INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

UMI®

University of Alberta

ORIGINARY SYNCRETISM AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF SWAHILI IDENTITY, 1890 – 1964: AN EXPERIMENT IN HISTORY AND THEORY

by

Louise Rolingher ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

in

History

Department of History and Classics

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring 2002

National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-69652-9

Canada

University of Alberta

Library Release Form

Name of Author: Louise Rolingher

Title of Thesis: Originary Syncretism and the Construction of Swahili Identity, 1890 to 1964: An Experiment in History and Theory

Degree: Master of Arts

Year this Degree Granted: 2002

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Library to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves all other publication and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis, and except as herein before provided, neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.

Louise

1802, 9929 Saskatchewan Drive
Edmonton, Alberta T6E 5J9

Jan. 14, 2002

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Originary Syncretism and the Construction of Swahili Identity, 1890 – 1964: An Experiment in History and Theory submitted by Louise Rolingher in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History.

E. A. McDougall

Dr. E. Ann McDougall, Supervisor
Professor, Dept. of History and Classics

Frances Swyripa

Dr. Frances A. Swyripa
Associate Professor, Dept. of History and Classics

Dr. George Lang
Professor, Dept. of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies

Date approved: 21 December 2001

University of Alberta
Abstract

ORIGINARY SYNCRETISM AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF SWAHILI IDENTITY, 1890 – 1964: AN EXPERIMENT IN HISTORY AND THEORY

By Louise Rolingher

Chairperson of the Supervisory Committee:Professor E. Ann McDougall
Department of History and Classics

Since the eighth century, the East African coast was part of the Indian Ocean system of economic and cultural exchange. The identity of the coastal people was, and still is, comprised of an ambiguous and shifting mix of Arab and African, ex-slave and freeborn. Controversy has surrounded the study of Swahili identity at least since European colonization in the nineteenth century and continues today. This study proposes a problematic for a new approach to examination of Swahili identity based on French anthropologist Jean-Loup Amselle's concept of "originary syncretism." Against earlier studies that assumed essential identities—e.g., African or Arab--this approach proposes a process of cultural mixing through ongoing "conflictual and peaceful practices" in which identity is negotiated. Islam, slavery, gender and colonialism each serve as fields within that problematic in which to experiment with postmodern and postcolonial theories of identity construction in late nineteenth and twentieth-century East Africa, especially present-day Kenya, Tanzania and Zanzibar.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction, Who Are the WaSwahili..1

Chapter 1, Constructing Islam..10

Chapter 2, Deconstructing Slavery..29

Chapter 3, Reviving Gender..45

Chapter 4, Rewriting Colonialism..57

Conclusion, Reassembling the Wreckage..70

Bibliography..73

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Even a small project like this cannot be completed without the support of many people. I owe much to my family, colleagues and teachers who helped in many ways to bring my dream to fruition. However, two people deserve special mention—my husband, Ernest Reinhold, for his endless patience and my supervisor, Dr. E. Ann McDougall, for her encouragement and guidance.

Introduction

WHO ARE THE WASWAHILI?[1]

> *Swahili self-understanding is enormously complex and has continuously adapted itself to the winds of change in culture and power that have blown along this coast [East Africa] for two thousand years.*
>
> *It has taken my people 50 years to move from being Negro to being black, to being Afro-American. How long is it going to take the Swahili to become African?*
>
> --Henry Louis Gates, Jr. [2]

> *We must question those ready-made syntheses, those groupings that we normally accept before any examination . . . We must also question those divisions or groupings with which we have become so familiar.*
>
> Michele Foucault[3]

When Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., challenged the Swahili people to recognize their African (slave) roots in his 1999 television series, *Wonders of the African World*, his African-American-centred statements, both verbal and visual, about Africa and Africans provoked a firestorm of controversy among scholars, African and Western, on academic discussion lists and even in the popular press.[4] Wittingly or unwittingly, Gates tapped into one of the most sensitive topics in East African history and politics.

Today those winds of change he speaks of are blowing again along the East African coast, now at gale-force. On December 29, 2000, the Pan African News Agency reported that political conflict on the island of Zanzibar was threatening both the economy and the lives of the island's residents. Bombers have targeted government buildings and riots have broken out on the neighboring island of Pemba. Some fear it will spill over onto the adjacent Tanzanian mainland. Human rights groups fear that the kind of "ethnic cleansing" we saw in Rwanda is imminent. Underlying the violence is a struggle for power; and in post-independence East Africa, identity decides who holds power and who does not. For the Swahili-speaking people of the region the "self-understanding" Gates speaks of is indeed complex. It is comprised of an ambiguous and shifting mix of Arab and African, ex-slave and freeborn. Successive colonial and post-independence governments and politicians have manipulated that identity to their own ends. It is a deadly game being played on a cultural field.

---

[1] Carol M. Eastman, "Who Are the Waswahili?," *Africa* XLI, no. 3 (1975).

[2] Jr. Gates, Henry Louis, *Wonders of the African World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999) 152.

[3] Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge & the Discourse of Language* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972) 22.

[4] The controversy has been well documented on discussion lists like H-Africa and in the electronic journal West Africa Review that has published many articles in response to the program and to Ali Mazrui's critique in which he described "Wonders" as a case of "Black Orientalism." H-Africa, http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~africa/ and Ali A. Mazrui, "A Preliminary Critique of the Tv Series by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.," *West African Review* 1, no. 2 (2000)., Ali A. Mazrui, "Black Orientalism," *West African Review* 1, no. 2 (2000). and Ibid. Mazrui is the most prominent of a small, but significant Swahili diaspora found today in other parts of Africa, in Asia, Europe and North America who call themselves the *muhajirina*--the exiles. It is therefore no surprise to find that most, though not all of the discussion about Gates' comments has taken place outside East Africa.

The question Gates raised is also one asked repeatedly in the academic literature on Swahili culture, be it history, anthropology, linguistics or political science. The "problem of Swahili identity" as James de Vere Allen has referred to it, has a complicated history. [5] Allen locates that "problem" in Western historiography and the "Arab Myth," a notion that the Swahili were descended Arab settlers whose social life and culture owed little to Africa. Would-be British colonizers looking for racially pure and tribally oriented African societies could not fit the people they found when they arrived into their neat categories so they simply declared them to be Arab settlers or in some cases Shirazis supposed to have come from the Persian city of Shiraz. That Swahilis at various times made and still make similar claims has only served to obscure the issue further.[6]

Some scholars have declared the debate over Swahili identity to be "time- worn" and essentially resolved or claim it is a Eurocentric "muddle" having more to do with the scholars than the Swahili.[7] However, despite these claims, the debate continues.[8] Some scholars assert that today, although many East African people participate in what can be called a "Swahili pattern of culture," there are a few groups who are considered "core" (e.g. The Twelve Tribes of Mombassa) and there are the "others" (Africans and more especially—slaves and their descendants) who are considered outsiders (Eastman 1994,).[9] Allen and a few others claim that the boundaries between "core" and "others" (between Arab and African) whether cultural, linguistic or territorial are (and probably always were) more variable—sometimes fluid, sometimes fixed– than such designations imply (e.g. Willis 1993 and Reese 1996). Where the boundaries lie between insiders and outsiders at any given time is, and was, contingent upon specific historical, social and economic contexts.

---

[5] James de Vere Allen, *Swahili Origins: Swahili Culture and the Shunwaya Phenomenon* (London: James Curry, 1993) 1.

[6] See Gates, *Wonders of the African World.* and James de Vere Allen, "The 'Shirazi' Problem in East African Coastal History," *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde* 28 (1982).

In his 1998 book, *Mestizo Logics*, anthropologist Jean Loup-Amselle calls for an abandonment of "ethnological reason" that "extracts, refines, and classifies with the intention of isolating types." Against this search for types, he offers a "continuist approach that would emphasize an originary syncretism or lack of distinctness." On close examination, he says, every culture "dissolves into a series of conflictual or peaceful practices used by its actors to continually renegotiate their identity."[10]

---

[7] Marc J. Swartz, "Politics, Ethnicity, and Social Structure: The Decline of an Urban Community During the Twentieth Century," *Ethnology* 35, no. 4 (1996): 235. and Alamin M. Mazrui and Ibrahim Noor Shariff, *The Swahili: Idiom and Identity of an African People* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1994) 131.

[8] In some cases, this debate has become personal. Swartz asserts that those who believe all Swahili-speaking people have a right to claim Swahili ethnicity (he names Carol Eastman, Pat Caplan and François Le Guennec-Coppans as the culprits) are those who have not actually "worked with Swahili communities and their history." Among those who have actually worked in Swahili communities (narrowly defined), he includes himself, John Middleton, Derek Nurse and Thomas Spear among others. Swartz, "Politics, Ethnicity, and Social Structure: The Decline of an Urban Community During the Twentieth Century," 235. However, his argument lacks some credibility if we note that James de Vere Allen who puts himself strongly in the first camp, was the curator of the Lamu Museum and spent much of his life in East Africa.

[9] Carol M. Eastman, "Who Are the Waswahili?," *Africa* XLI, no. 3 (1975): 85.

The purpose of this work is to examine ways in which such an approach might allow me to think differently about Swahili identity—to, as Foucault demands, question the underpinnings of the field. This is not a search for the threads of "Arabness" or "Africanness." The former, as we will see, is merely to repeat British attempts to divide East Africa between "natives" and "Arabs." The latter, as historian Michael N. Pearson has noted, is to engage in "an essentially non-academic debate over the place of the Swahili people in the modern nation-states of Africa."[11] My long-term goal is to explore the *processes* of cultural mixing and identity creation in the East African context, but that will require extensive work in archives and on the ground in East Africa. My aim here is to begin a process of de-familiarization—making the familiar strange—through re-examination not only of some well-known primary sources but, also, of some foundational secondary texts on Islam, slavery, gender and colonialism in East Africa. Taking Amselle's lead (which in turn derives from historical anthropologist James Clifford), I want to read historical texts in the way anthropologists have begun to read ethnography, i.e., as allegories of Western cultures replete with rhetorical strategies and unspoken ideologies.

Since I have declared this a project of de-familiarization, I will begin by reversing the usual procedure in historical texts of expounding a theory first and writing a history behind it. Of course, I have an ulterior motive. As a historian, I cannot write about theory without locating it in a historical context.

---

[10] Jean-Loup Amselle, *Mestizo Logics: Anthropology of Identity in Africa and Elsewhere*, trans. Claudia Royal (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998). I am indebted to Peter Mark for generously sharing his ideas and sources on cultural mixing, especially the work of Amselle.

[11] Michael N. Pearson, *Port Cities and Intruders: The Swahili Coast, India and Portugal in the Early Modern Era* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998) 17.

Even the name "Swahili" is contested and slippery, changing as it passes from the hands of one writer to another. The word itself comes from the Arabic *Sawahil* meaning coast. Most scholars note that "Swahili" is not name people gave or give themselves, but rather it is a language, more properly Kiswahili, a syncretic language with Bantu grammatical structures that incorporates many Arabic loan words. Over time, the language has absorbed other loan words from all the many people who have traded with or occupied the coast—Persian, Indian languages, Portuguese and more recently English. It is a history of cultural mixing written on the language itself. Today, Kiswahili is spoken not only on the coast where it originated, but also in central regions of the continent like the Republic of Congo and Uganda where it has been for a long time the language of the military [12]

Distinct dialects and groups developed in coastal areas and especially on the islands opposite what is now Tanzania and Kenya--Zanzibar, Pemba, Mombassa and Lamu among them. The people of the islands referred and still refer, to themselves as *WaHadimu*, *WaPemba*, *WatuWaMvita*, and *WaAmu*, all names associated with the places they lived or a particular history.[13]

Arabic and Persian documents in conjunction with archeological evidence place these people and their antecedents along the East African coast roughly from Mogadishu in present day Somalia to somewhere south of the Mozambique border. The mixing of populations and culture was a central feature of the new societies that gradually emerged in response to the exigencies of trade. A Greek guidebook for mariners, *The Periplus of the*

---

[12] Derek Nurse and Thomas J. Hinnebusch, *Swahili and Sabaki: A Linguistic History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 36.

[13] A.J.H. Prins, *The Swahili-Speaking Peoples of Zanzibar and the East African Coast (Arabs, Shirazi and Swahili)*, ed. Daryll Forde, vol. East Central Africa, Part XII, *Ethnographic Survey of Africa* (London: International African Institute, 1961) 16-20.

Erythraean Sea, written in the first century A.D. tells of "Arab captains and crews" who "trade and intermarry with the mainlanders of all the places and know their language."[14]

In the tenth century, the Arab geographer al-Mas'udi, visited the East African coast on several occasions. He described people he called *abābshi* ('Ethiopians") who had established settlements from the coast north of the Comoros Islands to *Sufala* (Sofala) in present day Mozambique as a "mixed population of Muslims and Zanj idolaters.[15]

From early times, Islam and slavery played a role in East African history. A Persian contemporary of Al-Mas'udi, Buzurg ibn Shahriyar of Ramhormuz, recorded a story portraying the links between trade, slavery and the coming of Islam to Africa in his *Kitab al-Ajaib al-Hind.* As Freeman-Grenville notes in his commentary, although much of Buzurg's book seems to be a record of sailor's tales and legends, some of it contains a kernel of truth. This particular story told to Buzurg by a sailor named Ismailawaih recounts the conversion to Islam of an African king captured by Ismailawaih and his crew and sold as a slave in Oman. The Omani master being a good Muslim taught his new slave "to pray and to fast, and [to learn] certain parts of the Koran." The master then sold him to another man who took him to Baghdad. There the king learned to speak Arabic, completed his study of the Koran and "prayed with the men in the mosques." Finally, he escaped from his master, made the *hajj* to Mecca and miraculously found his way back to his homeland. When Ismailawaih returned to Africa a few years later, he found that the man he had kidnapped and all of his people had become Muslims. Though wary of Ismailawaih, the king agreed to trade with him and asked him to tell his fellow Muslims "they may come here to us [to trade], as to brothers, Muslims like themselves."[16]

---

[14] Anonymous quoted in G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville, *The East African Coast: Select Documents from the First to the Earlier Nineteenth Century* (London: Collings, 1975) 2.

[15] Al-Mas'udi in Ibid., 14. and Allen, *Swahili Origins: Swahili Culture and the Shungwaya Phenomenon* 27.

Whether this account is true or not, archeological evidence now suggests people on the coast were practicing Islam as early as the eighth century. Mark Horton, working at Shanga on the island of Pate, has found what he believes is evidence of eighth- and ninth-century wooden mosques. On the island of Pemba, he has found a tenth-century mosque with evidence of earlier structures beneath it.[17]

In the fifteenth century, the Portuguese (and the odd Spaniard) began their explorations of East Africa. Some came as traders, most as conquerors. The official history of the Portuguese church and state speaks of the conflict between Christians and Muslims, but behind the scenes, it is likely that mixing was not uncommon. Occasionally, this mixing made its way into the official reports. Hans Mayr, a German who traveled with Francisco d'Almeida, conqueror of the cities of Mombasa and Kilwa, reported that a Spanish gunner and a convert to Islam, had thrown in his lot with the Mombasans. The gunner came to the attention of Almeida when he tried to prevent the sacking of the city by warning Almeida that the Mombasans were not cowards and would not surrender without a fight. Almeida offered the Spaniard his "protection and pardon," but the Spaniard refused.[18] The next day Almeida took Mombasa as he had taken Kilwa earlier. The official Portuguese stay on the coast lasted until a combined force of Swahilis and Omanis finally ousted them in 1729.

---

[16] Buzurg in Freeman-Grenville, *The East African Coast: Select Documents from the First to the Earlier Nineteenth Century* 9 – 13.

[17] Mark Horton, "Closing the Corridor: Archaeological and Architectural Evidence for Emerging Swahili Regional Autonomy," in *Continuity and Autonomy in Swahili Communities: Inland Influences and Strategies of Self-Determination*, ed. David J. Parkin, *Beitrage Zur Afrikanistik ; Bd. 48* (Wien: Institute fur Afrikanistik und Agyptologie der Universitat Wien; School of Oriental and African Studies, 1994) 17 – 18.

[18] Mayr in Freeman-Grenville, *The East African Coast: Select Documents from the First to the Earlier Nineteenth Century* 108.

By the mid-nineteenth century, when Seyyid Said, Sultan of Oman, moved his court to Zanzibar those Omanis and Swahilis had become the rulers on the East African coast. People captured in the interior and sold as slaves became the preferred form of labour on plantations established on Zanzibar to grow cloves for the Indian market and on the coast to produce grain to feed the burgeoning population.[19] Less than half a century later, the slaves outnumbered their Swahili masters nearly three or four to one in some areas.[20]

The masters, Swahili and Omani, much like the master of the king of Sofala in Buzurg's story, converted their slaves to Islam and brought them, if only nominally, into their own Islamic and Swahili culture. Including slaves in Swahili society had consequences for both masters and slaves. Ritual practice and marriage customs were two areas in which both mixing and contestation featured prominently.

