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**Swahili identity in post-colonial Kenya: The reproduction of
gender in educational discourses**

Porter, Mary Ann, Ph.D.

University of Washington, 1992

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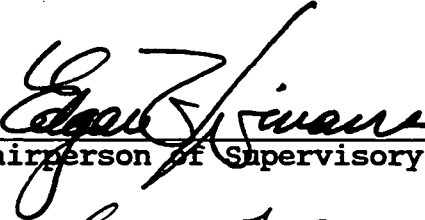
Swahili Identity in Post-Colonial Kenya: The Reproduction of
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by

Mary Ann Porter

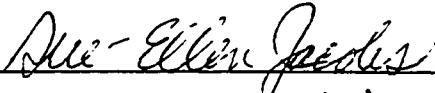
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University of Washington

Abstract

Swahili Identity in Post-Colonial Kenya: The Reproduction of
Gender in Educational Discourses

by

Mary Ann Porter

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In post-colonial Kenya, education is a key discourse within which struggles of power and identity among Kenyan peoples, and between Kenyans and the state are played out. This dissertation employs a series of parallel, articulating analyses of educational discourses in the colonial and post-colonial periods to examine both gender relations in the Mombasa Swahili community, and relations between Swahili people and the state.

In Mombasa, clear gender distinctions with women normatively confined to private spheres are a salient marker of Swahili culture, and thus Swahili identity, both to Swahili people themselves and to non-Swahili people who observe them. But since the 1930s women and girls have increasingly engaged in public educational domains as teachers, administrators, parents and students. Their involvement is part of a self-conscious Swahili attempt to afford local children good secular education provided by the state, while supplementing it with appropriate Koranic instruction. In this way they hope to maintain a distinctive Swahili, Muslim world view and

moral order. Paradoxically, the involvement of women in this project to maintain cultural integrity constitutes a challenge to male hegemony, and offers contested understandings of what "Swahili Women", and thus Swahili culture and identity are.

Furthermore, at the national level, the activities of Swahili men and women in molding secular education to their own cultural needs has the effect of resisting state attempts to construct a consciousness of Kenyan citizenship through the national control of education.

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*For all the children of the Mombasa neighborhood in which I
lived. For their friendship, and for the many things they
taught me. I wish them bright futures.*

and

For Wayne, who always tells it like it is.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Concepts like "nation," "society," and "culture" name bits [of the world of human kind] and threaten to turn names into things. Only by understanding these names as bundles of relationships, and by placing them back into the field from which they were abstracted, can we hope to avoid misleading inferences and increase our share of understanding. [Eric Wolf, Europe and the People Without History 1982:3]

When I traveled to Mombasa to begin my field work in June 1986, I flew (as travelers usually do these days) from the United States to Kenya's capital, Nairobi, and then took the train down to my final destination on the coast. But for many hundreds of years travelers to East Africa entered the region through the port of Mombasa making their way from there, first on foot and later by railway, to their inland destinations. This change in route reflects not only a move from sea to air transportation but the nineteenth and twentieth century shift away from the centrality and power of the Swahili coast. This shift in power was wrought in the first instance by British colonialism and European Christian missionization, and was confirmed in the post-colonial period when Nairobi continued to be developed as the capital of the modern nation of Kenya.

As a small child in Britain in the early 1960s I was oblivious to Harold MacMillan's "Winds of Change" speech and the crumbling of the empire. I was aware only of the development of the Commonwealth, and well remember visiting exhibits at the Commonwealth Institute depicting the production of Ghanaian cocoa and Kenyan tea and coffee. These exhibits also showed the developments that Africans were apparently making in education and medical care with the

financial and, it seemed, moral help of Her Majesty's Government. It was not until I was a graduate student in the United States that I was fully cognizant of the nature and extent of British Imperialism and I was stunned by its audacity.

In all my anthropological studies I have been curious about the impact of larger political and economic forces like colonialism and capitalism on the small, apparently bounded, cultures that anthropologists tend to study. And that led me to this study of the position of Swahili people in the post-colonial Kenyan state, and the ways in which the reproduction of gender within educational discourses, in part, constitutes contemporary Swahili identities, as well as having the effect of resisting state hegemony.

For the past twenty-five years, beginning with the civil rights and women's movements of the late 1960s, American anthropologists have been explicitly addressing the relationship of anthropology to colonialism and capitalism and the role of anthropologists and anthropology in the contemporary world (Hymes 1969; Asad 1973; Huizer and Mannheim 1979). In British social anthropology, particularly the work of the Manchester school, such interests were apparent much earlier (Colson and Gluckman 1951). I attribute the slowness of American anthropology to attend to such issues to the anti-communist (therefore anti-Marxist) climate in American society in the 1950s, which inhibited structural economic analyses.

More recently anthropological attention has turned particularly to the ways in which marginalized people in "developing" nations have been impacted by more powerful "first world" forces. These concerns are both epistemological and ethical. Earlier, more functionalist ethnographies tended to obscure the wider contexts in which particular cultures were located thus denying complete understanding and explanation of people's lives. This analytical isolation also had the effect of obscuring some of the more exploitative relationships, with colonialism and world capitalism for example, in which people found themselves. Recognizing these drawbacks, the 1970s saw the development of more politically sensitized analyses that documented the unequal relations being played out between different communities.

The key referents for much of this work were Immanuel Wallerstein's world systems theory (Wallerstein 1974), the dependency theory of Andre Gunder Frank (Frank 1966), and the work of structural Marxists, including French scholars such as Terray and Godelier (Terray 1972; Godelier 1977). While not providing a unified body of scholarship, the work of these political economists does hold some common themes. They all sought explanations for inequality and struggle in economic systems, with particular attention being paid to the articulation of modes of production, be they capitalist, as in the cases of Wallerstein and Frank, or pre-capitalist as in the works of Godelier and Terray. While their works

constitute an important intellectual development, and identified key structures outside the more traditional realms that anthropologists studied as having a bearing on people's lives, they were clearly overdetermining. That is, in providing structural political/economic explanations for inequality the political economists failed to take significant account of local, indigenous, social systems and forms of cultural expression (Nash 1981).

The concern about the over determination of the analyses by political economists led anthropologists such as June Nash to write ethnographies that take account of the wider structures but not to the exclusion of local systems of meaning. In We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us Nash (1979) modifies Wallerstein's world systems approach and keeps the core of her focus on the indigenous practices of the community as they articulate with the forces of capitalism. British historians, including E. P. Thompson, have also been critical of political economy approaches that denied agency to subordinate peoples, in Thompson's case the English working class (Thompson 1963). Given their concerns, it is interesting to read the review of recent works in political economy by William Roseberry in which he criticizes writers like Nash and E.P. Thompson who, he argues, fail adequately to take account of wider political and economic structures! "It is insufficient to assert that transformations are not structurally determined but result from human agency" (Roseberry 1988:171). In the same article

he also expresses reservations about the tendency of writers, in their project to correct the overdeterminacy of political economy, to over-romanticize the ways in which indigenous or subordinate peoples resist the agents of capitalism and colonialism.

Thus the literature presents us with an intellectual and methodological dilemma: as anthropologists who want accurately to portray all aspects of the life of a community, and who want to identify the sources of exploitation and inequality, we need to consider the institutions and structures outside the community that speak to such issues; on the other hand we do not want to deny indigenous explanations or to draw away from important ethnographic materials. How do we decide where best to focus our intellectual energies? Rather than attempting to decide that a particular site is the dominant source of the determination of peoples lives the better question is: what form of analysis might provide a way of looking at the relationship between wider structures and local agency, that is, how do they articulate with one another?

The approach that seems most nearly to be able to address some of the issues outlined above is practice anthropology, which is associated with a number of influential scholars including Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and Anthony Giddens (1979). Sherry Ortner (1984) and Jane Collier and Sylvia Yanagisako (1989) have produced some of the most useful writing about the practice approach which, as Yanagisako and Collier point out,

"is neither a theory nor a method in itself, but rather a key symbol" (Collier and Yanagisako 1989:27). In their 1989 article, in which they point out the parallels between practice and feminist anthropology, Yanagisako and Collier characterize practice approaches in the following ways: 1) They pay attention to individual human agency; 2) They look at that agency within structural contexts; 3) They characterize the structures that provide the said contexts as inherently unequal and power laden; 4) They depict structures of domination as being themselves cultural constructs rather than absolute forms; 5) Practice approaches challenge the notion that the dominant structures are necessarily determinant in people's lives; 6) Practice approaches attempt to identify the ways in which the dominant structures are reproduced (Yanagisako and Collier 1989).

Most importantly, then, in a practice approach the project is not to resolve the direction of the greatest amount of causality -- core to periphery, periphery to core -- or even to strike some kind of balance in analysis. It is to show how, at every level, there are negotiations over meanings, over economic resources, over politics, that are multi-directional and always changing. What needs to be done is to "try to understand how the system constructs actresses and actors and how these agents realize and transform the system" (Yanagisako and Collier 1989:29). The concerns of a practice approach in anthropology as depicted by Yanagisako and Collier

are those that are central to this dissertation as I try to lay out and explain the relations between Swahili people and the modern Kenyan state, particularly in terms of the reproduction of gender and educational discourses.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT

This current work represents a considerable intellectual shift from my original formulation of this project.

The Early Research Design

The research I originally proposed was influenced by the exigencies of positivistic grant writing, which required me to render ideas and relationships clear cut and simple when they were neither. I set out to look at the impact of secular education on the lives of Swahili women and their families.

This project came, in part, from reading Margaret Strobel's history of Swahili women in Mombasa (Strobel 1979) where she describes how the British colonial government provided secular education first for boys in the Swahili community and later, in 1938, for girls. She documents the public debate among influential men in the community about whether or not to accept government schools. There was particular resistance, she argues, to girls attending the government schools because of what that might do to the heshima¹ (respect) of the girls and their families. Drawing on the work of Hanna Papanek

¹There is no single English word that adequately translates heshima, but it is equatable with respect, modesty, good reputation, self-control and piety. I shall therefore use the Swahili word throughout the text.

(1977) Strobel argues that the resistance by Swahili people to government sponsored secular education for girls was a manifestation of their resistance to colonialism. She goes on to propose that in times of rapid social change, such as during periods of colonization, women are designated by men as repositories of traditional values and cultural knowledge, and they attempt to shield women from innovation.

The work of Strobel and other scholars who have written about Swahili people suggests that the social and cultural worlds of Swahili men and women have historically been quite distinctive and separate (Eastman 1984, 1987; Strobel 1979; Swartz 1982a, 1982b). I wanted to see if there were indeed separate men's and women's cultures, whether women were considered repositories of traditional beliefs and values², and whether education changed their lives. If women were considered to be cultural repositories and if their receiving education brought changes to their lives, I wanted to document how Swahili culture was transformed.

Originally, I proposed to determine the impact of education on the lives of women and their families through comparative life history studies of two cohorts of women who were similar in every way except for the amount of education that they had. Thus I proposed to "hold constant" variables such as class,

²These two propositions were problematic in themselves in that if Swahili culture was as gendered as Swartz, Eastman, and Strobel claimed, how could women be the repositories of "traditional culture" apparently for both men and women?

status group, age, ethnic sub-group, and gender in an effort to demonstrate the differences that education, as an agent of change, was making in the lives of Swahili people. It took no longer than a few days in Mombasa for me to see that the "variables" that I had wanted to control for were in fact the very elements that needed to be examined and explained, and that women themselves constituted a diverse group that could not be taken for granted.

The epistemological trap in which I caught myself in my original formulation of gender and education is best explicated by Chandra Mohanty when she says:

The problem with this analytical strategy [of looking at the effects of particular social forces on people] is...that it assumes men and women are already constituted as sexual-political subjects prior to their entry into the arena of social relations. Only if we subscribe to this assumption is it possible to undertake analysis which looks at the "effects" of kinship structures, colonialism, organization of labor, etc., on women, who are defined in advance as a group. The crucial point that is forgotten is that women are produced through these very relations as well as being implicated in forming these relations. [Mohanty 1988:68]

Nor is education simply an agent of social transformation acting on people, but a complicated set of discourses central to Kenyan daily life.

Education as Discourse

The engagement of Kenyans both nationally and locally in educational discourses became apparent to me as soon as I arrived in Kenya. Education is depicted by the government through the media and in political speeches as the route to

national development and prosperity as well as to success for individuals and their extended families. The Kenyan government currently spends somewhere between 32% and 36% of its national budget on education (Daily Nation, 10/19/87) and, given the needs of other national budget items, the government cannot continue to allocate this much money. But given the strong public demand for education for development, the government cannot, in some ways, afford not to keep financing education at this level if lack of educational opportunity is not to become a cause of unrest. Every day brings newspaper accounts of new schools being started, of government officials urging wananchi (citizens) to make a greater effort to support schools and the academic endeavors of their children. Where children fail public examinations, blame is cast on parents, teachers, schools, and the children themselves -- in fact anywhere other than on the educational system or the state.

Swahili people are concerned with the poor performance of their children in national examinations, and with the inadequacy of the supply and quality of teachers, schools and materials. At a conference of Muslim educators held in Mombasa in August 1986, where the participants discussed ways to improve their children's performance in the national examinations, the educational needs of the Swahili community were explicitly articulated: the children need to pass national exams in order to be gainfully employed and to prosper within Kenya. But as well as succeeding in the

schools and work place, it is necessary for Swahili children to experience religious, community education to counter the exposure to non-Swahili, non-Muslim, culture and religion (Meeting of Muslim Education and Welfare Association, Mombasa, August 1986).

The contemporary structure of government-regulated education in Kenya obliges Muslims to distinguish between religious and secular education where they have not done so before. In Islam no distinction is made between the religious and the secular; in all domains, including education, there is a unified view in which all knowledge comes from God and is acquired in order better to know God's works. In the Kenyan education system religious instruction, whether Christian, Islamic, or Hindu, is but one subject on the class schedule of a primarily secular institution within a Christian state.

While all Kenyans apparently desire education, they do not want it for exactly the same reasons. Swahili people want technical skills but wish to preserve their own religion and culture. The overt goal of the state, meanwhile, is to provide people with practical skills and a sense of their citizenship as Kenyans with a shared Kenyan culture.

The education literature has not been uncritical of the roles of education, and particular attention has been paid to questions of inequality in which certain groups are identified as having unequal access to education, be it on account of their ethnicity, their race, their class or their gender (A.

Kelly 1981; G. Kelly 1984; Kinyanjui 1977, Eshiwani 1975, 1977, 1983a, 1983b, 1984). Or the types of education that are offered are in some way unequal in terms of geographical location, availability of equipment or particular subjects, quality of teacher, hidden curriculum and so forth. Access to, and equality of, education for disadvantaged groups is seen as a prerequisite for an improvement in their status, and all the educational domains that I have just described could, in theory, be reformed and amended given sufficient will and resources. But, at some fundamental level, these analyses still leave the concept of education analytically untouched; it is still perceived as a set of pre-constructed circumstances, of varying quality and availability, into which a child may or may not be able to place themselves.

A more sophisticated strategy is to approach education as a set of discourses. I use "discourse" here as it is attributed to Foucault by Mark Hobart: "...the notion of discourse as the totality of the sayable (and the doable) for a particular people at any moment" (Hobart 1984:4-5). Education is not one essential unit. It comprises multiple relations and understandings among government policy, schools, teachers, curricula, pupils and their families which are constantly contested and negotiated. This approach is in accord with the practice anthropology that I discussed earlier where both local agency and wider structures are seen to be culturally constructed and mutually constituted, and examined

accordingly. It also makes it possible to uncover some of the very complex ways in which cultural elements, primarily gender in this case, are reproduced within educational discourses.

Gender and Education

After it became apparent to me at the beginning of my field work that "education" and "women" themselves needed to be examined and explained, they remained key viable domains of research in understanding the position of the Swahili community in modern Kenya.

Gender is particularly interesting because gender distinctions are such a marked element of Swahili culture. As I show in Chapter III, these distinctions are more ideological than practiced, but they serve as part of the symbolic repertoire of Swahili culture and identity on which people draw to make their lives meaningful and to inform their actions. Ann Stoler has argued that gender is one of the key arenas in which colonial hegemony is played out (Stoler 1989), to which I would add that the same can be said of post-colonial state hegemony.

Like gender, education has historically been an important marker of Swahili, especially male, identity. Swahili language and literature have been written in Arabic script for hundreds of years, in contrast to the formal literacy skills of other Kenyans who learned to read and write only during this century. To be educated is part of the Swahili ideal of being "civilized". In contemporary Kenya education continues

to be important to Swahili people as a route to upward mobility, although with the reservations about cultural and religious knowledge that I suggested above.

Education is a particularly useful arena in which to examine the position of Swahili people in modern Kenya because the school constitutes a site at which wider structures and local agency -- the Kenyan government and Swahili people -- encounter each other. The school also represents what Scott, in a re-examination of Gramsci's concept of hegemony, refers to as one of the "institutional bases of hegemony" (Scott 1985:320). It provides an opportunity, through looking at the daily actions of teachers and students, to see how the culture and ideology of the nation state (in this case modern Kenya) acts upon, is received by, and is acted upon by Swahili people and their culture(s) and ideologies. Conflicting identities are expressed through the process of education even as (and because) education itself is contributing to the very molding of those identities. Meanwhile, education itself is the product of competition and negotiation between particular groups and individuals; it is used by the state to define nationhood and by local individuals and the community to define themselves. Education creates gender and identity and also reflects gender and identity. In this dissertation my task is to demonstrate how this is so.

THE DISSERTATION

In the remaining pages of this chapter I describe my place,

as anthropologist, in the field; the research methods I employed; and the history and geography of Mombasa. In Chapter II I discuss Swahili culture and identity, and provide ethnographic information about Swahili social organization and culture; kinship; religion; marriage; households and economic activity. This seems a mammoth undertaking in light of the fact that whole books have been written on the topics described above, but here the ethnography shows a range of elements that collectively constitute "Swahili culture." It is this repertoire on which people draw to enact and make sense of their world, and which constitutes Swahili peoples' identities.

Chapter III explores expressions of Swahili power relations through the articulation of gender and status, which are mutually constituted. Topics through which these are examined include gender ideologies and practices; weddings; gendered space; and issues of sexuality.

The period of British colonization of East Africa, and the inception of the Kenyan state, is the subject of Chapter IV in which I discuss colonial education policies and Swahili peoples' responses to them. I document the founding of "Arab" schools in Mombasa, and thwarted attempts by Swahili people to maintain their identity by establishing their own Islamic schools as an alternative to government programs.

The themes of secular and Islamic education are carried over into Chapter V, as is the ongoing development of the

state. The chapter addresses the development of education in Mombasa since Independence, discussing national goals for education and their articulation at the local level as Swahili people respond to them.

Chapter VI explicitly addresses the ways in which the activities of Swahili girls and women in school, and symbolic representations of "Swahili Women", exploit orientalist notions held by other Kenyans and assert a distinctive Swahili identity in the face of the state's project in schools of developing a national Kenyan identity in its citizens. This chapter shows, too, that different Swahili men and women have different understandings of what constitutes "Swahili culture."

Chapter VII, the final chapter, returns to a broader question of local identity within the nation of Kenya. It looks at attempts by the state to dominate its citizens and ways in which local actions have the effect of resisting state domination. It considers too, the ways in which resistance to state domination within educational discourses can result in even firmer state control and further marginalization of Swahili people. But first let us turn to my field site in Mombasa.

SITUATION AND SITE

The realities that I had to confront when I reached Mombasa fall into three categories. They are the background of previous research that had been done on the Kenya coast, which

informed the way people saw me as a researcher and molded my access to particular topics and people (as well as having informed my formulation of the research problem in the first place); the actual events, language, belief systems, politics, etc., that came to constitute my data; and, finally, the way that I interacted personally with people in the community. It was the integration of these different elements that together constituted my daily activities in the research process.

The Kenya coast has a history of settlement for at least a thousand years, and many archaeological sites. Contemporary coastal cultures and societies are diverse and engaging. The coast is a common destination for Ph.D. students and professors pursuing their scholarly work individually, and for organized study tours from American and European universities. Most of the students on the study tours conduct individual research projects. Even though virtually none of them ever gets published, and so are invisible to scholars doing library research in the United States, the students and their projects are highly visible locally in the Swahili community. Given the West's fascination with purdah and veiling, which Swahili people practice, it was not surprising to me to discover that many students have chosen to do small projects on Swahili women. I was surprised, however, by the degree to which local people had a sense of westerners, especially "feminists," being critical of Islamic practices and beliefs regarding women.

As well as being sensitive about outsider perceptions of Swahili gender relations, I discovered that some Swahili people had read, and been disturbed by, scholarly reports on their lives that they felt to be inaccurate. Several different men individually took me aside and said that they hoped I would not "say bad things" about them.

Another issue that, initially, made some people wary of my research activities was the national political climate at the time, during which various executive pronouncements warned citizens against unauthorized foreign researchers. I did have research clearance from the Office of the President in Nairobi, but individual Swahili people to whom I talked did not seem too worried about that. On the other hand, almost everyone that I approached in their professional capacity, for example school teachers or state bureaucrats, was initially very wary of me. Their attitudes towards central government became clear to me through this process. Their first response was that they could not talk to me without my having research clearance. When I responded that I did have clearance and produced my official permit they were wary of me because I appeared to have some connection to the government. In some cases my official status remained an impediment to a free flow of information, but most people got used to me and came to trust me.

On beginning my field work I was viewed, especially by older men, as a Western Feminist who might criticize Islam and

the roles of Swahili women, or write "untrue" things about them. This made me cautious both because I wanted to win people's trust, and because I did not want to bother people who had already participated in other research projects. Swahili culture places a high value on politeness, appropriate behavior and observing rank and status. I think that my being English and a product of an entrenched class system sensitized me to these concerns, and I tried to be as respectful of individuals and the community as possible. This respect also led me to be cautious about breaking rules and causing offence more than I think American researchers would be. I wanted people in Old Town, where I lived, to understand that I was an anthropologist, but no such word, or concept, exists in the Swahili language so I used to explain that I was studying jamii (society). However, as I spent considerable time visiting schools and I allowed children to do their homework each day in my apartment, any one who did not know me by name called me "Mwalimu", teacher, and that is how I came to be known in Old Town Mombasa.

METHODOLOGY

I employed a number of research strategies while I was in Mombasa. I became a regular visitor to about twenty households where I conducted interviews and carried out participant observation. I attended weddings and funerals and other community events such as religious holidays. I visited a broad range of schools, secular and Islamic, from nursery

school to sixth form (advanced secondary school). I interviewed classroom teachers and head teachers and I observed classes in Social Education and Ethics, Islamic Religious Instruction and nursery school classes. I also interviewed elderly Swahili people about education during the colonial period.

In addition to these first hand sources, I was able to draw on written materials held in the library at Fort Jesus Museum, and in the Kenya National Archives in Nairobi. I also became an avid reader and collector of newspapers and magazines, which describe in so much detail the educational concerns of Kenyans.

I employed a research assistant, a young unmarried Swahili woman of Arab descent, who assisted me with some of my interviews and with translating and transcribing tapes from interviews. My methods for conducting interviews with Swahili people varied depending on the circumstances. I carried out interviews in Swahili or in English depending on the linguistic skills and wishes of the interviewees. I either recorded them on a tape recorder or, as was often the case, I wrote notes in a mixture of English and Swahili as the interviewee responded to my questions. While older men providing historical accounts seemed quite comfortable with the tape recorder, many other people, especially school teachers, were not. Where I took notes I read them into my tape recorder and added other recollections when I returned

home. In some cases I showed transcripts of interviews to the interviewees and asked for confirmation of accuracy and for their comments, which often generated further information. Towards the end of my stay in Mombasa I talked to some men and women about my research, and my understandings of the position of Swahili people in post-colonial Kenya, and they told me that what I said made sense to them.

THE TOWN OF MOMBASA³

Unlike many cities in Sub-Saharan Africa during the colonial period, Mombasa had already existed since at least the twelfth century, and was not a typical "native town" that could be planned by the colonial government; Mombasa already had a life of its own.

In 1895, when the ten mile coastal strip of what is now Kenya was leased by the Sultan of Zanzibar to the British as a Protectorate, settlement in Mombasa was confined primarily to the southeast of the island around Fort Jesus, and northward, along the shore, beyond the port at Forodhoni. The island is separated from the mainland by a narrow stretch of water on three sides, and is bordered by the Indian Ocean on the fourth (see Figure 1). The settlement of what is today referred to as the Old Town of Mombasa at that time comprised two mitaa (neighborhoods), Mji wa Kale and Gavana. When the

³There are many historical accounts of Mombasa and of the coast; the information provided here is a compilation from a variety of sources, written and oral. For more information see Cooper 1977, 1980, 1983; Coupland 1938; Berg 1968; Janmohamed 1978; Kindy 1972; Strobel 1979.

British took charge of Mombasa it had already been colonized by the Portuguese and successive competing groups of Arabs. Little is known about the early history of the town and who the indigenous populations were before the arrival of the Portuguese in 1593. That was the period when some Omani Arabs and a few people from the Indian sub-continent also settled there, probably as a result of trading, and when Mombasa began to develop as a city-state. It is the period to which the Mombasa Swahili Thenashara Taifa (Twelve Tribes), whom I discuss in Chapter II, attribute their origins. Swahili-type settlements similar to Mombasa grew up all along the coast of what is now Kenya, including at Malindi and Lamu (see Figure 2). They also emerged as far south as modern Mozambique.

Following a century of Portuguese rule the Yarubi dynasty of Omani Arabs took over Mombasa and in 1730 members of the Mazrui family were appointed to rule locally, which they did until 1837 when the Busaidi rulers of Oman took control. As the Busaidi sultanate moved to Zanzibar in 1840, this made the close administration of Mombasa much easier. Throughout the centuries Mombasa was frequently the site of clashes between different ruling and aspiring lineages, and also engaged in battles with other city-states along the coast, including Malindi and Lamu to the north.

This history was reflected in the settlement pattern of Old Town in the late nineteenth century. Close to the Portuguese-

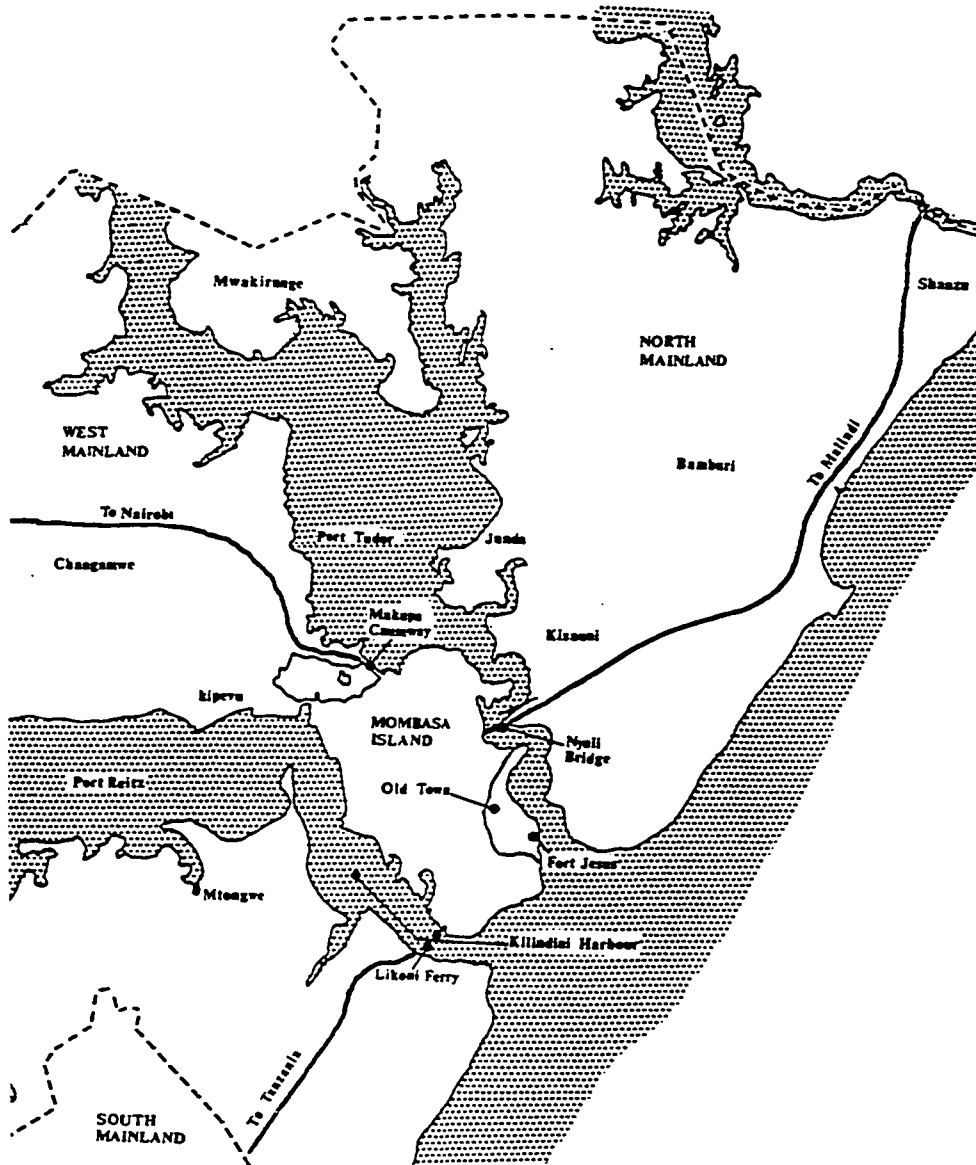


FIGURE 1: Map of Mombasa Island and Vicinity.

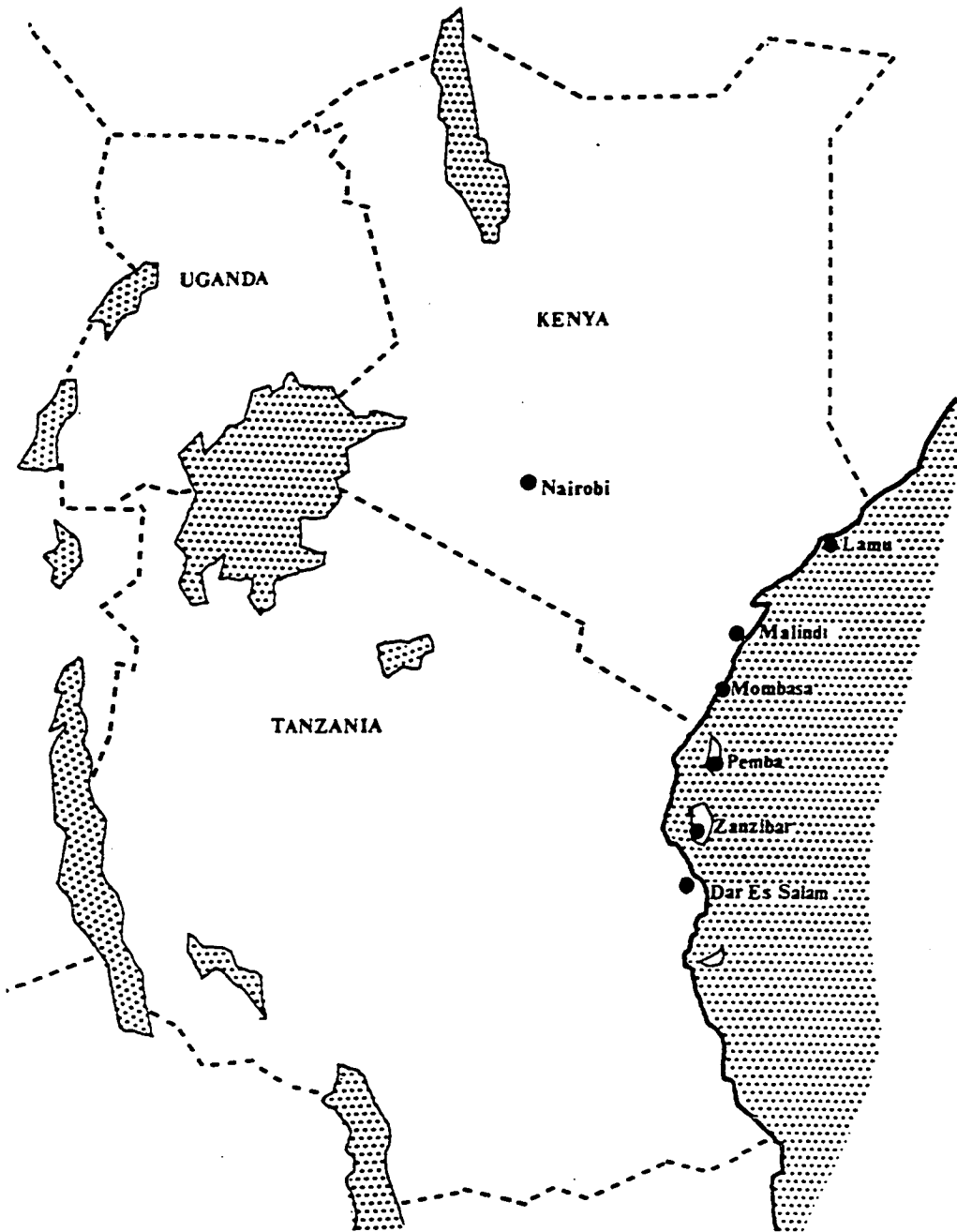


FIGURE 2: Map of the East African Coast.

built Fort Jesus were the houses of affluent Arabs, some of whom were agents and administrators for the Sultans of Zanzibar. In times of conflict with neighboring communities the Fort provided ready protection for citizens. Beyond, into Mji wa Kale, were the homes of Swahili people, particularly the Tisa Taifa. Surrounding the houses were mashamba (farms), and beyond them, covering most of the island were areas of uncleared dense vegetation, which thrives in the tropical climate four degrees south of the equator.

Before British rule Swahili people constituted the majority of the population of Mombasa. It was estimated by the British in 1897 that of a total population of 24,711 in Mombasa, 15,172 were "Arabs" and "Free Swahili" (Berg and Walter 1968). Newcomers to Mombasa in the second half of the nineteenth century included Asian traders and chandlers from various parts of the Indian sub-continent, and Christian missionaries who set up stations on the north mainland. While the Asian community thrived and expanded, the missionaries were eventually defeated by malaria and the reluctance of the coastal peoples, particularly the Muslims, to convert to Christianity. They moved up country, where they found a less hostile physical and cultural environment.

Economic activities in Mombasa in the nineteenth century were centered around the port and plantations. Outside the town, and on the mainland, were large Arab and Swahili owned plantations producing sisal, cashews and grain for export

primarily to the Middle East. The success of the plantations depended on a labor force of slaves who were brought from central and southeast African countries including what are now Mozambique and Malawi. As well as using slave labor for the plantations, Mombasa was a holding port for slaves waiting to be shipped to Oman where they were sold. The dhow (sailing ships) depended entirely on wind power and had to wait until the monsoon winds would take them north between July and October. Other East African products, including ivory and mangrove poles, were exported to all parts of the Indian Ocean through Mombasa. This energetic trade provided work for the newly arrived Asians who set up chandlers shops and who imported goods to distribute for sale throughout East Africa.

