

ESSAYS IN SWAHILI GEOGRAPHICAL THOUGHT

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Introductory Remarks

The essays offered here originated in a series of conference papers presented over the years at various professional meetings. In the time elapsed since the first of them was offered at the meeting of the UNESCO Commission on the History of Geographical Thought (1988), new important works on Swahili history and language have appeared which demonstrate a variety of productive approaches to the problems of Swahili cultural and ethnic history. In a publication such as the *Swahili Forum* it may be appropriate to recognize the steps made, to acknowledge the advances achieved, and to identify the needs remaining. John Middleton's (1992) well-received book presents a thorough and authoritative analysis of the social, economic, and spatial structures which evolved in the international setting of the East African coast. James de Vere Allen's posthumously published study (1992) pursues the questions of historical identity of the Swahili and of the political styles developed in the process of interaction of Arabo-Islamic and African elements of coastal culture. The special role of Islam in the formation and dynamics of Swahili city-states' elites has been analyzed slightly earlier by Randall L. Pouwels (1987). Pouwels also has addressed coastal historiography in a series of articles some of which are cited in the following essays. The fundamental study of the Swahili language by Derek Nurse and Thomas Hinnebusch (1993) revises and elaborates the possibilities of relating the chronology of the development of Swahili to the history of the Bantu-speaking coastal societies, raised in the earlier works singly or jointly by Derek Nurse and Thomas Spear. New editions of Swahili texts make available, sometimes for the first time, to African and Western scholars alike, the synchronic narratives indispensable for historical accuracy of our interpretations (Omar & Frankl 1990, Tolmacheva 1993).

All of these, and many other, works explicitly or implicitly acknowledge the basic and determinant role of geographical factors in Swahili history and culture. Titles like *Les Swahili entre Afrique et Arabie* (Le Guennec-Coppens & Caplan 1991) project the Swahili society straight onto the map of the western Indian Ocean. Yet the exploration of the Swahili vision of

¹ Sections IV and V will be published in *Swahili Forum* III

the geographical setting in which the culture originated has barely begun. As the Swahili language modernizes under various, increasingly urgent pressures, both internal and external, recovering "uncontaminated" evidence from the vocabulary becomes increasingly difficult. Much of the earlier written heritage of the coast has been irretrievably lost. The brief period at the turn of the twentieth century marks the time when a number of oral traditions were recorded as they were remembered in living context, rather than as oral histories or ethnographical reminiscences collected in more recent decades. Incomplete though the data for the following sketches are, I consciously based my initial research on the earlier texts and dictionaries, to avoid anachronistic reading and overly-modern interpretation. This does not imply a static approach but rather a desire for cultural accuracy in exploring the language and thought of a society on the verge of succumbing to Western imperialism and entering the age of dominated by an alien technology and dramatically different conceptualization of space, motion, and interaction between man and nature.

This publication gives me a chance to present to colleagues in the field of Swahili studies the directions I have pursued in my writing and the background against which the key points are made; to reflect on the nature of recorded narratives as they relate to space and geography; and to set forth observations and conclusions which I hope to further extend to and test in the field in the near future. Admittedly, the methodology employed is historical; I do not aspire to place the discussion below on the level of professional linguistic discourse. I hope the readers will accept the "merely" philological analysis which, unencumbered by jargon, remains at all times secondary to issues and considerations of cultural history.

I. GEOGRAPHICAL CONCEPTUALIZATION IN SWAHILI THOUGHT²

The Swahili culture of the East African coast is a striking example of the role geography and the environment play in the history of pre-modern societies. The part of the Indian Ocean littoral which in the 20th century came to be called the Swahili coast stretches from southern Somalia to northern Mozambique. Although the coast and its participation in the Indian Ocean trade were first mentioned in Greek sources ("Azania" in the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, "Zingis" in Ptolemy), the Swahili culture is a product of the Islamic era and originates in a complex interaction of African and Asian (mostly Near Eastern) elements in the coastal environment. The term "Swahili," derived from the Arabic *Sahil* (pl. *Sawahil*), referred originally to coastal towns, and later to their racially mixed population and their language (the question of contemporary Swahili identity, which is continuing to evolve, is still being debated).

The original foci of Swahili culture were African settlements on the islands and along the mainland coast of the Indian Ocean. Numbering in the dozens (today, over 400 archeological sites have been identified), most of them were founded between the eighth and the thirteenth centuries. Some of them developed into major termini of ocean trade and attracted visitors and

² This essay builds on papers presented at the 1988 meeting of the International Commission for the History of Geographical Thought (Boondanung, Australia) and the 1990 Annual Meeting of the Columbia History of Science Group (Friday Harbor, Washington, USA). The support received from the American Philosophical Society and Washington State University is gratefully acknowledged.

migrants from the Arabian peninsula and the Persian Gulf (later also from India and, apparently, the Comoros) It was the resulting mix of populations and cultures which for a long time motivated the perception of the Swahili civilization as not only superior, but essentially alien to Africa both ethnically and culturally. Indeed, Arabic had had a significant impact on the vocabulary of the Swahili language, as had Islamic religion, learning, and material culture on Swahili civilization. The Swahili speakers themselves have long stressed the differences between themselves and their indigenous neighbors, claiming foreign, Middle Eastern Islamic antecedents (the phenomenon has abated somewhat since independence). Both the trend and the impetus of competitive search for foreign roots were continuously strengthened by new waves of migrants who, although never numerous, fed the local contest of genealogies by founding their claim to prerogative on an Islamic system of values.

From the rooting of the Swahili identity in an Islamic diaspora radiating from geographically distant centers to the economic foundations of Swahili society (fishing, maritime trade across the ocean and the exchange between the coast and the mainland), it is clear that the role of geographical factors in Swahili history cannot be overemphasized. The expansion of certain towns into major centers of the coast (in the Lamu archipelago and on the adjoining mainland from the eighth, and then again in the 14th century; Mogadishu from the 12th century, Kilwa in the 14th-16th centuries, Zanzibar mostly from the 17th century), the development of social and political institutions, the spread of Islam and Islamic learning - all were related to the growing range of commercial contacts involving the different places along the coast in regional and international trade (much of the contest revolved around the control for Sofalan gold trade emanating through Kilwa)

Recent archeological evidence has left no doubts regarding the significance of coastal location and maritime environment in the origin of East African urban life, leading the British archaeologist Mark Horton to call the part of coast under discussion "the Swahili corridor." It is therefore astounding that no exploration of Swahili geographical knowledge and conceptualization has even been undertaken. What follows is the first attempt to outline the most salient features of Swahili geographical thinking, concentrating on categories of space, direction, and time; to determine the extent of a geographical vision held by the Muslim coastal urban dwellers; and to discuss the nature of toponyms and geographical vocabulary in the Swahili language.

The sources of our study all originated on the East African coast and may be grouped in the following way: (1) dictionaries of the Swahili language, with special emphasis on the early lexicons, reflecting pre-colonial usage largely unaffected by European borrowings; (2) traditional historical texts, especially the so-called chronicles, originally mostly in Swahili, although a few in Arabic³; and (3) turn-of-the-century records of Swahili accounts of travels inland along long-distance caravan routes and overseas to Europe and elsewhere.

The method adopted in this study is (1) to present synchronically the information as it was found on the coast by the 19th century missionaries, scholars and explorers and with the

³ Both Arabic and Swahili chronicles have been used in my research, edited and in manuscript. However, for the purposes of this paper the more widely-available editions and English translations by several scholars were used (Freeman-Grenville 1962; Omar and Frankl 1990; Werner 1914/15; Tolmacheva 1993).

qualification that the Swahili themselves perceived it as indigenous to the coast; (2) further, to distinguish between the African and the non-African elements and identify the origin of the latter where possible; (3) to identify the linguistic (lexical and morphological) tools employed in communicating geographical categories and vocabulary.

It will be demonstrated below that both on the conceptual and on the lexical levels several cultural complexes may be identified. To introduce them here briefly, we shall begin with the most recent complex, or substratum, and proceed retrospectively toward those more distant in time, whether from the standpoint of borrowing or evolution. It will be noted that the European element is not avoided. Two reasons may be suggested to justify the incorporation of European influences despite our focus on the pre-modern Swahili. First, in the interracial, intercultural milieu of the coast, as also in the strongly international vocabulary of the Swahili language, it would be pointless and even counterproductive to search for "uncontaminated" data. The degree of "contamination" is somewhat limited below through primary reliance on dictionaries and glossaries compiled prior to massive European interference in the inner workings of Swahili society. The mechanism itself with which the language (and the society) deal with modern phenomena and loanwords may be revealing of underlying mechanism of change and development which the "static" part of the vocabulary does not always convey. Secondly, while "pre-modern" may equal "pre-European" for some parts of Africa, the arrival of the Portuguese on the East African coast in 1498 and their subsequent active interference in coastal affairs impacted both the history *and* the language of the Swahili long before the era of industrial colonialism. The induction of East Africa into the Portuguese Indian empire and the fact that much of the Portuguese effort went into taking over the control of Indian Ocean shipping both served to affect the Swahili world-view and their cultural and geographical vocabulary.

The following list of complexes embraced in the Swahili world view contains several categories which must have overlapped in time. For instance, the German and English (British) influences for a time ran parallel, with both the German Empire and Great Britain actively supporting search for the source of the Nile and exploration of Equatorial Africa from the East African coast. Although Germany was first to establish protectorate over the coast, the British dominance over the Sultanate of Zanzibar assisted the influx of English loanwords into the Zanzibar dialect of Swahili which was later to become the foundation of the so-called Standard Swahili. (Steere's *Handbook of the Swahili Language* reflects Zanzibar usage). Furthermore, as coastal caravans penetrated Central Africa and reached the Congo (e.g., Tippu Tip), new Belgian-French loanwords began to enter the Swahili vocabulary. Neither group quite replaced the Portuguese vocabulary already imbedded in the coastal lexicon.

The next most recent cultural-linguistic complex is Islamic/Arabic. The two are only partly identical. Islam is a major identity factor among the Swahili; visitors to the coast distinguished the urban Muslim population from the country "heathens" as early as the tenth century A.D. (al-Mas'udi).⁴ Yet as we know, the Arabs were part of the coast's international network

⁴ This tenth-century Arab traveler (d. 965) and geographer is often somewhat carelessly cited as the authority for dating Arab colonization of the East African coast as early as the 920s when he visited the area. For a more careful study of his record see Tolmacheva 1986.

centuries before Islam. Although the records of Arab geographical knowledge and the conceptual development of Arab geographical knowledge and the conceptual development of Arab cartography are historically Islamic, the development of Arab navigation predated Islam. In fact, the system of Arab nautical orientation may be of non-Arab or only part-Arab origin. As is shown below, this system became part of the Swahili geographical-nautical system. For accuracy's sake we shall call it Arabic, reflecting the medium of the language as a transmission tool, rather than the original cultural source which may be difficult to discern.

Furthermore, there is a group of elements which can be precisely identified as Islamic, rather than Arab or Arabic. This refers to terminology and ideas linked specifically to Islamic space and time concepts, such as sacred orientation and the Islamic calendar. These will be called "Islamic" in the discussion below.

Finally, within the basic African complex one must be aware of two substrata or sub-complexes. In a culture as dominated by its proximity to the seas as Swahili culture, a maritime complex is predictably discerned. The monsoon navigation for trade, the fishing activity, the island location dictating defense strategies and means of communication, even concern over the choice of a healthy residence - all these generate attention to winds, currents, topography, orienteering marks, vessels, etc. On the other hand, the overseas trade alone could not provide sustenance for urban, non-agricultural settlers. Cultivation on the islands and on the adjoining mainland was an integral part of coastal economy. This, and the exchange of coastal surplus and imports for the goods of the interior created an awareness of the agricultural environment and cultivation seasons. While limited to the narrow coastal fringe, beyond which a dry belt of bush or semi-desert vegetation effectively separates the coast geographically and culturally from the high inland plateau. It has been recently emphasized that the earlier coastal culture may have been considerably more inland-looking than previously imagined. For this reason, and also because agriculture may reasonably be supposed to be an earlier foundation of coastal economy than trade, we are inclined to place the "mainland African" sub-complex at the earliest chronological stage of our schema. (Although fishing and shell-fish procurement may chronologically parallel or antedate coastal agriculture, neither may be of sufficient scale to assume a geographic impact. The chronology of Bantu settlement in East Africa cannot be discussed here.) The resulting sketch is presented below, where the time sequence is presented vertically, in visual agreement with the layered lexical strata, the bottom layer being the earliest and the top, the most recent. Thus the table is best read from the bottom up.

