, his honour or credentials. <sup>109</sup>

Their religious celebrations at the coast were not very different from those observed by other Muslims at the coast since they were all shafiis. the only difference is that the Hadhramis looked towards the sharifs in Hadhramaut or those who came straight from Hadhramaut as the real scholars. The Hadhrami community considered Sharif Ali bin Mohammed al-Habashy who was living in Seiyun as their qutb, (axis) until his death in 1914. Sharif Abdallah al-Shatry from Tarim became their qutb. In the absence of a Sharif from Hadhramaut, the religious ceremonies were led by sheikhs who officiated at religious functions in addition to their ordinary work. The

Hadhrami did not read the maulidi barzanji or the wangwana maulidi. They read the maulidi established by Sharif Ali Al-Habashy and written by Abdel Rahman Ali al-Deb', the recitation of which lasted about one hour.<sup>110</sup> This maulidi was read on every Thursday after maghrib prayers and on every happy occasion. In fact they considered this ritual as the centre of their religious affiliation.<sup>111</sup> The maulidi was read in classical Arabic or in the Hadhrami dialect from manuals brought from Hadhramaut. Social stratification was disregarded during the maulidi ceremony and if a daif had a good voice, he was asked to sit beside the sheikh, but only the sheikh was permitted to lead the ritual or to recite the fatiha as these were the functions of the sheikhs and sharifs. Although the Hussein sharifs were a branch of the Ba-Alawi sharifs of Hadhramaut, the Hadhramis did not regard them as their sharifs because the Hussein sharifs were too absorbed in the wangwana ideology and they therefore neglected and did not respect the Hadhrami settlers and avoided having contact with them. These sharifs had become Swahilized. Sharif Abdallah salim<sup>102</sup> is a descendant of these al-Hussein Lamu sharifs whom they considered neither well-educated nor endowed with barka (power).

Like all Islamic societies, the Hadhramis are a sexually segregated community, where men and women do not mix freely in

their daily lives. A woman's status is correlated with purda and therefore there has been considerable variation in the degree of structures of the purda required of women by their menfolk. Hadhrami women have always felt a striking aversion to emigration. A large number of Hadhrami men who travelled backwards and forwards between Southern Arabia and East Africa for the purpose of trade or to earn a living from some occupation on either side, did not settle permanently in East Africa. Therefore, many of them did not bring their wives and children with them. Those who were regular visitors married local women or they entered into a kind of temporary liaison with the local women.<sup>113</sup> Others sought brides from amongst the Omani Arabs, the Comorians and sometimes even the Africans. At first some of the children born locally, especially the girls, were sent to Hadhramaut to their relatives. This was a way of ensuring that their children did not get lost in the Swahili culture.

Thus, in the early decades of the colonial rule, very few Hadhrami women migrated and settled on coast. In 1921 there was a total number of 1,380 Arab women in Mombasa district.<sup>114</sup> This figure however includes all Arab women. It is unfortunate that separate figures for Hadhrami women are not given. Just before and after the Second World War, a large influx of Hadhramis migrated to East Africa together with their

women and children, due to the economic hardship in Southern Arabia. The Hadhrami women observed the purda with a degree of strictness, hardly going out of their houses or socializing with the women of other communities. They never went to work. If they were forced to do so, they worked in their houses, usually cooking, making mikeka, straw mats and bags, teaching Quran to womenfolk and children and baking mofa, a certain kind of bread made out of millet and maize meal, which was usually sold in Hadhrami shops.

Hadhrami women did not have any social activities outside the Hadhrami social circle and did not join any of the brass-bands or mabeni as they were known locally to which Swahili women belonged and were so popular in Mombasa from the first decades of this century right up to the 1950's.<sup>115</sup> Although, these mabeni or associations had a women's section called lelemama from the name of the dance - there is no evidence that Hadhrami women joined them or were their patrons. These mabeni and lelemama associations were considered immoral on religious, social and economic grounds by the Hadhrami Arabs, who were by nature very conservative, and did not adopt the manners and ways of those around them. The Muslim prescription for the seclusion and veiling of women was strictly observed by the Hadhrami Arabs. Their women, like all the other muslim women emerged from their houses only after

sunset, in the anonymity of darkness, to attend weddings and funerals or to visit friends. The membership of these lelemama associations consisted of both Swahili and Arab (non-Hadhrami) women. There is no evidence present to show that Hadhrami women joined these lelemama associations.

Even during the Second World War when the members of Ibinal Watan and Banu Sa'ad lelemama association began to break away from the customary restrictions by parading for the first time in the public streets, in front of male spectators, without their bui-buis, the Hadhrami women did not join these lelemama associations. This could be due to the fact that they were not allowed by their menfolk to join and also due to the fact that they did not dance lelemama dances at their weddings. Whereas the legal and religious aspect of marriage were the arenas of men, the wedding festivities and ceremonies were left to the women. From the late nineteenth century to the World War I, the wedding celebrations in Mombasa were characterized by the vugo dances; from 1920 to 1950's by the mukungwi dances. But throughout that period, dances that originated from Oman were danced at weddings of the Omani aristocracy; dances from Hadhramaut characterized the weddings of Hadhrami Arabs.<sup>116</sup> However in the occasional cases of intermarriage, many different dances were performed to please the different parties. The colonial period transformed the social structure



of Mombasa's Muslim community. The Hadhrami Arabs did not escape the wind of this social change in spite of the fact that they sought to reproduce their own way of life.

In traditional Hadhrami society, children were promised in marriage at an early age. Otherwise the mother of a young man of marriageable age would start to look for a wife for him among the daughters of her Hadhrami friends, often within the same clan or families of friends. The search was conducted by the mother, sisters or aunts of the young man. In general, the consent of the girl was not required and her wishes were hardly considered at all. Theoretically, marriages were endogamous with respect for the principle of kafa'ah - social equality - of the marriage partners. As interpreted by the sadah of Hadhramaut, kafa'ah was held to refer to equality of descent. They argued that a man ought to marry one of equal descent status as himself, but if no such suitable spouse existed, one may marry a woman of lower descent, since the children of such a marriage will take the descent status of their father and not of their mother. A woman, however, should not marry a man of lower descent than herself since the children would take the descent status of their father, though she may marry a man of her descent status. However, the strongest preferences were for both man and woman to have endogamous marriage within their stratum.<sup>117</sup>

The Hadhrami community that settled in Kenya sought to reproduce the same pattern of marriages as those found in Hadhramaut. They tried to maintain the principle of kafa'ah by a discriminatory pattern of marriage. Hadhrami men preferred to marry their own women and if necessary went back to Hadhramaut to get wives. Others married Hadhrami women born locally or Omani women or Comorians and sometimes african women. One feature among the Hadhrami which was very common was the marriages between cousins. Those marriages are said to strengthen family ties and to be stronger than other marriages, but it was also a way of maintaining the principle of endogamous marriage. The marriages ceremonies among the Hadhramis are almost the same as the ones among the Swahili-Arab Muslim community at the coast. The wedding ceremonies could last for a whole week but they usually last for three days and nights. They have the rubut and kesha on the first night, followed by the second night with the religious and legal ceremony of the nikah and dukhu the consumation of the wedding. On the third day the reception or subha is held. The only difference amongst the Hadhrami weddings is the subha or display of the bride, where the bride is dressed in typically Hadhrami dress and her hairbraided in thin plaits. She is then displayed in front of the invited women guests who are seated on mikeka (mats) in the madarah. The bride is made to dance traditional Hadhrami dances in front of the guests.

Over the years the marriage patterns have changed. Although the Hadhramis prefer to marry from their own community and from the same descent stratum, there has been a lot of intermarriages between the Hadhrami and other communities. This has had the effect of weakening the traditional strong ties to the principle of social stratification. People from different social strata married regardless of their descent status. Only the sharifs tried to maintain the principle of descent status. Another factor which has contributed to the change in marriage patterns, was the influence of modernisation and western values in the community. Early in the twentieth century hardly any Hadhrami children went to school. By the 1940's more and more younger generation were exposed to these new values which had the effect of changing the social values and mode of thinking among them. This however, is not to say that they completely discarded their traditional values and conservativeness, but that they became more accommodative although the strong clannish feelings still remained in spite of the social change in the community.

In conclusion, one may assert with some justification that the Hadhrami Arabs had had an impact on the East African Coast that has left its stamp on the Swahili-culture. Islam was strengthened and promoted by the Sharifite Hadhrami families who left Arabia to settle at the coast. The spread of Islam at

the coast and the interior was the deliberate and conscious effort of the traders and religious clerics among whom were Hadhramis who traversed the interior in search of trading commodities. Islam came with a written law from which deviation was theoretically impossible. Through cultivation and assimilation of the South Arabian and indigenous African cultures, there emerged a distinct pattern of the Muslim Swahili culture with the Swahili language becoming the lingua-franca of East Africa. Hadhrami influence on the socio-religious aspect of the Muslim population at the coast cannot be minimized especially as the Shafii Madhab (school of thought) predominates in all religious ceremonies and rituals.

The recent Hadhrami immigrants who settled permanently at the coast during the colonial period, especially in Mombasa, sought to reproduce their own ways of life without fundamental changes. To a considerable extent they succeeded in maintaining a distinct Hadhrami identity by speaking only Arabic in their homes, thinking of themselves as Arabs and being dedicated to the speaking of Arabic as their mother language. They maintained strong ties with their home land by frequently visiting their relatives in Hadhramaut and retiring to their homeland in old age. However, in spite of this strong kinship ties and clannish feelings, the Hadhrami community experienced a degree of social change through interaction and

integration with the other communities at the coast; through modernization and through some acceptance of western tastes and secular education. Even then, the Hadhrami community still enjoys a distinctive socio-cultural existence.

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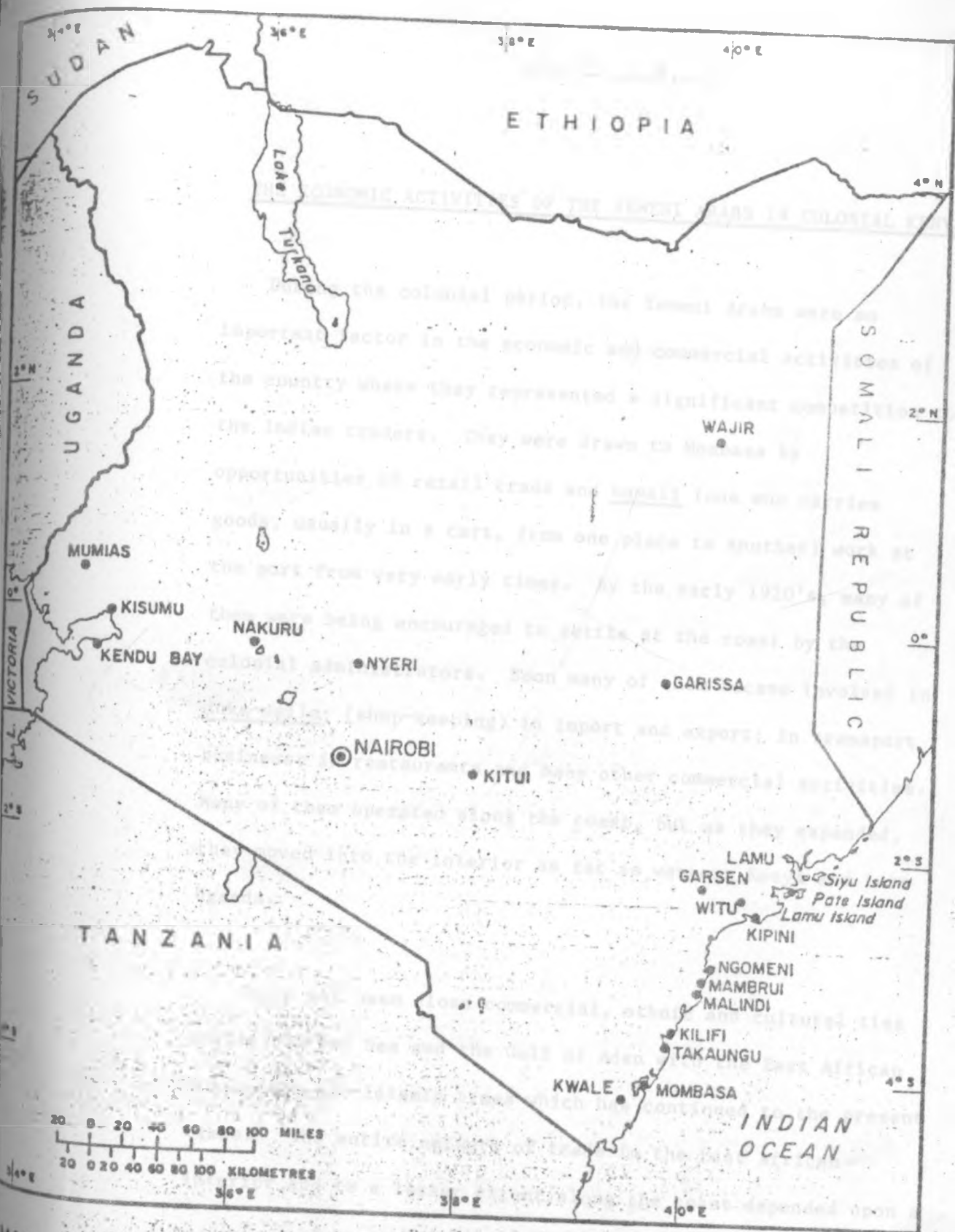
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MAP 2 MAJOR TOWNS IN KENYA WHERE YEMENIS TRADED AND SETTLED

CHAPTER 3

THE ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF THE YEMENI ARABS IN COLONIAL KENYA

During the colonial period, the Yemeni Arabs were an important factor in the economic and commercial activities of the country where they represented a significant competition to the Indian traders. They were drawn to Mombasa by opportunities of retail trade and hamali (one who carries goods, usually in a cart, from one place to another) work at the port from very early times. By the early 1920's, many of them were being encouraged to settle at the coast by the colonial administrators. Soon many of them became involved in duka-walla; (shop-keeping) in import and export; in transport business; in restaurants and many other commercial activities. Many of them operated along the coast, but as they expanded, they moved into the interior as far as western Kenya and into Uganda.

There has been close commercial, ethnic and cultural ties across the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden with the East African coast from pre-Islamic times which has continued to the present times.<sup>1</sup> The entire network of trade in the East African interior and to a lesser extent along the coast depended upon a

strong and well organized base at the coast. For centuries, dhows have called into the ports all along the East African littoral for trade, facilitated by the Monsoon winds. The Monsoon winds drew the lands skirting the Indian Ocean into a trading unit and the East African coast was an integral part of this unit of trade, for it provided acceptable articles essential to this pattern of exchange.<sup>2</sup> The North-East Monsoons, which starts in November and ends in March, are followed by the South-West Monsoons from April to September. These monsoon winds made it possible for vessels to travel from the Persian Gulf and India to East Africa and return to their home ports within the same year.<sup>3</sup> The commerce was dependant on these Arabian, Persian and Indian dhows because the boats built by the Swahili, were generally too small to cross the Indian Ocean.<sup>4</sup> The purpose of this chapter however, is to analyse the main pattern of Yemeni economic activities in the colonial period, evaluate their role in the economic development of the region and their impact or contribution to Kenya right up to independence.

During the last decades of th nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, the coast was experiencing an economic and political decline. The economic decline was caused by a number of factors, one of which was the passing of the ordinance abolishing the status of slavery in 1907. Since



agriculture was the main occupation of the Arab and Swahili population at the coast, the abolition of slavery "dealt a fatal blow to the economic status of the Arab and Swahili landowners."<sup>5</sup> It was, so to speak, the final blow that weakened the economy at the coast after a series of anti-slavery decrees signed between the British Imperial Government and the Sultan of Zanzibar. The anti-slavery decrees of 1873 and 1876 passed in Zanzibar, abolished all export of slaves, closed all slave markets and prevented slaves from approaching the coast, forbade the plantation owners from obtaining fresh supplies of slaves to work at their shambas and plantations, thus, leaving large tracts of land to turn to bush.<sup>6</sup> After the decrees were passed, the official policy of missions of harbouring runaway slaves was economically harmful to many Arab landowners, since it encouraged more slaves to leave their masters and go to work in the missions where they were allowed to squat on the land, as long as they conformed to mission rules and regulations.

The failure of the Arab-Swahili landowners to adapt to the new changes after the 1907 decree and their failure to obtain free labour, which was at that time unknown and hard to obtain, left the economic system at the coast to stagnate. In fact it destroyed the first "pillar" of the economic structure of the Arab and Swahili population at the coast.

The second "pillar" of the economic structure at the coast, that is land, was undermined in 1908 when the Land Title ordinance was passed whereby large tracts of land became alienated or were declared Crown Land. This ordinance was passed at a time when large areas of land owned by the Arabs and Swahili had become bush due to loss of slave labour over the years, and the boundaries between these lands and "waste" land could not be distinguished. The government therefore regarded these lands as Crown Land whereby many Arabs and Swahili lost their land to the government.

The construction of the Uganda Railway was also a significant factor in the economic decline of the coastal people. Many slaves deserted their masters to work in the construction of the railway, thus making it difficult for the plantation owners to replace the already scarce slave labour. The railway also affected the caravan trade which had been monopolised by the Arab Swahili traders since the railway line ran along the old caravan routes replacing these caravan expeditions with the railway line. The decline of this trade meant that many of those who hired slaves as porters for the expeditions lost the income that occurred to them from this caravan trade. With the advance of the railway into the interior, a steady flow of Asian immigrants moved into the interior establishing themselves as petty merchants along the

railway line, in administrative centres and in areas off the railway zone to dominate the whole commercial structure of the interior. The Asians soon by-passed the few Arab and Swahili middlemen in the interior by trading directly with the Africans, thus leaving the coastal people in an unfavourable economic situation in the face of the changes brought about by the new economic pattern.<sup>7</sup>

Kenya's link with western capitalism was forged from the late nineteenth century under the control of the British East African Company. Much of what is now Kenya became a Protectorate under the British in 1895, and a Crown Colony in 1920. Colonialism, generally, is a system of rule which assumes the rights of one people to impose their will upon another which inevitably leads to a situation of dominance of dependency. From the outset of British colonial rule in Kenya, there emerged a policy of simple primary production. The Imperial British Government played a minimal role in the economic development after the construction of the Uganda Railway (1898-1902). The initial "grants-in-aid" were aimed at the development of a basic infrastructure such as ports and railways, which could facilitate the export of food crops and raw-materials. However, by the 1920's the government's investments in the infrastructure had been considerable: almost 1,300 miles of new railway track had been opened and five

deep-water berths were built in Mombasa between 1920 and 1932.<sup>8</sup>

European settlers had been encouraged to settle in Kenya from 1900 onwards, in order to grow agricultural produce which would help finance the Uganda Railway and make Kenya "self-sufficient", in terms of revenue for economic expansion. The Kenya colonial administration enjoyed a high degree of autonomy in promoting internal accumulation, in that it could raise loans independently and make most of the major decisions concerning the allocation of government revenue. The European settlers had reached 2,000 by the early 1920's and they managed to influence government policies towards ensuring a high protective nature of government support and investments in the means of production for their own community. Racial antagonism developed in the country between the Europeans, Asians, Arabs and Africans because of the colonial government policies and the favoured position that the Europeans managed to secure for themselves.<sup>9</sup>

Government policies which affected the Yemeni community were those concerned with trade licensing and immigration laws, although these were aimed basically at the Asian community. The Yemeni labour-migrant community or Washihiri as they are commonly known at the coast, like the Asians, but on a much

smaller scale, had increased in numbers with the gradual establishment of the Protectorate. With the extension of "Pax Britanica" and the opening of the Uganda Railway, the interior was opened for the Asians and Arabs to move inland for trade. Many of them followed the railway zone and began trading with the Africans inland. These Hadhrami immigrants certainly played an effective and important role in the economic and commercial activities in the Protectorate. They were regarded by the colonial administrators as the ones who "represented an outstanding example of contrast of industry and potential to general Arab apathy and decline on the coast".<sup>10</sup>

With the development of Mombasa as an entrepot of the Protectorate, a number of Hadhrami Arabs were attracted to the port because of the development of the Kilindini Harbour and the increase of the Asian whole-sale trade, to form a large labour force in the port, and for the haulage demand in the town.<sup>11</sup> In fact, the immigration of these industrious labourers had the blessing of the Provincial Commissioner for the coast, who wrote in the 1919-20 Annual Report of Seyyidieh Province;

"...the definite recognition of the Hadhrami and Shihiri Arabs as a distinct community is a matter of considerable political importance, for I believe that on the successful handling of these people rests to a great extent the future development of the coast."<sup>12</sup>

Although there was a rapid decline of the economic development in the district, the Hadhramis were excluded from this general charge of apathy. The Hadhrami Arabs were singled out for their hard-work and capabilities in the economic activities. Indeed in 1923, it was officially proposed that a large-scale immigration of Hadhramis be launched as part of a solution to the problem of coast development. The Acting Senior Commissioner for the coast, R.G. Salked, writing a report on the "Coast Native Trade", realised the importance of the Hadhrami labour force which could be provided by the immigration of these people to the Protectorate, since, in his view, no other part of the Protectorate or the colony could supply the needed labour force. He wrote:

.... it is believed that South East Arabia might produce this (labour force) the Arabs are known as cultivators and traders. Their religion and language are the same as the coast. They already live here, land is available and it would seem that with a little encouragement many might be induced to immigrate. If so, not only might the necessary population be gradually introduced, but a class of men who can and have become competitors for the native. After all, whatever assistance the Government might produce, the grain trades greatest enemy is the lack of competition or rather the merchants rings."<sup>13</sup>

But this officially proposed large scale immigration of Hadhrami as a panacea for the problem of the badly needed labour force was not launched due to lack of capital and the

opposition of the Liwali of Mombasa, sir Ali bin Salim to it.<sup>14</sup> This state of affairs developed because the Omani Arabs and Hadhrami Arabs although seemingly living in harmony, resented one another. The Omani Arabs tended to scorn and resent these Washihiri whom they saw as uncouth and opportunistic transients.<sup>15</sup> The Omani Arabs resented these Washihiris who were able to better themselves despite the economic decline at the coast, unlike their Omani counterparts many of whom, in spite of being the landed gentry, were reduced to poverty. The Omani Arabs soon began to sell their land so as to live decently, and many of the Hadhrami Arabs were not slow in grabbing this opportunity to acquire wealth for themselves. This feeling of resentment towards the Hadhrami did not start in the period of economic decline at the coast, but long before the advent of colonial rule when they were referred to as *viborotos* (fleas).<sup>16</sup>

The Yemenis were an immigrant minority, and like any other minority race, did not escape the hostility of the indigenous people.<sup>17</sup> They came to East Africa in search of a "better life" because of the political problems and economic poverty in their country. They were extremely poor and worked as porters, water carriers, hamalis stevedores or at any other sort of menial work, as long as they had a means of sustaining themselves. As labour - migrants they were in search of a

livelihood and did not involve themselves in local politics and were thus encouraged by the colonial authorities to settle and pursue their economic interests. They were known for their economic interests. They were known for their hard work as labourers and porters by the authorities. Because of their acceptance of these menial jobs, they were despised and the name Washihiris came to be used as a derogatory term for them. In spite of this, the Yemenis, felt it was better to earn one's living honestly even if it meant working in inferior jobs. Their ability to overlook this state of affairs was important because it left them free to pursue their economic interests. There is not a single wealthy Hadhrami who transferred his business from Arabia to Kenya; all the wealth in the country was locally created. The extreme thriftiness of the Hadhrami, his willingness to live on narrow profit margins, and most of all his complete absence of any desire for leisure or hobby made him the ideal trader and worker in his own image, but unfortunately the object of suspicion, jealousy and ridicule. The Hadhramis knew about the abundance of grain and other trading items on the coast, which were in demand in the outside world. However, this was not to say that the East African coast was not affected by the world economic depression after the First World War.<sup>18</sup>



In spite of the economic recession, Mombasa District succeeded in attracting immigrants from Arabia, especially Hadhramaut. Most the Hadhramis were drawn to Mombasa by opportunities of retail trade or of hamali work and only prevented by lack of capital from launching out into more ambitious enterprises.<sup>19</sup> These hamalis found work in the port of Mombasa as hamalis and stevedores, hauling goods from one place to another. It was the most important means of transportation before the advent of the motor vehicles for transporting goods from the piers to private godowns, railways and bazaars and vice versa.