Although from the masters' perspective conversion of slaves could often be superficial, slaves took it seriously creating their own versions of religious practice to claim their place in coastal society. On Lamu, slaves excluded from their masters' religious practice created their own unique performances of the *Maulidi*, the celebration of the Prophet's birthday. The Maulidi ya Kiswahili became a competitive spectacle in which rival groups of slaves and ex–slaves vied to outdo one another. The masters soon became involved as sponsors of these competing groups.

Biological mixing and cultural mixing came together in the *suria* (concubines), but mixing is no simple matter of homogenization. Here it was fraught with tension. The masters who took slave women as concubines created a problematic new social group—

---

[19] The seminal work on slavery in this period is Frederick Cooper, *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa, Yale Historical Publications: Miscellany; 113* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 1977).

[20] Richard Francis Burton, *Zanzibar: City, Island and Coast*, 1st reprint ed. (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1872; reprint, 1967) 81.

their sons, the *wazalia* (sing. *mzalia*). While in the context of Islam children of these concubines should have been recognized as full members of the masters' families, in some Swahili cultures, that was not always the case. Daughters sometimes remained slaves while their brothers were considered "free" –free, but not equal to either their slave or "free-born" siblings. In a society where equality of status was paramount in choosing a marriage partner, whom would they (and their children) marry? To what name would they answer – slave or free? Moreover, what consequences might answers to that question have for Swahili society?

At the same time that slavery was on the rise, new colonial 'masters' from Germany and Britain were beginning to compete with the Swahili for markets and labour in East Africa. As they had in India and elsewhere, the British exacerbated, and in some cases created, tensions between local groups by favouring one over another--Arab over Swahili and Swahili over "African" (i.e., slaves and by the 20th century, ex-slaves). Those who could chose identities that provided the greatest economic and political advantage. Swahili identity then became the contested ground upon which Islam, slavery, gender and colonialism battled *and* embraced--mixed and pulled apart--as people struggled to define themselves in the new social and economic order.

This period, from the rise of plantation slavery through the period of British colonial rule (approximately, as my title indicates, 1890 to 1964), provides the historical context for my theoretical explorations. Amselle's originary syncretism provides the framework in which to explore a number of theoretical approaches to east African identity. Islam, slavery, gender and colonialism are the fields in which this experiment takes place. Although each field presents specific problems, for this project they are not discrete wholes or reified categories. They are unbounded fields open to the air where I can play with ideas and theories within the framework I am creating.

Chapter 1

CONSTRUCTING ISLAM

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

Ian Hacking[21]

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

Jean-Loup Amselle[22]

Most scholars who write about East African history and culture refer to Islam as a central feature of Swahili identity. The literature on Islam in East Africa, however, is mostly scattered in texts dealing with other aspects of that history and culture. Among those scholars who do write primarily about Islam, one of the most frequently cited sources is J. Spencer Trimingham's *Islam in East Africa.* Trimingham falls into the camp of those who insisted that Swahili culture owed more to its Arab than to its African forbearers. He begins his review of Swahili history with the statement, "The history of Islam in East Africa belongs more to the history of the Indian Ocean than to African history."[23] From his account of the people and their history, it is clear that he sees the syncretic nature of Swahili society and the role Islam plays in it. The second chapter of his book gives a detailed description of the many and varied "contemporary Muslim communities," and speculates on their origins. However, for him Islam as a "revealed religion" is the archetypal reified category. It is universal, unchanging and unbending—

---

[21] Ian Hacking, "Symposium Papers, Comments and an Abstract: The Sociology of Knowledge About Child Abuse," *No&ucirc;s* 22, no. 1 (1988): 57.

[22] Amselle, *Mestizo Logics: Anthropology of Identity in Africa and Elsewhere* 41.

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

"a way of life" imposed from above. He uses the following diagram to illustrate his point:

> **Islam → Bantu Culture = creative tension = synthesis in the Swahili Culture**[24]

The arrow from Islam to Bantu Culture is the essence of his argument. For him, African cultures were passive and Islam aggressive. Hence, the "creative tension" was a one-way street. This top-down analysis then leads him to see the spread of Islam into the interior as "penetration" facilitated by the European colonial presence. He identifies a number of possible "agents" -- "guides, interpreters, soldiers and servants" as well as the merchants from the coast—all of who might profitably be investigated in greater depth. However, his "invasion" metaphor leads him to dismiss this line of enquiry by attributing conversion of inland people to "unconscious" processes and a handful of Qur'an teachers.[25]

Moreover, Trimingham assumes that Muslim influence outside the coastal cities is something that arises suddenly in the late nineteenth century with the arrival of German and British colonizers. It is very difficult to assess from the literature where this idea originates. There are instances of trading centres that sprang up over short periods in the interior. For example, David Sperling notes the increase in the population of town of Ujiji located on one of the caravan routes to the interior of present-day Tanzania. Between 1860 and Stanley's visit there in 1872, Ujiji grew from an insignificant town to a trade centre whose population, though transient and mostly slaves, numbered seven to eight thousand. According to Stanley, twelve dozen of the residents were "Arab" traders (Afro-Arab Swahili from the coast).[26] Another such centre, Tabora, is said to have become "the citadel of Islam in the interior" by 1912.[27] However, Sperling also adds that not all trading centres showed a significant Muslim influence. Those centres that did see an increase in their Muslim populations seem not to have affected the surrounding rural areas until the 1950s and is some cases only in very recent times.[28] A reading of John Illiffe's account of late nineteenth-century changes in Tanganyika seems to indicate that the missionaries, focused on eliminating the slave trade and seeing Islam as their competitor for souls, may have been the "agents" of the notion of a marked increase in Muslim converts.[29] These were hardly unbiased accounts by disinterested observers.

---

[24] Ibid., 66.

[25] Ibid., 53 – 56.

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

Michael N. Pearson's review of the literature calls attention to two possibilities here. On the one hand, there are some fragments of information in Portuguese accounts that suggest settlements of Muslim traders already existed in the interior as early or, even before, the arrival of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. On the other hand, it may simply be the case that the relative lack of information for the earlier period creates the impression of a sudden increase in Muslims in the nineteenth century when more Europeans were making their way there and reporting their findings.[30]

More important for the study of the relationship of Islam to Swahili identity, Trimingham set the agenda. That agenda bears the mark of philosopher Ian Hacking's looping effect. Hacking argues that the classification of knowledge has a kind of "feedback" effect in which our categorization of certain kinds of knowledge shapes the object of our study, which in turn influences the way we classify that knowledge. Classification and knowledge are continuously folding back on one another.[31]

---

[27] Becker quoted in Ibid., 295.

[28] Ibid.

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

[30] Michael N. Pearson, *Port Cities and Intruders: The Swahili Coast, India and Portugal in the Early Modern Era* 86 – 100.

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

Trimingham's one-way penetration of Islam appears to dominate the historical discourse. August Nimtz, another oft-cited source, disagrees with Trimingham's claim that the presence of Europeans facilitated the spread the spread of Islam, but not his assumption that there was a sudden and numerically significant increase in converts. He has a difficult time finding evidence for this new wave of Islam except in a few reports from frightened German administrators and one missionary who complained that the Muslims were impeding his efforts to recruit converts. Nevertheless, he asserts that the cause of this perceived rise in Muslim converts was the result of an ideological vacuum created by the German defeat of the Maji Maji rebellion.[32] He looks for various agents as well and finds that the *turuq*, the Sufi brotherhoods, have stepped in to fill the void.

Nimtz' thesis has led to much speculation about how the turuq accomplished their work. A favourite site for examination has been charisma, the personal power of individual Sufi saints to attract followers who swelled the ranks of the brotherhoods. François Constantin, drawing on an ethnography of Lamu society by Egyptian anthropologist Abdul Hamid M. el-Zein,[33] examined the life of one Sufi saint known to his followers as Habib Saleh to find the "seed" of charisma.[34] Constantin decided that charisma resulted from a combination of personal (personality and power) and religious factors (his perceived link to the Prophet, *baraka*, defined by Constantin as Islamic knowledge, and his reputation as a scholar) with broader social factors (social upheaval). Habib Saleh was the right man in the right place at the right time. In the end, he seems to confirm Nimtz' assertion that Sufism somehow filled a void—in this case a need for stability during a period of political instability (the period of European colonization).

---

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

[33] See page 21 below.

[34] Francois Constantin, "Charisma and the Crisis of Power in East Africa," in *Charisma and Brotherhood in African Islam*, ed. Donal. B. Cruise O'Brien and C. Coulon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) 69.

Another issue for Trimingham was the contrast between a "pure Islam" and "popular Islam." This as Pearson notes in his *Port Cities* is a recurring theme throughout the history of Islam in Africa and elsewhere. Randall Pouwels takes up this theme in his *Horn and the Crescent* and adds it to the concern to discover how Islam spreads. He talks about "high Islam" of the Qur'an and *ulama* (learned teachers) vs. "popular Islam," Islam practiced by ordinary Africans. He places the increase in the spread of Islam somewhat earlier, for him the arrival of Seyyid Said and his court at Zanzibar in the 1840s is a key factor. He examines at length the changes brought about by the introduction of new "types" of ulama--administrative types who brought literacy and a "higher" form of Islam and charismatic types who gave rise to Sufi brotherhoods. In *The Horn and the Crescent*, Pouwels' version of penetration is one of depth rather than breadth. Although he notes that the appeal of these new ulama was for the most part "an elitist phenomenon," he wants to ascribe agency to the charismatic Sufis who he sees as some how more "African" than "Arab." Thus, in his recent article in the *History of Islam in Africa*, we find that the turuq have become the agents responsible for spreading Islam. At the same time, they are also agents of a not-so-creative ethnic tension and conflict.[35]

It is not that these lines of enquiry are not interesting, even suggestive. It is more the case that this particular loop is not getting us beyond structural paradigms and debates about theological correctness that say little about the processes involved and a view that "Islam itself" can explain all. We need to ask different questions or we will never find new answers. A rethinking of the "unconscious process" by which some of Trimingham's "agents" reproduced Swahili culture, including Islam, is precisely what I am trying to do here. I am questioning the familiar, as Foucault prescribes, in order to reveal the not so "unconscious" (previously unseen) aspects of that process.

---

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

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

Zein's fellow anthropologists recognized *Sacred Meadows* as an original and important contribution to anthropological theory at the time. However, historians have been more critical, citing his lack of attribution of sources (i.e., his informants) and a-historicity as his major failings.[36] Patricia Romero believed that Zein, because he was an Egyptian and a Muslim, should have been in a better position than non-Muslim, Western scholars, to get the story right.[37] However, according to her informants, Zein got it wrong, especially with regard to the story of Lamu's Sufi saint, Habib Saleh. He was not, as Zein postulated, a friend to slaves and an enemy of the Lamu Swahili elites. As a *sharifu*, a descendant of the Prophet, he may have been charitable in his attitude toward slaves, but only to the extent that Islamic law and custom decreed. Her recent book is an attempt to counter what she sees as a "hopelessly ahistorical" and "confusing" work by giving a descriptive chronology of Lamu society from its origins (as far as they are known) to the present day (the late 1990s).

---

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

[37] Romero seems quite oblivious to the complicated position Zein really occupied. See pages 17 and 18 below.

Randall Pouwels subsequently reviewed Romero's *Lamu*.[38] He commended her analysis of colonial figures, which he felt was sufficiently skeptical of their motives in setting colonial policy, but he noted that she appeared to be blind to the motives of her Swahili informants on Lamu. More important, Romero's attempts to discuss the history of Islam and her "accounts of Shi'a, the Hadrami shurafa and the Alawiyya" were full of errors. He asserts that because her knowledge of Islam is superficial, she "underutilizes or mishandles available published sources" (e.g. his translation of Shaykh Abdallah S. Farsy's *The Shafi'I Ulama of East Africa, 1820-1970).*[39] It is apparent from Romero's comments, however, that her informant, Sheikh Ahmed Jahadhmy, who "read drafts of every chapter and corrected factual errors", heavily influenced her representation of Islam.[40]

Zein could not respond to the criticisms and debate carried on by Romero and Pouwels because he died in 1979.[41] From the forward to his book written by his advisor Lloyd Fallers, it seems that like Romero (and Jahadhmy) and Pouwels he had been enmeshed in a debate about the rightness and wrongness of various versions of Islam, or more properly, Islamic practice from the first day he arrived on Lamu. Fallers pointed out the difficulties Zein and his family faced in Lamu, contrary to Romero's assumption, precisely *because* they were Muslims:

---

[38] Randall L. Pouwels, "Review," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 32, no. 1 (1999).

[39] It would have been useful have some examples of how Romero "mishandles" the sources, but Pouwels leaves us in suspense in this regard.

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

[41] Zein died of a heart attack, but rumour has it that he was killed in a car accident at the moment a curse was being pronounced on him by some of those he had offended on Lamu. Scott Reese, personal communication, Tue, 05 June 2001. See my brief discussion of rumour in history below, note 113, page 49.

> [I]f their background gave them an initial intellectual advantage, it also imposed burdens that non-Muslims would not have faced. Like members of Muslim communities elsewhere, the Lamuans naturally assume that their reception of Islam is the correct one, and so they first regarded the Zeins [Zein's wife Laila and son Hani accompanied him to Lamu] as ignorant, if not positively heretical. The demands made upon them to correct their errant ways were sometimes quite uncomfortable.[42]

Perhaps because of this experience or because he was a Muslim, an Egyptian *and* a scholar in the West,[43] Zein was concerned to find a way to move beyond similar debates in anthropology—to escape from his own loop. In the last article he published before his death, Zein examined works by some of the major anthropological and Islamicist theorists of his day and their arguments about anthropology and Islamic theology as tools for understanding the interplay between religion and social behaviour. The anthropologists included Clifford Geertz (Islam as a historically constituted ideology), Vincent Crapanzano (a Freudian interpretation of Moroccan myths), and D.F. Eickelman (a Weberian interpretation of Maraboutism in Morocco). The Islamicists were Abdallah S. Bujra (religious politics) and Michael Gilsenan (Sufism and charisma).[44]

---

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

[43] For a description of the position of the scholar who bridges the East/West divide, my discussion of Lila Abu Lughod on page 25 below and of the post-colonial scholar in Chapter 2.

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

Zein argued that neither the ideological assumptions of anthropologists nor the theological assumptions of Bujra and Gilsenan could account for the everyday experience of a given society because all of these approaches require some kind of universal and fixed notion about the nature of "man, God, history, consciousness, and meaning." They all portray Islam as a closed cultural system. Further, they all assume that religion, economy and history are things—bounded entities—that exist outside or above the societies in which people construct relationships with others and with their environment on a daily basis.

Today, such ideas are commonplace, though sometimes contested, among anthropologists, sociologists, cultural studies scholars and historians. The reified category is under attack from all sides.[45] Examining the daily practices of ordinary people, as Zein advocated both in *Sacred Meadows* and in his later article, is evident in much current scholarship (especially the influential work by Michele de Certeau, 1984, *The Practice of Everyday Life*). Some postmodernist and postcolonial scholars now bemoan the lack of historicity in theoretical and philosophical approaches to various fields of study in the humanities and social sciences. The quintessential postmodern scholar Fredric Jameson, looking for a way out of the "vicious circle" created by the "hegemony of theories of textuality and textualization," offers instead "historicism." He asserts that in order to "play the game" scholars and critics are trapped by their need to agree with "basic presuppositions of [their] general problem field" which "traditional positions . . . refuse to advance." Historical analysis and an assertion of the "real" offer a way out.[46]

---

[45] For an excellent review of the culture wars see Robert Brightman, 1995, "Forget Culture: Replacement, Transcendence, Relexification," *Cultural Anthropology* 10(4) 509 – 546.

[46] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993) 94. Jameson uses the terms history and historicism to refer not only to the contextualisation of events in a diachronic narrative. He is also referring to what he sees as the demise of the Marxist sense of history as dialectic. He has long held that Marxism is the point at which theory and history find common ground. See his comments in the preface to *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981) 13-14. I am well aware that Jameson is a

"Postcolonial" anthropologists like Lila Abu-Lughod desire to historicize and contextualize the study of religion, tying their observations to a past as well as the present in order to appreciate their subjects more fully.[47] This may seem flattering to us as historians, but the example of the history of Islam in East Africa demonstrates that "history" is not an answer in itself. "Loops" and "vicious circles," plague historians as well as literary critics and anthropologists.