Complex V	European:	III	English (since 19th century - continuing)
		II	German (late 19th century to ab. 1920)
		I	Portuguese (16th-18th centuries)
Complex IV	Islamic ⁵ : via	IV	Indonesian (episodic via the Indian Ocean, continuous Madagascar and the Comoros)
		III	Indian (episodic)
		II	Persian (episodic, indistinct ⁶)
		I	Arab (since the 7th c. - continuing)
Complex III	Arabic		probably since the first century A.D. and continuing, overlaps "Arab Islamic."
Complex II	African - maritime		
Complex I	African - continental		

The continuing and concurrent existence of the Islamic environmental complex with the African-maritime and African-continental can be seen especially clearly in the area of calendar and time-reckoning. For instance, the Muslim lunar calendar existed alongside the solar Near Eastern one; the monsoon seasons are reflected both in the naval calendar (see below) and in agriculture where they regulate planting and harvesting. The names of months in the Islamic calendar have been replaced the Swahili equivalents in numerical sequence; only three Arabic names have been retained. This suggests the influence of the solar calendar, limited in modern times to navigation, where each 30-day month was given a number. Such a month was divided not into weeks but into decades *mwongo*. A division of the month into first and second halves also existed formerly, apparently in accordance with lunar phases. The seven-day week has numbered days ordered in reference to Friday as the Muslim day of congregational prayer; except for Friday *Juma* and Thursday *Alhamisi*, the names are linguistically Bantu. (During the colonial period the Gregorian calendar was introduced and is widely accepted; days of the week retain their "Muslim" names). Informally, time of day is now commonly reckoned in numbered hours beginning at "sunset" (6 p.m.) in two twelve-hour sequences for night and day. The Islamic style of marking the time by reference to the hours of prayer, in the area with a fairly uniform length of the day, provides a conveniently stable time-table with the added advantage of being far more international than the former system. Only a few time-reckoning terms have remained from the African-mainland complex (e.g. *Mafungulia ng'ombe* "letting out of cattle," about 8 a.m.). Ways of traditional time-reckoning are described in the following passage:

⁵ The "Islamic category applies to the period and major framework of the cultural-linguistic interaction. Islam provides the context but does not control all lexical borrowing which may be ideologically neutral or secular.

⁶ Although Persian antecedents figure prominently in social history, no Iranian loan-words have been identified which could not have been channelled via Arabic and Islamic or "Indian Ocean" culture (to use the term of James de Vere Allen).

Determining the time after clocks we did not know, since we did not have any clocks in former times. If you asked someone for the time, he would answer, "Look at the sun." Or people would look at the shade and measure it with their feet. If the sun stood over the footprint, the people knew that it was such and such time. If the shadow measured 9 feet, they said, "Now it is 9 o'clock." But in the evening they did not know if it was 5 or 6 o'clock (i.e., 11 or 12 o'clock in Muslim time). On rainy days the people listened to the crowing of the cock. When the cock crowed the first time, the people knew that it was 5 or 6 o'clock in the night (11 or 12 o'clock); however, if the cock did not crow, they lost all track of time (Velten 1903:335).

There is no written geography in the indigenous records collected on the coast. Geography as a science was not part of the coastal intellectual training. Even medieval Islamic geography did not imprint itself upon traditional Swahili education. Some cosmographic lore became part of the Swahili literary environment but more by the way of written literature influencing folklore than as part of school learning. The basic cosmological ideas were few, unelaborate, poorly known and colored by Islamic cosmology. Ignorance, in fact, may have been at least partly the result of displacement of traditional learning (African complex) due to Islamic pressure which, however, was not accompanied by a corresponding effort to import Islamic science. The following excerpt admits lack of knowledge while communicating some of what was not lost:

We do not know the world; we know neither its beginning nor its end. We only see the days come and go and the sun rise and set. Our ancestors taught us that when the sun sets and sinks into the ocean, it causes a mighty explosion like that of a cannon-ball. But this cannot be heard by all people, but only by the little children and animals. We see the sun rise every day, but we do not know any explanation for this (Velten 1903:335).

Similarly, ignorance of the earth and celestial bodies is asserted, e.g., "about the origins of the ocean, where it comes from, the Swahili do not know anything," "we do not know if the moon is a mirror, or whatever. We only see the light that God created," "about the earth the Swahili do not know anything" (Velten 1903:336, 338). It then transpires that the disclaimers indicate certain cosmogonic and cosmological notions, although maybe not a well-ordered system. One account mentions three possible views on the earth:

They (the Swahili) do not know the form of the earth, whether it is a tree or a big stone. They only know the word *ulimwengu* for the earth. This means *ule mawingu* i.e., "these are clouds." They believe that the earth is held on an ox on his horns (Velten 1903:338).

Mythological associations here are quite obvious. Although it is accepted that myth as genre is alien to Islamic culture, it is nevertheless unquestionable that the Judeo-Christian myth of creation became part of Islamic cosmology through the medium of the Qur'an. The following etiological story illustrates both the nature of Swahili cosmological views and the Islamic overlay.

This is the history of the fish they call Chewa, the king of the fishes. His mouth is bigger than that of any other fish in the sea.

Now on the back of the Chewa there is an enormous stone, and on the stone there stands a big cow. The learned men say that this cow has forty thousand horns and forty thousand legs. On its horns the cow carries the earth.

This cow which stands on the stone on top of the Chewa has its nose in the sea. And every day it breathes once. When it breathes out the waves of the ocean are blown up against the shore and the people on the coast call it high tide. When the cow breathes in the water is sucked away and so the people call it low tide. And others say the Chewa fish breathes in such a manner that the earth is raised or lowered in the ocean - but only Allah knows. He created the seven oceans and the seven floors of the earth, one above the other, all well-fixed, and the seven skies hanging without pillars. And the Chewa fish who carries it all is just floating there by the will of Allah (Knappert 1970:173-74)

While Islam's impact upon stories like these resulted in syncretism in folklore and religion, cultural transformations went further, as evidenced by the accounts of Muslim learned men or functionaries *mwalimu* guiding the rites observed on occasion of solar or lunar eclipses. If the *Story of the Giant Whale Chewa* explains the phenomenon of tides, other records show that traditional lore had contained diverse concepts of the workings of the universe. The stars are small stones affixed by God to the skies; thunder is God's laughter, the earthquake is caused when the dow (ox) which carries the earth on its horns, changes the burden from one horn to the other, etc. Other oxen-shaped monsters live in the ocean and cause shipwrecks. Of special interest in regard to *patterns* of conceptualization is the Swahili transfer of their own island-dominated world-view to other societies: Mtoro Mwinyi Bakari asserted that the Swahili "believe that it (the ocean) surrounds all countries, that they are sitting on an island, and that other countries are also islands, surrounded by the ocean" (Velten 1903:338)

Vocabulary

The vocabulary related to meteorology or topography away from the sea is invariably of Bantu linguistic origin. A few examples will suffice:

country	<i>inchi, nchi, nti</i>	river	<i>mto</i>
desert	<i>jangwa</i>	star	<i>nyota</i>
distance	<i>umbali</i>	sun	<i>jua</i>
timberland	<i>bara</i>	town	<i>mji</i>
lake	<i>ziwa</i>	water	<i>maji</i>
mountain	<i>mlima</i>	way	<i>njia</i>
rain	<i>mvua</i>	wind	<i>pepo</i>

Even in relation to the coast, some terms of Bantu stock have remained:

coast	<i>Pwani</i>	reef, rock in the sea	<i>kipwa</i>
island	<i>kisiwa</i>	South wind	<i>kusi</i>
North wind	<i>kaskazi</i>	West wind	<i>umande</i>

New Arabic vocabulary, though, displaced the Bantu words in most aspects of maritime activity and conceptualization including both general and specific terms.

cape	<i>rasi</i> (Ar. <i>ra's</i>)	season, weather	<i>wakati</i> (Ar. <i>Waqt</i>)
hurricane	<i>tufani</i> (Ar. <i>tufan</i>)	ship	<i>marikabu</i> (Ar. <i>markab</i>)

port	<i>bandari</i> (Ar -Pers <i>bandar</i>)	storm	<i>tharuba, dhoruba</i> (Ar. <i>darbah</i>)
sea	<i>bahari</i> (Ar. <i>bahr</i>)	voyage	<i>safari</i> (Ar. <i>safar</i>)

The culture of navigation imprinted itself deeply on coastal society. As in the instance of *marikabu* paralleled by a variety of Bantu and foreign names for specific types of vessel, some Arabic terms of general nature found their place next to the more specific Bantu words. A geographical illustration may be provided by the Arabic loanwords for "place": *mahali*, *maqamu*, *janibu* ("area," also "side," "direction"). These have largely replaced *nti*, *nchi* in its most general meaning of place; however, the word retained both the general sense of "country, land, earth" and the most specialized meaning of pole (also *ncha*). The Bantu *uwanda* denotes open space, *uwanja* - enclosed space.

The culture of the navigating imprinted itself deeply on coastal society. In northern Swahili cities, an expert on seasons and sailing occupied an official post and guided certain rituals. In Lamu he was called *Mkubwa wa pwani* (roughly, "The Great (Old) Man of the Coast"), among the Bajun on the coast and islands north of the Lamu archipelago *fundi wa bahari*, "Master of the Sea" (Prins 1965:145). In 19th century descriptions of coastal life games of sailing boats are described. The boys sailed them on the shore at low tide (Allen 1981:23; Velten 1903:33), the girls played with theirs without leaving the house (Ruete 1988:21). Travel by boat to coastal destinations on the island was vastly preferred to overland journey (Ruete 1988:21).

To the coast refer certain Swahili words which seem to play a dual role of toponyms as well as common nouns. For instance, *pwani* means any coast but also specifically the ocean coast facing the islands. It is also contrasted with the word *nyika* "bush," "hinterland." In turn, *nyika* as a toponym seems to apply to the northern part of the Swahili coast (Kenya and South Somalia). Besides the basic geographic meaning of dry, slightly elevated strip separating the coast from the interior, it also carries the sense of cultural wilderness. As such, it produced the group term WaNyika for the nine northern-Bantu tribes which, to avoid the pejorative connotation, are usually called today Mijikenda. The indigenous form of the word "Swahili," *Sawahili* (only in the plural as a toponym - cf. "Benadir" from the Arabic plural of *bandar*⁷), when it first appears in written sources, seems to apply to the part of the coast north of Mombasa; the early modern European maps also place it immediately south of the Horn of Africa (approximately in northern Kenya touching on south Somalia). The other regional toponym, *Mrima*, signifies the southern part of the Swahili littoral (at least, southward from Mombasa). *Mrima* as a noun means "mainland" as opposed to "coast" or generally "continent"; the current expression "Mrima coast" is thus a linguistic tautology but carries a geographical distinction. *Sawahili* may not be the only loan-word in this group: *Muli*, with the same basic meaning as *Mrima*, may be of Indian origin.

⁷ Although similar in meaning, these terms historically apply to different parts of the coast. *Banadir* specifically means the harbors of the southern Horn of Africa. For greater detail see Tolmacheva 1976.

Location

There are three structural ways in which the Swahili language can express location. The first is common to most Bantu languages and consists of using the prefix *U-* with a cultural denominator. Thus *Uarabu* means "Arabia" (vs *Waarabu* "Arabs"); *Unyamwezi* - land of the Nyamwezi, *Uturuki* - "Turkey," and so on. Interestingly, the use of *U-* does not preclude descriptive wording, as in *Inchi ya Unyika*.

Secondly, location as well as direction may be indicated by the suffix *-ni*:

<i>barani</i>	upcountry	<i>mtoni</i>	by the river
<i>kusini</i>	southerly	<i>njiani</i>	on the road
<i>mbinguni</i>	in heaven	<i>Swahilini</i>	in/to the <i>Sawahil</i> area

The suffix may become an integral part of the word (cf *pwani* "coast," *pwa* "to dry," esp of the ebb of the tide) or toponyms. Such is likely to be the origin of the *-ni* syllable in place names like Kilindini, Kisimini, Mkoani, Mnarani, Mvuleni, Pangani, Pujini, etc. The locative significance is obvious in compound toponyms such as Kilwa-Kisiwani ("Kilwa-on-the-island"). The *-ni* form is not applicable to nouns denoting humans, which would seem to include ethnic names. It is therefore peculiar to encounter the form *Arabuni* for Arabia.

Finally, a less well understood and apparently no longer operative instrument is the initial *l-* in toponyms such as *Lamu* or *Luziwa*. Both the names also occur in the form without the *l-*: *Amu*, *Uziwa*. The use of *l-* as a locative prefix may explain the transformation, in medieval Arabic texts, of the Swahili name for Zanzibar, *Unguja*, into *Lanjuyah* (orthographically, the latter may easily be regarded as the distorted *(A)nguyah/Anjuyah* but it would approximate **Lunguja* even closer; no such form has ever been recorded, though).

Direction

No single system of orientation is evident on the Swahili coast. Instead, three directional systems may be perceived based on (1) the sun, (2) the winds, and (3) the stars. There is a possibility that an incomplete fourth system of reference, based on the natural north-south direction of the coast existed in the past. At this stage further investigation is needed to assess the probability and the precise nature of such a system. A fifth is also incomplete and may be called a principle rather than system. This refers to "sacred geography" of Islam (in the words of David A. King) and specifically to the requirement for Muslims to observe the *Qibla* direction in praying and in mosque construction. Since generally speaking Mecca is the north of any location on the East African coast, the Swahili word *kibla*, *kibula* is used interchangeably with *kaskazini* for "north." Although some mosque *mihirabs* (niches indicating the direction of Mecca) deviate from the required compass point, those excavated in Kilwa point to the north.