However, not all Yemeni hamalis and stevedores owned the carts they used. Most of them were engaged as labourers by the Indian labour contractors who usually owned a number of carts that were operated by a gang. In the absence of any definite place where labour could be obtained, these Indian labour contractors acted as agents for the merchants handling the cargo. The Indian who controlled the labour gangs kept them bound by a system of advances so as not to enable them to engage themselves from day to day to any person requiring to ship or take deliveries of goods from the customs.<sup>20</sup> The Indian labour contractors had the monopoly of this service for a long time which caused an out-cry from the non-Indian

merchants who felt that the Indians were demanding a lot of payment for their services. The merchants felt that with the proper registration of hamali labourers at the port, the labourers would be free to avail themselves to work, instead of operating as gangs for the Indian labour contractors.<sup>21</sup>

In 1916, there were some eighty Hadhrami and Swahili, hamalis, carrying goods from Mombasa Harbour to the godowns and bazaars. They became aware of the importance of the work they were doing in the wake of acute scarcity of labour and a sharp increase in cargo traffic. They were soon to have a monopoly of their services. They combined and drove up their wages to RS. 3.50 a day, a level considered too high by contemporary standards. Any attempt to curtail their earnings by the administration led them to withdraw their labour. This way, the hamalis were able to offer themselves for the wages which they bargained for on a day to day basis. The consequence was that they could make enough money in one day to enable them to rest for a day or two. Rarely did more than half the men work at the same time.<sup>22</sup>

The administration tried to control this labour by passing the Hamali Rules, published under Martial Law on 18th August, 1916, whereby only authorized labourers registered with the Labour Office could work at the Kilindini Port. Also on 13th

July 1916, the Mombasa Township Vehicles Rules was passed whereby all carts - vehicles had to be licensed.<sup>23</sup> The registered labourers were each provided with a badge and paid daily by the employers at the traffic rate laid down by the authorities, in front of a government official at the Government Labour Office.<sup>24</sup> This rule was not effective in controlling the hamalis, because although the hamalis were registered, they were not obliged to their calling and the only punishment was to confiscate the labourer's badge. This did not produce the desired effect. By December 1917, there were 1,797 hamalis and 953 stevedores registered at the Port Labour Registration Office. These figures included all the hamalis and stevedores in the whole of Mombasa District, of whom only 279 were paid off through the Labour Office. They earned RS. 1.90 daily per man.<sup>25</sup> The above figures show that in spite of the government's measure to control the hamali labourers in Mombasa by introducing rules and regulations, the hamalis had organised themselves as a group in such a way as to enjoy a monopoly.

Some of the Hadhrami hamali labourers who worked for the Indians or on their own usually managed to save to be able to own a number of carts, which they operated as gangs on the same lines as the Indian labour contractors. These Hadhramis employed their fellow Hadhramis, Swahilis and Africans to ply

their carts. Unlike the Indian, the Hadhrami cart owners shared the work with their labourers, hauling goods to and from the harbour.

The opportunity for hamali work in Mombasa was always great because Mombasa had emerged as the most important commercial centre by the early 1920's.<sup>26</sup> The expansion of Kilindini Harbour in response to the growing flow of imports and exports created more jobs connected with loading and off-loading ships. The growing number of business firms required manpower for carrying goods from the port to the godowns and from there to the railway and also for transporting goods from one commercial firm to another. The Hadhrami and Swahili hamalis dominated the haulage demand at the Old Port and Kilindini Harbour. However, after the mid 1920's the so called "Kavirondo" (Luo) immigrant from Western Kenya began to join the Hadhrami and Swahili hamalis in all aspect of harbour work, including construction and stevedoring.<sup>27</sup>

Right up to the mid-1930's the colonial policy towards the Yemeni hamalis and labourers was favourable. They were encouraged to settle because they proved hard working and their man-power was much needed at the ports. However, the colonial policy suddenly changed just before World War II after an inter-tribal riot broke out between the Yemenis and Luos in the

Majengo area in 1937.<sup>28</sup> The real cause of the riot was not known but the economic situation in Mombasa intensified the racial antagonism in the town since there was active unemployment in Mombasa by the 1940's. The Coast Provincial Commissioner, writing to the Colonial Office in Nairobi about the riot in 1937, stated that "the riots arose out of some small beginnings, such as that it is difficult to say that there are any real causes of friction between the two sections."<sup>29</sup> However, the riots left eleven Hadhramis and one Luo dead.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the administrators put a restriction and prohibition of immigrations from South Arabia in 1937. The District Commissioner of Mombasa J. Douglas McKean, wrote to the Coast Provincial Commissioner and expressed his fears of widespread riots with the dhow season approaching. He wrote "the dhow season from Aden will begin and there is a possibility that a large re-enforcement of Washihiiri may start further trouble in Mombasa. The Washihiiri in Hadhramaut is a wild tribe and news has no doubt reached them of the recent loss of their relatives and friends, and it is certain that a desire for revenge will be engendered."<sup>31</sup>

In order to limit their numbers, it was suggested by the colonial government to demand a deposit of Pounds 10 from all Yemeni immigrants who came to Kenya.<sup>32</sup> It was also suggested that, the authorities in Hadhramaut be asked to prohibit any

immigrant from sailing from Arabia, especially those without proper valid documents, even though they were all British subjects or protected persons. Word was sent to the authorities in Aden to restrict this influx of immigrations to East Africa, which was increasingly because of the worsening economic conditions in Southern Arabia. The reason put forward for the prohibition of these immigrants was that Mombasa, like the rest of the world, was experiencing an economic recession, and there was acute unemployment and thus no opportunity open for these immigrant labourers from South Arabia.<sup>33</sup>

However, the immigration policy towards the Yemeni immigrants was not effective, and with every dhow season, more Yemeni immigrant-labourers came to Mombasa. Mombasa became an important centre for economic and commercial activities for many of the Yemeni immigrants. In 1911, it was estimated that the total population of Arabs in Kenya was 9,100.<sup>34</sup> The expansion of Kilindini Harbour and Mombasa itself had economic opportunities such as retail trade and informal pursuits, such as hawking. At the apex of the commercial organization of Mombasa were about two dozen powerful European-owned houses and a handful of thriving Indian-owned enterprises. Together, they performed the vital function of importing goods from the outside world, and ensuring their distribution in the hinterland.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, they also organised the

movement of commodities, mainly agricultural produce from the interior to the coast, and finally arranging for their export to overseas markets.

Although a large per cent of the import and export trade was in the hands of the Europeans and Indian commercial firms, there was a lot of trade carried on, on a much smaller scale, between the ports of the lands bordering the Indian Ocean. This century old dhow trade still covered large distances in the Indian Ocean, joining ports such as Mombasa, Zanzibar, Lamu, Muscat, Aden, Kuwait, Bandar Abbas, Karachi and Bombay. In spite of modernization of the sailing boats in the previous thirty years or so, the produce and ports of call have remained the same for hundreds of years. What is even more fascinating, is that the cargo of this dhow trade had not changed over time. From East Africa, mangrove poles from the Rufiji Delta and the Lamu Archipelago had been exported to Kuwait 3000 miles away; while from Hadhramaut, dried fish and dates were brought by the dhows returning to their ports laden with ghee, lemon juice and grains.

An average of about 200 foreign dhows called into Mombasa each year and about 100 at Lamu, the second largest port in Kenya, during the 1907-1917.<sup>36</sup> The greatest number of dhows arrived during the 1907-1908 season, when there were 345, a

figure not surpassed until 1945.<sup>37</sup> Between 1919-1945, the number of dhows calling at the old port declined to an average of approximately 166 per year. By the mid 1930's, the highest number by nationality to come to Kenya's ports were from Arabia, followed by Indian, Zanzibari and Persian dhows. The question to be asked is: why was there a decline in the number of dhows arriving in Mombasa between the two world wars when the economy and the size of Mombasa were expanding enormously? The two main reasons were that, the new port of Kilindini was developed and modernized to accommodate steamships. With the advent of steamships which were faster and bigger, the dhows began to lose their importance as transporters of the essential goods from the East African coast to South Arabia. Consequently, with the modernization of Kilindini harbour, more steamships were used instead of the dhows. The fewer dhows that called at the Old Port, were those seasonal dhows from the Arabian Peninsula. The second reason was that, the main currency in the Indian Ocean trade was changed from the Indian Rupee to the Kenya Shilling and this created difficulties for the nahodas (captains) of the dhows, who had been using the Rupee as a means of exchange for decades. Regulations instituted by the colonial government at this period, such as export permits, also served to discourage the dhow owners from calling into Kenyan ports. In fact, in 1921 the District



Commissioner for Lamu wrote to the Senior Coast Commissioner about the decline of the Lamu dhow trade stating,

"..... I have to report that something approaching a climax has been reached in the Lamu dhow trade..... very many of the dhows have run at a loss during the past seasons, losses running from Fls. 500 to over Fls. 1000.... I fear that unless a means is found to deal with the matter immediately, the dhow traffic may cease, throwing the sailors out of employment and causing loss to owners".<sup>38</sup>

During World War II, the dhow trade flourished. The Germans and Japanese captured or blockaded many of the ports on the British Empire and sank many British ships on the open seas. Consequently, dhows played an important part in supplying the imports and exports of Mombasa. Sharif Abdul Rahman A. Shatry, who was the Dhow Registrar for over 30 years at the old Port, stated that, "the usefulness of the dhows especially during the war cannot be under-estimated because of the part they played in transporting much needed food-stuffs to the different ports of the British colonies since these dhows were not attacked by the 'enemy' ships. We registered more dhows during this period than any other period during colonial rule."<sup>39</sup> The average number of dhows calling into the Old Port till 1948 was high with a record of 433 foreign dhows recorded in 1946. However, from 1948, the number of dhows calling at Mombasa has been steadily declining.

The dhow trade was an important aspect of the network of trade which had come to be established on the East African coast and the hinterland, in spite of the fact that it did not appear on the apex of the commercial organization of Mombasa. As a rule, the importation of goods from the outside world on a large scale, was largely carried out by European and Indian firms. The imports and exports of the dhow trade, however, were on a small scale, but they provided employment and business and commercial opportunities for many people at the coast.

The foreign dhows which came to East Africa did not usually sail directly from their home base to Mombasa, but traded on the way. A variety of imports were received. There were Arabian chests, carpets, brass coffee pots, dates, dried fish and shark, cotton piece cloth of which the kikoi - a rectangular piece of cotton cloth which was wrapped around the body and tied at the waist, and commonly worn by Arabs, Swahili and African men at the coast - was the most important. Some of these kikois were manufactured in Indonesia and others in Arabia. Dates, too, used to be a very important import from Arabia. Henna, a powdered dye made from a shrub found in Arabia was also imported from Mukalla in Hadhramaut. Dried salted fish and shark formed the most important items of importation. This came from ports such as Sehut, Jazair and

Shihr in Hadhramaut. The places of second importance were Aden, Socotra and Kismayu. This commodity has always been in great demand among the coastal people as well as up-country Africans who started working and living on the coast. It became part of their diet, since it was relatively cheap and a good source of protein.

One of the first commodities to be unloaded at the beginning of the dhow season in Mombasa was the dried fish and shark. The dhows carrying these goods lay at anchor off Pwakuu, a few hundred yards from the jetties near the original settlement of Mombasa. The unloading provided employment for many porters, especially during the dhow seasons. The dried fish was auctioned and during the peak seasons, at least one auction took place everyday.

There were three main auctioneers for dried fish after the First World War in Mombasa. These were Hadi Bakhshwein, Swaleh Sherman and Rajab Garwaan - all Hadhramis. The auctioneers made their money from commissions ranging from between two to four per cent of the price of what the fish fetched at the auction. As a young man, Swaleh Sherman used to work with his uncle at the Old Port in the business of dried fish and shark. He became very successful in the business and became popularly known as Swaleh "Nguru". The meaning of the

Swahili word "Nguru", is Kingfish. The Late Swaleh Sherman was a very popular man in the dried fish business, hence he was known as Swaleh "Nguru".

Swaleh Sherman realised the importance of diversifying his business. He bought a second hand car in 1920 and became a taxi driver, but he retained his old business in dried fish. Later on, he bought a small shamba in Kisauni, where vegetables were grown for sale in the town market. He had the skill and ability of an entrepreneur, and was quick to realise that with the age of transportation advancing, people with rising incomes would be quick to buy cars. As a result, he started the business of buying second hand cars and selling them at a profit. From the capital accrued, Swaleh Sherman bought land on Mombasa island, especially in Majengo area, after 1945. He diversified this business and worked in close partnership with his sons.<sup>40</sup>

The dhow trade provided economic opportunities for those who were alert to it. Many a man made a living and became prosperous because of the dhow trade. The Shatry family of Mombasa were important dealers in Arabian wooden chests and persian carpets. The Shatry family is known to have resided at the coast for over a century. Before Sharif Muhammed Shatry, his father was an active trader in the Arabian wooden chests

and Persian carpets. Sharif Muhammed Shatry, who later in 1948 became the first Arab elected member of the Legislative Council,<sup>41</sup> was the main carpet retailer in Mombasa during the colonial period. His family had been in business of selling carpets and wooden chests longer than any other family in Mombasa.<sup>42</sup> In 1930, Sharif Muhammed Shatry moved to a shop in front of the Old Port from where he carried on the family business. He also purchased dates, salt and dried fruits from the dhows that called at the Old Port. Besides carpets and wooden chests, he also sold Arab brass coffee pots and furniture in his shop. The food stuffs which he purchased, were handed over to the brokers in Mombasa.

The importance of the dhow trade cannot be minimized in the economic history of the Yemeni Arabs in colonial Kenya. Over centuries, the dhows were the most important transporters of the Yemeni immigrants who came to Kenya in search of a better life. By 1945, the number of Yemeni immigrants recorded was 2,654, of whom only 28 were women.<sup>43</sup> This figure illustrated the importance of these dhows as the main transport agents of the labour - immigrant community in Kenya, especially during the colonial period, since these dhows crossed the waters of the Indian Ocean without harrassment from the British naval ships patrolling the waters.

From the late 1940's, a handful of the wealthier Arabs owned dhows, and a lucrative trade between the Kenyan coast, the Banadir coast and Southern Arabia existed.<sup>44</sup> A well-established Yemeni dhow trade existed between Lamu and Kismayu. For example, Said Bujra of Lamu owned dhows that exported commodities such as boriti, sim-sim oil and seeds, and coconut ropes from Lamu to Kismayu and Mukalla. He imported from Kismayu cattle and ghee, camel skins and fat, dried fish, etc.<sup>45</sup> Abdallah Bakithir or Abdallah Kadara as he is popularly known, also, owned four large dhows up to 1964. He used to trade with India, Southern Arabia, especially Mukalla. He exported grain and brought back from his trips all kind of trading commodities.<sup>46</sup>

It would be in order to give an example of commodities exchanged between Lamu and Kismayu by dhows. For example, on 20th October, 1943, Muhammed bin Mahdi imported 27 donkeys from Kismayu for himself, and 220 pairs of sandals from Sheikh Haji Rufai to Sharif Ali Harun in Lamu. Sharif Salim Badawi, imported from Kismayu 5 cases of shoes and sandals at KShs. 900; 1 case of gazelle skins valued at KShs. 300; 1 case of leather cushions at KShs. 300; 1 case of pocket pouches at KShs. 175 and 2 bales of goat skins valued at KShs. 400. And Sharif Ali bin Muhammed Beti exported to Kismayu from Lamu, 30 bags of wangwana starch valued at KShs. 4,000 and 30 bags of

dried coconuts valued at KShs. 540.<sup>47</sup> Such was the nature of trade carried on between Lamu and Kismayu.

The Yemeni came to form a large proportion of the labour force, for the port haulage demands in the towns. Apart from this contribution to labour, many Yemenis traded in cattle, while at the same time operating petty business in the town, similar to the Indian dukawallas. In spite of the fact that there was a well-established Indian monopoly of the wholesale trade from Europe and India, the Hadhrami traders and shopkeepers gradually came to equal the Indian dukawalla.

The Yemeni trader and businessman came to play an important part in the economic sphere as small-scale traders or dukawalla, as they were called. The Indians became a buffer between the powerful British ruling class and the majority of the underprivileged indigenous African population. The racial hierarchy in colonial Kenya was Europeans, Indians, Arabs and lastly Africans. Arabs, however, in most cases were treated as Africans, except in the payment of Hut tax.<sup>48</sup> This in itself tended to favour the Indian trader and businessman.

Trade as a function of the entrepreneur is of course a very wide term, but the trade pattern followed by the Indian or Arab entrepreneur in East Africa can be readily typified, the

basic unit always being the duka, seen as an indefinitely expanding unit. Almost all of the successful entrepreneurs started off with a small duka as their father or paternal uncles did, and thereafter expanded into other commercial activities.

In economic parlance, the Indian and Yemeni middlemen could be termed as "entrepreneurs". In a capitalist system of production, an entrepreneur plays the key role, he innovates and bears risks. Peter Marris and Anthony Somerset have described entrepreneurship as:

".... a practical creativeness which combines forces and opportunities in new ways. It is not necessarily inventive, entrepreneurs turns invention into profits, but need not originate it..... It is essentially a very practical talent for combining assests in a form which has not been attempted before."<sup>49</sup>

In the East African context, the Indian trader came to play the role of entrepreneur even before the period under consideration. He extended the money economy, stimulated the production of cash crops, and facilitated the diffusion of imported commodities.<sup>50</sup> However, there has been a deep and sharp hostility towards the Indian trader in spite of his role as an entrepreneur among all communities be they European, African or Arab.<sup>51</sup> It is true that to a certain extent the



indigenous people of East Africa often resented the "sharp practices" for which the Indian dukawallas became notorious. Their services however, were very much valued, especially in the remote parts of the country. At the coast, Arab and African land owners appreciated having Indian dukas on their land, because of the rent they yielded and the services they rendered. In 1922, the Chief Native Commissioner for the Colony urged all the District Commissioners at the coast, to encourage "native" traders in their respective areas. However by 1924, the Senior Commissioner for the coast wrote stating that, in spite of all the encouragement given to the Arab and Swahili shopkeepers, the "natives" themselves preferred Indian traders in the trading centres.<sup>52</sup> In fact, for many Yemenis, the Indian dukawalla was a source of inspiration; they tried to attain and reach the Indian trader's standards of trade.

With the economic system hinging on Mombasa, the middleman certainly played the dynamic role of linking the remote areas and the coast in a network of trade. The prosperity of the major mercantile house of Mombasa, depending to a large extent upon the energy and enterprise of the middleman and the itinerant traders operating in Mombasa and its hinterland. The middleman occupied a position of crucial importance in the intricate network of trade and commerce, which had evolved during the colonial era. The middlemen in most cases, were wholesalers or retail traders, who had connections at the coast.

The next most important position in the commercial organization of Mombasa's economic system was, the one held by the wholesalers. They played a vital role in the trading network of supplying the important needs of the bazaar merchants of the interior, who, in turn, maintained the flow of goods to the retailers and the travelling traders. In different towns of the interior, many of the Mombasa wholesale merchants had branches of their firms which were canvassing orders for imports and feeding them to the coastal headquarters. The bulk of the wholesale trade in cotton piece cloth and other items was in the hands of Indian merchants for a long time.<sup>53</sup> It was not until the 1930's that their position as wholesalers was threatened by the Hadhramis who had entered that business.

Most of the Hadhrami wholesale traders relied on their own energies and abilities to travel into the interior in order to trade with the African population, since their businesses were usually very small and they did not have any assistance. They were hardly more than three people working in the same business at the same time. A few examples may suffice to illustrate the activities of some of the Hadhramis who entered the wholesale business and became very successful. One such trader was Sheikh Abubakar Zubedi, who came to Mombasa from Hakme, Hadhramaut in 1918 when he was a boy of 12 years. He lived

with his uncle, Sheikh Salim Zubedi till 1923, when he was sent to Nairobi by his uncle to work as a cashier for an Arab, Salim Abdallah, who owned a restaurant in Pangani. He lived in Nairobi for three years and in 1926 returned in Mombasa to start working as a hawker, selling mostly cotton piece cloth and other imported manufactured goods in the Old Town. After some years, Sheikh Abubakar opened a shop, where he began to expand and diversify his interests. He began importing cotton piece cloth and beds from India. Later on, he went to Zanzibar where he imported curved beds and sold them in Mombasa. With the rising costs of importing goods, Sheikh Abubakar got into a contract with a local Sikh carpenter, who made curved beds locally for him at Mwembe Tayari, Mombasa in 1930.

In 1938, Sheikh Abubakar and his brother Sheikh Abdallah Zubedi opened a wholesale shop on present day Biashara Street. They were the first Hadhrami Arabs to enter the wholesale business with a capital of about KShs. 1,000.00<sup>54</sup> The profit margin was very small, and they had to work extra hard because they were faced with stiff competition from the Indian wholesalers, who had monopolised the business for a long time. Sheikh Abubakar had this to say when asked how he became so successful in the business.

"We were the first to enter the wholesale business in Mombasa. We imported cotton piece goods from Japan,

India, and sometimes Europe. There were some Arabs like Bin Mbarak and Mbarak Bin Gidem in Bondeni who were dealers in imported kikois from Aden. We started selling cotton piece cloth with what was popularly known as local prints to Indian retail traders because the Arabs were not yet equal competitors to the Indian traders. We also started exporting goods to Uganda and Tanzania but our most important customers were from Moyale, Wajir and Garissa where the retail traders played the most important role in distributing the imported goods."<sup>55</sup>

Gradually, Sheikh Abubakar expanded his business in exporting cotton piece cloth to Zaire, Sudan, Uganda and Tanganyika. He liked to travel and personally went to Zaire, Uganda and Tanganyika on trade expeditions.

