Uses of Race

Moral debate and political action in Mombasa

1895-1990

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For Kabibi

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Abstract

This study examines the moral and political uses of racial thought in greater Mombasa, from 1895, the time of British imposition of colonial rule, to 1990, the return to multi-party politics in post-colonial Kenya. Tracing the origins of racial thought from a pre-colonial past of ambiguous racial thinking, this dissertation shows how colonial administrative practice and intellectual work served to crystallise situational, negotiable and flexible categories of identity around static concepts of race. Assuming a central place in colonial and post-colonial struggles for status, rights and resources, racial thought then came to influence the imagination of separate moral and political communities, Arab and African, Swahili and Mijikenda, which were further mapped onto distinct spatial categories, that is, town versus hinterland. Across this spatial distinction, the study shows, is an enduring historical tension between the continental and maritime orientations of the Kenyan coast. This tension has influenced local political rivalries, Mijikenda political organisation, the late colonial *mwambao* movement, and Islamic reformism within the coast's Muslim community. In examining racial modes of thought in Mombasa, this study not only makes important contributions to wider debates on racial thought, but is also important to scholarly debates regarding the nature of racial thought in Africa, and to understandings of the local implications of the reorganisation of macro-spatial relations along Africa's Indian Ocean rim during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The colonial and post-colonial history of Mombasa was told by its residents through an excess of over sixty, in-depth interviews, conducted in 2018, information which was triangulated with archival documents, newspaper records and secondary literature.

INTRODUCTION

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Race, or racial thinking, has been at the centre of the social and political imagination of residents and officials in the Kenyan coastal town of Mombasa since at least the second half of the nineteenth century. In Mombasa and elsewhere along the Kenyan coast, racial thought has provided the battleground between maritime and continental imaginaries, Islamic and non-Islamic traditions, "civilisation" and "barbarism", and has come to assume a central place in debates regarding what constitutes proper civic and personal virtue. In Mombasa, racial modes of thought have provided frames of reference through which people identify themselves against others, and these have influenced the distribution of status, rights and resources, and have shaped political action and moral debate. In moments where the future political direction of Mombasa has been thrust dramatically into question, and as new political possibilities suddenly open out, authorizing debate over the fundamentals of Mombasa's identity and its future, race has informed public debates on citizenship that are often acrimonious and bitter, and which are more often than not couched in a distinctive language of racial antagonism.[1]

Yet, much writing and inquiry about society and the politics of Mombasa – and about African politics more widely – has continued to emphasise ethnicity, which is often presented as the dominant language, not only for political competition, but also for conducting moral debates

[1] See for example, Justin Willis and George Gona, 'Pwani C Kenya? Memory, documents, and secessionist politics in coastal Kenya', *African Affairs*, 112, 446 (2012): 48-71.

about civic and personal virtue. This study does not dismiss the rich historiography of ethnic politics in Mombasa, Kenya or Africa.[2] In fact, the literature on African ethnicity is germane to this discussion in two main ways – in its explanations of ethnic competition, or what John Lonsdale has called 'political tribalism', and its examination of the moral economy of ethnicity, or 'moral ethnicity'.[3] These two "contrasting uses" of (ethnic) identity in Africa, to borrow Peter Ekeh's characterisation, where ethnic identity is "used" in strategies of political competition with the imagined 'Other', and at the same time, provides the ideological resources for conducting moral discourses, are also features of racial thought in Mombasa.[4] Following from this precedent, this study is an examination of the political and moral *uses* of race, and of the role that racial thought has played in the modern history of Mombasa.