(1) To begin with the first, an Arab device on designating the cardinal points of the horizon has been adopted with the accompanying vocabulary: *shimali* (N), *matlai* and *mashariki* (E), *magharibi* (W). The Arabic *janub*, "south," comfortably transformable into **janubi*, for some reason did not displace the Bantu *kusini*; the Arabic *suheli* is used sometimes, maybe under

South Arabian influence. The former properly belongs in the wind system, the latter derives from the star system (see below). According to Krapf, the proper Swahili for "south" may be *shanga* (cf *pepo ya shangani* - southerly wind) but this is a rather obscure word; confusion over its exact meaning is exacerbated by the name *mwana shanga* being applied to a northerly (my emphasis - M.T.) wind in Steere's *Handbook*. Apparently, the word has fallen out of use; it could not be located in the texts scanned so far. *Maawio* (from *waa* "to shine") and *macheo* (from *cha* "to dawn") provide Bantu parallels for "east". Both the words are used less frequently than their Arabic equivalents. The Bantu for "west" are *machweo* or *huchwa*, meaning "sunset" or "evening dawn".

(2) The directional system based on the coastal winds refers primarily to the monsoons flowing steadily throughout most of the year and secondarily to the easterlies and westerlies which dominate the coastal region in-between the two major sailing seasons. In this system, *kaskazi* (*kasikazi*) denotes north and the northern direction, as well as the northeast monsoon and other northerly winds; *kaskazini* means "in the north" "in the northerly direction". The word *musimi* (Ar. *mawsim*) is applied especially to the season of the northeast monsoon and the northerly wind itself. *Kusi* stands for south wind in general and the southeast monsoon, both the wind and the season. *Kusini* may mean "south" as well as "southern," "in the south," "southerly," and "southward". Although perceived as a Swahili word, *kusi* may be derived from the Arabic *rih al-kaws* for the southwest monsoon (Tibbets 1971:364). The terms for "east" and "west" in this system are less coherent. The east wind may be referred to by the Arabic loan *matlai*, as also the north wind by the Arabic *shemali*; *shamal* denotes a north wind among the Arabian Bedouin (Tibbets 1981:370, note 408). The west wind has the Bantu name *umande*, but its primary meaning is "dew," "damp, cool air of the morning or evening" (my emphasis-M.T.). The regularity of the westerlies and easterlies, blowing in the off-monsoon times from the land in the morning and from the sea in the evening, respectively, allows to use the winds to denote direction. However, it is impossible to claim that the names have evolved as terms.

The transitional period from the *kusi* season to *kaskazi* bears the name *maleleji* or *malelezi*, probably from *lala* (cf *ulalo* "place or time of lying down or sleeping"). We may speculate that originally *malelezi* stood for easterly, i.e., evening, wind and therefore "east" but failed to preserve this significance (which would have made it complementary to *umande*). The interchanging regularity of the easterly and westerly winds is reflected in the alternate name for the *malelezi* season (late March - early April): *majira ya tanga mbili* or simply *tanga mbili* "the period of two sails". The precise interpretation of the name varies: one holds that the diminished power of the southern monsoon allows both voyage and return in the north-south direction (Ol'derogge 1961:496), the other emphasizes sailing on two tacks (Prins 1965:303). The phrase is considered to be a translation of the Arabic *rih al-qala'ayn* (Tibbets 1971:369). The meaning of the verb *tanga* "to go to and fro" may also be relevant.

(3) The star-based system is the only pre-modern one which provides division of the horizon beyond the cardinal points. In modern usage constructions of the following pattern are found

NE	-	kati ya kaskazi na matlai, mashariki ya kaskazini
NW	-	kati ya kaskazi na magharibi, magharibi ya kaskazini

The system was used in navigation and was borrowed from the Arabs together with the word for compass (*dira*). The rhumbs of the windrose recorded in Zanzibar (Steere 1885:458) are listed in the following table, together with the Arabic equivalents as found in Shumovsky's study of Ahmad ibn Majid's sailing instructions (Shumovskii 1957:139). Identifications offered here are based on those of Shumovsky (1957:142-143) and Tibbets (1971:296, note 133).

Points of the Compass

Rhumb	English	Swahili	Arabic
I	North	Jaa	Jah, Qutb al-Jah
II	N by E	Faragadi Matlai	Matla' al-Farqadayn
III	NNE	Nash Matlai	Matla' al-Na'sh
IV	NE by N	Nagr Matlai	Matla' al-Naqah
V	NE	Luagr Matlai	Matla' al-'Ayyuq
VI	NE by E	Dayabu Matlai	Matla' al-Waqi'
VII	E NE	Semak Matlai	Matla' al-Simak
VIII	E by N	Seria Matlai	Matla' al-Thurayya
IX	East	Matlai	Matla' al-Ta'ir
X	E by S	Sosa matlai	Matla' al-Jawza'
XI	ESE	Tiri Matlai	Matla' al-Tir
XII	SE by E	Lakadiri Matlai	Matla' al-Iklil
XIII	SE	Lakarabu Matlai	Matla' al-'Aqrab
XIV	SE by S	Hamareni Matlai	Matla' al-Himarayn
XV	SSE	Seheli Matlai	Matla' al-Suhayl
XVI	S by E	Sonoobari Matlai	Matla' al-Silbar
XVII	South	Kutubu	Qutb al-Suhayl, al-Qutb
XVIII	S by W	Sonoobari Magaribi	Maghib al-Silbar
XIX	SSW	Seheli Magaribi	Maghib al-Suhayl
XX	SW by S	Hamareni Magaribi	Maghib al-Himarayn
XXI	SW	Lakarabu Magaribi	Maghib al-'Aqrab
XXII	SW by W	Lakadiri Magaribi	Maghib al-Iklil
XXIII	WSW	Tiri Magaribi	Maghib al-Tir
XXIV	W by S	Sosa Magaribi	Maghib al-Jawza'
XXV	West	Magaribi	Maghib al-Ta'ir
XXVI	W by N	Seria Magaribi	Maghib al-Thurayya
XXVII	WNW	Semak Magaribi	Maghib al-Simak
XXVIII	NW by W	Dayabu Magaribi	Maghib al-Waqi'
XXIX	NW	Luagr Magaribi	Maghib al-'Ayyuq
XXX	NW by N	Nagr Magaribi	Maghib al-Naqah
XXXI	NNW	Nash Magaribi	Maghib al-Na'sh
XXXII	N by W	Faragadi Magaribi	Maghib al-Farqadayn

Commentary:

I	The Swahili <i>Jaa</i> parallels and Arabic <i>Jah</i> , <i>al-Jah</i> , more formally designated <i>Qutb al-Jah</i> "Pole of the Jah". <i>Jah</i> is derived from the Persian for "place" (cf. <i>nti</i> above). It also means the Polar star and refers only to the north pole		
II/XXXII	al-Farqadayn	=	Ursae Minoris
III/XXXI	al-Na'sh	=	Ursae Majoris
IV/XXX	al-Naqah	=	Cassiopeiae

V/XXIX and VI/XXVII	were confused by Steere or his informant. The Arabic for Rhumb V (NE) is al-'Ayyuq; Steere gets <i>Dayaby</i> in VI from <i>Dhubban al-'Ayyuq</i> (Capella). His <i>Luagr</i> is the badly distorted <i>al-Waqi'</i> (abbreviated from <i>al-Nasr al-Waqi'</i>), i.e., Vega (VI NE by E).	
VII/XXVII	al-Simak	= Arcturus
VIII/XXVI	al-Thurayya	= Pleiades
IX/XXV	al-Ta'ir	= Altair
X/XXIV	al-Jawza'	= Orion's belt
XI/XXIII	al-Tir	= Sirius
XII/XXII	Al-Iklil	= Scorpionis Steere's
	<i>Lakadiri</i> needs further investigation. The word as cited may be a distortion of (al-) <i>Hadari</i> (for <i>Hadari wa'l-Wazn</i> , Centauri) but this would be duplication of XIV/XX.	
	<i>Himarayn</i>	
XXIII/XXI	al-'Aqrab	= Antares; the name of the compass rhumb has apparently entered common usage (Johnson 1939a:519-20)
XIV/XX	al-Himarayn	= Centauri
XV/XIX	Suhail	= Canopus
XVI/XVIII	Silbar, also Sulbar, also Sindbar, allegedly from the Persian <i>sirbar</i> ;	= Achernar
XVII	al-Qutb or Qutb al-Suhayl, the South Pole. Although <i>qutb</i> means "pole" in general, for orientation purposes the word in isolation applies only to the South Pole (cf. <i>jah</i> above). <i>Qutb al-Suhayl</i> is the traditional formal appellation. Al-Qutb, abbreviated from <i>Salib al-qutb</i> , refers also to the Southern Cross.	

For the western half of the rose, Tibbets reads *mughib*; the correct form is *maghib* but *mughib* may be closer to actual pronunciation. It will be noticed that Steere's compass uses *magaribi* (*magharibi*, from the Arabic *maghrib*). It is of some interest that, although at least some of these stars and groups of stars have Bantu names, apparently no attempts to give the system an African "flavor" through lexical substitution have taken place.

The Toponyms

The following is intended to offer some observations on Swahili toponyms pursuant to the two goals of demonstrating the operative means of toponym formation and the scope of Swahili geographical knowledge indicated by the extent of the toponymical vocabulary. Questions of etymology will be discussed only in relation to the medium or mode of borrowing when dealing with foreign loans. (See also *Ethnonyms and Toponyms in Swahili Chronicles*.)

A peculiar and consistent aspect of Swahili texts in which most of the following toponyms occur is the concentration first, on the coastal and limited regional areal placenames denoting Asian locations (Arabian or Indian) come next. The interior remains ignored, poorly described topographically even in the records of inland journeys, such as those offered by Tippu Tip or Mtoro Mwinyi Bakari. In fact, the latter indicates outright the dependence of travellers, merchants and porters on guides, their markings and signals (Allen 1981:160, 165; Velten 1903:241, 248). The contrast is striking with coastal histories which may mention Lamu, Goa,

and Pemba in a single breath, as it were, with no special consideration given to the distance of Goa in India from Swahili locale Siu (Lamu archipelago), Muscat and Bombay, followed by Wanji and Faza on the Kenya coast comprise another list. Close association with Arabia is especially common: Yanbu' on the Red Sea is cited next to Mombasa, Zanzibar - next to Yemen and Jidda (Freeman-Grenville 1962:14, 41, 47). A passage in the *Pate Chronicle* lists places conquered by the city in the 14th century. Uziwa, Malindi, Kiwayu, Kitao, Miya, Imizi, Watamu, Kirimba (Freeman-Grenville 1962:248; Misiugin 1972:52; Tolmacheva 1993:279 a.o.); Werner (1914:158).

Some chronicle passages name towns no longer extant a few remain unidentified. In Swahili sailor's songs collected by Knappert toponyms occur casually, ranging from Madagascar to the Persian Gulf. An interminable song lists places by the group: from southern Arabia, islands south of Oman, the Comoro islands, etc. For example:

<i>Twende na Ajama * na Rasi Li-Hema</i>	Let's go to Iran as well, and Ras al-Khaima
<i>na mji Basora * Hadi na Sokira</i>	Basra, Hadd and Sawkira
<i>Bandari Abasi * barani Farisi</i>	Bandar Abbas on the Fars Coast
	(Knappert 1985:115)

The complaint of a man looking for a wife spitefully lists places on the Swahili coast as failing to provide him with a suitable candidate:

I am tired of searching,
I wandered round in all countries,
Lamu, Malindi and Mombasa,
Pemba, Zanzibar and Tanga
I did not find a intelligent one,
and I do not want a stupid one (Knappert 1985:113)

An incessant need to confirm an Islamic identity in the largely non-Islamic East African environment made certain that a number of Middle East toponyms became a common point of reference. The examples that follow illustrate not only the scope of this geographical awareness of the wider Muslim world but also the diversity of semantic and lexical adaptations to the social cultural and cognitive needs of the Swahili

Arabia - Manga, Umanga, Uarabu, Arabuni, Bara Arabu (cf. new Arabia). The singular for "Arab" is Mwarabu; Arab from Shihr is Mshihiri, Arab from the Persian Gulf, Mshemali (i.e., "northerner"). Note that Manga, which usually denotes Arabia, may include South Asia as well (Knappert 1985:131).

Persia, Iran - Ajama, Ajjemi, Uajemi (from the Arabic 'ajam "Persians"), also Farsi and Farisi. The two terms are not quite identical and may be used together to denote Iran: Ajam na Farsi. Persian Gulf - Bahr il-'Ali (cf. new Persian Gulf).

Syria - Sham, Shamu, barra ya Shamu (Arabic). As in Arabic, in addition to "Greater Syria" Sham also signifies Damascus (cf. new Dameski). Bahari ya Sham is Red Sea but fetha ya Sham (lit. "Syrian silver") meant "German dollars"!

The following are also of special interest, reflecting the wide range and prominence of international, even inter-continental contacts acquiring a modern, imperial scale:

India - Hindi, Uhindi, barra Hindi, bara ya Hindi; Hindu Indian - Banyani, Muslim Indian - M(u)hindi (pl. Wahindi)

Egypt - Misri (from the Arabic Misr)

Socotra - Umaheri (from Mahra in eastern Arabia)

Turkey - Turki, Turuki, Uturuki (but "Turkish Sultan" is sultani Rum)

Comoro Islands - Masiwa, i.e., Islands" (cf. new Visiwa vya Comoro)

Europe - Uzungu (from zungu "strange - mzungu = "European," "white"); also Ulya, ulaya (probably from the Arabic wilaya "region")

England - Wengereza, Uingereza (via Portuguese)

If the Inner African toponyms entered Swahili lexicon in the wake of indigenous caravan trade, regional terminology beyond the western part of the Indian Ocean, the names of continents and remote countries, as a rule, all developed as part of linguistic and cultural modernization. Some instances are highly successful lexically. Expressions found in the texts recorded in the 1890's, consisting of "traditional" elements like *barra Afrika* for Inner Africa, *Sudani* for (Anglo-Egyptian) Sudan (originally from the Arabic), *bahari ya Swahili* (i.e., "Swahili Sea") for the Indian Ocean, *bahari ya pili* "Second Sea" for the Mediterranean, even *Suezi* for Suez (Velten 1901 *passim*), are now barely a century old. The influence of certain foreign vocabularies (today overwhelmingly dominated, or replaced, by English) may be adduced through the spelling of then-new loans (e.g. *Wadeutschi* for "Germans," *Sibirien* for "Siberia," *Bahari Kaspisch* for "Caspian Sea") or phonetically: *Belgiji* or *Beljiki* for "Belgium" (via French) vs. *Wafianza* for "the French" (via German).