After opening his wholesale shop, Sheikh Abubakar Zubedi acted as a commission agent for many of the Mahra<sup>56</sup> hawkers and itinerant traders. The indent business, in addition to the wholesale business, became a significant feature of the commercial life of Mombasa. The retailers in the interior often placed their orders with one of the commission agents or indent houses in Mombasa which took responsibility for ordering the goods, arranging for their payments and extending a credit of from 30 to 90 days to the buyer. Under this method, the indent house became in effect, a wholesale merchant.<sup>57</sup> The commission agent sold imported items in different areas, arranging for the delivery on the basis of a small commission which the overseas manufactures gave him. If he had adequate resources, he would have branches upcountry or he would travel

over the wide areas to collect orders periodically. These commission agents were often individuals of relatively poor means. For a long time, Sheikh abubakar Zubedi acted as a banker and a commission agent for the hawkers and traders in Mombasa, especially the Mahra traders. However, the hawkers and itinerant trader had to buy all their supplies from his shop.

There was always an opportunity for a man to start a small retail or indent business, and once he had made enough profit, the trader usually invested in opening another shop as a wholesaler. The early economic history shows how business spreads from the earliest founded settlements to newer and less developed ones, frequently the same firm later branched out yet further afield. Rather than open a new shop of his own, a man might prefer to set up a son in another area altogether, for if he opened a branch of the firm under his sole control, the difficulty of finding a manager, whether a relative or anybody from the community, made a risky enterprise even more hazardous. Hence, the tendency for retail traders to do business with their sons, even if it meant they were in the same business. The rate of bankruptcy was always so high and if a man failed in one township, he tended, if he could find the means, to move out to a more remote settlement and continue the same line of business or otherwise enter another business

altogether. On the other hand, a successful trader was more likely to move into a larger town with wider business prospects and may even diversify his business.

Mombasa's position as a centre of trade certainly attracted a lot of trade links with the interior. But this is not to say that there was no north/south trading links with the other coastal towns. Mombasa's commercial organization was also geared to the needs of the coastal trade. By 1900, it was reported that the trade of Malindi district was almost entirely in the hands of some 65 Indian traders residing particularly in Malindi, Takaungu and Mambrui.<sup>58</sup> They were engaged in a flourishing trade with the Giriama and other coastal people, bartering cotton cloth, brass and copper wire, beads, kerosene, oil and rice for ivory, Indian rubber, gum copal, simsim, tobacco and corn. There was certainly a lot of trade carried on between the coastal towns from Lamu in the North to Vanga in the South, and no doubt, the Indians had the monopoly of the trade for a long time. One cannot deny the important position the Indian merchants held in the economic history of any of the East African countries. But, this is not to say that their monopoly was complete as is often assumed to have been the case. There was certainly competition from the Hadhramis who were engaged in retail trade. After acquiring the skills of the trade, they became successful traders and a constant source of competition to the Indian trader.

Before the advent of colonial rule, Malindi was the "granary not only of the coast, but also to an appreciable extent, of Arabia and the Persian Gulf."<sup>59</sup> During the 1950's, Malindi developed rapidly and the whole district is said to have been under cultivation. But by the 1920's, Malindi's economy had declined considerably, and some of the local Arabs found it difficult to pay their taxes.<sup>60</sup>

By the early 1930's, the most important export from Malindi area, which was sent on foreign dhows, was mangrove piles, most of which were cut from Ngomeni swamps near Malindi and the Mto and Kilifi area, 32 kilometres north of Ngomeni. The Arabs for a long time had been involved in the Mangrove cutting industry at Ngomeni Creek, which they had carried out for a large number years without complaining. In 1919, the forest department invited traders for a monopoly for the cutting of the poles, and in spite of a very fair offer by the local Arabs, the contract was given to an Indian named Hassanali M.M. Ganijee, a resident of Mombasa. The Arabs resented this strongly and there was a sharp decline in the custom dues on the export of boritis by Rs. 4,000/-. Owing to the fall of boriti cutting, many of the larger dhows had ceased to call at Malindi. However, the Ngomeni Creek was again opened in the early 1930's to the local residents for the cutting of boritis. Consequently, the number of dhows from

Arabia increased since the nahodahs (captains) of the dhows could stop at Malindi on their return journey from Mombasa and load their dhows with the boritis, which formed an important export of Malindi to the Persian Gulf. Furthermore, due to the fact that crops in Arabia were good, the dhows had plenty of produce to bring down to Malindi. Thus, the numbers of dhows that called at Malindi increased in the 1930's. From 1939 to 1945, there were many foreign dhows that came to Malindi, 91 per cent of the dhows recorded originated from Arabia, 4 per cent from India, 2 per cent from Persia and 2 per cent from Somalia.<sup>61</sup>

By the early 1950's, however, the dhow trade in Malindi had decreased considerably. One reason was that, the Ngomeni swamps were overcut and the only supply of boritis came from the Mto Kilifi region which could not meet the demand of the dhow captains. Also, the dhow captains preferred to sail directly to Mombasa, where they off-loaded such commodities as dried fish, carpets, wooden chests, salt and brass-pots; and loaded their dhows with maize, simsim, copra oil and lemons, before sailing to Malindi on their home journey, where they loaded boriti and mangrove poles.<sup>62</sup>

Thus, by the late 1960's, the number of dhows at Malindi had decreased by nearly two-thirds and the chief reason for



this was the abolition of the rupee as the currency of trade from the 1930's; imposition of import duties by the colonial government; and the modernization of sailing facilities of dhows by use of steam engines after which they preferred to sail to Mombasa, instead of Malindi.

In the late 1920's, Malindi District experienced economic depression and the people along the coast were hard hit. The rate of land sales by the Shamba owners was so high that the District Commissioner, Mr. Fazan wrote in 1920:

"It requires no stretch of imagination to foresee the time when practically no Arab and Swahili land owner should be left if the rate of alienation continues..... It would be a matter of intense gratification if the time could come when the Arabs would achieve some of their former prosperity."<sup>63</sup>

However, gloomy as the picture may sound, the Arabs, especially the recent immigrants from Southern Arabia, did indeed try to uplift their social and economic position by engaging in petty business, cattle trade, retail trade and many other jobs which have commonly been referred to as "the informal sector."

The 1920's saw the establishment of trading centres throughout the district. These flourished in several places. In 1924, the District Commissioner reported that there were

eight townships and twenty-one trading centres and "all the salesmen were mainly Arabs and Indians" and "the few Arabs who were important merchants of the retail trade were recent arrivals from Shihir, not those who had settled the town before 1861."<sup>64</sup>

Some of the most prominent members of the Hadhrami Arabs in Malindi today came to the East African coast to settle during the time that Malindi was in economic decline. They seized the opportunity to establish themselves in business such as retail trade, petty trading and cattle trade. Sheikh Omar bin Dahman al-Amoody came to Malindi in 1919 from Wadi Hajar, Hadhramaut. His late father was among the first people to buy land from the Arab who were selling their land due to economic hardship. He used to grow fruits and grains. Coconut was also grown on the land. For a long time there was very little profit from his sale of fruits and grains. This was due to the fact that prices at that time were very low because of the post-war depression. However, from his little savings, Sheikh Omar decided to invest in a retail shop in Malindi town, near the Vasco da Gama pillar. It is from this retail shop as a base for expansion, that Sheikh Omar began to diversify his business. He had this to say when asked about his economic activities in Malindi.

"When I first came to Malindi, the first thing that I noticed about the town was that all the shops nearby

belonged to the Indians who were very rich. Although my father owned a little land, I was determined to have a shop of my own where I would be able to supply the needs of my own community, because I felt that the Indian cheated them and did not give them a fair deal..... I also felt that I would be able to diversify my activities as long as I had a base from where I could operate. I knew that I would be faced with a lot of competition but I was determined."<sup>65</sup>

Sheikh Omar began to diversify his business. From a retail trader, he became a wholesaler. He used to import goods from Mombasa and sell them locally in Malindi to the African population and other retail shops that belonged to the Hadhramis. He developed a very cordial relationship with his customers, and also extended credit to them. He became the main supplier to meet the needs of the town. In 1946, Sheikh Omar invested in public transport between Mombasa, Malindi and Lamu, after the roads were opened by the colonial government. He realised the importance of public transport in an area where distance between towns along the coast had been a hindrance to the economic development. He felt that the commodities could be transported quicker to the main ports for export. He recalled that when his own father owned a fruit shamba how difficult it was for him to transport the products to the town for transportation to Mombasa, and for export to the outside world. "There was no encouragement from the government to the fruit growers in the district. Only those who grew cotton as a cash crop were given encouragement."<sup>66</sup> The reason for this

was that fruit, as a perishable commodity, did not fetch a lot of revenue since it was more difficult to export it to Mombasa, as steamers did not call at the port of Malindi. According to him, most of the traders were not involved in direct trade with Aden and India during the colonial period because the traders could obtain the required imported goods from Mombasa, and it was cheaper to do so. Malindi carried on a lot of trade with Mombasa. In turn, Mambrui and Takaungu carried on a lot of trade with Malindi.

The Hadhramis had for many years been in the retail trade because the wholesale business was in the hands of the Indian traders. However, as they began to expand and have an impact on the economy of Kenya, they ventured into the wholesale business. There was a tendency for Arab traders to take over from the Indian traders when the Indians left town to go to other bigger towns. The Indians had a tendency to move into bigger businesses and therefore, move into bigger towns. An important characteristic of this immigrant population is the high degree of urbanization.<sup>67</sup> This is clearly seen in Mambrui and Lamu, when in 1968, there was only one Indian trader in Mambrui and the numbers in Lamu town had decreased by five times.<sup>68</sup> However, the Indian population in Malindi increased seven times. The increase of the Indian population in Malindi, had a direct effect upon its economy. There was

certainly a sharp decline in the economy of the town they left and it was the Hadhramis who took over from where they left. However, the Hadhramis who took over from the Indians in Mambrui and Lamu were not able to stop the decline of this town. The major reason being that, Lamu and Mambrui had a few products (apart from boriti in Lamu) to offer for export to Arabia, the Persian Gulf and India. After the mid 1940's, towns like Malindi, Lamu and Mambrui were by-passed by the steamship that preferred to sailed directly to Mombasa for trade. Although the Hadhrami Arabs took over from the Indian trader, they were not as successful as the Indian traders who had for a long time monopolised not only the retail trade but also the wholesale trade in the colony.

The activities of another prominent Hadhrami Arab, Sheikh Ahmed Taib, who came to Kenya in 1920 from Andai, Hadhramaut, can be cited as another example of how a hard working businessman diversified his businesses. He started a retail shop with his savings that accrued from the cattle trade. He first opened a retail shop in Makindu but later moved to Kitui town - a centre of trade for the Arabs and Kamba traders. Kitui had a significant number of Hadhrami Arabs who were mostly involved in the stock trade and the retail and wholesale business. It was also a centre for collecting agricultural produce from the Kambas and exporting it to Mombasa. Many

Hadhramis were attracted to Kitui because of its "proximity" to the coast and the abundance of grains that one could get there.<sup>69</sup>

From 1927 to 1931, Sheikh Ahmed Taib was involved in the cattle trade and he used to send his cattle on the hoof to Mombasa where he sold them to the auctioneers; and with the income he obtained, he bought goods to stock his retail shop in Kitui. He opened another retail shop in Mwingi, where he could rest on his way to and from Mombasa. He expanded his business further into retail and wholesale. In Mwingi, he owned the leading provision store and also became the sole distributor of cotton piece goods to the rest of the retail traders in the town. He invested his profits from here into lorries which he used for transporting goods between Kitui and Mombasa.

Lamu town also became a centre for retail and wholesale trade. The lamu Archipelago took a significant share in the maritime trade of the coast. With the economy of the coast so knit together, the same goods and cargo changed hands all along the coast from the sellers to the final buyer. Lamu was a great centre of dhow-building and enjoyed a considerable share of the carrying trade.<sup>70</sup> However, it must be noted that for centuries there has been a long history of ethnic, cultural and economic interaction that linked all the ports along the coast

from Kismayu and the Lamu Archipelago in the North to Vanga in the South. Lamu town had been involved in the Indian Ocean trade, exporting ivory, gum-copal, hippopotamus teeth, hides and skins, cowries, tortoise shell and slaves.

The Hadhramis who came to settle in Lamu as migrant-labourers especially after the BuSaid came to power were extremely poor. The Hadhramis who came to Lamu found a well-established and rigid system of relationship between the people living there within the "Wangwana ideology".<sup>71</sup> According to the Wangwana of Lamu the Hadhramis or "Washiiris" as they were known, were not allowed to intermingle freely with the people of Lamu. They were considered as the "nomads" of the Arabs, and were in the lowest strata. Due to their lowly position, the Washiiris were not allowed to live in the northern part of the town, but confined to the southern part with the ex-slaves, to whom they were considered equal. Actually, the Hadhramis were indifferent to the social stratification that existed in Lamu. They were not interested in establishing relations with the Wangwana; as labour-migrants they were in search of a livelihood. Keeping themselves on the periphery of Lamu's social arena was important for the economic goals that they wanted to achieve. As strangers, they were allowed economic freedom which they needed to accumulate wealth. They were not interested in "Hishima" or in the "Wangwana" ideology.<sup>72</sup>

Most of them settled in Langoni. The Hadhramis gained from the presence of the BuSaid and British rule, since through the, Lamu opened its doors for more "strangers". Indian traders also began to come to Lamu at the same time. With the increase in the numbers of settlers, the Langoni market acquired its position as the supplier for the new-comers as well as for the islands around Lamu. The open market was a boom for the Hadhramis who were able to manipulate the agricultural products which they sold directly to foreign traders, since the Wangwana were not interested. This gave a fillip to the Hadhramis and their economic activities. The Langoni market of retail trade established a new way for many of the inhabitants of Lamu to support themselves without depending on the Wangwana. With the establishment of the Hadhramis in Lamu, the economic position of the Wangwana as the leaders in foreign trade was threatened since the Hadhramis had a wider network of relations especially with other Hadhramis all over the Indian Ocean. They also had more readily available cash than the Wangwana who had to depend on the barter system. The Hadhramis suffered no social consequences from opening the market to every customer. All these factors offered the Hadhramis more freedom to manoeuvre the market.

Generally the Hadhramis' policy was more acceptable to the government of the Sultan of Zanzibar and the British government



than the Wangwana's policy since the Wangwana were interested in keeping Lamu in isolation. The Hadhramis, on the other hand, were interested in opening up Lamu to other East African peoples and to trade. This integration, accompanied by peaceful relations, was essential for the progress of the Hadhramis' business. The decline of the Wangwana made the Hadhramis the strongest economic group in Lamu.<sup>73</sup>

The Most important economic activities that the Hadhramis were involved in were retail trade, cattle trade and the dhow trade. By 1957, the cattle trade was one of the most important forms of trade for the district economically,<sup>74</sup> and the dhow trade was at its lowest since the 1950's. It was reported by Prins in 1957, that there were only 237 sailing ships registered in use and in 1963 there were only 204.<sup>75</sup> The main reason for their sharp decline was that it was no longer profitable compared to other business to own a dhow, since the returns were low. The retail trade, was and is still, the most wide-spread economic activity for most of the Hadhramis in Lamu.

There was a lot of trade that was going on between Kismayu and Lamu by dhows and by land.<sup>76</sup> The District Commissioner of Lamu once reported that, one of the most important forms of

trade in the District was the cattle trade between the Somalis and the local Arabs. He wrote that the cattle trade was

".....one of the most important for the District economically, not only the auctioneers make a profit, but also the Arabs who buy the cattle at Makowe and take it to Mombasa, a large proportion of the money the Somalis receive for their cattle is spent on shops of the the District and they return with goods on which traders make their profit".<sup>77</sup>

The colonial administrators tried to encourage traders in the cattle trade and the dhow owners, but there was an economic depression throughout the country and many traders, especially the dhow owners, sold their dhows to either start a retail shop or concentrate on their small shamba.<sup>78</sup>

Although the picture of Lamu's economy may seem gloomy, it was a centre of trade for a long time. There was a well established and well organized trading network between Lamu and the Benadir coast. Traders from both the countries enjoyed a well established trading pattern. Some of the items exported to Kismayu from Lamu were coconut oil, vinegar "makuties", Koriya boriti, common soap, maize, rice, spices, coconut ropes, empty sacks - (second hand from India and re-exported to Kismayu). From Kismayu, goat-skin, ghee, camel fat, ivory sticks, hides and skins of camel and goats, sandals and manufactured items of skins were imported to Lamu.<sup>79</sup>

Most of the traders in Lamu District were Hadhramis. The activities of these men were very much appreciated by the colonial administrators who felt that the economic future of the district was in their hands. The District Commissioner of the district wrote in 1923, that the "Hadhrami and Sheher community justify in increasing degree the attention that has been given to them. Unfortunately, trade depression and the decrease in the dhow traffic has reduced the number of immigration this year. Longer experience only strengthens my belief that with these people lies the future prosperity of the coast."<sup>80</sup>

A prominent member of this community, Mr. Said A. Bujra had for a long time been involved in the cattle trade and dhow business in Lamu District. As a young man, he worked in Mombasa as a taxi driver for a Goan family. He managed to buy a second-hand car from them with his savings but he employed two other people to work for him as his drivers. He moved to Malindi as the personal driver of Commander Lawford.<sup>81</sup> In Malindi he worked for Sir Ali Bin Salim in the fish business. He used to supply Mombasa with fresh fish. At times, he sold about 11 tons of fish. Commander Lawford bought land and built the Lawfords Hotel, and Said Bujra became a partner. From his savings, he bought a dhow from Omar Abed Bin Hinduwan. After some years in the dhow trade he realised that it was more

profitable to have bigger dhows because he would then be able to carry more cargo for export to Southern Arabia and the Benadir coast.<sup>82</sup> He built a bigger ship in Mambrui. He used to export Boriti to Kismayu, Mogadishu and Mukalla. He also transported boriti along the coast and kuni (fire wood) to an Indian, a Mr. Nanji, who owned a brick factory in Port Reitz in Mombasa. Once in 1942 he had gone to Kismayu in one of his dhows, where he saw the large numbers of cattle in the area. He realised that it would be a very profitable business to venture into, since he would be able to supply Lamu and Mombasa with their meat supply and, at the same time, be able to cut out the Somali middlemen. Cattle business promised to be more profitable than the dhow trade, since it became very expensive to maintain them.

During World War II, some of the wealthier Arabs owned dhows and Said Bujra owned four of them. He made a lot of money transporting food stuff from Kenya to Somalia. After the war, he continued to transport mangrove poles in the Lamu area. However, by 1970, he had sold all his dhows due to the high cost of maintaining them - each year a dhow required a major overhaul caulking, and repainting. His son, Ahmed Bujra maintained that the crew of the dhows had become very difficult to control and the dhows made very little profit with the sharp decline of the Indian Ocean dhow trade - that had been caused

by the general modernization of the dhows and the economic development of the Arabian Peninsula as a result of the discovery of petroleum.<sup>83</sup> In fact up to the late 1960's, some Lamu families still owned dhows. Abdullah Bakathir, or Abdullah Kadara as he is popularly known, owned four up to 1964. Kadara used to send these jahazis to trade in India and Southern Arabia, especially Mukalla but he stopped in 1957 because it was no longer profitable to do so.<sup>84</sup> He sold all the four jahaziz and invested in a small hotel on the seafront.

Like most dhow owners, Said Bujra sold his dhows and concentrated on the cattle trade - he used to buy cattle from the Somali traders in the north. At first he sold them in Lamu, then began transporting them to Mombasa on the hoof. He became a major supplier of cattle to the Kenya Meat Commission. In 1966 he bought land at Witu in Lamu district, where he started a cattle ranch, and since then he has been buying cattle from the Somali traders in Wajir, Mandera and Tana River.<sup>85</sup>

Said Bujra opened a retail shop in Lamu town which is known as Bujra stores. This shop supplied provisions and cotton piece goods in Lamu town and during the Mau Mau Emergency, he was the main supplier of food to the Canteen in the town's jail and also to the Hola Detention Camp. He has

now left this business in the hands of his son and is concentrating on the cattle business.

Swaleh Mahdi was also extensively involved in the cattle business in Lamu district. He began the cattle trade with his father from a very early age. He used to travel with his father in the Tana River District and in Somalia where they bought cattle from the Somali traders. He was in the business for over 30 years, buying and selling cattle from the Somali and Orma in the district and transporting them to Mombasa for sale to the Kenya Meat Commission. However, business did not expand and many of his cattle died from foot and mouth disease and there was no veterinary doctor in the area and thus no cattle vaccination against cattle diseases (foot and mouth and East Coast-Fever). He then moved from Lamu to Malindi where he bought a small shamba and a butchery for his sons to run. He retired from all work in 1952 and left his sons to manage the business. His sons were not genuinely interested and they mismanaged the business. Hence, Said Mahdi, once a very wealthy man owned only a small shamba of fruit and a retail shop where second-hand furniture was also sold, when he died in August, 1981.<sup>86</sup>

The most common economic activity among the Hadhramis in Lamu has been the retail business, with over eighty-five per

cent of 152 retail and service establishments found in a northeast-southeast direction parallel to the sea and one street inland passing in front of the fort owned by them. The most numerous retail business in Lamu are the grocery shops, of which about two thirds are owned by Hadhramis, and the rest by Indians and Bajunis. They sell common food products such as rice, spices, tea, coffee, sugar and tinned foods. They are much smaller than the ones found in Malindi and usually only one person works in each. These shops are not specialised and the turnover is almost certainly lower than that of their counterparts in Malindi. In spite of this, most of the people in Lamu earn their living from these retail establishments. This is true for the whole of Lamu District. In Witu, too, there were many retail shops owned by Arabs and Indians. But the Indians left Witu more than twenty-five years ago and the shops have been taken over by Arab and Bajuni traders.<sup>87</sup>

The development of Mombasa as a large urban centre was accompanied by an increase in the size of its population, whose economic needs created many opportunities for those who were alert and ambitious. If a man lacked the means to start a wholesale or indent shop in the town or its vicinity, there were many opportunities to start a small retail shop. Mr. Said Naji, a stock-trader from Tana River District, used to herd his cattle from Bura\* and Golbanti to the coast for sale. He once

saw a European camp at Gongoni, where 100 labourers were working on salt deposits. He was shrewd enough to realise that the labourers would need to be supplied with provisions. In the absence of a retail shop in the area, his application to open up a retail shop there was granted. He went to Mombasa and sold all his cattle, and used the proceeds of the sale to purchase goods for his store at Gongoni. This business was very successful until very many traders moved into Gongoni and opened retail shops. In the face of stiff competition and dwindling profit margins, Najî closed his shop in Gongoni and opened a retail shop at Nafaka on the other side of the Tana River. He also opened another shop in Garsen. His trade goods were salt, sugar, tea, milk, ghee, cotton piece goods of khaki and mariakani, and manufactured articles that could be found in Mombasa, which he bought and resold to the people in Tana River District.<sup>88</sup> However, Said Najî did not stop his business in stock trade. When his sons reached the age of 12 years, he usually left them in the shop with shop assistants. He would buy cattle from the Orma who were his friends. When he bought the stock, he usually left them to the Orma for fattening and safe-keeping till his next trip to the coast, where he sold them to the Hadhrami butchers such as Mbarak bin Gidem and Hassan Sherman.<sup>89</sup> Najî grabbed the economic opportunity which the presence of workers created and started a chain of retail shops in the Tana River District and, later, other business.