As an ideal, focusing on change over time and the mundane details of the everyday are laudable goals, especially for one who aspires to write social or cultural history. Such a focus would indeed expand our picture of the lives of ordinary people past and present. However, while Jameson and Abu-Lughod have to deal with selecting from an overabundance of information, the situation for the historian of Africa is different.[48] The evidence we work with is often at best uneven and in many cases almost nonexistent. We sometimes have to work from fragments or from very one-sided materials—both written and oral. More often than not, we have to approach our subject matter obliquely "writing against the grain." In an effort to bridge gaps, writing history in the African context (especially the history of slaves and other subalterns) can sometimes become a search for theory.

But, which theory or theories should we choose? Abu-Lughod, inspired by Edward Said's *Orientalism,* notes, "In popular and much scholarly thinking in the West, Islam is perceived as all-determining. This view corresponds to that of many Muslims

---

controversial figure among post-colonial theorists particularly for his characterization of "third world literature" as non-canonical. As Aijaz Ahmad points out, Jameson takes his Hegel seriously viewing societies outside the West as societies without history and therefore outside "Civilization."Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literature* (London: Verso, 1992) 95 – 122. However, as an important actor in the debates on postmodernism, his views on history are pertinent here.

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

[48] See my reference to Pearson, page 18 above.

who believe that they should indeed be guided by the ideals of Islamic faith and practice." As someone who is as she says "between" both worlds, she is concerned to demonstrate "that not all events . . . can be explained by reference to Islam."[49]

For me, the problem is not so much one of explaining events without reference to Islam, but of weaving between polar opposites. How can I talk about Islam and identity without assuming Islam explains everything? How can I talk about Islam and identity without assuming Islam explains nothing? Here, I believe, Amselle's notions of "originary syncretism" and negotiation are important. They are important because they point to a process always underway and to relationships between individuals as well as groups.

Through all of my reading both about Islam and about slavery in East Africa, I have been struck by the fact that while everyone talks about how masters converted their slaves to Islam, few seriously consider the slaves to be "agents" or even significant in the either the spread or construction of Islam in East Africa.[50] Slaves are portrayed as passive recipients of a deficient form of Islam or if not entirely passive then perpetual outsiders with no claim to a place in Muslim and "Swahili" identity.

Trimingham talked about porters and *askaris* (soldiers) as "agents," but he forgot to tell us that many were slaves or ex-slaves. Frederick Cooper reported in *Plantation Slavery* that nearly 140,000 slaves were imported into Zanzibar at the height of the plantation economy—1850 – 1875.[51] Many died and some escaped, but the number who stayed were significant and the process was more visible (to Westerners) for a longer period than was the case with people in the interior.

---

[49] Abu Lughod, *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories* 23.

[50] Many scholars who insist that the Swahili are Africans prefer not to discuss how that identity is related to slavery. One exception is Carol Eastman whose work I discuss in Chapter 3.

[51] This is not an unproblematic number. Richard Burton wrote in 1859 that estimates of the total population of Zanzibar ranged from 100,000 to 1,000,000. When he asked Seyyid Said how many "subjects" he had on the island, the Sultan replied, "How can I know when I cannot tell you how many there are in my own house?" He finally settled on 300,000 as a compromise and estimated the slave population at between two thirds and three quarters. Burton, *Zanzibar: City, Island and Coast* 312.. Abdul Sheriff has proposed that the numbers of slaves in any given area—island or coast--fluctuated widely as the

At about the same time that Zein was writing his critique of Clifford Geertz, Cooper published an article on Islam as hegemonic ideology in the Swahili culture of the nineteenth century. He wrote it in the wake of Edward Said's influential, but highly controversial book *Orientalism*. *Orientalism*, originally published in 1978, was a critique of the representation of Islam as the "other" or binary opposite of the West from the Greeks to the present. Referring to Western power, Said cited Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony as the means by which dominant classes or groups manufacture consent to their rule among the dominated.[52] Cooper, an economic and social historian, gave Said's work a mere footnote, but in his article he attempted to find a relationship between Islam and slavery without resorting to "orientalist" stereotypes used by Islamicist scholars including Said's arch nemesis Bernard Lewis for whom Islam was (and is) always the "determining factor" of analysis.[53] He asserted that while no such entity as "Islamic slavery" existed, there was a connection between religion and slavery in the way masters characterized their relationship to their slaves. He drew on Clifford Geertz' concept of religion as an ideology grounded in specific historical circumstances (see the discussion of Zein above) and married it to an interpretation of Gramsci similar to Said's.

---

export demand for cloves, grains and oils rose and fell throughout the nineteenth century. Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770 - 1873* (London: James Currey, 1987) 33-61. Nevertheless, slaves remained a significant portion of the population along the coast even after slavery was officially abolished by Said's grandson, Seyyid Hamoud bin Mohamed bin Said in 1897.

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

[53] Frederick Cooper, "Islam and Cultural Hegemony," in *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa*, ed. Paul E. Lovejoy (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1981) 273. Cooper was particularly critical of Lewis for talking about "Islam's attitude" toward racism. Islam he noted does not have attitudes, people do. Unfortunately, neither his article nor Said's work, including his later book, *Culture and Imperialism*, have changed this kind of discourse. We have only to pick up a newspaper on any given day to find references to "Islamic" terrorism or similar discourses.

The nineteenth century was a turbulent one for the Omanis and the Swahili elites. Zanzibar and all of East Africa was being drawn ever more tightly into growing capitalist world of the Europeans at the same moment they began their experiment with large-scale agriculture. The British attack on the slave trade gradually became more effective over the nineteenth century. Declining markets in slaves meant merchants had to look for alternatives. They found it, if briefly, in the production of cloves on Zanzibar and grains on the coast.[54] Control over the "means of production," the slaves, was never complete and often fragile. Slaves could and did run away or rebel.[55] While some masters might use physical discipline to keep production on schedule, it was generally more profitable and less difficult to resort to older relationships of reciprocity like giving slaves their own land, allowing some to accumulate wealth through various means and even to purchase their own slaves in some cases. However, on Zanzibar to some extent, but especially on the coastal plantations where grains were the major crop, the demands of production sometimes meant a change in this unspoken agreement—longer hours and fewer benefits. Thus, Cooper argued that the masters had to find ways to convince slaves to accept these changes and that way was through the "hegemonic ideology" of Islam.

One of Zein's main criticisms of Geertz was that while Geertz acknowledged the historical specificity of Islam in particular places-- Morocco and Indonesia--he, nevertheless, continued to insist on a universal, bounded Islam that floats above all societies in which it is the predominant religion. In both societies, the *Ulama*, the more learned members, represent this universal Islam by separating "themselves from local interpretations or the specifications of a particular history".[56] Cooper, following Geertz, assumes the universal concept of Islam rather than the historically particular by insisting that the Ulama and especially the leaders of the Sufi brotherhoods were the East African equivalent of Gramsci's "intellectuals"—the individuals whose task it is to convince the masses that the ideology of the ruling class should be the ideology of all. Although he argues against an "Islamic slavery" on the grounds that to do so "puts more of a burden on the significance of religion than it can possibly bear, " he later insists on its universality. "The particular importance of Islam . . . lies in the fixity and evocative power of the written word" and the "aura of permanence" that conveys.[57]

---

[54] Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770 - 1873* 49.

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

Another anthropologist, Talal Asad, has indirectly taken up Zein's cause calling into question Geertz' theories of religion and ideology. Although he grounds his analysis in the historical development of Christianity, his arguments with Geertz are much the same as Zein's. In contrast to Geertz' focus on meaning, symbols and ideology, Asad proposes a constructivist approach, one that sees religion not as something already there, but as something created out of power relations between people and groups of people in specific historical and societal contexts. He reminds us in another essay that orthodoxy in Muslim communities and states has always been subject to competing discourses, especially in "conditions of change and contest."[58] Asad draws loosely on Foucault's concept of the relationship between power and knowledge. Individuals and groups in a given society assert power through discourses about right practice, but other individuals and groups may contest those discourses in order to assert their own place in that society.[59] By taking such an approach, we can then look at Islam and Swahili identity as ongoing construction projects couched in competing discourses between masters and slaves—discourses as Foucault insists that have real effects in the world. Thinking about the process in terms of discourse rather than ideology allows a more fluid and nuanced analysis than the concept of an *a priori* universal religion. It also allows multiple discourses to be in play at the same time—an important point when I come to gender and colonialism.

---

[56] Abdul Hamid Mohamed el Zein, "Beyond Ideology and Theology: The Search for the Anthropology of Islam," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6 (1977): 241.

[57] Cooper, "Islam and Cultural Hegemony," 273 & 97.

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

Much of Cooper's argument draws directly from *Sacred Meadows*, especially the celebration of the *Maulidi ya Kiswahili*.[60] *Maulidi*, the celebration of the Prophet's birth, in Zein's work and in many studies of East and other parts of Africa, has been a favourite site for examining social relations in societies where Islam is the predominant religion. It has been analyzed as a ritual in which the power of the elite is displayed for the masses (Combs-Schilling), a sign appropriated by ex-slaves on Zanzibar to signify poetry (Fair), an example of resistance on the part of slaves (Glassman) and a ritual that maintains Arab hegemony on Pemba today (Goldman).[61] For Zein, as a major social and religious event on Lamu, it provided an insight into the social arrangements there.

---

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

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

[61] M.E. Combs-Shilling, *Sacred Performances: Islam, Sexuality, and Sacrifice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), Laura Fair, "Pastimes and Politics: A Social History of Zanzibar's Ng'ambo Community, 1890-1950" (Ph.D., University of Minnesota, 1994), Jonathon Glassman, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995) and Helle Goldman, "A Comparative Study of Swahili in Two Rural Communities in Pemba, Zanzibar, Tanzania" (Ph.D., New York University, 1996).

By the end of the nineteenth century, Lamu society had become highly stratified. At the top were the *wangwana* (people of the town)[62] who called themselves the *Wa Yumbili*. This group was divided into three. At the top were the *Wa Yumbili Pembe* followed by the *Wa Yumbili Ngombe*. At the bottom rung of the wangwana were the *Wa Yumbili Ponde*. Beneath these groups were the Comoros Islanders who were permanent outsiders and the slaves who were insiders, but without status. The manner in which each group celebrated the *Maulidi* signified their position in Lamu society. The Wa Yumbili Pembe and Wa Yumbili Ngombe celebrated the *Maulidi Barzanji*, a private and quiet ceremony performed in the mosque only by persons licensed to do so. The Wa Yumbili Ponde, the Comoros Islanders and the children of *souriyas* (concubines) celebrated their own Maulidi, the *Maulidi ya Rama*, in public with musical accompaniment and dancing.[63]

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

---

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

[63] Zein, *The Sacred Meadows: A Structural Analysis of Religious Symbolism in an East African Town* 19 & 41.

Initially, the wangwana used the competition between Bajuri and Jum'ani's followers to their advantage. They became mediators between, as well as backers of, the competing ex-slave groups. When the competition became too heated, the masters would step in temporarily reasserting their power. However, over time, the role of competitor eclipsed that of mediator. Controlling the followers of Bajuri and Jum'ani became less important than vying for greater status within their own group to such an extent that they began to sell their land to pay for increasingly lavish celebrations.[64] The masters then declared the Maulidi ya Kiswahili to be unorthodox, a secular event more to do with competition than religion. The title of Mwalim which in an earlier context had been used to signify a religious leader became synonymous with *fundi*, a secular term emphasizing the mechanics of competition and dramatic effect. In their eyes, celebrations of the Maulidi ya Kiswahili were "no longer rituals for the sake of God's blessings, but performances which mainly sought to attract other people's attention."[65] At that point, the Wangwana still had sufficient power to have the last word.

Cooper has resolutely argued against a Foucauldian approach to the analysis of power on the grounds that to embrace it would be to deny the very real power imbalances that now exist between the neo-colonial powers of the West (the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) and African nation states.[66] Cooper interprets Foucault's notion of power as "capillary" (presumably referring to the concept of biopower Foucault developed in his *History of Sexuality*) and rejects it because for him current relations between Africa and the West are most emphatically "arterial" and one-way.[67] In the East African context, Cooper sees power is a negative, injurious force rather than Foucault's more nuanced view that sees power as positive and generative as well as destructive.

---

[64] Ibid., 109 - 15.

[65] Ibid., 111.

[66] For more on Cooper and Foucault see Chapter 4.

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

In his work on slavery in East Africa and especially his article on ideology and cultural hegemony, however, Cooper weaves carefully between a view of Islam as cultural hegemony and a view that would allow some agency (counter-hegemony) for the slaves —something he wants very much to do. His is a delicate balancing act that is not always taken up by those who have followed.[68] In the section of his article where he discusses the slaves, he comes very close to Asad's notion of a constructed Islam were it not for the fact that he is looking instead for the development of a separate and unique "slave culture" as a counter-hegemonic *force*. He talks about the ways in which people began to think of themselves as both Muslims and connected to non-Muslim Africans through dances and initiation rituals that combined elements of Islam with practices brought from the mainland. What these slaves were making *was* Islam and in the process, Swahili identity.

I am arguing here for an approach that explores the connections between Islam and Swahili identity that does more than reverse the flow of Trimingham's model from African to Arab. I want to begin to think in terms of a process of originary syncretism that denies essentialisms and simultaneously allows for both conflict and peaceful negotiation in the generation of Islam and identity. Like Foucault's concept(s) of power, the process is one that is not easily represented in a two-dimensional diagram because it operates on many levels through time and space. It is a process that begins to approximate the complexity of identity formation in East Africa and one that makes room for the role the slaves played without resorting to the binary of Arab/African.

---

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

Chapter 2

DECONSTRUCTING SLAVERY[69]

The past cannot be corrected by bringing to it the procedures and mechanics and mind-sets that originally produced our very perception of that past. After all, it is not the past as such that has produced the present or poses the conditions for the future (this was the fatal delusion of Naturalism), but the way we think about it.

André Brink[70]

The historical narrative does not, as narrative, dispel false beliefs about the past, human life, the nature of the community, and so on . . . we should regard it as allegorical, that is, as saying one thing and meaning another.

Hayden White[71]

André Brink's call to examine the "way we think about the past" is not always easy to do, especially with a topic that carries the moral and political weight of slavery. Nevertheless, in the pages that follow, I will attempt such a rethinking through a reading of several texts dealing with slavery in East Africa. These texts cut across genres from secondary historical texts to a novel and the life history of a man captured and brought to Zanzibar in the late nineteenth century. For this reading, I have extended White's notion that historical texts should be read as allegories —"saying one thing and meaning another"—to all of these texts because they all purport to be "realist"—based in "real" pasts. While the allegorical thread runs through all of them, I do not presume to connect them in any necessary way. Rather, each text presents its own problems and offers its own insights that I will argue can be used to bring new "procedures and mechanics and mindsets" to our construction of the past and of slavery.

---

[69] I am using Jacques Derrida's term "deconstruction" broadly to mean pulling apart texts to examine their political (if not as Derrida would insist their metaphysical) underpinnings. I do not claim, however, as some interpreters of Derrida would that there is no reality outside the text itself.

[70] André Brink, "Stories of History: Reimagining the Past in Post Apartheid Narrative," in *Negotiating the Past*, ed. Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998) 33.

[71] Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987) 45.

When most of us in the West visualize a slave, the image is of a woman or a man captured in Africa and shipped across the Atlantic to a "new" world under horrifying conditions. Representations of slaves and slavery, from the anti-slavery tracts of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to current popular images in films like *Amistad* and *Beloved*, draw on this powerful trope, which ties the African and the slave inextricably together.[72] Within this trope, slavery is the antithesis of freedom, usually defined as autonomy or self-determination.

The visual images that make up this trope of slavery include drawings and paintings of Africans in chains and the by-now infamous diagrams of slave ships packed full with the prostrate bodies of Africans. Other representations also include terms like "middle passage" which once referred to a specific event—that traumatic Atlantic crossing—but has now come to stand for exploitation of all sorts. The recent travails of would-be Chinese immigrants who spend months on leaky ships in degrading conditions are now spoken about in terms of the "middle passage." The transport of South Asians to British colonies in the Caribbean and the South Pacific and ultimately any separation from one's homeland, however defined, are referred to in discussions of postcolonial literature as the "middle passage."[73] It is no surprise then that scholars like Henry Louis Gates, Jr. would assume that the issues facing East Africans are the same as those confronting African-Americans.

Historians and social scientists studying slavery have been no less captivated, and in some cases, haunted by the trope of the African slave in the Americas. Perhaps the best-known comparative study of slavery is Orlando Patterson's Slavery and Social Death. In it, he examines relationships of dependency and exploitation across time from "before the dawn of human history right down to the twentieth century" and finds that we are all descendents of slaves or slave-holders.[74] Patterson's work is awe inspiring in its erudition drawing as he does on a vast range of material from ancient Greece and Rome to the Atlantic slave trade. Nevertheless, the "peculiar institution" of the Americas is his dominant image.