Other instances illustrate linguistic failure. Modernization as well as nationalistic factors have led to the situation where today the Swahili language is struggling to retain (and losing) *Bahari ya Sham* vs. *Red Sea*, *Bahari Nyeusi* vs. *Bahari ya Black Sea*, *Bahari ya Hindi* vs. *Indian Ocean*, and so on. *Ureno* has already lost out to *Portugal*. The awkwardness of some new composites like *Portuguese East Africa* in Swahili compares unfavorably with the simple yet much more idiomatic *Jamhuri ya Afrika Kusini* for "Republic of South Africa". Morphological and syntactical facility of the Swahili language can and should be exercised to communicate new concepts and toponyms in a manner agreeable lexically as well as culturally to the established geographical idiom.

II. SWAHILI CHRONICLES AS A GEOGRAPHICAL SOURCE⁸

The tradition of urban Islamic learning on the East African coast produced two major types of pre-modern writing: poetry and political history. The so-called chronicles, most of them recorded in Swahili using Arabic script, combine local and dynastic histories focused on individual city-states of the coast. Their data are being increasingly used for reconstructing not only pre-colonial history of the Swahili but also the mode of historical thinking characteristic of the unique, Afro-Islamic culture rooted in a highly specific environment of the seaboard. The following observations are intended to throw light on the potential of such historical records for the historical geography of the region and eventually for exploring the geographical thinking of the indigenous societies.

Two major reasons make us turn to historical sources for geographical data on the East African coast. The first reason is that, to the best of our current knowledge, the pre-19th century Swahili society had not produced either geographical works, properly speaking, or maps (The geographical information contained in Swahili poetry is not considered here). At present no such early works are known to exist, and the contemporary studies of the Islamic learning on the coast indicate no active memory or awareness of "academic" geography or cartography. This is not to imply a lack of geographical knowledge or a complete ignorance of cartography: at the turn of the twentieth century a few map-like sketches were collected by, or made for, European visitors. Those I have seen are inscribed in Swahili using Arabic script. There is also some evidence that the coastal maritime culture produced written sailing instructions. However, it is unclear if the latter belong *sensu stricto* to Arabic or Swahili culture; I am aware of only one noted in print and have not seen others.

The second reason derives from the nature of the extant pre-European geographical works which do contain accounts and maps of East Africa. These are mostly medieval compositions, largely in Arabic, by "armchair geographers" of the Islamic world (very few among them were travellers like Ibn Battuta). Not only are they products of an external tradition, but they also retain remarkably few placenames, out of which fewer than a dozen have been identified. Their advantage is that they do offer a longitudinal view of the Indian ocean's littoral with occasional topographic detail, but the Swahili records contain a considerably greater number of toponyms, without completely duplicating Arab information. The two groups of sources also largely belong to different chronological periods and so in that respect, too, should be regarded as complementary rather than redundant. Moreover, even within the Arabic body of evidence two major strains, or branches, should be distinguished: the main-stream "academic," incorporating historical, geographical, and encyclopedic writing of the 10th-14th centuries with a limited and often repeated toponymical vocabulary; and the practical maritime tradition, largely represented by the late 15th-early 16th century sailing instructions richly interspersed with Bantu placenames. An additional distinction is that the placenames of the Swahili records

⁸ This essay is based in part on the paper presented at the 1987 annual meeting of the American Historical Association. The author gratefully acknowledges the support of the American Philosophical Society and Washington State University.

mostly refer to towns rather than topographical features, unlike, for example, the sailing instructions of Ahmad ibn Majid

A major systemic characteristic distinguishing the Arabic works from the Swahili chronicles is the considerably wider geographical scope of the former. Even when relatively narrowly focused, as in the *Urjūza Sufālīya* ("Poem in *rajaz* metre about the route to Sofala") of Ahmad ibn Majid,⁹ their data range along much of the coast, their span limited only by the possibilities of travel. The chronicles, on the other hand, are dominated by local interest and therefore frequently dwell on matters relevant to one city's affairs. Their geographic horizons usually widen on only two kinds of occasions. One is provided by the introductory part the story which often includes a legend of origin and describes the arrival in the remote past of noble ancestors from somewhere in the Muslim north; a sketch of their itinerary and short lists of places of their settlement is commonly offered. The other format involves descriptions of wars or conflicts of more recent and less problematic occurrence. Lists of conquered or controlled locations are then provided, for the most part credibly identifiable on the coast among the existing towns or excavated sites.

The chronicles' geographic determinant, on the surface, seems to come with the title which includes a city's name. Some of those collected early and among the best known are the *Chronicle of Pate* (*Akhbar Pate*) and the *Chronicle of Lamu* (*Khabari Lamu*)¹⁰ Written in Swahili, they employ the Arabic loan-word occurring variously in its more pure, Arabic form *Akhbār* and in a Swahilized form, *Khabari*. However, by themselves these examples are not sufficient to indicate that this was the preferred, standard title. The shorter, numerous "chronicles" of other coastal places, which may have followed the established pattern, were recorded usually later than the two above-mentioned histories; among the manuscript copies of chronicles in the Dar es Salaam collection, some do not carry a title at all. The Arabic history of the northern coast based on the Mijikenda cycle, *Kitāb al-Zunūj*,¹¹ uses an ethnonym rather than toponym (the Arabic broken plural of *Zanj*). The Arabic version of the Kilwa chronicle, probably the most sophisticated pre-modern piece of Islamic writing produced on the coast, names Kilwa at the end of a somewhat pretentious, although by no means extraordinary, rhymed title: *Kitāb sulwa fī akhbār Kulwa*¹² (One suspects that a less formal version might have been entitled simply *Akhbār Kulwa*, perfectly fitting the coastal standard)

⁹ Originally published in Arabic facsimile with a Russian translation by I. A. Shumovskii (1957); now also available in reprint in *Arabic texts on navigation by Ahmad ibn Majid and Sulayman al-Mahri* (Institut für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften 1992). The Portuguese translation by M. Malkiel-Jirmounsky (Lisbon, 1960) has not been well received.

¹⁰ The first has seen the most editions and translations; these are collected, with several previously unpublished versions in Tolmacheva (1993). Available in Romanized Swahili version with translation are the Lamu chronicle (Hichens 1938), and a version of the Mombasa chronicle (Yahya Ali Omar and P. J. L. Frankl 1990). Selections translated or reprinted in Freeman-Grenville (1962) are not accompanied by texts in the original language. The reader will note that this analysis dwells only on historical records recognized as coastal annals; ethnographical oral narratives containing some geographical observations (such as collected by Carl Velten) or summaries of local histories published by R. L. Pouwels are not included. This survey does not include the published texts from the Comoros; I have not seen those collected in recent years in Mozambique or Zanzibar.

¹¹ Published with an Italian translation by Cerulli (1957). Another version extant in England has not been published. For the latest survey of the Mijikenda history studies see Walsh (1992).

¹² Strong 1895. Elias Saad reads *Kitāb al-silwa fī akhbār Kilwa* (cf. Saad 1979).

The Sea

For narratives produced on the coast, by a society deeply and variously influenced by its maritime environment and oceanic contacts, references to sea are primarily remarkable by their absence. The sea surrounding the islands, on which many of the towns were built; the sea from which sustenance was derived; the sea separating the islands from the mainland; the Indian ocean facing the East African seaboard and separating it from, or linking it to, Asia; none of the facets of maritime location and culture are readily apparent in the texts. One may wonder less about the absence of references to common economic activities, such as fishing, often missing from our sources. After all, such mundane activities are more likely to be reflected in folklore (or else in anthropologist-inspired records, such as *Desturi za Wasuaheli*)¹³ than in politically-oriented historical narratives, even though fishermen, singly or as a class, are occasionally mentioned (and are attributed the role of trouble-makers)¹⁴. The external sources, on the other hand, do not overlook occupations of the sea: Arabic accounts mention fish as a local staple at *Badhūna* (a probable reference to Bajun) and fishing for export at Malindi. Al-Idrisi speaks of ritual use of fish oil among the Zanj and of tortoise meat and shellfish in Sofala. A mode of harvesting shellfish is described by Al-Biruni¹⁵.

Still, even in descriptions of oceanic migrations (e.g., from South Arabia to the East African coast) the most direct indication of a storyteller's awareness of the sea environment may be references to boats (such as mentions of the seven ships built for seven travellers who then depart for seven different destinations). Of course, the use of the Arabic loanword *bahari* (from *bahr*) for "sea" in Swahili vocabulary is testimony of an awareness of the maritime world that includes not only an oceanic setting but also an international scale of oceanic routes.

In Arabic sources, the west part of the Indian ocean *Bahr al-Hind* is usually divided into *Bahr al-Barbar* or *Khalīj al-Barbar*, that is Sea, or Gulf, of the Barbar (also *Barbara*), Kushites of Northeast Africa, in its northern part and *Bahr al-Zanj* further south. Arabic texts also mention harbors (for instance, Mombasa and *Sayūna* are placed by al-Idrisi in bays, *khawr*) and rivers flowing by major coastal cities (especially Ibn Sa'id (1970); Parts 5-8 south of the Equator and parts 5-7 of Climate I).

Such pieces of information are clearly designed to accentuate data important to those approaching East Africa by sea, to elaborate itineraries, and to recreate voyage ambience for the armchair traveller. By contrast, when Swahili sources mention harbors, something they do exceedingly rarely, the purpose seems to establish a relationship between locations (as when Magogoni is identified as harbor for Tukulutu) or to enhance the imagery, as when the noise from the Pate harbor is said to be heard at Manda (Tolmacheva 1993:56, 49).

It may be interesting to explore if *Bandar es Salaam*, a variant name for Dar es Salaam, reflects a topographical consciousness (*bandar* is "harbor" in Persian) or merely offers an

¹³ Velten (1903). This edition contains a translation into German; for an English translation see J.W.T. Allen (1981). For a partial translation into Russian see Zhukov (1983).

¹⁴ As in the Stigand version of the Pate chronicle (see, for example, Tolmacheva 1993:50).

¹⁵ See especially al-Idrisi's description of the Seventh Section of the First Climate (Cerulli et al. 1970). For al-Biruni see Togan (1941). Al-Biruni also repeatedly mentions pearl-fishing on the coast presently located in northern Mozambique.

instance, and a late one at that, of onomastic borrowing. A rare instance of topographic precision is offered by the *Pate Chronicle* when Cape Kitao is named in conjunction with the sea as the sight of a drowning (the town of Kitao is listed among other urban locations of the northern Swahili coast)¹⁶ The alternate name for the town of Faza on Siu (Pate) island is Rasini, i.e. "On-the-cape," with the Arabic loan *ra*'s and the Swahili locative suffix *-ni*, but such mixed descriptive etymology is rare even in placenames

A preliminary perusal of historical texts in Swahili has turned up only three examples of rivers, and those are listed or mentioned in passing rather than described (the Sabaki, Ruvuma, and Mtima). This "neglect" is especially evident since we know that the Ozi River and several coastal creeks served as waterways to the interior towns also named in the chronicles.¹⁷ The Arabic *Book of the Zanj* mentions the Webi Shebelle, Tana and Juba rivers as frontier features or settlement locations rather than communication routes (Cerulli, 1957, 1:234/256, 235/259, 237/263, etc.)

Since the 1980s historians have been suggesting that the early culture of the coast was not, as had been assumed earlier, cardinally sea-oriented but rather looked inward from the coast, drawing primarily upon the exchanges with the mainland¹⁸ and wary of the insecurity on the islands exposed to strangers' approaches from the sea.¹⁹ This view, strongly influenced by new archeological data, may go a long way toward explaining the seeming irrelevance of the sea to our sources. The other possible explanation may be that, on the contrary, the sea was so obviously a constant of the environment that its presence and effect needed no articulation. It may also be suggested that the relative level of participation in long-distance naval contact played a role: the East African coastal population was on the receiving end of both the trade and migrations, and the Arabic and Swahili sources corroborate each other on that in general, though not in detail. There are exceptionally few corresponding indications of Swahili commercial activity reaching out to Asia in our records²⁰ (we are not concerned here with the African settlements in Arabia and India, since apparently they were generated through slave trade, i.e. passively, and in any case leave no imprint on the African coastal consciousness).

Of particular interest seems the general obliviousness of the Swahili texts regarding the island location of many settlements. Again, there is a very common word for 'island' in Swahili (*kisiwa*). Moreover, both *Kisiwa* and *Kisiwani* are found among the names of East African island, so that obviously this is not a matter of terminological or conceptual inadequacy; nor

¹⁶ Tolmacheva (1993:54). Cape Kitao (Kitau) is at the south extreme of Manda Island; the town of Kitau faced west toward Lamu island. This detail is found only in the Stigand version's story of the conquest of Kitau by Pate.