The Expansion of Mombasa in the Colonial Period

During the British colonial period, 1895-1963, Mombasa went through profound changes in terms of administration, demography, economy and settlement. The British East African Protectorate gained status as a British Crown Colony in 1920, except for a coastal strip which retained its Protectorate status and close ties with Zanzibar. The territory was divided into seven provinces including Seyiddie, which is now Coast Province. There were British administrative commissioners for both the provinces and the districts within them. Coast Province was divided into six districts, four of which were administered at the local level by "native agents" in the form of chiefs and headmen. The other two districts,

Lamu and Mombasa, were part of the continuing Protectorate and their local administrators were Arab/Swahili liwalis instead of chiefs, and mudirs instead of headmen. The District Commissioners were responsible for the administration of the affairs of Europeans and Asians.

The biggest changes in Mombasa were triggered by two major building projects. A railway line was built from Mombasa to Kampala in Uganda, providing much easier access to the highlands and the interior; and the British implemented the building of a new deep water port at Kilindini on the South West side of the island⁴. Both of these enterprises required thousands of laborers, the supply of which could not be met in Mombasa. Upcountry Africans from Kenya colony migrated to Mombasa to work; the predominant ethnic groups were Kavirondo (Luo and Luhya), Kikuyu, Kamba and Taita. Indians came both to labor and to work as clerks for the Harbor and Railways, and to clerk for the colonial administration.

While British building projects were providing employment for the upcountry Africans in Mombasa, British activities were simultaneously undermining the economic base of Arab and Swahili people. In 1907 slavery was abolished, and the

⁴Although official history cites the need for deeper water as the reason for building a new port on the opposite side of the island from the old one, historian Justin Willis suggests that the Forodhoni port could have been adequately expanded and deepened and that it was British desire to have a new site away from the uncontrollable Arab/Swahili part of town that led them to Kilindini (Justin Willis, personal communication).

plantation owners lost their work force. Many of them were forced to sell their land, mainly to Asian people; others let their land lie fallow and it was often cultivated in small plots by their former slaves who remained on the land as squatters. Male former slaves also took up casual day labor and were able to keep their earnings for themselves (Cooper 1987). Like former slave owners, those who had traded in slaves also lost the major source of their livelihood.

The landscape of Mombasa changed rapidly. New administrative buildings were constructed at the edge of Old Town, including the law courts and the district office at Treasury Square. The Mombasa Club, the meeting place for Europeans, was constructed in a prime location by the sea and next to Fort Jesus. A tram line was constructed to carry people around the fast expanding town and out to the site of the new railway station.

The newly arrived laborers needed housing, and substantial settlements began to appear to the north, south and west of Mombasa on the mainland at Kingorani, Likoni and Chagamwe respectively. There was such a shortage of housing that squatters built supposedly temporary homes on the land of others. These majengo areas still exist today; the houses are built of limestone with a makuti (thatched) or mabati (corrugated iron) roof. Colonial legislation, recognizing the housing crisis, allowed squatters to remain on the land until the landlord wanted to use the whole plot. Therefore,

squatters could not be evicted individually, and many still remain (Cooper 1980). Bajuni and Hadhrami people, whom I discuss in Chapter II, also arrived in Mombasa in significant numbers during the colonial period.

By 1900 a railway line had been built beyond Nairobi, and white settlers from Europe were beginning to arrive and try their hand at farming in the highlands. In 1905, the British colonial administration transferred from Mombasa to Nairobi, increasing employment opportunities for local people there and removing whatever little opportunity there had been left for Arab and Swahili influence at the coastal strip. In 1963 moves for coastal autonomy failed and Mombasa became part of the independent Republic of Kenya. By then, the Old Town was but one small area of the municipality of Mombasa and the population had grown significantly both in absolute size and in the diversity of its ethnic composition (see Table I).

TABLE I. Population of Mombasa in 1961 (Statistical Abstract 1962).

European Population:	4,400
Asian and Other Population:	40,200
Arab Population:	27,000
African Population:	<u>122,000</u>
Total:	193,600

Contemporary Mombasa

In the 1979 census the population of Mombasa was 341,148, and in 1989 it was 461,753. In the latter census the population of Old Town was 16,923. In August 1988 the Provincial Planning Office's working estimate for the

population of Mombasa was 680,000-700,000. In 1979 the extrapolated population growth rate was 3.9% per annum; it is estimated currently to be closer to 6%⁵. Mombasa is the most ethnically diverse town in Kenya.

Since Independence, Kenya has developed a large civil service and a massively expanded education system through the university level. In addition to the laboring and clerical jobs for which they originally came to Mombasa, upcountry people are now transferred there in their civil service and teaching careers, or they come to a branch of one of the major international companies that operate in Kenya such as Rank Xerox, Barclays Bank, or Goodyear Tyres.

Most Mombasa residents of upcountry origin do not think of Mombasa as their home: they send remittances back to their place of origin, and return there when they are sick, for family rituals, for their annual leave, and when they retire. Dissatisfied with schools in Mombasa and fearful of what they see as the evils of a big city, they send their older children home to be educated. They leave their babies upcountry because of the heat and malaria in Mombasa. There are many stories about the Swahili people circulating in Mombasa among non-coastal Kenyans. One letter that was written to the Daily Nation, a national newspaper, claimed that the cats in Old Town are in fact evil spirits and that the writer would not enter that part of Mombasa even in the day time.

⁵Provincial planning office staff personal communication.

Much of the economy of Mombasa still revolves around the ports, both at Forodhoni, in Old Town, and at Kilindini. Kilindini is the largest Indian Ocean trading port north of Durban and is also a base for Kenyan Naval forces and for those of several other nations. Significant revenue comes from supplying foreign fleets with food and water. In November 1986, for example, there were 11,000 US sailors in town for about a week, and they contributed substantially both to the formal and informal economies of the region.

Old Town Today

Most new visitors to Old Town enter the neighborhood from the intersection of Ndia Kuu, Mbarak Hinawy and Nkrumah roads, right outside Fort Jesus and the Mombasa Club. The formerly all-white colonial Mombasa club is now multi-racial, but the membership is still predominantly male. Fort Jesus, which was run as a prison by both the Arabs and the British is now one of the National Museums of Kenya. It is visited daily by parties of Kenyan school children, all dressed in brightly colored uniforms, and by European tourists dressed in very little. Around the Fort coastal Bajuni people, and Kikuyu and Kamba women from upcountry have kiosks selling soft drinks and souvenirs. On weekends the land adjacent to the Fort is used as a soccer pitch on which the boys and young men of Old Town play their league matches which are well attended. Taking care of the needs of the spectators are photographers, a barber, and boys selling barafu (sticks of frozen fruit juice)

out of ice chests.

Descendants of the Arabs who ruled Mombasa before the arrival of the British still live close to Fort Jesus; they include the Mazrui, the Mohashamy, the Timamy, and the Said extended families. None of their large houses are more than a hundred years old. Some have ornate wood balconies carved by Indian craftsmen, others are concrete buildings constructed in the last twenty years to replace older buildings on the same site. Some houses have walls and wrought iron gates, and there are cars parked outside, some with Saudi or Omani license plates. Interspersed with these houses near the Fort are tourist shops selling brass coffee pots, Persian rugs, leso (printed cotton wraps), wooden masks, shields and spears. And outside them, incongruously, stand Samburu⁶ warriors in full regalia, with ocher smeared on their skin and hair, carrying spears posing for tourists cameras.

Gordon Wilson, in a 1958 survey of Mombasa, described Old Town as follows:

It is a picturesque hodge-podge of ancient and modern buildings on what formerly were gardens of an Arab aristocracy who lived near Fort Jesus and the administration centre of the Coast Province and District at Treasury Square. There was no planning. The roads and paths today, while the delight of the tourists, are the bane of everyone else. The streets are narrow and the drains are open on one side of the street, or paths. The buildings are mostly two stories and sometimes more, so the streets are dark and take a long time to drain or to dry after a rain. [Wilson 1958:153]

⁶Samburu people are nomadic pastoralists from Rift Valley Province.

It has changed very little. There are several narrow one-way roads that go around and through Old Town along which cars can travel, but for the most part travel is on foot or motorcycle along narrow passages and alleyways. Most of the buildings are now more than two storeys high as a result either of demolition and rebuilding, or of building additional storeys on the top of the houses. The atmosphere in Old Town is very different from the rest of Mombasa. Walking down the street you pass houses from which women, both Asian and Swahili, are selling cooked food such as spicy potatoes, and mahamri (doughnuts) for a few pennies. The streets are lined with buildings; there is barely an open patch anywhere. There are mosques -- some of the oldest structures to be seen -- furniture-making workshops, goldsmiths, and musicians shops where they sell music tapes and rent out bands to play at weddings. There are printing shops, chandlers, gunny sack merchants, electrical supply shops, and little grocery stores run primarily by Hadhrami Arab and Asian people. In spite of scary tales of the Old Town, the night is the most pleasant time to walk around; as it is the coolest time people come out and talk to their neighbors and passersby. The smell of bhangi (marijuana) frequently permeates the air, and local house servants can be seen clustered around outside the windows of houses where t.v. sets broadcast the Voice of Kenya (VOK), or show a rented video.

Old Town is becoming increasingly diverse with only about

half the population being Swahili or Arab. Almost all the other half are Asians of various sects and the remainder of the population is a handful of Europeans, and Mijikenda people from the coastal hinterlands who work in the Old Town as domestic servants and casual laborers. The people of Old Town get along quite well and this may be in part because they share their religion; over 80% of Old Town residents are Muslims of various sects (Old Town Conservation Survey 1990). Asian and Swahili people are neighbors and attend each others' weddings and funerals regardless of identity, but they do not intermarry and their societies and cultures are quite distinct. Thus, in spite of the social intercourse of peoples of diverse origins and identity, it is not problematic for me to provide a distinctive ethnography of Swahili culture and social organization, which I begin in the following chapter.

CHAPTER II: SWAHILI CULTURE AND IDENTITY

In this chapter I describe some elements of Swahili culture and social organization as though they were discrete entities: sub-group identity; religion; family and kinship; households and economic activities. In practice, these elements are inseparably intertwined and grounded in everyday life; and they are differentially understood and enacted by different people. The various elements of Swahili culture provide a repertoire of the possibilities for the ways people may live their lives -- and the identities that they create for themselves. In relation to the outside world, Swahili culture, and thus identity, is shared to the extent that, even if all the people do not enact and understand Swahili culture in the same way, they do have some shared understanding of what constitutes the range of possibility. As Dorinne Kondo says of culture:

Culture...is no reified thing or system, but a meaningful way of being in the world...These cultural meanings are themselves multiple and contradictory.
[Kondo 1990:300]

For some Swahili people, however, Swahili culture is reified. A number of Swahili men have come to make a living out of being what I call "professional informants". They host scholars in their homes, conduct guided tours of old Swahili monuments, and give public lectures on "Swahili culture". They talk specifically about Swahili mila na desturi (tradition and custom). Swahili culture is depicted as fixed and bounded as Islamic, civilized, and literary with complete gender segregation, even as it reportedly disappears in the

onslaught of western style technology and immorality. As Mannheim reminds us:

We are directly aware primarily of those aspects of our culture which have become subjects of our reflection; and these contain only those elements which the course of development have somehow, at some point, become problematical. [Mannheim 1952:295]

This is indeed the case for Swahili people as a whole, whose political and economic power has declined throughout the colonial and post-colonial period. It is most particularly the case for older Swahili men who are losing power both to other Kenyans and to Swahili women.

In an intellectual period of deconstruction and anti-essentialism, I approach with caution the task of writing "Swahili ethnography". However, there is something there to be described, which is recognizable both to Swahili people and to other anthropologists who have lived with them.

THE POLITICS OF SWAHILI IDENTITY

The problem of categorization of Kenyan coastal peoples has preoccupied scholars (indigenous and foreign) and colonial and post-colonial governments considerably more than it has troubled most of the people themselves (Prins 1967, Eastman 1971, Noor Shariff 1973, Allen 1976). Much of the debate has centered around the degree to which coastal Muslims are Africans or Arabs and, from a British colonial perspective, this depended on the racial origin of the "blood flowing through the veins" of the colonized. In this dissertation I am arguing for a cultural definition of Swahili people as a

population of Kiswahili speaking Muslims of diverse origins who share a common cultural repertoire. I argue this because apparently essentialist terms such as "Arab" and "African" are actually subject to different interpretations in different cultural and political contexts. In spite of this the imputed origins of the different groups comprising the Swahili community are pertinent to an understanding of internal conflicts during the colonial period and, indeed, of contemporary Swahili status concerns and politics, and so I include them here.

Historical materials suggest that the word "Swahili" was first used by foreigners to describe the coastal seafaring Muslims¹ of East Africa (Cooper 1980) and was probably derived from the Arabic word for coast, souahel. Swahili people, to this day, distinguish among themselves by more specific local labels referring to their place of residence or imputed place of origin.

The Mombasa Swahili people known as the Thenashara Taifa (Twelve Tribes²) fall into two sub-groups of the Thelatha Taifa (Three Tribes) (Changamwe, Kilindini and Tangana) and

¹These seafaring Muslims were probably all men. Swahili women rarely go to sea, and some get very sea sick when travelling by boat. This is in part due to the fact that they have to sit in the bottom of the boat next to the diesel engine.

²The usual translation of the Swahili word taifa is "nation" rather than "tribe", which is used here. I use the latter translation, in spite of "tribe" often being considered an invidious word (Magubane 1971) because that is the translation that Swahili informants use.

the Tisa Taifa (Nine Tribes) (Mvita, Jomvu, Kilifi, Mtwapa, Pate, Faza, Shaka, Bajuni, Katwa.) The name of their Taifa refers to their reputed place of origin. The Twelve Tribes have been established in Mombasa for many hundreds of years and are considered by some to be the only "true" Swahili (Swartz 1991). Indigenous Swahili scholars such as Hyder Kindy (1972) use the term "Swahili" without comment when talking about the collectivity of the Mombasa Twelve Tribes. Salim (1976) says that the Twelve Tribes are an "admixture" of African and Shirazi elements. He does not doubt that some "Arabian blood" flows in their veins.

Bajuni men and women have migrated more recently to Mombasa from the northern Kenya coast and Lamu archipelago, many of them since the second world war. Mombasa Bajuni, or Wagunya as they are often called, still have many relatives in the islands and there is a lot of travel to and fro.

Other coastal sub-groups that I encountered in Mombasa, in addition to Twelve Tribes and Bajuni, included Wabarawa, from southern Somalia, and Wamambui, Waamu and Wavumba from Mambui, Lamu and Vumba respectively.

There are several groups of Arab Swahili people to be distinguished, both by their specific place of origin, and by the circumstances of their arrival. All the Arabs that I am considering here under the broad cultural definition of Waswahili (Swahili people) speak Swahili as their first language and, as I said before, have integrated into the

coastal community to the degree that they share a common culture with other Swahili speaking peoples.

Hadhrami Arabs have been migrating to the East African coast since before the arrival of Islam; the earlier waves of migrants are quite integrated into Swahili culture and, as Washarifu, are one of the most elevated status groups in Lamu. The most recently arrive Hadhrami immigrants reached Mombasa in the 1940s following the economic decline of their home in Aden, now in Yemen. Their arrival was facilitated by the British who ruled both Aden and Kenya, but they were very poor and struggled to establish themselves economically, competing with earlier migrants for work. As they were willing to work for lower wages than any other community they eventually came to blows with Luo dock workers, whose wages they were undercutting, and riots ensued (Cooper 1987). Today many small grocery shops are run by Hadhrami people. They have been given the somewhat derogatory label Washihiri, which refers to one of the towns from which they came.

Omani Arabs first came to East Africa in the eighteenth century as agents of the Sultans of Oman and Zanzibar who ruled the East African coast after 1698. The Mazrui family were agents for the Yarubi dynasty of Oman and continued to rule parts of the coast, including Mombasa, after the Yarubi were overthrown in Oman by the Busaid dynasty in 1749. In 1837 the Busaid defeated the Mazrui and assumed the administration of Mombasa. It was the Busaid Arabs with whom

the British primarily dealt after they leased the Kenya coast from the Busaid Sultan of Zanzibar in 1895. Subsequently the Mazrui political alliances in Mombasa were with the Twelve Tribes.

All the Swahili sub-groups described above had historically been engaged in various disputes with one another over status and power, but in the pre-colonial period the objects of the disputes were land and trade and goods; the British introduced a new and invidious issue over which to struggle: their classification as persons -- their own identity.

The British men who came to administer the British East African Protectorate were the products of a culture that was heavily influenced by the nineteenth century evolutionary ideas of Charles Darwin and they believed in their own racial superiority. At the outset of their administration they placed all residents of the Protectorate into racial categories: Europeans, Asians³, Arabs and Africans, and further classified them into the categories "Native" and "Non-Native". Europeans and Asians were considered non-native, while Africans and Arabs were considered native. The British classified "the Swahili" as natives without attributing to them African or Arab identity.

The administration did not seem to find it problematic to distinguish Swahili people from Arabs. The main category of

³People whose ancestors came from the Indian sub-continent. They marry endogamously and have maintained their group distinctions.

Mombasa people that the British labelled as Swahili were the Twelve Tribes. The problem of Swahili definition came to the British later when they were asked repeatedly by the Twelve Tribes to decide whether, in fact, Swahili people were Arabs or Africans or Asians because of the legal implications of these classifications.

The consequences of being classified "Natives" were far reaching. Natives had no representation on the Legislative Council⁴ and therefore could not vote; they had to pay the Hut Tax; their conditions of employment by the British were less favorable: educational opportunities were fewer and inferior; their treatment in prisons was different -- they were subject to corporal punishment; they received fewer rations during World War II; and it was illegal for Natives to have "carnal knowledge" of a white woman, with or without her consent.⁵

Both Arabs and Swahili people objected strongly to their being classified as natives both because of the inferior treatment that they received and, more importantly, because it impugned their status. They considered themselves of higher status than Africans whom some of them had owned as slaves until abolition in 1907. Although Swahili and Arabs faced a common foe, they also had ongoing internal disputes. British

⁴"Native" interests were represented by two British delegates on the Legislative Council, the governing body of Kenya Colony and Protectorate.

⁵It is interesting to note that all these laws appear to be aimed at men.

colonial policies presented a new range of issues over which they struggled.

Arab people, their ancestors having arrived in East Africa relatively recently, and in holding intermediary administrative positions on behalf of the Sultan of Zanzibar, were in a better position than Swahili people to argue for their reclassification as non-natives and for Arab representation on the Legislative Council in Nairobi. Even so, it was difficult to be reclassified. In 1910 Arabs were declared non-natives for the purpose of taxation, but were still subject to native penal codes and terms of employment.

Swahili people continued to be classified as natives for everything. Their power in the Mombasa community declined; before British rule the Twelve Tribes had received a proportion of the customs duties collected by the Sultanate of Zanzibar, but in 1921 the British discontinued that payment (Salim 1976). In the same year the Coast Arab Association (CAA) was formed comprising Omani Arabs opposed to the Liwali of the coast, Ali bin Salim, and members of the Twelve Tribes. Ali bin Salim had a monopoly on Arab ties with the British that the CAA wanted to break, but in 1927 the Twelve Tribes left the association after they discovered that they still were not allowed to vote for the Arab representative at the Legislative Council. They felt betrayed by the Omani Arabs in the CAA and found themselves politically isolated. In the process of allying themselves with the Arabs, who eventually

rejected them, the Twelve Tribes had alienated Africans in Mombasa. Three Tribes member Hyder Kindy described their situation thus, "Without allies in either camp, the Twelve Tribes could only remain like bats -- rejected by birds as animals and by animals as birds" (Kindy 1972).

The Twelve Tribes continued their fight for non-native status by trying to assert their Arab origins, but this project did not go unopposed. In 1928 a letter appeared in the Mombasa Times, authored by an anonymous Arab, which suggested that the Twelve Tribes were descendants of the local African Mijikenda groups.

...I should like to state that the 12 tribes were not Arabs, they were originally natives of East Africa...They were civilized by those Arabs who first set foot in these countries...who converted the savages to the Mohammedan religion. [Cited in Kindy 1972:34]

The Twelve Tribes were outraged and, shortly after, there appeared a long piece in the Mombasa Times laying out in detail the Arab origins of the Twelve Tribes in Mesopotamia and Yemen (Kindy 1972).

In 1934 Arabs were granted non-native status while Swahili people were still broadly classified as natives. There was a clause in the Ordinance to Amend and Define in more precise terms the Definition of the expression "Native" that allowed Swahili people to be classified as non-natives for some purposes provided they could prove some Arab descent, but in 1945 it was reported that still not one Swahili claim to Arab origins had been recognized by the Omani Arabs responsible for

determining Swahili people's claims (Salim 1973).

Swahili claims to Arab status were foiled, in good part, by the Omani Arabs with whom they had internal disputes, and who thought themselves of higher status than the Twelve Tribes. They were also foiled by the British, who in their internal correspondence made it clear that they were not at all sure how to classify Swahili people. They acknowledged that some Swahili people had "Arab blood" and they also knew that some Mijikenda people had been absorbed into the Twelve Tribes (Salim 1976). If they could not draw the line between Swahili people and Mijikenda and they declared the Swahili to be non-native, what was to stop Africans from wanting to be classified as non-native as well?

In the 1950s the Twelve Tribes were granted the right to vote as Arabs and did so in the 1957 and 1961 elections (Kindy 1972). After achieving the franchise there was little opportunity for Swahili people to have much of a role in Arab politics before the Emergency⁶ and impending independence from Great Britain made Kenyan politics even more complex.

As it became clear that Britain would grant independence to Kenya by the early 1960s, all ethnic groups on the Kenyan coast debated over their future. The Mwambao (coastal autonomy) movement argued that the coast should constitute an

⁶In 1952, fearing the political unrest around Nairobi created by the Mau Mau movement, the governor, Sir Evelyn Baring, declared a state of emergency under which many people were arrested and detained, and the government had special powers for several years.

autonomous state allied to the sultanate of Zanzibar, while other coastal people supported unity with the rest of Kenya (Salim 1970). The British government did not support coastal autonomy and in 1963, at Independence, coastal peoples, Africans, Arabs and Swahili alike, all found themselves citizens of the African majority Kenyan state.

Swahili Identity Since Independence

In 1964 the revolution in neighboring Zanzibar saw the overthrow and murder of thousands of Arabs and the hegemony of African Tanzania. In this Africanizing context at home and abroad Swahili people abandoned their Arab appellations and began to adopt more African identities. The ethnic category that people often chose for themselves for official purposes was "Bajuni", or even "Digo", the most Islamicized and therefore highest status of the Mijikenda groups. They did not adopt the label "Swahili"; and this reluctance to take on what once might have been the most appropriate category can be attributed to their responses to circumstances brought about by colonial and post-colonial governments.

James de Vere Allen suggested that in the pre-colonial period the term "Swahili" and the people and culture who came under that category were Africans, not Arabs, with a long and distinguished history (Allen 1976), and this African contention is the subject of considerable debate (Horton 1987; Donley-Reid 1990). Whatever is, in fact, the long term history of the Swahili people, events in the colonial period,

some of which I have described above, did lead to the demise of the category, as well as of the people, such that at independence it was not a term that anyone particularly wanted to use. Ironically it was both too low status and too high status. On one hand the term "Swahili" had become associated with slavery. In the British census of Mombasa in 1897 a high proportion of the residents being described as "Free Swahili" suggested that other Swahili people were slaves. Frederick Cooper notes that in the British census of 1924 many of the people calling themselves "Swahili" were emancipated slaves (Cooper 1980). The British had repeatedly classified Swahili people as Africans -- which they considered too low for their own status -- until the 1950s when they were reclassified as Arabs. Shortly afterwards, at Independence, to identify with a category (Swahili) that was associated with Arabs was not politically astute. Individual reluctance to become "Swahili" at independence was coupled with government policies antithetical to the adoption of "Swahili" as an ethnic category. "Swahili" has not been recognized by post colonial governments as an ethnic group of Kenyans. Whiteley points out that at Independence Kiswahili was adopted as an official language of Kenya because it was not believed to be the language of any particular Kenyan ethnic group and thus prevented possible inter-ethnic rivalries over language (Whiteley 1969). To this day "Swahili" is not one of the recognized ethnic categories that can be recorded when

registering the birth of a new baby. "Swahili/Shirazi" was still a category in the 1989 census but only 1.6% of Kenyans identified themselves as such.

There have continued to be changes and developments in the meaning of "Swahili" as both a label and an identity in the almost thirty years since Kenyan Independence. Ethnic classification is not publicly contested among Swahili people as it was during the colonial period because race and ethnicity no longer form the foundation of public administration, but there are still discourses about Swahili culture and identity and the appropriate application of the term "Swahili". In its overt form this debate has moved from popular politics to more scholarly domains.

Individual reluctance to adopt the Swahili label was mirrored by foreign trained writers in the first decade of Independence. In the early 1970s scholars debated how precisely to define a Swahili person (Eastman 1971; Noor Sheriff 1973). This coincided with the end of the most derogatory period of Swahili labelling and led authors such as Salim (1973) and Strobel (1979)⁷ to decline to use the term "Swahili" to refer to personal identity at all. Salim refers to "Swahili Speaking Peoples" in his title and Strobel called her book Muslim Women in Mombasa, even though the many Asian Muslim women in Mombasa were not the subject of her work. On

⁷Their research for these books was carried out in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

the other hand, in the same time period, Hyder Kinyo (1972) wrote his autobiography and referred to Swahili people as a matter of course. It is interesting to note too that there is a clear self consciousness in his work that he is writing in a post colonial, African, period of Kenya's history.

In the more recent post-colonial period, outside scholarly interest has contributed to the indigenous self consciousness of Swahili culture that I described earlier. Professional informants now emphasize that, while there are Arab influences, Swahili culture is an African culture. This is reinforced by the fact that Swahili language does have a Bantu (African) linguistic structure, although much of the vocabulary is Arabic in origin.

With this indigenous self consciousness of Swahili culture, foreign scholars seem to have become more comfortable once more with using the term "Swahili" in their writings, and this is reflected in more recent publications (Allen 1981; Mirza and Strobel 1989; Nurse and Spear 1985).

"Swahili" is primarily a label used if not exclusively by outsiders, then in relation to outsiders. Anyone can become a Swahili person by converting to Islam, learning to speak Swahili, and embracing Swahili world view and material culture, even Wazungu (white) men periodically do this.

This recent self consciousness of Swahili culture has come about due to greater outside contact with the rest of Kenya and the scholarly gaze. Self consciousness of a particularly

group identity comes at the point of contact with other groups (Barth 1969; Keyes 1981) and although people still rarely use the self referent "Swahili" in everyday life, their cultural self consciousness is becoming more overt in the wider Mombasa community.

But still, Swahili people always claim a sub-group identity as well, and often more than one. My neighbor told me one day that he was a Bajuni and the next that he was an Arab. A young woman with a Duruma (Mijikenda) mother and a Bajuni father stated on different occasions that she was a Swahili and a Duruma. The sub-group on which Swahili people draw depends on their particular circumstances at any given time.

ISLAM AND MORAL ORDER

Swahili people are Sunni Muslims, mostly of the Shafi'ite school of law. The Islamic religion provides a point of reference for the enactment of most aspects of daily life including how to dress, how to eat, how to pray, how to bathe, how to go to the bathroom, how to engage in sexual activity and how to give birth. The Koran, dictated to the Prophet Mohamed by Allah (God), and the Hadith -- the accounts of the exemplary life led by the Prophet Mohamed -- are constantly referred to and drawn upon as people go about their day. Swahili people are, in the first instance, governed by Islamic law in matters of personal status and property such as marriage and inheritance. Although in very difficult or contentious cases they have been known to resort to the Kenyan

civil courts.

Most Swahili people do their best to observe the five pillars of Islam, the first of which is to recognize "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is His Prophet." They also pray five times a day, preceded by ritual ablutions. Men attend the mosque regularly for some of their prayers. Only two mosques in the vicinity of Old Town admit women, who may attend Friday lunchtime prayers and hotuba (sermon) in the Baluchi and Mazrui mosques; they sit in separate, concealed areas. Most women pray at home; should they find themselves in someone else's home when they hear the call to prayer the householder provides them with a place to wash and pray, and the necessary sheets or leso in which they must envelop their bodies. Women often pray while others are in the same room quietly doing something else. Thus religious acts are quite integrated into the general run of daily life.

Swahili people⁸ fast each day during daylight hours in the holy month of Ramadhan, and during that month many women attend the Baluchi mosque in the evenings for prayers and religious readings. People also give alms to the poor, and go on pilgrimage to Mecca if they can afford it⁹.

⁸Children are not required to fast, but when they reach about nine years old they begin to try to do so, and build up to fasting completely over several years.

⁹There are, of course Swahili people who do not observe the Islamic religion in ways that their family and neighbors think they should, for example, they don't pray regularly, or they drink alcohol; but they are remarkably few.

There are also more locally derived Islamic practices to which people turn in times of trouble. Some local waalimu (religious instructors) treat people who are sick, who are possessed by spirits, or who have been bewitched due to jealousy, for example. Typical treating practices include the writing of Koranic verses on pieces of paper that are then incorporated into a hirizi (amulet) to be worn by the patient. Another practice is to write verses from the Koran on the inside of a cup, to rinse the cup thus diluting the words, and then drink the liquid. Illnesses are also treated by doctors trained in "Arabic" medicine, matabibu, which is Galenic (Swartz 1991).

Islam is also important to Swahili people in relation to wider Kenyan society. Most other Kenyans are not Muslims; they are predominantly Christians, and/or they have indigenous cosmologies, and a few Kenyan Asians are Hindus. Swahili people see their religion as the primary source of morality and order in the world and, as I demonstrate in Chapters IV and V, it is most important to them to maintain their way of life in the face of encroaching Christian ideology from the state and other Kenyans.

FAMILY AND KINSHIP

Prins suggests that kinship structure does not provide a framework that generates a great deal of insight into Swahili social organization:

...the role of kinship should not be over stressed, "shipping" indeed furnishing a better key to open the

door to a thorough understanding of the society than "kinship." [Prins 1967:xv]

This is true at structural, analytic, level but on the ground a person's kin are the most important people in their lives. Within the Swahili community the extended family is a highly significant social unit for economic cooperation, endogamous marriages, and political activities. Extended families are also the unit of status and reputation; that is to say that if one person is reputed to misbehave it is the extended family on which it reflects badly. It is within the boundaries of this unit, then, that kin attempt to keep information about the family. There is also gender variation in the relevance of family and kinship to Swahili people, which Prins does not identify but unwittingly illustrates by his reference to shipping. Shipping certainly is important to the whole ideology of Swahili culture, but in people's daily lives it is really only men to whom it has much meaning. Men are the traders, fishermen, and cargo boat captains whose livelihood and identity are tied to the sea; not women. For women, on the other hand, most of the people with whom they come into contact, particularly members of the opposite sex, are their kin. It is their relatives, many of whom live close by, on whom they depend for companionship, business partners, child minders, money lenders, advice, refuge, meals, and assistance with weddings, funerals and match making.

Kinship

The formal literature suggests little coherence in Swahili

kinship. While Prins (1967) has attempted to document Swahili kinship as a whole, others (Bujra 1968; Mazrui nd; Caplan 1984) have looked at the kin systems of particular sub-groups of Swahili people (Bajuni, Mvita and Mafia Island respectively). Even while describing "Swahili kinship" as a whole Prins has documented many internal variations which are based on regional sub-group origins. It is because of the diversity of origins of Swahili people that there exists so much internal variation and thus the lack of structural cohesion that Prins describes.

Except for very prestigious families of recorded Arab descent, and Masharifu who are reputed to be direct descendants of the Prophet Mohammed, the genealogical memory of Swahili people is relatively shallow, going back three or four generations at most. Lateral kin are much more extensively recognized.

While Caplan (1984) explicitly describes the descent of people on Mafia Island as cognatic, Mazrui (nd) and Bujra (1968) describe the descent systems of Mvita (Mombasa) and Bajuni (Lamu archipelago) people as patrilineal. Swahili people inherit their names and sub-group identity from their father, and for the more Arab identified Swahili people patrilineality is extremely important. Both Mazrui and Bujra go on, however, to talk about strong matrilineal influences on these patrilineal systems. For Lamu Archipelago Bajuni people marital residence is frequently uxori-local and divorced men

generally return to the home of their mother (Bujra 1968). While mashamba (farms) are inherited patrilineally by men, houses or other property pass from Bajuni mothers to their daughters while they are still alive. Inheritance after death follows Islamic law. Bujra notes that although Bajuni rank is, in theory, inherited patrilineally, having a particularly high or low status mother does affect a person's standing in the community (Bujra 1968).

Some writers and scholars have actually argued that Swahili kinship used to be matrilineal (Allen 1976; Mazrui nd; Nurse and Spear 1985) but there is insufficient evidence either to confirm or to deny it. One Mombasa Maalim (religious teacher and healer) told me that Swahili people are and always have been "matrilineal"¹⁰, but I interpret this as an allusion to the strong matricenteredness and matrifocality present in many aspects of Swahili culture and society today. James de Vere Allen believed that the historical presence of matrilineal descent systems on the Kenya coast is evidenced in the present by the practice of Siyu people being referred to by reference to their mother (James de Vere Allen personal communication). Margaret Strobel and Sara Mirza, while not concerned with Swahili people's kinship as such, document in some detail the female puberty rituals enacted by Swahili women, the origins of which are clearly with matrilineal societies such as the

¹⁰He used the English term in the middle of a Swahili sentence.

Yao, Makua, Makonde and Nyasa peoples of Central and Southeastern Africa. These rituals were brought by women slaves captured from those groups and integrated into Swahili households (Strobel 1979; Mirza and Strobel 1989).

Contemporary Swahili kinship does have a strong emphasis on, and closeness to, the mothers' side of the family. All the Swahili sub-groups structurally equate mother and mother's sister (Mama) while only some equate father and his brother (Baba). Bajuni and Barawa kinship distinguishes between a woman's brother's son who is mpwawa (nephew) and her brother's daughter who is given the closer term ndugu (sibling). Matrilateral parallel cousins are ndugu (sibling) also, while cross cousins and some patrilateral parallel cousins are not. The term ndugu is an interesting one in that it is used both as a particular kin term (e.g. a woman's brother's daughter) and also to refer to a set of relatives who are close. This can include a broad range of relatives out to second and third cousins. People who are not ndugu but who are considered to be of similar status and members of the same community are referred to as jamaa, which is generally translated as "family", but also as "society". It is possible that the kin terms used by Swahili people are becoming less specific. Older people were able to tell me specific classificatory kin terms where their adult children knew only descriptive terms.