---

[72] Akosua Busia, "Beloved," directed by Jonathan Demme (1998) and David H. Franzoni, "Amistad," directed by Steven Spielberg (1997).

[73] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) 139 – 40.

One of the many sources Patterson examined was Suzanne Miers' and Igor Kopytoff's 1977, *Slavery in Africa*, an attempt to develop a uniquely African concept of slavery. Although African slavery is their focus, the slave in the Americas is the specter, the absent other and binary opposite. Slaves in Africa unlike their absent brothers and sisters are not seen as complete outsiders. Although initially marginalized, they become "lesser kin."[75]. This "ideology" of kinship makes it easier later, perhaps several generations later, to incorporate slaves into the dominant society unlike the American slaves who supposedly remain outsiders. [76]

Even a careful historian like Cooper was (and is still) haunted by that image of the African slave in the Americas.[77] When Cooper began his career, comparative histories of slavery were popular in the United States. The boom began with Stanley Elkins' revival of Frank Tannenbaum's *Slave and Citizen*, a comparison of Catholicism and slavery in Brazil with Protestantism and slavery in the southern United States in his own comparative work *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life.*[78] He was soon followed by some of the most prominent scholars in the field among them Eugene Genovese from whose monumental *Roll, Jordan, Roll* Cooper draws most of his comparative categories, and C. Vann Woodward, a scholar and activist prominent in the growing civil rights movement at the time.[79]

---

[74] Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982) vii.

[75] This concept is later taken up and developed by french anthropologist Claude Melliasoux as "fictive kin."Claude Meillassoux, *Anthropology of Slavery: Womb of Iron and Gold* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[76] Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, eds., *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977). Miers and Kopytoff's assertion of a uniquely African form of slavery was part of broader debates about "African" history in general—debates about whether the history of a vast continent with so many different people and societies could be reduced to a single form.

[77] Frederick Cooper, "Conditions Analogous to Slavery," in *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies*, ed. Frederick Cooper, Thomas C. Holt and Rebecca J. Scott (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000) 1 - 10. The haunting of African scholarship on slavery by the American ghost can be found in West Africa as well. In a tribute to Martin Klein's contribution to African history, Ann McDougall notes that his recent work, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, "risks overlooking the long-

Cooper assumed that comparing African slave systems with American slave systems would explain something about slavery in East Africa. However, as Michael Pearson notes, comparisons have a tendency to prove the obvious—some of the objects of our studies are similar and some are different.[80] Cooper certainly found similarities and differences—both societies were engaged in plantation or large-scale agriculture, some of it for external markets, and both answered their labour needs with slaves, but the cultural contexts were different. I would go even further than Pearson does to argue that there is sometimes a tendency to fill in gaps in African history with assumptions based on the American experience. Social historian Megan Vaughn[81] who writes about

---

term legacy of his own analysis [of the relationship between slavery and Islam] in his desire to honor the heroic lives of slaves in the same way slaves in the Americas gave been celebrated" E. Ann McDougall, " Quest for Honour: Slavery, Islam, and the Contributions of Martin Klein to African History," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 34, no. 3 (2000).

[78] It should be noted that comparisons between African and American slavery are as old as the British anti-slavery movement. Olaudah Equiano's autobiography certainly stands as one of the first. I am, however, concerned here with influences on Cooper at the time he began his work on slavery.

[79] Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll; the World the Slaves Made.* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), Laura Foner and Eugene D. Genovese, eds., *Slavery in the New World; a Reader in Comparative History* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969) and C. Vann Woodward, ed., *The Comparative Approach to American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1968).

[80] Pearson, *Port Cities and Intruders: The Swahili Coast, India and Portugal in the Early Modern Era* 6.

[81] See note 36 below.

slavery in Mauritius draws on the work of anthropologist Johannes Fabian to assert, "by translating the experience of others into our own measures of being-in-time, we are laying down the terms in which they may be represented."[82] Amselle, in his critique of ethnological reason makes a similar claim. Following James Clifford's critique of ethnography in *Writing Culture*, Amselle contends that anthropologists, who thought they were writing about African societies, were really writing allegories about their own, and as Hayden White argues, historians are no less prone to this sort of writing than are anthropologists. This, I believe, is where Cooper had trouble with his analysis of the role of Islam and what the slaves were doing. He was looking for the development of a separate slave culture, an allegory based on the experience of Africans in the Americas. Thus, although he saw that something new was being created, it had to be within an already existing "hegemonic" Islamic culture.

Jonathon Glassman's *Feasts and Riot*, a more recent (and one of very few since Cooper's) study of slavery and resistance in nineteenth-century Pangani, Tanganyika takes up Cooper's allegory and wraps it in a discourse of Enlightenment ideals and democracy translated through the American experience onto the Africa cultural field. Glassman builds on Cooper's (and Gramsci's) assertion that slaves (subalterns) could manipulate this "hegemonic ideology" to their own ends, siting a number of examples including the *Maulidi ya Kiswahili* described in Zein's *Sacred Meadows*. In his view, this appropriation of the Prophet's birthday celebration constitutes a demand by the slaves for "equality" and "citizenship" in Swahili society.

The problem with the using concepts like "equality" and "citizenship" is that they are signs that developed as part of a discourse on freedom and unfreedom[83] in Europe during the Enlightenment. For the West in general and for Americans in particular these concepts have become *myth* in the sense Roland Barthes conceived it.[84] That is, "equality" and "freedom" have become naturalized to the point that we no longer question what they mean. We take for granted that they are positive goals sought by everyone including the slaves in East Africa. At present, there is no indication that such ideas would have had any meaning for slaves in nineteenth-century East Africa. They might have protested harsh treatment or, as Cooper notes, changes in the reciprocal arrangements they had with their masters brought on by the changing demands of export markets and plantation routines. However, that is not the same as demanding "equality" or "freedom." It is possible, even probable, that over the course of the twentieth century, East Africans did begin to think in these terms, but in the moment Glassman examines, it is not obvious that they would. It is his allegory not theirs.

---

[82] Megan Vaughn, "Reported Speech and Other Kinds of Testimony," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 13, no. 3 (2000): 259.

[83] I have borrowed this term from Gyan Prakash because it connotes a broader opposition than that between freedom and slavery. See my discussion of Prakash in Chapter 4 below.

Cooper and Glassman's works are secondary sources, but the problem of allegories troubles many of the primary sources on which we as historians must rely. Certainly, travelers, advisors, missionaries and colonial administrators saw Africa and Africans through European lenses. Scholars like Said, James Clifford and Mary Louise Pratt among others have called our attention to the need to read through the "eurocentric" biases in such works.[85] Many scholars in recent years, especially social historians looking for subalterns, have turned to sources like court records, life histories, even post-colonial literature to find "authentic voices" that can speak about the lives of people left out of history books.[86] At first glance, these voices, past and present, appear to give us the "authentic" insider story we are seeking. However, they, too, are sometimes plagued by allegories.

---

[84] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999) 109 – 21.

[85] Said, *Orientalism.*, James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). and Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1993).

[86] For example see works by Marcia Wright, Edward Alpers and Sarah Mirza and Margaret Strobel for East and East Central Africa, Ann McDougall and Olaudah Equiano in West Africa.Marcia Wright, *Strategies of Slaves & Women : Life-Stories from East/Central Africa* (New

In 1994, Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel *Paradise* was short-listed for the prestigious Booker prize for literature in Britain. *Paradise* is the story of Yusuf, a Swahili boy handed over to a "rich and renowned merchant" in payment for his father's debts. Set in late nineteenth-century East Africa, *Paradise* is full of "voices" that speak about the complex identities and relationships in coastal society.

Yusuf knows the trader as his Uncle Aziz. He is an exotic man who smells of perfumes and spices. He is also a generous man who never fails to give Yusuf a ten-anna piece when his great caravans of "travellers and porters and musicians" pass through the town where Yusuf and his family live.

Yusuf's father is a man from a family with a "good name" (that is a geneaology that connects him possibly to an ancestor from Arabia or Persia) and bad luck who was once married to an Arab woman from Kilwa drowned along with their children on a visit home to her parents. His mother is the second wife. Although raised on the coast she is from a family who came there from an upcountry village. During one of their frequent quarrels, Yusuf overhears his father tell his mother that he bought her from her relatives

---

York: L. Barber Press; 1993), Edward A. Alpers, "The Story of Swema," in *Women and Slavery in Africa*, ed. Martin A. Klein and Claire C. Robertson (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), Sarah Mirza and Margaret Strobel, eds., *Three Swahili Women* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), McDougall, "A Sense of Self: The Life of Fatma Barka," and Vincent Carretta, ed., *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings by Olaudah Equiano* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995). In a recent article, historian Megan Vaughn recounts her excitement at discovering the "voices" of two Maravi (Malawi) slaves in eighteenth-century Isle de France (Mauritius) court records. The two had been called to testify against a recaptured fellow slave. It was the first time she had "heard" the "voices" of slaves from so distant a past and from a country in which she did much of her early work as a social historian. In spite of her initial excitement, Vaughn eventually despairs of finding more traces of Maravi identity in Mauritius from oral or written texts and turns to other evidence—drumming and healing rituals that presumably retain those traces she is seeking. More important for the discussion here is her realization that the importance of the voices had more to do with her own connection to "nineteenth century abolitionists who had "itching ears to hear a colored man speak, and particularly a slave" than any light they might shed on slavery in Mauritius. Vaughn, "Reported Speech and Other Kinds of Testimony," 238.

and if she makes trouble, he can easily replace her with another. Both are Muslims and Yusuf learns the Arabic alphabet and a few prayers from his mother, but he is taken away before he learns enough to read or write.[87]

Throughout his first years with Uncle Aziz, Yusuf lives and works in his shop with another *rehani*, Khalil, also pawned for his father's debts. Khalil is the son of Omani immigrants. He speaks fluent Arabic and manages the shop for Uncle Aziz. For some time he hoped his father might pay off his debt so Khalil could return home, but his father dies and his mother and siblings return to Oman leaving him behind. From their first meeting, Khalil tries to convince Yusuf that Aziz is *not* his uncle. He tells Yusuf to address Aziz as Seyyid or Lord, but even years later when Yusuf fully understands that he is rehani, he still thinks of and refers to him as "Uncle" Aziz.

Yusuf is a bright and handsome boy in whom Uncle Aziz sees great potential. When Yusuf is old enough, Aziz takes him along on his trips into the interior. On his first trip, Yusuf stays with one of Uncle Aziz' client/partners, Hamid, in a mountain village. While he is there, Hamid, appalled at Yusuf's inability to read the Qur'an during Ramadan sends him to school with his own children. Yusuf, though embarrassed because he is so much older than the other students are, takes up the challenge.

In some sense, *Paradise* is an "authentic" text about Swahili identity and slavery. It is certainly full of those "voices" we long to hear and its author appears to have the "necessary" credentials to represent and re-present their stories. Gurnah was born and raised on Zanzibar. The main characters in all his works, not merely *Paradise*, are Kiswahili speakers, Muslims and biologically some combination of African and Arab. In his first novel, *Memory of Departure*, the central figure is Hassam, the descendent of slave-traders who had hoped along with his fellow Swahilis to put the past behind him, but it comes back to haunt him as independence from Britain nears. Eventually, Hassam's only recourse is to escape to a life in the metropolitan centre. Both of Gurnah's more recent books *Admiring Silence* and *By the Sea*, are also a stories about exile and silencing the past in order to live in the colonizer's world.[88] Even *Paradise*, despite its theme of slavery and dependence, contains such references. His choice of the name Yusuf for his main character is a reference to the biblical story of Joseph, sold by his brothers into slavery in Egypt.[89] This is not a casual choice. In using it, Gurnah connects himself to a whole world of "exile" literature in the west from the Old Testament to Thomas Mann's monumental four volume work, *Joseph and his Brothers*[90].

---

[87] It is common for mothers to provide their children's early education. Yusuf is sent away at about the time when he would begin formal training with a Qur'an teacher.

Homi Bhabha talks about the difficult position of the post-colonial intellectual in the West:

> What is striking about the 'new' internationalism is that the move from the specific to the general, from the material to the metaphoric, is not a smooth passage of transition and transcendence. The 'middle passage' of contemporary culture, as with slavery itself, is a process of displacement and disjunction that does not totalize experience.[91]

In other words, the intellectual from the periphery who now lives in the metropol is not immune to the myriad of influences around him. His allegories will be filled with ambivalence and contradictions.

Gurnah's rough "passage of transition and transcendence" is reflected in his works. In *Memory of Departure*, he condemns the slave trade in the harshest language, but in *Paradise*, he never uses the word "slave" in referring to Yusuf only *rehani* or pawn. His describes Yusuf's life with "Uncle" Aziz as "captivity," but the word "slave" is used only for others, for example, when he describes Zanzibar as a place "where even the slaves defend slavery" or the "porters and slaves" who travel with the caravans.[92] He also talks about breadfruit as the food of slaves. Yusuf collects breadfruit everyday to give to those porters and slaves. The connection between breadfruit and bondage is no simple one either. The British brought breadfruit plants from Malaysia to the Caribbean to feed the slaves on the sugar plantations there. What, then is Gurnah trying to tell us about slavery in his native land? He seems to want to both connect to and distance himself (and East African slavery) from the trope of American slavery.

---

[88] Abdulrazak Gurnah, *Admiring Silence* (New York: The New Press, 1996) and *By the Sea* (New York: The New Press, 2001).

[89] Gurnah, *Paradise* 84.

[90] Thomas Mann, *Joseph and His Brothers*, translated from the German by H.T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Knopf, 1958).

[91] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 5-6.

Gayatri Spivak, postcolonial critic and one of the founders of the Subaltern Studies Group, has already told us "the subaltern cannot speak." She calls for "intellectuals" (scholars in the academy or activists of various stripes) to speak for them, but at the same time, she problematizes such attempts saying that in "representing them [the subaltern], the intellectuals represent themselves as transparent."[93] Gurnah does not represent himself as transparent. At least on this side of the Atlantic, he does not represent himself at all except through his fiction. However, we should take Spivak words as a warning not to read such texts as unmediated "voices."

Post-colonial texts are intriguing. They hint at "truths" but do not yield their authentic or pure "voices" easily. Although a book like Gurnah's can tell us how slavery is remembered today on Zanzibar, its use may lie more in teaching us new ways to read old sources. Life histories whether recorded by missionaries, colonial administrators or historians seeking to recover the past from the memories of people willing to tell them, have proved to be a rich source of those voices. What could be more "authentic" than the words of people who have been slaves?

---

[92] Gurnah, *Paradise* 47, 88 and 64.

[93] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 70.

Kibuli bin (son of) Mchubiri was born sometime toward the end of the nineteenth century in a Bisa community near Lake Nyasa in present-day Zambia. Under the name of Rashid bin Hassani, he told his story to W. F. Baldock, an officer of the Tanganyika Forestry Department with whom he had been acquainted for several years.[94] His violent capture and subsequent transfer to the coast, a journey that took nearly a year, was typical of many of the slaves who worked the plantations of Zanzibar. The *Angoni* (or *Nguni*) warriors who captured him and killed his sister and grandmother eventually sold him to a Yao trader, Chamba.[95] Chamba in turn sold Kibuli to an Arab trader from Zanzibar, Bwana Saidi.

Because the British anti-slave trade campaigns were well underway, Saidi had to smuggle Kibuli and his companions from the mainland to the island under cover of darkness. After one sleepless night in a mangrove swamp and seven days hiding on a coconut plantation, Kibuli received a new set of clothes from Saidi and Saidi took him to the slave market. There a representative of Bibi Zem Zem, one of Seyyid Said's daughters, purchased him. Because he was still a child, Bibi Zem Zem gave Kibuli to a slave woman, Mtondo Msanja, and her husband Hassani. They gave him the name Rashid and he became Rashid bin Hassani (Rashid son of Hassani).

---

[94] Rashid bin Hassani, "The Story of Rashid Bin Hassani of the Bisa Tribe, Northern Rhodesia" Recorded by W.F. Baldcock, ed. Margery Perham (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1963; reprint, 1971).