¹⁷ See, for example, Tolmacheva (1993:71): the Stigand version of the *Pate Chronicle* where the Sabaki is specified to serve as a boundary between the Pate and Mombasa spheres of influence on the mainland.

¹⁸ This does not imply disinterest in the sea. Its economic significance in early Swahili history has been recently discussed by Horton and Mudida (1993).

¹⁹ Pouwels (1987, ch. 1-2); James de Vere Allen (1981; 1993, ch. 1-2). In a recent review article Martin Walsh has sounded a warning against taking this re-orientation too far (Walsh 1993).

²⁰ The *Pate Chronicle* has a variant statement regarding sea trade which in some versions reads *akipeleka al-Hindi kufanya biyashara* "he sent to India to conduct trade" but at least one other (MS 358 of the Dar es Salaam University) says simply *hwenda kufanya bi'ashara* "[made them] go to conduct trade" (Tolmacheva 1993:206, 422).

can geographical unsophistication be presumed. Of course, the name *Kilwa Kisiwani* means "Kilwa-on-the-island," so that toponymics does provide an explicit example of the awareness we have been seeking in the texts. As Randall L. Pouwells has shown both for the 10th-12th and the 14th-15th centuries, island residence was due to choice, even though it often led to hardship or complications. Nevertheless, the aspects of isolation, of separation from the mainland, of communication by water between islands or island archipelagoes is generally obscured in the indigenous sources.

By contrast the external, Arabic sources seem eager to identify a location as being insular. For example *Qanbalū* (*Qanbalūh*), a toponym placed on the East African coast by the Arabic authors of the ninth-tenth centuries, often appears joined with *jazīra*, 'island' (*Jazīrat Qanbalū*). Only then do they proceed either to identify the island settlement (usually by the same name if only one town is involved: thus "City of Qanbalu") or given different names where there is more than one. For example, before naming the towns *Mkumbulu* and *Mtambī* (Mtambwe) on Pemba, Yaqut first lists the island itself, *al-Jazīrat al-Khadrā'*. True, Arabic sources do not consider places like Mombasa, separated from the mainland only by a narrow creek, islands. The works of academic nature also do not know very many of them in addition to Pemba and Mombasa. Yaqut briefly describes Zanzibar (*Lanjūya*, a distorted *Ungūja*, the island's Swahili name) and mentions Tumbatu (Yāqūt 1866-73, 2:75; 4:336, 656). When Lamu and Pate appear in later sources (14th and 15th centuries), their island location is not brought out even by the expert navigator Ahmad ibn Majid.

Among the recorded toponyms *al-Jazīrat al-Khadrā'* (the Green Island) is remarkable for both its debt to Arabic vocabulary and the remarkable tenacity with which it had held its own among the Swahili counterparts, penetrating local narratives. The Arabic *Kilwa Chronicle*, composed circa 1520, lists *al-Jazīrat al-Khadrā'* as the fifth out of seven locations settled by the Shirazi migrants; the seventh is *Hanzuwān* (Anjuan) which, although an island, is not marked as such. The *Book of the Zanj* also uses this Arabic name for Pemba. In the Swahili *History of Kua* there is a mention of Juani Island, but on the other hand, Madagascar (*Qumr*) is called simply "land."

In one instance a passage describing a conflict between two contenders juxtaposes "coast people" and the "people of Kisiwani" (Freeman-Grenville 1962:224-225). Kilwa-Kisiwani is meant, and the particular wording alerts us to the extreme fluidity of Swahili onomastics: the "coast" here is the mainland seaboard but *not* the island, while the locative "on-the-island" replaces the town's proper name and becomes a toponym in itself. This example also shows how closely we need to read the texts for geographical, spatial, and onomastic evidence. The writers seem to provide such data only by the way, as when "Emezi on the mainland" is listed in a description of Pate wars (Tolmacheva 1993:56; this wording is peculiar to the Stigand version). Other places on the list may not be included among the mainland settlements, or else there might have been another town of the same name (in this case Emezi, *Imīdhi*) elsewhere that was on an island. Kilwa is mentioned in a version of *Pate Chronicle* both as "Kilwa" and as "Kilwa Island." As indicated above, the Qomoros are occasionally identified as islands (one wonders in this connection whether this distinction might not be due to the influence of Arabic usage, as in the case of Pemba).

Even in the oral traditions recorded on the islands in recent years neither the sea nor the insular location of places discussed is noted, whether purposely or in passing. The "Arabs from Damascus" allegedly sent by caliph 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, if they are mentioned at all, arrive from Persia or Yanbu' to settle straight "at Hidabu Hill" in Lamu or at Manda (see e.g. Hichens 1938:8/9; and Pouwels 1987, ch. 3, Appendices). Subsequently, towns, woods and *shambas* (farms) are mentioned, but no water features even though the action described takes place at Ozi, Lamu, Manda, and other points at or near the sea.

Admittedly, this lack of explicitness should not be taken too far: Pate histories mention the monsoon season, sea travel, a shipwreck, and even a discovery of an island by a member of the ruling family early in the Portuguese era (cf. Tolmacheva 1993:300, 303, 305 *et passim*). Descriptions of attacks by the enemy are explicit as to transportation of troops by sea or naval blockades against coastal cities. Among such are references in the *Pate Chronicle* to hostile actions by the Portuguese and later by the Mazrui of Mombasa, the Omani Arabs, and finally the British; or the dramatic picture of the Battle of Shela (c. 1812) during which vessels from Pate and Mombasa became stranded on the Lamu beach due to low tide, preventing the defeated invaders from flight (Tolmacheva 1993:301, 303, 308-310, 314, 318, 320, etc.).

The Coast

The Arabic *sāhil* for "coast" had early made its way into Swahili with both the general meaning "coast, seaboard" and the more specific connotation "coastal town." Arabic sources continuously refer to East African toponyms as marking locations "on the coast." The itineraries quote distances of sailing "by the coast," and include features of coastal topography such as large mountains, river estuaries, and coastline configuration affecting travel by land or sea (bays, promontories, etc.). Sailing directions contain more detail; they speak of reefs and banks as well. The coast is envisioned as a whole and represented in texts and maps in its major divisions corresponding to "countries" or "lands", the land of Barbara (modern Somalia), the land of Zanj beyond it, the somewhat vague land of Sofala, and the totally mysterious Waq-Waq. The order in which these are listed is always the same, the direction is from north to south (or, according to Arab geographers, mistakenly from west to east). There are no similar sketches of the coast in Swahili sources, nor are there any similar terms derived from broad ethnic categories. *The Book of Zanj* is the only indigenous coastal source to apply the name 'Zanj' to local population. Undoubtedly this instance is induced by the book's use of the Arabic language, and probably also by an attempted linkage to Arab-Islamic learning, especially important in view of the genealogical connection with the Islamic state that is asserted in the book more than once. By contrast to Middle Eastern Arabic writers, the coastal authors or keepers of the Swahili traditions were much likelier than the foreign authors to realize the discrete nature of coastal politics and to be affected by it. It is probably not surprising therefore that there is no "land of Zanj" in their stories. Moreover, Sofala and Waq-Waq, treated in Arabic as toponyms, are also absent (both refer to parts of the southeast

African coast; the use of the name 'Sofala' was gradually reduced to that of a town in Mozambique)²¹

What we find instead is that references to the coast are reflective of a degree of cultural dissociation of the Swahili from the mainland societies. This may be a consequence of the self-perception by the Islamized and urbanized Swahili as deeply distinct from the non-Muslim African "Other" and as culturally gravitating toward Asia and the Muslim Middle East. In addition, the regional scope of Swahili references to the coast or mainland seems to indicate a somewhat different range of contacts or a different sense of priority *vis-à-vis* the contacted locations.

Not that simply "coast" is not present: the *Pate Chronicle* mentions "Mgao coast" and "Mrima coast". Translations also on occasion refer to "Swahili coast". However, in these cases Swahili texts say simply *Sawahili* or *Sawahilini* (both the words are usually translated as "coasts") and refer, in my opinion, to groups of coastal towns. I feel that they use the word as a plural noun rather than toponym, so that Captain Stigand's "the whole of the Swahili coast" or Alice Werner's "all these lands" or M. Heepe's "alle diese Länder" for *Sawahili zote* (Tolmacheva 1993:56, 172, 227) should be read as "all port towns."

The mainland is present in such references as "Emezi on the mainland" (see above) or "mainland of the Ruvuma". The Swahili *bara* (probably from the Arabic *barr*) means not so much "continent" as "land away from the sea": the texts often say that so-and-so went *barani* when an island ruler or contender flees to the adjacent mainland or goes there to gather soldiers and procure food. The word also means "up-country, into the interior". Long-distance trade routes led from the coast up-country, *barani*. "Up-country" was Ngoji (Freeman-Grenville 1962:227), and according to a history of Kilwa Kisiwani "up-country" also dwelled the uncivilized waShenzi.²² Usually a lack of civilization (that is, of Islam, urban living, and accompanying social culture as well as Swahili speech) is associated in the narratives with the concept of *nyika*, cultural as well as natural wilderness. *Nyika* also denotes location beyond the coastal fringe and as such is juxtaposed to *Mrima*, the seaboard. In the chronicles, the two words seem to have both a general and a narrower geographic content. For instance, a chronicle of Mombasa (c. 1824) seems to list the following as Nyika towns: Mtawe, Tihui, Rebabe, Chebubi, Kambe, Kuma, Jebani, Tabai, Giriama, Doruma, Mtawe, Chimba, Lungo, Debgu (Freeman-Grenville 1962:216). The Mrima as a specific location is listed in a version of the *Pate Chronicle* in a sequence of toponyms suggesting its latitudinal location between Malindi and Kilwa. The span of the Mrima coast is said to range "from Wasinja and Pangani to Saadani, Tanga," and Kilwa. South of Kilwa begins the Mgao coast (Tolmacheva 1993:57: the Stigand version only).²³

²¹ I explore this change elsewhere (Tolmacheva 1990). For Waq-Waq, variously linked with Madagascar, southeast Africa or southeast Asia, see Tolmacheva (1987/88).

²² Freeman-Grenville 1962:224. There was a further distinction yet, between the waShenzi of the coast and those "up-country." See "The Ancient History of Lindi" (Freeman-Grenville 1962:229).

²³ The word "Mrima" may be significant to the decipherment of the Swahili dynastic myth but this is not the place to address the subject.

In the passage cited above and at least one other in the same text, Mrima is mentioned alongside cities, with no hint of a difference in the scale of locations or difference in nature between town and (coastal) region. This represents a peculiar difficulty of working with toponyms in traditional texts: unless one is familiar in advance with the named locales, it usually is impossible to ascertain whether the place named refers to a region, town, or even part of one as in the case of the Weng'andu quarter of Manda, listed separately in addition to the town itself. Even where some appropriate terminology is present, considerable latitude of interpretation is possible: the Swahili *nchi* means both "land" and "country," while *mji* generally means "settlement," all the way from village to town to city.

Apparently, in these cases factors of settlement and cultivation are predominant over considerations of size and scale, as when the *Pate Chronicle*, listing conquests, speaks of "countries" and then confusingly proceeds to name urban toponyms. Shanga, otherwise usually perceived as a town, is called "country near Pate." Madagascar is called simply "land," Chakomba "place," while in a fairly rare instance of ethnonym preference, the *Pate Chronicle* mentions "the Bajuns" rather than an area of that name, placing the expression alongside other geographical names.²⁴ The pattern of word formation used in this instance is typical of Bantu morphology and works also to construct toponyms. An example of chronicle usage of this device is *Uarabu* or *Arabuni* for "Arabia" or more generally "land of the Arabs."

When foreign peoples or locations are involved, unstated assumptions and implications make for increasingly complicated interpretations. East African and Asian locales may be found next to each other with no indication of the considerable distance between them or that the latter are not placed in Swahili environs. Thus, Goa may be inserted between the mentions of Lamu and Pemba. A reference to Maskat may be preceded by Siu and followed by Bombay which in turn is followed by Wanji and Faza. Yanbu' on the Red Sea coast of Arabia is flanked in the text by Shaugu (roughly on the latitude of Lamu) and Mombasa (considerably farther south). In this respect, a short list enumerating Zanzibar (an island), Yemen (a country, and foreign at that), and Jidda (a foreign city) seems particularly striking in the inconsistency of its geographical scale and concepts.

On occasion, the narrators do make an attempt to set some boundaries, as in the case of Mrima above. For example, Liongo Fumo is said to conquer the "district Ozi, from Mpokomoni to Malindi." The Nabahan kingdom of Pate at its greatest extends from Mukadisho to Kirimba (Kilwa, see below). Unfortunately, this does not always result in greater geographical precision, as when "seven towns between Komwana and Shaka" are added to the list of Pate-controlled centers (Tolmacheva 1993:48-56: the Stigand version).

A final instance of a regional term to be discussed is another coastal appellation: *Muli*, identified as an Indian expression for "seaboard." Unlike the words *Sawahili*, *bara*, *nyika* or *Mrima*, frequently found in Swahili records, this word is found in the later external sources (15th-16th centuries Arabic and Turkish). Freeman-Grenville has linked *Muli* to "Mafia" but as a prefix *mul-* the morpheme occurs in a variant name for the historical town of Mozambique

²⁴ Tolmacheva (1993:76): the Stigand version, unfortunately available only in English. The translation, however, is reliable. The use of an ethnonym is borne out by the accompanying detail: "the Bajuns at Faza."