For a long time, the Hadhramis in the then "Northern Frontier District" were interested in cattle trade. They bought cattle from the Orma and Somali of the Tana River District and took the cattle to Mambrui for fattening and later sent them to Mombasa for sale. It was a very profitable business for many Hadhramis. The Naji family of Mambrui had been involved in the cattle trade for a very long time. Mr. Ahmed Naji, who is 70 years old, recalls how as a young boy he travelled with his father and older brothers in the Tana River District to buy cattle from the Orma. The journey on foot took them three days to go and three days to return to Mambrui. They bought cows for four or five Shillings, and when they totalled about 100 cows, they would walk to Mombasa, the journey taking them ten days on foot. In Mombasa, the cows were sold according to sizes, the biggest fetched about Shs. 20/-, the medium sized one sold for Shs. 12/- and the small ones for Shs. 7/-.<sup>90</sup>

The Naji family were not only involved in retail and cattle trade, but they also ventured into the public transport business in Tana River District. There was no public service in the area as late as 1958. The late Said Naji, a pioneer in the district, started a public transport which operated three times a week from Mambrui to Garsen and Hola, in a land-rover which he owned. He later bought a bus for twelve passengers.

By 1961, he owned a bus for 45 passengers and operated four times a week from Malindi. Between 1962 and 1966, a second bus was on the route from Mombasa to Hola.<sup>91</sup> By 1970, the Naji family owned 16 buses and the company was known as Tana River Bus Service, which operates along the coast from Mombasa.

The Tana River District attracted Hadhrami immigrants who settled and traded with the indigenous people. The Hadhramis were the pioneers in all kinds of business, be it retail trade, cattle trade or transport. In fact, most of the shops and hotels in the area were owned by Hadhramis. There is a lot of trade links between the towns of Hola, Garissa, Garsen, Malindi and Mombasa. Usually a man opened a shop in one town and, after saving enough, he opened another shop in another town where his son or relative would be left to manage the business. This, however, did create a duplication of business, but the Hadhramis were forced to do so, due to lack of capital and manpower. There was a tendency for the younger generation to carry their fathers trade. Thus, if a man started retail or cattle business it was understood that his sons would do the same, since they learnt the trade from their father and were not trained for any other kind of business. Because they lacked the capital and the know-how, most of them feared ventured into other business in case they became unsuccessful or bankrupt. This, however, does not mean that

there were no entrepreneurs among the Hadhramis. The Naji family were among the pioneers in the District and ventured into all kinds of business.

The activities of the late Sheikh Bayusuf can be cited as an example of another entrepreneur in the districts. When he migrated from Hadhramaut, he first settled in Kismayu where he was involved in the cattle trade. He used to travel very widely in the Northern Frontier District and Tanaland. He used to trade extensively with the Orma and Somali cattle traders. However, he moved out of Kismayu and settled in Garissa after World War I, where he opened a shop after selling cattle in Mombasa and buying the merchandise needed. The retail business proved very successful because there were no shops in Garissa at that time and the facilities he provided were very much needed by the people in the town. It must be noted that the whole commerce of Garissa and Hola was opened for the Hadhramis since there were no Indian traders who ventured into this semi-arid area.

Sheikh Salim Bayusuf became the sole distributor of the essential goods in Garissa. He later opened another shop in Garsen and Hola. Here again, there was the problem of transport in this region, so Sheikh Salim started a transport service from Garissa to Mombasa, passing through Hola and

Garsen. He was the first to start a service for transporting not only passengers but also goods in the whole region.

In fact for a long time, the commerce of Hola and Garissa was in the hands of the Bayusuf family, who were the main distributors of the essential commodities such as cotton piece goods, kerosen, oil, grains and imported manufactured goods.<sup>92</sup>

Sheikh Oman Dahman, whose economic activities we have cited above, was also among the first to start a public transport service in the coast area and the Tana River District. From 1948, he started the service in the area between Malindi and Mombasa, and later up to Lamu and the towns in the Tana River District.

Thus, the above examples illustrate how the Hadhrami have ventured into business that needed a lot of skills, efficiency and reliability. To most Hadhramis, the shop was an expandable unit, and the entrepreneurs who were shrewd, were quick to grab the economic opportunity that presented itself, to venture into more sophisticated business.

So far, we have discussed the economic activities of the Yemeni Arabs living along the coast where most of them settled. This however, does not mean that there were no

Yemenis who settled in the interior of Kenya during the colonial era, and were involved in all kinds of commercial and economic activities. Yemenis are known to have settled, among other places, in Nairobi, Kisumu, Kakamega, Thika, Murang'a, Nakuru, Naivasha, Eldoret, Kajiado and Kitui.<sup>93</sup> But the largest concentration of the Yemenis was found along the coast.

Lika many other cities of Africa, Nairobi is a product purely and simply of colonial rule. In 1899 the railway line, destined to link the port of Mombasa with the rich Kingdom of Buganda had reached a point 327 miles from the coast, roughly on the borders between Kisumu and Maasai country. In 1905 Nairobi was named as the capital of the Protectorate. By then it had, in addition to the railway and administrative offices, a Municipal committee to organise its affairs, an Indian bazaar, a soda water factory, shops and hotels.

One of the first implications of Nairobi's colonial rule was that, in spite of a predominance of Africans in its population from the very beginning, the town was laid out to accommodate a European and Indian population, not an African one. From the very beginning there was a residential segregation, justified by the Simpson Report of 1913, which advocated that ".....in the interest of each community and the healthiness of the locality and country, it is absolutely

essential that in every town and trade centre there should be well defined and separate quarters for Europeans, Asiatics and Africans".<sup>94</sup> The first African settlement of Nairobi grew up spontaneously and outside the orbit of official planning. The largest of them was perhaps Pangani, which according to some accounts, existed before the founding of Nairobi as a transit camp on the caravan route to Uganda. It existed till 1938, when it was demolished to make room for Asian housing. The second village was Mji wa Mombasa, demolished in 1922 along with two smaller villages, and Kaburini.<sup>95</sup> It was recommended that, a "Native Location" should be built in Nairobi for the improvement of the sanitary condition in Nairobi after the outbreak of plague in 1906. It was explicitly anticipated that the establishment of a "native location" would involve a more effective control on Africans in the city; and would go hand in hand with the enforcement of an Ordinance requiring the registration of all adult African men, which had been passed in 1915, but was not put in practice until 1919.

The "native location" was locally known as Majengo buildings - but officially known as Pumwani. Pumwani played many different roles in the social and economic life of the city. It was a place where immigrants moving into Nairobi could find cheap accommodation. Pumwani's population was

ethnically very heterogeneous, with people from every tribe to be found in Kenya, as well as large minorities of Ugandans and Tanzanians. There was a noticeable concentration of Arabs to be found in Pumwani too.

Most of the Hadhrami Arabs who came to settle in Nairobi, did so in Pumwani. This was not due to official planning since they were considered as Asians, but because they lacked any capital to be able to live anywhere else. Pumwani was ideal because it was cheap in all the socio-economic aspects. Some of the Hadhramis in Nairobi started their economic activities in Pumwani. The area attracted a good deal of indigenous entrepreneurial activities because of the existence of a ready-made market for cheap goods and services. There was some ethnic specialization evidence in the economic activity pursued by the different ethnic groups in Pumwani.<sup>96</sup> The Arabs, most of whom originated from Hadhramaut, were mostly either in the restaurant or groceries business.

Local economic enterprise in Majengo did not only bring profit to the entrepreneurs and houseowners, but it also created a good deal of employment for the shop assistants, cooks, water carriers, etc.

To illustrate this, it would suffice to cite the activities of some of the Hadhramis who lived in Pumwani, and were able to expand their economic and commercial enterprise. One such man, was the Late Swaleh Muhsin Shaush, who came from Hadhramaut in the 1920's and lived in Pumwani. He owned shops, restaurants and land in Pumwani. He was one of the wealthiest Arabs in Nairobi and many people were in his employment. In fact it would not be an exaggeration to say that, nearly all the Arabs who came to Nairobi in search of work, somehow ended working for him in one of his establishments in Pumwani.<sup>97</sup> He owned the Riyadhha and Yasmin eating houses in Pumwani and 16 retail shops. Mr. Swaleh Muhsin was in fact the sole distributor of all essential commodities, especially during the wars. Most people interviewed believe that Swaleh Muhsin's wealth was enormous, but he never showed it. Although he was a very rich man in Pumwani, he used to send most of his money to his father in Hadhramaut. In the late fifties, he went to Hadhramaut and stayed for some years leaving his businesses in the hands of his son and his assistants. Unfortunately when he came back, he found that his business was not running well and was facing a lot of problems. The Riyadhha "Hotel" was deep in debt. Yasmin "Hotel" was not bringing any profit and all his good workers had left to work on their own or in other people's employment. He tried to bring the business back to its former position, but he was not able to do so. He died a poor man.



Swaleh Muhsin was a very rich man involved in all kinds of business, but because of mismanagement and the squandering of the accumulated wealth by the younger generation, he ran into bankruptcy. One of his sons, however, tried to save his father's property and managed to keep Yasmin restaurant running.<sup>98</sup>

The activities of another prominent member of the Hadhrami community in Nairobi, the Late Sheikh Ahmen bin Zain can be cited to illustrate how a hard working man was able to save and build a sound business but after his death, the younger generation decided to all go different ways. Sheikh Zain had lived in Nairobi, first in the Old Pangani and, when it was demolished in 1938, in Pumwani. In Pumwani, he owned a restaurant and retail shop. He also owned another retail shop in Shauri Moyo. After many years of saving and hard work, he managed to move out of Pumwani and rented a place on River Road for a small hotel. In 1954, he moved out of Pumwani with his family to live in Eastleigh, near the airport. Sheikh Zain was known in Nairobi as the "father" of all the Arabs, because not only was he an "elder" of the community to whom disputes were referred for arbitration, but he was very kind and helpful to them. He was known to have given shelter and food to those Hadhramis who came to Nairobi in search of work.<sup>99</sup> After his death when, however, his sons decided to go their separate

ways, Lebanon Hotel as it was known was sold, but the retail shop was left to their mother to run. She has rented it to a Bajuni family.

It must be noted that the Yemenis had a tendency to rely on family members to work in their businesses. The reliance on family members was caused by the desire to keep business affairs confidential and to help relatives and kinsmen, rather than foreigners.<sup>100</sup> The pioneers expected their sons to maintain the family business intact and continue the process of capital formation and business expansion with the same degree of thriftiness and industry. However, this was not always the case. Evidence gathered from oral interviews showed that some of the pioneers were disappointed with the way their sons handled the business. Thus most of them preferred to expand in the same line of business.

A couple of case studies will illustrate why some of the businessmen preferred to expand in the same line of business. In Nairobi nearly all the Hadhrami were involved in "hotels" (restaurants), retail establishment, hides and skins or in other people's employment. Hardly any of them owned any land in Nairobi in the early years of colonial rule. After some of them had accumulated enough capital, they bought land, especially along the coast. The Yemenis in Lamu began to buy

the land from the Wangwana, when they sold their land during economic depressions of the 1930's and 1940's. Also, in Malindi and Mombasa, the Yemenis bought land from their Omani counterparts during the time of economic recession at the coast. However, there were others who preferred to rent the land or premises on which they ran their business, and sent money to their relatives back home in Southern Arabia. In Nairobi, most of the Hadhramis were confined to Pumwani but as soon as they accumulated enough wealth, they moved out into the Asian residential areas of Parklands and Eastleigh, where they built their own houses.

Sheikh Salim Ahmed Jeizan came to Kenya in 1934 from Shibam, Hadhramaut. He lived with his older brother in Mombasa for four years, helping him in doing odd jobs here and there. In 1938, he went to Thika to work for Mzee Mbarak Kaskash, who had rented the premises of Bibi Asha Kitui for running it as a "hotel". Salim Jeizan worked for one year in Thika, but then moved to Pumwani to work for Swaleh Muhsin Shaush. He worked in Yasmin Hotel from 1939 to 1951. He worked very hard first as a waiter, but as his employer realised that Salim was a good worker he "promoted" him to the post of cashier. However, Salim worked as a cook, cleaner, waiter/cashier, in fact wherever he was needed. He first started with a salary of Shs. 5/- a month and by 1951 he managed to buy a share in the hotel

as his employer had decided as an incentive for him to work even harder.

Salim Ahmed Jeizan recalled that when he first started working in Yasmin Hotel, the business was being run by Issa-al-Amoody and Ali Muhsin. The whole business for the day was from food cooked of 3 or 4 lbs of beef, about 6 lbs of mutton, about 2 packets of flour, 6 chickens and 3 lbs of rice. They served tea, coffee and soft drinks with mandazi and mbaazi. After working in the "hotel" for four years, the business for just one day had gone up by more than five times.<sup>101</sup> However, there developed a rift between Salim Ahmed Jeizan and his employer because Swaleh Muhsin wanted Salim Jeizan to go and work in his other hotel - Riyadhha. But Salim refused since he had a share in Yasmin Hotel and not Riyadhha Hotel. He felt it was ridiculous for him to leave Yasmin Hotel and therefore he decided to look for another place to work. The opportunity did arise and in 1951, together with Sheikh Ahmed Zain and Mohammed Shebani they jointly rented the premises of an Indian, Aziz Din, to open a hotel in town near River Road, which they named Arab Hotel. However, the building was demolished in 1953, but Salim Ahmed had already bought a share in Hadhramaut Hotel on River Road from Salim Baseif, who was leaving for Uganda. In Hadhramaut Hotel, he was in partnership with Sheikh Omar BathEIF, a Hadhrami Arab from

Mambrui, working for Muhammed Ahmed Musleh as a karani (accountant). Salim Ahmed worked in Hadhramaut Hotel with his partners, but all the while he hoped to own his own hotel. As he lacked the capital to start on his own, he rented premises on River Road from an Indian and opened his own hotel, which he named Yasmin Hotel, since by then he had given up his share in the restaurant in Pumwani.<sup>102</sup>

It must be noted that, the restaurant business was on a small scale and catered largely for the African population in Nairobi. Most of the hotels were situated on River Road or around that area. In fact the area is known by the regular users as "middle east" because of the number of hotels owned by Arabs in the area. The names given to the hotels are also of Arabic origins, for example, Hadhramaut, Three New Aden, Lebanon, Yemen, Al-Mansura, Afro-Arab, Yasmin and Yassin Hotels.

According to most hotel owners interviewed, the feeling that prevailed was that hotel business was very profitable when managed, yet it was very easy to become bankrupt if mismanaged. It is also a very frustrating job, as it is not possible to satisfy every customer but it is very important to keep them happy. There is also a lot of competition since nearly all the hotels owned by Arabs are concentrated in one area.<sup>103</sup>

In Mombasa, restaurants owned by Arabs were concentrated in the Old Town in Mji wa Kale, Bondeni and Majengo areas. These restaurants sprung up to cater for the labourers in the town especially the dock workers. What is even more interesting about these restaurants is that nearly all of them serve the same food and one feels he or she knows them all if one enters any one of them.

In Malindi, most of the restaurants cater for the tourists who flock there. There are only three large restaurants owned by Arabs in Malindi. They are situated right in the middle of the town and run along the same lines as those in Mombasa and serve the same kind of menu. In fact, the variety of food served in most hotels owned by Arabs in all parts of the country is very limited.

Another important commercial activity among the Hadhrami Arabs during the colonial period, was the hides and skins business. The hides and skins business was a leading export of the colony. In 1937, the total value of the hides and skins exported was Shs. 6,007,040/-<sup>104</sup>

In 1925, a total number of 900,000 hides and 11,200 goat skins fetching approximately Shs. 6,600,000/- and 1,500,000/- respectively were shipped from Mombasa.<sup>105</sup> The hides and

skins industry was mainly a native industry, with the Arab and Indian itinerant trader buying the hides and skins from the Africans in the interior and transporting them to Mombasa for export, mainly to Britain. Most of the skins arriving in Lamu came from the Northern Frontier District, the merchants in most cases acting and working as agents of the buyer. The skins arriving in Nairobi and later transported to Mombasa came from Western Province. By the early 1930's the quality of hides and skins deteriorated because of the way there were prepared, and the unscrupulous actions of the traders who added mud and cow dung to the skin before it was completely dried. This had a marked effect on the hides and skins industry, since the spoilt hides and skins were rejected and therefore, reduced revenue. In 1932, the total value of exports was 53,506 cut hides and skins valued at Shs. 1,741,340/- only. The colonial government was alarmed and a government notice, 746/37 Proclamation and Rules and Regulations for the Hides and Skins Improvement Rule, was introduced in September 1932.<sup>106</sup> The rule was introduced as a measure to restore the industry to its past position. The loss in economic value of hides and skins was due to poor methods of preparations and storage of the products. This practice developed because there was a stiff competition between the itinerant Arab traders in the interior. In 1935, H.E. Bader, the Acting Colonial Secretary wrote:

"The competition between the itinerant Arab is so keen as a consequence, that the native producer has every inducement to sell his hides before thorough drying has taken place".<sup>107</sup>

The government tried to stop this practice by introducing the Hides and Skins Improvement and Inspection Rules of 1937, whereby Inspectors were appointed to inspect the hides and skins before they were exported. Hide bandas were built, especially in Lamu, with a view to creating interest in the methods of both sun-dried and shade-dried hides and skins, among the local butchers and other stock owners, so as to produce the desired type of hides and skins. Efforts to control this practice at the roots proved successful. The rules specified that "No trader should buy, sell or offer for sale any hide or skin which, in the opinion of an inspector, is in a condition unfit for storage or shipment owing to incomplete drying".<sup>108</sup> Those interested in the trade were told of the necessity of proper drying methods and were assisted by the government inspectors in improving the quality of the hides for the general benefits of the trade. The government introduced fixed prices for the sun-dried and shade-dried hides and skins. The first grade skin in 1934, fetched Shs. 4.50 per frasila for the sun-dried and Shs. 20.50 for the shade dried, while the fourth grade fetched, Shs. 50 for both sun-dried hides and skins.<sup>109</sup> In 1937, the total value of export of hides and skins rose tremendously. It shot



up to Shs. 6,007,040/- from Shs. 1,741,340/- in 1932.

The hides and skins business was a very important trade activity for many Yemeni Arabs in Kenya. Mohammed Ahmed Musleh, was the most important man in the business for a long time in Nairobi. Most of the others involved in this trade were at one time working for him. He owned a warehouse in the industrial area. His brother used to travel all over the country collecting hides and skins from as far as Wajir, Marsabit and Kikuyu country and from the Somali cattle traders. He used to export the commodity to U.K. and Cairo, where he had his own agents. From the hides and skins business, he opened retail shops in Wajir, Moyale and Marsabit and became the sole distributor of the essential commodities. In fact, he became the government agent for the essential commodities during the wars. He also opened a restaurant on River Road called Yemen Hotel. However, the retail business did not do very well and he had to abandon his shops in Northern Kenya. However, the Yemeni Hotel and the hides and skins business were very successful right up to the late 1960's. The late Muhammed Ahmed Musleh, was a pioneer in the business of hides and skins. In fact all the people involved in this business worked for him before they worked on their own. Business men such as the late Muhammed Abdallah and Abdul

Wadoud were in his employment before they moved out on their own. Later on, Mohammed Abdallah and Abdul Wadoud became the most important dealers in hides and skins.<sup>110</sup>

Along the coast there were many people involved in the hides and skins business. Most of the people involved in the cattle trade were involved in the trade. Even the jahazi owners were involved in the trade - exporting hides and skins to different ports in the Indian Ocean and especially to Somalia. It was a very profitable business for many of the traders.

In 1950, some of the Arab traders in the hides and skins business felt threatened by government measures. The Arabs in Western Province asked the Secretary of the Arab Reform Association which was formed in 1937, to look into the matter since the majority of them relied on the hides and skins trade for their livelihood.<sup>111</sup> The Secretary of the Arab Reform Association wrote to the President of the Central Arab Association, who was also the Arab elected member of the Legislative Council, Sharif Mohammed Shatry, to request the government not to impose any control or restrictions "affecting prejudicially the Arab traders."<sup>112</sup> The Arab traders felt that they were the ones who had given a great impetus to the hides and skins trade and that their "predecessors gave

tremendous sacrifices to develop this trade and the economic development of the colony."<sup>113</sup>

The traders were however assured by the government that, as long as they abided by the Hides and Skins Improvement and Inspection Rules of 1937 <sup>114</sup> and worked towards the improvement of the trade, the government would not impose any control or restrictions on the Arab traders.

It would be in order to discuss the "informal sector". As was rightly emphasised by the recent International Labour Office Report on Kenya, "it is stagnant, non-dynamic and a net for the unemployment and for the thinly veiled-idleness into which those who cannot find formal wages jobs must fall."<sup>115</sup> The term "informal sector" has been adopted here to refer to the economic activities of the people who would not fall into such official categories as "paid labourers" or "licenced and registered traders". It must be noted that many Yemeni Arabs depended on the "informal sector" for their livelihood during the early years of colonial rule. Their activities were characterized by the smallness of scale, simple technology and meagre capital. The sector includes petty traders, street hawkers, coffee-sellers or tembo (beer) sellers, masons, carpenters, tailors, carriers of water, Hamali, etc. Very often these people were self-employed and plied their crafts and wares illegally.

The study of this sector is important because the economic activities of this type were a source of livelihood for a significant number of Hadhramis who came to settle in Kenya as a migrant-labour group. There were many involved in street hawking, selling cotton piece goods in various parts of Mombasa Island and Nairobi city.<sup>116</sup> Coffee sellers are seen going around in the streets of Mombasa carrying large brass coffee pots clapping two porcelain cups together to attract customers. Coffee sellers could only be found along the coast where the tradition of drinking coffee at any time during the day is associated with Arabic culture. Hadhramis were also involved in hamali work in the ports of Mombasa, hauling goods from the port to the warehouse. Hadhramis were known as the suppliers of water in the Old Town, carrying water in debes (tins) from the water kiosks to the houses, especially in the Old Town of Mombasa since the houses did not have tap water, and selling a debe for five cents. Some sold fruits in small street stalls, a sight still common today. However, this was not confined to Hadhramis only. A number of Africans and Swahili also derived their livelihood from this type of economic activities.

Finally, a word or two about Hadhrami women in the informal sector, because hardly any of them were involved in any kind of economic activity that took place out of their

houses. Women were generally not required to work, especially if they were from the higher strata in the society. It was the duty of the men in the family to provide for them. However, not all the Hadhramis were well-to-do. Their women worked at home and made handicrafts which they gave their men to sell; they cooked food that was sold; either given to their children to sell on the streets or sent to a Hadhrami shop to be sold. According to a male correspondent writing in 1931, Arab women were selling food at Mwenbe Tayari "to help their husbands and support children."<sup>117</sup> Some Hadhrami women worked as teachers at home, teaching women and children the Quran.