[95] The Yao were middlemen from present-day Mozambique and Malawi in the ivory and slave trades. Many converted to Islam. Chiefs like Mataka became Muslims as part of a broader imitation of coastal life that included architectural and clothing styles and even the importation of mango trees. Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* 41 and 213 – 14 and Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770 - 1873* 77-82. For an extensive treatment of the Yao in the ivory and slave trades, see Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves in East Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975). Yao is another of those slippery syncretic identities that shifts over time. Megan Vaughn notes that Yao identity was at least as slippery as Swahili identity. When she and her fellow historians of Malawi began to look for the "original" settlers who some called Nyanja. Some traditions claimed that Nyanja had "suffered at the hands of slavers, .. been scattered or had taken refuge in the swamps surrounding Lake Chirwa." It turns out, however, that many of those who now identify themselves as Yao were once Nyanja. During the nineteenth century, they had been assimilated of their own volition or through slavery into Yao. She also notes that people identified and identifying themselves as Yao were supported in their dominance of the area by colonial policy. Vaughn, "Reported Speech and Other Kinds of Testimony," 246 – 49.

During his first few years on the Zanzibar plantation, Rashid spent his time learning to become a Muslim. He was circumcised, taught to pray and to read the Koran. He and his "parents" lived on their own small farm or *shamba* on Bibi Zem Zem's estate. Five days a week Hassani worked on Bibi Zem Zem's coconut shamba and during harvest time on the cloves. Thursdays he worked his own land and on Fridays he rested. Rashid does not tell us about the daily routine of his new mother. She may have worked alongside her husband or in the mistress's household. Rashid's life, however, took a different turn.

When he was about fifteen or sixteen years old, Bibi Zem Zem sent him out as a "hire-slave" or *vibarua* to build houses for Indians. The Indians paid nine pesas a day with meals for Rashid's services. He kept one pice and Bibi Zem Zem collected the remaining eight.

Shortly after, he married another slave who was *wazalia* – "a girl born in slavery." Rashid built his own house and though he continued to "work at odd jobs," he "kept all [his] wages and was merely under the protection of Bibi Zem Zem." When his only child, a daughter, was about five years old, he met some *Swahilis*, men "like Europeans" with money to throw about in Indian shops. They got him drunk and convinced him that he too could have money to spend if he would sign on as a porter to carry "wire, beads, cloth and cowrie shells" from Mombassa to an unnamed destination in the interior. He took them up on their offer and had many adventures on his travels into the interior.

After several years as a porter during which Bibi Zem Zem again collected a portion of his salary, she died and he was freed. He no sooner became a "free" man, however, than he encountered some askaris of Sultan Ali and his British allies. They were engaged in a war against a rebellious Arab from Mombasa, Bwana Mbaruk. Their leader gave him a semblance of a uniform and forced him (presumably at gunpoint) to join them.[96] Subsequently, he tried his hand at running a small shop, went to work for the Germans and finally for the British as a forest ranger.

Rashid was an old man at the time he told his story to Mr. Baldock. Swahili identity and Islam play only minor roles in it. In part, this dirth of talk about Islam and or Swahili identity in Rashid's story may have been the result of another one of those troublesome Western allegories. We do not know the circumstances under which Baldock recorded Rashid's story—whether the story was in response to questioning on Baldock's part or a spontaneous outpouring initiated by Rashid. Neither do we know whether Rashid or Baldock constructed the form in which the story is told, i.e., the chronology and structures. All we do know is that Baldock worked for the forestry department.

Nonetheless, there are suggestive clues. The last section of Rashid's narrative begins with a question. "You ask me whether the state of the people was better when I was a child or now?" To which Rashid responds,

> I have heard young fools complaining about the tax, which they regard as oppression by Europeans, and saying that the old free state was better. It is true that you were free to live where you liked and go where you liked, but it was much more a question of living where you could and going where you dared.[97]

Rashid's story can certainly be read as Baldock's allegory about the British "civilizing mission," as an uplifting tale for the folk back home. Read from start to finish it is a powerful narrative of colonial salvation, the story of man who is transformed from a primitive savage (his story of life at home is full of tales of sorcery and brutality) to a more civilized Muslim slave. In the end, he becomes a more or less fully civilized employee of the colonial government for whom life under colonial rule is a marked improvement over his "degenerate" past.

---

[96] The irony of Rashid's predicament—that as a "free" man he has no protection from marauding armies seeking to swell their ranks—seems to go unnoticed in his story.

[97] Hassani, "The Story of Rashid Bin Hassani of the Bisa Tribe, Northern Rhodesia," 118.

Or perhaps it is Margery Perham's allegory since she is the one who selected and published Rashid's story in her 1939 collection, *Ten Africans*. Perham is best known as the biographer of Lord Lugard, the architect of British indirect rule in Africa. She was for many years employed in the colonial office and though she held that Africans were in no way inherently backward, she certainly believed that the "barriers between the civilized and the uncivilized [were] there and they [were] solid," presumably in need of changing.[98] She tells her readers that she has confirmed the particulars of Rashid's story with "two men who knew the country in those days," most likely people she worked with, and that she has "done no more than replace names with symbols wherever the identity was uncertain or where this course seemed desirable *for other reasons*."[99] What other reasons? Whose story is this? As twenty-first-century historians, what can we make of it? Rashid, our subaltern, does not speak in a clear unmediated "voice" from the past.

If all of these texts are allegories that speak of one thing and mean another, what use are they to the historian? How can the reading of texts about slavery and their deconstruction aid the project of constructing new texts about slavery, Islam and Swahili identity? In part, it can provoke us to write more self-conscious narratives--aware of our limits, aware that we will create our own allegories, recognizing the discourses that inform and constitute our knowledge of the past, knowing there will be cracks and contradictions in our own work even as we find it in the work of others. Uncovering the cracks and contradictions in the works of others may also lead to new questions, new lines of inquiry—escape routes from the loops of the past.

---

[98] Margery Perham, ed., *Ten Africans* (USA: Northwestern University Press, 1971) 12.

[99] Ibid., 81. Emphasis mine.

Cooper's allegory as well as Glassman's relies in part on another allegory—that of Zein. Zein's *Sacred Meadows* could be read as a post-colonial, hybrid allegory about a Sufi saint, Habib Saleh, who rescued slaves from their Lamuan masters by giving them an Islamic education. Any reading of *Sacred Meadows* must take that allegory into account. Gurnah's allegory, while it may not lead to authentic voices, does point to his predicament as a post-colonial scholar, a predicament that can help us to understand problems facing Zein in his work. Like Gurnah, (and Abu-Lughod) Zein was a scholar between two worlds.[100]

Cooper's work, Rashid's biography and Zein's allegory come together to expose the contradictions that create space for some of those new questions I want to ask. Cooper, while he used Rashid as one of the "voices" in *Plantation Slavery*, left him out of his analysis of Islam and cultural hegemony. However, this seems a bit strange, since Rashid is also representative, at least in one instance, of all the other slaves brought to Zanzibar through his conversion to Islam by his adopted parents under the auspices of Bibi Zem Zem. Did Cooper leave him out because he was aware of the complexity of Rashid's "voice"? Or was it is because Rashid did not fit his allegory about slavery and distinctive slave cultures? In his article, he tells us that one tool the masters used in asserting their dominant position in coastal society can be found in naming practices. Slaves were given names that put them firmly in their subordinate place. [101] "Slave names came from days of the week (Juma), what slaves brought their master (Faida-profit) or even what they had cost him (Arobaini--$40)." Slaves were *not* given "Qur'anic names [like] Ali, Mohammed or *Rashid*."[102] I can neither speak for Cooper nor can I assume to know his motives, but pulling apart the allegories and inspecting the cracks and fissures does problematize the intersection between slavery, Islam and Swahili identity.

---

[100] Alternatively, perhaps I should say multiple worlds since Egypt can hardly be said to have existed in isolation from the West. Certainly, in the twentieth century, East and West have met mixed in complicated ways there and Zein was a product of that mixing as well as the product of his experiences as a scholar in the West.

[101] The issue of slave names in the American context was and is a highly politicized one. In the American case, however, it was the imposition of the master's surname that was and is controversial. The best-known example is Malcolm Little who renamed himself X rather than continue to be known by the name of his ancestors' owner. Others include Cassius Clay who became Mohammed Ali and his guide Elija Mohammed. Of course, one cannot help being struck by the irony of the latter two names. Is this a case of Arab/Islamic cultural hegemony as well?

Finally, questioning the discourses in Glassman's allegory foregrounds the need to historicize as best we can the processes by which people began to think of themselves as citizens and not merely as Swahili or Arab or African or some combination of the three.[103] Glassman's problems with Enlightenment discourses also point to one of the pitfalls of using theory constructed in one frame and applying it to another. Theories may help to fill the lacunae in the historical record, but we must think about how those theories work in conjunction with the time, place and people we are trying to explain. Theories can rarely be transferred whole from one historical space to another. They must also be translated and may even be transformed in the process.[104]

---

[102] Cooper, "Islam and Cultural Hegemony," 289. Emphasis mine.

[103] See Chapter 4 below

[104] For an excellent example of translation and transformation of theory, see Ann Laura Stoler's *Race and the Education of Desire* in which she engages Foucault's theories of power developed in his College de France lectures and moves them beyond the confines of Europe onto the colonial ground. Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995). Asad's *Genealogies of Religion* is another. For a discussion of the place of theory in history see Chapter 4 below.

Chapter 3

REVIVING GENDER

"More interesting lives are lived on the margins . . . than in palaces." –Anon[105]

If we treat the opposition between male and female as problematic rather than known, as something contextually defined, repeatedly constructed, then we must constantly ask not only what is at stake in proclamations or debates that invoke gender to explain or justify their positions but also how implicit understandings of gender are being invoked and reinscribed. Joan Wallach Scott[106]

In a recent seminar, the professor urged my fellow graduate students and me to pursue new avenues of inquiry—especially topics related to globalization (originary syncretism?). Race, class and *gender*, he said, have reached their limits as categories of explanation. Moreover, interest in these categories is waning in the new world order.[107] He may be right about the second statement. The enthusiasm that impelled both "women's history" and "feminist analysis" in the 1970s and 80s has lost the aura of newness over time. The latter has become mired in debates about the universal application of patriarchy with its built-in assumptions about who holds power and why, and about the imposition of "white, middleclass" values on marginal groups within

---

[105] This quote was printed on the t-shirt of a man sitting in front of me at a meeting at City Hall in Edmonton, Alberta in Oct. 2001. The meeting had been arranged by the Edmonton Journal and the University of Alberta to discuss the events of September 11—the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York City and the attack on the Pentagon in Washington. I was so struck by its appropriatness for this thesis that I wrote it down. I asked the man if he knew the source, but he did not.

[106] Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999) 49.

[107] There have been many challenges to the predominant Western feminist view. For some examples of the complex responses to this view from within Muslim cultures, in addition to Lila Abu-Lughod (Chapter 1 above), see Asma Afsaruddin, ed., *Hermeneutics and Honor: Negotiating Female "Public" Space in Islamic/Ate Societies* (Cambridge, Mass.: Centre for Middle Eastern Studies of Harvard University, 1999) and Victoria Bernal, "Islam, Transnational Culture, and Modernity in Rural Sudan," in *Gendered Encounters*, ed. M. Grosz-Ngaté and O. H. Kokole (London: Routledge, 1997)..

Western societies and on societies outside the West -- societies that Stuart Hall has called "the Rest" (Hall 1996, 185 and Scott 1988, 15 –50).

In East Africa, however, neither the study of women nor the study of gender relations can be characterized as fully explored. A handful of historians and anthropologists, among them Margaret Strobel and Carol Eastman, pioneered the study of Swahili women.[108] Strobel, a historian, did her early work in Mombasa, Kenya. She published two books on Swahili women's history and contributed a chapter to Claire Robertson and Martin Klein's *Women and Slavery in Africa*. Her last book on the Swahili, *Three Swahili Women*, was published in 1989, but it was based on the work she did in the early 1970s. Although she maintains an interest in Africa and other areas of the "third world," she has moved on to teach Women's Studies and to write about women as colonizers rather than the colonized.[109]

Eastman was a linguistic anthropologist whose work ranged from studies of the Haida people on Canada's Northwest coast to the Swahili-speaking people in rural areas of Kenya's northern coast. Like Strobel, she was concerned with the relationships between women and men, between Islam and "traditional" religion and between

---

[108] Although her claims are not as extravagant as Eastman's, Pat Caplan's work on Mafia Island is similar enough that it does not add much to my discussion here. Janet Bujra and Susan Geiger have done work on gender differences in contemporary labour markets and women's political role in the period immediately before and after independence in Tanzania. Bujra's work does not address identity so much as class and Geiger's is more concerned with political identity than my present investigation. Pat Caplan, "Gender, Ideology and Modes of Production on the Coast of East Africa," *Paideuma* 28 (1982), Janet Bujra, *Serving Class: Masculinity and the Feminization of Domestic Service in Tanzania* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001) and Susan Geiger, *Tanu Women: Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism, 1955-1965* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing, 2000).

[109] Some of Strobel's more recent work includes Margaret Strobel, "The Academy and the Activist: Collective Practice and Multicultural Focus," in *The Politics of Women's Studies: Testimony from 30 Founding Mothers*, ed. Florence Howe (New York: The Feminist Press, 2000)and Margaret Strobel, "Gender, Race and Empire in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Africa and Asia," in *Becoming Visible*, ed. Renate Bridenthal, Susan M. Stuard, and Merry E. Weisner (Boston:: Houghton Mifflin, 1998).

Arabness and Africanness. Both wrote feminist allegories about woman's subjugation in patriarchal Islamic Swahili society.

Strobel's first major work, *Muslim Women in Mombasa, 1890 – 1975,* remains not only the seminal text, but also one of the very few texts on the history of Swahili women. In some ways, *Muslim Women* was far ahead of its time in the types of sources used. Although her analysis lacked some of the sophisticated analysis of current theory (e.g. she did not question the transparency of her sources), Strobel drew on various forms of popular culture like dance, poetry and even film to reconstruct the historical trajectory of women's lives and their role in the evolution of Swahili identity. She presented a complex picture of women from the many strata of Mombasa society—from the elite to the slaves—examining their roles in domestic life, their access to education or lack of it, and their participation in the economy and in a uniquely female social activity, the *lelemana* dance societies.

However, as the book progresses it becomes clear that Strobel is writing an allegory about women's "liberation" in which the women move from male oppression under Islam to secular "freedom" under British rule. Participation in economic enterprises, secular education and escape from *purdah* and the veil become markers of this liberation. That most Swahili women in 1975 Mombasa eschewed this "progressive" liberation in favour of the "social segregation of the sexes" seems to arise from their discovery that life in the new world of "capitalist patriarchy," while it may offer some independence, is really no better than the old life under Muslim patriarchy. Segregation may be confining, but "sexual inequality in the work place" and "wage discrimination" are little better.[110] This latter is an important insight, I believe, an insight that, had her allegory been a different one, she would have probed further, but Strobel tacks it on as an afterthought at the end of her book.

---

[110] Margaret Strobel, *Muslim Women in Mombasa, 1890 - 1975* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) 219.

For the most part, Strobel's book has served more as a resource than as a subject of debate. Cooper and Glassman cite her in their discussion of women's roles—slave and free—in their works. Strobel and Cooper benefited from a mutual exchange of ideas and information in the writing of their early works. In 1988,however, Carol Eastman, in the heat of the battle over whether Swahili culture and identity owed more to Arabia or Africa took on what she saw as Strobel's assertion that cultural flow (hegemony?) ran in one direction (as it did for Trimingham) from Arab/Swahili to African.[111] Eastman wanted to counter that one-way flow, but it led her in a strange direction. Instead of Trimingham's model (Chapter 1 above),

Islam → Bantu Culture = creative tension =synthesis in the Swahili Culture

she offered something like:

synthesis in Swahili Male Culture

Islam → Bantu Culture = creative tension ↗

Bantu Culture → Islam = creative tension ↘

synthesis in Swahili Female Culture

Her argument is convoluted and at times, unclear. She seems to want to argue that the African slave wives of Muslim Swahili men achieved "liberation" within *purdah* (seclusion) because they did *not* "ascribe to the wifely ideal" and consequently they were able to wrest power in the form of "clothes, jewelry and money" from their husbands in exchange for intimacy. This she somehow attributes to "African" culture. Thus, she concludes that in nineteenth-century Swahili society two distinct and gendered cultures arose. Men, *wangwana*, derived their identity from "an Arab elite culture" and that Swahili women, *wanawake* (fem. wangwana), derived their identity from an "African, foreign slave culture."[112] Swahili men were from Arabia. Swahili women were from Africa.

---

[111] I disagree with Eastman. Strobel does, I believe, make some wrong assumptions about some of her sources, but her argument is far more complex than the simple Arab to African scenario Eastman attributes to her. In part, this is due to Eastman's reliance on Strobel's short article on "Slavery and Reproductive Labor" published in *Women and Slavery in Africa*, ed. Martin A. Klein and Claire C. Robertson rather than on Strobel's more nuanced monograph.