The period of this study, 1895-1990, is marked by three critical junctures. Firstly, the period between 1895 and 1950 saw the influence of colonialism on the transformation of racial categories in Mombasa; the period between 1950 and 1963 saw racial thought being deployed

[2] For a discussion of ethnicity and civic virtue, see John Lonsdale, 'Moral ethnicity, ethnic nationalism and political tribalism: The case of the Kikuyu' in Peter Meyns, *Staat and Gesellschaft in Africa: Erosions and reformprozesse* (Lit Verlag, Hamburg, 1996): 93-106; 'Moral and political argument in Kenya' in Bruce Berman, Dickson Eyoh, and Will Kymlicka, *Ethnicity and democracy in Africa* (James Currey, Oxford, 2004): 73-95. For discussions on the role of ethnicity in political mobilization in Mombasa and the wider Kenyan coast, see Justin Willis and George Gona, 'Tradition, tribe and state in Kenya: The Mijikenda Union, 1945-1980', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 55, 2 (2013): 448-473; Justin Willis and Ngala Chome, 'Marginalisation and political participation: The 2013 elections', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 8,1 (2014):115-134; Ngala Chome, '"The Grassroots are very complicated": Marginalisation and the emergence of alternative authority in the Kenya coast 2013 elections', *Afrique Contemporine*, 3, 247 (2013): 87-105. For discussions of ethnic politics in Africa, see Leroy Vail, 'Introduction' in Leroy Vail, *The Creation of tribalism in Southern Africa* (James Currey, London, 1989): 1-20; Carola Lentz, '"Tribalism" and ethnicity in Africa: A review of four decades of Anglophone research', *Cahiers des Sciences Humaines*, 31, 2 (1995): 303-28; Carola Lentz and Paul Nugent, 'Ethnicity in Ghana: A comparative perspective,' in Carola Lentz and Paul Nugent, *Ethnicity in Ghana: The limits of invention* (St. Martin's Press, New York, 1999): 1-28; Crawford Young, 'Nationalism, ethnicity and class in Africa: A retrospective' *Cahiers des Sciences Humaines*, 26, 103 (1986): 421-95.

[3] The distinction between 'moral ethnicity' and 'political tribalism' is made much more explicit in Lonsdale, 'Moral ethnicity'; 'Moral and political'.

[4] See for example, Peter Ekeh, 'Social anthropology and two contrasting uses of tribalism in Africa', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 32, 4 (1990): 660-700.

during the decolonisation era to make specific claims on the future political direction of Mombasa; while the period between 1963 and 1990 saw the continuation of these racialized discourses, quietly and at times bitterly, in moral debate and political action, especially in the time leading to political liberalisation in the 1990s. In this way, the study ends at a period in Kenya where the future political direction of the country is dramatically thrust, yet again, into question. In Mombasa, the 1990s – similar to the early and late colonial decades – would again witness an increased deployment of racial thought in public, regarding especially the distribution of status, rights and resources, struggles to reform Islam, which also involved public debates about "proper behaviour" associated with wider attempts at creating a political community of Muslims.[5]

An examination of the politics of Mombasa across the colonial and post-colonial decades is thus important for two main reasons: it contributes to scholarly debate regarding the nature of racial thought in Africa and to understandings of the local implications of the reorganisation of macro-spatial relations along Africa's Indian Ocean rim during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[6] These reorganisations took place during the imposition of colonialism, where colonial power restructured local economies with implications for local politics, imaginations of identity, and debates by local communities over claims and obligations. Reorganisations were experienced, yet again, during the immediate post-colonial period, when the future of Mombasa, and elsewhere

[5] Gregory Deacon, George Gona, Hassan Mwakimako, and Justin Willis, 'Preaching politics: Islam and Christianity on the Kenya coast,' *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 35, 2 (2017): 148-167; Hassan Mwakimako and Justin Willis, 'Islam and democracy: Debating electoral involvement on the Kenya coast,' *Islamic Africa*, 7, 1 (2015): 19-43.