Thus, the informal sector consisted of a wide range of activities carried out by individuals with meagre capital, if any at all, and a limited technology. For some individuals, it was the only means of survival, for others, a weapon for achieving a better standard of living. Also, a large number of the population in this sector pursued their activities within severe constraints imposed by the laws.

From the foregoing discussion about the Hadhrami involved in the economic development of Kenya during the colonial period, it would be in order to try and highlight the most important factors that had an advantage or disadvantage towards their development. Firstly, the Hadhramis came to settle in

East Africa to look for a "better life". They came as a migrant-labour group with no capital and no skills in any kind of economic and commercial activities. They had to work their way from scratch, with very little outside help apart from friends or relatives. Most of them had to start from money extended to them by well-wishers or money lenders. The whole edifice of trade and commerce rested on the credit system. Availability of credit was vital to the trade because most of the Hadhramis who carried out the distribution of goods had very limited capital resources and depended on the existence of cheap credit. The Arabs were not as organized as the Indian merchants or the European firms in making credit available to their fellow Arabs, since they hardly possessed any capital for themselves. Every one had to work for himself. Very often Hadhrami traders would pool their meagre resources together in order to finance the importation of goods from outside or start a business in retail establishments or wholesale business. The success or failure of this type of credit terms that was loose and on easy terms depended on a quick turn-over of trade. the trader had to be quick to unload the merchandise with speed on the market in order to reduce his other costs and be able to get the money to pay his creditors in good time. He did not wish to spoil his relationship with them in case he needed to ask for more credit. Most Hadhrami traders did ask for credit from the Indian traders at very high interests. Some of the

Hadhramis interviewed had very bitter memories about the Indian money lenders who they claimed "cheated and swindled them."<sup>118</sup>

The Arabs were placed in a different position vis-a-vis the Indian trader because the government encouraged and helped the Indians in all their economic enterprises. The Indians were given loans from the banks to enable them to import from outside. Also, the fact that the Hadhramis never went to school or for any training of any kind was a great disadvantage in their economic endeavours. They had to rely on the Indian trader's good will and trust.

The greatest asset the Hadhrami Arabs had in their economic pursuits was their ability to work hard and live very modestly and consequently possessed a high propensity to save and thereby contributed to capital formation.

Their ability to cultivate a healthy relationship with the local inhabitants in their daily transactions was a fillip to their economic development, especially in the interior. Many Hadhramis are known to have married African women and established good relations for trade.

The Hadhrami Arabs were involved in all kinds of economic and commercial activities in Kenya, but it would be misleading

to depict them as a powerful economic block, for they lacked as much capital as Indian and European merchants and firms had in order to enter more sophisticated and lucrative sectors of the commercial system. Nevertheless, a consideration of their economic status vis-a-vis other Arabs and Africans, shows that the Yemenis presented a noteworthy competition to the Indian trader. Lack of capital in the early years of colonial rule stopped them from moving into sophisticated and more ambitious economic activities.

However, a significant number of them emerged as successful retail traders not only in Mombasa, but in the rural areas, along the coast and up-country. However, by the turn of the 20th century, the really wealthy constituted a very tiny minority.<sup>119</sup> A number of them became owners of landed property which was used to earn rent, while some invested their capital in such enterprise as the pressing of oil. For example, in 1917, there were seven establishments in Mombasa, comprising 23 presses and producing oil by camel power, all of them owned by Hadhramis.

Let us now emphasise the main arguments and conclusions of this chapter. The Hadhrami Arabs came to settle in Kenya as a migrant-labour group. They worked in all kinds of menial jobs wherever they could find one. Many secured their livelihood



from the informal sector that developed with the growth of urban centres in Kenya, especially in Mombasa and Nairobi. Most of them lacked any capital to start any business without any help from relatives and friends. All of them had to work their way from scratch and save enough to enable them to better themselves compared to the rest of the community.

Mombasa, by the turn of the century had become the most important entrepot in the East African region and continued to play an important economic role. It emerged as the centre of trade. Many Hadhramis started their economic activities in Mombasa and managed to expand their businesses from Mombasa into the interior right up to western Kenya and beyond in Uganda.

The economic system of Mombasa with its bazaars, the credit system, lack of specialization and competition acted as an incentive for the Hadhramis to work harder and be able to improve their economic status. They were involved in retail trade, wholesale trade, restaurants, cattle trade, hides and skins. Many who could not, worked as labourers and water sellers. The Hadhrami's ability to work for very small profit margins and their high propensity to save contributed to capital formation and enable them to enter more lucrative economic and commercial sectors in the country. It would

however be misleading to depict the Hadhramis as a powerful economic block, for they lacked as much capital and the technical know-how as the Asians. At the same time it should not be overlooked that many of them were the first to travel in the interior. They introduced the money economy, although it was the Indian trader who played the bigger role in spreading it. Hadhramis were important middlemen in the commercial system in Kenya, as well as East Africa as a whole. Together with the Indian traders, they played a very important part in the commercial affairs of the Protectorate. In all the leading towns and districts, they were very firmly established.

From the evidence gathered, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the Yemeni's involvement in the economic and commercial activities in Kenya was mostly in the retail trade, "hotel" business, petty-trading and retail shops. In fact, most of them could be placed in the "informal sector". Even if a man expanded his business, chances were he would open the same business in another town or in another area. This was due to the fact that they initially lacked the capital and the technical know-how. For them, it was easier to expand in the same line of business than it was to risk all their savings in a different business. But this is not to say that some of them were not brave enough to venture into other businesses.

Documentary and oral evidence shows that the majority of these Yemeni traders had no great tales of prosperity to tell. The majority of the Yemenis in the commercial sector were small traders or duka-wallas (shopkeepers), who had limited capital at their disposal and who had to be content with very small profit margins. Given the small profit margins, it is not surprising that for most of the Yemeni traders, it took time before they could embark on an expansion of their business activities. During the course of the early colonial period, therefore, the Yemeni traders had carried trade to the remotest parts of Kenya and East Africa as a whole, most of them being engaged in it on a small scale. It would not be exaggeration to say that the Yemeni petty-trader, like his Asian counterpart, contributed to greater local production in various areas, and thereby set in motion the whole process of modern development in the countryside. These small traders were reported successful because they could live and travel very cheaply. Their ability to have and live on small profit margins enable them to venture into more sophisticated business. The freedom of enterprise generally allowed them to expand their historic commercial activities along the coast, into the interior and provided opportunities for the new immigrants to follow the old trail of trade established by the earlier immigrants.

Meanwhile, their economic role in Kenya was to steadily expand during the colonial period especially after World War II, where both the population and their enterprise increased greatly. Their businesses of petty-trading was gradually transformed into larger business undertakings during this time.

The wealthier Yemenis did invest quite a substantial amount of their money in property and land. A handful of them eventually bought land at the coast, while others invested in real estate. However, it would be naive to deny that Yemenis did repatriate some of their earnings to Southern Arabia, although with the absence of any statistics it is impossible to determine the exact percentage of the repatriated profit. Some members of the commercial community confessed, that they did send money to their families and relatives back home, since they depended on remittances from East Africa and the Far East, a tradition that had been going on for as far back as people can remember. On the other hand, a substantial proportion of their profits were invested in land, real estate and other enterprises. Reference has already been made to Yemeni retailers who were ploughing back their profit in businesses and branching out into wholesale and other enterprises.

No one can deny that Yemeni traders who owned property made a significant contribution to modern urban development in

colonial Kenya. At the same time, the labour contributed by the Yemeni population to this development must not be over-looked. The Yemeni labourers contributed a significant part of the labour force that helped in the construction of the modern port at Kilindini; they formed part of the labour force that helped in the smooth running of the Old Port and the Kilindini Harbour; they also helped in the functioning of secondary industries, and other amenities. Since the survival of the whole commercial system depended on a large efficient labour force, it is not an exaggeration to say that the Yemeni Arabs contributed a lot towards the survival and development of the economic system in Mombasa and Kenya as a whole.

FOOTNOTES

1. For more details on the early connection between East Africa and Southern Arabia, see beginning of my work, Chapter 1. See also, Chittick, H.N. and Rotberg (eds.) East Africa and the Orient: Cultural Synthesis in Pre-Colonial Times. London, 1975.
2. C.S. Nicholls, The Swahili Coast, Diplomacy and Trade on the East African Littoral 1798-1856. London, 1979, p. 74.
3. Ibid., p. 75
4. For details of the description of Swahili boats, see Nichols, op.cit., pp. 75-78. C.H. Stigard, The land of Zanj. London, 1913. Chapter VII, and KNA/ DC/LMU/3/1 Lamu Political Records, Vol. 1.
5. A.I. Salim, The Swahili-Speaking Peoples of Kenya's Coast: 1895-1963. Nairobi, 1973, p. 100.
6. Unless otherwise stated all the subsequent information on the decline of the economic system at the coast is found in Salim op. cit., Chapter 3 "Economic Decline 1895-1925", pp. 100-138.
7. For a detailed analysis of the Asians in East Africa, see J.S. Mangat, A History of the Asians in East Africa: C 1886-1945. London, 1969. D.P. Ghai and Y.P Ghai (eds.) Potrait of a Minority: Asians in East Africa. Nairobi, 1970.
8. E.A. Brett, Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa: The Politics of Economic Change 1919-1939. London, 1973, p. 17. For more details on the colonial economic policies in Kenya, see N. Swainson, The Development of Corporate Capitalism in Kenya 1919-1977. London, 1980.  
  
Van Zwanenburg, Colonial Capitalism and Labour in Kenya 1919-1939. Nairobi, 1975.
9. For details on racial antagonism in Kenya, see C.G. Rosberg Jr. and J. Nottingham. The Myth of "Mau Mau": Nationalism in Kenya, New York. 1970. G. Bennett, Kenya: A Political History: The Colonial Period. London, 1963.
10. Salim, op.cit., p. 135.
11. Ibid.

12. KNA PC/COAST/1/1/165 "Coast Native Trade".
13. KNA PC/COAST/1/1/165 "Coast Native Trade 1921-1923". Senior Commissioner's Report. 11/5/1923.
14. KNA PC/COAST/1/1/436A. Mombasa District Annual Report 1923. p. 9.
15. R.E. Stren, Housing the Urban Poor in Africa: Policy, Politics, and Bureaucracy in Mombasa. Barkely, 1978. p. 31.
16. M.A. Hinawy, Al-Akida and Fort Jesus Mombasa. Nairobi, 1970 (second edition), p. 36. Also see, Chapter 2 below, on the discussion of the relationship between the Yemeni Arabs and their Omani counter-parts.
17. For instance the Lebanese in West Africa, the Chinese in South East Asia and the Asians in East Africa.
18. KNA/PC/COAST/1/19/126. "Dhow Trade Lamu 1921-1923"  
KNA/COAST/1/1/165 "Dhow Native Trade 1921-1923".
19. KNA PC/COAST/1/1/436 Annual Districts Reports.  
Vol. 5, 1923, p. 9.
20. KNA PC/COAST/1/9/42 "Hamals Labour Bureau" Registration of Port Labourers. Letter to the Provincial Commissioner, Mombasa from the Port Labour Registration Office, 5/12/1916.
21. Ibid. Meeting of Port Labour Committee 19/12/1916.
22. Ibid. Letter from Provincial Commissioner Mombasa to District Commissioner 15/4/1916.
23. KNA PC/COAST/1/5/5 "Hamali Carts not to be allowed to pass Vasco Da Gama Street Mombasa 1916". Also see file KNA PC/COAST/1/110/145 "Hamali Carts" on correspondence regarding the regulations of hiring hamali labourers.
24. Ibid. Chairman, Mombasa Chambers of Commerce to Provincial Commissioner Mombasa 12/7/1916.
25. Ibid. Port Labour Registration Office: Statistics for November.
26. For a detailed study of Mombasa's commercial expansion, see K.K. Janmohammed Ph.D., Thesis "A History of Mombasa, 1895-1939. Some Economic and Social Aspects of an East African Port Town During Colonial Rule". North-western University, 1977.

27. Ibid., p. 358.
28. KNA PC/COAST/2/12/29 "Immigration Policy 1937-43".
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid. The Official figures are 11 Hadhrami's and one Luo dead. However, oral interviews conducted at Mombasa reveal that the number of dead Luos was more than the official figures given in the records.
31. Ibid. Letter from J. Douglas McKean, Mombasa District Commissioner, to Coast Provincial Commissioner, 22/9/1937.
32. Ibid. Also see Chapter 2 above, on the problems that developed after this policy was introduced by the colonial government. The policy did not succeed in restricting the Yemeni immigrants from coming to Kenya.
33. Ibid. Letter from Secretariat, Nairobi to the Coast Provincial Commissioner, 31/8/1943.
34. Report on the non-Native Census. Enumeration made in the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya 1931.
35. Janmohammed, op. cit., p. 116.
36. E.B. Martin, C.R. Martin, The Cargoes of the East. The Ports, Trade and Culture of the Arabian Sea and Western Indian Ocean. London, 1978, p. 44.
37. Ibid.
38. KNA PC/COAST/1/19/126 "Dhow Trade Lamu 192101923" District Commissioner Lamu to Senior Commissioner, 3/8/1921. The florin currency "fls" was valued at 2 shillings a florin.
39. Oral interview (hence forth O.I.) Sharif Abdulrahman Shatry 8th January, 1981.
40. Mr. Awadh, who is the son of the late Swaleh Sherman, is at the moment the Managing Director of all the businesses owned by the family of the late Swaleh Sherman. They have now diversified their business from selling second hand cars to road building and contracting, transporting, ranching, mining; and are also agents for distributing petroleum. In addition they won a considerable amount of land both on the Island and the mainland. The road on which their present business is situated has been named



"Swaleh Nguru Road" after the pioneer who is remembered by many of the older members of the community, both Arabs and Africans as "a very generous and helpful man who was always there when his services for religious and communal activities were needed." This was the opinion of most of the older members of the community of Mombasa.

41. See Chapter 4 below, pp. 280-287, on the biography of Sharif Muhammed Shatry and his activities as the Arab elected member of the Legislative Council and as president of the Central Arab Association.
42. O.I. Sharif Abdulrahman Shatry, 8th January, 1981.
43. Martin and Martin. The Cargoes of the East. p. 70.
44. KNA. DC/LMU/2/30/7. "Trade with Occupied Territory 1924-1944".
45. Ibid.
46. O.I. Abdallah Kadara, 4th February, 1981.
47. KNA DC/LMU/2/30/7. "Trade with the Occupied Territory 1924-1944." And DC/LMU/2/30/4. Trade and Customs: Import and Export Duties."
48. For more details of the treatment of Arabs by the colonial administrations, especially with regard to the applications of the ordinances, see A.I. Salim "Native or Non-Native". The problem of social-stratification of the Arab-Swahili of Kenya, in B.A. Ogot (ed.) History and Social Change in East Africa, Nairobi, 1976, pp. 65-85.
49. P. Marris and A. Somerset, African Businessman: A Study of Entrepreneurship and Development in Kenya. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1971, pp. 1-2.
50. Janmohammed, op.cit., p. 130.
51. For such comments, see about the Indian traders, Marris and Somerset op. cit., and Janmohammed op. cit.
52. Janmohammed op. cit., p. 135.
53. O.I. Sheikh Abubakar Zubedi 2nd December, 1980.
54. Ibid.

55. Ibid. O.I. Abdallah Said Zubedi 13th January, 1981. According to Abdallah Zubedi, the family worked together as one unit. One of Sheikh Abubakar's sons, after studying in England, stayed in Hong Kong as an agent for his father supplying the goods needed. Another son lived in Nairobi sending goods to Sudan, but now has an office in Mombasa. Currently, he is building a factory for processing coffee and tea. They have also invested in a tourist agency in Mombasa. The family exports coffee to Europe and Arabia, and are now embarking on exporting coffee to Arabia. They also supply the local hotels and leading supermakets with tea and coffee.
56. Mahra, are a district group of Arabs who are found around the Mahra Mountains on the eastern side of Hadhramaut, in the People's Democratic Republic of South Yemen. Although they are Arabs, they speak a different language from the arabs. Their language is distinctly not Arab although all their other customs are similar to the Hadhramis and they are Muslims.
57. Janmohammed, op. cit., p. 121.
58. E.B. Martin, The History of Malindi, A Geographical Analysis of an East African Town from the Portuguese Period to the Present. Nairobi 1977, p. 90.
59. Salim, op. cit., p. 26 and p. 116.
60. Ibid. Chapter III "Economic Decline 1895-1925" discusses the economic decline of Malindi District.
61. Martin, op. cit., pp. 224-230.
62. Ibid. p. 230.
63. KNA DC/MAL/1/1/1981 - 1919 Malindi District Annual report 1919.
64. KNA DC/MAL/1/2/1924 Malindi District Report 1924.  
  
For more details and the names of the trading centres, see KNA DC/MAL/1/2/1924.
65. O.I. Sheikh Oman Bin Dahman al-Amoody 25th January, 1981.
66. Ibid.

67. D.P. Ghai "An Economic Survey" in D.P. Ghai and Y.P. Ghai (eds.) Portrait of a Minority: Asian in East Africa. 1970, p. 100.
68. Kenya Government Census, 1969.
69. O.I. Sheikh Taib 15th January, 1981.  
  
the Kenya Pipe Line was constructed from Mombasa Port to Nairobi to transport petroleum oil. This pipe line put many oil transporters out of business.
70. Salim, op. cit., p. 23.
71. A.M. El-Zein, The Sacred Meadows: Structural Analysis of Religious Symbolism in an East African Town. Illinois, 1974, p. 88.  
  
Also see Chapter 2, above on the socio-cultural history of the Yemeni Arabs in Kenya, especially on the discussion of the social stratification of the Yemenis in Southern Arabia.
72. For a detailed analysis of the "Wangwana Ideology", see al-Zein op. cit.
73. Ibid., p. 89 and p. 93.
74. KNA DC/LMU/1/8. Lamu Annual report 1957.
75. A.H.J. Prins Sailing from Lamu. 1957.
76. KNA DC/LMU/2/30 "Trade with Occupied Territory 1924-1944".
77. KNA DC/LMU/1/8 op.cit.
78. Such words of encouragement can be found in the various Annual Reports for the districts and especially, KNA PC/COAST/1/1/165 and KNA DC/LMU/2/307.
79. Ibid. This file contains import licences for trade between Lamu and Kismayu, with the names of the traders and the goods imported or exported.
80. KNA DC/MSA/1/3 Mombasa District Annual Report, 1923.
81. Commander Lawford built a hotel in the early 1930's and by 1934, he was the first to develop the dairy industry in Malindi.

82. O.I. Mr. Said Bujra 7th February, 1981. He owned four dhows but in 1973 he had sold all of them.
83. O.I. Mr. Ahmed Bujra, 4th February, 1981.
84. O.I. Mr. Abdallah Kadara, 4th February, 1981.
85. O.I. Mr. Said Bujra, 4th February, 1981.
86. O.I. Mr. Swaleh Mahdi, 27th February, 1981.
87. O.I. Mr. Omar Atik, 7th February, 1981.
88. O.I. Mr. Mansoor Najji, 27th February, 1981.
89. Ibid.
90. O.I. Mr. Ahmed Najji, 29th February, 1981.
91. O.I. Mr. Mansoor Najji, 27th February, 1981.

By 1968 the younger members of the Najji family started a farm, Mjanaheri Farm because they did not like the father's tradition of buying and keeping cattle with their Orma friends for fattening. So they bought a 75 acre piece of land to keep their cattle. By April, 1979 they had 5,000 acres of land. They have 120 high grade cattle and milking is done twice a day. They also keep poultry for tender meat and supply the local hotels in Malindi with eggs and chicken meat. Mjanaheri Farm is the only Hadhrami cattle farm in Malindi District.

92. O.I. Mohammed Bayusuf, 2nd December, 1980.

Mr. Mohammed Bayusuf, the son of the Late Sheikh Bayusuf, who is the Managing Director of Bayusuf Transporters, moved to Mombasa where he established the head-office with branches in Nairobi and Garissa. The reason for moving to Mombasa was the fact that, Mombasa had developed into a major port of East Africa and a lot of goods needed to be transported to the other parts of the country and it was a better place for the development of the company. Moving to Mombasa enabled the company to develop to its full capacity, as opposed to Garissa where it would not have had as many goods to transport.

They transport all kinds of goods throughout Kenya and across to Uganda, Sudan and Burundi. The Bayusuf Transporters now own over 100 transporting vehicles and employ 400 people. The family still owns retail shops in Garissa, Hola and Garsen. They have invested in cattle-ranching in Tana River District.

Another important transporting agency in Nairobi is Mohammed Taib Enterprises owned and managed by Sheikh Mohammed Taib. They are an agency of petroleum transportation within Kenya and to Zaire, Sudan, Rwanda and Burundi. The petroleum is mostly transported to farmers in the Rift Valley. Mohammed Taib Enterprise is also an import/export agency. Sheikh Mohammed Taib first started retail business to Saudi Arabia where the idea of expanding into the present business first occurred to him. It was in 1958 that he started the present business. O.I. Mr. Mohammed A. Taib, 10th November, 1981.

93. Kenya Government Census 1969, 10th November, 1980.
94. W.J. Simpson, Report on Sanitary Matters in the East Africa Protectorate, Uganda and Zanzibar. 1913.
95. Kenya Land Commission: Evidence and Memorandum Vol. 1 pp. 1164 and 1124. Also cited in Janmohammed op. cit.
96. For a detailed study of Pumwani, see J.M. Bujra "Pumwani" The Politics of Property. A study of an Urban Renewal Scheme in Nairobi, Kenya. Report on a research Project sponsored by the Social Science Council pp. 26-49.
97. O.I. Mr. Salim Ahmed Jeizan, 5th March 1981. This is also the opinion of most of the Arabs in Nairobi, and people who have worked for him.
98. Ibid.
99. Ibid. Also Chapter 4 below, pp. 264-270, on the role of the Muqaddam in the Yemeni Society in Kenya.
100. O.I. Mr. Salim Ahmed Jeizan, 5th March 1981.
101. Ibid.
102. Ibid. This was the sentiment expressed by the Arab owners in Nairobi.
103. KNA PC/COAST/2/9/9 "Specific Trade and Industries 1928-1939".
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid. A Memorandum on the Hides and Skins Trade in East Africa.

106. Ibid.
107. Ibid.
108. Ibid.
109. O.I. Mr. Salim Ahmed Jeizan 5th March 1981.
110. KNA PC/NZA/3/1/349. Letter from Arab Reform Association, Kisumu to Sharif Mohammed Shatry, President of Central Arab Association, Mombasa 10th October, 1950.
111. Ibid. See Chapter 4 below, pp. 279-303, on the political activities of the Yemeni Arabs in Colonial Kenya.
112. Ibid.
113. KNA PC/COAST/2/9/9 Circular Letter 1/12/1/7.
114. International Labour Report on Kenya 1972, Employment, Incomes and Equality: A Strategy for Increasing Production Employment in Kenya. Geneva, 1972, p.5.
115. One prominent member of the Hadhrami community started as a hawker in Mombasa, selling cotton piece goods, and is now one of the most prosperous family in Mombasa.
116. Quoted from Janmohammed op. cit., p. 177.
117. O.I. Sheikh Abubakar Zubedi and Mr. Said Gohran.
118. Salim, op. cit., p. 135.
119. Janmohammed, op. cit., p. 182.