Swahili people's kinship system (inasmuch as there is one system) is best described as cognatic: both maternal and

paternal kin are significant, although there is more or less influence on one side or the other from sub-group to sub-group and from situation to situation. These varying kinship emphases are most clearly manifested through particular practices: marriage, divorce and child custody. Marriage

Like kinship, Prins does not consider marriage to be a "key institution" in the Swahili social structure (Prins 1967) and certainly Swahili marriages, often ending in divorce, do not provide much social continuity. In spite of the fragility of particular marriages, however, marriage is the marker of full adulthood, particularly for women and so is of central importance for Swahili people. Most people can expect to be married more than once; men may marry polygynously.

Popular wisdom suggests that for a woman her first marriage is the most important, while for a man it is more likely to be a later one. A woman's first marriage is made for her by her family, which is expected to make the best marriage they can for her in terms of the status of her husband. Women are expected to be virgins when they marry. While for status reasons a woman's first marriage is important to her and her family, many women find more emotional satisfaction in their subsequent marriages where they are more free to choose their own husbands. A young man may not be able to accumulate a very high bride price for his first marriage, which may therefore be to a formerly married or low status woman. His most important marriage may be later on when he is more

established and financially secure.

More first marriages these days are based on love, friendship or at least some acquaintance between the couple, but first spouses are still selected from a pool of suitable candidates. Young people are quite aware of who their possible marriage partners are and often sit around with family and very close friends discussing the merits of possible spouses.

It is not uncommon for Swahili women to be married to foreign men, provided that they are of suitable background and that the woman can continue to reside in Mombasa¹¹; foreign husbands include Chinese, Indians, Pakistanis, Arabs and Europeans. Historically Swahili women have long been married to foreign traders and resided uxori locally in homes provided by their own family.

The social status of a potential spouse is extremely important; ideally acceptable marriages are either between equals or are hypergamous (wife of lower status than husband). In practice, however, a wife of particularly low status -- perhaps of slave descent or from one of the Mijikenda or other groups of indigenous coastal peoples -- can be the cause of great distress in the groom's family. Several such marriages of which I was aware came about because young men had made lower status women pregnant.

¹¹A handful of Swahili women have married American men and moved to the United States.

Kindy (1972) mentions the very rare incidence of hypogamous (wife of higher status than husband) marriage, but I would argue that it is becoming more frequent for first marriages¹² as the rank system of social stratification begins to give way to class formations. All the cases of hypogamous first marriage that I saw were of Bajuni Swahili men marrying Arab Swahili women. The men were either highly educated, and the bride's personal choice, or very successful traders who paid high bride wealth in the range of 30,000 Kenyan shillings (\$1500). The brides' families, while high status, were quite poor. The marriages that I have described so far are between men and women who are unrelated.

Marrying Kin

One way of ensuring a suitable marriage is to marry within the family. More first marriages are between kin than subsequent ones and they usually take some form of cousin marriage. Extended families marry endogamously to maintain wealth, or Sharif, or other prestigious, ancestry within the family. Such marriages are also contracted to save a family's reputation. A young unmarried woman losing her virginity or becoming pregnant might necessitate speedy marriage within the family. One young woman who took to wearing Levi jeans under her veil, and behaving in unfeminine ways was hurriedly married to her cousin.

¹²Hypogamous marriage may always have been more possible in women's subsequent marriages, where status is not of quite such critical concern.

There are certain kin however that are considered too close to marry and this is determined by the prohibitions in the Koran, and by Swahili custom. The Koran lists marriage partners forbidden to a man as follows:

You are forbidden to take in marriage your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, your paternal and maternal aunts, the daughters of your brothers and sisters, your foster-mothers, your foster sisters, the mothers of your wives, your step-daughters who are in your charge, born of the wives with whom you have lain (it is no offence for you to marry your step-daughters if you have not consummated your marriage with their mothers), and the wives of your own begotten sons. Henceforth you are also forbidden to take in marriage two sisters at one and the same time. [Koran 4:23]

In practice Swahili people marry cousins on both their mothers' and their fathers' side of the family. Tanner notes that people say they favor patrilateral marriage but in practice it is fairly balanced. Matrilineal connections, he argues, get played down either because, in the case of high status families, patrilineal descent is more important, or because there are low status, even slave connections, on the mother's side and the family "forgets" them (Tanner 1964).

While Swahili people do marry matrilineally, there is some sensitivity around matrilineal parallel cousin marriage. In a community where a person's mother's sister's children are their brothers and sisters people say it is "unclean" or "too close" to marry those kin. This is in spite of the fact that the cousins are from different patrilineal lines. The kin concerned are not necessarily first cousins, in fact Bajuni first cousins rarely marry (Bujra 1968). The concern with marrying

too close extends to classificatory matrilateral parallel cousins. Thus when one Bajuni marriage ending in divorce was declared to have been doomed from the start because it was "too close", it was a marriage between a woman and her mother's mother's mother's sister's daughter's daughter's son.

Tanner argues that while most coastal Swahili people consider matrilateral parallel cousin marriage to be too close, Mombasa people do contract such marriages. In his survey of the coast overall he encountered only twenty-five matrilateral parallel cousin marriages out of the 305 that he recorded. I would argue that the propensity to marry matrilateral parallel cousins depends on sub-group identity with Bajuni Swahili being less likely to than Arab Swahili. Three sisters in one prominent Arab Swahili family contracted several marriages among their children, which lasted for many years. One Bajuni informant told me that, beyond the Koran's prohibition of marrying sisters simultaneously, they do not allow a widower to marry his deceased wife's sister because it is also "too close."

Although rare, the levirate is practiced occasionally. A young widowed mother of Arab descent living virilocally was told by her father-in-law that the family would not continue to support her and her children unless she married her late husband's younger brother. This she did, very unwillingly, because she could not afford to support her children alone, and she did not want to give them up. She said that her new

husband, younger than she, felt like a brother to her.

Polygyny

For women, the issue of husbands taking more than one wife is a troublesome one. I was told by both men and women that the Koran allows a husband to marry up to four wives as long as he can care for them all equally and as long as the wife/wives that he already has are agreeable to the marriage.

The Koran says:

...you may marry other women who seem good to you: two, three, or four of them. But if you fear that you cannot maintain equality among them, marry one only or any slave-girls you may own. This will make it easier for you to avoid injustice. [Koran 4:2]

The Koran does not say anything about the consent of other wives. I did not hear a single woman speak favorably of polygyny all the time I was in Kenya. When a young bride was to be married to a local politician as his fourth wife, her mother, aunts and sisters were very ambivalent. He was a good match, but no one wanted her to have to be a fourth wife.

Co-wives do not reside together; frequently they do not even live in the same town. One man I know has a wife in Mombasa, one in Malindi, and one in Lamu. Men have their own motives for not wanting their wives to live together: it would cause trouble. Either, men say, they would see what he gave the other wife and complain about unequal treatment; or worse, from his point of view, they would become allies and talk about him behind his back.

Women resist their husbands' polygynous marriages in

several ways. Three older women told me of events in their past when their husbands had taken a second wife. Two of them had insisted on a divorce at great personal and financial cost to themselves. The third woman found out that her husband had secretly taken a second wife in Takaungu and she refused to speak to him or to sleep with him for six months, although she did continue to cook for him. Finally she relented, and they resumed their previous domestic life interrupted by the weekend trips that he took to visit his second, and later his third, wife.

Given the resentment women feel towards their husbands taking second wives, is not surprising that men contract secret marriages. It has been suggested to me that Swahili men often secretly marry Mijikenda women, and this may well be because they do not wish to admit publicly that they have married a much lower status woman. On one occasion in the coastal hinterlands I was introduced to a couple -- a coastal Arab Swahili husband and his Giriama wife¹³. As the evening proceeded and the husband realized how many people I knew in Mombasa he made it clear to me that he was anxious that I not tell anyone that we had met. Another man secretly married a woman much younger than himself and introduced her into his

¹³That they were at a social event together as a couple was in itself remarkable. Swahili husbands are not seen at social functions with their wives. The only exception is that a few high status, wealthy, Swahili married couples did attend New Years Eve celebrations at a local coast hotel, which others considered to be without heshima.

household as a tutor for his children. His first wife soon figured out what was happening and sent the younger wife packing. The broad geographical distribution of a man's households and the incidence of secret marriage make it difficult for an ethnographer to gauge the frequency of polygynous marriage, but it certainly exists and is a source of pain and trouble to women while being attractive to men.

Divorce

There is a very high rate of divorce in the Swahili community, which Margaret Strobel calculates from the Muslim registration of marriages and divorces to be about two thirds of all marriages (Strobel 1979). Divorces occur for many reasons including incompatibility of a spouse and their parents in law, a husband taking a second wife, and general incompatibility of spouses. In Islamic law, which governs family matters in the Swahili community, a husband may divorce his wife, but the only way a wife may get a divorce is by going to the Kadhi (Islamic judge) and requesting him to dissolve the marriage. This involves her having to tell the details of the conflict for the public record. Informally a wife can make her husband's life miserable by doing such things as withholding all domestic support so that he will agree to divorce her.

Child Custody

In Islamic law children ultimately belong to their fathers who are expected to pay maintenance for them whether or not

they are in their custody. Young children are often left with their mothers and then move to the custody of their father or their father's kin when they reach their teens. A constant complaint heard from women is that their ex-husbands will not pay maintenance for them and their young children, especially where their ex-husbands have taken on new, younger wives. Sometimes former husbands make maintenance payments conditional, such as in the case described above where a widow was obliged to marry her brother-in-law. One ex-husband (a cousin) refused to further support his children if his former wife married a lower status younger man of whom he did not approve, saying that she would bring disgrace to their family. She went ahead with her second marriage and her new husband took over their support. As with maintenance, ex-husbands can make conditions in order for their ex-wives to get custody of their children while they are small. One woman was forced to divorce her second husband, whom she loved very dearly, in order for her former husband to grant her custody of their young son.

While most Swahili mothers get custody of their young children, some Arab-Swahili young children of broken marriages are raised by their shangazi, their father's sister. They are also raised in their father's household by their step-mother. Step-mothers have a reputation for being very cruel and stories abound with the evil deeds of fathers' wives.

Fostering

Even children whose natural parents are together do not necessarily live with them full time; fostering of children is common. Children are raised by their father's mother, mother's mother, mother's brother (and his wife), mother's cousin, father's sister, older brother (and his wife), and older sister. Children also live with more distant kin if they are close in other ways, for instance being neighbors of the child's parents. I was not aware of any child that was raised by someone who was not a relative.

The reasons for fostering are diverse. Strobel suggests that historically there has been a low fertility rate among Swahili women (Strobel 1983). Women seem either to have no children or to have many, and so fostering them out to childless relatives is satisfactory to all concerned. Although children call their long term foster parents "Mama" and "Baba" they still belong to their own parents who are supposed to contribute to their maintenance and make major decisions about their lives. Fostered children have a lot of contact with their own parents who are often in the same neighborhood. Children are sometimes sent to live with relatives in another town. They are sent away from Mombasa to rural areas if their parents fear they will be corrupted by big city life, while children are also sent to Mombasa from the rural areas in order to attend a better school.

There is also a practice of a couple's first child being

raised by either their mother's mother or their father's mother. Bajuni children go to their maternal grandmother, while children from the elite Arab families go to their father's mother. The second child of an Arab family goes to their maternal grandmother, but a second Bajuni child would not be sent to their paternal grandmother as that relationship is not close. Although this is stated as custom and certainly happens, it is not always the case.

HOUSEHOLDS AND RESIDENCE

Swahili domestic units are not fixed in their size or composition, and the following account illustrates this. My journal records the events surrounding the death of a young Amu man. He was killed in a matatu¹⁴ accident in Mombasa on a Monday and, having no identification¹⁵, his body was taken to the city morgue at Coast General Hospital. His family did not realize that he was missing until two days later on the Wednesday, as members of each of the households where he spent part of his time thought that he was somewhere else. Relatives were telephoned in both Tanga, on the Tanzania coast, and Lamu, on the northern Kenya coast to see if he was there. His body was discovered in the morgue on the Thursday when his relatives started to search for him. They explained

¹⁴Deaths in road accidents are common in Kenya, and people travelling in speeding matatu, small overcrowded mini vans, are particularly vulnerable.

¹⁵His Kenya ID card was at his brother's wife's sister's house.

to me that he kept his belongings at the homes of various kin and he lived everywhere and nowhere.

Swahili people are, indeed, very mobile. Both men and women frequently go away on extended visits to their relatives or to conduct biashara (business), and visitors from other towns in Kenya, Tanzania, Somalia, the Comoro Islands and the Middle East appear regularly and are given hospitality until they are ready to go on their way again. As co-wives do not reside together, men are often away from one household while staying with another wife. Others are migrant workers and travel as far away as the Middle East.

The size of domestic units, which I would describe as a group of people who eat food from the same kitchen, can range from just one person to seventeen or eighteen; the size of any single household fluctuates. As is clear from the example above, a person can be a member of more than one household. The residents of a domestic unit are usually all related to each other in some way, apart from domestic servants. There is no typical domestic group cycle. There are married couples living alone; married couples living with their children; divorced or widowed women and their descendants; three generation families with both sons and daughters bringing in spouses; and families taking care of children who are siblings, nieces and nephews, and grandchildren; as well as fostered children who are more distantly related. There is one "household" which was considered remarkable by local

people as well as myself. One patriarch had, within the last five years, bought land and built a compound containing three apartment buildings. He brought in all his twelve children, their spouses and children, and the husband of the only married grandchild. The eldest son and family live in one building; the elderly parents, their daughters and their families live in another building; and the sons and their families live in the third. The women in each building frequently cook together, especially the sisters, and during Ramadhan the entire compound eats together every evening.

Although the sex ratios for Swahili households appears roughly equal (Old Town Conservation Survey 1990), the daily predominance of women and children in the households is clear to see. Women spend a great deal of time either in their own home or those of their neighbors and kin, while in contrast men are out of their homes much of the time. They may go out to work, they attend the mosque for some of their daily prayers, they meet to talk in the streets and cafes, and they participate in or watch soccer matches.

Domestic labor in a household is shared among women. Cooking, cleaning, and child care are all supervised by the most senior woman in the house, who delegates tasks to younger women and girls. The dirtier work is generally allocated to the youngest worker. Small children help out by running errands. Many households in Old Town have domestic help,

which is extremely cheap, even by local standards¹⁶. The vast majority of the servants are men from the Mijikenda groups in the coastal hinterland. They work long hours and return to their homes on leave infrequently.

Within the mitaa (neighborhoods) in which people live particularly close ties are formed among neighbors and relatives. The boundaries of the mitaa are not absolute, but are described with reference to proximity to a particular building, often a local mosque. Of the sixty Swahili households recorded in the Old Town Conservation Survey, forty households, that is two thirds of them, have relatives in the same mtaa. Only three households of the remaining twenty did not have relatives somewhere in Mombasa. Most of them were located within Old Town not more than fifteen minutes walk away. In spite of people's mobility there is considerable continuity in family residence in their homes. Half the surveyed households either owned their own home or rented it from a family member (Old Town Conservation Survey 1990).

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Swahili people, like other Mombasans and other Kenyans, make their way economically through both the formal and informal economy, detailed data about which are difficult to acquire. Classically, the Swahili economy, which is

¹⁶A young person working as a servant earns about \$17 a month plus their food, a place to sleep, and new clothes for major Islamic festivals.

documented almost exclusively in terms of male activity, was based on the sea, including trade and fishing, plantation farming, and crafts such as wood carving and furniture making. These days economic activity is far more diverse and women's employment is more visible. Living in urban Kenya had become expensive by the 1980s. A major drain on resources is school fees and other educational expenses, which I discuss in Chapter V. Elderly people whom I interviewed considered the Second World War to be the time after which living became expensive.

The Formal Economy

Swahili people's participation in the formal economy is broad, depending on their level of education and skill. The work of the more highly educated includes engineers, accountants, college lecturers, and teachers. Some men have been to vocational school and earn their livings as mechanics, electricians, boat builders, and furniture makers. The vocational training of women frequently leads them to secretarial work and tailoring. The tourist industry provides jobs for drivers, travel agents, and boat operators. Many of these jobs are performed outside of Old Town in the commercial sector of Mombasa, or at tourist resorts to the north or south of Mombasa.

Some people, more men than women, go to Oman and Saudi Arabia to work. Jobs there include the military, translating and secretarial work (women), and clerical work. The pay in

these jobs varies, but some workers do well, and Old Town households benefit significantly from regular remittances of both cash and material goods including textiles and electrical appliances.

The Informal Economy

Unemployment in the formal Kenyan economy is on the increase so it is to the informal sector that people turn either to make or to supplement their incomes. It is within the confines of the Old Town that Swahili people are engaged in the informal economy. Some people are, understandably, unwilling to divulge the nature of their work because it is outside the formal economy, that is unregulated and un-taxed. When asked their occupation many people will answer "biashara" (business). The location of the old port in Old Town facilitates magendo (smuggling, or illicit activity).

Other economic enterprises, which seem to be new for Swahili people, are based on property development. It is no exaggeration to say that on almost every street in the Old Town there was building work going on, either additional stories were added to houses, or the old house was razed to the ground and replaced by an apartment building. The owner of the building then rents out the new rooms or flats and makes a significant income. New buildings are not subject to the rent control imposed on old buildings and so rental profits can be increased.

Buying a shamba (farm) north or south of Mombasa along the

coast is another developing business enterprise. The owner lives in town and commutes either daily or weekly to the shamba. Assisted by Mijikenda labor, they raise chickens for eggs and meat, cows for milk, and a variety of fruit and vegetables all of which they sell to the coast tourist hotels.

Women's Economic Activities

Contrary to the suggestions of some Swahili scholars (Swartz 1982; Eastman 1984, 1987) most Swahili women have historically engaged in some income generating activity. Wealthy women were landlords and money lenders (Strobel 1983); poorer freeborn women braided palm leaf mats; other women brewed beer or made palm wine; and a few very low status Swahili women even went fishing (B. Cooper 1988). With the exception of fishing, all these economic activities were confined to the home.

The economic activities of most Swahili women in Old Town are still more domestically based and smaller scale than those of men. This is due to their having had less education than men, and because child care and cultural concerns about heshima lead to their spending more time at home. The women prepare food that can be sold as snacks. This includes mandazi (doughnuts), samosas, vibibi (coconut pancake), fried potatoes, baobab fruit sugared and dyed red, and mofa (a coarse grained bread). The food is either sold in a batch to a local kiosk, which takes a small cut in the profits; sold in the street by children or house servants; or sold from the

house. When food is sold from the house, either the woman sits just inside the door so that the food is displayed, but she is not visible from the street, or local people know that a particular kind of food is available there and they call at the house.

In the Old Town Conservation survey the most frequently cited vocational training for women was tailoring or dress-making. While some women go out and sew in small workshops, far more work at sewing in their homes, and their customers, women and their children, come to them. There is a steady demand for their work because of the year-round cycle of weddings and religious holidays that call for new clothes for everyone. Weddings and holidays necessitate other beauty treatments too, and additional services provided by women and adolescent girls for a fee include the application of intricate henna designs to hands and feet, hair braiding, eyebrow shaving and removal of body hair.

Since the late 1930s when Swahili women began to be formally educated, and the 1950s when the first women school teachers were trained, Swahili women have been entering public sector employment in increasing numbers. I am aware of a significant number of Swahili women in the following occupations: teacher, secretary, bank teller, beautician, nurse, travel agent; and just a handful who work as grocery store owners, lawyers, social workers, and hotel administrators.

The income that Swahili women gain from both formal and informal sector economic activity gives them a greater measure of power within their families and households, and allows some of them to expand the possibilities for the ways in which they live their lives. It situates some women differently in relation to men than their mothers and aunts have been, and constitutes a challenge to the "ideal" Swahili system of distinctive and asymmetrical gender relations. Having noted this, it is to gender relations and their articulation with Swahili status that I now turn in Chapter III in order to demonstrate the centrality of gender relations in the repertoire of Swahili cultural elements.

CHAPTER III: GENDER, STATUS, AND POWER

Gender and status are keys, structural and symbolic, to understanding Swahili life. They are principles of social organization, and they give meaning to peoples' lives; but neither is a preordained category into which people fit, nor does either stand alone. Gender and status relations are constantly negotiated and contested and they are mutually constituted; that is, all gender enactments have consequences for status, and a person's status, in part, circumscribes gender possibilities.

Swahili gender and status relations have to be understood in a broader context of the shifts in economic and political power of different Swahili people in the colonial and post-colonial periods, where power is not entirely congruent with status.

Swahili Status

Swahili people are highly conscious of status, their own and other peoples, in daily interactions. Status in Swahili society is in part ascribed at birth, but the maintenance, loss or advancement of that status is also subject to human agency. Ascribed status comes from a person's descent, primarily patrilineal but also matrilineal, and from their sub-group membership. Historically, high status accrued to families that were successful plantation owners and who had connections with the Arabian peninsula, while people of primarily African descent were considered to be of lower status. Claims of being Msharifu, a direct descendant of the

Prophet Mohamed, also conferred high status. Today, Washarifu (plural) still make claims to special religious knowledge and almost magical powers, as well as demanding material assistance from non-sharifu if in financial distress. These claims and ascriptions are increasingly contested and the position of former trading and slave owning families is particularly precarious, as they find themselves financially poor with only their residual claims to their good name to defend.

The elevation or maintenance of status is achieved through being seen to behave in appropriate and respectable ways for a Swahili person, particularly in terms of religion and gender relations. Religious piety is applauded and, generally, modest behavior leads to social approval. Although it is the behavior of individuals that is monitored, ultimately it is the reputation of a family that is at stake.

The process through which peoples actions, and thus their reputations, are assessed is through observations of behavior by others, which are noted and evaluated in conversation. Sengenya, (malicious gossip), is considered sinful and people who do gossip excessively are said to have inferior characters and can damage their own reputation, even as they are doing damage to others. In spite of this, Swahili society is one in which social commentary in the form of gossip is central in sanctioning or approving the actions of others. Although it is culturally discouraged, particularly by men, daily life is

spent in large part recounting and analyzing the motives and lives of others and thus assessing others' relative worth. Even as people do talk constantly about others they are careful to speak of their family's own lives and concerns only to those closest to them. According to one Swahili proverb, "Langu liwe moyoni" (My affairs should remain in my heart). Given that people are unwilling to broadcast news about themselves, the accuracy of information about them that is in circulation is the result of speculations developed from very little factual information. Regardless of whether news is true, people respond with judgmental commentary as though it were. As one woman told me: "It doesn't matter whether something is true or not if gossips have decided that information [is true then] it is true". While always interested in the news of others, any particular family will try to keep important and sensitive information to themselves. I learned early on in my field work never to talk about the families I stayed with, even if it meant responding evasively to the questions of others, and generally not to gossip at all.

Two key concepts that people employ when commenting on behavior are heshima (respect, modesty) and adabu (good manners). Heshima is a word that I heard used almost constantly during my field work, and which is centrally implicated in conceptions of gender and status. The possession and demonstration of heshima contributes to the

enhanced status of both actors and their families, not just to particular individuals. This is why families are so concerned to monitor the behavior of their members, especially women who, ideally, most embody the qualities inferred by heshima, but who are depicted as most lacking in self control. Men's behavior is also discussed in terms of heshima, but the concept adabu is much more frequently applied to them.

Maintenance of distinctive gender divisions is considered by Swahili people and their ethnographers to be one of the key markers of Swahili status. Male waungwana (freeborn) ideology and concerns stress the need for men to regulate the behavior of female kin in order that no disgrace is brought to their extended families by their immodest or inappropriate behavior; such behaviors might include associating alone with unrelated men, or dancing where they could be observed by men. It can also include acts that have the potential of leading to such encounters, like being out on the street or staring out of the window.

The personal qualities and acts marking the most respectable and highest status person in Swahili society are more easily achievable by men than by women. These include sedateness at public events like weddings and funerals where women's participation routinely entails dancing or wailing; or the opportunity to teach religion or give religious sermons in public spheres that have not been available to women. Thus, in some ways men are of higher status than women. However,

the dominant ideology regarding what is appropriate behavior, and what is achievable by men and women respectively should not be allowed to obscure the roles that women do in fact play both in making claims for their own personal status, and in confirming or denying the status claims of others; women are important agents in Swahili status negotiations. Beyond the ascribed status of birth Swahili people, especially women, are constantly negotiating, renegotiating and reflecting their status positions in practically every sphere of daily life.

GENDER AS IDEOLOGY, GENDER AS PRACTICE

Constructions of Swahili Women

That women do play key roles in status negotiations, and other domains, in the face of gender ideologies that ostensibly deny them such a role is one of the central themes in this dissertation, and before I go on to document women's specific activities I want to consider here some of the contradictions between ideology and practice. Scholarly literature on the Swahili (Swartz 1982; Strobel 1979; Eastman 1984) as well as Swahili cultural ideals, as they were explained to me by both men and women, portray men and women as being different from each other to the point of having distinctive cultures. The cultural world of Swahili men is characterized as Arab, occupying public space, civilized, and literary, while the domain of women runs in a series of dyadic oppositions as African, occupying private space (and being veiled in public), wild, and expressive (that is having oral

rather than written poetic traditions). While these distinctions are frequently at odds with peoples' practice, they do have meaning to Swahili people and are integral to their world view.

In her 1991 essay, Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses, Chandra Mohanty demonstrates how western feminist discourses depict "Third World Women" in ways that suggest that they are monolithic (Mohanty 1991:53). In an analytic move that places her out of the danger of rendering western feminists themselves a monolithic category, Mohanty argues that while there is diversity in their discourses, the effect of western analyses is to portray "Third World Women" as powerless victims without personal agency. She presses for analyses that are historically situated, that recognize the power of women as well as their difficulties, and which recognize and address the diversity among women. While I find Mohanty's argument compelling, there are things that we can learn from an examination of monolithic images of women, which in effect amount to ideological representations of gender. These images are themselves constructed out of a particular set of historical circumstances and power relations and, even if they do not represent the lived experience of particular women, the very existence of these images has effects. In this case I am examining what I consider to be indigenous monolithic images - - local ideology about Swahili women.

Henrietta Moore suggests that there are two ways in which gender can be conceptualized and used in anthropology. It can be understood as a cultural construct, as in symbolic analyses such as her own and those of contributors to the volume edited by Ortner and Whitehead (Moore 1986; Ortner and Whitehead 1981); and gender can be understood as the project of looking at social relations, the tangible actions and agency of women. Moore makes it quite clear that these two approaches are not mutually exclusive (Moore 1988).

My ethnographic materials from Mombasa suggest that I can fruitfully develop Moore's two categories into three as a way to think about Swahili gender relations. While Swahili people did not overtly describe gender in this way, I noticed that there are two distinctive vernacular components to Moore's single category of gender as a cultural construct, that is, the ways in which "Swahili Women" were described. The first category, represents an ideal Swahili woman, perfect in every way. She is mostly invisible. She either stays home or, if she has to go out, she covers herself completely with her buibui¹. The ideal Swahili woman is of good character: a loving mother, a faithful wife, a virtuous daughter. She never raises her voice, nor draws any kind of attention to

¹A buibui is a black silky opaque garment, generally made of a synthetic fabric, that women wear over their dresses when they go out, covering them from head to foot. It is designed in such a way that there is a certain amount of flexibility in how much of herself a woman conceals. She has the option of pulling the veil across her face should she choose to, or leaving it uncovered.

herself. She does not chew miraa (a mild stimulant); it goes without saying that she does not drink. Nor does she watch romantic Indian movies on the VCR. Rather, when home she sews, or reads the Koran, or cooks, or prays, or tends to her children.

The second category depicts a woman the way that most Swahili women are said to be. She is noisy, likes dancing, parties, and new clothes. She spends all her husband's money, neglects her children, refuses to cook, and is liable (at any moment it seems) to get into an argument with someone in public, to dance inappropriately at weddings, or do any number of other things that show she has no heshima, and that her husband or father or brother or son will have to stop her from doing in order to save the reputation of the entire family.

My third category coincides with Moore's second category of gender -- as social relations. This is the way that I saw most women to be and represents the way that they usually described themselves. They can be more or less pious or irresponsible but by and large they get on with their very busy lives and work hard, taking care of their families and children, and enjoying visiting with their friends and attending weddings whenever they get the chance. What is interesting is that Swahili women I know told me that women should be like the ideal (category one), that is quiet and virtuous, but that they tended in fact generally to be loud, uncontrollable and unreliable (category two). Whenever I

asked them if they thought they themselves or their sisters, or friends, or neighbors were loud, uncontrollable and unreliable, they almost always said that "no", they weren't that way, but "women" were, thus articulating very clearly a distinction between diverse cultural ideological notions of "women" and the actual practices and personalities of real women.

Both men and women share the two culturally constructed categories of Swahili women. Virtually every Swahili woman that I came to know while I lived in Kenya seemed to consider herself to be untypical in some way or other: one woman went out to work in an office where the norm was that men worked outside and women stayed home, another had married a man for love against her parents' wishes, while yet another woman had chosen not to marry at all. A school head master talked to me at length about how highly educated women are much more likely to drink and to dance and to become silly than are equally highly educated young men. When asked why he thought this to be the case he said he was really puzzled by it and did not know the reason. That my observations do not concur with the headmaster's, and that he himself cannot think of an explanation for the behavior that he believes to exist does not invalidate his perceptions of reality. What is interesting is that he believes it to be true and so in one sense it is, because he operates as if it were so, in that he did not allow his own daughters to be educated beyond

secondary school.

Constructions of Swahili Men

While I discern a split for women between the ways they see "women" and the ways they see themselves, I identified no such split in the ways that men perceive ideal categories of Swahili men as distinctive from themselves. However, women talked frequently about the ways in which mens' behavior was at odds with the image of the ideal, educated, religious, moral Swahili man. Women do articulate a difference between the way that Swahili men ideally are supposed to be, and the way that men actually are in practice. To women, the men with whom they have the most contact, mostly their husbands and brothers and sons, are often unreliable both in terms of providing material support and being physically present. The quality of relations between women and each category of male kin varies as they are placed in a different structural relationship with each. The chances of a woman maintaining life long ties with her brother and her son are stronger than maintaining such ties with her husband.

As divorce and polygyny are relatively common in Swahili society many women are de facto household heads, making total financial dependence on a husband a risky business. If a woman is the primary or only wife of her husband, the women say, he does give her as much money as he can to support her and their children, although a woman may not know the full extent of his income. One women also commented to me that at

least they did not have to contend with one problem that they perceive non-Muslim Kenyan women have of husbands drinking away all their money. After divorce, or if a woman has co-wives living elsewhere, her support from her husband may be a lot less reliable. Women's talk is full of allusions to the unreliability of husbands and former husbands. One old woman I know had a young grandson who followed her everywhere she went, and was always begging to be picked up and held. Bibi Amina commented that it would be a fine thing if women could get husbands that would stick with them to that degree.

One woman told how her former husband, her cousin who had been like a kindly elder brother to her, had married her when she was fifteen and left her ten years later after she had born three children. He did continue to maintain her and their children and he eventually returned to them. However, he was away at night several times a week, and she finally persuaded him to admit that he had taken a second wife. She would not tolerate such a situation and with the help of her, by then, teen-age children she forced him to divorce her and to move out. Since then, financial support has been sporadic and she has begun to do dress-making in her home, as well as getting some financial support from her children working. In concluding her account, and as a final affirmation of the unreliability of men, Bibi Hafswa told me the story of the woman who had won 50,000 Kenyan shillings (\$2,500) in a lottery. As a mark of her love and respect she gave the money

to her husband; and with that money he procured for himself a second wife.

Although wives whose husbands are polygynous are de facto household heads in the absence of their husbands, this changes when they return home. Just as Janice Boddy has noted for Hofriyati women in the Sudan, Swahili women's lives are much less structured when their husbands are away (Boddy 1989:45). When a Swahili woman is in charge of her household she decides when she will go out, who she will have come to her home to visit, what and when and if she will cook; she attends weddings more frequently, which women love to do probably more than anything else. When her husband is in residence a woman must provide meals on a regular basis, vacate certain spaces in the home, and, most significantly, check with him that it is alright for her to go out. The degree to which this constitutes women actually asking for permission from their husbands of course varies from couple to couple, but most people agreed that a husband is perfectly within his rights to refuse to allow his wife to leave the house.

Paradoxically, to be divorced or widowed or a co-wife -- that is without a husband exclusively one's own -- women say, is an undesirable state of affairs, even though it offers more personal autonomy. It denies women a more secure income and, most importantly, it denies them the status that comes from having a husband, especially a good one. After I had been in Mombasa for over a year, a local woman, a widow, whom I had

seen at every wedding I attended and who was always very involved with preparations and arrangements, suddenly disappeared from view. When I asked my neighbors where she was they replied that she had made a very good marriage to a high status man, a local business man, and that she was at home taking care of him. The husband travelled for his work, and the woman was around a little more when he was gone, but not very much. One day I met her on the street and I asked her why she rarely came to weddings any more. She replied that her husband wanted her to stay at home, and she was willing to do this, even in his absence. He was a very high status man whose good reputation (and thus her own) she wished to maintain and enhance by doing her wifely duty. She was putting into practice being an ideal Swahili woman.

Marriage contains a highly significant shift of status for women for it is at that moment that they become adults. Only married women may attend weddings and funerals and thus have access to adult women's sites of networking and power negotiations. Marriage offers a woman autonomy from her father and, once the mahari (bridewealth) has been paid by the bridegroom's family the bride has control over that, especially the gold jewelry with which she is endowed (Susan F. Hirsch, personal communication). Furthermore, coastal women do not follow the Islamic legal practice of reverting to the control of their fathers on divorce, but are generally free to contract their own subsequent marriages and control

their personal affairs. Normally, only married women may set up their own households, and be relieved of some of the drudgery of domestic work.² A married woman usually does the more interesting work, and will often be given a younger sister or niece to help her with the dirtiest most boring work such as fetching charcoal, cleaning the house and preparing vegetables.

Spouses are chosen on the basis of suitability of status and character rather than mutual attraction, and they do not spend very much time together. Women derive a lot of their emotional support from other women: their sisters, mothers, neighbors and friends. Swartz argues that men do not have a similar source of succor among male friends and kin and so look to their wives for such support (Swartz 1982).

Women's relationships with their brothers are ambiguous. In that brothers are consanguineal kin, the potential longevity of a sister-brother ties is greater than that between husband and wife, which does not commence until adulthood and may be terminated by divorce, or rendered distant by polygyny. Tanner (1964) notes that "Afro-Arab" brother-brother ties are notoriously unstable due to divisive Islamic inheritance laws that can lead to brothers cutting off

²During my stay in Mombasa I very occasionally encountered women in their thirties who apparently had never married. They were professionally employed outside the home and commanded significant respect and authority on that basis. In spite of their professional authority and adult status they did not attend weddings. Even more rarely I encountered unmarried Swahili women who set up their own households.

relations with each other, but I do not believe this to be the case with sisters and brothers. However, there are a number of matters over which adult brothers and sisters do dispute, often concerning money, and these disputes are generally more discretely played out than spousal conflicts because the siblings share the desire to protect the reputation of their natal family.