Eastman's challenge has not had much, if any, impact on Strobel (no debate ensued) or on the study of Swahili identity and culture. I raise it here for two reasons, both of which are important to my project. First, in spite of the strangeness of her argument and her insistence on ethnic essences, Eastman casts doubt on the received wisdom about power relations between Swahili men and women. She questions, however inadequately, the assumptions that purdah signifies women's oppression and suggests that women might make more of their situation, i.e., exhibit agency, than Strobel had assumed. Second, although her analysis lacks nuance, she wants to examine how people presumed to be powerless (women, slaves) might have influenced the construction of Swahili identity.

In *Muslim Women*, Strobel cites a poem--the *Utendi wa Mwana Kupona.*[113] Written by the wife of Bwana Mbaruk (the same Swahili leader for whom Rashid fought), the poem was for many years believed to be a straightforward instruction to young women on how to comport themselves in marriage—"to be faithful in her religious duties, respectful to her superiors, and attendant to the needs of her husband."[114] The poem also cautions women to avoid the company of slaves except where necessary to keep the household running smoothly.

---

[112] Carol Eastman, "Women, Slaves and Foreigners: African Cultural Influences and Group Processes in the Formation of Northern Swahili Coastal Society," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 21, no. 1 (1988): 1.

[113] Utendi means verse in the Lamu Swahili dialect. Utendi or (Utenzi in standardized Swahili) was a highly developed art form, written in Arabic script. Tendi (pl.) recorded the history of the Swahili and "were also used to as a tool of temporal and spiritual education." They were sung schools known as *Madrassas* or *Chuos*. Moreover, since only a few Swahili children had the privilege of lengthy educations they served to supplement what was learned in the classroom Ali A. Jahadhmy, *Anthology of Swahili Poetry*, *African Writers Series* (London: Heinemann, 1977) 27.

[114] Strobel, *Muslim Women in Mombasa, 1890 - 1975* 85.

Sitangane no watuma illa mwida wa *khuduma watakuvutia tama labuda* *nimekwambiya.*	Do not associate with slaves except during household affairs they will draw you into disgrace as perhaps I have told you.[115]

Strobel interpreted this poem as an example of women's oppression in Swahili, Islamic society. She asserted, moreover, that although some "resisted," as African women were assimilated into Swahili society, whether as concubines or slave wives, they absorbed these values of the patriarchal Muslim worldview.[116]

Eastman objected to Strobel's interpretation. She questioned whether a woman could have written such a poem on the grounds that to her knowledge Swahili women did not write poetry of "epic length or . . . of a didactic nature" (Eastman 1988. 19). Eastman reported a rumour circulating in 1985 on the Kenya coast that attributed the poem to Bwana Mbaruk. Although she was skeptical, she advocated exploring the "truth" of the rumour because it seemed to fit her essentialist views on ethnicity and gender.[117]

Instead of looking for truth, however, in this instance Eastman might more profitably have explored both the issue of women writing poetry and the meaning of Mwana Kupona's Utendi. Swahili scholar Ali Ahmed Jahadhmy notes in his 1975 collection of Swahili poetry that the women of Lamu (adjacent to Mwana Kupona's home in Siu) were well known as both composers and keepers of Tendi. Ann Biersteker, a linguist and director of the Program in African Languages at Yale, reexamined the poem for Kenneth Harrow's 1991 publication, *Faces of Islam in African Literature*. Her research tells a different story. Tendi like Mwana Kupona's were often filled with irony and sarcasm, especially with regard to the relationship between men and women.[118] Reading Mwana Kupona's poem as irony opens up questions about women's power within Islam and Swahili identity without insisting on discrete, gendered Arab and African essences. An understanding of the poetic devices at work points to some of those competing discourses that may play a role in constructing Islam and Swahili identity.[119]

---

[115] Mwana Kupona quoted in Jahadhmy, *Anthology of Swahili Poetry* 31.

[116] Strobel, *Muslim Women in Mombasa, 1890 - 1975* 84 – 94.

[117] Rumour can provide an interesting and novel source for the historian, but the question should not be whether the rumour is "true", but what purpose it serves in a particular historical context. See Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires:Rumor and History in East and Central Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).. Unfortunately, Eastman did not pursue her rumour.

In both their allegories, Strobel and Eastman wanted to illuminate woman's role in the creation of coastal culture. For both, their allegorical (political?) locations blinded them to another possibility, one that might suggest gender as a site for a more complex reading of cultural mixing and construction. Taking Scott's admonition to problematize power relations in gender, we need to consider other possibilities, for example, that cultural mixing flowed between wawanake and slave men. Mwana Kupona did warn against associating with slaves, but was that a serious warning or *an ironic one* and or perhaps both? If so, how might we read it?

Glassman, in *Feasts and Riots*, points to widows and divorcees, women on the margins of society, as a site for questioning our assumptions about relations between men and women. For various reasons—survival as well as affective needs among them--these women often chose outsiders, *mgeni*, as their new partners. To retain the woman and her children for the community, male members of her family accepted both the new husband and his offspring as Swahili.[120] Although they accepted outsiders, these fathers and brothers insisted that the husband be (or become) a Muslim and that the new husband not be a slave. Glassman cites "a marriage contract signed at Bagamayo in the mid-1880s between a Muslim bridegroom from the deep interior and the brother of a locally born bride" which specified that should it be proved that the bridegroom was a slave, the marriage would be annulled. However, as Glassman asserts, the frequency with which such clauses appear in marriage contracts suggest that if not the rule, marriages between slave men and wanawake were at least thinkable and certainly possible.[121]

---

[118] Ann Biersteker, "Language, Poetry, and Power: A Reconsideration of Utendi Wa Mwana Kupona," in *Faces of Islam in African Literature*, ed. Kenneth W. Harrow (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991) 68 - 74.

[119] E. Ann McDougall, "Women in African Muslim Societies, 1400 - 1700," in *Encyclopaedia of Women in Islamic Culture* (Forthcoming).

It is a possibility that becomes more of a probability if we consider two statements in Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari's *Desturi za Waswahili* (Customs of the Swahili People). Bakari lived in Bagamayo on what is now the Tanzanian coast directly opposite Zanzibar. He was a scholar of Islam who studied *Ilimu*, Islamic teachings, with Sheikh Abubakar bin Taha'l Barawy in his hometown and later taught at an oriental seminar in Berlin at the invitation of the German linguist Dr. Carl Velten. The Desturi is a compilation of Swahili traditions written down in the 1890s in Arabic script by a number of "Swahili persons" at Velten's behest. Mtoro was the complier and editor of the final work. In his chapter, "On Slavery," Mtoro makes two intriguing statements: "a freed domestic slave can marry a free woman, but a raw slave cannot" and "if a free woman marries a slave man, their child is not a slave, because free birth is matrilineal."[122] Given all I have said about attending to allegories, I do not assume that these statements come to us unmediated, but they do suggest that any investigation of Swahili identity and Islam must question reified categories like "patriarchy" and the meaning of being a Muslim—man or woman.

---

[120] Glassman uses the term Shirazi. Shirazi, as I noted in my introduction, is another of one of the many names people claimed as identity on the coast. It has a specific history of its own that would require at least a chapter, if not a book to explore. It is one of those contested identities subsumed by "Swahili-speaking people"—the same and not the same. I am substituting Swahili here in order to avoid further complicating an already complicated discussion.

[121] Glassman, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast* 128.

[122] Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari, *The Customs of the Swahili People: The Desturi Za Waswahili of Mtoro Bin Mwinyi Bakari and Other Swahili Persons*, trans. J.W.T. Allen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981) 174 – 75.

In the introduction to this thesis, I spoke about the relationship between masters and concubines and the conflict the Islamic practice of accepting their offspring (at least their male offspring) as members of the father's lineage presented for the sons. Nancy Rose Hunt in her introduction to *Gendered Colonialisms in African History* presents another view of gender that resonates with the story of one of Zein's informants in *Sacred Meadows*. She introduces the concept of masculinity into the study of gender. Although she is careful to note the struggle women have had establishing themselves and women's issues in academia, she, nevertheless, insists that we must go beyond the old woman-as-victim/man-as-victimizer dichotomy in order to understand how identity is constructed.[123]

This approach is one that seems particularly suited to the story of Zein's informant, M.M.. M.M. was a man whose mngwana father had participated in a '"secret marriage" with a slave woman who had been his *souriya*.[124]

> M.M. is the son of an mngwana. His father was very rich. However, the father married a slave. When the son was born, he lived with his mother, whom the father divorced because of prostitution. When the father died, the boy began to sever his relations with the mother. Due to his relation with the British District Commissioner, he arranged for her transfer from Lamu to another small village. He never visited her or helped her. He never came in touch with his mother's relatives. When the mother grew old, she lost her sight, but he paid no attention. When she died, he didn't

---

[123] Nancy Rose Hunt, "Introduction," in *Gendered Colonialisms in African History*, ed. Nancy Rose Hunt, Tessie P. Liu, and Jean Quataert (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1997) 2.

[124] We do not know the precise time frame in which this occurred, but since the story was from a living informant, we can speculate that it occurred late in the colonial period or shortly after independence.

> participate in her funeral. He did not show grief, or the traditional custom of making *twasia*, or reading the Qur'an in the mosque.
>
> M.M. does not want to show that his mother was a slave. He wants to be identified as an mngwana, and to do that he has to neglect and forget his mother. His refusal to support her, or make a twasia is a real justification for his claim that he is part of his father's category. However, doing that also shows that he is the son of a slave, because no mngwana will neglect his mother. The wangwana know that without the mother's *ridba*, i.e., without her approval, you cannot succeed in this life or in the hereafter.[125]

The conflict between M.M.'s desire to be recognized as wangwana and the way in which masculinity was viewed in that society provides a glimpse into the complexity of negotiating and constructing masculinity, Islam and Swahili identity. Zein explored the complex relationships and problems surrounding concubinage or "secret marriage", cultural purity and the concept of equal marriage among the wangwana. The sons of unions between slave women (souriya or pastime girls) and wangwana men created a new and problematic social group the wazalia. Their mothers, as in many Islamic societies, became *umm-al-walad* (mother of the son) granting higher status to both mother and child. By the time of Zein's stay in Kenya, stratification in Lamuan society was rigid and membership in the wangwana was based on a system of descent and the principle of equal marriage. Of course, the people most affected by this ambiguous status were the wazalia themselves. The mzalia man had no equal woman to marry since the daughters of such unions were considered slaves and hence not available as marriage partners. Thus, these men presented a serious problem for the patriarchs into whose families they were born. They could marry neither a woman of their father's rank nor a slave.[126]

For the identity of the wangwana father, the position of these sons in the larger family had equally serious consequences. Tradition required that the patriarch be viewed as first among equals with his male offspring. His power resided in their support. The ambiguous position of the souriyas's sons changed the relationship between fathers and sons and as a consequence, the father's secure identity as the leader of a purely wangwana family. Now, within the family there were sons who bore their fathers' names, but who were not the equals of their siblings born of "free wives." This challenge to the identity of the wangwana, according to Zein, weakened them so that when outsiders challenged their authority, they were not able to fight.[127] Whether that weakening is a construction of Zein's allegory or not, it is clear that a shift of some kind took place. As good Muslims, the fathers *should* have recognized their sons'--and, in principle, their daughters--positions in the family. Doing so would seem to have solved the problem, but their "sense of self" also depended on "cultural purity" which at that time excluded the son's of souryia.[128]

---

[125] Zein, *The Sacred Meadows: A Structural Analysis of Religious Symbolism in an East African Town* 87.

[126] Ibid., 30-31.

In East Africa and in the history of East Africa, cultural mixing was (and is) embodied (literally) in relations between men and women and in their children. Combined with the paucity of women's history *and* gender studies, then gender becomes a relevant, even necessary, field of inquiry for a study grounded in the concept of originary syncretism. Moreover, the debates over the validity of a universal version of power relations within gender can serve to destablize and problematize the assumed opposition between men and women that Joan Scott demands.

Gender alone cannot explain all. If we look at Mtoro's observations about marriage between slave men and "free" women and his comment about "freedom" being matrilineal, how do we reconcile that with the concept of "cultural purity" Zein observed on Lamu? We could, I suppose, explain it away by pointing to the different locations—

---

[127] Ibid., 32 - 33 and 88.

[128] The phrase "sense of self" I owe to Ann McDougall. See McDougall, "A Sense of Self: The Life of Fatma Barka."

Mtoro's mainland vs. Zein's Lamu; or we could throw up our hands, as Patricia Romero did,[129] and assign Zein to "hopeless" a-historicity and dismiss the apparent contradiction out of hand. However, another possibility exists—that in the process of colonization identities and religion were once again under construction as the relations of power between landowners and merchants and their dependents shifted under a new regime. If we read gender as more than an allegory about universal patriarchy and about more than women alone, it becomes another means for defamiliarizing and disrupting the allegories, the master narratives, about slavery, Islam and identity.

---

[129] See Chapter 1.

Chapter 4

REWRITING COLONIALISM

> ***This vision [of the subaltern]. . . assumes the universality of such notions as the rights of "free-born Englishmen" and "equality before the law," and it posits that "workers all over the world, irrespective of their specific cultural pasts, experience 'capitalist production' in the same way." This possibility can only arise if it is assumed that there is a universal subject endowed with an emancipatory narrative.***
>
> Gyan Prakash[130]

In a 1997 critique of historians and their relationship with postmodern theory, cultural historian Mark Poster pointed to a contradiction he found in Lynn Hunt's work on the cultural history of the French revolution, *Power, Culture, and Class.* Her vision of the agency of ordinary people, he said, was a an attempt to "articulate agency as a complex interaction between structural determination and self-fashioning." He saw in her discussion of structures, embeddedness and action an attempt to bring together culture, society and economy in a useful way. However, in the second half of her work he found what was for him one of the central problems in modernist historical discourse—"the historian's resistance to the notion of escaping the metanarrative of modernity, the figure of the self-emancipating subject."[131] Poster used Hunt's work as an example of the present state of thinking about two concepts that play an important role in African history as well—resistance and agency.

We can see that self-emancipating subject in the counter hegemony of the slaves in Cooper's model of Islam as a hegemonic ideology, and even more in Glassman's insistence that slaves were claiming "equality" and "citizenship" in nineteenth century East Africa.[132] Although neither author has revisited his earlier ideas about resistance, agency and Islam, Cooper did some "rethinking" about the relationship of resistance and agency to colonialism in a 1994 review article published in *The American Historical Review.* Tracing the development of his thoughts on these issues from his earlier work, *From Slaves to Squatters,* to the 1994 article and his most recent essay published in his edited collection *Beyond Slavery* offers a space in which to explore the issue more thoroughly.

---

[130] Gyan Prakash, "Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism," *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 5 (1994): 1484.

[131] Mark Poster, *Cultural History and Postmodernity: Disciplinary Readings and Challenges* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) 103.

[132] See chapter 1 for Cooper and chapter 2 for Glassman.

In *From Slaves to Squatters* originally published in 1980, Cooper took on the debate over Swahili identity. He proposed, if somewhat tentatively, that ethnic identification had as much to do with British classifications as it did with the way people saw themselves and that the connection was an economic one. He based this proposition on two Zanzibar census reports for 1924 and 1931 respectively. The 1924 census claimed a dizzying number of "ethnicities"—Arab (Omani), Swahili, Wahadimu, Watumbatu, Shirazi, Wapemba, ex-slaves, Hadrami, Comorian, a host of names for migrants from the mainland (Nyasa, Yao, Manyema and Zaramo among them) and an obscure category, "other Africans."[133] In the 1931 census, the categories remained, but the numbers shifted significantly in spite of no significant change in either immigration or emigration. On Zanzibar, those reported to be Arab increased by seventy seven per cent, Wahadimu by sixty nine per cent, Watumbatu by thirty per cent and the mysterious "other Africans" by fifty six percent. In contrast, the numbers of Swahili, Shirazi,[134] ex-slaves, migrants and Comorians declined, the most significant being the first two with losses of eighty-six and thirty six percent respectively. When "Shirazi" resurfaced in the 1940s as a political identity with the establishment of the Shirazi Association on

---

[133] Keep in mind here Megan Vaughn's comments about Yao identity being multivalent (note 85 above). Also Zaramo sometimes becomes blurred with Swahili in various texts—Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari identified himself as Swahili, but J. W. T. Allen who translated Bakari's work into English (and Allen's informant, Bwana Idi Marijani of Bagamayo) identified him as Zaramo. Bakari, *The Customs of the Swahili People: The Desturi Za Waswahili of Mtoro Bin Mwinyi Bakari and Other Swahili Persons* ix.

[134] See my discussion of Shirazi identity page 2 in the Introduction.