C H A P T E R 4

YEMENI POLITICAL ACTIVITIES: 1900 - 1965

On December 12, 1963 Kenya became an Independent African State after more than 70 years of British colonial rule. The discussion in the following pages will deal with general nature, organization and content of Arab-Swahili politics,<sup>1</sup> in the early years; the emergency and development of Yemeni political activities, especially after the Second World War, and the last two decades of political consciousness before independence. It is the aim of this chapter to study the Yemeni involvement in politics in colonial Kenya, to try and record their reaction to the political changes that took place in Kenya during the second half of the colonial period in the manner that European, African and Indian reactions have been recorded.

A British Protectorate over the territory between Uganda and the coast was proclaimed at Mombasa on July 1st, 1895. A.H. Hardinge, Her Majesty's Agent and Consul General at Zanzibar, announced that he was taking over in the name of the British Government, "the administration of colony as far as Kikuyu and the whole coast from Vanga and Kismayu."<sup>2</sup> The agreement between Great Britain and Zanzibar was signed on 14th

December 1895, by the Sultan of Zanzibar and the British Government, whereby the coast was to be linked with the British sphere of influence to form a British East Africa Protectorate. The British Government became responsible for administering the Protectorate, "although the Sultan's nominal suzerainty was maintained."<sup>3</sup>

After this agreement, the Liwali, Kadhis and Akidas and other muslim officers of the traditional Muslim administration, became responsible to the British Government. However, the Arabs and Swahilis were assured a special position in the new administration which A.H. Hardinge established. His sympathetic understanding of the Islam and Muslims, after working in Muslim capitals, influenced his policy towards them in East Africa.<sup>4</sup> He was aware of the losses of political power and prestige which the Arabs had lost through the establishment of colonial rule.

A.H. Hardinge resisted any immediate measures to abolish slavery since he was aware that any such measures would be "materially and morally harmful to the freed slaves and that it would also retard pacification at the coast."<sup>5</sup> The British were still at this juncture trying to bring the whole coastal area under their effective control. Desultory fighting was still continuing in the Sultanate of Witu and by the Mazrui



Arabs at Takaungu. The Sultan of Witu, Fumo Bakari, defied the authority of the Sultan of Zanzibar, when in August 1890, the anti-slavery decree was published. Trouble broke out in Witu and a force of 1000 men were sent to Witu by the British so as to eliminate all the "vestiges" of local hegemonies on the coast" which had defied the Sultan's authority. Fumo Bakari died a fugitive in 1891, but his successor Fumo Omari also "rebelled" against the Sultan's authority, so the British Government decided to take over the administration of Witu "in the name of the Sultan of Zanzibar." Fumo Omari submitted to the British in 1894 and was exiled for life to Zanzibar.<sup>6</sup>

The Mazrui "rebellion" was led by Mbaruk bin Rashid bin Salim al-Mazrui, some of the last Mazrui independent ruler of Mombasa. The revolt was caused by a problem of succession to the post of Liwali. In 1895 trouble brewed in the semi-independent township of Takaungu after the death of Salim bin Khamis. The Imperial British East Africa Company (I.B.E.A. Co.) chose Rashid bin Salim as successor. However, this appointment was challenged by Mbarak, Rashid's cousin and a nephew of the older Mbaruk. Mbarak regarded himself as the rightful successor. He announced Rashid's authority and retired to Gonjora and took refuge with his uncle Mbaruk in Gazi. The British Government came out in full force to suppress the Mazrui uprising of Mbaruk and his nephew. In 1896

with a strong reinforcement that arrived from India, Mbaruk and his followers fled and secured asylum in German East Africa. Thus, after the defeat of Mbaruk in March 1896, the coastal people of the British East Africa Protectorate had to accept British domination.<sup>7</sup>

Given the mood then prevailing, A.H. Hardinge had to use "tact and diplomacy while dealing with the Arabs at the coast", by granting them a special position in the administration of the protectorate. As a way of compensation, Hardinge set out a deliberate policy of appointing the Arabs as key figures in the administration of the coast and its hinterland. He argued that young Arabs and Swahilis should be trained in judicial and administrative work and stated,

"I would endeavour by this means to enlist the rising generations of Arabs and Swahilis (of the better class) on the service of the government and whose interests with ours would thus become identified and so gradually create throughout the territory a body of men which could serve as a useful intermediary between the British rule and the native population."<sup>8</sup>

Thus, because of his policies, there emerged at the coast an administrative run by both the Arabs and the British administrators. For example, there developed two types of courts: the courts of the Liwalis, Mudirs and Kadhis, and those under the Europeans.

Before the advent of the colonial rule, the original inhabitants of Mombasa town, the Three Tribes - Thelatha Taifa - of the Kilindini and the Nine Tribes - Tissa Taifa - of the Mvita, which constituted the Twelve Tribes - Thenaashara Taifa - were recognised by Seyyid Said. By signing a number of treaties or charters with the heads of each Taifa, known as a Tamim, he not only granted the Tamims political freedom against interference from his own Liwalis, but also granted him a subsidy and extensive authority over his Mataifa. The Sultanate of Zanzibar also acknowledged the long-established alliance between the Twelve Tribes and the Mijikenda tribes, whereby leaders of the Swahili tribes acted as their agents. However, this alliance lasted until the early years of colonial rule, when the colonial administration declined to accept the autonomy of the Thenaashara Taifa on the grounds that the treaties signed were vague. This did not only rob the Swahili of their due recognition, but it was the beginning of their total eclipse and future grievances against the colonial government and the Arabs.<sup>9</sup>

The Arabs administrators at the coast, before 1895, were direct representatives of the Sultan of Zanzibar. There was no elaborate system of administration or a code of regulations evolved as long as the Liwalis and Kadhis maintained law and

order and collected revenues from the custom's dues. Their duties were not clearly distinguished or defined.<sup>10</sup> After the imposition of colonial rule, the Liwalis<sup>11</sup> at the coast were given the powers of a second class magistrate although their European counterparts, the District Officers were given some basis of seniority. The Kadhis, the Chief muslim judges, worked with the Liwalis. Infact, the first Chief Kadhi or Sheikh al-Islam, Sharif Abdul Rehman was appointed in 1898.<sup>12</sup> Under the colonial rule, the Swahili elders were recognised as wazee (sing. mzee) among the Swahilised and Islamised populations and the Swahili tribes of Mombasa, the Thenaashara Taifa. The duties relegated to the wazee were very minor and no government pay was attached to the office, but because of the prestige attached to the office, it attracted many aspirants.

In spite of his efforts, A.H. Hardinge's vision of Arab officers and administrators beyond the coast was never fulfilled due to a number of reasons. The Arab population, disillusioned and many impoverished, showed little if any enthusiasm for the administration responsible for their economic and political decline. Coupled with this, his successor, were less enthusiastic about the rule of Arab administrators, especially away from the coast. Thus by 1904, all attention was turned inland, away from the coast, with

plans to make the government and the railway pay through taxation and the development of the country's natural resources. C. Eliot actively encouraged white settlement in the highlands and talked about the "paramountcy of white interests."<sup>13</sup>

From then onwards, the colonial government became engrossed in executing its plans for European colonization and the extension of British authority, so that the hut tax collecting could be more efficient as an indirect stimulus for the agricultural labour required by the European farmers.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the coast began to be neglected and Arabs' role as administrators led to the introduction of the Legislative Council (Legco) in 1907 with seven officials and three non-official members - all Europeans.

The interests of the Indians, Arabs and Africans were however not to be entirely overlooked. A.C. Hollis was appointed as a Commissioner of Native Affairs, whose duties were not only to care for the contentment of the "natives", but also to "devise ways and means of supplying badly-needed labour for government departments and for private industrial and agricultural concern."<sup>15</sup> At this appointment, the Indian community sent a strong representation to the Colonial Office, to have a member of their own community to be appointed in the

Legislative Council. Thus, on 20th September 1909, A.M. Jeevanjee was appointed by the Colonial Office in London to represent the Indians in Legco. His appointment was to be in recognition of the considerable part the Indian was playing in opening up the country, and in economic development.<sup>16</sup> A.M. Jeevanjee was a prominent Indian merchant in the country, who had come to Nairobi in 1899 and was the head of a firm of contractors and ship merchants and a general merchant.<sup>17</sup>

The appointment of A.M. Jeevanjee not only angered the European population, but also attracted bitter resentment from the Arab community at the coast. In 1909, the Assistant Liwali of Mombasa, Ali bin Salim, strongly protested against the terms of services proposed for them by A.C. Hollis. The Arab administrators were no longer placed on par with their European counterparts. Only Ali bin Salim became the government recognised leader, and also as the spokesman for the whole community. These government policies led to the resentment by other members of the community towards Ali bin Salim and the beginning of Arab political discord that prevailed after World War 1.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the Arab and Swahili became more aware of the political activities in the colony, and more sensitive to the political and economic demands and expressions of the various racial groups in the colony. They too, together with the African, began to raise their voices and put forward

their won grievances, although at first not as articulately or effectively as the Europeans or the Indians.<sup>19</sup>

The Europeans had been the dominant voice in the political life of the colony until 1922. In the first elections of the colony in 1919, 11 elected Europeans were returned to the Legislative Council, and the Indians and Arabs were each to be represented by a nominated member. Ali bin Salim was nominated to represent the Arabs in the legislature. The Arab community was not satisfied with the appointment and by the end of the war, a number of Arabs at the coast emerged to form an association to put forward their grievances, since most of them felt that the Liwalis and Mudirs would not be able to question the authority of which they were a part. The District Commissioner at the coast, Ainsworth Dickson, noted such a body in 1919 and stated that,

".....a certain group composed of Arabs, Buluchis and Swahilis are enthusiastic as to the future. Some of the younger people are considering a possibility of forming an association with a view to raising their status. The movement has a national tendency. I am very hopeful of the future if we tackle this question in the right way."<sup>20</sup>

Thus in 1921, the Coast Arab Association emerged to represent the coast people - Arabs, Swahilis and Buluchis.

Before one looks at the history of the Coast Arab Association and its aims and objectives, it would be in order to give a brief outline of the political history of the Yemeni Arabs at the coast, before the founding of the association. The Yemeni Arabs, like the rest of the population in the Protectorate, had to resign themselves to accepting the protection of the British government. They continued their economic and commercial activities unhindered by the change of the regime.

However, the Yemeni Arabs had their own political and social organization which kept them out of local politics at the coast for a long time. From as early as 1914, the colonial administrators nominated two headmen as leaders for the community Sheikh Abdul Hadi and Sharif Hussin Shatry.<sup>21</sup> By the 1930's, there were four headmen officially recognised by the authority. They were Sheikh Abdul Hadi, Sharif Hussein Shatry, Sheikh Ali al-Amry and Sheikh Faray bin Sherman.<sup>22</sup> The Yemenis were organised under their own elders called Shuyuba (singular Shaib) or Muqaddams<sup>23</sup> These muqaddams officiated over all matters of dispute or misunderstanding among the Yemeni community. this system of having muqaddams or headmen, was an instrument that kept the Yemeni community at the coast out of local politics right up to the mid 1930's.



Nevertheless, the Yemeni community had been awakened to the political situation prevailing in the colony by the mid 1910's. During the First World War, a large number of the Yemeni Arabs enlisted in the Arab Rifles. The provincial Commissioner, C.W. Hobley, writing to the Chief Secretary in Nairobi in 1917, noted that,

"the contract between the attitude of the locally born Arabs and the Shihiri Arabs from Hadhramaut is most marked, the latter comes here to work and the Arab Rifles have been entirely recruited from this section and even now they continue to enlist in the corps."<sup>24</sup>

The Yemenis in the Arab Rifles distinguished themselves during the War, and it was recommended that all men who had served in the company be entitled to a passage to Aden or Mukalla, for those who wished to travel back home.<sup>25</sup>

It must be evident that the Yemeni community did not come out in the open like the rest of the Arab-Swahili community to form their own society or association per se, because they had their own internal socio-political organization based on clan and kinship ties. All matters and problems of the community were solved within these organizations. The Yemeni Arabs are known to have very strong clanish feelings and loyalty to the clans are very strong.<sup>26</sup> They often banded together within

the clan organizations for their well-being. They were organized in their own Jumiya's - welfare organizations - wherever they settled. The Yemeni immigrants who came to the coast belonged to one of the many jumiyas that existed at the coast. People from the same area or district in Hadhramaut kept in touch when they settled in the Protectorate. Each was a member of a jumiya and paid some kind of subscription into a common fund. The money collected was used for the well-being of the members of that jumiya. Thus, there were the Jumiyat-al-Sana, Jumiyat-al-Fughma, Jumiyat-al-Seiun, Jumiyat-al-Jalfy, and so on. These jumiyas were organised for people who came from the same village or town or district in Hadhramaut, and provided food and shelter from the recent immigrants from South Arabia, till they managed to get work to support themselves.<sup>27</sup> Because of their ability and willingness to do any kind of work (even menial), the immigrants did not stay for too long before they managed to get work for themselves. This kind of assistance helped create a bond between members of the same clan and jumiya. After receiving such assistance, they paid some kind of subscription to the jumiya so that other members of the jumiya could be assisted. Since the men did not bring their womenfolk from Hadhramaut, it was easier and cheaper for a number of men to rent a room or two in the Majengo area or the Old Town, and thus live communally. This way, they managed to save enough

money to be able either to go back home after a number of years, or send regular remittances to their relatives in Arabia. However, some of them became permanent residents and took Kenyan-born Yemeni wives. In other cases, the men went back for their wives in Hadhramaut or to get married there.

The jumiyas also helped their members when they could not pay their taxes. In 1921, the District Officer of Mombasa writing in his Annual Report complained that, the "Washihiri" who constituted a considerable population of the tax-payers for the non-native poll-tax, were a difficult problem because beyond earning sufficient income for their daily subsistence, they made no effort to pay their taxes.<sup>28</sup> The jumiya encouraged their members to pay their taxes, but when one could not, his tax was paid for him by the association to save him from being taken to court, but he had to repay the jumiya.<sup>29</sup> In this way, the jumiya was like a "watch-dog" on the behaviour of their members while at the same time looking after their welfare. The Yemenis are, for all purposes and intent, one community, but very often when it came to a problem arising in a clan, it was solved within the framework of the organization. For example, the people of one jumiya would have little say in the affairs of the people originating from other parts of Hadhramaut who had organized themselves in their own association in Mombasa. Each jumiya strove to solve its own problems. In other words, they were autonomous entities.

All these activities took place at the clan or town level. Each jumiya had its own spokesman. Whenever there was a problem concerning more than just the clan, the spokesmen of the clans approached the muqaddams who represented the interests of a number of clans. Thus at a higher level, the whole community was organized under the leadership of the four headmen officially recognised by the colonial administrators. Thus, the jumiyas worked as single cells within a wider unit of the whole Yemeni community.

The traditional headmen, or muqaddams as they are known, among the Yemeni community, looked after the welfare of their people. They were accepted by the community as their leaders and were usually members of a clan or tribe that also exercised considerable influence back in Hadhramaut. These muqaddams were the intermediaries between the colonial administrators and the Yemeni community.

This type of organization existed because the Yemenis managed, to some extent, to transplant to Kenya, the social and political institutions that existed in Hadhramaut.<sup>30</sup>

Although there were four official headmen, the government recognised Sheikh Abdul Hadi as the Chief Spokesman for the whole Yemeni community. Sheikh Abdul Hadi had considerable

influence in Mombasa among the people who came from Eastern Hadhramaut, including a large number of former slaves, who formed a significant part of the Yemeni community in Mombasa. He was also very popular among the other clans because it is said that he was a very "just" muqaddam and carried out his duties with "honesty and conviction."<sup>31</sup> Sheikh Abdul Hadi was not officially appointed, or paid a salary by the colonial government; they merely recognised him in his traditional capacity as a muqaadam. It must however be noted that, this socio-political organization amongst the Yemeni Arabs lasted throughout the colonial period.

Thus was the socio-political organization of the Yemeni Arab community at the coast. Political activities at the local level was confined to a few individuals only.

When in 1921, the Coast Arab Association was founded with Rashid bin Sud Shikely as its President, it demanded on behalf of the Arab-Swahili community, among other things, elected representation and that more attention be given to coastal affairs such as education, their economic plight and reduction of Arab administrators. Member list of the association does not reveal any Hadhramis except Sharif Abdallah Salim, who is of Sharifite origin, therefore of Hadhrami descent. However, there is no evidence that the recent Hadhrami migrants were actively involved in the association.

Besides demanding two seats for the Arabs in the Executive council and four on the Legislative Council, the Coast Arab Association refused to recognise Ali bin Salim as the community's spokesman.<sup>32</sup> The colonial authorities accused Rashid bin Sud of discrediting the Liwali, whom they (the colonial government) had "proped up" as the leader of the Arab-Swahili community. This led to serious repercussions in the relationship between Liwali Ali bin Salim and the Coast Arab Association. A.I. Salim has however summed up the situation prevalent at the time by stating that,

"That there was division amongst the Arabs is undeniable..... But the undue exaggeration of its presence is liable to overshadow a genuine attempt by the association to seek redress of grievances and raise the status of the community through independent democratic representation."<sup>33</sup>

A further split in the Arab-Swahili community was caused when the right to vote was given to the Arabs only, after they were granted one seat in the Legislative Council. The Swahili of the Twelve Tribes formed their own society - the Afro-Asian Association in 1927, with Sheikh Muhammed bin Abdul Karim as President.<sup>34</sup> Their demands were that they should be included in the voters roll, and be classified as "non-natives" like the Arabs in the application of ordinances. The recent immigrants from Southern Arabia, especially those who came

after the establishment of colonial rule, were at best on-lookers. They stayed out of the conflict between the Association and Liwali Ali bin Salim. In 1931, Liwali Ali bin Salim retired from active political life. This left only one Arab member in the Legislative Council, Sharif Abdallah Salim, who had replaced Hemed Muhammed Issa Timamy in 1931. Hemed was the first elected Arab on the Legislative Council, after the Coast Arab Association and the Protectorate Debating Society founded in 1923, under the patronage of Ali bin Salim, decided on him as the sole candidate.

Sharif Abdallah Salim was born in Lamu in 1902. His grandfather, Sharif Abdulrahman al-Husseini had originated from Tarim in Hadhramaut and settled in Lamu. At the age of four and a half, Sharif Abdallah Salim was sent to Zanzibar, where he received his education between 1909 to 1916, at the Government Primary School. According to him, it was of a better standard than the one of the mainland.<sup>35</sup> In 1916, he returned to Lamu with his father. He worked as an interpreter for the courts of Lamu, with a salary of 15 rupees a month. In 1917, he was transferred to Mombasa's High Court. However, after one year, he resigned because the administrators refused to raise his salary. In 1919, he joined the Department of Registration of Documents and a translator of Arabic documents into English, with a salary of 75 florins a month. He worked

in the department till 1928, when he retired on medical grounds. After his retirement from the government, he worked as a land estate agent till 1931, when he was elected to replace Hemed Issa Timamy on the Legislative Council.

From the time of his elections, Sharif Abdallah Salim took a very active role in the Legislative Council, presenting the grievances of the Arab community.

He was more militant than the mild Hemed, who, according to the officials was, "too reticent to take part in debate."<sup>36</sup> He presented the grievances of the community and addressed Sir Philip Cunliffe - Lister, the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1932, and his efforts were rewarded in 1938, when Arabic was introduced in Arab Schools and in 1944, Arab Civil Servants were granted pension rights and placed on Asian terms of service.<sup>37</sup>

However, the politics of the 1930's in Colonial Kenya were based on racial groups and localised racial politics, where each group strove to rid itself of any position of inferiority, striving at the same time to obtain the benefits enjoyed by the privileged European community. And by this time, the dormant Yemeni community had been awakened to the realities of the political situation. Although secular education for Arab boys



had been started as early as 1912, the impact of western education was negligible, for it only served a tiny per cent of the Arab and Swahili population. In 1938, a girls school was established. However, very few Yemenis sent their children to school. They were satisfied with Quranic education and expected their male children to join them in their businesses, trade or profession. But the Swahilized Yemeni families such as the Bakhshwein and Basharaheil families did send their children to school, although the majority of the pupils came from among the Omani Arabs and from the members of the Swahili Twelve Tribes. In 1935, the first Arab from Coast Secondary School went to Makerere College in Kampala on a government scholarship.

After the Second World War, the Yemenis began sending more of their children to primary schools. By the 1950's they began to feel that although only a few of their own boys finished secondary education, those who did well were not given a fair chance to go abroad for further studies. According to Sheikh Abubakar Zubedi, a prominent member of the Yemeni community,<sup>38</sup> the Yemenis felt that their boys were discriminated against the colonial government and the local Arab administrators of Omani origin. Although many of the Yemenis felt the same way about the issue, none of them approached the Liwali on the matter, and after that, a number

of Yemeni boys were granted government scholarships to study abroad. The first Yemeni student to go to England was Said Hamdun, who returned to Mombasa in 1959, with a honours degree in Arabic, from London University.<sup>39</sup> This was the first time that Sheikh Abubakar Zubedi attempted to enter into the political scene in Mombasa and was to remain active right up to independence.

At the outbreak of World War II, the Arabs and Swahili community had only two seats in the Legislative Council and one in the Municipal Council which was founded in 1928 with their Coast Arab Association "moribund". After the death of Liwali, Sir Ali bin Salim<sup>40</sup> in 1940, the Governor, Sir Henry Moore appointed Mbarak Ali Hinawy as the Liwali for the coast, on 29th December, 1941. Like his predecessors, Mbarak Ali Hinawy was to dominate Arab leadership and politics until his death in 1959. His political career started as an Arab Assistant to the Senior Commissioner for Coast Province. He accompanied the first Arab elected member, Hemed Muhammed Issa Timamy, in a delegation to England that gave evidence before the Joint Select Committee on Closer Union in East Africa in 1931. He was later appointed Liwali of Mombasa and eventually in 1941, became the second Liwali for the coast. Mbarak Ali Hinawy earned respect and admiration as well as hostility from the sections of the people he was supposed to represent. He found

himself in virtually the same position as his predecessor, Ali bin Salim, with regard to the political association that emerged at the coast during respective times.

In the early 1940's, there was considerable political activities in the Arab community. The Central Arab Association was founded in January 1943, under the presidency of Sud bin Ali, the English-educated son of Sir Ali bin Salim. The Central Arab Association collected money for the declared objective of improving the lot of the community, but unfortunately because of the nature of Arab community at that time - one of fitina and jealousy - Sud bin Ali was accused of undermining the Liwali, Mbarak Ali Hinawy. As a result of Sud's attack on the Liwali, which appeared in the press, a number of Arab elders resigned from the association towards the end of the year.<sup>41</sup> Sud bin Ali resigned from the Presidency of the association because of what he regarded as "Arab political apathy and internal intrigue."<sup>42</sup> His political life was however terminated when in 1944, he was replaced by Mbarak Ali Hinawy as the nominated member in the Legislative Council. All political activities by the 1940's took place amidst growing national political consciousness. The years before and during World War II had increased African's discontent and political awareness which provided a fertile field for political organization. However, political

organization was confined to "tribal" and local level through deliberate colonial government regulations, so as to avoid a national political movement.