The nature of women's quarrels with their brothers is based on distribution of resources, and on the higher valuation of sons than daughters that women experience. A recurring theme in interviews was of women who were financially subsidizing their brothers and sometimes their brother's wife and children, when their brothers did not work to support themselves. One case offers an example: An Omani Arab household unit included an elderly couple in poor health, their unmarried son, and their widowed daughter and her own small daughter. The woman, who had a job as a secretary, helped support her parents. The unmarried son decided to marry, but as his job in the police force did not pay very well he wanted his new wife to move in with him and his family. In order to make room for the new daughter-in-law, the elderly parents told their daughter to find another home for herself and her daughter, which she did, meanwhile still regularly giving money to her parents. The woman was first annoyed because her brother had little money to buy the sitara (new clothes and other personal items that the groom must

obtain for the bride) and so her parents began to buy things for their new daughter-in-law. The woman, then was subsidizing her brother's marriage. She was further outraged when her parents decided that they and their son did not like the new bride's cooking and requested that she come in to cook for them every day. Because having men in the family who are good providers brings respect to the family, the woman did not tell her friends that it was she who was affording considerable support, financial and material to her natal family, and not her brother. If people knew how irresponsible her brother was, behaving unlike an ideal Swahili man, this would bring disrespect to her family.

Swahili women, then, had a considerably more complex understanding of the differences between male ideology and male practices than their male kin did. Why was that? What made it possible for men, apparently, to have a much more coherent sense of male gender identity than women? There are two factors to consider here. The first is that men, overall, have higher status and significantly more power than most women do. The male Swahili world view is the most readily articulated by men and women alike, and the most highly valued; it verges on the hegemonic. Men, with the self assuredness that comes with greater power and the chance to speak and represent themselves, simply do not experience a difference between what is ideally required of Swahili men and their own practices.

The second reason is methodological. I spent much more time with women than I did with men. I interviewed men, I visited with men in the households in which I lived, or with which I was closely associated. But while I spent hundreds of hours of participant observation with women at weddings and funerals, and talking in their homes, I did not spend the equivalent time with men. I never spent time with them at coffee stands on the streets, or in and around mosques, or in their celebrations of weddings and funerals. To do so, as a woman, was not possible. Thus I do not know for sure that there is complete coherence in Swahili men's self image, but I believe that to be the case.

GENDERED SPACE: THE STREET AND HOME

Having discussed cultural and practical concepts of Swahili men and women, I want to consider spatial location as a manifestation of gender distinctions in Swahili culture and society. Swahili mila na desturi (tradition and custom) prescribe men and women being physically segregated, and that this be further reinforced by women being veiled. As with Swahili concepts of men and women, there are distinctions to be made between ideal use of space and the actual use, and negotiations of use, that occur. There is also considerable variation in gender segregation depending on the beliefs of particular individuals, the status that they wish to maintain, and economic conditions which may circumscribe what is possible in this domain.

Anthropological studies of women and of gender are imbued with gender distinctions based on spatial location (Rosaldo 1974; Elshtain 1981). Men are to be found in the public, political, sphere while women are located in the private and less highly valued domestic domain. Ostensibly this distinction is clearly visible in Swahili towns, including Mombasa: Swahili men are more visible in public spaces, at street-side cafes drinking coffee and talking, and sitting outside mosques. Women are present on the streets but they are less visible. Women can observe the activities of men, but men cannot clearly see women. Men on the street are dressed either in pants and t-shirts, brightly colored sarong, or the traditional kanzu, a full length white robe. All of these garments are much more distinctive and visible than the black buibui that women wear outside the home, which covers whatever colorful garment they may be wearing underneath. While the men occupy the streets as their space, passing the time of day with their friends, women are generally seen walking purposefully along. They may pause briefly to greet someone, but the street is not a place for women to socialize. At night the invisibility of women on the streets becomes further emphasized and literal as their black garments render them unseen. I remember being struck by this invisibility early on in my field work one evening when I left a hall where a wedding was being held. Standing outside, getting accustomed to the quiet after the noise inside, I was startled

to realize that I was standing not twenty feet away from a cluster of about fifty young women, stationed in the shadows, completely shrouded in their buibui. They were wanawale (virgins), unmarried young women who were not eligible to attend the wedding but who wanted to watch it from outside.

In contrast with the streets, people's homes are filled with women cooking, sewing, watching videos, visiting, attending to children, and applying beauty treatments to their friends. The men who are resident are rarely seen there during waking hours, except when they come home for their lunch. This situation is confirmed by the observations of Linda Donley in her work on Swahili space and gender in Lamu who notes:

One man, reported to be 96 years old, said that he went out every day because it is "unmanly" to spend time at home. He had the company of many other men who felt the same and only went home to eat and sleep. [Donley 1987:186]

But this broad, gendered, public/private distinction cannot convey the nuances of the ways in which men and women occupy space. Both men and women do spend time in the location not predominantly associated with their own gender. This requires negotiations over the use of space in both private and public domains.

The Home: Private and Public

Swahili homes are divided into male and female and, at times, public and private areas. Donley, drawing on the works of Bourdieu (1977) and Giddens (1981) argues that physical

spaces, including domestic architecture, conscribe social relations including those of gender and status. Concomitantly, in a dialectical relationship, those gender and status relations circumscribe particular building plans and use of space (Donley 1987; 1990).

While I concur with Linda Donley that certain rooms in Swahili homes are associated with men, and others are associated with women, I want to make the point that beyond particular rooms being gendered, there are decisions and negotiations, often unspoken, regarding which genders occupy which spaces at which times. The way in which space is gendered within the home is, to some degree, fluid.

The classic floor plan for Swahili houses in Mombasa provides for a central hallway, at one end of which are a kitchen or cooking area, and two small rooms, one containing a toilet, the other a shower (see Figure 3). In some older houses these two rooms are in fact one larger one containing both a shower and a hole in the floor for the toilet. The hallway is quite wide, approximately six feet, and along the wall are mwakisu (latticed palm-covered beds), and chairs. There are rooms off the two sides of the hallway, generally two on each side. While the doors to the rooms remain open, in part to allow any available cross draft to pass through and cool the house, each doorway is covered by a hanging curtain so that people cannot look into the rooms. These adjacent rooms, generally referred to as ndani, literally, "inside",

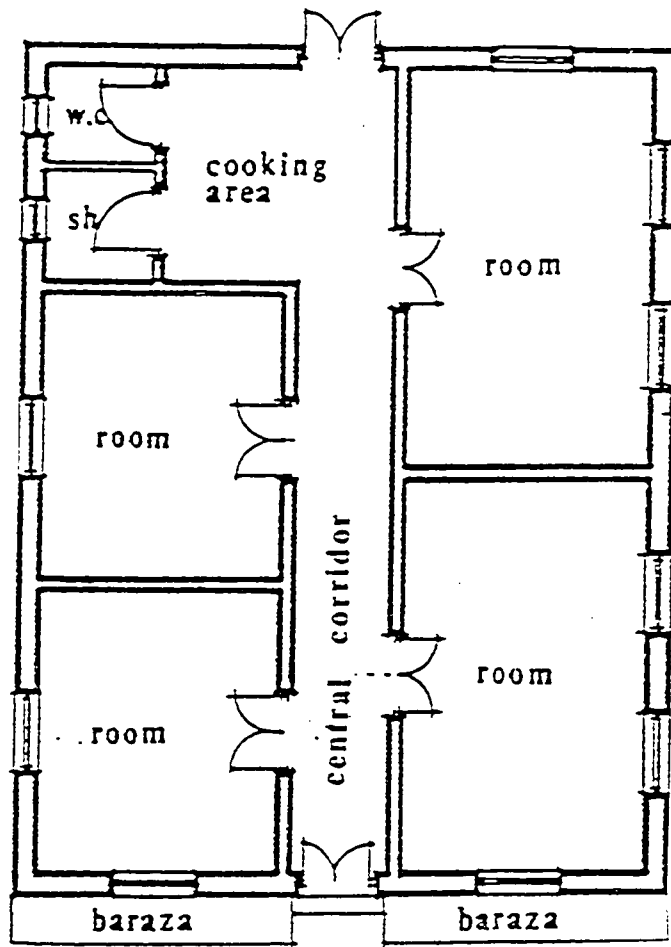


Figure 3: Floor Plan of A Swahili House.

are bedrooms. A married couple may sleep and store their personal possessions in one; the children of one sex or the other occupy another; a grandmother and grandchildren may be housed in another. It is in these rooms that women pray five times a day, and where they rest if they are sick.

How the regular residents of a household use this space when there are no outsiders present, and how much men and women remain apart from each other depends to some degree on the composition, and idiosyncracies, of that particular household. One man, from a family that considers itself religiously devout, told me that he separated his sons and daughters from each other within their home from the age of seven or eight years old. In other households adolescent siblings of both sexes and sometimes their friends can all be found spending time together chatting or watching a video or the television. What is very unlikely, and to be avoided for reasons of heshima, is for two unmarried adults of the opposite sex who are eligible to marry one another to spend any time alone together.

The central hallway of the house is a communal area in which residents sit and talk, and is the area in which visitors are received. At the doorway of the house going in to the central hallway visitors stand outside and call "hodi", indicating that they are there and wish to come in. Those inside either immediately reply "karibu", (welcome, come in) or they will ask who it is. Once identified the person will

either be invited in or, if the caller is an unrelated man and only women are home, there is a verbal exchange through the curtained door, a message left, and the caller departs without being admitted. At other times the identification leads to women veiling themselves, or retiring further inside, or to male residents going outside to attend to the caller. Although there are elaborate calculations of gender and status relations being made as people move between or remain in particular spaces, these are not articulated verbally. Everyone knows exactly what to do and where to go.

Often the visitors get no further than the hallway as they deliver their message and depart, or are invited to sit out in the hallway and visit for a while. Should women wish for privacy, or should the hallway be occupied by male visitors, the women of the house retire ndani and continue their conversation there. Should the hallway be occupied by a majority of women, a male household member takes his male visitor to sit outside. At other times women remain to talk to a male visitor in the hallway, but they don pairs of leso (locally made cotton wraps that cover them in the same way as the buibui does). In so doing the hallway has been rendered a public, male, space and so women attire themselves as though they were outdoors. The hallway also becomes a public, male, space when karamu (feasts marking weddings, funerals or other significant occasions) are held in a home. Men gather in the hallway to eat, while women eat ndani, in the bedrooms.

Thus, contra Rosaldo and Elshtain, I suggest it is not so much that the home, where women happen to be, is private and the streets, where men happen to be, is public, but rather that women are symbolized as private and men are symbolized as public. Whichever gender predominates in a space defines the gender associations of that space.

The Street: Public and Private

Just as parts of homes are deemed public spaces, parts of the street, the public domain, can be considered private, especially where women predominate. At public functions such as weddings and Maulidi (celebration of the birth of the prophet) men and women occupy different locations, or the same location at a different time (such as when men eat their lunch and then women eat after them in the same place). These gender specific spaces are often marked by physical structures such as wooden dividers or hanging gunny-sack cloths. At some events women can observe men's dance and poetry reading activities from where they are located, but men cannot observe women.

Where women predominate in the public domain men are not allowed to enter. In Old Town, food was being prepared by women in a cordoned off alley way for one particularly large wedding when a man wanted to pass through to get to his house. He called out and asked and was granted permission to pass, but it was he who had to avert his eyes as he scuttled through, while the women carried on with what they were doing,

staring at the man as he passed.

The degree to which men and women completely segregate themselves from each other in the, ostensibly, public domain also depends on claims to status. When high status women hold dances for weddings they do so in a hall, or in someone's house where there are permanent concrete walls and no men are present. No mixing of the sexes is allowed at all at the Muslim Women's Center hall, a popular place to hold weddings, so music is supplied by women drummers and singers who are long term clients of Mombasa's high status families, often of slave descent. Alternatively taped music is used.

Others, who do not make the same claims to propriety, screen their dance spaces off with walls of gunny-sack, around which adolescent boys sometimes peer until they are shooed away. The musicians in these situations are usually men but, except for shoga (homosexual men) whom I discuss below, they do not interact with the women present save, briefly, to confirm what piece of music they are to play. Regardless of status, there are, in fact, fewer outside weddings nowadays as the land adjacent to houses is increasingly built on in order to relieve the intense housing pressure in Mombasa. In this same period, more schools have been built, and school halls have become a popular alternative location.

Weddings

Weddings, through discourses on gender, are the location of the construction, mediation and reinforcement of status beyond

the enactment of gendered space. Except during the holy month of Ramadhan, weddings occur almost daily in Mombasa, especially in December, April and August when the schools are closed. A marriage is marked by one or more social events, and a very wealthy prestigious family may host as many as seven dances and luncheons. Everyone has an idea of what constitutes a good wedding and the wedding giver -- the Mama Harusi, the mother of the bride -- does her best to host a praise-worthy wedding. In order to do this, Mama Harusi calls on her extended network of kin and friends to assist her, both with their labor and donations of money. A few weeks before the wedding Mama Harusi and a female relative or friend go to call at the home of each of the guests and invite them to the wedding. Lower status women want higher status women, as well as their own peers, to come to their wedding. High status women do not choose to go to all the weddings that they are invited to, but lower status women generally flock to the weddings of high status families. If lower status women are willing to spend a lot of money and effort and invite many people who may come out of curiosity, this is a way to raise their standing in the community. The promise of entertainment by a particularly popular musician, of food catered by a prestigious resort hotel, or rumors of a particularly elaborate -- but undisclosed -- decorating of the stage on which the bride will be displayed, can all attract the large number of guests desired to make a wedding successful.

The plans for the wedding are discussed among the potential guests in the days leading up to the wedding, as women decide whether to go, and with whom, and they note with interest who else has been invited. People who expected an invitation and did not receive one, or who did not receive one personally, may feel that their social standing has been impugned. Different sets of people are invited to the various wedding events, although with much overlap of guests. Three major events are: vugo an afternoon dance event in which the guests participate, kupamba where the bride is displayed to the assembled guests, and karamu where an elaborate luncheon that includes rice is served. Fewer people are invited to, and accept the lunch invitation in part because of the practical and financial constraints of catering for hundreds of people, but also because to be the guest of someone and to eat their rice places one in a position of indebtedness to the hostess, unless one is releasing that hostess from a former debt. Women have to consider the status of the luncheon giver -- do they wish to be in the debt of someone in her status position? Can they afford to be in her debt? Would they be in a position at some future time to repay her and all her peers who might be offended if she were invited to something and they were not? Such are the considerations that must be made at this time.

Who marries whom is also extremely important when considering status. The ideal is still for the kin of a man

to approach the kin of a virtuous young woman to ask for her hand. Many couples choose one another these days through contacts at school or work, or through noticing one another around the community. Even then, however, there is still a formal proposal from one family to another. If the bride's father does not consider the candidate for husband to be of sufficiently high status based on who he is and what his prospects are, and after considering the bride wealth offered, then the man may be refused even if the bride would like to be married and/or to have him as a husband.

Bride wealth is the subject of much speculation and commentary and can range from almost nothing³ to about 35,000 Kenyan shillings⁴. High bride wealth is a source of pride and reinforcement of social position for both the bride and the groom's family. For the bride's family it confirms that she is a worthy and desirable wife, for the groom it shows his family's ability to accumulate considerable financial resources.

The contravention of status in one wedding that I witnessed confirmed the status norms that are supposed to prevail. A highly educated daughter of a very high status family married a young man whom she met at college. He was considered to be

³The only marriage that I heard of in which the bride wealth was absolutely nothing was where the bride was pregnant and her family managed to persuade the young man concerned to marry her.

⁴Around US\$1750; for comparison, a secretary makes about 1200 Kenya shillings, or US\$60 per month.

a good and personally honorable young man from a respectable but much lower status coastal family. Her family consented to the marriage because, it was rumored, the bride had threatened to elope if they did not. The wedding was elaborate, as one would expect from a family such as hers, but certain changes in details led many of the guests to comment on her family's obvious distaste with the contravention of their status. As is appropriate for the marriage of the daughter of a high status family, the bridegroom was escorted to the bride's house in a huge procession through the streets of Old Town accompanied by a band and many singing men and women. However, the groom's party was greeted, not by the bride's mother which is usual, but by one of her aunts. The mother, it was said, was not willing to acknowledge the bridegroom and his lower status kin. The couple in this case also refused to consummate their marriage under family supervision and went to a local hotel.

As Marc Swartz has noted (Swartz 1982), the supervised consummation of a marriage where a blood stained sheet is displayed and a drum is struck can simultaneously be a source of enhanced prestige for women and their families and of shame and embarrassment for men. It is not only men, however, who do not care for this custom. Many more highly educated women consider the practice an invasion of their privacy, although they may still go along with it in order not to bring shame to their families. I should make it clear that while men do not

care for the rituals accompanying proving virginity, they value female chastity highly.

Kupamba entails the displaying of the beautifully dressed and hennaed bride to an assembled group, and can lead to some status dilemmas. If the bride is beautiful and expensively dressed then her family wants her to be seen, but to display a woman is not considered pious in religious terms. The bride is almost always displayed, but those families whose concerns are more with exercising piety than displaying beauty and wealth may confine the audience to immediate female kin of the bride and groom in their home rather than at a hall.

Swahili ideology values order in society and in social intercourse. One way in which the arrangements of a wedding can be criticized is if there is chaos in the events. A local politician's son got married, and during the final night of celebrations many bus loads of guests were brought in from surrounding areas to accompany the bridegroom to the bride's house. The sudden arrival of about two hundred men and women into an already full area of land led to total chaos. The sacking dividing men and women came tumbling down and crowds of young enthusiastic men were crushed against the matrons of the community. These respectable older women gathered up the groups of female kin and friends who had accompanied them, informed the hostess that this wedding had no heshima and went home commenting to one another that those people were not really waungwana (high status free born people) anyway, but

that they were really of low status Duruma origin.⁵

Veiling

As well as concrete walls and screens of gunny sack acting as physical boundaries around female, private, domains, the buibui serves a similar purpose as a personal physical enclosure where space is not absolutely gender specific and men and women move amongst one another, or in proximity to each other. In the West, people feminist and non-feminist, tend to think that all Muslim societies are alike with women being uniformly veiled and in Purdah; this was most clearly manifested in press coverage of the Middle East during the Persian Gulf war. This veiling is presumed to be oppressive both in the physical constraint it enforces and as a symbol of broader restraints on women's lives.

The buibui, in fact, has multiple meanings and purposes. It provides women with anonymity when they go out, which towards the end of over two years in the field I began to yearn for myself. The buibui marks status and piety, and it marks Swahili identity in the broader community as I discuss in Chapter VI. I have even heard of it being used as a disguise by a man to visit his married lover. Furthermore, the multiple meanings and purposes of veiling shift over time.

Margaret Strobel notes that in the nineteenth century upper class women in Mombasa went out accompanied by servants

⁵One of the nine (mostly non-Muslim) Mijikenda groups that inhabit the coastal interior

carrying a canopy, known as a ramba, which enveloped them completely. Towards the end of the nineteenth century some higher status women in Mombasa had taken to wearing a black silk mask and a mantle, while lower class women had begun to wear a long indigo robe known as ukaya. She goes on to say that the early twentieth century brought the demise of the ramba, and the appropriation by all Swahili women of the buibui, which has its origins in Hadramat, from where a large number of immigrants were coming (Strobel 1979:74). Throughout this century Swahili women have worn the buibui as a mark of their status as respectable people, but the intensity of its use has fluctuated, and it is particularly interesting to note the changes in use and meaning of the buibui and other veiling garments even since Strobel conducted her research in Mombasa in the mid-1970s.

During the 1960s, and particularly after the 1964 revolution overthrew Arab rule in Zanzibar and very sophisticated young Muslim women fled to Mombasa, the practice of veiling was on the decline. This continued into the 1970s, with young women not veiling until they finished school, and women not wearing their buibui at all if they left the coastal region of Kenya. In this period Strobel was able to say, "To the exclusion of other styles, the buibui is now worn by non-Asian Muslim women in Purdah" (Strobel 1979:75). Since the late 1970s this trend has ended, and there are new innovations in veiling attire. More women are veiled, their buibui are

longer⁶, and more girls are veiling at the onset of puberty. Furthermore, adolescent girls are experimenting with alternatives to the buibui, which I describe in Chapter VI. This increased veiling is in part attributable to the 1979 revolution in Iran, which stirred an increased sense of religious identity in many Swahili people as they heard sermons from men who had spent time in the Middle East, and read Islamic literature originating in post-revolutionary Iran.

The veil has other meanings too. In recent years, in coastal politics, the catch phrase "Buibui clad women" has been coined. Swahili women are increasingly politically active, and are vital participants in electoral politics as they organize rallies for candidates and go door to door urging people to get out and vote for the candidate that they support. In January 1992 a political rally was held in support of the newly formed opposition party, Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD), in Mombasa. Opponents of FORD, including Mombasa Member of Parliament (MP) Shariff Nassir, questioned the success and size of the rally which, Shariff Nassir said was attended by people brought in from Western Kenya. A national newspaper reported, "Mr Nassir said

⁶The hemline of the buibui is dropping from calf length to ankle length. Although they have not yet dropped as far as prescribed in the Hadith where the Prophet Mohamed's daughter wore a gown so long that it trailed along, eradicating her footsteps in the sand as she went. In the badly drained streets of Mombasa, this does not seem practical.

there is no successful meeting at the Coast which is not attended by bui-bui-clad women and men in kanzu..." (Daily Nation, January 1992). Thus the buibui has become a symbol of coast political activity and of Swahili women's participation.

Women are increasingly finding themselves in the public domain as they enter the formal labor market and work in offices, banks and stores. The buibui, or some other modest attire such as a long dress with long sleeves and some kind of head scarf, offers women some protection of both their reputation and their person as they work in close proximity with unrelated men, and makes it possible for them to be in the work place. The work place, a public domain with the potential for impropriety, also provides women the opportunity to demonstrate their piety in a challenging situation and thus ironically it may enhance their status.

SEXUALITY AS A DISCOURSE ON GENDER AND STATUS

In Swahili culture and society sexuality is implicated in the construction of both gender and status. To be attributed with sexual preferences unbecoming a person's gender -- that is, certain homosexual practices -- can result in censure, and a challenge to a person's social standing.

Understanding homosexuality in Mombasa is problematic for the ethnographer in that the kinds of data that are so far available limit the analysis that can be made. No anthropologist has yet interviewed self defined homosexuals in Mombasa about their lives, and there is a real methodological

and ethical problem in trying to construct a description without those first hand data. What is available more directly is a public discourse on sexuality found in gossip and the media. When people describe others as homosexual such information cannot be considered factual with respect to sexual practice and sexual identity, but what other Swahili people "know" and say about the sexuality of particular individuals does provide us with Swahili cultural views about sexuality, gendered behavior and contested status.

There are three homosexual categories in Mombasa: shoga (plural mashoga), msaga, (plural misago) and basha (plural mabasha). Mashoga are low status, unmarried men who are said to be "passive" partners in sex with other men. Misago are women who are reputed to be sexually active with other women; generally they are married. Both of these categories are more subject to derision than the third category, mabasha who are men reputed to take the "active" role in sexual activity with other men. Mabasha as a distinctive category of person are much less visible than mashoga and misago both physically and in public discourse. They are older, high status (and therefore powerful), married men. Gayle Rubin says that, "Modern Western societies appraise sex acts according to a hierarchical system of sexual value" (Rubin 1984:279), and this is true for Swahili society too. There is no Swahili term for heterosexual, or "straight", and this taken for granted and unmarked category of "normal" sex is at the top of

the Swahili sex hierarchy. In descending order below, the homosexual categories are ranked basha (active man), msago (woman engaging in sexual activity with another woman), and, finally, shoga (passive male).

The mashoga, the lowest ranked category, are the most incongruent with their gender and the most visible in the community; this is not coincidental. It is the mashoga for whom there is the most clearly defined ritual space; they are essential to all but the most high status weddings. Their role is to participate at vugo, women's dances that take place in the afternoons, and in various processions associated with the wedding such as accompanying a bridegroom to the home of the bride. As musicians and dancers they accompany women in singing, dancing and playing pembe (cow horns used as percussion instruments). While other men are hired to play musical instruments at all but the highest status or most religious families' weddings, they are distinctive from the mashoga. Men who are not shoga play drums, a trumpet, and a high pitched clarinet but, as one old woman told me: "If a man is playing pembe, he's a shoga." It is not a man's instrument. Dance style also marks a shoga when he ties a leso around his hips and dances chakacha, which entails rotating his hips in a way that only women dance. This is in marked contrast to Swahili men's dancing, which is highly formalized and generally entails men standing in a long row stepping slowly from side to side.

As well as singing and playing musical instruments mashoga provide all the percussion instruments and charge a rental fee for bringing them to the vugo⁷. Participants in vugo always engage in a lot of banter, tell jokes and compose songs. Mashoga often contribute the most lewd jokes and stories to which the women present respond with mock outrage and laughter. Mashoga also take part in parades during the two religious Idd celebrations; some dress in women's clothes, construct breasts and large behinds from crumpled paper, and wear wigs, much to the delight and amusement of onlookers. Mashoga can be seen with women at weddings where they are not playing music, and they sometimes sit with women at funerals.

In spite of their recognized roles in Swahili weddings, mashoga can be subject to violence. Periodically during my field work I witnessed, or heard about, street fights in which men derided as "shoga" were picked on and, if no one intervened on their behalf, beaten up. I was told that while people generally did not mind mashoga, a family was distressed if their son turned out to be one; it is not a blessing.

The very first time I attended a women's wedding event, kupamba, one of my companions pointed out a group of flirting women to me and described them as misago, about whom she was most scornful. Compared to mashoga, women's semi-public expressions of sexuality are less ritualized. Women flirt

⁷This differs from other coastal towns where women are in competitive groups of dancers and own and bring their own instruments.

with one another at various women's social gatherings referring explicitly to their romantic interest in each other. One local young unmarried woman wore Levi jeans and Reebok high tops under her full length koti, the black concealing garment that she wore. She also tied her veil in various original designs more commonly seen on Arab men than young Swahili women. She flirted with other young unmarried women telling them that she wanted them to be her wives. She used the active form of the verb kuoa (to marry), which is used by men, rather than the passive form of the verb kuolewa (to be married), always used by women. Her friends were highly amused by her approaches and, with some laughter, responded with the modest behavior appropriate to a young bride. Within just a couple of months of her beginning to act in this way the young woman was hurriedly married to her cousin, as people had begun to talk about her behavior and it did not reflect well on her family.

As well as the label msaga being applied to a woman who expresses a romantic interest in another woman, this sexual label is also invoked where there is ambiguity in gender roles. In part as the result of educational opportunities, some women have become successful professionally, and there are a few women now in their thirties who have not yet married. This professional success has provided the women with power and influence beyond their years and gender status in the Swahili community. They generate income that can be

used for family events such as marriages and weddings, or to set up their own households, and they often have professional contacts with people of influence outside the immediate Swahili community whom the women may petition on behalf of other, male, kin, who then are in their debt. Swahili people label such women as "misago" where it has nothing to do with the erotic preferences of the women. They are being condemned for behaving in ways that are inconsistent with being a woman and for challenging the gender/status system.

Gill Shepherd argues that homosexuality in Mombasa is relatively unstigmatized, compared to Western Europe and North America because, she argues, it does not challenge the status system (Shepherd 198:268). This may once have been true, but it is certainly no longer the case. Appropriate gender relations and behaviors are critical to the maintenance of status, and so contravention of appropriate gender behavior does in fact constitute a threat to the rank system. Misago and mashoga do transgress gender boundaries. The most blatant transgressions are seen in the activities of the mashoga, which is why they are the lowest status and subject to acts of violence. Powerful women, regardless of their erotic activities, are not behaving in ways consistent with the old gender/status ideals and thus receive a derogatory label -- msago. The high status, wealthy, powerful, sexually "active" mabasha contravene gender categories the least and are hardly visible either through their public behavior or in community

gossip. A community with a secure male oriented status system was able to accommodate low status mashoga, and misago who formerly had power and influence only in the domestic sphere, but that is no longer the case. Now every contravention of appropriate gender behavior, including homosexuality, presents a challenge to the status system itself.

The practices and experiences of Swahili men and women described in this chapter show how power relations are expressed through the articulation of gender and status. High status and power are no longer entirely congruent with wealth and male gender. As I said at the start of the chapter, this shifting situation has its origins in the economic changes wrought by the onset of British colonial power. The colonial period also saw the beginning of educational opportunities for Swahili girls, and challenges to a Swahili world view, and these I explore in the following chapters of this dissertation.

CHAPTER IV: EDUCATION AND IDENTITY IN THE COLONIAL STATE

In this chapter I focus on education, both secular and Islamic, during the period of British colonialism from 1895 to 1963 to demonstrate the inception of the Kenyan state and its mechanisms for material and ideological reproduction. In so doing, it becomes apparent that there is significant continuity in state domination and subordinate resistances between the colonial and post-colonial periods.

In contemporary Kenya, people's hopes for a prosperous future are embedded in discourses on education; in spite of economically difficult times, Kenyans continue to build schools, and scrape together the money to get their children an education. They see education as the primary agency of positive change in their lives. Beyond that, from the social scientists' perspective, education is also a place to look for an understanding of the relationship between local communities and wider social structures.

As anthropologists, our strength and our training is in the qualitative study of small scale societies, or fragments of larger ones. But in order to address the pressing questions that face us now -- how do small groups of people relate to the state? how are social and cultural constellations regenerated? -- we look beyond anthropology to develop those answers. European social theory is one locus of edification as anthropologists have turned to the more ideologically, superstructurally, oriented cultural Marxists such as Gramsci and Althusser, discussed by James Scott and Paul Willis

respectively (Scott 1985; Willis 1981b). Both Gramsci and Althusser have privileged the school as the fundamental site, and agent, of the reproduction of the ideologies of the ruling class. As Willis says of Althusser, for him:

Education provides the necessary skills for production, the necessary graded ideologies for the social division of labor, and the necessary milieu for the actual formation of subjectivities through the celebrated "imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions of existence". [Willis 1981b:51]

Gramsci, in turn, sees the school as one of the institutions through which the hegemony of the state is articulated and reproduced (Scott 1985).

While I do see the school as being central to the questions at issue here, two problems come to mind with their particular portrayal of education. The first is that the capitalist economic structure with its embedded class relations is presupposed, with people being slotted into pre-existing categories -- that is, having ideology done to them -- rather than having agency to initiate action and to choose how to respond to external forces. Willis (1981b) problematizes Althusser's approach as entailing the reduction of "human agents to bearers of structural relationships".

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) take a more cultural approach to the role of education in state hegemony, and explain in detail how the hegemonic culture of the bourgeoisie is regenerated and entrenched in the apparent meritocracy of the French educational system, thus leading people to think that every one has an equal chance at class advancement, even as

they are kept firmly in their place. While this is a progression from the purely structural position of Althusser and Gramsci, Paul Willis suggests that Bourdieu and Passeron still take the working class as a given (Willis 1981b:54). Thus, once more, subordinate people are rendered the passive, un-theorized segment of the class structure, with no agency of their own. Willis argues further that if the position of the subordinate class is not documented in detail and theorized there is no place for the recognition of resistance to state hegemony.

The second problem for those of us working in the former European colonies is the fact that the social theory to which we have looked addresses hegemony and ideology primarily within western, industrial, capitalist societies. Thus industrialization and the class system are taken as givens that are in place. The role of the state (and/or the dominant classes, depending on how the relationship between state and ruling class is seen) is to maintain hegemony, and the question for social theorists of the Left is how that hegemony can be challenged in order to dissolve the class system.

However, in former colonies, including Kenya, the power of the state and the ruling class is much more tentative. Although a capitalist economic system has developed with an accompanying incipient class system, it is not the only major element of organization within Kenya. Ethnic identity is still very important both in the personal development of the

self, and as an organizing principle of economic and political activity. Thus, rather than there being a hegemonic state, an entrenched class system, and moves towards class resistance in Kenya, we find, at the level of ideology, a state that is attempting to impose notions of nationhood, national identity and a capitalist work ethic, having to articulate with indigenous moves to maintain particular ethnicities as well as relate to a particular nationality.

The Kenyan schools are a primary location of these articulations, but the process is by no means one of socialization, or of ideology passively received, suggested by the writers discussed above; nor is it merely class relations that are being regenerated and contested. For Swahili people, education is, and was throughout the colonial period, a primary discourse through which they negotiate economic and political power, gender and ethnicity in a broader state context. The colonial period requires special attention here as it is the starting point for Swahili mass education and engagement with an incipient state system. It is the period when girls were first educated, which made possible the increased influence of some Swahili women in the Independence period. It was in the colonial period that the British developed administrative structures, some of which were so entrenched that they have endured into the present. Looking to the colonial era provides a longer period over which to identify and comprehend the changes, embedded in discourses of

gender and education, that are taking place for Swahili men and women.

In a 1990 article, Ann Stoler and Frederick Cooper caution against intellectual depictions of colonialism as being monolithic (Stoler and Cooper 1990:609). While I am making a set of arguments about the position of Swahili people vis a vis the colonial state, it should be made clear that, in the latter, the European personnel involved were a diverse and combative cast of characters including Christian missionaries, school teachers, British colonial officials, and white agricultural settlers, a number of whom were aristocrats and thus wielded considerable political influence in the colony. Similarly, as I have indicated in earlier chapters, there were, and are, diverse interests and positions among Swahili people. These differences become quite apparent in exploring archival material, published books, and interview contents to construct this account of Swahili people, gender and education in the colonial period. Derived from all these sources the final result is, necessarily, my own understanding of events.

EARLY SWAHILI EDUCATION

Before colonial intervention the education of Swahili children was entirely through the vyuo¹ and madarasa, Islamic schools attached to the mosques. In Islam there is no distinction made between secular and religious education

¹Although children actually attend madarasa after they have completed vyuo, the terms are sometimes used interchangeably to refer to vyuo.

because God is everywhere and all aspects of life can be understood within a religious framework. There is little accessible² record of formal educational arrangements on the coast before the colonial period, but at its onset there were 150 vyuo up and down the coast (Truman 1973), where small children learned to recite the Koran and learned some Arabic letters and numbers. For boys who wanted to continue their education there were a few madarasa where they could learn religion, Arabic, math, logic, and geography at an advanced level. The most privileged and scholarly could go to Egypt or the Middle East for the very best education with the great scholars. The boys for whom there was the closest link between their formal education and their adult occupations were religious judges, scholars, and administrators. For those who worked as plantation overseers or in shipping, the language, literacy and numeracy skills that they acquired allowed them to do their jobs and keep records competently. The spiritual aspects of their education ensured that they were wise and reputable adults who could take their place in the community.