[6] For African modes of racial thought, see Peter Mark, 'The evolution of Portuguese identity: Luso-Africans on the Upper Guinea coast from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century, *Journal of African History*, 40 (1999): 173-191; Jonathon Glassman, 'Slower than a massacre: The multiple sources of racial thought in colonial Africa, *American Historical Review*, 109, 3 (2004): 720-754; *War of words, war of stones: Racial thought and violence in colonial Zanzibar* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, U.S, 2011); Mahmoud Mamdani, *When victims become killers: Colonialism, nativism, and the genocide in Rwand*a (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, United States, 2001). For a recent review of Indian Ocean studies, see Jeremy Prestholdt, 'Locating the Indian Ocean: Notes on the post-colonial reconstitution of space,' *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 9, 3 (2015): 440-467.

across the Western Indian Ocean, came under intense debate. Lastly, reorganisations of macro-spatial relations along the Kenyan (and East African) coast took place after the global restructuring of the 1990s, when debates regarding identity, citizenship and Islam vigorously re-entered public discourse.

In examining racial modes of thought in Mombasa, this study draws from a body of work that has examined racial thought in Africa more widely, and which has contributed especially in expanding the study of race beyond the West.[7] In this way, the study follows in the lines of conceptual reformulations that perceive of racial thought as a shifting field of discourse, and approach the study of race as a topic of intellectual history, rather than a doctrine – synonymous with nineteenth century European science – that categorizes and ranks humanity in specific biological terms.[8] Since societies across space and time have often developed discourses that divide humankind in constituent categories, each distinguished by inherited traits (for example, discourses of "civilization" and "barbarism") the task of the researcher – these authors suggest – is to examine how particular ways of categorizing humanity become important modes of organizing social and political action than others, and at particular times and places.[9]

Associated with this conceptual framework, is the argument that identity is socially constructed, and that racial identities, amongst other identities, are constructed through intellectual work that attributes to them particular qualities, moral concerns and behaviour. In Mombasa, such intellectual work derives its ideological resources from religion, in this case, from a reformist Islam with intellectual origins in Arabia, and other ideas regarding what it means to be a "proper" African, or black, originating especially from hinterland cultures – as shall be shown below.

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[7] Glassman, 'Slower than a massacre'; *War of words, war of stones*; Mamdani, *When victims become killers.*
[8] See for example, Robert Miles and Michael R. Brown, *Racism* (Routledge, London and New York, 2003); Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without groups* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, United States, 2006).
[9] Brubaker, *Ethnicity*, pp. 3-4.

What is also important to note is that while studies of African ethnicity have predominantly focussed on vertical or regional divisions between what were once thought of as "tribes", studies of African racial thought examine the racialization of "ranked ethnic thought", where categories of identity are imagined as hierarchical strata, and are linked to one another in a dominant and subordinate relationship that structures the entire society.[10] Along the coast of East Africa, evidence has shown that groups of Arabs, or those, such as the Swahili, who have claimed recent or distant origins in the Middle-East, have long thought of themselves less as ethnic groups and more as confederations – corporate-territorial groups named after their location of residence (sing. *mtaa*, plu. *mitaa*), some of whom self-identified with the Arabic "*Taifa*" that translates to nation – that were linked to other groups within a stratified and hierarchical social structure.[11]

In addition, and following Glassman, 'concepts convergent with the ideal of civilisation [such as *uungwana* or *uustaarabu*] ostensibly inclusive yet contributing to hierarchical beliefs and practices that look uncomfortably like "racism" have also occurred', not only in the intellectual traditions found along the East African coast, but in many other non-Western traditions as well.[12] In fact, Malvern Van Wyk Smith's investigation of the intellectual genealogies of Western racism does not only find that they began on the African continent, possibly in New Kingdom Egypt, but that the kingdom's ruling elites, similar to their counterparts along the towns of the East African

[10] See for example Glassman, 'Slower than a massacre'; *War of words, war of stones.*
[11] See for example, Francois Constantin, 'Social stratification on the Swahili coast: From race to class?' *Africa*, 59, 2 (1989): 145-160; Fred James Berg, 'The Swahili community of Mombasa: 1500-1900', *Journal of African History*, 9, 1 (1968): 35-56; A.H.J Prins, *The Swahili-speaking peoples of Zanzibar and the East African Coast: Arabs, Shirazis and Swahilis* (International Africa Institute, London, 1961); Ann Patricia Caplan, *Choice and constraint in a Swahili community: Property, hierarchy and descent on the East African coast* (International Africa Institute, London, 1975); Janet M. Bujra, *Conflict and conflict resolution: An anthropological study of political action in a Bajuni village in Kenya* (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of London, 1968); Abdu'l Hamid, el-Zein, *The Sacred meadows: A structural analysis of religious symbolism in an East African town* (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1972).
[12] Glassman, *War of words*, pp. 10-11.