(*Mulbayūnī*) and probably a number of other toponyms. The general sense of the word is that of a boundary between water and land, and Shumovsky, translating the Arabic sailing directions, refers to it as a common noun rather than placename (Shumovskii 1957:158, Arabic *mūl*). However, the Arabic expression *Barr al-Mūl* (literally, "land of the mainland") refers to a part of the Indian ocean coast south of Dar es Salaam (Ferrand 1914, 1924).

The Town

The number of towns or cities named in chronicles, mostly on the islands and on the coastal fringe, is impressively large: James Allen came up with the total number of 173. Those not yet identified invite, besides archeological exploration,²⁵ a variety of approaches to the texts. The Arabic sources of the "academic" tradition provide only limited assistance in this regard. The small number of toponyms which appear both in Arabic and in Swahili narratives present no difficulty, but those still problematic do not overlap. It may be that more thorough examination of the Arabic sailing direction will bring results, but for now the best course seems to approach the lists of placenames, where they occur together, *as lists* rather than merely groups of unrelated toponyms.

It appears that a pattern may be occasionally found in such lists: the *Pate Chronicle*, naming conquered "countries beyond Kiwayu," lists seven towns in what Stigand observed to be a northward succession. This is followed by another list of seven locations, aligned in a southward direction.²⁶

Longitudinal listings, usually from north to south, occur both in this text elsewhere, and in the *Kilwa Chronicle*. They probably can be found in other texts, once the search is geared toward this purpose. The boundaries of coastal regions discussed above also seem to be defined beginning from the north rather than from the south or haphazardly. It is impossible to determine at this stage whether this depends primarily on the north orientation in the astronomical or cartographical sense, on the predominant direction of the winds and currents, or finally on the significance of contacts with the northern societies. Moreover, it is clear that such ordered, consistent enumeration as in the instance offered by the *Pate Chronicle* is not common by any means. In fact, the (probably coincidental) fact that both lists happen to name exactly seven places in each direction is mildly alarming to any historian familiar with the propensity of Swahili traditional histories for the number seven, with its symbolic connotations.

Another observation afforded by the same roster of locations is that the breakoff point is both in the middle of the list and at the geographical center of the "empire" being described. This type of "radial" (for lack of a better word) orientation seems to be present also in the description of Lioṅgo Fumo's "empire," however nebulous, and in the outline of the Nabahan possessions from Mukadisho to Kirimba (with Pate at the political center).

²⁵ For the most recent overview of the state of archeological evidence for early Swahili history see Wright 1993.

²⁶ Stigand 1913:38; also Freeman-Grenville 1962:248 and Tolmacheva 1993:48; the lists are virtually identical in all versions.

This does not quite hold for Kilwa: in the Arabic chronicle the list of seven landing sites either was originally geographically inconsistent or the placenames fell out of order in the process of retelling or copying (not to mention spurious story-telling). The latter part of the list conforms to the north-south standard and names Mombasa, Jazirat al-Khadra', Kilwa, and Hanzuan. The first three locations, however, are *Mandakha*, *Shaugu*, and *Yanbu*.²⁷ While Yanbu' is well known, the former two have not been identified. Mandakha has occasionally been thought to be a distortion of the Arabic *Malinda* for Malindi, but there is no solid reason for that: *Malinda* is first mentioned by al-Idrisi in the eleventh century and its name, highly legible in Arabic script, continues to appear in the manuscripts without distortion. Yanbu' is located on the Red Sea and does not belong in a story implying settlement on the East African coast except as an alleged point of departure. It is possible, however, that its inclusion (not unique to this source) is merely a device to increase the Islamic authoritativeness of the chronicle as a dynastic document (in other traditions it occurs as the originating point of migration). Finally, Shaugu may be the Shanga of the *Pate Chronicle*, the excavated site of Shanga (on Shanga see Horton 1987 and forthc.)

Also in the *Pate Chronicle* is found a case, extremely rare in our sources, of orientation by the cardinal points to indicate for the reader the respective location of towns on the Pate island:

... the kingdom of Pate comprised the cities of Pate and Kitaka, which was to the east of Pate and further to the east of Pate was the city of Shanga²⁸

Such wording might be a highly significant piece of evidence suggesting that spatial orientation and regional vision were part of a historical conceptualization of the chronicles, at least where northern Swahili culture is concerned. V.M. Misiugin has argued against interpreting this reference as evidence of accurate geographic knowledge. Misiugin claims that the passage distorts the physical reality of the island and that the towns are in fact aligned north to south rather than west to east (Misiugin 1972:51-88). While the warning is well taken, the particular objection misses the target: these towns *are* aligned as described. (Good, large-scale maps of the island may not have been accessible to Misiugin.)

Certainly, Pate authors knew where the other towns were on the same island, as well as on the other islands of the archipelago and on the mainland in the immediate vicinity. The word 'east' is expressed here by the Arabic loan-word *matlai* 'sunrise'; thus there may be no doubt in what direction Pate's neighbors were situated. For a while I believed it possible that terminological borrowing in this case might suggest systemic borrowing as well. Had Misiugin correctly guessed at the influence of Islamic geography, which had adopted the Ptolemaic representation of the East African coast as stretching to the east? Not in this case, as the maps prove, and not in any other case I am aware of; in fact, I do not know of any pre-modern Swahili maps showing a significant length of the coast. Islamic influence cannot be precluded,

²⁷ Strong, 385-415; reprinted in Freeman-Grenville (1962) as document 14 (for the list see p. 35)

²⁸ Tolmacheva 1993:169, 224; the Werner and Heepe versions are almost identical here but the wording differs slightly in the other versions

even though, as stated above, it does not appear that academic geography was ever practised on the coast. One published Swahili map is oriented to the south, as are the majority of Islamic maps. Another, admittedly produced for a European, contains images placed according to southern orientation upon which are superimposed inscriptions oriented toward the north (Werner 1915, facing p. 280; reproduced in Tolmacheva 1993: xiv.). Certainly more research is necessary to ascertain the probability of such an influence and the degree of geographical precision in the narratives.

Among other meaningful groupings of placenames are the "Nyika towns" discussed above; the lists of "Shirazi" settlements in the histories of Kilwa Kisiwani may also carry some special meaning. It is also in these texts that some cities are identified as capitals or being 'large,' meaning important (*mji kuu*): among such are Bera and Mgao. The greater emphasis belongs on the use of the concept of capital rather than the identification of the place, since confusion is not far away: one version names Mgao as capital of Mwanya, while the next one cites Sudi in the same role (Freeman-Grenville 1962:230).

It is striking that the more important centers of the coast cannot boast such distinction in the texts. (Again, in contradistinction Arabic geographers are eager to mark the most prominent among the cities they know, e.g. Mogadishu or Kilwa). Two simple explanations occur which may throw light on this lack. First, it is quite likely that the city-state political organization prevalent in the region made virtually every town into a 'capital' and thus generally removed the need for the definition. Secondly, those chronicles which are primarily concerned with dynastic legitimation or with aggrandizement of the past for the cities whose histories they narrate probably regard their focus on a location (if a conscious process may be assumed) as a sufficient statement of a town's leading role, not needing further elaboration. References to the 'Nabahan kingdom', for example, make it perfectly clear that Pate was regarded as the heart of the empire, even though Pate is never called a capital city. And such lack of scale classification cuts both ways: few smaller settlements are identified as villages; Uzini on Zanzibar is a rare, if not unique example.

Some placenames have geographical elements built into them. Dar es Salaam also appears as Bandar es Salaam; the latter, it has been suggested, was the former name. Both the versions are loans from Arabic and of fairly recent origin; in Arabic, any confusion between the 'Dar' and 'Bandar' parts is impossible, and an abbreviation unlikely. The word *bandar* is originally Persian although used in Arabic where accent shifts to the first syllable. The *dar* part is etymologically, morphologically and orthographically different from the Arabic *dār*. In Swahili, though, accents and syllabic vocalization may make "Dari" and "Bandari" much more similar: the accent shifts, the long Arabic *ā* is replaced with a short *a* (as happens in the word *Sawahili*, where the second *a* is contracted and the accent shifts to *i*, impossible in the Arabic plural of *sāhil*). It is not impossible that without a firm grasp on etymology, the two words became confused in local usage and could be substituted one for another in the context of references to the port city. Since evidence is scarce, however, it is prudent at this stage to suggest parallel usage.

City names occasionally may provide an "ethnic" or, rather, cultural name for groups of population according to the usual rules of Bantu word formation. These are of the same order

as the Bajun and Uarabu examples discussed earlier. One of the most common such constructions, *waShirazi*, linguistically derived from the Persian toponym, has of course long been identified as a socio-cultural term having only a most tenuous connection with the real city in Iran. On the other hand, derivations like *waMalindi* are both local and "correct," that is firmly rooted in a real rather than legendary descent of more recent Swahili migrants. Such obviously geographical markers of coastal genealogy seem to offer descriptive identification rather than terminological transformation.

To conclude our survey of toponymical vocabularies, the following further observations are offered in regard to the general nature of the placenames registered in chronicles.

First of all, because most of the records have been in existence for a fairly limited time, the majority having been written down or copied at the turn of the 20th century, the texts naturally reflect a modern map of the coast in the sense that no histories have been registered focused on the sites that have since disappeared, ceased to function, or untraceably changed names. It seems probable that this time factor had led to the appearance of considerably longer lists of towns in the more recent chronicles of Mombasa and Kilwa Kisiwani, which are inclined to list numerous and not even particularly prominent modern sites. By contrast, the chronicles claiming to go back to the early centuries of Islam contain fewer placenames as a rule, but usually those names belong to more significant settlements.

Secondly, it is likely that these chronicles, especially those with a dynastic focus, represent only a *selective* memory of the past, including historical contacts and maybe historical placenames of political and social significance. Historical tradition, as any tradition, does not have to be geographically accurate, be it for reasons of dynastic claims, expansionism or a special relationship with a neighboring location. Histories containing older segments do not chat about other locations in the abstract, but purposely and self-centeredly talk of places relevant, important or significant to *their* basic message. The reverse of this is the omission of placenames that were too remote or too powerful to be controlled, or yet too insignificant as centers of Islamic culture or trade. Thus, Shungwaya which may have never existed, or at least is impossible to identify, gets listed but Zanzibar, with its active and powerful presence on the coast, is frequently overlooked. The *Pate Chronicle* glorifies Pate as center of an empire conquered by Sultan 'Umar in the 14th century but fails to record the loss of towns or to acknowledge the growth of other power foci in the region. Therefore, the fact alone of a placename occurring in a text may not be regarded as evidence of this location's significance to the whole coast but rather *only* to the place where the particular text originated (or developed). In order to be able to arrive at conclusions regarding the general, regional, or local role played by the cities or to deduce their *perceived* importance one has to look at the *frequency* of the particular names as they occur in documents generated by cities located in *different* parts of the coast.

Finally, further publication of early Swahili texts must be urged. At present, most researchers resort to European-language translations without much chance to verify these against the indigenous version. A reader seeing the names of Zanzibar and Pemba in the translations of G S P. Freeman-Grenville, for instance, generally remains unaware whether the

original text uses the Swahili *Unguja* or Arabic *Zanjabār* (Swahilized as *Zanjibāri*, *Zinjibāri*) or calls Pemba *Jazīrat al-Khadrā* for 'Green Island' instead of its Swahili name. To answer this need, texts must be made available at least in transcription.

Furthermore, the manner in which toponyms are recorded in the chronicles written by the Swahili in Arabic script rather than those recorded by Western scholars using Romanization, offers peculiar phonetic variations in some of the names. The significance of these variations, first noted by Misiugin, lies in providing linguistic and onomastic information. Neither current Standard Swahili spelling nor Romanized transcription, especially if less elaborate than that developed by J. W. T. Allen (1945) shows some of the details that are evident in Arabic-Swahili orthography.²⁹ That, or its accurate rendition in transcription with diacritical marks giving consideration to original Arabic phonetics, is capable of recording different accents in pronunciation from those currently accepted, consonant substitution, variation in vowel length, etc. Such information may hold keys to etymological or cultural interpretation of certain placenames. Identification of names found in Arabic sources may be facilitated, while some identifications current in the literature may be corrected. For example, the Western confusion over the Swahili usage of toponyms *Kilwa* and *Kirimba* has led to serious overestimates of the geographical extent of Pate's influence described in an important passage in the *Pate Chronicle* (Tolmacheva 1993:56, 172, 226, 299, a.o.). Through a careful reading of the texts previously available only in manuscript I have concluded that the narrative refers to the city of Kilwa rather than the chain of small islands off the coast of Mozambique. Since access to manuscript or photographic copies of the chronicles continues to be limited and obstacle-ridden for the majority of African historians, the publication of Arabic-script versions of the texts cannot be urged too strongly.³⁰

²⁹ This subject is further discussed below in "Ethnonyms and Toponyms in Swahili Chronicles."