Some small girls were able to take advantage of the chuo (singular of vyuo) education, but they appear to have been few (Truman 1973; Prins 1967; Mirza and Strobel 1989). Older

²Swahili language was written in Arabic script before the British administered the coast. I am not aware of written records describing Koranic schools before the twentieth century, and am certainly not aware of any translations or transcriptions of such.

girls who showed intellectual promise, and whose families valued that intellect, were tutored in more advanced subjects at home. Whatever numeracy and literacy skills Swahili women could acquire must have been useful when they came to engage in their small business enterprises such as mat making, food production and property management (B. Cooper 1988; Strobel 1983).

European missionaries made some attempts to educate and convert coastal peoples to Christianity from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, and also to provide sanctuary for fleeing slaves. Close to Mombasa, the Anglican Church Missionary Society was established at Rabai, in Mijikenda territory, and at Freretown where freed slaves could go to live; the Methodists had mission stations at Ribe and Kwa Jomvu, but they recorded only a handful of converts (Salim 1973). The missionaries and their families were thwarted in their conversion goals by the strength of Islam, and the presence of malaria, which killed or weakened many of them. They were much more successful when they later moved inland where the climate was healthier and the local populations were less resistant to missionization. However, their involvement in the founding of the first non-Islamic school was significant for the development of early education in Mombasa.

EARLY WESTERN IMPACT ON MOMBASA

In 1894 the Church Missionary Society started the multi-racial primary school headed by a Mr. Parker, and at first it

was attended by Swahili and Arab children, both male and female. The school provided a western style education, teaching reading, writing and arithmetic. Shortly after the school started it was announced that the children had to study Christian scriptures in order to be allowed to learn English. The fees were also reduced, and Muslim parents withdrew their children from the school suspecting that the school's primary goal was to convert them to Christianity (Truman 1973). This predicament has been a recurring theme for Swahili parents ever since the opening of Buxton Road School: Confronted with the realities of modern life it is desirable that children receive an education that will equip them to deal with it, especially math and English skills, where English is the primary language of administration and bureaucracy in Kenya. However, parents do not wish that education to be attained at the cost of their children's religious beliefs and cultural identity.

In 1894 the question of education was not yet a significant one, with a more immediate issue being slavery which, in time, became implicated in educational affairs. The coastal plantation economy of wealthy Arab and Swahili people depended in large part, both directly and indirectly, on slave labor. Although long term British Protection Status did not come to the East African coast until 1895³, British diplomacy and

³From 1824-1826 Mombasa was briefly under British Protection; for a full account see Sir John Gray, 1957.

naval might throughout the nineteenth century forced the Sultans of Zanzibar to restrict the slave trade first by proclaiming the end of the trade of slaves by land in 1876, and then by the anti-slavery decree of 1890 providing for the manumission of all slaves whose owners died childless. In 1907 the status of slave itself was abolished.

The diminishing supply of free labor for plantations, trade, and shipping placed the Arab and Swahili owners in economic hardship, and they gradually sold their land and businesses to Indians and to a few wealthy Arabs. Land that they allowed to lie fallow due to labor shortages was appropriated by the Crown under the 1907 Land Titles Ordinance. Swahili people perceive this undermining of Swahili economic power as the precursor to the decline of their political power and cultural hegemony on the coast, as British colonial rule became established.

BRITISH EDUCATIONAL POLICY

The colonial government became involved in educational policy early in its administration, and firmly asserted its right to control who went to school and, most importantly, what they would be taught. At the same time, however, the British government was determined that schools in the protectorate would not be a burden on British taxpayers, and so they were more than willing to allow missionaries to continue actually doing teaching that they had instigated before formal British rule.

From the very start, education was a site of struggle among the colonizers as well as between the colonizers and colonized. The 1909 Fraser report on education, and the Report of the Education Commission for the East African Protectorate of 1919 considered the education needs of both European and Asian immigrants to be on par, but the White settlers did not agree (Truman 1973). Both groups of immigrants did agree that the education of indigenous people would be separate and less extensive than that available to themselves. Hence the segregation between the two immigrant communities and the indigenous peoples: Africans and Arabs. Europeans, while the smallest population in the colony, commanded the largest share of resources allocated to schooling.

While European and some Indian children were educated in academic subjects preparing them to pursue their individual goals in the professions or British universities, African and Arab children were to be educated according to the goals and needs of the colony, both material and ideological. The historical record gives a sense of the importance of a certain kind of morality. The British viewed the "natives" as a population that needed to be controlled, especially in urban settings. They feared moral degeneration manifested in disease and uncontrolled dancing and drinking, and thought that the ex-slaves at the coast, once out of the control of their masters, were particularly likely to succumb to these

vices. In Zanzibar the education of boys was explicitly geared to make them disciplined and have self-control, and to instil them with western ideas of good time-keeping and an ethic of hard work in order better to prepare them for employment with the British (Cooper 1980:69).

As well as instilling discipline the British had another ideological goal in their education system and that was to produce citizens loyal to the colony. The government, at a 1936 Legislative Council meeting, made its position very clear:

While literary achievement must not be neglected, the chief aim must be to train the children to be worthy, in character and accomplishment, of their great heritage as citizens of the Colony. [Legislative Council 1936: 256]

Practical, literacy, and numeracy skills in the local population were less important, except where it furthered the goals of the colonial state or the settler community. When the Department of Education was founded in 1911, under the directorship of J.R. Orr, grants were awarded to train Africans in skilled trades so that they could replace Indians who were more expensive and who were seen by the British settlers as a threat to their own economic well being and political dominance in the colony (Mambo 1980).

The Board of Education, set up in 1912, comprised members of the settler, missionary and government communities who worked fairly well together for some years; the government formulated policy and the missionaries did the teaching for them. However, the missionaries and the government, swayed

by the settler interests, began to diverge in their goals for indigenous education. In 1923 the Conference of Missionary Societies in Great Britain and Ireland argued for more education for Africans, to which the settlers and, therefore, the government were opposed. By 1935 the Director of Education was warning upcountry missionaries against their inclination to provide higher and secondary education to Africans at the expense of giving "rural" (i.e. practical) training (Mambo 1980), and Africans themselves were beginning to try to influence curricular content by founding their own schools.

In the 1930s, Kavirondo and Kikuyu people began to establish independent schools and the colonial legislation to oppose them shows how clearly determined the British were to hold onto control of the curriculum, even in schools that were not government funded. The response of the Director of Education, Mr. Morris, in 1936 was both paternalistic and patronizing at the second reading of a Bill to centralize the school curriculum (Amendment of Education Ordinance Act 1931):

While one must admire the enterprise and initiative behind this movement, which is an entirely African movement, at the same time it is essential in the interests of the African people themselves that these schools should be controlled. If control is not exercised then the pupils attending these schools are in very grave danger of being cut off from any education above the very elementary stage. The Bill [to enforce a centralized curriculum] only applies to African schools. There is a very good reason for that in that the majority of African parents are illiterate and quite unable to judge of the value of the curriculum to their children. [Legislative Council 1936:109]

Morris made it clear that schools not following the government curriculum for Africans would be closed down.

CURRICULUM IN THE ARAB SCHOOL

These conflicts over what should be taught and who should control the schools, which highlight the divergent educational meanings and goals of the state and its subjects, were reiterated at the coast. The Arab School⁴ in Mombasa was one of the very first government schools to be established in the colony, opening in 1912 with a headmaster, Mr. Pipe, who spoke Swahili and had "experience with Muslim societies" (Truman 1973). The school was for boys only, and this early education of Arab boys came in part because the British identified Arab men as having gentlemanly sensibilities in tune with their own. This made Arabs seem to be something of an ally on a continent populated by people thought to be so far beneath the British. The early education reports of the British government barely mention the education of girls.

Colonial officials sympathetic to coastal Muslims and progressive Arabs hoped that the boys school would aid the revival of Arab culture and scholarship, which had been on the decline for centuries, and place them on a firmer economic footing in the post-abolition period through agricultural training at the government experimental farm at Mazeras.

⁴The school was known as the Arab School until the inception of a parallel school for girls in 1938; after that they were known as the Arab Boys School and the Arab Girls School respectively.

Salim suggests that the British favored the agricultural training, for although they wanted to educate some men for coastal colonial administration, they feared that too large a group of coastal Muslims so educated might lead to political unrest (Salim 1976). The government's political and ideological goals in education outweighed consideration of what was actually most desirable for the citizens of the colony, and conflict between the government and the colonized was played out, once again, in the domain of curriculum, especially religion and language.

In 1910 the administration announced that only Swahili and English would be the media and language subjects of instruction in the soon-to-be-opened government schools, which meant that Arabic would not be taught. Fraser's perception was that the "Arabs" did not care about learning Arabic (Fraser 1909) as their vernacular was Swahili. But this along with the absence of Islamic religious instruction caused some families to keep their sons away from the school that they might otherwise have attended. In the early years very few boys attended the school: fourteen boys the first two years, and thirty four boys in the third year (Truman 1973).

Some British teachers were sympathetic to indigenous concerns about curriculum. In late 1913 when Archibald Pipe resigned as the headmaster at the Arab School he commented that Buxton Road school, which by this time had a secondary section as well, was "determined to break" the Arab School

(Salim 1973). This remark followed from Buxton Road's continued practice of reducing school fees for Arab pupils in order to attract them to the school and the Christian scripture that was taught there. In order to provide an education more acceptable to the Swahili community the next headmaster of the Arab School, Mr. Gaunt, with the support of Hobley, the Seyiddie Provincial Commissioner, moved to incorporate Koranic training into the Arab school curriculum. Hobley was then accused of being an atheist by Mr. Martin, the headmaster of Buxton High School (Truman 1973). As now, the government did not pay the salaries of the Islamic religion teachers, but even so the United Missionary Conference censured the government for allowing Islamic religious instruction in the school (Truman 1973).

By the 1919-1920 school year there were 73 boys divided into six classes with five Swahili and Arab assistant teachers but the community still wanted Arabic to be offered as part of their cultural revival:

The number of boys has now increased to 73. Most of the parents state that, until Arabic (with Koran) is taught in this school, the numbers will increase very slowly. At the end of March 1918, there were 54 boys on the register, and at the end of March 1919, 69 boys.
[1920PC/COAST: Mombasa Arab School 1919-1920]

Another problem for the government, as is also the case today, was simply finding enough teachers that were qualified to teach both the mainstream curriculum and Islamic studies. Mission trained teachers were not well received, and the Arab boys were extremely rude to their African teachers.

The Education Commission Education Report of 1919 conceded that Arabic should be an optional subject, and that while the Koran could be taught, "Mohammedan law and theology" would not be. After using Swahili as the medium of instruction through Standard three, classes were thereafter to be taught in English. The report envisaged that there would be compulsory education in Kenya first for Europeans and Indians, then, eventually, for Arabs, Baluchis, and Swahilis. The report stated that it would be many years before "universal compulsion for natives" could be carried out because compulsory education would have to be free (Report of the Education Commission for the East African Protectorate 1919. PC/Coast/1/4/19).

The Coast Provincial Commissioner's annual report of 1920 on the Arab school provides a sense of the concerns of administration to instil health and discipline both physical and moral into the boys. The PC reported, "The attendance has not been affected by epidemics of plague or small-pox, but by fever and venereal disease." He also reported that many of the boys wore trousers underneath their kanzu, the ankle length white cotton garments that respectable boys and men wore, so that the kanzu could be removed for the drill period. The boys were also taught to take off their caps or salute when they met their masters, quite different from the bow and kiss of the hand that a person would offer to their elders and betters in Swahili society.

The following year, 1921, the Acting Colonial Secretary was still complaining about the low school attendance by Arab boys:

[Schools]...are not attended to any large extent by Arab children and it appears that use is not made of the facilities which are afforded. It is the intention of the Government to continue the present Arab School at Mombasa and the addition of a commercial school with Teachers Training College is under consideration.
[DC/MSA/1/8/5]

However, by 1924 increases in attendance were reported at government Muslim schools in Mombasa and Malindi, which the government attributed to their concession on teaching the Koran.

In 1928 the acting Director of Education announced in government guidelines to teachers of religion that they were supposed to be neutral and they should not attempt to convert the pupils (PC/Coast/1/4/1 vol iii). By 1936, at a Legislative Council meeting the government was able to announce an 80% increase in the number of Africans and Arabs attending government schools over the previous five years (Legislative Council 1936). By 1937 when Mr. Morris, the Director of Education was asked by a member of the Legislative council about the increased "desire of the natives of the coast for education," Mr. Morris replied:

The answer, Your Excellency, is in the affirmative...I agree with the Hon. Member that the present position is very much more satisfactory. [Legislative Council 1937:69]

As well as modifying the curriculum to some degree to accommodate the educational needs of the Swahili community,

the British administration did also recognize the need for the Muslim community properly to observe Ramadhan, and each year during the colonial period the schools were closed to observe this month long religious period of daytime fasting and prayer.

ETHNIC DIVISIONS

Chapter II included a discussion of British attempts to classify Kenyans into four racial groups, and the difficulties that they had in forcing what are, in fact, ethnic identities into racial categories that they perceived to be identifiable through physiognomy. These divisions were, in theory, extended to the school system. The 1909 Fraser education report had considered the education of three distinctive groups, Europeans, Asians, and Arabs and Africans. In the education report of 1919 Arabs, Swahili and Africans was once again considered as a single unit. One purpose of the report was to determine, "The extent to which education should immediately be introduced among the Arabs and Swahilis of the Coast Area," and the report went on to say:

This term of reference deals mainly with what one may call the Mohammedan civilised population at the coast apart from the Mohammedan Indian population. The Arabs have been so long at the coast appearing first as conquerors and subsequently as immigrants and have to a great extent amalgamated with the Swahili population that the Commissioners think that both Arabs and Swahilis might attend the same schools...The Mombasa Mohammedan School should become the High School for the Mohammedan Coast Arab, Baluchi, and Native Population. [Report of the Education Commission for the East African Protectorate 1919:32]

In July 1926 at a "Meeting of Gentlemen interested in

Education in the coast area," separate school area committees were established for the three previously recognized racial groups, although there was considerable debate as to whether the Arab and African communities should each have separate committees as well. If the two communities were jointly represented then missionary representation would be included, which the Arab representative found unacceptable because, he argued, "Arab" school was the same as "Islamic school". Another member warned against the dangers of making religious distinctions in education. The decision was to keep the African and Arab communities under one school areas committee, but the senior Liwali persuaded the committee to retain the name "Arab school." The committee also noted that "For the purpose of this resolution the word 'Arab' is to include 'Swahili'" (PC/Coast/1/4/1 vol iii).

In the same meeting the Acting Director of Education demonstrated that the British still had very clear notions of what they understood the core of education to be when he complained that although the Arabs in Lamu (on the north coast) wanted government schools, they wanted the teaching of reading, writing, and arithmetic to be of secondary importance to the teaching of religion, "The attitude of the Arabs at Lamu is so impossible that I do not see what can be done unless education is impossible".

Following the arrival of the new governor, Sir Edward Grigg, it was announced that an education "cess" would be

levied on each community and Sir Edward declared the merits of each community paying for its own education, so that they would get "the best they can afford".

In spite of its designation as the Arab/Swahili school, boys of all ethnic and religious backgrounds were in attendance, according to men who taught or were schooled there in the mid-1930s. It is not clear from which group or groups the students were in the majority, but they included Arabs⁵, Swahili, African Christians from the coast and upcountry, Twelve Tribes members, Mijikenda, Baluchi, Badala (Asians,) and the descendants of slaves. The student population was described by one informant as mseto, a food combining upcountry posho (grain) and coastal rice. Strong friendships were formed among the boys and they did not find the ethnic mixing problematic. The racial segregation rule was, after all, a vision of the government, as one former Arab Boys School teacher explained to me:

The rule [of racial and religious separation] was in name only in Mombasa. It was a colonial rule. The Waswahilis were always allowed in Arab schools because here the Swahilis and the Arabs have intermarried. Africans and Arabs have intermarried; Indians and Africans have intermarried. The colonial government never tried to monitor the Arab schools. They knew what was going on.

Teachers at Arab Boys school were both British, and

⁵Most of the Arab students were of Omani descent. The Hadhrami community was both conservative and poor and few people sent their sons to the government school.

coastal Muslims. The teachers instructing one former pupil⁶ in 1934 included Mr. Hilton, Mr. George Nasib, Mr. William Jones and Mr. Powell. The coastal Muslim teachers included Maalim Hanzwari bin Salim, Abdalla bin Salim, Ahmed Basheikh, Abdulraheem Mzee, Maalim Kibwa Mwinyi Ngwale and Abed Kafy⁷.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION IN MOMBASA

While the Arab and Swahili communities had voiced their opinions about government education, in part through the attendance or non-attendance of their children in the schools, the 1930s was a period when some members of the communities, like the Kikuyu and Kavirondo upcountry, took the education of their children into their own hands.

Some of the elite Omani Arab families who wanted their children to be well educated, and who did not fear their children's religious faith being compromised, sent them to local Christian schools founded by various communities. Shamsa Muhashamy, sister of the man who later became the last Liwali of the coast, attended the Church Missionary Society Buxton Rd school (Mirza and Strobel 1989); her niece attended Sacred Heart, the Goan Catholic school; and the children of Mbarak Al-Hinawy, Liwali of the Coast, attended Star of the

⁶Except where otherwise indicated, the information for this section comes from interviews with former teachers and pupils from Arab Boys School and Arab Girls School.

⁷I am aware that the English teachers' names include the title "Mr." while the Kenyans' do not, but I record them in this manner here as that is the style in which they were told to me in interviews.

Sea Convent school. These schools were all mixed by both race and gender and, being privately funded community schools, were not subject to the racial stratification imposed by the government.

Sheikh Al-Amin bin Ali Mazrui, a member of that same community of elites of Omani descent favored pursuing modern education within an Islamic context for Muslim children, as he did not see the government Arab school providing what was needed. He came from a family with a strong interest in Islamic reform and modern education. Sheikh Al-Amin organized many madarasa along the coast and in the hinterlands and led a group of reformers and scholars in the Mazrui mosque in Mombasa. Older boys went to the Mazrui mosque in the afternoons for advanced lessons in Islamic studies, some of them having spent the mornings at the government Arab school. The boys were taught logic and rhetoric by a follower of Sheikh Al-Amin, Sheik Ghazali. It was with the backing of Sheikh Al-Amin that Ghazali founded the Ghazali Muslim school in late 1933, which attempted to provide the modern education in an Islamic setting that Sheikh Al-Amin advocated. The school was radical in another way too; Sheik Al-Amin was a firm believer in education for girls and the Ghazali Muslim School was co-educational from the start.

The school was first located near the Maghuro mosque in the Kibokoni neighborhood until Sheikh Al-Amin and Mbarak Al-Hinawy went to Sir Ali bin Salim, a member of the Zanzibari

Busaid dynasty, and persuaded him to give the school the use of buildings that he owned on Salim (now Digo) Road on the current site of the Bank of Baroda. This was something of an accomplishment for Sheikh Al-Amin whose family had been rivals of the Busaid since the mid nineteenth century. The school was provided with financial backing from the Wakf⁸ commission and with books from donors in Egypt. The school committee was made up of prominent Watu wa Mji, people of the town, including Sharif Abdalla bin Salim (who had married into the Mazrui family), Mwalimu Ali Muhamed bin Hemed, Sheik Mbarak bin Ali Hinawy, Sheikh Al-Amin Mazrui (secretary), and Liwali bin Ali Mazrui.

The Ghazali school, while co-educational, was markedly segregated by gender; the girls were taught upstairs and the boys downstairs. As well as religion, and Arabic which was not readily available in the government schools, the children were taught the "Ministry [of Education] subjects" arithmetic, English, geography and science. While religion and Arabic were taught in Arabic, the medium of instruction for the rest of the curriculum was Swahili. The classes were taught up to Standard 4, the equivalent of fourth grade in the USA. No domestic science was offered at Ghazali's school. Sheikh

⁸ In 1899 Sir Arthur Hardinge, the first Commissioner of the Protectorate, who was sympathetic to the coastal Muslims, established the Wakf commission, which was similar to the Wakf department in Egypt. It administered the incomes from Wakf properties -- buildings, the incomes from which were available to help poor Muslims with housing and education.

Ghazali's strength was teaching Arabic and religion, but in 1936 he spent time at the government Arab school learning how to teach ministry subjects, especially English and math so that he could teach them in his school. At least one teacher in the government Arab school, Abed Kafy, taught ministry subjects voluntarily at Ghazali Muslim school. Abeid and Mohamed Kassim both taught the boys at Ghazali Muslim school, and Sheikh Ghazali's wife, Zainab Musa, taught religion and Arabic to the girls.

Sheikh Ghazali was forced to close his school in 1938, and the pupils were transferred to the government Arab Boys School and the newly opened government Arab Girls School.

There are contested accounts of the cause of the closure of Ghazali Madarasa. One version is simply that the British government forced the closure, another is that it came about because of internal disputes.

A former pupil of Ghazali's in the Mazrui mosque, reports that the government wanted Ghazali's school to be integrated with the government school, and to that end they had begun to encourage the transfer of pupils, both boys and girls, to the Arab school in 1936 and 1937. The government's justification for the closure was that the school did not satisfy building and health regulations, and because discipline was not up to government standards. One former student of Ghazali thought that the government was "jealous" of the school, which he described as being fully equipped. "They [the government]

didn't want individuals going off and doing what they wanted by themselves raia⁹." This last remark is telling, given that the period during which the government was trying to close down Ghazali Muslim School coincided exactly with the inception of the Independent Schools movement in central and western Kenya and the enactment of legislation by the government to quash them. Clearly Mr. Morris' remarks about the Kikuyu and the Kavirondo communities applied to the Coastal Muslims as well.

Ghazali at first resisted the attempts at closure, as his former pupil explained:

There was correspondence because Ghazali did not want to go in with the government school. He didn't want to because he knew that certain subjects would lose their strength, like Arabic and religion. Also he would not have any power in the government school. The timetable would be the principle's.

Finally Ghazali agreed because the Ghazali school committee had agreed. He did not have the power to go against them and the government. It was the only madarasa in Mombasa to be closed by the government.

The account of a man who taught at the Arab boys school at that time, places more emphasis on internal disputes within Ghazali's school. There were, he said, conflicts between Ghazali and the other teachers, who were relatives of Sheikh Al-Amin Mazrui. The school was very poor, depending on money

⁹ An individual that operates alone; in contemporary use it can refer to a plain clothes police officer.

from a few Wakf properties and low fees, and ill equipped and there were discipline problems:

They decided they couldn't contain it [the internal disputes] any longer. Mbarak Ali Hinawy advised Al-Amin to hand the school over to the government. To save face it was Mbarak who saw the government education officers and talked to them, especially the number two, Mr. Wisdom.

While it is not clear from whom the initial impetus came to transfer the Ghazali pupils to the government schools, the combination of government desire to control the education of the Swahili community with internal problems within Ghazali school clearly facilitated that outcome. Ghazali Muslim school finally closed in 1938, just as the new Arab Girls School opened. Sheikh Ghazali went to teach Arabic at Arab Boys School and Zainab Musa transferred to the new girls school. Although this indigenous attempt at providing a modern education in an Islamic setting lasted only five years, Ghazali Muslim school left a very important legacy: all contemporary oral accounts of the beginning of the modern education of Swahili girls, and the founding of the Arab Girls School, begin with Ghazali's madarasa.

SWAHILI GIRLS' EDUCATION

Given the colonial government's instrumental approach to "native" education (to produce loyal subjects who could work where required), and its own preconceived notions about gender (ladies did not go out to work, and were under the control of their husbands and fathers,) it is not surprising that it took so long to do anything about the education of Swahili girls.

Many Swahili people shared the views of the British regarding the education of women, until the agitation in the 1930s by Sheikh Al-Amin who pointed out repeatedly that the Koran indicates both men and women should be educated. It was the daughters of the community's elites who were the first to have the opportunity of education. After Ghazali's school had been founded and was admitting girls a few young girls began to attend the Arab school which, until then, had been only for boys. The first little girls to attend were the children of teachers at the school like Sheikh Abdallah Mvindeneni (a member of the powerful Shikeley family). In 1936 the parents committee of the Arab school voted to admit a few girls (Strobel 1979), and a separate class was provided for them until the Arab Girls School opened in 1938.

As more and more girls began to attend the class at the Arab school, the British government apparently decided that there should be an Arab school for girls. Shariff Abdalla bin Salim, the elected member to the Legislative Council, was a member of the Advisory Council on Arab Education as well as a committee member of the Ghazali Muslim school and the Arab Girls School. He described to me the beginning of Arab Girls School as follows:

They wanted to start this girls school. So the government brought it before the committee [the Advisory Council on Arab Education]...that they wanted to start this girls school...They knew that some of our...members would object to it. Because some old people who were there said the girls would be better...educated than the boys because boys play out very much and the girls are always home. They will

study more at home and they will get education better than the boys and the girls will refuse to marry the boys. Some of the committee members [said this.] The old man, Sir Ali bin Salim [who was on that committee] he was like a governor here. He was a person who objected to it but then he was defeated. That's how it started.

The Arab Girls School committee included some members of the Ghazali committee, including Shariff Abdalla and Mbarak bin Ali Hinawy. Sir Ali bin Salim was also on the Arab Girls School committee.

The Arab Girls School was located in a building on Makadara road¹⁰, and the first headmistress that "took over from Sheikh Ghazali" was Miss Scott, who formerly worked at the Arab Boys school; she was followed by Mrs. Curl, and then by Miss Gray, who is (mis)remembered by many as having been the first headmistress because she made such a major impact on the development of the school. Miss Gray understood the concerns of the Muslim community that their daughters be educated in a manner congruent with their religion and culture. One former Arab Girls School pupil rememberd that there were four classes upstairs and four classes downstairs, with over 100 pupils in Standards 1-4 when Arab Girls School started. Like the boys school, Arab Girls School took girls from a variety of ethnic groups. Because few girls attended school at that time

¹⁰ Before it housed the school the building was a public house called the Bull and Bush, run by a Goan man. It was purchased and completely renovated by "jamaa" and rented to the government for the school. After the school moved to larger premises in 1952 the building was acquired by the Wakf commission and rented out as apartments.

anyone, Arab or not, was eagerly accepted. There were Twelve Tribes, Arabs, Swahili, Bajuni and Asian girls. There were fewer wageni (outsiders) in those days.

The school was strong in Islamic religious studies and was able to offer Arabic, as the government had conceded that it be part of the curriculum of the government Arab schools in 1938 (Salim 1973). The girls studied the academic ministry subjects in the mornings and domestic science and physical education in the afternoons. Some of the girls went home at lunchtime and spent the afternoons in local vyuo doing additional religious studies. A number of families would not allow their daughters to attend the Arab Girls School until they had completed their religious training and could recite the entire Koran. This led some girls to begin school so late that they could not fit in even four years of primary education before they reached puberty and left school. In the 1950s Miss Gray, the headmistress, ruled that girls over nine were no longer eligible to start school (Strobel 1979). The girls' books and all their other supplies except their uniforms were provided by the school. Their uniforms were calf length dresses of high quality green checked cotton, with white collars, cuffs and pockets, quite in the style of any respectable British girls school. As in Britain, the uniforms had to be purchased from one shop only so that there was no variation in quality or style; the supplier to the Arab Girls School was on Kilindini Road (now Moi Avenue).

Under the supervision of Miss Gray the school moved to its current, and much larger, site at Mbaraki in 1952, where there was room for many more girls who had been waiting to start school. One of the prized features of the school was a specially built soft grass playing field laid over the hard coral ground. The teachers there included Mrs. Bull who taught English and Physical Education, and whose husband worked in Nairobi, Sharifa Ahmad, Fatma Ali, Shuweka Gharib, Hafswa Baghozy and Hadija Mwinzagu.

Miss Gray is remembered, with affection by many¹¹ for the work that she did for the school. She spoke Swahili, she had heshima "like an Arab," she wore modest clothes and worked very hard. She took a personal interest in the girls and their families and understood their concerns. She organized annual Maulidi readings at the school to which pupils and their families came. She also encouraged attendance at an adult women's evening reading and writing class run by Mrs. Curl.

Sylvia Gray was also extremely tough with British education officials when it came to getting what she wanted for the school. One of the issues over which she fought and won was proper remuneration for the teachers. In 1939, as one former teacher described, the teachers' salary was thirty Kenyan

¹¹Although at least one former pupil remembers Miss Grey favoring pupils of direct Arab descent, to the detriment of girls with more indigenous origins.

shillings¹² per month with no housing allowance or any other benefits.

The government said that the money was enough because the teachers lived with their parents, but Miss Gray told them that even parents want to be helped. So our salary was increased to 150 Kenya shillings, then to 400 shillings and before Independence it reached 700 shillings per month.

Miss Gray was at Arab Girls School until shortly before Independence.

Immediately before the Second World War, then, some government education was in place for both Swahili boys and girls whose parents wanted it and could afford it¹³ but the ensuing world conflict was highly disruptive to education in the community both at the time and, through its consequences, in the post-war period as well.

WORLD WAR II AND ENSUING CHANGES

World War II was fought in East Africa as the German, Italian and British colonizers staged their nations' battles on African soil. Somalia to the north was an Italian colony, and on one occasion an Italian bomber reached as far south as Malindi (seventy kilometers to the north of Mombasa) and dropped a bomb on the sand banks outside the town. While Sir Ali bin Salim had his own air raid shelter built at the side of his house, most Mombasa residents were not so fortunate.

¹²The current rate of exchange is 20 Kenyan shillings to the dollar.

¹³For a selective list of Mombasa schools and their founders see Appendix A.

There were mass evacuations and many families spent the war in small villages and rural areas to the south where there were no schools comparable to those available in Mombasa. Even those people who did remain in Mombasa had their schooling severely disrupted, as the British navy took over most of the town, and many schools were closed to accommodate them. Coast Secondary School at Shimo-la-Tewa became a military hospital; Allidina Visram was closed; Star of the Sea's buildings were rented to the navy and classes took place in the parish hall. Where pupils could still attend their own schools they were sharing the premises with children from the displaced sites. The situation was quite chaotic, and it is seen by many Swahili people as a major turning point in the way they lived their lives. After the war, the world did not look the same to most people, including a former pupil of Sheikh Ghazali:

After the war people returned to the schools and other places and it was like a new world...Everything was turned upside down...The town grew...the world grew. There were more offices and more jobs; there were many more necessities, the price of food increased...In the past we did not have money worries.

The post-war period saw increased inflation¹⁴, a further influx of workers from other parts of Kenya, the Middle East and Asia, and expansion in the production and consumption of goods. These structural economic transformations brought changes in the way people saw the world, "...these [economic] changes brought other changes, even in ideas". The pre-war

¹⁴For details see Appendix B.

world is remembered as being a time of heshima (respect, modesty) in contrast to the post-war period in which things are kiulaya (European-foreign style), where people do not have respect for one another, and they struggle and compete to get by in the world:

In those days you were given pencils and even soap for laundry every week [at the government schools]. Now everything has changed and it is necessary to look for work to educate your child, to feed your child and to clothe your child. Or you have to do business or open a kiosk. [Former pupil of Ghazali]

The post-war period also marked a relative strengthening of the political position of the Swahili and Arab communities compared to before the War. Swahili people were re-classified as Arabs and allowed to vote for representation on the Legislative Council (Salim 1973). In the late 1940s the Arab Education Council passed a resolution that Arab schools could admit Arabs only (now including Swahili), and the Arab administration was to vet every child who applied to attend an Arab school. Parents had to take the school application form to the Mudir or Liwali for the coast and prove that the child was an Arab. One Swahili woman who entered the Arab Girls School in 1960 described the process:

It was difficult for an African girl like me to get in [to the school], but my grandfather [her grandmother's husband who was an Arab] filled in the forms and said I was an Arab even though my skin was the wrong color. He fixed it for me. Miss Gray was still the headmistress and she did not refuse me.

It is unclear from where the impetus for this tightening of policy came; while some interviewees attributed it purely

to Legco (the Legislative Council) policy, and the need for funds to be divided strictly among the (now) four racial groups -- African, Arab, European and Asian -- others attributed it to Mbarak Ali Hinawy, the Liwali. One man argued that it was always a difficult task to try to distinguish Arabs and Africans, given the degree to which they had intermarried. And he saw it as shortsighted to block Africans from the Arab schools in a period of rising African nationalism, with Kenyan Independence on the horizon.

If this move did come from Hinawy rather than the government, it may have been in recognition of the growing demand for education in the Swahili community which could only begin to be met by giving them greater access to Arab school places. There was considerable expansion in the availability of school places for Swahili children in Mombasa in the 1950s. In 1950 the Arab¹⁵ secondary school, which had shared the Arab boys primary site during the war, was opened on its own site by the Sultan of Zanzibar. In the same year the Mombasa Institute of Muslim Education (MIOME) opened with 108 boys from all over East Africa. In 1952 the Tudor Arab Mixed school was opened to take some of the pressure off the Arab Boys and Girls schools, but there was an outcry at the idea of a mixed school so Tudor Arab Mixed school became Tom Mboya primary school for boys and a separate school, Mbeheni, was

¹⁵In 1959 the name of the school was changed to Khamis secondary school in honor of the owner of the land surrounding the school.

built for girls.

The expansion in the number of schools, still racially segregated, led to the need for more teachers from within the Arab/Swahili community. This demand was compounded by the British government's recognition that in the period of Kenyan Independence that was becoming inevitable, a large number of Kenyan teachers would be required to replace the expatriates (Stabler 1969). A number of respected Swahili school teachers began their careers in the late 1950s when teacher training opportunities became available and teaching jobs were plentiful. Arab Girls School set up a teacher training program for their own students to train to become teachers there after they had completed Standard 7.

DISCUSSION

Historical assessments of the events that I have described here vary considerably. Education specialist Robert Truman suggests that the Arab community was "moribund" (Truman 1973). Kenyan historian Robert Mambo, citing government archives and missionary records, concludes that the coastal Muslims were in a powerful position during the colonial period, as, he suggests, Liwalis and Mudirs in the Coastal Protectorate had more administrative power than "native agents" in other districts and provinces. The Muslim rejection of secular western education for themselves, he argues, took away educational opportunities for the indigenous African population also (Mambo 1980). In contrast, A.I. Salim,

another Kenyan historian citing many of the same archival sources as Truman and Mambo, depicts the Swahili and Arab communities as being treated quite unfairly by the British (Salim 1973).

Several people writing about the Swahili community during the colonial period have remarked on the resistance by the Arab and Swahili communities to secular education. Margaret Strobel, evoking Hanna Papanek, suggests that Swahili resistance to girls education in the colonial period constituted resistance to colonialism (Papanek 1977; Strobel 1979). The theme of resistance is an important one, which I discuss in detail in Chapter VII. Certainly there were periods when Swahili people did not take up all that was offered to them by the British government in the way of educational opportunities, but given that the British were not offering schooling with the Swahili community's interests as their primary concern, it is neither particularly surprising nor reprehensible that they, on occasion, rejected what was offered.