Zanzibar, Wahamidu, Watumbatu and Wapemba, for political purposes at least, became Shirazi.

Cooper was circumspect in trying to assign meaning to these changes in naming. Because the 1924 census attached occupations to each of the names, and given his views about the "arterial" nature of colonial power,[135] he wanted to draw a direct line between British attempts to organize land ownership, labour and the shifting identities "reflected" in the census data. However, since the 1931 census did not include occupation as a category, he was tentative in his interpretation. Cooper was aware, for example, of the complex relationship between "Shirazi" as a political category that developed as part of a nationalist discourse in the twentieth century and "Shirazi" as an ethnic identity. He also noted the possible disparity between British perceptions of the people they were surveying and the self-perceptions of those being surveyed. Nevertheless, the temptation to interpret these changing identities in terms of economic rationality was too much for him. British laws that favoured the landowning class—primarily those classified as Arabs—led to people identify themselves in ways that positioned them to take advantage of changing economic conditions. He allowed that the evidence is thin and that further research into "patterns of interaction, intermarriage, and cultural change demand further study."[136] Still, in the end, ethnicity and class become if not identical, then parallel social divisions with an "arterially" determined economic cause. This instrumental view of colonialism then allowed for "Resistance" on the part of slaves and ex-slaves in the form of subtle refusals to work and/or outright rebellion.

---

[135] See Chapter 1 above.

[136] Frederick Cooper, *From Slaves to Squatters: Plantation Labour and Agriculture in Zanzibar and Coastal Kenya, 1890 - 1925* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1997) 167.

In his 1994 article, Cooper began a project to "rethink" colonialism that is still in progress.[137] Ever the comparative scholar, he examines the approach to Western domination, resistance and agency in the works of the Subaltern Studies group in India, a group of scholars whose writing has had a major impact on postcolonial studies and theory. Although he admires the work done by Ranjit Guha in asserting agency for Indian subalterns, he is critical of the way in which Guha (and others in the group),

> . . . like many African historians, . . wants his subalterns to have a rich and complex consciousness, to exercise autonomous agency, and yet remain in the category of subaltern, and [for wanting] colonialism to remain resolutely colonial, despite the contradictions of its modernizing projects and its insistence on maintaining boundaries, despite its interventionist power being rendered contingent by the actions of subalterns.[138]

Cooper's says he is concerned that too much emphasis on the "dualisms," presumably between colonizer/colonized, would "flatten" the "rich and complex lives of people living in the colonies and underestimate the possibility that African or Indian action might alter the boundaries of subordination within the seemingly powerful colonial regime."[139] He is trying to find a way to render the relationship between oppressors and resistors (colonizer and colonized) in all its complexity and still maintain the notion of the resisting subject.

Like Hunt, whose book is divided between analysis of cultural representations and analysis of socioeconomic structures, Cooper wants to tie this more complex notion of relations of power to social and economic relations. He cites a number of examples including the work of West African scholar K. Onwuka Dike in the 1950s on the Niger

---

[137] Cooper was subsequently joined in this project by his colleague Ann Laura Stoler. See their edited book *Tensions of Empire* in which a modified version of the 1994 essay introduces the collection.Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). Stoler's most recent contribution to the project is her forthcoming book *Along the Archival Grain: Colonial Cultures and their Affective States*. Princeton University Press.

[138] Cooper, "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History," 1517-18.

[139] Ibid.

Delta. Dike, he says, portrays Africans as neither "collaborators" nor "resistors" and Europeans as one group among many competing for international trade.[140]

For all the complexity of his discussion, it is in this article that Cooper takes on and rejects Foucault's concept of "resistance as constituitive of power and power of resistance."[141] Foucault's "resistance" he says, "suffers from the diffuseness with which the object of resistance is analyzed."[142] He acknowledges that the concept offers numerous sites for contestation, but he asserts that in resorting to theory, and in particular Foucault's theory,

> [that] struggle within the colonized population—over class, age, gender, or other inequalities is "sanitized"; the texture of people's lives is lost; and complex strategies of coping, of seizing niches within changing economies, of multi-sided engagements with forces inside and outside the community, are narrowed into a single framework.[143]

This claim does not make much sense unless one asks Foucault's theory to stand in for, rather than act as a starting point for, the kind of complex analysis Cooper seems to be proposing. If, however, we think about his "resistance" to Foucault in relation to Poster's argument about Hunt, we can see where Cooper is taking us. His first objection is to postmodern theory in general. He rejects out of hand the possibility that an engagement between history and theory might at least be worth exploring.[144] He asserts that "poststructuralists" (presumably including Foucault) merely "find power diffused in "modernity," "the post-enlightenment era," or "Western discourse."" His second objection is even more revealing. Foucault's theory of power, he says, "denies that there was a "single locus of great Refusal"."[145] Here, I believe, is the heart of Cooper's argument. Despite his claim that "Resistance is a concept that may narrow our understanding of African history," he wants a place, a space, a site for his resisting, self-emancipating subject to act.[146] Multiple sites will not do.

---

[140] Ibid., 1521.

[141] See the chapter 1 above.

[142] Cooper, "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History," 1533.

[143] Ibid.

[144] He does not discuss his own experiment with Gramsci and Geertz.

[145] Cooper, "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History," 1533.

However, the most convincing "evidence" of Cooper's desire to hold on to his "resistor" is his article in *Beyond Slavery* where he reprises his earlier discussion of colonial Zanzibar--this time without the issue of identity. In this version, he gives us a slightly more complicated colonizer. He notes the contradictory nature of the colonial administration that insisted upon "free" labour yet at the same time supported slavery in an attempt to keep the colonial economy functioning. Then, almost in the same breath, he says "the limits of repression and paternalism were continuously contested, . . and runaway communities were dotted along the coast".[147] The self-emancipating subjects—the slaves—apparently took advantage of British confusion about slavery and ran away.

Cooper's contribution to *Beyond Slavery* is an article not a book and as such, a full discussion of the complex cultural and economic interaction is not within its scope. Still, in the fifty pages in which he skips from North to South and West to East across the African continent, he could have found room for a more nuanced representation had he so desired, but he did not. I have not raised this issue because I want criticize Cooper for something he never intended nor do I want to deny agency to slaves. I do, however, want to point out that Cooper's search for the self-emancipator cuts off discussion about how multiple factors, multiple sites of power, within the colonial project itself might have played a role in creating Swahili identity. Moreover, contrary to his desire to enrich our understanding of subaltern lives, it flattens all the participants in the drama—colonial administrators, landowners--Arab, Swahili, and African--and the slaves as well.

---

[146] Ibid., 1532.

[147] Cooper, "Conditions Analogous to Slavery," 119.

Cooper's 1994 article was part of a debate with Latin Americanist Florencia Mallon and Indian historian Gyan Prakash. In her article, Mallon argues that the importation of "Marxisms" and notions of "progress and modernity" into histories of the "Third World" has led to what she sees as the present "intellectual and political" crisis within the academy.[148] However, she disagrees with Cooper's rejection of theory. She finds in Subaltern Studies, with its eclectic mix of Gramscian Marxist theory (hegemony and the notion of the subaltern), Derridian textual analysis and Foucauldian concepts of discourse and power relations, the possibility of, if not a wholly "different" point of view, as least a "productive tension" between Eurocentric, postmodern theory and the need to assert some kind of agency for women, peasants, workers, *and* slaves. Mallon suggests that this productive tension offers four directions in which scholars can proceed. Quoting Prakash, she identifies the first direction

> [as viewing]the subaltern . . . less as a sociological category and more of a discursive effect.[149]. . The other three are: maintaining the tension no matter what but relying on more Foucault-inspired emphases on regimes of power and less on Derrida-derived methods of textual and linguistic deconstruction; moving back more exclusively toward Gramsci, . . but with the cost of losing part of the critical postmodern edge in the understanding of historical metanarrative; and an attempt to use discursive/textual/linguistic analytical techniques to analyze subaltern practices/debates/discourses themselves—insofar as we can have partial and foggy access to them—as contested and constructed arenas of struggle over power.[150]

---

[148] Florencia E. Mallon, "The Promise and Dilemma of Subaltern Studies: Perspectives from Latin American History," *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 5 (1994). The crisis she was referring was the disillusionment created by the collapse of the Soviet Union—in particular the "slow death" of the Cuban Revolution and the "tarnishing of the memory of Chilean aspirations for social justice under Salvador Allende" in the "post-Pinochet" era.

[149] Here Mallon (and Prakash) is referring to attempts to recover the histories of subordinated groups by reading between the lines or against the grain of colonial discourses about them.

[150] Mallon, "The Promise and Dilemma of Subaltern Studies: Perspectives from Latin American History," 1514.

Gyan Prakash disagrees profoundly with Cooper and Mallon on their views of the resisting subject.[151] He does so because the way in which that subject is read as "natural" and "always already there" denies the particular and complex histories of the colonized and the colonizer and the relations of power between them. In his discussion of an article by Dipesh Chakrabarty, he asserts that the universalization of European (and American) models of "history from below" cannot account for the experiences of subalterns in India (or for that matter Africa) because such model judge the behaviour of subalterns by a standard that makes no sense in the Indian context. Chakrabarty's study of a jute workers' strike in which " hierarchical notions of caste and religion, drawn from Indian tradition" were the discourse in which resistance was organized. Earlier Marxist analyses of the strike found the worker's backward and deficient because their idea of resistance did not coincide with Western, ideals about freedom, class formation and class interests, but relied instead upon specifically Indian "pre-capitalists" discourses.

Prakash has taken up this line of thinking in his work on debt-labour and slavery in colonial India. In both his book *Bonded Histories* and his contribution to Martin Klein's *Breaking the Chains*, he asserts through a complicated analysis of colonial discourse, that the British created discourses about slavery and then abolished them.

> Enunciated initially at the discovery of slavery in India in the late eighteenth century, this discourse gained fuller expression in the nineteenth-century pronouncements and actions of the East India Company officials. As a range of different social relations, defined as unfreedom, was seen to be founded in the Hindu and Islamic texts compiled and authorized by the Orientalists, the British first enforced and regulated these religious laws on slavery; then they surrounded the supposed textual sanctions with legal protection guided by principles of "equality and justice"; and finally, finding the denial of unfreedom contrary to their post-Enlightenment legacy, they abolished slavery in

---

[151] Prakash, "Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism".

> 1843. In fact, what the British did, although they were unaware of it was to abolish their own creations.[152]

Prakash asserts that postcolonial analyses such as his give precisely the texture Cooper demands for Africans through what he calls the "catachrestic combination" of Gramscian Marxist theory with the post-structural theories of Derrida and Foucault. By catechresis, he means taking from those theories what is useful and reshaping them to the postcolonial context.[153] In places where the history of subalterns has to be read in the "cracks and fissures" of colonial discourse, theory is precisely what gives those subaltern lives fullness.[154]

Although he does not invoke Foucault, Derrida, or Gramsci, Justin Willis's book *Mombasa, the Swahili and the Making of the Mijikenda* bears a certain resemblance to Prakash's analysis of the colonial encounter. He notes that today in Mombasa, most people think of the British as the people who freed the slaves from the Arabs—the Omanis and Swahili traders and landowners. However, the story in the colonial archives is not so straightforward. Labour commissions and court documents reveal that for many years after the abolition of the slave trade, "local officials continued to attribute the coast's perceived economic backwardness to the abolition of slavery."[155] The Imperial British East Africa Company (formerly the British East Africa Company) often found itself in competition with those landowners and traders for labour and "made arrangements" with "patrons and owners" to meet their own needs. Well into the twentieth century, nineteenth-century patterns of patron-client relations continued to exist in spite of the dominant colonial discourses about "free" labour.[156]

---

[152] Gyan Prakash, "Terms of Servitude: The Colonial Discourse on Slavery and Bondage," in *Breaking the Chains: Slavery, Bondage, and Emancipation in Modern Africa and Asia*, ed. Martin Klein (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993) 131.

[153] Catechresis originally meant to use a word in the wrong sense--"as when we say, "there is long talk, and small matter." which are spoken unproperly, for we cannot measure either talk or matter by length, or breadth" Thomas Wilson, *The Art of Rhetoric. for the Use of All Such as Are Studious of Eloquence, Set Forth in English [1553]*, Nicholas Sharp, 2000; available from http://www.people.vcu.edu/~nsharp/wilsded2.htm..

[154] Prakash, "Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism," 1490.

[155] Justin Willis, *Mombasa, the Swahili, and the Making of the Mijikenda* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) 84.

In his discussion of identity later in the book, Willis takes a constructivist approach that resonates with the concept of originary syncretism. The British certainly played an important role, but a good deal of negotiation and contestation among other groups contributed to an increasingly divided society in which the fluidity of earlier times gave way to more essential ideas of origins and social stratification. Willis begins with a more complex set of relations than masters and slaves. In Mombasa, through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, relations between coastal people and those from further inland, whether they came unwillingly as captives or came of their own volition, entailed a full range of dependencies including patron and client, employer and worker, and master and slave. Although identified with groups calling themselves Girama or Digo or Jibana, others became Swahili to identify with their new geographic location and with new networks of connection and obligation they created.[157]

Willis does not paint pre-British times as idyllic. He notes that in the nineteenth century under Busaidi (Omani) rule some Mombasa Swahili were already claiming Arab descent and distancing themselves from other members of the group know as the Twelve Tribes.[158] In the early days of British rule, the use of "Arab" administrators "tended to increase the prestige" of Arab as category. The institution of the Hut and Poll Tax Ordinance 1910, however, marked the beginning of British efforts to draw clear lines between "Arab" and "Swahili." The tax was a strategy to coerce "native" Africans to become industrious "free" labourers and the British identified "Swahili" with

---

[156] Ibid., 87.

[157] Ibid., 188 – 91.

[158] Twelve Tribes is another one of those names for Swahili. It is still used today although membership has become much more restricted than in earlier times.

"native." Individuals were then required to "prove that [they] were ***not*** . . . Swahili" or pay the tax.[159]

To distance themselves from the less desirable (tax paying)"Swahili," now spoken of as "idlers and cheats," some members of the Twelve Tribes began claiming to be an elite category. Those with Arabized names sought to separate themselves from their generally poorer dependents, who had "African" names; and they were encouraged in this move by colonial administrators. In 1920, the acting Chief Native Commissioner wrote the following to the Provincial Commissioner:

> It was agreed that members of those families who were able to prove that they were of such grade in the *Tissia Taifa* [nine tribes] or the *Theletha Taifa* [three tribes] that they would have been recognized by the Zanzibar Government as Arabs should also be accorded the status and treatment of Arabs by this government.[160]

It was left to the Twelve Tribes themselves to distinguish between those who had a valid claim and those who did not, and Willis notes some were "eager" to oblige. At a meeting between prominent members of the Twelve Tribes and the governor "those who were present recognized that all members of the twelve tribes were not of the same status, and that the privileges asked for would only be accorded in part and not as a whole.".[161]

Mombasa, the Swahili and the Making of the Mijikenda has its faults. The story ends too neatly with those people excluded from Twelve Tribes Swahili identity "becoming" Mijikenda and claiming shared origins with people in the hinterland around Mombasa. Sometimes Willis throws out an interesting idea, but does not pursue it. He mentions "official concern about the "demoralization" of Swahili youth" which he interprets as a loss of control by the British. Here an analysis of talk about "demoralization" in colonial discourses could have led to an even richer understanding of how the British and the Twelve Tribes were constructing and re-constructing Swahili and Mijikenda identities. Who was talking? How was that talk circulating? What exactly was said? And how did what was said articulate within the power relations of colonial society? Willis also mentions that notions of Arabness were becoming detached from Islam as Twelve Tribes members disavowed their dependents. To be a Muslim no longer signified attachment to the larger society. Is this a site in which Islam is being constructed, but now as "high Islam" and "popular Islam"? In addition, because his focus is the Mijikenda, he does not have much to say about the ex-slaves who remained in Mombasa. Here an analysis of a complicated agency embedded in pre-colonial and colonial structures of dependence and domination might at least allow us to speculate about how they constructed themselves or were constructed within identities available to them. If we could situate the discourses about who was Swahili in multiple relations of power—e.g., between the British and the Twelve Tribes, between the Twelve Tribes and their dependents and between the British and the ex-slaves—rather than merely narrativize it, how might that lead to a more dynamic view of coastal identity?

---

[159] Willis, *Mombasa, the Swahili, and the Making of the Mijikenda* 189.

[160] Ibid.

[161] Ibid.