³⁰ The 1993 edition of the *Pate Chronicle* contains both Arabic-script versions (where available), and Romanized Swahili transcription. The edition of the Comoro chronicle contains a facsimile of the Arabic-Swahili script. The 1990 edition of the Mombasa chronicle transcribes the Arabic-Swahili version with diacritical markings for the consonants but not the vowels. Michigan State University Press has brought out several volumes in its continuing series *African Historical Sources*, including some Swahili texts. A major project underway at the University of Helsinki aims to collect and computerize Romanized as well as Arabic-script texts.

III. ETHNONYMS AND TOPONYMS IN SWAHILI CHRONICLES³¹

This paper aims to assess the potential value of Swahili historical prose texts for ethnic, cultural, and linguistic approaches to Swahili history from the relatively narrow perspective of local onomastics. It explores two groups of names, ethnonyms and toponyms, as they were recorded and used in the texts produced (or reproduced) at the turn of this century or shortly after WW II. These are mostly pre-colonial but not pre-European terms and usages, since the Portuguese element, incorporated into Swahili mostly over the period of the 16th-18th centuries, forms part of the vocabulary and the geographical background. In addition to orthography and usage, questions of topo- and ethnonym formation are briefly addressed to establish the patterns which appear in this group of texts. Finally, I comment on the folk etymology of certain placenames as interpreted by the sources and make a few remarks on placename identification.

Swahili historical narratives usually referred to as chronicles are local histories focusing on dynastic pedigrees and city-state politics. As *local* stories they refer to local ethnic, cultural, and other identity groups as well as those with whom the locals may have dealt in the past, including various African, Asian, and European groups. The total number of ethnonyms found in the texts is not large, and most of them are readily identifiable. The chronicles contain a considerably greater number of placenames, predominantly referring to coastal East Africa, and some of these have not been identified. Both the groups (ethnic and geographical names), especially when studied together, allow to make certain observations concerning the historical geography of the coast and the history of the Swahili language and literacy.

The majority of extant chronicles were recorded in the Swahili language using Arabic script at the turn of the century. Thus the linguistic usage registered in them reflects the state of the dialects prior to the development of Standard Swahili. The fact that the recording was originally done by Swahili-speakers themselves distinguishes this group of texts from oral narratives collected by field anthropologists and linguists such as Carl Velten about the same time. It is an important and interesting cultural statement that the association of the chronicles with Arab literacy continues to be so strong that the copying of earlier manuscripts in Arabic script has continued on the coast, while no attempt has been made locally to romanize the texts in accordance with contemporary practice.

For this study I used texts both in Swahili and in English translation, relying especially on Arabic-script versions available to me in the United States when closer reading was required. Freeman-Grenville's collection (1962) was used largely for the texts gathered by him in the 1950s or those not readily available elsewhere. The more recent summaries of oral historical traditions (such as those published by Randall L. Pouwels 1987: ch. 3, Appendices)³² I treated as historical rather than linguistic sources because they do not offer the same contextual or

³¹ An earlier draft of this paper was presented at the 35th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association (Seattle, 1992). Travel to the meeting was supported in part by a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship in the Humanities. The writer also gratefully acknowledges the support received from the National Endowment for the Humanities and Washington State University.

³² A useful summary of genealogical statements made in the sources (largely published) is available in Pouwels 1984.

chronological framework as the earlier and more extended narratives East African chronicles composed in Arabic as well as external Arabic sources were consulted for comparative purposes only.

Although geography is not a stated concern of the chronicles, nevertheless, the politics of Swahili city-states of the pre-modern age infused the narratives with an awareness of points near and far, on the islands and the mainland, in Africa and in Asia, especially the Near East and India. The dynastic focus of the texts inevitably led to their discussing not only the ruling families, but also the emergence of the cities and towns they ruled, built, or conquered. The settlement as a political unit is part of a historical-geographical vision of the chronicles, and the memory of old places and placenames survives even when the rationale for including the information may not be readily apparent. For example, in the introductory description of the island of Pate, the *Pate Chronicle* lists the other settlements nearby. The text makes a reference to a time when "Siu was not yet a town (*mui*)". It then goes on to describe how it became one, and later refers to the emergence of *that* city's rulers (WaFamau)³³ Another instance of such historical-onomastic awareness is found in the Stigand version of the *Pate Chronicle*, where the descendants of the original settlers of Siu are identified in the following way: "Now they are called Swahilis and their clan is the Banu Sadi"³⁴ Lamu traditions also register a memory of former names: Lamu is said to have been called in the past "Mrio" or "Kiwa-Ndeo", and Uziwa either "Mudiwo" or also (confusingly) "Mrio" (Pouwels 1987:45).

Toponym Formation

Toponyms ending in *-ni* are frequent in the texts as well the contemporary map of East Africa (Mpokomoni, Magogoni, Kikoni, Pangani, Shangani, Kisauni, Kilindini, etc). The particle *-ni* denotes location, distance, and sometimes direction. It may be added to a common noun (*bara* "mainland", *barani* "to/from the mainland," *Swahilini* for the "Swahili coast") or to a name of a people or an area: *Arabuni* "Arabia", *Tikuuni* "Bajun (Tikuu) coast". In the latter case, there is linguistic duplication of the sense of location, since *Tikuu* is thought to derive from *nti kuu* "big country" (Sometimes, however, *-ni* is not used even when movement toward a place is meant: *akenda Goa* "he went to Goa")

Another instance of duplication, by different means, is the form *Uzunguni* "abroad," "(to) Europe," where *U-* is the locative prefix and *-ni*, the locative suffix. A similar case of using the two particles together is *U-runga-ni* (Freeman-Grenville 1962:297). Interestingly, while the prefix *U-* is actively employed in modern Swahili, the only other *U-* toponym in the texts I have been able to consult is *Unguja* (for Zanzibar), which I interpret as "place of waiting" (i.e., port, especially one influenced by monsoon navigation where ships have to wait for the wind). The form *U-Reno* for "Portugal" still exists in oral usage, but I have been unable to find it in available texts.

³³ Cf. Tolmacheva 1993:296, 346, a.o. In the earlier editions only the Heepe version has this statement (1928); reprinted in Tolmacheva 1993:195-249.

³⁴ Stigand (1913:49); this version is reprinted in Freeman-Grenville, document 47 and Tolmacheva 1993: 31-127.

Another morphological device for toponym formation in Swahili is the older locative prefix *L-* I found in the texts only two toponyms using it, Lamu and Luziwa; both are remarkable for clearly showing not only the use of the prefix but also its impermanent nature: the alternative forms Amu and Uziwa are not infrequent in the texts. Indeed, the *Pate Chronicle*, often hostile to Lamu, notes the variant pronunciation in some of its versions and indicates that "Amu" was the native form: "Bwana Mkuu bin Muhammad bin Abubakar bin Omar ... made a treaty with the Europeans; and he liked to leave at Lamu till the monsoon, and he called it "Amu" and took a wife from among the people of Lamu"³⁵

More research is needed on placename formation with prefixes *M-* and *Ki-*. Although these have not been linked by the linguists with a locative function, both types of toponyms are frequent enough to call attention to themselves. However, the chronicles alone do not provide sufficient data for articulating any specific patterns.

Ethnonym Formation

In contemporary Swahili, the dominant way of naming a group of people operates according to the rules of Class I, by adding the prefix *wa-* (the singular prefix *m-* is not applied consistently for purposes of ethnic designation of individuals). This is not a uniform practice, however, and some ethnonyms lack the prefix: for example, *WaTikuu* but *Bajuni*, *Somali*; *Wa(I)Ngereza* for "the English" but *Jarman* for "the German" (although *WaJarumani* is also found); for "the Portuguese" it is *WaReno* but another derivative uses no prefix: *Portugali*. By their very nature, these names refer to outsiders, and foreign linguistic influence may be at work. It is not clear what role, if any, the foreign aspect plays in this morphological process; comments on some other aspects of foreign influences follow below.

While sifting through the sources for ethnonyms, that is, relatively broad anthropological-linguistic categories, it becomes apparent that the chronicles seem to avoid using terms approximating what today is called "ethnonyms" in regard to those groups who are at the center of a particular narrative. It is possible that finer gradations of identity or different emphases (local geographical, cultural, social, religious) make the broad "ethnic" categories inadequate.³⁶ It may be noted, for instance, that the *Mombasa Chronicle* calls outsiders from Malindi *WaMalindi* but never refers to Mombasans as *WaMombasa* or *WaMvita*. The *Pate Chronicle* uses *watu wa Pate* rather than *WaPate* to refer to the city's population, even though the construction may seem to us unnecessary or redundant. (No emphasis on the free-born status of those called *watu* "men" or "people" can be discerned in most instances.) The same pattern is observed in references to the people of Lamu (*watu wa Lamu*), Siu (*watu wa Siu*), and other places. In fact, in all the known versions and copies of the *Pate Chronicle*, the best known to me, I have been able to find only one, doubtful, instance of use of such a local,

³⁵ Werner 1915:281. This is the only version verbalizing the distinctive usage. The Heepe version (1928) uses "Amu" but omits the linguistic remark. Other versions use "Lamu." See also Tomacheva 1993:175, 230, 303.

³⁶ I explored some narrative expressions of identity in the papers "Identity Groups in Swahili Chronicles" (presented at the 1991 annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association) and "Group Identity in the Pate Chronicle" (presented at the 1991 annual meeting of the African Studies Association).

placename-derived identity label which can be called “ethnonym” admittedly only if the category is shrunk to the level of regional category. The case is that of the passage describing the Battle of Shela (ca. 1812) in which some references to the participants name the *WaPate* and *WaMombasa*, but even there the *wa-* may be simply the connector between the placename and the word *watu* “men,” which in this case precedes it being separated by a few words. The phrasing elsewhere in the passage carefully connects the substitute expression “army” to both the cities: *jeysbi ya Pate na Mombasa* or even *jayishi ya Pate na ya Mombasa* (Tolmacheva 1993:286, 336, etc.).

Usage

The following remarks highlight the ways in which the texts refer to some of the most well known cities of the Swahili coast. The examples chosen below are significant both for their frequency in the Swahili sources and for their early familiarity to non-African outsiders, especially Arabs.

(1) It is known that the native name of Mombasa is *Mvita*. However, the city is almost invariably called in the texts “Mombasa”; this may be reasonable in external narratives, but even the locally-produced *Mombasa Chronicle* uses the form *Mvita* only twice (Omar and Frankl 1990).

(2) Only the Swahili sources distinguish between various “Kilwas” (Kilwa-Kisiwani, Kilwa-Kivinje, Kilwa-Masoko, etc.). The Arabic authors speak of only one Kilwa. This is true even of those who had traveled in Africa and were thoroughly familiar with the coast, such as the navigator Ahmad ibn Majid (late 15th century).

(3) The name “Zanzibar” for the island never becomes quite “domesticated” in pre-colonial Swahili vocabulary, although it was known from Arabic usage (In Arabic the name could also apply to the mainland littoral). *Unguja* remains the name of the island, as *KiUnguja*, the name of its dialect. In the very rare instances when, in the context of Arab-Omani affairs, the island is called “Zanzibar”, the Arabic-derived Swahilized form *Zinjibari*, with *jīm*, prevails even when the recording of the texts had been done in the British era and even though writing *Zanzibar(i)* in Arabic characters is just as easy.

(4) The Arabic name for Pemba, *Jazīrat al-Khadrā'* (“Green Island”) also does not appear in Arabic-script Swahili texts. However, the abbreviated *Khadrā'* figures in the Arabic *Kilwa Chronicle* (Strong 1895).

Orthography

Of the limited number of toponyms which occur both in the external, medieval Arabic sources as well as in Swahili texts, a few show orthographic differences between Arabic and Swahili usages, even though the traditional Swahili texts employ Arabic script. It has been noted that the Arabic script, with its 28 consonantal characters, is inadequate for the 46 consonantal

sounds of Swahili.³⁷ The matter is somewhat different when it comes to vowels. As shown below, the Arabic forms recorded in the early texts allow for instances of precision which the modern, romanized Swahili script and orthography do not offer. The following examples are an eclectic sample of variations gleaned from the Arabic-script Swahili versions with occasional parallels from the Arabic texts. They reiterate the value of the old records for contemporary research as no abstract discussion can.

(1) "Mombasa" is spelled in Arabic *Manbasa*, with *nūn* (even though the *nb* combination is pronounced *mb*), but in Swahili *Mambāsa*, *Mumbāsa*, *Mwambāsa*.

(2) "Malindi" is spelled in Arabic *Malinda* but in Swahili *Malindi* and *Malindī*, with a long *ī*. It is striking that the Arab expert on the coast Ahmad ibn Majid also has *Malindī* (Shumovskii 1957), as if writing with a Swahili accent.

(3) "Mafia" is spelled in Arabic *Manfiya* (and the nasal consonant reappears in the Portuguese version of the name) but in Swahili *Mafiya* or *Mafiyā*, with a long *ā*.

(4) Sometimes the Arabic-script spelling of Arabic loanwords in Swahili is changed in a way that looks not like corruption but adjustment to Swahili phonetics. The following examples both emphasize the accent on the penultimate syllable: thus the common *Sawāhili* alternates with the less frequent *Sawahīli*, with the character *yā* inserted to insure the long *ī*, while "Arabuni" for Arabia *'Arabuni* may be spelled *'Arabūni* with *wāw* to show the long accented *ū*.