The material presented in this chapter shows that the Arab and Swahili people involved in the politics of what should be taught, by whom, and where, in Mombasa were not resistant to education per se, but they were resistant to education in its colonial form, which did not correspond to what was meaningful for them. As Eugen Weber, writing about the entry of the rural peasantry into the state educational system in

nineteenth century France, remarked:

It was only when what the schools taught made sense that they became important to those they had to teach...People went to school not because school was offered or imposed, but because it was useful. [Weber 1976:301]

Some progressive Swahili people such as Al-Amin Mazrui and his followers saw that some form of modern education would be required for the community if they were ever to have a chance at gaining any of the benefits from the modern world economy and the changes therein that were beyond their control. But this was not a position that held any meaning for the majority of Swahili people until after the second World War, at which point they experienced the changes in Mombasa and made choices for their children based on their perceived needs. The move to being more favorably inclined toward education was not a purely material one; the community grew less fearful of education as young men and women finished school and had not changed into Christian parodies of the colonial rulers (Strobel 1979).

Most importantly, then, education became relevant for the Swahili community. Before the war, the government educational system did not provide anything that most Swahili people saw as being of value, and the community perceived things about the schools that were dangerous to the integrity of the community and its culture. The cultural domains which were most threatened were religion and the particular set of gender relations that marked community association and systems of

meaning. In the early period, when neither the British nor most Swahili people saw any reason to educate girls, the immediate source of anxiety was the teaching of religion in the curriculum, as I described above. The Swahili community in the pre-war period sent their sons and daughters to school in proportions that reflected the degree to which the British provided an appropriate education in the schools, both in terms of gender segregation and religious curriculum. Parents seemed to see a full religious curriculum in the school as some protection against wider cultural subversion and this religious curriculum rendered the European version of "school" and "education" as something congruous with Swahili notions of madarasa and elimu (education).

The change in circumstances brought about by the war and other outside forces changed the fundamental meaning and purpose of education for the Swahili community. Before the war education, particularly that of girls, had been valued for its own sake rather than for any particular material gain. After the war parents began to send their children to school in order that they could be employed later on.

The material presented here shows that the ideological and practical designs of the colonial state could not be handed down and passively received by the colonized. The subjects of the Crown contested and negotiated what their education would look like, and where it was unacceptable they simply did not participate.

The discourses within which Swahili and Arab people encountered the colonial state -- on curriculum, the education of girls, and the challenge to ethnic and religious identity - - have continued to be articulated in the post-colonial period, and it is to these that I turn in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V: EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSES IN POST-COLONIAL MOMBASA

In December 1963 Kenya won its independence from British colonial rule, and Kenyans began the process of taking over the administration of their own country. In some ways the goals of the new Kenyan state were similar to those of the British: they wanted to create a nation of people able to do the desired work of the state, and they wanted citizens who were loyal to the state. But there was a difference too. The British had wanted citizens loyal to the colony and the Crown, not to an African nation. With their policy of indirect rule, the British goal had been to keep indigenous people in their rural areas of origin, allowing them to move to town or to settlers' farms only as they were required for colonial labor (White 1990). For subjects of the colony to express any sense of cultural unity as Kenyans was antithetical to the colonial project of keeping people divided and as a source of labor.

The project of the incipient Kenyan state in 1963 was different. Now it needed people in Kenya to develop a sense of themselves as Kenyans in order that the nation could develop and prosper. While local cultural beliefs and practices were still respected, a national Kenyan culture also had to be cultivated. Like the British, the new Kenyan government identified education as the primary agent of national development, both material and ideological. The 1964 Kenya Education Commission Report on the state of education proposed that students be educated towards contributing to national unity, "...henceforth our educational system must

help foster the psychological basis of nationhood" (Ominde Report 1964:28).

In this chapter I show how the Kenyan state has attempted to produce a particular kind of citizenry through education, and how, as in the colonial period, ordinary people, in this case Swahili, contest and negotiate that educational plan. As in the colonial period the ongoing discourse includes curriculum, the education of girls, and the challenge to religious and ethnic identity. However, unlike the colonial period, Swahili women have become more visible actors in these discourses, and their perspectives are not always those of their male counterparts. Thus, as well as making an argument about the relationship between Swahili people and the state, I am also exploring the articulation of gender among Swahili people.

KENYA'S EDUCATIONAL GROWTH 1963-1988

At Independence Kenyans did share the government's desire to expand education. As I have shown in Chapter IV, the British had rationed the amount of education and controlled the content during the colonial period, and Kenyans were eager to have more access to, and greater control of, schooling. The time of Independence seems to have been one brief "hegemonic moment" when citizenry and state alike agreed that there should be education for the masses, and that it would lead to the development of the economy and national unity. The rallying cry of Kenya's first President, Jomo Kenyatta,

was Harambee (lets pull together). There were many jobs to be filled by Kenyans and the government committed a third of its expenditure to education. Some Kenyan young people were educated in public institutions all the way through university and were guaranteed a job in the public sector upon graduation.

There has been rapid expansion in the provision of education since Independence. In 1963, 892,553 Kenyan children were enrolled in 6,058 primary schools, and by 1986 4,624,278 children were attending 12,943 primary schools. In 1963, 31,120 students were enrolled in secondary school in Kenya compared to 443,707 in 1985. The cost to the Kenyan government of funding secondary education rose from 1.1 million Kenya pounds in 1963 to 39.2 million pounds in 1985 (Kenya Ministry of Education 1987).

The academic syllabus at Independence changed significantly from what had been taught to Kenyans before, although it was still a national, centrally controlled, curriculum. It became less vocational and more academic, resembling the colonial syllabus for European children, and oriented to preparing students for the white collar jobs that had become available. Based on the British system, the complete system was known as "7-5-2-3": seven years of primary school (Standards 1-7), five years of secondary (Forms I-V), two years of sixth form (Upper and lower Form VI), and three years of university. At the end of each phase students took examinations to determine whether

or not they were eligible to continue with their schooling.

Under President Moi's Nyayo¹ presidency, which began in 1978, a number of changes have occurred. As the state's need for white collar workers was largely met, and with an eye to improving the capacity of the citizenry to work at more "practical" tasks, a new educational system, 8-4-4, was introduced. Under this system it is envisaged that most children will terminate their education with eight years of primary school, leaving a few to go on to four years of secondary school and even fewer to go on for four years at one of the, now, five universities in Kenya². As in the colonial period, the government has found itself molding its educational policy to suit its economic needs.

As part of its project of instilling a sense of national unity, the Kenyan government completely abolished the racial segregation between schools. Children were no longer required to name their ethnic identity when applying for admission to a particular school, and all educational institutions became open to all ethnic groups. Community names of schools were abolished. In Mombasa, for example, the former Arab Boys

¹Nyayo means "footsteps" in Swahili and indicates that President Moi's philosophy for the nation of "Peace, Love and Unity" follows in the footsteps of the late President Kenyatta's philosophy of Harambee.

²The expansion in the number of universities has occurred in order to provide more places for the increasing number of school leavers. 1989 and 1990 were particularly critical years as students were completing their secondary education out of Form IV and Form VI, simultaneously, during the period of transition to 8-4-4. See Table I.

School was renamed "Serani". Qualified school teachers of any ethnic group could teach in any school, and in the early 1960s many of the Mombasa schools that had been for Arabs and Asians began to employ African teachers from upcountry.

In 1972, government delegations went from Nairobi to see that the policy of integration was being carried out. The delegates suggested that the children in one of the former Arab schools on the coast were too light skinned, and the schools were not following the government policy of integration. The head teacher argued that the children were representative of the area in which they lived, and the only solution to the government's objections would be to bus children in from another area. The head teacher's position prevailed, and the school continued to serve local children.

The government has continued to attempt to ensure that all children have access to all schools, and that there is a clear procedure for deciding which students will be admitted, given that there are more children wanting to go to school than there are places available. In Mombasa, when decisions are to be made regarding admission to Standard 1, each head teacher calls a school committee meeting, giving notice to the Division School Advisor, who is the assistant to the Municipal Education Officer. The Division School Advisor attends the meeting and informs the school committee of the contents of the Education Act pertaining to admissions. The School Advisor represents the Municipal Education Officer, who in

turn represents the Ministry of Education. The advisor looks at the head teacher's plan for the admission procedure to make sure it conforms to the Education Act. After the list of students to be admitted has been drawn up, it has to go to the Municipal Education Officer for approval.

Secondary schools are administered at the Provincial level. In Mombasa, when it is time to decide which primary school graduates will enter which secondary schools, the Provincial Education Officer (PEO) calls a meeting of all secondary school head teachers in the Province. The Kenya Certificate of Primary Education results for all the children in the Province are ranked. Starting with the highest scoring child, each name is read out and the child is allocated to the school of their choice (or second or third choice) until all the schools are full. Through these procedures, the government attempts to ensure that admissions are not based on personal networks, and that schools do not remain the domain of particular communities.

At independence the government also urged schools to become co-educational and admit girls in order to begin to rectify the gender imbalance in educational opportunities created by the British. Since 1975, at the beginning of the United Nations Decade for Women, it has been government policy to improve unaided secondary schools (which I discuss below), most of which are coeducational, rather than to build new government secondary schools (Eshiwani 1975). Although there

have been some new all girls secondary schools started -- for example Star of the Sea in Mombasa -- most of the new secondary places for girls are in coeducational settings. While more places for girls are clearly welcome, research suggests that, all other things being equal, secondary school girls achieve better results when educated separately from boys (Deem 1979; Williams 1981), and coeducational schools are not acceptable to some Swahili parents for their daughters.

Although the government has continually increased the amount of expenditure on education and built many more schools, it has been very difficult to keep up with the growing population in Kenya, which by 1987 was estimated by the Ministry of Education to be 20 million people, with an annual growth rate of 3.8%, the highest in the world (Ministry of Education 1987:4). According to the 1962 census the population of all Kenyans was 8,363,263 (Kenya Population Census 1962). As this increase is the result of growth in the number of healthy births rather than in-migration, the population increase is among school age children. The pressure on schools is strong, and the demand for education continues to be intense. A number of different policies for financing education have been implemented throughout the post-colonial period. The most significant has been the government's move to make primary education universally free and available to all Kenyans.

VERNACULAR PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATION

In Kenya in the late 1980s, education held a central place in discourses on national development and national unity. At that time people were not able, overtly, to express their opinions about the state of the country and the path that it was taking, but everyone talked about education in the press, in public meetings and in daily conversations. Candidates for political office urged students to "fanya bidii" (make an effort) in public examinations for their own benefit and for the benefit of the nation; teachers discussed the challenge of implementing educational policy; parents considered how they would find the money to send their children to school. It was taken as a given that education is a desirable thing for which, and within which, one should strive; no one publicly questioned the need to expand education, nor the content of the syllabus.

But there were many aspects of the practice of teaching and learning that were a source of discontent and there are a number of problematized themes in the educational discourses of the late 1980s: the 8-4-4 system; school fees and "cost sharing"; public examinations; the position of Coast Province; religious curricula; and the education of girls. The themes are evidenced in public debate, community participation, the practices of teachers, students and parents. Together they offer a mode of articulation of people's concerns about how they will live and the kinds of people that they and their

children are becoming.

The 8-4-4 System

TABLE I: Transition of Kenyan Students From 7-5-2-3 to 8-4-4.

	S7	S8	FI	FII	FIII	FIV	FV	FVI	FVI ³
1984	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
1985	+	+	O	+	+	+	+	+	+
1986	+	+	+	O	+	+	+	+	+
1987	+	+	+	+	O	+	+	+	+
1988	+	+	+	+	+	O	+	+	+
1989	+	+	+	+	+	+	O	+	+
1990	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	O	+
1991	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	O

The 8-4-4 system was the government's new educational plan designed better to implement their economic and development goals, and to further their ideological goals. 8-4-4 replaced 7-5-2-3 in January 1985, the beginning of the school year, when the previous year's Standard 7 students entered an extra year of primary school, Standard 8. This left Form I empty. The Standard 8 class of 1985 finished secondary school at Form IV, in 1989. Implementation of the new system took until the end of 1990, when the final cohort of students educated under

³S Indicates primary school grade (Standard); F denotes secondary school grade (Form); + indicates students present in that level in a particular year; O indicates no students present in that level in a particular year. There were two years of Sixth Form.

the old system completed their last year of sixth form (see Table I).

The introduction to one of the new 8-4-4 text books, Business Education for Primary Schools, explains:

The main focus of the new 8-4-4 system of education is the world of work. Majority of those pupils reading this book will terminate their education at standard 8 and walk out into the world of work. This book will provide them with a base for starting their small businesses. [Gatama 1986]

The new 8-4-4 curriculum embodies this work goal by introducing many more technical, agricultural and business classes at the primary school level. The introduction of the new system represented a concerted effort over a very short period of time on the part of the government to implement an educational system to provide Kenyans with skills that would allow them to work in manufacturing, agriculture and their own small businesses. It also aimed to provide children with a complete education in eight years so that most of them would leave the school system at that point.

The experience of 8-4-4's implementation to teachers, district education administrators, pupils and parents has been an emergent discourse of chaos. The system came in very quickly. In 1981 The Presidential Working Party on the Second University was appointed, and one of its recommendations was that there be more technical curricula in both the planned second university, and in the primary and secondary schools (Ministry of Education 1987). As a result, in 1984 it was announced that the 8-4-4 system would begin in 1985.

The new technical subjects that were to be taught required specialist teachers, special classrooms such as woodwork rooms, and plots of land for agriculture and building classes. It was difficult for schools to find the money to build the new facilities, and there were not enough trained teachers in the country to teach the new classes. At the end of 1985 the first, new, Standard 8 students had to be prepared to take the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examinations, even as the schools were scrambling to provide the facilities.

Urban centers like Mombasa faced particular difficulties. Many schools are not located close to land suitable for agriculture, nor do many urban residents see the relevance of such a subject for them. One task for the first Standard 8 class in the KCPE examination was that they build a hut from scratch. In Mombasa there were problems finding land on which to do this.

During the mock (practice) for the 1988 KCPE examination, all primary school students had to turn in their practical projects on one particular day. In the week preceding this date students in Mombasa from all schools were to be seen around the streets assembling their practical projects. For agriculture they had to make a rake, a feed trough, a water trough, and a wheel barrow; for home sciences a pair of pajamas sewn by hand and a table cloth with embroidery and bias binding; for art a painting and a book cover; for craft a model, or pottery; and for metal work: a soap dish. Both

boys and girls were required to make all the items.

One girl had her paternal uncle make a pot for her; she successfully made a wheel barrow, but then her younger siblings and neighbor children broke it, so she had a fundi (craftsman) make another one. Students were going around households looking for various items from which to construct their practical project items. Some children, even those who were getting help with the production of their items, complained that some other children were cheating. The definition of cheating turned out to be someone who just went out and bought the completed item. The whole process was chaotic, although I suspect some of the teenagers refined their skills in negotiating to get something done for them.

Another difficulty was the quantity of material to be covered in the new curriculum; as well as all the practical subjects -- agriculture, home science, art, craft, and metal work -- the students studied "Business Education; English; Geography, History and Civics; Kiswahili; Mathematics; Mother Tongue; Music; Physical Education; Religious Education; Pastoral Program; and Science" (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology 1986:xiv). In order for the students to have any chance at doing well in the national examinations they had to cover the entire syllabus. In 1988 the Education Minister, Mr. Aloo Oringo, reduced the length of the April and August school holidays in order that there be more time for the syllabus to be completed. In Mombasa some schools were

holding classes on the weekends as well.⁴

In 1987, a circular was sent to schools saying that there would be no special daily school timetable for the Ramadhan⁵ period. During the colonial period many schools simply closed during Ramadhan, and since the start of Independence, schools in Mombasa had adopted a Ramadhan timetable in which students still covered the same number of hours in a school day, but the school day started much earlier, at 7 a.m. and, with two short breaks, was over by 1.15 p.m.⁶ This allowed children who were attempting the fast to rest at home in the hottest part of the day.

The justification of the Municipal Education Office, which issued the 1987 order, was that abolition of the special timetable was in order to complete all the requirements of 8-4-4. Local Swahili people complained to the Mayor's office, threatening a student strike if nothing was done to reverse

⁴An indirect, but troublesome consequence for Swahili women was that school halls were available on fewer occasions for holding weddings, which led to a shortage of suitable places available.

⁵Ramadhan is a holy month in the Islamic calendar during which time people fast during day light hours. They do not eat, drink, swim, smoke, have sex, or do anything that might permeate the body. The day-time is spent in prayer and contemplation, although most women spend the day over hot fires cooking food for the night time. The night time is spent eating, visiting friends, and playing games. Day and night are switched to the point where, if there is a death, the matanga (funeral gatherings) are also held at night. No weddings are held during Ramadhan.

⁶As the last class was P.E. and the Muslim children were excused P.E. because it was too strenuous while they were trying to fast they generally got out of school by 12:45.

the order. The Mayor's office, in turn, asked the Municipal Education Office to continue the Ramadhan timetable, and the Municipal Education Office then consulted with the Ministry of Education in Nairobi. No Ramadhan timetable was forthcoming, but there was no student strike. In 1988 the issue was not pursued by Muslims because part of Ramadhan coincided with the school holidays.

The 8-4-4 system is in part a response to the problem of a glut of educated people who cannot get work: 8-4-4 educates people to create their own work. However, in the short term it has created its own glut. In 1989 and 1990, during the final stages of transition to 8-4-4, there were both Form IV leavers and Form VI school leavers looking for employment or a university place at the same time. The number of universities was rapidly expanded beyond Nairobi University, both by turning former teacher training and agricultural colleges into universities, and by building new ones. But this left a problem of a shortage of approximately 800 university professors. A delegation was sent to Europe and North America to try to persuade Kenyans teaching there to return to Kenya to teach. Simultaneously, it was announced that all programs of expatriate school teachers, including the US Peace Corps, would be terminated, because the new Form IV and Form VI graduates would be able to work as untrained teachers.

School Fees and "Cost Sharing"

As in the colonial period, the Kenyan government is in a position of wanting to maintain central control of curriculum content and standards of education, but would prefer to devolve the cost of that education. Kenyan schools are classified into four categories, and the number and standards of each kind vary. As of 1988, the schools that are denoted as "maintained" by the government are generally of the highest educational standard, and offer the fewest number of places. To a lesser degree the government provides support to "assisted" schools. It provides no assistance to private schools, although it still regulates what happens in the schools. The remaining category of school is Harambee where the schools have fund raising drives. There are two kinds of Harambee schools, those that are completely financed by fund raising drives, and those that are known as "assisted Harambee" schools. In reporting on the transfer of primary school students to secondary schools following the 1986 KCPE exam, the Daily Nation observed that of 350,000 pupils who sat the examination, 160,000 had gone on to secondary school. Of those, only 55,000 entered government aided secondary schools (Daily Nation 11/17/87:20). In the following January the Daily Nation reported that selection for 1988 Form I places in the nation's 628 government maintained secondary schools was under way and that,

The majority of the 350,000 candidates who did KCPE will end up in private and harambee schools. Last year

these schools absorbed about 100,000 students while the government schools only took 65,000 students. [Daily Nation 12/1/88]

At maintained schools 100% of the teachers' salaries are paid by the government; the teachers are trained (they have graduated from teacher training college) and approved by the Teachers Service Commission⁷ (TSC), and the cost to parents is lower than at government assisted, private or harambee schools. Since Independence the government has adjusted its policy on funding to all schools, as it has struggled to meet the national demand for education. At Independence all schools were charging some kind of fees to finance their programs. In maintained schools the fees were minimal as the government provided a significant sum. Many of the schools that are assisted today were founded by particular religious or ethnic communities, often Kenyan Asians or Christian Churches,⁸ and, as well as fees, the schools raised money from their community as a whole and gave scholarships where necessary to poor students.

Following the 1961 Addis Ababa Conference for Universal Primary Education in Africa by 1980, and the Kanu manifesto,

⁷The Teachers Service Commission is the national employer of teachers for the state. It's offices are in Nairobi, and it is to Nairobi that schools put in a request when they need teachers. The TSC, not the local district or municipality is the employer of all teachers, and is free to transfer teachers at will. Thus the schools have little control over their teaching staff.

⁸For a complete list of Mombasa schools as of 1988 see Appendix C.

free primary school education for Standards 1 through 4 was announced in 1974 (Kavu 1981:88). In 1978 all primary school fees were abolished. This led to a boom in demand for primary school education, while the schools were struggling to work out how they would pay their bills. One maintained primary school had previously charged pupils 460 Ks for their initial admission into the school, and could now charge no fees. At first the government allowed schools to levy "building funds" of 30 Ks per child per year, but this could not be compulsory. Then in 1979 a general circular announced that "there should be no more collection of building and other school funds in primary schools from the pupils" (Kavu 1981:92).

The only money that maintained schools are allowed to collect as of 1988 is "caution money" (money used to pay for things that are damaged by students); the 50 Ks that students must pay to enter the KCPE; and Harambee money if permission is granted by the District Commissioner to hold a Harambee (fund raising drive) for any school. Permission is not always given. In Kisumu, in Western Kenya, Harambees were banned on parents day because they discouraged parents from attending (Daily Nation 1/19/88).⁹

Thus the maintained schools find themselves in a difficult position; the government tells them to raise their own money

⁹I attended one Harambee in another coastal community where soldiers stood at the exits to the field where it was being held and would not allow anyone to leave until money collection was completed.

and then limits the ways in which they can raise it. Teachers at maintained schools also talked about how some supplies were supposed to be provided centrally from either the Municipality or Nairobi, but that the orders they put in are never filled. The Municipality is supposed to supply texts and all equipment, while parents are supposed to provide uniforms and exercise books. Some maintained schools have done things like implement compulsory PTA membership fees that are 30 or 40 Ks per term.

The government maintained secondary schools are allowed to charge fees, which average over 2,000 Ks per year. Some of them also charge PTA memberships of several hundred shillings per year.

The government assisted schools, many of which started as independent community schools during the colonial period, have less aid from the government. One currently assisted school was charging about 20 shillings per month in the 1950s and by the late 1960s they were charging 165 Ks per term. Once the government began to move towards free primary education, it also regulated the fee structure and the assisted schools are now only allowed to charge 85 Ks per term. They are allowed to collect money for "building fees" and "library fees" and one Mombasa assisted primary school charges 300 ks per term as a "building fee". Although in the late 1970s the government told the assisted schools that they must levy their own money for capital expenditure, it did assume 100% of the payment of

teacher's salaries.

In the maintained secondary schools the government pays 80% of the teachers salaries. Although placing a larger economic responsibility on the school, this system does allow the school some autonomy in deciding who they hire, as they are not completely under the control of the TSC. The assisted secondary school fees are comparable to the maintained secondary schools. Private secondary schools are more expensive, costing around 5,000 Ks per year, and vary in quality. Schools that are willing and able to pay TSC rates to trained teachers, which for some graduate teachers are now in the range of 3,000 Ks per month, draw better students than private schools that are only willing or able to hire untrained teachers whose salaries may be as low as 800 Ks per month.

Harambee schools pay everything for themselves, while the assisted Harambee schools are provided with a few TSC teachers. Even completely private and Harambee schools must be registered with the TSC, and have a TSC qualified head teacher. The Harambee schools are generally the last ones to which pupils are allocated at the Provincial Form I selections. There is only one Harambee school in Mombasa; it was explained to me that Mombasa is so multi-cultural that no one group takes the initiative to start them.

In 1987, the government attempts to devolve costs officially received a name: "Cost sharing." In October 1987,

the Minister of Education announced that the government had "embarked on a policy of cost sharing", and that the government planned to reduce the education budget from 37% to 29% of the nation's budget (Daily Nation 10/19/87).

From the local perspective, many teachers talked about the difficulty of trying to run schools and educate children when they did not have the equipment and facilities they needed and were constantly subject to capricious announcements from Nairobi. Both schools and the local education authority were placed in a difficult position when there was an executive order announcing that all primary education would be free; that 8-4-4 would be implemented the following year; that schools could no longer have building funds; that they could not hold a Harambee without consent from the District Commissioner. In 1988 there was an executive announcement that head teachers could not "drive away" students whose parents had not paid their school fees, nor could the teachers withhold examination results until fees were paid (Daily Nation 1/18/88). Thus, the schools are left with little control, little income and almost no way to generate any. Further, even as the government tries to devolve the heavy education budget, demands for more schools, more teachers and more supplies increase with the growing population.

Kenyan people are still committed to education although it is an increasing financial burden. One mother talked about how hard it was for their family with four children in school

and only her husband's income being sent home from Saudi Arabia. Because she can neither read nor write nor speak English she cannot go out and get a job, she can only stay home and sew. These days with education to pay for, things are so expensive. If only she had an education she could go out to work too. Her remark highlights a great irony: the cost of education has risen so steeply that people have moved from seeking education for its own sake (until after WW II), to seeking education for making a livelihood (in the late 1950s) to, finally, seeking a livelihood to pay for education.

Public Examinations

It was the British who first instituted a system of public examinations in Kenyan schools. Until the late 1950s students in Kenya took the Cambridge or London public examinations. After that, Kenyan examinations were introduced and, like everything else, they were classified by race: African, Asian and European Examinations.¹⁰ After Independence all Kenyans took the same examination, but it was still possible for Kenyans to take London or Cambridge exams until 1987 when the government no longer permitted the schools to administer those exams.

Examinations are the key measure of the success not only of a child but of their parents, teachers and their schools. The

¹⁰One person stated that in the colonial period the Kenyan Asian examination questions were always much more difficult than the European exam which, he thought, was because the Europeans felt threatened by the abilities of the Asians.

8-4-4 syllabus is completely geared to examinations. Passing or failing exams determines what a young person's future can hold. As one teacher I observed told his students "We want you to succeed and have a better life." But examination results are also a marker of community success and prestige, and bad results reflect badly on everyone.

Press coverage of the announcements of the results for the 1987 KCPE exam in January 1988 gives some sense of the discourse. Although there is also concern about secondary school results, the main focus is on primary schools, which involve many more people. Each child's result is in the form of a score, the total points they made on all parts of the examination. The school children are ranked nationally and by Province; the schools are ranked in order of success (taking the average score of the school); all the districts in the country are ranked. With a headline of, "Smiles Say it for Top Student" a feature article focused on the top pupil in Nairobi, describing his life style and accounting for all the efforts that made him a success (Daily Nation 1/5/88). Political speeches praise the schools where students did well, and are reported with headlines like, "Pupils Praised Over KCPE" (Daily Nation 1/13/88); and, "President Lauds Nyandarua [the district with the highest KCPE national score]" (Daily Nation 1/16/88).

Although the educational successes are featured most prominently in the press, many more articles are devoted to

poor KCPE results, with headlines such as, "Nassir¹¹ Urges Probe into Coast results" (Daily Nation 1/7/88); "Parents Angered by Poor Exam Results" (Daily Nation 1/12/88); "Leaders to Review Exam" (Daily Nation 1/14/88).

Poor examination results are taken very seriously, and everyone looks for the cause. First parents, students, and teachers are blamed. Then politicians are blamed. Following poor results in Mombasa schools that were announced in January 1988:

A Councillor...called for the Mombasa Municipal Council Education Department to be reshuffled following poor results for the 1987 Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examination. [Daily Nation 1/9/88]

That same day, under the headline "Flops 'due to the heat'", the MP for Mombasa West attributed the poor examination performance of Mombasa students to the intense heat. The poor performance of Mombasa school children in the 1985 Kenya Certificate of Education exam was even attributed by one teacher to a break dancing craze, which completely absorbed school children and distracted them from their studies. Good examination results are seen as the mark of success in education, which, in turn is seen as the mark of development and progress.

In the context of the difficulties of implementing 8-4-4 described in the previous section, it is not particularly surprising that students might not do well. What is so

¹¹Shariff Nassir is the Mombasa Member of Parliament (MP) referred to in Chapter III.

interesting is the absence in the discourse of any reference to central government, the Ministry of Education, the Executive branch, or the new 8-4-4 system itself. I see two reasons for this. The first is that people still really want education, and they believe it can provide what they need; secondly in the political climate of the late 1980s it was impossible to be openly critical of state authority and its representatives, and where anyone was critical, the press, the source of record of this discourse would not have reported it for fear of being closed down by the government. There was no open or formally public counter-discourse which might place at least part of the unsatisfactory performance of pupils at the door of the government for its policies on examinations, its rapid implementation of a wholly new schools program, or its unwillingness to fund what is required of the schools.

The Position of the Coast

The poor 1987 examination results for Mombasa and the Coast that troubled parents and politicians were not new. Coast Province is identified by a number of scholars and administrators, both local and non-local, as a region that has not thrived in education. When I talked to personnel at the Coast Economic Development Planning Office about the education of girls, their response was that the main concern in the region was the education of all Coast children. Coast children's examination results are poor, and the region does not receive as many resources as some other areas of the

country.

Robert Mambo sees the root of the problem in Coast Province's colonial history, and its environment:

The situation in the Coast Province was characterized by a "dual" system of administration, a discriminatory governmental economic policy, a cultural configuration in which power and favors were generally awarded to those most opposed to Western Education or most unwilling to share its benefits, and a hot enervating and malarious climate. All but the last was amenable to government policy. [Mambo 1980:315]

As parts of the Coast were a Protectorate they did not have Local Native Councils (LNCs) to take care of the majority African interests. The Africans residing in parts of the Coast which did have LNCs, for example Kilifi and Kwale, were quite resistant to engaging in colonial labor (J. Willis 1987; Brantley 1981) and mostly were subsistence producers, so they did not have money to donate to LNCs for schools (Kinyanjui 1977). Mambo states that at Independence the proportions of indigenous children attending school in Mombasa were very low, as seen in Table II (Mambo 1980:304).

TABLE II. Mombasa School Attendance by Ethnicity, December 1963.

	<u>Number in School</u>	<u>Number in the Population</u>
Africans	3363	117,000
Asians	11,828	32,000
Arabs	2670	27,000

Another cause of lack of funding for education at the Coast

has been the land tenure system. Land reform, resulting from the 1953 Swynnerton-Dyer plan, provides title in land to individuals rather than collectivities and this is a source of individual wealth that can be used for education. But the regions benefitting from this first were those where Kenyans agitated against colonial rule, mostly in central Province, rather than at the Coast (Kinyanjui 1979). Further, as stated earlier, mission schools did not thrive in Coast Province. The result is that at Independence the region did not have the financial resources nor the educational infrastructure in place that existed in some other parts of the country.

Another reason that coast schools have not done well is because, as Kinyanjui argues, CPE (now KCPE) "Is essentially a test of English" (Kinyanjui 1979), and school language policy still poses a dilemma for Swahili people. At Independence all classes in the schools were taught in English beginning in Standard 1. Then the policy changed so that now children are taught in their vernacular (which varies regionally) for the first three years, and they are then taught in English from Standard 4 onwards. There is difficulty in making this transition. Several teachers admitted that, when teaching Standard 4 and up, if the pupils are having trouble grasping the material in English, they then switch to Swahili, in spite of the policy of many schools of fining students fifty cents if they speak Swahili. The use of Swahili for clarification massively increases the

comprehension by the students, but ultimately does not serve them well in the project of passing public examinations, which are all in English.

As well as the Coast being educationally disadvantaged because of structural historical reasons, Swahili people talked at length about Coast Province being discriminated against by central government in the allocation of resources, and about their sense of their way of life and sense of morality being eaten away. For example, during Ramadhan it is customary for people, men women and children, to go out at night and call on their friends and sit out and talk. They used to go out of Old Town down to Moi avenue, and small boys assembled bands and played music for them. These days all people out on the street at night outside of Old Town are frequently stopped by the police for their kitambulisho (identity card), and so now people tend to stay closer to home. There is no recognition by local authorities of their walking out at night being part of a significant religious holiday.

There is also an awareness of the nation, while ostensibly celebrating its multiculturalism, becoming increasingly Christian. This is evidenced by the regular Church attendance of prominent Kenyans, and by the condemnation of such practices as polygyny in both public speeches and in school text books. The wider nation, of which all Kenyans are supposed to be a part, does not look familiar to Swahili

people.

Along with other Kenyans, Swahili people experience financial hardship as the cost of living rises. Many men in the community are under-employed, and some women who would like to go out to work to ease their families' financial difficulties say that they cannot do so because they have no education and hence no skills. One woman commented to me, "The only way out for the Muslim population is through education," but, she went on to suggest, the community seems unable to pull itself up. I encountered few people who believed that education was not a means for self improvement, but there are diverse understandings of what is meant by education, what it can offer and, very importantly, what harm it may bring. Education poses a conundrum; it represents both the problem of, and the solution to, the weakened position of the Swahili community.

Religion and Moral Order

For Swahili people, an Islamic way of life is the key to a morally ordered world; the domain within which they have been most active in protecting their world view has been ensuring that there is still a component of appropriate Islamic religious instruction in the Mombasa schools. A serious concern is that children should get their religious education early. As one man put it, "Religious education gives children obedience to their parents and helping people in trouble". Another person said that you have to teach children Islam

first, before they get the chance to learn anything else; under the traditional vyuo system this arrangement worked.

In most vyuo little has changed in the form of religious education since the scheme at the beginning of the colonial period which I described in Chapter IV. Small children start to attend chuo at around three years old. They begin to learn to recognize Arabic letters and to recite sections of the Koran. Then they build up words as they first learn sura (verses) from the Koran. When they can recognize and recite all 35 sura of one juzuu (chapter) of the Koran, they are allowed to proceed to the msahafu (the complete book of the Koran). All the children learn together, but a child will stay behind after class when s/he is ready to be heard by the maalim (teacher) to see if they are ready to continue on. Many waalimu are men, but there are some women too. In addition to recognizing Arabic letters and reciting the Koran, children learn about the life of the Prophet Mohamed, and fikri, general Islamic knowledge regarding the proper way to wash, pray and conduct oneself as a Muslim.

But while in the colonial period some parents did not allow their children, male or female, to attend secular school until they could read and recite the whole Koran, but nowadays, if they are to get any benefit from secular education and finish in a timely manner, they must begin to attend school before their vyuo studies are completed. The community tries to ensure that they are well educated in Islamic religious

instruction in the government regulated secular schools, but there are some practical difficulties with this.

The Ministry of Education ruling on the teaching of religious education is that all students must study and be examined in one religion (either Christianity, Islam or Hinduism) in primary school. In secondary school, students may take either religion or "Social Education and Ethics," which is a new non-examinable¹² subject in the 8-4-4 syllabus. This is a change since the colonial period, when Arabic and the Koran were taught as well as Islamic religion more broadly. Before 8-4-4 the remaining Islamic religion was not even examinable.