The Central Arab Association which by the 1950's was the only Arab association that could claim the role of representing the Arabs in the country, since the Afro-Asian Association, founded in 1927, had declined to the position of a largely social club.<sup>43</sup> The Coast Arab Association, founded in 1921, had died a natural death. The Central Arab Association was careful to avoid an open confrontation with Liwali Mbarak Ali Hinawy, but it did not hesitate in sending petitions and memoranda to him or the government, on behalf of the community. In 1948, Sharif Muhammed Shatry was elected to the Legislative Council unopposed. He also became the President of the Association in the same year. In 1949, Sharif Muhammed Shatry called a general meeting of Arabs and resolved to revive the Association,<sup>44</sup> since it had declined after Sud bin Ali gave up politics. Sharif Shatry put forward the project of building a social hall for the Arab community. Money for the construction was to be collected from monthly subscription and donations from generous well-wishers.<sup>45</sup> This project encouraged many Hadhrami Arabs to become members of the association, since it was the first of its kind and they felt that the association was working for the betterment of the

community. Also, Sharif Muhammed Shatry was very popular among the Hadhrami immigrants and the bulk of his supporters were to be found in this community. the Hadhramis' veneration for sharifs, made Sharif Muhammed Shatry very popular amongst this community. It is said that in their homes, the Hadhramis had pictures of him hanging on the walls and framed embroidered slogans with "Yahya Shatry" (Long Live Shatry) written on them.<sup>46</sup>

The construction of the social hall was completed in 1955, when the Provincial Commissioner Dr. Desmond O'Hogan officially opened the hall in January. The hall was to be used for social events, meetings and would be the headquarters of the Association. The building of the hall cost Shs. 140,000, collected from members and generous donors.<sup>47</sup> One such donor was Lt. Colonel, M.T. Babcareen, who donated a large sum of money towards the construction of the building because he believed that the Arabs were making a serious attempt to improve their status in the country.<sup>48</sup> The Central Arab Association activities were restricted to Mombasa where most of its members were to be found, but it represented the interest of all the Arabs in the Colony.

Sharif Muhammed Shatry served as an Arab elected member on the Legislative Council from 1948 till 1952, when he was

defeated by a narrow margin of 35 votes by Sheikh Mahfudh Mackawi, a Yemeni businessman from Nairobi. In spite of the fact that Sharif Muhammed had the support of the Central Arab Association and the general support of the Hadhrami community, he lost to Sheikh Mahfudh Mackawi. The major reasons for his defeat in the 1952 elections - the first time the Arab seat was contested - were the literacy qualification for the Arab electoral roll and since the bulk of his supporters were illiterate Hadhrami migrant-labourers, many of them were disqualified as voters.<sup>49</sup> Also, they had developed an opposition towards Sharif Muhammed Shatry's leadership within the Hadhrami community. According to Sheikh Abubakar Zubedi, a number of the prominent Yemeni community gathered at Konzi Mosque and decided to sponsor Sheikh Mahfudh Mackawi against Sharif Muhammed Shatry, whom they regarded as "dictatorial."<sup>50</sup> Also, personal quarrels with the Liwali Mbarak Ali Hinawy, contributed to Sharif Muhammed Shatry's defeat in the 1952 elections.<sup>51</sup> Unaware of all these, Sharif Muhammed Shatry's supporters "claimed that the elections were rigged."<sup>52</sup> However, by 1952, the Arab community was represented by three members on the Legislative Council - the official nominated member, Liwali Mbarak Ali Hinawy; the newly elected member, Sheikh Mahfudh Mackawi and Sharif Abdallah Salim, the nominated unofficial member - a seat they gained as a result of the constitutional changes initiated by the

Secretary of State for the Colonies. But these three members found themselves caught up in the political upheaval of the time, emanating from the Mau Mau revolt.

At the same time, the coastal community was expressing a kind of cultural, educational and economic revival in spite of the Mau Mau movement. The only signs of the emergency, was the arrivals of Mau Mau detainees on Manda Island.<sup>53</sup> However, this is not to say that the Arab community was completely dormant in the political field. There is a lot of local political activities, where the leaders played important roles. For example in 1953, the Central Arab Association decided to send a deputation of at least two of its members to put their case to the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Oliver Lyttelton. The Association also hoped to make an appeal for better recognition of the Arabs not only in Kenya, but also in Tanganyika and Uganda.<sup>54</sup> The President of the Association, Sharif Muhammed Shatry, expressed the views of the Arab community and regretted its lack of adequate representation in the government of East Africa. He said that the 25,000 registered Arabs in Kenya had two nominated - one official and one unofficial - members and one elected representative on the Kenya Legislative Council, while there were no Arab representatives in Tanganyika's and Uganda's Legislative Councils, and there was no official representative on the East

African Central Legislative Assembly either.<sup>55</sup> In his opinion, increased representation of the Arabs was needed to make their "voices heard and not drowned in the midst of others."<sup>56</sup> The Association also submitted a memorandum giving its views to the three East African Colonial Governments. In March, 1954, the Lyttelton Plan which introduced the first multi-racial constitution in Kenya was put forward. In this Plan, the government was concerned with the principle of parity - particularly the division of ministries - one to the Africans, two to the Indians and three to the Europeans. The Arabs were left without a minister - only a Personal Advisor to the Governor on Arab Affairs.

The community's disappointment with the new post for the Arabs could hardly be hidden. They expressed their disappointment through the local press. One such correspondent wrote, "rarely have the Arabs felt more strongly about any constitutional changes as they felt now about their expulsion from the new Cabinet of Ministers. So passionate is their reaction to this that one could almost say that if the Secretary of State had deliberately continued to infuriate the Arabs.....he could not have chosen a more effect way<sup>57</sup> Another correspondent expressed his views by saying that, "It is a big insult to the 24,000 loyal and cooperative Arabs to be denied representation in the New Kenya Council of



Ministers..... If this is the reward for being so loyal and cooperative, I suggest that the Arab Members of the Legislative Council resign at once."<sup>58</sup> The disappointment felt by the Arabs on the announcement of the Lyttelton Plan, was the last straw as another correspondent wrote,".....is it to be understood from this that the Arabs form a negligible subsidiary race and should be satisfied with an advisor to the Governor and the Council of Ministers (the advisor having no 'Cabinet Status') as constituting their sole representation? The only development of the Arab case heard of late is the forthcoming flight of the Government to Mombasa to "explain" to the Arabs. What on earth is there to 'explain'? The Arabs need more and better representation and that is all there is to it. There have been too many 'explanations' in the past.<sup>59</sup>

In spite of the outcry by the Arab community, Mbarak Ali Hinawy was appointed in September 1954, as Personal Advisor to the Governor on Arab Affairs, and was to feel free to see the Governor to discuss Arab affairs, a duty already being executed by him as the Liwali for the coast.<sup>60</sup> Although the Arabs had not been inclined to accept the proposals, they finally had to resign themselves to the appointment. In the words of Sharif Abdallah Salim, the arab nominated member on the Legislative Council, "It is my personal opinion that if the matter remains unchanged, the Arabs will probably accept the position if the

member on the Executive Council is invited to appear before the Council of Ministers wherever matters affecting the Arabs are discussed and on the understanding that Arabs are in the future consulted before there is any important issue which affects the whole colony."<sup>61</sup>

The Arabs were becoming more and more aware of the nationalistic significance of the political trends in the country. The younger generation was becoming more politicised with constant attention to the broadcasts of not only "Sauti ya Mvita", but to the anti-colonial broadcasts from Cairo and Bombay.<sup>62</sup>

From the mid 1950's, the political activity at the coast was to revolve around the treaty of 1895, which gave the basis of the birth of Mwambao, or the struggle for the autonomy of the Coastal Strip.<sup>63</sup> Briefly, the historical developments that led to Mwambao movement were; firstly, the European community's desire to divide the colony into five provinces so as to safeguard their privileges after the new multi-racial constitution was proclaimed in 1956.<sup>64</sup> Secondly, the constant attacks by the African members in the Legislative Council, on minority privileges at the coast. Attacks by the African Members on Arabs land rights in areas such as Shimoni - Wasin District and Malindi, stirred political debate at the

coast between the Arabs and the African population.<sup>65</sup>

Thirdly, events in Zanzibar also intensified the already tense situation on the mainland. When in 1957, the Arab - led, but multi-racial, political party, the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP) was defeated by African groups in the first-ever elections in East Africa based on common roll, the Sultan's subjects on the mainland became anxious over their political position since the right for a common roll was agitated for by the Arab leaders of Zanzibar Nationalist Party.<sup>66</sup>

In the 1950's racial tension that erupted in the colony, the coast African politicians founded a newspaper called "Sauti ya MADU", the Voice of MADU (Mombasa African Democratic Union) to express their views on the political situation at the coast. The attack by the newspaper on minority groups such as the Arabs, who it claimed "entered East Africa as traders and missionaries and not as rulers, and therefore could claim any territorial rights,"<sup>67</sup> resulted in a debate between the Arab and Swahili, to counter African attacks. The Arab and Swahili population at the coast felt that the coast Arab was part of the East African coast "where he has shed his blood, left his mark and bred a race. He has (therefore) undisputed sovereign rights."<sup>68</sup>

The debate in the press between the Arab-Swahili population and the Africans on the one hand, and between the Arab-Swahili population and the European settler community and leaders on the other, resulted in the Arab and Swahili population decision to "cling firmly to the 1895 Agreement not only as a bargaining card for political concessions but also as a legal basis for coast autonomy."<sup>69</sup>

A number of parties emerged at the coast to fight for Mwambao - the Shungwaya Freedom Party, largely a Bajuni party; the Coastal People's Party (C.P.P.) with its support from Mombasa; the Kenya Protectorate People's National Party (K.P.P.N.P) supported by people in Malindi District and the Coastal League, also with support from Mombasa, but a party of moderation and compromise in comparison with Coast People's Party.<sup>70</sup> Thus, the futile struggle for Mwambao began, only to end in 1963 when Kenya gained political independence.

What about the reaction of the Central Arab Association and the Yemeni Arabs at the coast to Mwambao? From the very beginning, the idea of an autonomous coastal strip was criticised by the President of the Central Arab Association, Sharif Muhammed Shatry, Arab politics had by then deteriorated into sharp hostility between the supporters of the Central Arab

Association and those opposed to it. Clash of views and personal antagonism between the Association and the Liwali for the coast, Mbarak Ali Hinawy developed after the elections of 1948, since the association hardly "concealed its aim to discredit the Liwali and the traditional Hadhrami headmen or elders."<sup>71</sup> This state of affairs developed because the Liwali consulted the traditional elders - officially recognised by the colonial administrators, as the spokesman of the community - on the affairs and grievances of the Arab community, instead of Sharif Muhammed Shatry. Sharif Muhammed Shatry on the other hand felt that, as he was the elected member of the Arab community and the President of the only Arab organization in the country, he should have more say in the affairs of the Arab community. His conservatism led him to support the status-quo - i.e. loyalty to the British government, when he argued that,

"the idea of coast autonomy was "baseless in gratitude and complete disregard for and abandonment of the real interest of Kenya."<sup>72</sup> Another example of his loyalty to the British government is when in 1955, he (Sharif Muhammed Shatry) appealed for volunteers among the Hadhrami hamalis and labourers to help out at the ports after a strike by the African dock workers."<sup>73</sup>

Thus, his conservatism and personal quarrels resulted in a split within the association due to difference of opinion, because many of the elders of the community, who were also members of the association insisted on the consultative principle in the governing of the affairs of the Arab community.

Therefore, a majority of the Hadhrami elders and the "progressive elements" in the association left the association to form the Society of the Protectors of Arab Rights because they resented what they termed as "dictatorial tendencies" within the association.<sup>74</sup> The society was to watch over the affairs and conduct of the Arab community.

The Protectors of Arab Rights was founded in 1951, with the aim of unifying the ranks of the Arabs "for the general welfare in social, literacy and economic life of the Arab community; and the unselfish pursuit in the raising of the general standard and sincere direction towards that which will be beneficial for the community by means of publications, preaching, speeches and lectures." The sixth article of the constitution of the Society also stated that "the organization shall have no right to interfere in the policy of the Government. In fact it shall co-operate with the Government for the Welfare of the Arab community. It shall not assist or intervene in any movement which might arouse communal feelings or any other disturbances. It shall not help or participate in any demonstration from which springs the enmity or opposition to the government."<sup>75</sup>

From the onset, the Society for the Protectors of Arab Rights was not going to support any anti-government activities,

as one prominent member of the community felt that it was wrong for the Yemeni immigrant community to get involved in the local politics since they were "wagani" (immigrants), and as such should concentrate on their economic and commercial pursuits."<sup>76</sup> Some of the leading members of the Yemeni community who broke away from the Central Arab Association to form the new Society were Sheikh Abubakar Zubedi, Sheikh Amer Abdullah bin Abry, Sharif Salim Omar Attas, Sheikh Amer bin Nehed, sheikh Mahfudh Bawazir, Awadh Mathran and Abdallah Said Zubedi. It was their aim also to try and change Sharif Muhammed Shatry's attitude and work together with the Liwali and the traditional headmen.<sup>77</sup>

The Society was more concerned about the economic and educational betterment of its community than with political agitation. However, it was not completely insensitive to the political environment at the time. Indeed, it found itself drawn into the prevailing debate when coast African politicians started attaching the minority races through "Sauti ya Madu". The society was quick to react to the accusation that the Arabs were "Imperialists and Communists." The society felt that the malicious accusations against the local Arabs and those of the Middle East (since they accused the local Arabs of "Nassarism"), would create another but ill-feeling and racial hatred. The Arabs were sympathetic and were willing to

co-operate with those who acted with them. The Vice-President of the Society expressed his fears when, in 1958, he wrote,

"The attitude adhered to by MADU will one day, sooner or later, disturb the atmosphere of understanding in this multi-racial country. The Arab community is peaceful, but as one might expect they could not tolerate such an unwarranted and prejudicial attack in the Press on them."<sup>78</sup>

It was the hope of the society to see the end of the verbal quarrel in the press, since it was a waste of time and energy for MADU to create unnecessary squabbles between the Arabs and Africans, as such squabbles would not "help the African..... in achieving their legitimate aspirations." the most that the Arabs (those belonging to the trading class) could hope to achieve with any race, was to establish equality and friendship, "not as masters or communists, but as equal community in citizenship." The society wondered whether the quarrelling would benefit either the Africans or Arabs at the time of nationalists agitation for political independence.

In August 1955, the Central Arab Association and the Protectors of Arab Rights Society, at a meeting at the Muslim Hall decided to bury differences and work together for the betterment of the whole community. The decision was reached as a result of deepening differences between the two organizations



which had reached such proportion, that it began to be a threat to the well-being of the community as a whole. Thus, the Society, which was founded as a rival body designed to check the Central Arab Association when in error, together with the Association decided to work hand in hand for the aim of improving the lot of the Arab population.<sup>79</sup>

At the national level, struggle for coast autonomy continued. A new political organization for the Arabs was launched in Mombasa - the Afro-Arab Youth League. The aims and objectives of the League, were to promote and establish unity among the various Arab groups in Kenya and to serve the welfare and advancement of the community in matters connected with education, culture, economy and politics. Mr. Abdillahi Nasser was elected as the first President of the League, Mr. Muhammed Omar Abeid, Vice President, Mr. Salim Balala, Vice-Secretary, Mr. Sultan Said bin Brek, Secretary and Mr. Abdallah Said Zubedi as Treasurer. It is interesting to note that some members of the Hadhrami community joined the League. The Executive Committee of the League hoped to be able to work with the elected members of the Legislative Council, Sharif Abdallah Salim and Sheikh Mahfudh Mackawi. The members were "challenged" by the League to convene a public meeting presided over by the elected members, so as to throw light on the recent discussions held with the Governor.<sup>80</sup> The League felt that

"pledges undertaken and promises given prior to the elections of the candidates never materialised. No consultation between the Legislative Council Members and the electorate they represented ever took place."<sup>81</sup> (The League's second meeting was also attended by 30 women - the first time for Arab women to attend political meetings). At the meeting, the League expressed its views that the Arab elected members, the nominated members and the Arab Advisory Council of 15 appointed to advise the Liwali for the coast, were not handling the affairs of the community properly. Thus, the young educated members of the community, who formed a large majority as members of the League, called for the abrogation of the 1895 Treaty, in the face of growing racial tension and the widening gulf separating the various coast communities. They called for fresh negotiations, the formation of a Protectorate national status for all Protectorate people regardless of ethnic origin, and a common roll for all national willing to pay allegiance to a Protectorate Government.<sup>82</sup> However, the "older" organizations at the coast, the Central Arab Association, the Afro-Asian Association and the Bajuni Organizations led by the two elected members of the Legislative Council, merely demanded a ministry and an additional seat through the creation of more constituencies in the Protectorate.

In 1958, a new arrangement incidental to the Lennox-Boyd Constitution had made changes in Arab representation. The

community had four seats, two elected one, the nominated official seat held by the Liwali for the coast, and the new specially elected seat, which was won by Muhammed Aziz Alamoody, a businessman from Malindi. One of the two elected seats was won by Mahfudh Mackawi and the other was won by Sharif Muhammed Shatry after the three organizations - the Central Arab Association, the Afro-Asian Association and the Society for the Protectors of Arab Rights - decided to support the candidature for the newly-converted seat in 1958.

However, racial antagonism at the coast had developed between the Africans and the Arabs, resulting in the November 1958 call, by the two Arab elected members, for the implementation of the Governor's Statement and the declaration of the Coastal Strip as a separate entity.<sup>83</sup> But at the Lancaster House Conference in 1960, I. Macleod, the Colonial Secretary's stated that the Coastal Strip was not within the scope of the Conference and that no change was being contemplated in the 1895 Treaty with the Sultan. Kenya was declared "an African Country" and a common roll was introduced for the first time.<sup>84</sup> On returning home, the Africans organised themselves into two political parties. The formation of the Kenya African National Union (KANU) during a leader's conference at Kiambu in March, 1960, was described as a largely

Luo-and Kikuyu-dominated organization. Thus, the Kenya African Democratic Union was formed to oppose the objectives of K.A.N.U., by the leaders of the minority "tribes" in Kenya.<sup>85</sup> The intense African political activities was a great concern for the coastal communities, whose fears of being dominated by the "up-country" Africans became more "serious" and "real" in their eyes. Thus the cry of Mwambao attained even stronger echoes everywhere along the Coastal Strip.

What about the attitude of the Yemeni community in particular towards the idea of Mwambao? The general attitude of the Yemeni community towards Mwambao, especially the trading class, was not passive, since being immigrants and traders, they were more concerned with commerce and earning a living than with political aspirations. Most of them supported the status-quo as long as there was peace and stability, in order to pursue their economic pursuits. However, there developed within the Yemeni Arabs a minority who supported Mwambao while the majority opposed it. The traders, shopkeepers, hoteliers and labourers were apolitical and, thus, opposed to any kind of political agitation that would disrupt the life-of work and trade. But, the young western educated Yemenis sided with the Mwambaoists. Abdillahi Nasser had many Yemenis from Guraya, Bondeni and Kuze on the side of those who agitated for coast autonomy. The Mwambaoist accused the Yemeni traders of

"sitting on the fence" and they became targets of attacks by the Mwambaoist in their meetings, especially the Coast People's Party led by Abidllahi Nasser (The Coast People's Party was founded by among others, Abdillahi Nasser after the Afro-Asian Youth League failed to achieve its objectives).

The Mwambaoists accused this particular section of the Yemenis of being opportunists, especially their subscriptions to the African political parties. They were denounced and they were advised "to go home" (i.e. back to Southern Arabia).<sup>86</sup>

The Yemeni traders and labourers believed that the coast was an integral part of Kenya and, thus, dis-associated themselves from the illusive and unfounded idea of coast autonomy. Their decision to stay aloof or support Africans lies in the fact that, as a trading class they had no political aspirations for the community as rulers. As one writer wrote in 1961, "the Hadhrami Arabs as a whole are completely in favour and in support of the African nationalism..... They believe it is absolutely wrong for them and the Asians and Europeans to act as a barrier in the way of the nationalist struggle for Uhuru."<sup>87</sup> The anti-Mwambaoist within the Yemeni community realised that the cry for coast autonomy could only lead to racial tensions that could be tragic, as some of them had been victims of such racial tensions in Indonesia, Somalia and Hyderabad, when the local people were struggling for independence.<sup>88</sup>

Because of racial tension at the coast, the British government was compelled to send Sir James Robertson to fly to East Africa to collect oral and written evidence and "to report to the Sultan of Zanzibar and Her Majesty's Government jointly on the changes which are considered to be advisable in the 1895 Agreement relating to the Coastal Strip of Kenya, as a result of the course of constitutional development in East Africa."<sup>89</sup> Sir James Robertson was in East Africa from 4th October to 1st November 1961, collecting evidence on Mwambao.

The Central Arab Association dis-associated itself from Mwambao. It boycotted the meeting called by Abdillahi Nasser on the merger of coast parties - to put a stronger front for the struggle of coast autonomy. The statement read,

"The Central Arab Association of Kenya has never and will never involve itself in the problems of the Coastal Strip. The reason for boycotting the Conference on merger Coast Party (SIC) by Abdillahi Nasser was not that the Central Arab Association was reorganizing, but that it does not agree with Mr. Nasser's dangerous policy on the Coastal Strip..... The Hadhramis to merge with the Africans for their own future interest."<sup>90</sup>

In fact, the Yemeni elders and leaders advised their kinsmen to join hands with the Africans if they wanted to live peacefully in Kenya. It can be argued that the Yemeni traders and labourers at the coast, were among the first to support the Africans in the struggle for the release of Jomo Kenyatta.<sup>91</sup>

Although the Yemeni traders came out in support of African nationalism and integration, the young western educated Yemenis supported Mwambao. As Robertson's Report stated,

"The Arabs (the Yemenis included) and the Swahilis resident in the Strip are almost unanimous in favour of some form of local political autonomy although there are differences as to whether the Sultan's sovereignty should continue. Virtually all oppose integration of the protectorate with the colony, fearing strongly that Arab tradition and rights would be out in jeopardy under the weight of up-country African influence."<sup>92</sup>

Yet other leaders in the Yemeni community such as Sheikh Mahfudh Mackawi, were very vague about the issue of Mwambao. There were others who were confused about the whole issue of Mwambao and did not participate in the political and racial tensions of the last decades of colonial rule. As one correspondent in the Mombasa Times wrote,

The Coastal Strip issue is a very delicate and difficult problem..... (and) the majority of the Arabs, of whom the majority are from Hadhramaut.....are confused with the whole issue."<sup>93</sup>

One "spokesman" for the Yemeni Arabs, Salim Muhammed Balala, who was supported by some leading members of the community (especially those opposed to Mwambao), was nominated to contest the Arab Reserved Seat in 1961.<sup>94</sup> As a Councillor

in the Mombasa Municipality, Salim Balala had looked after the interests of the Yemeni community, and as such, he was their best candidate. However, he lost the seat to Abdillahi Nasser in the elections of 1961.