(5) "Mogadisho" is spelled invariably with *qāf* rather than *ghayn*, following the Arabic form *Muqdishā*, *Maqdashaw*. The cognate "Unguja" is spelled with *ghayn*. There are indications that in Arabic practice the sound *g* was transmitted with *jīm* (in Persian the tall, dotted *gāf* was used, and that occasionally impacted both Arabic and Swahili practice). "Angazija" is spelled with *ghayn* for the sound *g* in Swahili sources but with *jīm* in Arabic sources.

(6) The Arabic emphatic (tall) *ta'* is not normally used in writing Swahili words of Bantu stock, since the corresponding consonant is lacking. Normally it appears only in Arabic loanwords. It is therefore particularly striking to see it used in the toponyms *Tūla* (also *Tūlā*) and *Tuwāla* (also *Tuwālā*) as in the *Pate Chronicle* (Heepe 1928: M5, A 6; Tolmacheva 1993: 502, 510, 530, etc.). These two placenames do not occur in Arabic sources, and therefore one should look not for foreign influence but for some underlying phonetic cause.

(7) Finally, the spelling of the name "Lamu" alerts us to how consistently the Swahili texts use the means of Arabic orthography to indicate accent on the last syllable, uncommon in Swahili and Bantu languages in general, while also showing the first vowel to be long. (In Arabic, a two-syllable word with the first long vowel would unavoidably have accent on the first syllable; the accent on the last syllable and a final long *ū* are unusual in Arabic nouns in the singular.) The forms used include *Lāmū*, *Lāmūu*, *Lāmūw*, *Lāmūuh*, *Lamūuh*, and even *Lāmwhuh*. These are all in agreement with the now seemingly old-fashioned English spelling *Lamoo* (as in Steere 1885 for example). When in the 15th century, quite late for the Arabic

³⁷ For a systematic presentation of phonetic-orthographic correspondences see J. W. T. Allen 1945.

sources, the city of Lamu is first mentioned by Abū 'I-Mahāsin Ibn Taghribirdi, the spelling preserves both the *alif* for the long ā and the *wāw* for the long ū.

Similar cases of showing accent on the final vowel by using the Arabic *wāw* are presented by *Kiwayū*, the Arabic *yā'* by *Malindī*, and the *alif maksūra* (for the long ā) by *Kirimba*.

Etymologies

It is most interesting to note some placename etymologies offered by the chronicles or oral traditions. The story of the settlement of Siu told in MS 177 (University Library, Dar es Salaam) describes Pate's war against the neighboring city of Shanga and by the way comments on the origin of the former city's name (Tolmacheva 1993:278 The wording varies slightly in other versions):

Watu wa-Shanga wakakhalifu kapijana nao kawashinda na-muji kauvunda kaondowa Asili ba'ada ya-watu wakaja Pate na-ba'adi ya-watu kabila yao Kinandangu wakakimbia wasijuwekane wamezipokenda Hatta siku zikapita ikaja khabari kwa Sultan Muhammad bin Sulayman na-watu winda'o, kuenda wakamabilia, "Wale **wa-siu** tumewaona katika mwitu". Kapeka watu kuwangalia wakawadirika, wamefanya zijumpa ndani ya-mwitu, wakawatukua wakaja nao Pate, Sultan Muhammad kawasamehe kawarudisha mahala pao Ndiyo asili ya-muji wa-Siu.³⁸

Needless to say, this etymology, equating the people of Siu with the "unknown" men (originally from Shanga) in the woods only works in the Ki-Amu dialect, where the verb *jua* "to know" is pronounced *yua* to produce the form *Siyu* or *Siu*. Another version refers to "those unknown" as *wale wa-shiwo*, thus obscuring the direct etymological link (Tolmacheva 1993:328/346: the version of MS 321, University Library, Dar es Salaam).

Several examples of folk etymology were recorded by Stigand. According to his informant, "Mogadishu" derives from *mui wa mwisho* "the end city" (Stigand 1913:29, note 4), probably meaning one at the end of the Swahili region. It is more likely that the true etymology is based on *ngoja* "to wait" and means "the place of waiting". *Unguja* for Zanzibar and *Angoche* (Port *Angoxe*) in Mozambique seem close parallels.

Some names are truly meaningful (the region of fishing and farming villages north of Lamu was called Nti Kuu "the great country"; Pouwels 1987:44), while others are given spurious origins. The name "Mvita" for Mombasa is commonly derived from *vita* for "war" because of the town's history, despite the frequent use in the texts of the northern form *zita*. Another story has a clearly pejorative intent: "The Mombasa people hid themselves in the interior [from the Pate army - M.T.] and that is the origin of the place being called Mvita, from "mfita" (one

³⁸ "The people of Shanga seceded. He made war, conquered the town, destroyed it and took away (the residents). The origin of some of the people is that they came to Pate, and some of them, of the tribe Kinandangu, ran away and it was **not known** where they had gone. After some days passed, the news came to Sultan Muhammad bin Sulayman from the hunters. They said to him, "Those **unknown**, we have seen them in the forest." (The sultan) sent people to look for them and they caught up with them; they had made huts in the woods. They (the posse) carried them off and came to Pate. Sultan Muhammad forgave them (the fugitives) and returned them to their own place (a place of their own). This is the origin of the town of Siu."

who hides)" (Stigand 1913:45; Tolmacheva 1993:57) The quarter of Weng'andu in the old city of Pate was said to receive its name from the people of Manda settled there: "the Manda people had many gold ornaments, for which reason they were called "Wavaa ng'andu" (the wearers of gold" (Stigand 1913:42; Tolmacheva 1993:53). Conflicting traditions call for great care in pursuing such leads: R L. Pouwels cites instances of alternative, usually archaic, names used or claimed for some northern Swahili cities, e.g., three(!) names for Uziwa: Ndeo, Mudiwo, and Mrio which are contradicted in related traditions by claims of Mrio or Kiwa-Ndeo for Lamu (Pouwels 1987:45).

The name of the town of Faza, originally called Rasini, is explained as based on the custom of drawing water at sunrise; eventually a different naming process is said to have occurred at the same place, with people being labeled by the location:

... it was the custom of those people to arrive daily as the sun commenced to mount in the heavens. Till the women in their houses used to tell their slaves, "Go quickly and draw water before the sun mounts and those of the mounting sun have come".

So the people of Faza (or Paza) were called "those of the mounting sun" This is the origin of the word "Wapaza," for after a while the word "sun" was dropped out, and they were called "those of the mounting (= "Wapatha" in Pate Swahili) After many days had passed the name of Wapaza stuck to them

Later on when the country of Rasini had been taken by the Sultan of Pate, it remained uninhabited till the Watikuu came asking for a place in which to settle. The sultan of that date told them that they could have the place of the Wapatha. That is why they are now called Paza (or Faza) (Stigand 1913:34-35; Tolmacheva 1993:44).

Some folk etymologies are based on Arabic toponyms, such as those in the traditions recorded by R L. Pouwels, deriving the name of the WaYumbili of Lamu from Yanbu' in the Hijaz (also from Yumbe, Yumbwa; Pouwels 1987:46). Claims to Arab origin, whether real or spurious, are commonplace in coastal traditional histories, and these examples illustrate how onomastics has been used to support some of these claims. Ethnic (or tribal) rather than geographical terms also have been used: the Arabic "Book of the Zanj" (*Kitāb al-Zunūj*) asserts that the Kushitic Galla people are descendants of the Arab tribe Banu Qays Ghailan (Cerulli 1957 1:233).

Identifications

As a rule, the chronicles are unhelpful in identifying obscure names with modern or archeological sites. For instance, according to the Stigand version of the *Pate Chronicle* the town of Kitau had been abandoned very early (Stigand 1913:42; Tolmacheva 1993:54); yet the Portuguese knew *Quitao*. Population shifts, usually initiated by the victorious side upon conquest and reported in some of the stories, seem to erase towns and induce vagueness in the memories of them. In a few instances, however, the usage and simultaneous availability of several versions of the text of the *Pate Chronicle* allowed me to explore or confirm the identity of sites while tracing their variant names. Such was the case with the changing names of Ozi-Uziwa-Kau, on the Ozi River

Another instance also came from a close reading of the *Pate Chronicle*, in a particularly sweeping description of 14th-century conquests by Sultan 'Umar bin Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Sulayman, the boundaries of his kingdom are said to extend "from Mogadishu to Kirimba". The historicity of such an "empire" aside, the geographical span of this claim is truly staggering. The islands known today under the name Kirimba are far south in Mozambique, and some of the earlier commentators of the *Chronicle* were not even aware of their existence or location. The southernmost places on the list of conquests belong to the part of the coast called "Mrima" and "Mgao", in today's Tanzania. The Stigand version is the only one that mentions both Kilwa (certainly the most important historical center of the southern Swahili coast) and *Kirimba*, all others speak of Kirimba alone, without naming Kilwa; 'Umar's conquest of Kilwa and *Kilwa Island* is implied again in a later passage where the range of Pate's authority is reiterated as extending from Mukadisho to Kirimba (Stigand 1913:38, 45; Tolmacheva 1993:48, 57)

Sultan Omar (Fumomari) reigned. It was he who fought the towns of the coast, Manda, Uziwa, Komwana, Malindi, and the Mrima and Kilwa till he came to Kirimba.

Then the Pate people passed on overland and fought the whole of the Mrima coast from Wasini and Pangani to Saadani, Tanga, Kilwa, and Kilwa Island and Mgao coast. So the Pate troops proceeded till they reached Kirimba; these were the ends of the Nabahan kingdom, Mukadisho and Kirimba, so Sultan Omar conquered the whole of the Swahili coast except only Zanzibar he did not get because at this time this town had no fame.

The coincidence of the placenames in these passages, and the lists of conquered cities, in the same sequence, in less extended and rambling versions of the *Chronicle* which are not interrupted, as Stigand's is, by parables and excursi, was of great assistance in determining the correct place. After my translation of the *Chronicle* was finished I learned that the unpublished translation of the *Pate Chronicle* substituted "Kilwa" for the "Kirimba" of what I assume to be MS 177 (Cusack n.d.). To find proof, I explored linguistic probabilities (still working with texts) and found helpful dialect variations. A version of the *Mombasa Chronicle* records the form *Kirwa* (Omar and Frankl 1990:106). The variant *Kilimba* is suggested by the late, external Arabic sources (Tolmacheva 1969:276). In fact, *Kilwa/Kirimba* may be a "generic" toponym, a placename developed out of a common noun: compare the Portuguese *Quiloane*, a version of *Kilwani* (*Kilwa* plus the locative particle *-ni*). The Old Kilwa, now called *Kilwa-Kisiwani* "Kilwa-on-the-island," is often referred to in a Swahili history of Kilwa as simply "Kisiwani" (*kisiwa* "island" + *-ni*; Freeman-Grenville 1962, document 42). On the other hand, the noun *kisiwa* also may serve as a toponym, even without the particle *-ni*, as in the *History of Sudi*, where Kisiwa is listed as one of the seven Sudi domains (Freeman-Grenville 1962:230).

Foreign Influences.

Numerous instances above have highlighted the presence of Arabic, Islamic, or broadly conceived Middle Eastern geographical elements in Swahili historical records in addition to the use of Arabic script. The following observations briefly focus on the Swahili knowledge of and use of European terms. In addition to phenomena discussed in the first essay of this series, they may suggest a few directions of future research and subjects to be pondered next.

The Portuguese, the earliest Europeans to appear on the coast (although their arrival is not dated accurately in the chronicles), figure in several narratives very prominently. They are called variously *Portukāl*, *Portugali*, *Portugīs*, and *WaZungu Portugīs* "the Portuguese Europeans" (For some reason, although Portugal was originally referred to as *Reno*, that is "the Kingdom," I have not encountered in the texts "WaReno" for the Portuguese.) The verb predicate takes the singular with these group names. The form *Portug_s* occurs only rarely, so that one wonders whether the timing of the recording may reflect the weakness of the English, or possibly, in this instance, German linguistic influence. Whatever the case, the Portuguese derivation prevailed and the more common form reflects the older, toponym-based term in the role of ethnonym.

The presence of Europeans in the region accelerated linguistic change and especially affected the vocabulary. One final example will illustrate the way in which political realities connected with the changing foreign actors on the coastal scene quickly impacted the usage, especially that of newly-acquired vocabulary. This is the striking instance of the contrasting, yet concurrent, use of two words for "the Germans": *Jarman* (*Jarmani*, *Jarumani*, *Pate Chronicle*) and *WaDachi* (*History of Lindi*) (Tolmacheva 1993:294 and elsewhere; Velten 1907:272 and elsewhere). One is an ethnonym wholly borrowed from English and constituted as a collective noun without morphological emendations; the other is an ethnonym based on a German loanword and provided with the *wa-* prefix for "people" in a typical Bantu construction. Both mean the same people and were used on the East African littoral approximately during the same period. The main difference was in the audience: the stories were narrated for a German scholar and a British diplomat, in areas affected by rival designs of protectorates to come.

To conclude: Writing was evidence of high culture on the coast. For those who could not write in Arabic, the practice of using Arabic script, and the fashion for inserting Arabic loanwords were tools of associating with a "higher" civilization and of asserting a cultural identity that went beyond demonstrating allegiance to Islam to claim and legitimize social prestige and privilege. However, the comparisons with Arabic usage drawn upon above serve to highlight not only the cultural influences absorbed by the Swahili language but at the same time a degree of Swahili "independence" in adopting a foreign alphabet and orthography and adapting them to indigenous needs.

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