A challenge confronting the community is finding enough good teachers to teach Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in the school system. Where there are TSC employees offering other subjects who are also qualified to teach religion, then they do so. Generally, there are plenty of TSC teachers who can teach Christian Religious Instruction. If religiously qualified TSC teachers are not present in a school, then it is the responsibility of the school parents' committee to employ and pay appropriate religious teachers. The Municipal Education Office (MEO) provides fifty Form 4 school leavers as IRE teachers, and they are paid the 800 ks untrained teacher

¹²When a subject is non-examinable, even if it is compulsory, it receives low priority in being taught if there is material still to be covered in other subjects that are examinable.

salary. But this is still not enough teachers and, say interviewees, the ones who are good always find better jobs.

Some of the people most knowledgeable about Islam are not qualified to teach in the school system because they do not speak English, which all Kenyan school teachers must be able to do. There are insufficient numbers of teachers who speak English, can teach other school subjects, and are qualified to teach Islamic studies.

In addition to the problem of language qualification, there is the issue of teaching method. The government school curriculum requires that the students are taught analysis, that they can question and dissect ideas. It also requires that teaching be conducted in such a way that students can be engaged in their own learning through practical projects. Some of the most knowledgeable Islamic scholars teach by rote, which is not acceptable to the Ministry of Education.¹³

In addition to there being issues of the qualifications of the teachers, there is the question of paying them once the TSC teachers and the fifty MEO teachers have been allocated. The National Union of Kenya Muslims pays for some IRE teachers but not at TSC rates. It is also the responsibility of the parents' committee to decide which religion(s) will be offered in the schools depending on demand in the school. Some schools do not offer all three religions. As one teacher

¹³Many Swahili teachers that I spoke to believe that rote memorization is not the best way to teach, and would like to see more modern methods used in teaching in the madarasa.

described it, "It is up to the community to decide".

This practice of providing for religious instruction sheds some light on the ways in schools remain associated with particular ethnic or religious communities: the school parents' committee reflects the make up of the school, and when it comes time to decide what religion will be taught the opinions of the current parents prevail. Subsequently, parents who would like their children to learn the religion of their choice choose a school where that choice is available. Thus it is self-fulfilling that certain schools are associated with certain religions. As one teacher said, "It's like the British Constitution, everyone knows what [community] a school is."

In 1988, when I completed my field work, there were a number of problems that the Muslim communities were having with the implementation of IRE in the new 8-4-4 syllabus. One was the shortage in supply of school text books. Another was simply a lack of IRE text books, because they hadn't been written yet. There was no in-service training of IRE teachers until August 1988 in Mombasa, for which head teachers had been waiting with increasing impatience for several years as they tried to figure out how to supply the Islamic religious instruction that the government and the parents required.

The biggest difficulty for the community concerns the quantity and quality of the religious instruction available in the schools, given how much time it is taking away from

lessons in the vyuo and madarasa. Although scheduling varies, primary school students do not have afternoon session for the first two or three years and during this period their parents often send them to afternoon chuo. After that, they have to be in secular school in the afternoon. Sometimes they are then sent to chuo in the evening, but more often, at that point, they will just go on Saturdays, because they have homework to do in the evenings. People say that children simply do not receive enough religious instruction, and the quality and quantity of IRE in the schools simply does not replace what children were learning in the vyuo:

If all the schools could get competitive teachers, and good books and sufficient time allocated we would not need the madarasa. The students only get three periods of 35 minutes in upper primary. Madarasa is daily for 2 hours. So it's time, books, quantity and quality of teachers. In the school IRE syllabus the first thing they are supposed to learn how to do is read and write the Koranic script, but they don't usually grasp it.

The Education of Girls

It is, of course, widely recognized in the education and women's studies literature that girls, overall, receive less formal education, of a lower quality than their male counterparts (Deble 1980; Eshiwani 1985). Although statistics show that this global imbalance is beginning to be reduced at the primary level, the same cannot be said for secondary, technical and higher education (Kelly 1984). Girls are disadvantaged in terms of their access to schools, the length of time they remain in school, and the curriculum offered to them. Swahili girls are no exception.

Explanations for girls' educational disadvantages fall into three categories. The first addresses society-wide issues, including social stratification, gender divisions and belief systems including religion. The second category contains explanations at the level of the school, e.g. official policy, curricula and classroom interactions. The final category addresses issues concerning the family, for example how families can hamper or promote a girl's formal education.

Gail Kelly argues that the single most important factor in determining whether or not girls will go to school is, in fact, the availability of an appropriate school place. Not only do there have to be enough school places for girls, but they have to be of the right kind in terms of location, quality of education and curricula. Kelly further suggests that, as school provision in many countries is a matter of official policy, steps can be taken to improve education (Kelly 1984). This can be done more easily than, for example, changing systems of stratification, particular belief systems, or family attitudes.

Family issues that must be considered when examining girls' education include domestic labor. Parents may choose not to send a girl to school, even if it is free, if her domestic labor is too valuable to be forfeited (Mbilinyi 1969). Swahili girls in their early teens do have household responsibilities for which boys of their age have no equivalent. Even where girls' domestic labor does not keep

them from school, it does keep them from successful completion of their homework. Swahili women who have done well at school all mentioned that they were encouraged by parents or other relatives to do their homework away from home in a particular place, for instance in a public library or in a parent's office or shop, at a particular time each day.

Early marriage also interferes with their schooling. Most of my highly educated informants who remain unmarried, or who did not marry until they reached their mid-twenties, described turning down marriage proposals while still in school. Some families are unwilling to turn down a marriage proposal for fear that there will not be equally good opportunities in the future.

A particularly significant issue that makes Swahili people cautious about keeping their daughters in school is the issue of school girls pregnancies. In 1987 35,000 unmarried Kenyan school girls reportedly became pregnant and left school (BBC World Service broadcast 1988). At that time young women who became pregnant were not supposed to remain in school, nor to return there after they had given birth, although one Mombasa school was reputed to allow young mothers to return and continue their schooling.

Given the very high value placed on chastity at marriage in Swahili culture, this issue has been of great concern. Although it is impossible to get any kind of measure, there appear to be fewer cases of unmarried pregnancies among

Swahili school girls. This is due to particular vigilance over the activities of young women; to some of them attending single sex, day schools, where the incidence is not so great; to a hasty marriage that conceals the event; or, on occasion to induced miscarriages obtained through dawa (indigenous medicine), or to privately obtained abortions.

Even though the incidence of premarital pregnancy in the Swahili community is low, the topic is constantly in the national media and in people's conversations. In the colonial period when there were parental fears over heshima it was not that people feared their daughters would actually become pregnant, but that they would be "spoiled" in more ideological ways, losing their value systems. Contemporary fear of daughters becoming pregnant, being literally "spoiled", has come to be a concrete articulation of more generalized fears about changes in gender relations and the perceived decline in morality that accompanies them.

Girls have already reached puberty when they finish primary school at fourteen or fifteen years of age, as have all secondary school aged young women. This leads many people in the Swahili community to argue that it is preferable for girls to be educated in single sex schools. As one man put it:

Girls are also shy when they are placed in the classroom with boys. It is difficult to instil discipline if you are teaching about sex to a mixed class. Better if the girls are taught by a teacher who is like a mother to them and the boys taught by a man.

If their daughters do not qualify for a place in one of the

two maintained girls secondary schools in Mombasa, and if they cannot afford to send them to one of the few unaided girls schools, some families perceive no alternative but to withdraw them from school. Other families say that, although they would prefer more girls-only opportunities, their daughters can maintain their heshima in coeducational settings while benefitting from secondary education. Although parents would like single sex schools, it is not very easy to create more.

The curriculum itself can be a source of difficulty for school girls. Rosemary Deem describes how, in Britain, the curriculum prepares only middle class girls for careers; working class girls are prepared for marriage and motherhood. She also describes the "hidden curriculum", which reinforces society's stereotypes about what boys and girls should do. The hidden curriculum is contained in the ways in which the formal curriculum material is presented in the classroom, and in classroom interactions (Deem 1978). It has been observed that through the hidden curriculum girls are subject to negative attitudes of teachers regarding their abilities, and are sometimes talked down by boys with no intervention on the part of the teacher, who may not even realize that this is happening (Eshiwani 1983; Megarry 1984). One example, which I observed, is the issue of swimming classes, which can be a source of embarrassment for all girls when menstruation sometimes prevents them from swimming. An additional difficulty for Swahili girls, however, is attending a mixed

swimming class, or one with a male instructor, which is considered immodest by Swahili people. I observed one male teacher who chastised girls in a mixed class for not attending swimming classes taught by a man, apparently without considering possible reasons. He said:

This is where most of you become very sick, swimming. Only about 15 of you show up; Especially girls you are always sick; you don't want to swim. Or you don't want to swim with boys. You should not cheat, better to say, "Excuse me, Sir, I am afraid of water" than to lie and say you are sick.

Fewer girls than boys have the opportunity to take science subjects at advanced level, and this presents difficulties for the few girls who do. One Swahili woman described how it felt to be the only girls doing science 'A' levels with a group of boys. She found it difficult to work with them, and she could not stay alone with them when they met after school to discuss their homework because it was inappropriate. She passed her 'A' levels in spite of strong pressure on her parents by other relatives to withdraw her from school.

GENDERED EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSES

While Swahili educators, both men and women, are active in promoting education for Swahili children to ensure that they succeed in public examinations, that they know their religion, and maintain their identity, the emphasis that men and women each place on these issues differs. Men articulate greater concern about morality and the maintenance of a particular world view, while women focus on more practical considerations. However, to say that Swahili women are

particularly concerned with the material practicalities of life is not to say that they are unconcerned with moral religious issues. As described in Chapter III, since the late 1970s there has been a renewed interest in Islam among men and women. Adult women are attending madarasa and learning Arabic, and there is a move in Mombasa to make more mosques provide space in which women can pray. As of 1988 only Mazaras, Mombasa Kaloleni, Baluchi and the Islamic center were providing sections for women.

Nelson (1981) suggests that Islamic ideology contributes to the ordering of social relations in Muslim societies, and clearly this is a view shared by a number of the Swahili men that I spoke to. Male teachers, secular¹⁴ and religious, seemed most concerned about a particular set of morals, the loss of which would compromise the perpetuity of a Muslim community.

One respected Sheikh, while explaining the concept of heshima, bemoaned its demise in the community. He saw this evidenced in inappropriate gender relations, and blamed the demise directly on secular education, even though that was not what he had been asked about at the time. He suggested that children nowadays do not have heshima because they do not have the right msingi (foundation). The cause of this state of

¹⁴Most of the Swahili male school teachers that I talked to had had a thorough religious training too, many of them being educated at the Arab boys school and having attended madarasa for a substantial period of time also; or else having completed madarasa before they even entered Arab Boys school.

affairs is that children read books from other places, and they see and copy the actions of people from other places. He suggested that schools spoil boys and girls because they sit together; Islamic schools stop children being "spoiled." A teacher stated, "Girls proportionately more than boys drink and dance with men if they get too much education...If they are educated [girls] use too much English in their Swahili and are disrespectful."

Another man, a local preacher, gave a public lecture to the women of the community. He chastised them for spending lavishly on weddings and funerals and said that the music they produced at these events was haram (forbidden, unclean). He suggested that people get themselves into debt in order to finance these events and subsequently have nothing to show for it. The problem with people these days, he said, is that they have lost imami (faith).

A number of men serve on local Muslim committees working to improve examination results for coastal Muslim children, but for them, their sense of morality within the Swahili community continues to be tied to appropriate gender relations, which has practical consequences for the education of girls.

The male teachers' understanding of the capacity of uneducated Swahili women to monitor the educational progress of their children was different than that of women. In an interview one male teacher said, "Women cannot speak up at public meetings; it's cultural. They don't want to sit with

strange men so it is a problem for them to participate."

In spite of this view, the consensus of teachers interviewed was that, for coastal Muslim children, mothers come to school far more frequently than fathers to deal with their children's problems. I also observed Swahili women talking informally to their children's female teachers, in settings such as on the street, or when they encountered them at a wedding or funeral. Swahili women who do not speak English were not deterred from going to school to talk to their children's teachers. Where teachers did not speak Swahili well because they were not from the coast, the women took a friend, relative, or older child with them to act as an interpreter.

The concerns that women educators articulated were more frequently related to material survival, and the need for people, especially young men, to see the connection between education and material well-being. As one woman teacher put it:

In the past [men's] fathers had shops and farms that they joined, but now their fathers do waged labor. They [the young men] live at home, so they don't need much money. There are no good male role models; money from Saudi gives them a false sense of security. They won't stay in school. They won't do menial jobs like street sweeping because of their status, while Mijikendas will do anything to get their kids through school.

While some men are concerned that the education of girls may break down appropriate gender categories, Swahili women teachers expressed concern that fewer Swahili girls than boys are getting an education:

Why are our Muslim girls behind in education when, we have already been told, education is the obligation of Muslim men and women?...It is sad to see that there are very few Muslim girls who study for jobs like doctors, teachers, clerks etc. If you look at schools you will see that there are more girls in primary schools than in secondary schools. In the university you will not see more than four or five Muslim girls. All of you, this is the time for us to wake up and ask ourselves what it is that makes our girls not progress? [Karim 1986:1]

DISCUSSION

At Independence there was a "hegemonic moment" as government and citizenry shared their view of education enabling national development, material and ideological. Throughout most of the post-colonial period, however, the educational goals of citizen and state have diverged. The government and citizenry share a desire for education but for different reasons. Ordinary people do want to learn certain skills that will improve their material existence, but they do not want education at the expense of their sense of identity and morality.

As in the colonial period, educational discourses continue to provide a site of contestation between subordinate people and the state. When the state tries to impose policy from above, it is not passively received, but responded to and molded, as much as possible, to people's own image of what they understand education to be based on their world view and community membership. Given this, neither the school, nor the teachers therein, nor even the Municipality, can be conceived of simply as enacting the agency of the state, transmitting ideology to receptive children as implied in the works of

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and Gramsci (1973).

Because of their nascent educational and employment opportunities in the colonial period, women are now also engaged in the project of providing education to Swahili children consistent with an Islamic morality and world view. This chapter has begun to suggest the ways in which Swahili men and women respond differently to the educational initiatives of the state, adding another dimension to these discourses not found in the colonial period. The theme of gendered educational discourses, which I have begun to address here, is the focus of Chapter VI, which examines the reproduction of Swahili gender relations.

CHAPTER VI: GENDER AND GENERATION: THE REPRODUCTION OF SWAHILI CULTURE

I have been arguing in this dissertation that gender is one of the key markers of Swahili culture and, hence, of Swahili identity. In this chapter I focus on the representation and reproduction of Swahili culture through expressions of gender within educational discourse. I also turn my attention to the question of generations as I demonstrate that Swahili culture and identity have various meanings to Swahili people of different gender and age.

In examining the reproduction of Swahili culture I draw primarily on the work of Paul Willis whose complex, nuanced, approach effectively deals with two problems that I see embedded in much of the previous work on theories of reproduction: first, Marxist anthropologists who analyze reproduction (in contrast to production) have tended to focus on women and the domestic domain even though the reproduction on which they focus is not the biological act of giving birth (see Harris and Young 1981). Yanagisako (1985) suggests that in this culture we make a fundamental distinction between the production of people and the production of things. The production of people is assumed to be "reproductive" and is, therefore, the domain of women.

Writers in the field of education, dealing with western industrial societies, (in contrast with the non-industrial societies on which the Marxist anthropologists have focussed) pay less attention to women in reproduction. They interpret

reproduction more broadly, focussing on the material and ideological processes that schools enact in the reproduction of workers to join the laboring classes (Bowles and Gintis 1976; Apple 1982a, 1982b, 1988; Apple and Weis 1983; Willis 1981a, 1981b). Some of them, however, display what I see as the second problem with reproduction theory: reproduction is depicted as being static, i.e. schools produce more workers to replace the old workers which they resemble (Bowles and Gintis 1976). In Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs, Paul Willis' ethnography focuses on cultural reproduction in a boys' school, a male domain, thus moving away from the feminizing tendencies of reproduction theories. He depicts cultural reproduction as dynamic and shifting rather than unchanging, and warns against assuming that the working class culture that the "lads" reproduce in school is unchanging even when it appears to look the same:

Patterns of the development of labor power...must in every generation be achieved, developed and worked for in struggle and contestation. If certain obvious features of this continuous reproduction...show a degree of visible continuity over time this should not lead us to construct iron laws and dynamics of socialization from this mere succession of like things. [Willis 1981a:183]

He argues that culture is only successfully reproduced when people themselves (in this case the boys in school) take on particular meanings and ideas and make them their own by applying them to something.

The above works on reproduction, including Willis' come out of a Marxist concern with class relations. My focus here is

on the reproduction of Swahili identity and some of its components -- gender and generation -- rather than class but, as Willis himself says, his approach, "is equally applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to other forms of domination" (Willis 1981b:62).

Much of the relevant education literature has focussed on school curriculum and classroom interaction as the locus of cultural reproduction, but other aspects of school life outside the classroom are also critical to such reproduction. The particular example on which I focus here is a school prize giving ceremony.

Background to the School Prize Giving

One evening two adolescent girls who lived in my neighborhood came and invited me to attend their school prize giving. The school they attended, Mwana Kuona Girls¹, is an all girls government maintained school, and was for Arab and Swahili girls during the colonial period. Although community schools were abolished at Independence, many people in the Swahili community prefer to send their daughters to Mwana Kuona because, they told me, it is single sex, their mothers and aunts went there and because the headmistress is from the community. It is their school and, in part because of the particular administration of religious education through parents committees that I described in Chapter V, it has maintained some of its cultural integrity.

¹A pseudonym.

The Prize Giving Day

The prize giving was held in the nursery school hall; it had French doors all the way down both sides flung wide open thus offering a little ventilation for those of us inside, and a good view in for all the school girls standing outside who could not squeeze into the hall. Parents and friends had been invited for 2:30, but still nothing was ready when we arrived at 2:45. We were directed to sit in the block of chairs at the right side of the hall; men, of whom there were a few were sitting to the left. The right side of the hall filled rapidly with women, almost all of them buibui clad, accompanied by their children. School girls milled around outside the hall, and there was more activity up on the stage behind partially closed curtains; a table was being set up with flowers and piles of books, which were to be awarded to the girls as prizes for various accomplishments in school. Beside the table there was a row of chairs for the special guests. The school hall had a loud music system, and the choice of music while the parents arrived and the preparations were being completed was Like a Virgin the newest album by Madonna, who was extremely popular among school girls at that time. After the women's section was full, the left hand side was divided so that women sat in the back half and men sat in the front. A few very late women sat in amongst the men in the front. The girls gradually filed in and sat on the floor; others remained outside and watched through the French doors.

The headmistress, senior teachers and guests walked onto the stage. The guests included school inspectors, the Chair of the PTA, and the guest of honor, who was a Swahili University of Nairobi Professor from Mombasa. He and his wife sat at the end of the front row on the left side. The deputy head welcomed everyone, and then we all stood and the school brownies and girl guides came on stage and led everyone in the Kenyan national anthem followed by a pledge of allegiance to the President and Nation.

There were welcoming songs and then speeches by the headmistress, the chair of the PTA and the guest of honor. During her speech the head announced that because Mwana Kupona is a Muslim school, that is, 85% of the girls are Muslims, the parents committee had decided to change the girls' school uniform. They added hijab (a head scarf) and suruali (long trousers), and decided that the girls' cotton dresses, which had, alone, constituted the uniform were to be cut looser. It was to be optional for the six through nine year old pupils, but for the older girls the new uniform was compulsory.

The speeches were followed by handing out the prizes during which something astonishing occurred:

One of the men seated in the row of guests on the stage got up, staggered across the stage and kissed the honored guest, the University of Nairobi professor, on both cheeks. He then put his arm around the headmistress' shoulders and gave her a friendly hug. People gasped, some laughed. We quickly

realized that the man was drunk. There was little attempt to restrain him, which surprised me at the time. The headmistress and the guest continued to hand out the prizes, trying to ignore the man wandering on the stage as they did so.

When one girl, who was completely veiled, was photographed receiving her prize, the man posed with her, while she looked very very embarrassed. I was told later that evening that the drunk man was the girl's father. After the prizes had been handed out, school girls performed a variety of songs, dances and poems for the assembled parents and friends. During the dances and poems the drunk man periodically got to his feet and attempted to join the performers.

Of particular interest to me, was the time when a group of girls wearing the new uniform that had been announced by the headmistress performed a dance and recited a poem about the heshima of the new uniform:

Vazi Jipya
A New Uniform

*Vaa vazi jema, kujivika mwilini
Liwe zuri la heshima, kukusitiri mwendani
Mtu akikutazama, ajue wewe ni nani*

Wear a uniform, a good uniform to clothe your body
It should be nice, of "heshima" to cover you up my friend
When a person looks at you they should know what kind of
person you are

*Na leo tumesimama, mbele yenu uwanjani
Mupate kututazama, vazi letu la thamani
Vazi hili la heshima tuendapo barabarani*

Today we are standing in front of you in the hall
 So you can look at us, our precious uniform
 This respectable uniform, when we go along the road

*Ni vazi la kushangaza, kuvaa hapa shuleni
 Mno limetiya fora, avaapo mke shani*

It's an impressive dress, to wear here at school
 It's too much [cool/hip] when a fashionable/modern girl
 wears it

*Si vazi la kuchukiza, kuvaa hapa shuleni
 Na sisi hatukupuza, twafuata yetu dini
 Ni vazi la kupendeza, la heshima kweli*

It's not an offensive uniform to wear here at school
 And we are serious, we are following our religion
 It's a lovely uniform, of "heshima" truly

*Na dini zasisitiza, zote zilo duniani
 Kwa vazi la kupendeza, la heshima duniani*

And religions remind us, all the religions in the world
 Of a pleasing uniform, of "heshima" in the world

*Na wenzetu twawahimiza, kulivaa vazi hili
 Na wenzako kaweleza, uzuri wa taamali
 Vazi hili la heshima, kuvaa hapa shuleni*

And we urge our friends to wear this uniform
 And tell them the goodness of study/meditation
 This uniform of "heshima" to wear here at school

*"Taireni", asojua aambiwe
 Shimeni waja shimeni, jambo hili
 Asokujua hadharani, habari nasimuliwe*

"Taireni, Taireni²," those who do not know must be told
 Come on everyone come on, make an effort with this
 Those who are not at this meeting must be told what was said

As they sang and danced the man got up from his seat once
 again, and weaved in among the dancers. There they were on
 the stage dressed in modest suruali (loose cotton pants),

²Uttered as greeting at Mijikenda or Swahili events such
 as divination or possession, in preparation for the entry of
 spirits.

loose fitting dresses and hijab (large head scarves) dancing and singing a song composed by themselves and their teacher about heshima, while a drunk man, the antithesis of heshima, danced among them.

Following the heshima song a group of school girls danced a traditional Luo [western Kenyan] dance, which entailed much hip gyration. The drunk man attempted to replicate the movements. In the case of both dances the girls were highly successful at completely ignoring the man and dancing in ways that created a significant space around themselves even though he was physically quite close.

Parents and some teachers laughed more and more at the man, and the headmistress looked mortified. Finally after the man was sitting quietly down in the school hall, watching the girls perform Arab dancing the school watchman, an old Mijikenda fellow wearing a frayed kofia, (white cotton skull cap) came along and told the drunk to leave. The drunk became belligerent as various men came to him, some of them telling the watchman to leave the drunk man alone because they were causing a scene. The drunk man told them all "Hamna adabu". (You don't have any manners!) and they left him alone.

At the end of the prize giving the headmistress announced that the man was not a member of the PTA or of the school committee, but just a parent. She said "Mungu atamwondosha" (God will drive him out) to which all the parents replied in unison "Amin".

Some time after the prize giving the headmistress of the school told me that it was, she, not the mostly male parents committee, who had initiated the change in uniform. She said that now they are teaching more religion in school it is no good teaching about heshima and correct dress if they don't set an example. She was concerned that the girls looked half naked as they grew rapidly, wore the same school dress, and were literally bursting at the seams with their stomachs showing where their buttons pulled at the waist. Girls did not like to wear a buibui, she said, and by having this kind of uniform they could choose not to wear one and still have heshima. The non-Muslim pupils liked wearing it too, as it gave them much more freedom to move around. She stressed the importance of mtandio (complete covering) to the girls -- that their heads must be covered with something. She herself started dressing in a long dress with long sleeves and a head covering some years ago and explained:

In the modern world it is necessary for women to go to work because everything has become so expensive, so there is no kuficha (concealment/hiding); men and women mix much more than they used to. Therefore it is even more important that men and women know how to behave properly in the other's presence.

ELEMENTS OF SWAHILI CULTURE

This account is significant because it contains in it many of the elements of Swahili culture that I have already described in this dissertation but, as I shall show, there are many variations in form, and apparent contradictions. First, education is central. The location of the event is a school

and the prize giving is a celebration of the educational accomplishments of school girls. Religion and poetry also feature extensively in the ceremonies. A number of poems are recited, and there are references to God and to religion both in the poem and in the headmistress' remarks about the drunk man. It is God who will drive the drunken man out and to whom he is answerable. Ultimately a Muslim's character is between himself and God (although, as I have shown in Chapter III, this does not prevent people from making their own judgements about other people).

Men's Status

Male status concerns are clearly played out in this event. It is noteworthy that there was no immediate move to quell the man when he first began wandering around the stage. He was neither restrained nor thrown out at once, because people did not wish to add to the public display. No one on the stage did anything except to look very upset. Not only is drunkenness unusual and un-Islamic, any kind of public disruption is intolerable. It was not appropriate for women to challenge the man, and other men did not want to get involved because it damaged their own reputations to be involved in a public scene. The old school watchman who eventually challenged the man did so after he, the drunk, was sitting in the hall away from the stage, but the watchman was repelled by the drunk man on the basis of their relative status relations. The drunk was, in spite of his unseemly

behavior, a Swahili person, a cultured, coastal, educated, Muslim man. The school watchman, being from one of the Mijikenda ethnic groups of people that reside in the coastal hinterland, was considered to be less cultured, less educated and, even though he was considerably older, and better behaved than the drunk man, of much lower status. As they were now down in the hall, less directly in the public gaze, other men, but no women, intervened but they were rebuffed by the drunk telling them "Hamna adabu" (You don't have any manners). He turned the accusation of lacking good manners back on them. They were obliged to sit down because they didn't want to be involved in a public fuss. They preferred to allow him to remain quietly in the hall rather than create a further scene.

School Girls and Heshima

When the school girls danced on the stage wearing their new school uniform, and singing their poem especially composed for the occasion, there were about eight or ten of them spaced evenly across the stage in two rows. When the drunk man joined them on the stage he attempted to replicate their steps and dance along with them, join in with them, be a part of them. The girls totally and completely ignored the man just as if he did not exist. They moved their bodies as necessary to avoid him but the movements seemed effortless. They gave no indication of recognition of his presence either in their movement or in their facial expressions. They avoided him without appearing to avoid him and so, in effect, he was not

there. This was the ultimate in displaying heshima in a situation that was potentially very humiliating. In these unexpected circumstances, it was not the intended poem and dress that showed most clearly that Mwana Kupona girls have heshima, but the context provided to them by the unforeseen circumstances.

There are a number of significant themes in the poem. The girls are announcing to other Mwana Kupona girls, and to their parents and the wider community that they have a new school uniform. They urge their friends to wear the new uniform, which will tell everyone that they, individually and collectively as pupils at Mwana Kupona, have heshima. That is they are respectable, virtuous, girls. These are images consistent with idealized Swahili girl and womanhood. So too is the message that they are following their religion, and that it is good to study diligently. All of the above elements, then are consistent with an ideal model of Swahili culture: education, religion and poetry are represented, and the men and women behave appropriately for their genders; the young women demonstrating in word and deed that they have heshima, and the men maintaining their status by not getting involved in a public display.

SWAHILI CULTURES

But in spite of this apparent congruency of ideology and practice, there are a number of paradoxes and shifts in the enactments of Swahili culture seen here. The three on which

I focus are gender, generations and the performance of heshima.

Gender

Although the Prize Giving ceremony contained elements of education, religion and poetry, the way in which gender cross cut with them is not consistent with Swahili cultural ideals. Education has historically been a key cultural element, but here it is for girls. In the past a high value has been placed on education in Swahili culture, and the highest, most civilized, status has been attributed to the most educated. That used to mean that the highest status people were men, because women were not educated. Being educated is one way that some women can enhance their status and improve their political and economic position. Like education, the performance of poetry and expressions of religion in a public place such as the school hall are normally considered to be in the domain of men. So women are engaged in a number of activities, and located in places that have been associated with the more high status world of men.

Generations

Along with, and in contrast to, the ideal representations of Swahili women, the poem also evokes ideas and images that are very important to contemporary Swahili teenage girls. In the third stanza of the poem they sing, "It's an impressive dress to wear here at school; It's too much [cool/hip] when a fashionable girl wears it." Here, their target audience is

simply the other school girls, using a justification for wearing the new uniform that is likely to be more directly compelling to them than notions of heshima (even though they clearly have heshima given the way they are simultaneously dealing with the drunk man who is dancing in their midst).

Swahili adolescents, boys and girls, are very fashion conscious, as are their mothers, but more experimental than their mothers. During the time I was in Mombasa young women were experimenting with new veiling arrangements. Many young women did not care for the buibui which they found cumbersome and old-fashioned. It did not allow them to have their hands free, which presented a problem for some activities.³ They also described it as an "old women's" garment, with no style. The buibui is supposed to be of plain black opaque fabric, but adolescent girls were experimenting with black fabrics with a woven pattern, and with fabric that was virtually transparent. Many chose to wear a black full length, long sleeved lightweight coat, which fastens all the way down the front, from the chin to the floor (koti), and a headscarf (hijab). With this arrangement they cannot cover their faces. Some people there told me that it is appropriate that a young woman cannot cover her face because then she must behave properly or

³With a buibui, a woman always needs at least one hand to hold the garment in place and sometimes both hands. When several young women were employed by the National Museums of Kenya to conduct a household survey in the Old Town, most of them found that they could not easily manage a clip board, a pile of interview schedules and their buibui as well. Most of them opted to wear black coats and headscarves instead.

be known and risk community disapproval.

Others wore a flimsier garment resembling a graduation gown with no fastening down the front, accompanied by a tulle scarf draped artistically around their heads. Some of the young women, who wore long black coats and head scarves, began to put colored trim on their head scarves. The boldest touch was when the young women began to wear their head covering back a little so that their hair at the front was visible, and some went so far as to color a piece of the visible hair.

Needless to say, the more pious in the community disapproved of what they considered to be this frivolous style of veiling, and some families did not allow their daughters out of the house unless properly attired. Nevertheless, an appeal to hipness in the poem in convincing girls to wear the uniform is a fitting one for them, but one which definitely subverts some of the other messages in the poem conveying ideal notions of heshima and Swahili womanhood.

Performing Heshima

There is also apparent paradox in the very performance of the poem itself. Idealized notions of Swahili women require that they be quiet and invisible; in the episode described here girls are literally displaying, performing, their concealment. Although this performance of concealment seems antithetical to Swahili cultural ideals about women, the contemporary reality is that the school provides an opportunity for Swahili people to display and explain their

religious and cultural beliefs.

This display also has a logic within a wider Kenyan context outside the immediate community. The audience for the prize giving day at Mwana Kuona school comprised mostly Swahili men and women who were related to the girls, parents of other, non-Swahili, girls, and school inspectors and officials mostly from other Kenyan ethnic groups. The wider audience viewing the new school uniform is anyone and everyone in Mombasa who sees girls from Mwana Kuona school going back and forth covered from head to foot in scarf, loose fitting dress and trousers, symbols to the school and Swahili culture of heshima, but symbols to the wider community of Islam.

The views held about Swahili people by non-coastal, non-Muslim Kenyans are largely Orientalist, embedded in what Edward Said describes as "cultural hostility" (1978:291). Like Said's descriptions, the viewpoints are essentialist, pertaining to all Swahili people, and presuming that the described characteristics are innate. To paraphrase Said:

To look into Orientalism for a lively sense of an Oriental's [Swahili person's] human or even social reality -- as a contemporary inhabitant of the modern world -- is to look in vain. [1978:176]

Said characterizes Orientalist depictions of the Orient to include its sensuality, its aberrant mentality, habits of inaccuracy and backwardness (Said 1978:205), and these are found in depictions of Swahili people. One Swahili woman described how when she was in secondary school the non-coastal teachers would chastise them with, "You Arab girls are so

rude." British colonial officials, and writers such as Mambo (1980) depict Swahili and Arab resistance to colonial era education in terms of laziness and backwardness, a view which has carried over into the post-colonial period. The negative opinions that were to be heard expressed frequently in private conversations among non-Swahili people are based on the former slave owning practices of some Swahili people, the perception that the British favored the Swahili community during the colonial period, and most significantly, on the fact that Swahili people are Muslims. They make statements about Swahili men being polygynous, sly, unreliable, and homosexual⁴; they hold very stereotypical ideas about Swahili women, the most common one being that they are veiled, in purdah, and subordinate to men. Swahili people are exoticized and rendered "other."

This reoption of the veil, along with Swahili girls performing a dance about heshima, and displaying a new and more modest school uniform in Mombasa, articulates with other Kenyans' orientalist ideas about Muslim women and thus allows for the assertion of a distinctive Swahili cultural identity. Thus at one level gender representations constitute cultural representations as young women express elements of Swahili identity in relation to non-Swahili.

⁴In July 1988 a Kenyan tabloid out of Nairobi published an unsubstantiated and salacious full length feature article on homosexuality among Muslims at the coast.

Gender and Generations

But people's identities are multiply composed:

Identity is not a fixed "thing", it is negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous, the result of culturally available meanings and the open-ended, power-laden enactments of those meanings in everyday situations. [Kondo 1990:24]

The school girls who display their heshima as Swahili, are simultaneously expressing their gender and their generation, and the meanings that they give to heshima and to the performance that they enact are informed by the particular gender and generation position in which they are located.

Karl Mannheim argues that in "the 'stratification' of experience" each generation takes on the cultural knowledge that they encounter first in their lives as being natural. It is this first layer of cultural knowledge against which all subsequent knowledge is measured and understood, either positively or negatively (Mannheim 1952:297-298). In this way, even though all Swahili people share certain "Swahili" cultural knowledge, their "generation location" informs how they know what they know, and what it means to them:

[the fact]...of belonging to the same generation or age group...endow[s] the individuals sharing in them with a common location in the social and historical process, and thereby limit[s] them to a specific range of potential experience, predisposing them for a certain characteristic mode of thought and experience, and a characteristic type of historically relevant action. [Mannheim 1952:291]

Thus, these schoolgirls can be found singing and dancing, that is, performing poetry with some religious content and some references to being hip, in an educational institution, in a

public place in front of mixed audience, none of which quite meshes with classic ideas of Swahili women's behavior. At the same time their dress and their behavior in dealing with the drunk man is, indeed, exemplary of heshima. This apparent contradiction becomes comprehensible once it is understood that their generation location is different; what it means to them to be a Swahili women is not precisely shared by older women, nor by men.