Sir James W. Robertson report for the struggle for Coast Autonomy, after gathering oral and written evidence, turned out to be unpopular with the Mwambaoists, since he recommended against it.<sup>95</sup> Salim Balala expressed hope that after the round-table conference on the Coastal Strip (which was to run parallel with Kenya's Constitutional Conference in London in 1962), where leaders and representatives of the various people of the coast would put forward their memoranda, they would all share in the decision in London on the status of the Coastal Strip. He advised the Yemeni Arabs not to "lend ears to ridiculous and nonsensical statements such as 'up-country Africans must go to up-country' and we will meet force with force."<sup>96</sup> At a KANU rally held at the Mombasa Stadium, Salim Balala advised the Yemenis to "reject" Mwambao and to support KANU. However, Salim Balala did not speak for all the Yemenis, nor was his advice taken by all of them. An incident in October 1961 disappointed many of the Yemeni Arabs who were anti-Mwambao and pro-Kanu. The Anti-Autonomist United Front, KANU, KADU and KFL (Kenya Federation of Labour) called on all Africans to boycott all Arab shops, hotels and businesses and



at the same time to stop selling their (Africans) fruits to Arabs at the Mwembe Tayari Market. The Yemeni Arabs were disappointed because most of the Arab shopkeepers and hoteliers were Yemeni Arabs, who were anti-autonomists or anti-political. As one correspondent wrote on 11th November 1961.

"This action taken was very disappointing especially so because the Arabs Traders Association had explained to the Mombasa African Traders Association and KANU in two joint meetings and statements were issued jointly. The Anti-Autonomists Front were informed of the Arab shopkeepers anti-autonomist stand..... Arabs do not want anything more than the rights to live peacefully with all races in Kenya and they never claimed any privileges or supremacy over any race."97

As if the cry of Mwambao was not enough, Majimboism or Regionalism began to plague the already tense Coastal community. KADU began thinking seriously of Regionalism as a safeguard measure for tribal interests after the breakdown of talks with KANU. After his release from prison in 1961, Jomo Kenyatta joined KANU and the anti-autonomists amongst the Yemenis hailed him as "our nationalist." At a meeting held in Mombasa, 25,000 enthusiastic Arabs, Africans and Asians cheered him. It was the first political meeting he addressed since his arrest in 1952, and he told the huge crowd that "we do not want Coast Autonomy. Kenya is one and we do not want to sell any part of it."98

On the eve of the Special Conference on the Coast Strip, the Mwambaoist, having founded a Mwambao United Front (MUF) felt "undaunted" by the proposals of Sir James Robertson. At the conference, Omar Bassadique (a Yemeni Arab) and Abdillahi Nasser were the only two spokesmen for Mwambao out of the eight elected members who represented the Kenya Protectorate and Bajuni Lands (who formed one body at the Strip Conference), besides the eight members from the Colony and eight from the Zanzibar Legislative Council. Even before the Conference opened, there were "rumours" that the Sultan of Zanzibar would renounce his sovereignty and accept compensation since the Zanzibar Sultanate could not offer any comfort to the autonomists. The Sultan's speech at the Conference, "that he was more interested in the welfare of his subjects than in preserving his sovereignty", dealt a death blow to the autonomists' dream.<sup>99</sup> Thus, the autonomist had to accept the final outcome of the Special Conference on the Coastal Strip. In fact, both Omar Bassadique and Abdillahi Nasser admitted in London that the "idea of Mwambao never left the ground."<sup>100</sup> At home, too, the United Front crumbled, with supporters of autonomy calling upon all successionists, regionalists, autonomists and unitarits to bury the hatchet so as to work together for the "welfare, progress and prosperity of their communities."<sup>101</sup>

The autonomists and the whole Arab-Swahili population realised that with the end of the struggle for coast autonomy, their special political status would be no more, and that their destiny was soon to be in the hands of the new rulers - the Africans. The coastal population hoped that the new African government would "honour and respect the Muslim way of Life", once they "assumed sovereignty."<sup>102</sup>

The coastal community watched the rivalry between KANU and KADU with detachment. KANU accused KADU of helping the colonial government to divide the country into pieces in order to give the Rift Valley to their masters - the "Imperialists." Jomo Kenyatta assured the "foreigners" that he had no quarrel with any body "just because his skin happened to be brown or white." The party appealed to them to come forward and identify themselves with the Africans by attending KANU meetings.<sup>103</sup>

Because the Arabs trading class had supported KANU against the Mwambaoist, or were neutral, that section of the Arab community felt that KANU was not interested in having an Arab in the government after all the support they had extended to KANU and its officials.<sup>104</sup> However, KANU revealed that the party had on several occasions, approached Councillor Salim Balala who turned down the offer. KANU defended itself by

stating that it was a "just political party that wanted all different sections of the citizens of Kenya to form a non-racial government." In May 1962, Salim Balala was nominated to one of the specially elected members seats in the Parliament, since he was one of those Arabs who consistently upheld integration and supported KANU - of course on the advise of such prominent Yemeni Arabs as Sheikh Abubakar Zubedi.<sup>105</sup>

Salim Balala continued to urge his supporters and the Arab community at large to continue to support KANU, since the KANU government was determined not only to assist them in advancement through modern ways, but also determined not to interfere with the Muslim customs.<sup>106</sup>

However, full integration resulted in major changes in the position of the coastal people. The posts of Liwalis and Mudirs were abolished and a Chief Kadhi for Kenya was appointed, to preside over civil cases of those who professed Islam as their religion.<sup>107</sup> Kenya achieved independence on 12th December, 1963, and "all discriminatory laws and racial nomenclatures" were abolished, and the Arab-Swahili population found reconciliation to African rules where all were equal.

Soon after independence, Kenyatta and other politicians made pronouncements that the coast Arabs were Africans, and

were given a fairly creditable position in the national life and government. After independence, the Yemeni Arabs, who were holders of South Arabian passports applied for Kenyan citizenship. In fact, the Sultan of Kathiri State, who visited Kenya in November 1963 (before the revolution of 1964 in South Yemen), Hussein bin Ali-Kathiri, advised all Arabs living in Kenya to take up Kenyan citizenship "as soon as possible", when he addressed a large crowd of Yemenis in Mombasa.<sup>108</sup> Those who did not, became subject to the same disadvantages as those faced by thousands of Asians and Europeans. There were those who opted to go back to Southern Arabia in spite of the fact that there was a revolution in South Yemen. Their decision was influenced because of the uncertainty about the new African government, but the majority decided to stay in Kenya as Kenyan citizens or as Yemeni citizens.

FOOTNOTES

1. For a detailed history of the Arab-Swahili political history, see A.I. Salim, The Swahili Speaking Peoples of Kenya's Coast: 1895-1965. Nairobi, 1973. See also, M.H. Abdulaziz, MUYAKA: 19th Century Swahili Popular Poetry, Nairobi 1979.
2. G.H. Mungeam, British Rule in Kenya 1895-1912: The Establishment of Administration in the East Africa Protectorate. Oxford, 1966. p. 1.
3. Salim, op cit., p. 73.
4. Ibid., p. 73. See also Mungeam op.cit., pp. 17-18.
5. Ibid., p. 73.
6. Ibid., p. 71.
7. For detailed analysis of the resistance by the Sultan of Witu and the Mazrui Arabs of Takaungu and Mombasa, see Salim op. cit., Ylvisakir, op. cit., and J. Berg, "Mombasa Under the Busaidi Sultanate: They City and Its Hinterlands in the Nineteenth Century." Ph. D. Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1971.
8. G.H. Mungeam, op. cit., p. 26.
9. A.I. Salim., op. cit., pp. 27 - 29.
10. Ibid., pp. 76 - 79.
11. Ibid., p. 76
12. Ibid.
13. See C. Eliot, The East Africa Protectorate. London, 1905, on the issue of settler policies Colonial Kenya.
14. For detailed study of labour recruitment in Colonial Kenya, see R.M.A. Van Zwaneberg Colonial Capitalism and Labour in Kenya 1919 - 1939. Nairobi, 1975.
15. B. Bennett, Kenya: A Political History: The Colonial Period. Nairobi, 1968. p. 25.
16. Ibid., p. 5, and 25 - 26.

17. Ibid., p. 30.
18. Salim op. cit., p. 99.  
For the biography of Sir Ali bin Salim, see Salim and A.J. King (eds.) Kenya Historical Biographies. Nairobi, 1971. pp. 112-141.
19. KNA PC/COAST/1/1/377. "Arab Association 1921", and KNA DC/MSA/8/5. Mombasa District Annual Report 1922.
20. Ibid.
21. KNA DC/MSA/3/1. Mombasa Political Records.
22. Oral Interview (henceforth O.I.) with Mr. Mahfudh Bawazir, 26th November 1980.
23. For more details on the role of the Muqaddams, see Chapter Two above pp. 112 - 114.
24. KNA PC/COAST/1/13/63. Arab Rifles 1915 - 22. Letter from Provincial Commissioner C.W. Hobley to the Chief Secretary Nairobi, 5/4/1917. Also see KNA PC/COAST/1/10/13 "Compulsory Service of Arabs and Baluchis 1915."
25. Ibid. Letter from Mr. K.H. Rodwell to the Provincial Commissioner C.W. Hobley. 12/7/1916. Also see H. Moyse-Bartlett. The King's African Rifles: A Study in the Military History of East and Central Africa, 1890 - 1945. Aldershot, 1956. pp. 95 - 112 and pp. 72 - 74 and pp. 367 - 368 on the King's African Rifles and Arab Rifles in Colonial Kenya.
26. W.H. Ingrams, A Report on the Social, Economic and Political Condition of the Hadhramaut. London 1936. pp. 36 - 40.
27. O.I. Sheikh Abubakar Zubedi, 2nd December 1980.
28. KNA DC/MAS/1/3/1921. Mombasa District Annual Report 1921.
29. O.I. Sheikh Abubakar Zubedi, 2nd December 1980, and Mr. Mahfudh Bawazir, 26th November 1980.
30. See Chapter Two above pp. 65 -74, and Ingrams op. cit., on the social history of the Yemeni Arabs. pp. 36 - 45.

31. O.I. Sheikh Abubakar Zubedi, 2nd December 1980.
32. Salim op. cit., p. 183.
33. KNA DC/MSA/1/3. Mombasa District Annual Report 1927.
34. O.I. Sharif Abdallah Salim 11th January 1981.  
  
According to his personal communication, sharif Abdallah Salim decided to resign from the Department of Registration, but the government would not release him. So he went to the medical board and claimed his eyes were weak. In the absence of an eye-specialist he was invalidated by the medical board and was thus relieved of his duties in the government.
35. Salim op. cit., p. 183.
36. Ibid., pp. 199 - 200.
37. O.I. Sheikh Abubakar Zubedi, 2nd December, 1980.
38. See Chapter 3 above, pp. 178 - 180, on the biography of Sheikh Abubakar Zubedi.
39. Mombasa Times. 31st March 1960.
40. Sir Ali bin Salim died in December 1940. A year earlier he was knighted for his services to the Colonial Government, and in appreciation of the 'good' work in laying the foundation of colonial rule. Also see KNA DC/MSA/1/3. Mombasa District Annual Report 1943.
41. KNA DC/MSA/1/3. Mombasa District Annual Report 1943. The Mombasa Times, published the article by Sud bin Ali, discrediting the Liwali of the coast, Sir Mbarak Ali Hinawy.
42. KNA DC/MSA/1/3. Mombasa District Annual Report 1943.
43. KNA DC/MSA/1/1943. Also see H. Al-Kindy, Life and Politics in Mombasa. Nairobi, 1972, on information about the Afro-Asian Association.
44. Mombasa Times. 17th January 1955.
45. Mombasa Times. 19th January 1955.



46. O.I. Mr. Mahfudh Bawazir, 26th November 1980.
47. Mombasa Times. 17th January 1955.
48. Mombasa Times. 10th February 1953.
49. The right to vote for the Arabs was granted to them in 1923. The vote was granted to any Arab who was a British subject and could read and write Arabic or Swahili in Arabic scrip. Also see KNA PC/COAST/1/1/412 Coast Province Annual Report 1923.
50. O.I. Sheikh Abubakar Zubedi, 2nd December, 1980.
51. Salim, op. cit., p. 213.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid., pp. 214 - 215.
54. Mombasa Times. 7th February 1953.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Mombasa Times. 15th March 1954. Letter by "Snubbed."
58. Mombasa Times. 19th March 1954. Letters by S. Hassan Ali.
59. Ibid. Letter by "Disappointed."
60. Mbarak Ali Hinawy had been told privately about the new appointment in March, 1954. However, it was made public in September, 1954. Although he accepted the post, he was not happy about it and he refused to accept the non-pensionable allowance of Shs. 6,000 that went with the new post. Also see Salim op. cit., pp. 217 - 218.
61. Mombasa Times. 17th March 1954.
62. The community at the coast had been given significant expression in the broadcasting station of "Sauti ya Mvita" - the Voice of Mombasa as their won service where it was the front and focus of a coastal muslim revival with programmes calculated to divert the attention of the population from Cairo's revolutionary Arabic and Swahili broadcasts. Also see Salim op. cit., p. 219.

63. For details on Mwambao see Salim op. cit., pp. 219 - 246 and "The Movement for 'Mwambao' or Coast Autonomy 1956 - 1963" in Hadith 2 (ed.) B.A. Ogot 1970.
64. Salim, The Swahili-Speaking Peoples of Kenya's Coast. p. 219. Also see, The Kenya Coastal Strip: Report of the Commissioner. 1961, p. 1.
65. Ibid., p. 224 and 228; and Mombasa Times. 23rd January 1958.
66. Salim, op. cit., p. 227 and see M.G. Lofchie, Zanzibar: Background to Revolution. Oxford, 1965. pp. 175 - 180.
67. Mombasa Times. 17th October 1957.
68. Mombasa Times. 17th October 1957.
69. Salim, The Swahili-Speaking Peoples of Kenya's Coast. p. 226.
70. Ibid., pp. 233 and 234
71. Ibid., p. 212
72. Ibid., p. 221
73. Mombasa Times. 23rd March 1955.
74. Salim op. cit., p. 221. Also O.I. with Sheikh Mahfudh Bawazir and Sheikh Abubakar Zubedi, 2nd December 1980.
75. KNA DC/MSA/2/1/76. "The Constitution for the Protectors of Arab Rights Organization."
76. O.I. Sheikh Abubakar Zubedi, 2nd December 1980.
77. Ibid.
78. Mombasa Times. 2nd October 1958.  
Madu had swallowed the colonial government's propaganda then prevailing that Egypt's Nasser was a "communist."
79. Mombasa Times. 24th August 1955.
80. Mombasa Times. 23rd October 1958.
81. Ibid.

82. Mombasa Times. 17th December 1959.
83. Mombasa Times. 6th November 1958.
84. Salim, The Swahili-Speaking Peoples of Kenya's Coast. p. 213.
85. G. Bennett, Kenya: A Political History: The Colonial Period. London, 1963, pp. 153 - 161.
86. A.I. Salim op. cit., pp. 239-243.
87. Mombasa Times. 10th May 1961.
88. Mombasa Times. 18th March 1961.
89. The Kenya Coastal Strip: Report of the Commissioner 1961. p. 13. See also Mombasa Times of 11th November 1961 and 16th January 1961, for correspondence on the question of the Coastal Strip.
90. Mombasa Times. 10th May 1961.
91. O.I. Sheikh Abubakar Zubedi, 2nd December 1980.
92. See The Kenya Coastal Strip Report of the Commissioner, 1961. p. 13, on the views of the coastal population on the issue of autonomy.
93. Mombasa Times. 20th February 1961.
94. Mombasa Times. 20th January 1961.  
Salim Balala was proposed for the Mombasa Central seat by Sheikh Abubakar Zubedi.
95. See the recommendations and proposals by Sir James Robertson, also see The Kenya Coastal Strip Report of the Commissioner, 1961 and A.I. Salim op. cit., pp. 240-242.
96. Mombasa Times. 6th February 1961.
97. Mombasa Times. 11th November 1961.
98. Mombasa Times. 4th September 1961.
99. Salim op. cit., p. 242.

100. Ibid.
101. Mombasa Times. 20th March 1962.
102. Mombasa Times. 8th October 1963.
103. Mombasa Times. 21st January 1963.
104. Mombasa Times. 29th March 1963.
105. O.I. Sheikh Abubakar Zubedi, 2nd December 1980.
106. Mombasa Times. 17th August 1963.
107. Salim op. cit., pp. 244 - 246.
108. Mombasa Times. 12th November 1963.

C O N C L U S I O N

Before we close the chapter on the history of the Yemeni Arabs in Kenya during the seventy odd years of colonial rule, let us highlight the main arguments and conclusions of this study. The Yemeni Arabs had connections with the Kenyan coast from very early times trading with the local people. They became not only an important economic factor but also a socio-cultural factor in the course of their settlement on the coast. After the advent of colonial rule, they represented a competition to the Indian monopoly of retail and wholesale trade. By reviewing their economic development, it can be concluded that they had been able to "better" themselves by the mid-twentieth century in spite of the fact that they had come as an immigrant labour community.

They formed an important section of the Arab community by the early decades of the twentieth century. They kept much of themselves, clinging to their social and cultural values, which they had brought along with them from Southern Arabia. The Yemenis sought to reproduce those values without any fundamental changes. To a certain degree they were successful; but they also experienced a degree of social change through interaction and integration with the other communities at the coast. Through the process of modernization, acceptance of western values and secular education, the new generations of

the Yemenis became more Swahilized. They did not adhere to the sentiments of their forefathers. They began to consider themselves as part of the whole coastal community.

The youth of the community began to question the established traditional authority that existed in the Yemeni community. They became more politicized, unlike their forefathers who were considered to be apolitical, right up to the outbreak of the Second World War. The Yemenis, like the rest of the Arab and Swahili communities at the coast, found themselves caught in the web of political antagonism. There were those amongst them who associated themselves with the local political parties, others detached themselves from the political arena, concentrating on their trade, while others remained indifferent to the political upheaval of the 1950's.

However, after Kenya gained her political independence, the destiny of the Yemeni Arabs became linked inseparately to the rest of the communities in the newly emerging nation of Kenya.

This study would not be complete with a word or two about the position and condition of the Yemenis in the post-independent Kenya. The Yemenis have experienced a much greater degree of socio-cultural and economic changes. Those who opted to take up Kenyan citizenship have tried to integrate and socialize on a larger scale, with the other local

communities at the coast. They have taken full advantage of the economic and commercial opportunities presenting themselves in independent Kenya. The more successful businessmen are increasing trading with the Middle East, exporting Kenyan products to that part of the world, thus boasting economic development and growth in general.

There has been considerable social change and mobility within the community. The status of the women within the community has changed considerably. They are less inhibited and particularly more actively in the community's affairs, more girls acquire secular education and work for a living, thus supporting their families. However, in comparison to the women in other communities, their liberation is not complete, because their menfolk still dominate and dictate their movement. Religious conservatism still has its effect upon the community.

Of late, there has been a significant mobility within the community. A large number of Yemeni youth have been going to such countries as Saudi Arabia, Oman, The United Arab Emirates and North Yemen in search of employment. Like their forefathers, who had come to East Africa in search of a better life, the present generation is similarly turning towards the Middle East for more remunerative employment. Financial help sent by these Yemeni youths working outside to relatives in Kenya has positive economic effect and helps raise the standard

of living of many families. The life style of the Yemenis has also changed over the years, in terms of material acquisitions and comforts.

The natural death suffered by political organization and welfare societies has left the community without any kind of organization. Although there had been a higher degree of socialization and integration, the problem of full-integration still exists. Being a minority group, they are faced with the same kind of problems that the other minority communities face, although on a much smaller scale. In spite of the fact that Kenya is a multi-racial country, the Yemenis feel a certain degree of insecurity and discrimination against them. This can be seen in the wider context of tribalism in the country, where complaints are often heard of discrimination here or there, against this section of Kenyans by another.

In spite of increased economic prosperity enjoyed by some of the Yemeni businessmen, a significant portion of the community has been experiencing problems arising from the unemployment which drove many youths to greener pastures in the Middle East. A considerable number of young men remain unemployed.

There has also been a conflict of cultures within the community. There are those who believe that with greater socialization, the Yemenis are losing their distinct



identity. On the one hand, there are those who strongly believe that this kind of integration is beneficial to the community, since they would then not stand out as foreigners. Yet on the other hand, there are those who believe that some kind of organization would help preserve the community's cultural heritage and identity and serve to provide and promote health, social and educational services for the community, along the lines of the Ismaili Association or the Hindu Union.

The latter school of thought holds that there is need for organised leadership within the Yemeni community so that they could attempt to overcome some of the problems that they are facing in independent Kenya.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

A.

PRIMARY SOURCES

B.

SECONDARY SOURCES

C.

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D.

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E.

ORAL INTERVIEWS

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	PC/COAST/1/1/231	Proposed Re-organization of Coast Administration.
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	PC/COAST/1/1/262	Prohibition of Immigration without Passports.
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PC/COAST/1/3/153	Arab Clans and Families Industries: Hides and Skins 1928-1939.
PC/COAST/2/9/9	Specific Trade and Industries: Hides and Skins 1928-1939.
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	DS/MSA/1/2	Annual Reports 1909
	DS/MSA/1/3	Annual Reports 1921-1930.
	DS/MSA/1/4	Annual Reports 1931-1940.
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	DS/MSA/2/1	Handing over Reports.
	DS/MSA/3/1	Political Record Book 1914.
	DS/MSA/3/2	Political Record Book 1914.
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(ii) LAMU DISTRICT

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(iii) MALINDI DISTRICT

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E.

ORAL INTERVIEWS

Oral Interviewees were:

Sheikh Abubakar Zubedi  
Mr. Mahfudh Bawazir  
Sharif Abdallah Salim  
Sharif Abdulrahman Shatry  
Sheikh Ali Muhsin  
Mr. Muhammed Bayusuf  
Mr. Abdallah Said Zubedi  
Mr. Awadh Saleh bin Sherman  
Sheikh Ahmed bin Taib  
Sheikh Ali bin Taib  
Sheikh Omar bin Dahman  
Mr. Mansoor Nanji  
Mr. Said Gohran  
Mr. Swaleh Mahdi  
Mr. Badru Swaleh  
Mr. Kassim bin Omar  
Mr. Ahmed Nanji  
Mzee Nasib  
Mr. Muhammed Shaush  
Mr. Edward Rodwell  
Mr. Said A. Bujra  
Mr. Ahmed S. Bujra

Sheikh Abdallah Bakithir

Mr. Muhammed Faraj-al-Jabry

Mr. Muhammed A. Taib

Sheikh Salim A. Jeizan

Mr. Zulfiquar Abdullah

Mr. Mula Jooger M. Tayeb

Sharif Muhammed Al-Bir

Mr. Abdallah Batheif

Mr. Abdulaziz S. Bajaber