Clearly, I am not claiming here that Willis has found the "truth" about Swahili identity and Cooper got it wrong. Cooper's claim in *From Slaves to Squatters* for "occupational" identities may be another facet of that very complicated self-understanding Henry Louis Gates, Jr. refers to his *Wonders of the African World*. If we think about those censuses in terms of language or discourses in which the British were attempting to establish their power we might see the detachment of occupations from naming as a failure of the colonizing project and in the process disrupt our idea of that arterial connection between colonizer and colonized. I am, however, arguing that with some attention to the issues I have raised here, Willis' approach which does not insist upon the single site of refusal, and allows for the creative use of theory, comes much closer to what Cooper *said* he wanted to do--that is, to create rich and complex histories about those who participated and participate in the ongoing construction of coastal identities and at the same time to demonstrate how those constructions relate to economic and social changes in colonial East Africa.

Conclusion

REASSEMBLING THE WRECKAGE

When I began this project, I could not envision any means for separating the roles of Islam, slavery, gender and colonialism in the shifting formation of Swahili identity. For weeks, I abandoned outline after outline to the wastebasket. As my supervisor will attest, I even resorted to some "creative" outlines full of lines and arrows running back and forth across the page in an attempt to represent what seemed to me to be a web of relationships that I could not disentangle. Now having succeeded to some degree in pulling that web apart, I must find the connections again.

Jean-Loup Amselle wrote *Mestizo Logics* as a corrective--a counter-allegory--to essentialist narratives in anthropology that posited tribalism and ethnic differences as primordial essences between people who had lived in close proximity to one another for centuries. His concept of syncretism, as I read it, is not a banal mixing of cultural practices, but a dynamic one in which power is both constituitive of identity and an effect produced in the process of contestation and negotiation in which identity is formed. Originary syncretism, however, is not a formula or a model into which we can drop "facts" or "events" and thereby explain them. Neither is it a universally applicable concept, but rather one to be proved or disproved through historical investigation. To treat it in such a manner, would be to "flatten," as Cooper puts it, lives and histories of those people we are attempting to represent and re-present. For that reason I chose each of the four "sites" as a place to explore the ways in which history and theory could be used to create that depth of understanding Cooper and Mallon demand.

Just as the process of originary syncretism is not a straight line from A to B or B to A—from Arab to African or African to Arab (as Henry Louis Gates would have it), so the process of analysis is complex. As Florencia Mallon argues, tensions within the analytic process should not be glossed over, but instead can be used in creative ways. Deconstructing secondary texts like Cooper and Glassman and even a life history like Rashid bin Hassani's as we would Gurnah's novel, points to some of those tensions. Such readings require us to consider issues like slavery and "unfreedom" as "unnatural" and something to be analyzed with specificity as Prakash does. If "voices" like Rashid's do not come to us unmediated but only partially and through a fog, as Mallon puts it, still we can find something in them that enrich our understanding of the past. If Cooper had considered Rashid's name when he was formulating his theory of hegemonic Islam, how might that have complicated his analysis?

Taking Talal Asad's proposition that Islam (and identity) is a project continually under construction rather than an essence or reified category is a first step toward creating richness and complexity from small bits and pieces of the relics we call evidence. In the performance of a ritual like the Maulidi ya Kiswahili we can read both agency and domination. If we bring gender into the mix, M.M.'s struggle to define himself as Swahili rather than wazalia (slave) and the repercussions that his struggle had for his father's self-perception takes us ever deeper into the complex process underway. If we then consider that these projects were under construction at a time when the British were busily creating their own knowledge about coastal religion and identity through categorizing discourses aimed at restructuring labour practices and society we begin to move into a multidimensional picture of Swahili identity. Add to that the possibility that the "civilizing mission" of the British was as much trial and error as it was purposeful and we have a very complex picture indeed.

Finally, social construction alone is not enough. As Gyan Prakash argues, we must examine that construction within relationships of power. The kind of analysis Prakash brings to the colonial encounter does not deny the hegemony or event outright domination of colonizers or elites, rather it insists on it. However, by including

Foucault's notion that power can be both generative and destructive and is embedded in and created by both discourse and practice, he makes space for agency on the part of subalterns. By reading such an analysis of power into the construction of Islam, identity and gender, we can begin to investigate, in specific historical circumstances, the ways in which power was negotiated and produced at "multiple sites" as slaves and masters struggled to define what it meant to be a Muslim and what it meant to be Swahili.

Bibliography

Abu Lughod, Lila. *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Afsaruddin, Asma, ed. *Hermeneutics and Honor: Negotiating Female "Public" Space in Islamic/Ate Societies*. Cambridge, Mass.: Centre for Middle Eastern Studies of Harvard University, 1999.

Ahmad, Aijaz. *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literature*. London: Verso, 1992.

Allen, J. de Vere. "The 'Shirazi' Problem in East African Coastal History." *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde* 28 (1982).

———. *Swahili Origins: Swahili Culture and the Shungwaya Phenomenon*. London: James Curry, 1993.

Alpers, Edward A. "The Story of Swema." In *Women and Slavery in Africa*, edited by Martin A. Klein and Claire C. Robertson, 185 - 99. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983.

———. *Ivory and Slaves in East Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.

Amselle, Jean-Loup. *Mestizo Logics: Anthropology of Identity in Africa and Elsewhere*. Translated by Claudia Royal. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998.

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

Bakari, Mtoro bin Mwinyi. *The Customs of the Swahili People: The Desturi Za Waswahili of Mtoro Bin Mwinyi Bakari and Other Swahili Persons*. Translated by J.W.T. Allen. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.

Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Translated by Annette Lavers. New York: Hill and Wang, 1999.

Bernal, Victoria. "Islam, Transnational Culture, and Modernity in Rural Sudan." In *Gendered Encounters*, edited by M. Grosz-Ngaté and O. H. Kokole. London: Routledge, 1997.

Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Biersteker, Ann. "Language, Poetry, and Power: A Reconsideration of Utendi Wa Mwana Kupona." In *Faces of Islam in African Literature*, edited by Kenneth W. Harrow. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991.

Robert Brightman. "Forget Culture: Replacement, Transcendence, Relexification," *Cultural Anthropology* 10, no. 4 (1995): 509 – 546

Brink, André. "Stories of History: Reimagining the Past in Post Apartheid Narrative." In *Negotiating the Past*, edited by Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee, 29 - 42. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Bujra, Abdalla S. *The Politics of Stratification, a Study of Political Change in a South Arabian Town*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.

Bujra, Janet. *Serving Class: Masculinity and the Feminization of Domestic Service in Tanzania.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001.

Burton, Richard Francis. *Zanzibar: City, Island and Coast.* 1st reprint ed. London: Tinsley Brothers, 1872. Reprint, 1967.

Busia, Akosua. "Beloved." Directed by Jonathan Demme, 1998.

Caplan, Pat. "Gender, Ideology and Modes of Production on the Coast of East Africa." *Paideuma* 28 (1982): 28 - 43.

Carretta, Vincent, ed. *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings by Olaudah Equiano.* New York: Penguin Books, 1995.

Clifford, James, and George E. Marcus, eds. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

Combs-Shilling, M.E. *Sacred Performances : Islam, Sexuality, and Sacrifice.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

Constantin, Francois. "Charisma and the Crisis of Power in East Africa." In *Charisma and Brotherhood in African Islam*, edited by Donal. B. Cruise O'Brien and C. Coulon, 67 - 90. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.

Cooper, Frederick. "Conditions Analogous to Slavery." In *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies*, edited by Thomas C. Holt and Rebecca J. Scott Frederick Cooper. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

———. "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History." *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 5 (1994): 1516 - 45.

———. *From Slaves to Squatters: Plantation Labour and Agriculture in Zanzibar and Coastal Kenya, 1890 - 1925.* Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1997.

———. "Islam and Cultural Hegemony." In *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa*, edited by Paul E. Lovejoy. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1981.

———. *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa, Yale Historical Publications : Miscellany ; 113.* New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 1977.

Cooper, Frederick, and Ann Laura Stoler, eds. *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Crapanzano, Vincent. *The Hamadsha: A Study in Moroccan Ethnopsychiatry.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.

Eastman, Carol. "Women, Slaves and Foreigners: African Cultural Influences and Group Processes in the Formation of Northern Swahili Coastal Society." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 21, no. 1 (1988): 1 - 20.

Eastman, Carol M. "Who Are the Waswahili?" *Africa* XLI, no. 3 (1975): 228 - 36.

Eickelman, Dale F. *Moroccan Islam: Tradition and Society in a Pilgrimage Centre.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976.

Fair, Laura. "Pastimes and Politics: A Social History of Zanzibar's Ng'ambo Community, 1890-1950." Ph.D., University of Minnesota, 1994.

Foner, Laura, and Eugene D. Genovese, eds. *Slavery in the New World; a Reader in Comparative History.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969.

Foucault, Michel. *The Archeology of Knowledge & the Discourse of Language.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1972.

———. "Truth and Power." In *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings,* edited by Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.

Franzoni, David H. "Amistad.", edited by Steven Spielberg, 1997.

Freeman-Grenville, G. S. P. *The East African Coast: Select Documents from the First to the Earlier Nineteenth Century.* London: Collings, 1975.

Gates, Jr., Henry Louis. *Wonders of the African World.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999.

Geertz, Clifford. *Interpretation of Cultures.* New York: Basic Books, 1973.

Geiger, Susan. *Tanu Women: Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism, 1955-1965.* Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing, 2000.

Genovese, Eugene D. *Roll, Jordan, Roll; the World the Slaves Made.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1974.

Gilsenan, Michael. *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt: An Essay in the Sociology of Religion.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973.

Glassman, Jonathon. *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995.

Goldman, Helle. "A Comparative Study of Swahili in Two Rural Communities in Pemba, Zanzibar, Tanzania." Ph.D., New York University, 1996.

Gurnah, Abdulrazak. *By the Sea.* New York: The New Press, 2001.

———. *Admiring Silence.* New York: The New Press, 1996.

———. *Paradise.* New York: The New Press, 1994.

———. *Memory of Departure.* New York: Grove Press, 1988.

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

———. "Symposium Papers, Comments and an Abstract: The Sociology of Knowledge About Child Abuse." *No&ucirc;s* 22, no. 1 (1988): 53 - 63.

Hassani, Rashid bin. ""the Story of Rashid Bin Hassani of the Bisa Tribe, Northern Rhodesia" Recorded by W.F. Baldcock.", edited by Margery Perham. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1963. Reprint, 1971.

Horton, Mark. "Closing the Corridor: Archaeological and Architectural Evidence for Emerging Swahili Regional Autonomy." In *Continuity and Autonomy in Swahili Communities: Inland Influences and Strategies of Self-Determination*, edited by David J. Parkin. Wien: Institute fur Afrikanistik und Agyptologie der Universitat Wien; School of Oriental and African Studies, 1994.

Hunt, Nancy Rose. "Introduction." In *Gendered Colonialisms in African History*, edited by Nancy Rose Hunt, Tessie P. Liu and Jean Quataert. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1997.

Iliffe, John. *A Modern History of Tanganyika.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Jahadhmy, Ali A. *Anthology of Swahili Poetry, African Writers Series.* London: Heinemann, 1977.

Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.* Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.

———. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981.

Klein, Martin A. and Claire C. Robertson, eds. *Women and Slavery in Africa*, . Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983

Kopytoff, Igor, and Suzanne Miers, eds. *Slavery in Africa : Historical and Anthropological Perspectives.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977.

Mallon, Florencia E. "The Promise and Dilemma of Subaltern Studies: Perspectives from Latin American History." *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 5 (1994): 1491 - 1515.

Mann, Thomas. *Joseph and His Brothers.* Translated from the German by H.T. Lowe-Porter New York: Knopf, 1958.

Mazrui, Alamin M., and Ibrahim Noor Shariff. *The Swahili: Idiom and Identity of an African People*. Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1994.

Mazrui, Ali A. "Black Orientalism." *West African Review* 1, no. 2 (2000): http://www.westafricareview.com/war/vol1.2/mazrui2.html.

———. "A Preliminary Critique of the Tv Series by Henry Louis Gates, Jr." *West African Review* 1, no. 2 (2000): http://www.westafricareview.com/war/vol1.2/mazrui1.html.

McDougall, E. Ann. " Quest for Honour: Slavery, Islam, and the Contributions of Martin Klein to African History." *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 34, no. 3 (2000): 546-64.

———. "A Sense of Self: The Life of Fatma Barka." *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 32, no. 2 (1998): 385-415.

———. "Women in African Muslim Societies, 1400 - 1700." In *Encyclopaedia of Women in Islamic Culture*, Forthcoming.

Meillassoux, Claude. *Anthropology of Slavery: Womb of Iron and Gold*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Mirza, Sarah, and Margaret Strobel, eds. *Three Swahili Women*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.

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

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

Nurse, Derek, and Thomas J. Hinnebusch. *Swahili and Sabaki: A Linguistic History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982.

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

Perham, Margery, ed. *Ten Africans*. USA: Northwestern University Press, 1971.

Poster, Mark. *Cultural History and Postmodernity: Disciplinary Readings and Challenges*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

Pouwels, Randall L. "The East African Coast, C. 780 to 1900 C.E." In *The History of Islam in Africa*, edited by N. Levtzion and R.L. Pouwels, 251 - 67. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000.

———. *Horn and Crescent : Cultural Change and Traditional Islam on the East African Coast, 800-1900, African Studies Series ; 53.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

———. "Review." *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 32, no. 1 (1999): 228 - 29.

Prakash, Gyan. "Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism." *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 5 (1994): 1475 - 90.

———. "Terms of Servitude: The Colonial Discourse on Slavery and Bondage." In *Breaking the Chains: Slavery, Bondage, and Emancipation in Modern Africa and Asia*, edited by Martin Klein, 131 - 49. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993.

Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation.* London: Routledge, 1993.

Prins, A.J.H. *The Swahili-Speaking Peoples of Zanzibar and the East African Coast (Arabs, Shirazi and Swahili).* Edited by Daryll Forde. Vol. East Central Africa, Part XII, *Ethnographic Survey of Africa.* London: International African Institute, 1961.

Ranger, T. O. "Review." *The Journal of Religion in Africa* Vol. III (1975): 224-28.

Reese, Scott. E-mail, Tue, 05 Jun 2001.

Romero, Patricia. *Lamu: History, Society and Family in an East African Port City.* Princeton: Marcus Wiener, 1997.

———. "The Sacred Meadows: A Case Study of "Anthropologyland" Vs. "Historyland"." *History in Africa* 9 (1982): 337-46.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism.* New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

Scott, Joan Wallach. *Gender and the Politics of History.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

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

Sperling, David. "The Coastal Hinterland and Interior of East Africa." In *The History of Islam in Africa*, edited by N. Levtzion and R. L. Pouwels. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, edited by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

Stoler, Ann Laura. *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things.* Durham: Duke University Press, 1995.

Strobel, Margaret. "The Academy and the Activist: Collective Practice and Multicultural Focus." In *The Politics of Women's Studies: Testimony from 30 Founding Mothers*, edited by Florence Howe, 155 -79. New York: The Feminist Press, 2000.

———. "Gender, Race and Empire in Nineteenth- and Twentieth- Century Africa and Asia." In *Becoming Visible*, edited by Renate Bridenthal, Susan M. Stuard and Merry E. Weisner, 389 - 414. Boston:: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.

———."Slavery and Reproductive Labor in Mombasa" In *Women and Slavery in Africa*, edited by Martin A. Klein and Claire C. Robertson, 185 - 99. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983

———. *Muslim Women in Mombasa, 1890 - 1975*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.

Swartz, Marc J. "Politics, Ethnicity, and Social Structure: The Decline of an Urban Community During the Twentieth Century." *Ethnology* 35, no. 4 (1996): 233 - 48.

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

Vaughn, Megan. "Reported Speech and Other Kinds of Testimony." *Journal of Historical Sociology* 13, no. 3 (2000): 237 - 63.

White, Hayden. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.

White, Luise. *Speaking with Vampires:Rumor and History in East and Central Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Willis, Justin. *Mombasa, the Swahili, and the Making of the Mijikenda*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

Wilson, Thomas. *The Art of Rhetoric, for the Use of All Such as Are Studious of Eloquence, Set Forth in English [1553]* Nicholas Sharp, 2000 2000 [cited. Available from http://www.people.vcu.edu/~nsharp/wilsded2.htm.

Woodward, C. Vann, ed. *The Comparative Approach to American History*. New York: Basic Books, 1968.

Wright, Marcia. *Strategies of Slaves & Women : Life-Stories from East/Central Africa*. New York, London: L. Barber Press ; J. Currey, 1993.

Zein, Abdul Hamid Mohamed el. "Beyond Ideology and Theology: The Search for the Anthropology of Islam." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6 (1977): 227-54.

———. *The Sacred Meadows: A Structural Analysis of Religious Symbolism in an East African Town*. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1974.