I found it most interesting that the headmistress had proposed the new uniform and then had announced at the prize giving that it had been the parents committee's idea. Her responsibility for the idea is not public knowledge, and she does not receive credit. Similarly when the school girls were performing a dance about heshima they are, at first glance, reproducing very traditional versions of Swahili culture in which women are quiet, modestly dressed, and in the background.

But a closer analysis has shown that these ideal images, of a woman letting men appear to determine a uniform policy in the case of the headmistress, and of girls wearing more concealing dress and extolling the virtue of modesty and adherence to religion, are what Paul Willis called in the quotation earlier "the mere succession of like things." That is, on the surface, the gendered practices look like a continuation of the traditional, the ideal, Swahili culture. But underneath they are not the same. The headmistress

persuaded the parents committee to do what she considered to be appropriate. The school girls own images of how they want to be hip are present in the poem subverting other more conventional images of Swahili young women.

While expressing a conventional Swahili image, the women are simultaneously asserting their identities and achieving other goals as women, and as women of a particular generation. And so the school is a public site of the agency of the state where Swahili culture is also expressed, and a place too where some Swahili women have the opportunity to develop their own different identities effecting resistance to male hegemony. Swahili culture is reproduced, but it does not remain the same.

CHAPTER VII: DOMINATION AND RESISTANCE IN POST-COLONIAL

KENYA

In Chapter VI, I focused on the reproduction of Swahili identity through enactments of gender and generation, and showed how many of the familiar elements of Swahili culture -- gender, religion, education, status, poetry, heshima -- were played out and differentially understood by Swahili people in one particular context. These are largely local, internal, constituents of Swahili identity that existed prior to the colonial period and which, to some degree, can act independently of the state. In this chapter I shift focus to consider Swahili identity as it is construed, through domination and resistance, in a wider, national, context.

In recent years, as anthropologists have explored the relationship between local cultural elements and broader structures, particular attention has been paid to hegemony and resistance (Jean Comaroff 1985; Scott 1985; Abu-Lughod 1990). These concepts provide a significant framework for understanding the distribution of power that has been documented in particular ethnographic materials, but they are not categorically defined. A number of questions pervade the anthropological discourse: what exactly is hegemony? how does it relate to domination? what is resistance? does there have to be consciousness for someone's actions to constitute resistance?

HEGEMONY AND DOMINATION

"Hegemony" has become virtually a key symbol for a set of

questions and ideas about the relationship between superordinate and subordinate peoples. The term was first coined by political activist Antonio Gramsci (1957; 1973) in exploring the relationship between the Italian state and the working class. Gramsci wanted to explain why the working class did not actively resist the rise of Fascism in Italy in the early 1920s, and attributed it to ideological domination by the state (Gramsci 1957). Scholars spend considerable energy trying to define and refine the concept of hegemony because Gramsci never clearly did so. His writings are comprised of short essays, and ideas that he developed whilst in prison; he does not offer one categorical definition of hegemony.

James Scott characterizes Gramscian hegemony as "ideological domination", but says that Gramsci's writings are ambiguous as to whether the ideology is seen by the subordinate group as being legitimate, or whether it is merely passively accepted (Scott 1985:315). It is this lack of clarity about the nature of hegemony which leads to questions about intentionality, consciousness and resistance, which I shall discuss below. Scott objects to the Gramscian notion of hegemony in that it fails to take account of subordinate understandings of ideological domination, and this view is, at least in part, shared by Ranajit Guha.

Guha makes a distinction between Gramscian "hegemony", in which there is no conscious awareness of superordinate

domination, and "domination" in which subordinate peoples (in this case colonized Indian intellectuals) are aware of their own domination (Guha 1989).

A useful analysis and definition of Gramscian hegemony is provided by Jean and John Comaroff:

We take hegemony to refer to that order of signs and practices, relations and distinctions, images and epistemologies - drawn from a historically situated cultural field - that come to be taken-for-granted as the natural and conceived shape of the world and everything that inhabits it. [Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:23]

They go on to say that once "something leaves the domain of the hegemonic it frequently becomes a major site of ideological struggle." They identify ideology as a companion concept to hegemony. Ideology is would-be hegemony that is challenged, "the expression and ultimately the possession of a particular social group" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:24). While hegemony constitutes the natural, taken-for-granted, world view shared by dominant and subordinate groups, ideology is the world view of one, usually more powerful, group and is available to be contested. What Jean and John Comaroff call "ideology" is what Ranajit Guha calls "domination".

While hegemony has been so central to the analysis of western capitalist societies, it has limits in its application to new, historically heterogeneous, states. Raymond Williams, one of the most prominent interpreters of Gramsci, talks about the project of the state being to maintain hegemony (Williams 1977), but colonial powers and new nations that recently

gained their independence are in a different position. They are still attempting to achieve hegemony. This is because citizens of the new states hold diverse views of the world, each of which, as I have shown for Kenya, they go to considerable lengths to maintain. The existence of such different views, and the knowledge that there are alternatives to a nation state, block the full imposition of state hegemony.

In characterizing the relations between Swahili people and other Kenyans on the one hand, and the state on the other, "domination" and "ideology" are more accurate than hegemony. For my purposes here I use "domination" to refer to enactments of power and control by the superordinate party, in this case the Kenyan state, of which the subordinate party, Kenyan citizens, are cognizant. Modifying the Comaroff's usage, I employ "ideology" to refer to the actual content of the project of domination: the ideas and messages of the state that are transmitted through laws, policies, and pronouncements.

Consistent with my rejection of the Kenyan state being hegemonic, my task in previous chapters has been to demonstrate that the desires, ideologies and moral system of the Kenyan state are not simply transmitted to a passive citizenry through the educational system. They are responded to and molded into what individual people and communities think are appropriate. However, there is still considerable

expression of state power and domination. Citizens' consciousness of their domination, and their attempts to reformulate state ideologies in their own cultural image, does not mean that the state is entirely unsuccessful in achieving its goals.

Centralization and Uncertainty as Enactments of State Power

The goal of the Kenyan state is to retain control of the nation, and this is achieved through centralizing key institutions such as education; through the sudden and frequent pronouncement of changes in public policy, which are difficult for the citizenry to keep up with; and by the physical control of persons. In the late 1980s unexpected pronouncements from Nairobi appeared frequently in the print and electronic media: they warned wananchi against foreigners, especially foreign missionaries and foreign researchers; they decreed that citizens must not discuss politics in public vehicles; they warned against "tribalism" and against traitors who were not loyal to the Nyayo government.

People were also routinely stopped on the streets late at night and asked to produce their identification cards; regular road blocks monitored the passage of cars and the numbers of people on the buses; in Nairobi, Kanu youth wingers¹ operating

¹Kanu youth wingers are young men and women who have left school and are doing 1-2 years of national service for the government while waiting to enter university. Although not set up specifically for this reason, having school leavers go into the National Youth Service takes some of the pressure off demand for university places, which is high both because of the expanding school leaving population, and

some city buses forced people to queue up in orderly lines before entering the buses.

As explained in Chapter V, schools were unable to plan programs with any certainty because their means of funding was constantly subject to changes beyond their control. Male school teachers were told that they could not grow beards because they were considered to be a sign of radical political sympathies. Many of the individual acts or pronouncements on the part of the state are small, but the cumulative effect is to accustom people to responding to state decrees and to pay attention to observing the law. In this way, significant social control can be achieved without a large show of military or police force -- that is, domination through ideology.

RESISTANCE

Resistance is the counterpart to hegemony, domination and ideology, and in part constitutes them; if people are resisting the domination of a more powerful group, then there is no hegemony; and domination and ideology are indicated.

An important question in studies of resistance is one of intentionality and consciousness of one's deeds:

...the present debate among historians and anthropologists over the conception and definition of resistance boils down to the problem of consciousness and motivation. [Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:31]

because student strikes, and consequent closures of the university have delayed graduation of the students already admitted.

Anthropologists look for conscious acts of resistance by subordinate peoples in order to counter the over-determining Marxist derived analytic models that see the under-class as accepting their position. An anthropological approach can counter the over-determination, without over romanticizing the lives of the oppressed (Abu-Lughod 1990; Roseberry 1988).

There are several implications for both conscious and unconscious acts of resistance. James Scott, in Weapons of the Weak, lists many small and not so small conscious actions of resistance by powerless groups: "foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage..." (Scott 1985:29). These are important, even if they do not significantly improve people's lives, or even if they are immediately detrimental, because they indicate peoples' consciousness of their predicament.

There can be unconscious resistance too. If the effect of the actions of powerless individuals or groups is to interfere with the hegemonizing project of the superordinate group, then that constitutes resistance regardless of intent. This becomes apparent in returning to the school prize giving that was described in Chapter VI. When I talked to the school headmistress about the new school uniform, her explanation for its implementation was in terms of the need for respectability and setting an appropriate example in a changing world. I, as an outside anthropologist suggest that Swahili girls performing a dance about heshima, and displaying a new and

more modest school uniform in the town of Mombasa articulates with other Kenyans' orientalist ideas about Muslim women, and thus these school girls are asserting Swahili identity, which is important for them to do for the perpetuation of their culture. I can legitimate my assertion by saying that the headmistress' notion of what is right and respectable in the world comes from a Swahili sensibility of propriety, so it is an assertion of a Swahili world view. But this is my interpretation, not their initial overt explanation of what they are doing. The headmistress did not directly articulate her decision in terms of community identity, much less resistance; she did not intend that to be the outcome. Her intention was that the girls should look respectable². Whatever the intentions, the effect of women displaying symbols of Swahili identity is to reinforce their distinctiveness as a group, which counters and therefore resists the homogenizing³ project of the state.

And these acts that are not necessarily consciously resistant can have another effect too: they may, in time, through the repeated practice of the resistant act, lead to consciousness of their actions as resistant (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991). So, resistance is an act that consciously or

² Towards the end of my stay in Mombasa I discussed my interpretations with some Swahili people, and asked whether they made any sense to them; they said that they did.

³"Hegemony homogenizes" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:24).

unconsciously has the effect of subverting, slowing down, diverting the dominating projects of the state.

Resistance and its Consequences

As well as resistance being conscious and unconscious, it can also have quite unintended negative outcomes. Paul Willis and Lila Abu Lughod, among others, have documented how when people are aware of their subordinate position, and even actively resist it, it does not necessarily directly free them from their condition; and sometimes the very act of resistance pushes them further into a dominated condition (Willis 1981a; Abu-Lughod 1990).

In Learning to Labour the lads recognize the subject position of the working class of which they are a part, a condition that Willis describes as "partial penetration" (Willis 1981a:145). They do enact many daily resistances to the system as it is represented to them through the school, such as disrupting classes, challenging teachers, and scoffing at other boys who accept the educational message that if they work hard they will get good jobs and better their lives. The end result of this resistance is that the lads do not do well enough in school to do anything other than the factory work in which most men of their class engage (Willis 1981a). Thus their resistance reinforces the dominant position of the capitalist state, and ensures a steady supply of suitable labor.

The provision of Islamic religious instruction by Swahili

people in order to ensure that their cultural identity is maintained is a situation comparable to Willis' lads. One Kenyan education administrator with whom I spoke argued that attending chuo as well as secular school is disadvantageous for Muslim pupils:

In Mombasa the effect of Islamic methods of teaching by rote learning, reading and writing from right to left in the madarasa and left to right in the modern schools is negative on the child's performance.

But Thomas Eisemon in a study of literacy skills among coastal Muslim school children in a rural community to the south of Mombasa, argues that Koranic instruction offers some benefits that children can carry with them to secular schools in terms of familiarity with written texts, and working in more than one language (Eisemon 1988). A number of Swahili people reported that "properly educated" people have extensive education in both Islamic and secular schools, and their ability to write in different scripts and to read in different directions indicates a breadth of skills and abilities rather than a barrier to learning.

One aspect of IRE that does present a problem however, and which constitutes an example of resistance reinforcing domination, is the amount of time taken up with Koranic education. Children spend a great deal of their time in school, either secular or Koranic. When they are not in regular school in the evenings and at weekends they can be found in chuo. The number of hours that children spend in

secular school is increasing with efforts to complete the 8-4-4 syllabus.

The goal of encouraging children to attend chuo is to make sure that they receive an adequate quantity and quality of religious education because it is not certain that they will receive it in school. However, this does take away time from doing school homework, a great deal of which is allocated, and which the pupils must do in order to pass the public examinations that will give them some chance of getting further education, or a decent job. Thus, the resistance to outside ideologies, against which Swahili people are protected by sufficient IRE, disadvantages them in another way: They do not have much time to complete secular school homework, they do not do well in exams, and they are not equipped to take their places in positions of power where they might be able to mold Kenya to look a little more like their own world. Through the resistant effects of their actions they feed into external domination; they ensure (unintentionally) that they remain a subordinate group. This is not a simplistic argument for the incompatibility of an Islamic pedagogy with modern development but rather a demonstration of the way in which Islam operates as a form of resistance with some unintended consequences.

Similarly, Swahili women veiling has the effect of asserting Swahili identity and so resisting the homogenizing project of the state. But as well as this being an apparently

desirable condition for Swahili people -- the assertion of their identity in a time of challenge to diversity -- the particular orientalist form that this articulation takes renders Swahili people even more "other" and removed from central loci of power.

Young women's desire to veil stylishly and to be "hip" in other ways has the effect of resisting their elders: the whole point of veiling is not to be stylish. Their fascination with Madonna, with pop music, rock videos, fashion and romance resists the world view of their elders. Their need to buy the latest in music and fashions leads them into jobs as store clerks, bank tellers and secretaries. Being out in the world of work and also exposed to foreign ideas regarding sex and romance to be found in songs, videos and magazines, engages them exactly in the "corrupt" world view of a wider Kenya and of the West⁴ that their parents, through appropriate religious education, are trying to protect them. Like Bedouin young women (Abu-Lughod 1990), Swahili young women, in resisting their elders, are vulnerable to being drawn further into the clutches of the state as they develop consumption patterns that require them to go out to work, and adopt family values of conjugal romance and monogamy.

⁴The particular concerns about the activities and interests of Kenya's youth are shared by parents of all ethnic groups, because it is on the upcoming generations that the marks of radical socio-cultural transformation can most clearly be seen.

IDENTITIES

As Dorinne Kondo states, "...identities are multiple, fraught with tension and contradiction, and asserted in specific performative contexts" (Kondo 1990:306). And while people routinely sustain multiple identities of gender, age, ethnicity and so forth, at any single moment a particular element of one's identity may be foregrounded, have more power and more relevance. The overt goal of the Kenyan state is that people should increasingly identify as Kenyans but, in practice, peoples local identities tend to be foregrounded.

Swahili identity (even with all its diversity of emphasis) is much more coherent than national, Kenyan identity. The Swahili elements of a person's identity come about through daily interactions in family, prayer, religious schooling, observations of marriages, births and deaths and all the other practices and elements that constitute the repertoire of Swahili culture from which people can draw. Swahili culture, and thus identity, is integrated into people's lives as the mostly taken for granted in daily experience. In spite of rapid contemporary changes, there is still continuity with a distant past, a shared history.

Kenyan culture, and thus identity, is far less integrated into people's daily lives. The nation of Kenya is quite young; there is only a brief shared history. Kenyan culture is not imbued in everyday experiences. Mostly it is presented to Kenyans quite self-consciously as ideology through school

curricula, political speeches, new national holidays and patriotic songs. Kenyan culture, and identification with it, floats above the more fully integrated local identities of all Kenyans. One domain in which Kenyans do share the experience of being Kenyan is in international sporting events. Kenya continues to produce some of the best long distance runners in the world and their participation in the 1988 Olympic games was a great source of national pride. Perhaps it should not be surprising that the source of national identification would be externally, at the international level where Kenya is pitted, as a nation, against other nations, rather than around some internal national rallying point.

I have spent much of this dissertation highlighting all that is distinctive about Swahili culture and identity, and the moves to maintain some cultural distinctiveness in the post-colonial state. However, I do not mean to suggest that the rest of Kenya is any more homogenous; it is not just Swahili people who are striving to maintain their distinctiveness.

On December 20, 1987 Silvanus Melea (S.M.) Otieno, a Nairobi lawyer, died suddenly at the age of 55. The national controversy surrounding where he was to be buried sheds some light on issues of national and local identities. Although much of the rhetoric of speeches and policy decisions from Nairobi alludes to the desire for the Nyayo trilogy of peace, love and unity and for nation building, the final decision of

the Kenya supreme court indicates consent to the ongoing forging of local, ethnic, identities.

The Otieno Case

S.M. Otieno, a Luo man by birth, was married to a Kikuyu woman, Virginia Wambui Otieno. They lived most of their married lives in Nairobi and raised their children there. When S.M. Otieno died, his widow announced through the Voice of Kenya (VOK) radio station that her late husband would be buried at their farm at Ngong just outside Nairobi. Simultaneously, the late Mr. Otieno's brother and other male members of the Umira Kager clan to which Mr. Otieno had belonged announced through VOK that he would be buried according to Luo custom in Siaya district in Western Kenya, the place of his birth. These conflicting announcements rapidly took the widow and her brother-in-law to court where, for five months, evidence was heard about where he should be buried.

Mrs. Otieno won the original case. The high court justice, Mr. Shields, in ruling for the plaintiff (Mrs. Otieno) argued:

He [S. M. Otieno] was a Luo by tribe, educated in Makerere and India and had a very substantial and varied legal practice in Nairobi. He married the plaintiff, a Kikuyu lady of one of Kenya's leading Kikuyu families, and numbered along [sic] his clients people of all tribes and races. He was a metropolitan and a cosmopolitan, and though he undoubtedly honoured the traditions of his ancestors, it is hard to envisage such a person as subject to African Customary Law and in particular to the customs of a rural community. [Daily Nation, January 3, 1987]

Justice Shields was arguing that common law, with its roots in

British law introduced in the colonial period prevailed over customary law.

However, when a panel of three high court judges ruled on the clan's appeal in the case in May of 1987, they found in favor of Mr. Otieno's brother and clan, arguing that "where, as here there is a conflict between common law and African customary law, the latter must prevail" (Daily Nation, May 15, 1987). They argued that there is nothing repugnant in Luo burial practices, and nothing in Mr. Otieno's background to suggest that, even as a resident of Nairobi, he had forsaken his "tribe" and its practices. This case was the talk of Kenya from S. M. Otieno's death until his burial in Siaya district on May 23.

On hearing the final ruling, Mrs. Otieno announced that she would not go to Western Kenya for the funeral, as her brothers-in-law stated it was her duty to do, that her human rights had been violated, and the case showed that women in Kenya had no rights (Daily Nation, May 14 1987). The issue of women's rights (in this particular case, widows' rights) in Kenya was prominent throughout the case, as was the contestation of African traditional law with colonial common law. As within the Swahili community, gender is significant in national discourses on the development and character of the nation. While there is clearly the emergence of some kind of proto feminist sympathy, and debate over gender in Kenya, it is secondary to issues of local ethnic identity as the

following account indicates.

One day during January when the appeal stage of the Otieno case was beginning, I talked to a number of women teachers in the staff room of a school in Mombasa; they were of various coastal and non-coastal backgrounds, and all college educated. My field notes provide the following account:

They all feel sorry for Wambui, but they don't think she will win the case. They think she should just give in to her late husband's clan. They said that it is a problem if a woman will not follow her husband's clan. It is not fair that she gets absorbed by the man's clan, but then at least she has a place. It is terrible if you don't have a place/clan. It would mean a person is not anything. I suggested they would be a Kenyan. They said you can't just be a Kenyan. A clan can be bad, but it is good too. You have to have your own people. They feel she gave up her clan (Kikuyu) by marrying a Luo and living in the city. They didn't see S. M. as having given up his clan. So, they have sympathy for her, but better if she gives in because they don't expect she'll win.

This case shows clearly how local identity constitutes a person's fundamental identity in Kenya and how women are expected to accommodate that fact. Only secondarily can people count themselves as Kenyan.

Maintaining identity as both Kenyan and as a member of a particular community is challenging in a period when people are constantly urged to beware of disloyal citizens.

Reflecting this climate, Datsun, a major importer of foreign cars and vans to Kenya, promoted their vehicles with the slogan: "Datsun is my car, Kenya is my country." Following this, a Muslim youth group produced a t-shirt that read "Islam is my religion, Kenya is my country" thus asserting loyalty to

both the state and the local community. And a coastal MP pointed out in a speech the similarity between the Nyayo philosophy of Peace, Love and Unity, and the main tenets of the Koran.

But external forces make it difficult in some ways for Swahili people to realize the position of being Swahili and Kenyan, not merely because of the internalization of Swahili culture, but because of alienation from Kenyan culture. The images of Kenyans that are portrayed from Nairobi in print and electronic media and in political speeches are rural, monogamous, Christian church goers living in nuclear families. The Kenyan We Want, the title of one Social Education and Ethics text book portrays Kenyans that simply do not resemble coastal Muslims (Were 1987). To restate Paul Willis: "...macro determinants need to pass through the cultural milieu to reproduce themselves at all" (Willis 1981a:171). And it is difficult for people to take something, make it their own and reproduce it when there is nothing in it that is recognizable as even potentially their's. In the search for national unity, something that all Kenyans do share at some level, paradoxically, is the desire to maintain strong ties to their own ethnic group.

CONCLUSION: PRACTICE APPROACH REVISITED

Throughout this dissertation I have employed the practice approach in anthropology as framed by Yanagisako and Collier to explore the lives of Swahili women and men in post-colonial

Kenya: I have looked at individual agency within wider structural contexts that are inherently unequal and power laden. I have shown that the power structures of the state are not absolute, but are culturally constructed and contestable, and that they do not absolutely determine people's lives (Yanagisako and Collier 1989). The practice approach grounds, humanizes and locates agency on the one hand, and demystifies wider structures on the other. Using the practice approach as a framework saves the analysis from overdetermining tendencies that much of Marxist inspired social theory embodies.

It becomes clear that although, in post-colonial Kenya, Nairobi is the source of state policies, their implementation, and their resistance, have to take place at the local level in the everyday actions of ordinary people trying to get by in every town in Kenya. I have shown here how every day engagement in educational discourses is one site of domination and resistance between Swahili men and women, and between the state and Swahili people, as they struggle to educate their children as they think fit.

GLOSSARY

Adabu: Good manners, often with reference to men.

Bajuni: Person or people of Arab, and Northern Kenyan or Southern Somalian, descent.

Baobab fruit: Fruit of the Baobab tree often dyed red, soaked in syrup, and sold as candy.

Barafu: Home-made popsicle.

Bhangi: Marijuana.

CAA: Coast Arab Association.

Chakacha: Dance performed by Swahili women in which they wrap a leso around their hips and rotate them.

Dawa: Medicine.

DC: District Commissioner.

Desturi: Custom.

Dhow: Wooden sailing boat with lateen rigging.

DO: District Officer

Fikhi: General Islamic knowledge regarding the proper way to wash and pray.

Fundi: Craftsmen or technician such as carpenter, car mechanic etc.

Hadith: Account of the life of Prophet Mohamed, used as an example of how to live as a good Muslim.

Haj: Pilgrimage made to Mecca by Muslims who are able to afford it.

Haram: Forbidden, unclean.

Harambee: "Lets pull together." National slogan of President Kenyatta; school fund raising event.

Heshima: Respect, modesty, reputation, piety, more frequently associated with women.

Hijab: Refers both to a large women's headscarf tied under the chin, and to the state of being completely veiled.

Hirizi: Amulet, often containing lines from the Koran, worn as a protection against evil.

Hotuba: Religious sermon, often given after Friday prayers at the Mosque.

Imami: Faith.

IRE: Islamic Religious Education.

Jamaa: Extended family.

Jamii: Society.

Juzuu: Chapter of the Koran.

Kadhi: Islamic judge.

Kanu: Kenya African National Union, the ruling political party in Kenya. Newspapers and local writers have begun to write it in lower case letters.

Kanzu: Full length white cotton robe worn by Swahili men, especially on special occasions or when attending the mosque.

Karamu: Lunch time feast marking weddings, funerals or other significant occasions such as departure for Haj.

KCE: Kenya Certificate of Education (secondary school completion examination).

KCPE: Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (primary school completion examination).

Kitambulisho: National identity card.

Koti: Long sleeved, full length black coat worn by young Swahili women over their dresses as a form of veiling when they go out.

Kuficha: To conceal or hide.

Kuoja: To marry (refers to men).

Kuolewa: To be married (refers to women).

Kupamba: Literally, to decorate; ceremony where a bride in all her wedding finery is displayed to assembled guests.

Leso: Cotton wrap made in Kenya covered with print design and a Swahili proverb. Usually sold in pairs.

LNC: Local Native Council

Maalim: Islamic teacher and healer.

Mabasha: High status male homosexuals.

Mabati: Corrugated iron used for roofing.

Madarasa: Islamic school for advanced students; term also used generically to refer to any Islamic school, including chuo.

Magendo: Smuggling or other illicit activity.

Mahamri: Deep fried bread resembling a doughnut.

Mahari: Bridewealth.

Majengo: Buildings; also refers to an area of town settled by squatters.

Makuti: Thatch (usually palm leaves) used for roofing.

Mandazi: See Mahamri.

Mashamba: Farms.

Matabibu: Medical practitioner, frequently in Arabic tradition.

Matatu: Mini vans used for public transportation throughout Kenya.

Maulidi: Celebrations of the birth of the Prophet Mohamed; celebratory readings of the Koran.

MEO: Municipality Education Office.

MEWA: Muslim Education and Welfare Association.

Mila: Tradition.

Miraa: (Also called Gaat, or Kaat) Leaf grown in highland Kenya which acts as a stimulant when chewed, usually with gum.

Misago: Lesbians.

Mitaa: Neighborhoods.

Mofa: A coarse grained maize bread baked in a clay pot.

MP: Member of Parliament.

Mpwawa: Nephew.

Msaga: Lesbian.

Mshafu: The complete book of the Koran.

Msharifu: (Sharif) person believed to be directly descended in their father's line from the Prophet, Mohamed.

Mseto: A combination of rice and posho.

Msingi: Foundation.

Mtaa: Neighborhood.

Mwakisu: Wooden bed frame covered with latticed palm leaves.

Mwambao: Political movement for coastal autonomy in the early 1960s.

Ndani: Inside -- often used in reference to a woman or a house or a room.

Ndugu: Sibling.

Nyayo: Footsteps; President Moi's philosophy of Peace, Love and Unity, which follows in the footsteps of President Kenyatta's philosophy of Harambee.

PC: Provincial Commissioner.

Pembe: Cow horn used as percussion instrument at Swahili weddings where the horn is hit with a heavy stick.

PEO: Provincial Education Office.

Posho: Upcountry food, usually a ration of grain such as maize.

Purdah: Concealment of women by particular attire or by isolation in a particular space.

Raia: An individual that operates alone; in contemporary use it can refer to a plain clothes police officer.

Ramba: Canopy carried by slaves covering high status women in the Mombasa streets in the nineteenth century.

Samosa: Savory deep fried snack with meat or vegetable filling.

Sarong: Ankle length wrap made of Indonesian textile worn by Swahili men.

Senganya: Malicious gossip.

Shamba: Farm.

Shangazi: Father's sister (aunt).

Shoga: Low status homosexual man.

Sitara: New clothes, leso, toiletries, shoes etc. provided for a new bride by her husband.

Souahel: Arabic word for Coast.

Sura: Verses of the Koran.

Suruali: Trousers; underwear.

Taifa: Nation.

TSC: Teachers Service Commission.

VOK: Voice of Kenya (government run radio and television stations).

Thelatha Taifa: Three Tribes of Mombasa.

Thenashara Taifa: Twelve Tribes of Mombasa made up of the Three Tribes and the Nine Tribes.

Tisa Taifa: Nine Tribes of Mombasa.

Ukaya: Long indigo robe worn by lower status Swahili women in Mombasa at the end of the nineteenth century.

Vibibi: Coconut pancakes.

Vugo: An afternoon dance event in which the guests dance chakacha and play pembe.

Waalimu: Islamic teachers.

Walimu: Teachers.

Wagunya: Bajuni people.

Wananchi: Citizens.

Wanawale: Virgins; unmarried young women.

Washarifu: Plural of Msharifu.

Washihiri: Twentieth century immigrants from Hadhramat on the Arabian Peninsula.

Waswahili: Swahili people.

Watu wa Mji: People of the town: Old Town Swahili people, especially of Twelve Tribes and Arab descent.

Waungwana: Freeborn people.

Wazungu: Europeans, white people.

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APPENDIX A: EARLY MOMBASA SCHOOLS AND THEIR FOUNDERS

1894 Buxton Rd school founded by the Church Missionary Society (now Buxton High School). Mixed by gender and ethnicity.

1909 White Sisters Convent School founded (now Star of the Sea School). Mixed by gender and ethnicity.

1912 Arab Boys School started by British government (now Serani Primary School). Boys of mixed ethnicity.

1913 Indian Boys School started by British government. Asian boys.

1918 HH the Aga Khan Mombasa Boys School opened. Ismaili boys.

1919 HH the Aga Khan Mombasa Girls School opened. Ismaili girls.

1923 Allidina Visram School opened. Asian boys.

1930's African government schools started.

1931 Shimo-La-Tewa boys boarding school opened. Arab and Swahili boys.

1932 The Goan School, Mombasa Government assisted school for Goan children opened. Mixed by gender, Goans.

1933 Ghazali Madarasa founded. Mixed gender, Swahili and Arabs.

Indian Girls School (private) moved to new buildings after starting in a private house (date unknown). (Now Coast Girls High School.) For Asian girls.

1934 Government Indian Primary School opened.

1937 Muslim School founded at Changamwe by Afro-Asian Association.

1938 Arab Girls School founded (now Mbaraki Primary). Girls, Arab and Swahili.

1939 - 1945 Education disrupted by World War II.

1943 British government took over Indian Girls School, renamed it Government Girls High School. Asian girls, primary through secondary.

1948 Primary Section of Government Girls High School moved and eventually became Bondeni primary school.

1951 Mombasa Institute of Muslim Education opened. Technical secondary school for Muslim boys of all ethnic backgrounds from the whole of East Africa.

1952 Tom Mboya primary school built. Arab and Swahili boys.

1953 Mvita Primary School opened. Mixed gender; African.

1957 Allidina Visram ceased as primary school and became secondary only.

1958 Girls started to attend Allidina Visram to take 'A' levels.

1959 Marycliff School started by White Sisters.

Government Girls High School became secondary only, and renamed Coast Girls High School.

1960 Arab Boys Secondary became Khamis Secondary.

1968 Burhaniya Secondary School founded by Bohora community. 50% Bohora (hard for Asians to get school places in late 60s).

1977 Alibhai Panju school started by Ithnasheri community for Muslim girls.

1983 Burhaniya school divides by gender.

1985 Sheikh Halifa Bin Zayed Secondary and Technical school founded; mixed by gender, but segregated.

APPENDIX B: PRICE INCREASES AFTER WORLD WAR II

A man who was a pupil both of Sheikh Ghazali and the Arab Boys School described World War II, and then the transfer of political power to the Independent Kenyan state as the two most traumatic events in Swahili collective memory. People's system of morality was transformed, he argued, because the massive rise in the cost of living drew people into the labor market. He gave the following (unsolicited) examples of price increases between immediately prior to World War II and the time at which he was speaking in April 1988, and it is interesting to note that they are all material elements of male Swahili culture:

	<u>Price Before the War:</u>	<u>Price in 1988:</u>
Rice	One penny per pound.	Thirteen shillings ¹ per pound.
Kanzu cloth	One and a half shillings for seven yards.	Three hundred shillings for seven yards.
Plain Kofia	Three shillings	Fifty shillings
Embroidered Kofia	Twenty shillings	1000 shillings
School fees	Five shillings per term, plus one shilling sports fee	2000 shillings

¹There were 12 pennies to the shilling.

APPENDIX C: MOMBASA DISTRICT SCHOOLS 1988

Maintained Secondary Schools

Mombasa Polytechnic

Allidina Visram High School

Khamis Secondary School

Shimo-la-Tewa Secondary School

Star of the Sea Secondary School

Technical High School

Tudor Day Secondary School

Changamwe Secondary School

Likoni Secondary School

Mombasa School for the Physically Handicapped

Assisted Secondary Schools

H. H. Aga Khan High School

Sacred Heart High School

Private Secondary Schools

Burhaniya Secondary School

H. H. The Aga Khan Kenya Secondary School

Kilindini Secondary School

Makupa Secondary School

Mombasa Baptist High School

Mombasa High School

Mombasa Secondary School

New Era High School

Oshwal Secondary School

Sunrise High School

St. Anne's High School

St. Charles Lwanga Secondary School

Valentine's High School

Alibhai Panju Secondary School

Coast Academy Secondary School

Mombasa Academy Secondary School

Burhaniya Girls Secondary School

Bamburi High School

Memon High School

Jomvu Secondary School

Sheikh Khalefa Secondary School

Utange Harambee

Maintained Primary Schools

Mombasa Primary

Bondeni Primary

Central Girls

Kikowani Primary

Kaloleni Primary

Mbeheni Girls

Ziwani Primary

Tom Mboya Primary

Mbaraki Primary

Serani Primary

R. G. Ngala Primary

Changamwe Primary

Magongo Primary

Bomu Primary

Freretown Primary
Khadija Primary
Kongowea Primary
Kwa Jomvu Primary
St. Lwanga's Primary
Likoni Primary
Makande Primary
Makupa Primary
Marycliff Primary
Maunguja Primary
Mtopanga Primary
Mtongwe Primary
Mvita Primary
Shimo-la-Tewa Primary
Sparki Primary
Fahari Primary
Tudor Primary
Utange Primary
Miritini Primary
Mwakirunge Primary
Mikindani Primary
Bamburi Primary
Ziwani for the Deaf Primary
Chaani Primary
Mwijabu Primary
Shikaadabu Primary

Gome Primary

Majengo Primary

Maweni Primary

Mlaleo Primary

Mrima Primary

Vijiweni Primary

Ganjoni Primary

Kisauni Primary

Amani Primary

Kwa Shee Primary

Kipevu Primary

Umoja Primary

Kenya Navy Primary

Assisted Primary Schools

Aga Khan Primary

Alibhai Panju Primary

Burhaniya Primary

Guru Nanaki Primary

M. M. Shah Primary

St. Augustine's Preparatory

Port Reitz School for the Handicapped

Sacred Heart Primary

Star of the Sea Primary

Unaided Primary Schools

Loreto Convent

Changamwe S. D. A.

The Coast Academy

Valentine Primary

New Era Primary

Nasser Puria Primary

Kenya Primary

Pwani Academy

Bashir Primary

Oshwal Primary

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