coast, distanced Egyptian civilisation from its African roots.[13] The latter is akin to the long-discredited but persistent "Hamitic hypothesis," which held that state formation in Africa, from the deserts of West Africa, the highlands of Ethiopia, great lakes of Central Africa, and the ruins of Zimbabwe, was the work of a foreign ruling race (of Caucasian) Hamites.[14]

In Mombasa – where Persian and Arab immigrants assimilated themselves in pre-existing, and evolving communities – racial ideologies, claims of exclusive origins, and notions of ethnic purity continue to exist alongside a history of considerable incorporation. While local traditions long held that this coastal civilisation was produced by Middle-Easterners, local networks of claim-making and social obligation told a different story – showing that the hierarchical and racial system of domination that wrote off African origins and agency was nonetheless flexible and negotiable, based on a balance of power between multiple strata within the coastal towns, and of relations with the immediate hinterland.

This negotiability afforded social mobility and status to lower-ranking members of society, especially those coming from the hinterland, who were then able to renegotiate their low-status, for instance by wealth acquisition and adoption of the "right" behaviour, consequently getting incorporated, or working their way up into a higher-status within an existing racial hierarchy.[15] But as Omani-Arab power and British colonial rule took hold of Mombasa and the East African

[13] Malvern Van Wyk Smith, *The first Ethiopians* (Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2009).
[14] Robin Law, '"The Hamitic Hypothesis"' in indigenous West African historical thought,' *History in Africa*, 36 (2009): 293-314.
[15] This point is succinctly made in Justin Willis, *Mombasa, the Swahili and the making of the Mijikenda* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, United Kingdom, 1993), however, the author views identity in Mombasa as primarily ethnic. Another, more recent analysis conceptualises coastal identity in terms of ethnoreligious separations, see Janet McIntosh, *The edge of Islam: Power, personhood and ethno-religious boundaries on the Kenya coast* (Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2009). Also, see the discussion in Randall Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent: Cultural change and traditional Islam on the East African coast* (Cambridge University Press, London, 1987).

coast in the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, the hierarchy of the coastal towns became less negotiable and identities less permeable.

Arabs – or those who claimed distant origins in the Middle-East – manipulated colonial perceptions of race to their own advantage, leading to a redefinition of identity that aligned with official perceptions of race. Based now on ideas of origin and descent, racial identity lost much of its negotiability; and the possibilities for incorporation and mobility were diminished.[16] As a result, traditions emphasising racial exclusivity – foregrounded by exclusive notions of origin and descent – occupied a central place in the social, intellectual and political pursuits of residents, officials and researchers.

While traditions of exclusive origins were, more often than not, bound with wider concerns regarding the distribution of status, rights and resources, professional and non-professional historians of the Kenya coast would either reproduce them uncritically, or would be preoccupied with determining their veracity, largely neglecting their *uses*.[17] For instance, it is this preoccupation with the validity of traditions of origin that explain the protracted, and oftentimes tense debate regarding Swahili identity, a category that has constantly defied exclusivity.[18] For

[16] Willis, *Mombasa*.

[17] Good examples include, Arthur Champion, *The Agiryama of Kenya*, ed. Middleton, John (London, 1967); Alice Werner, 'The Bantu coast tribes of the East Africa Protectorate', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, XLV (1915): 362-255; H.E. Lambert, *Chi-Jomvu and Ki-Ngare: Sub-dialects of the Mombasa area* (Kampala, 1958); T.V., Ngala Tuva, *Nguvu ni Marauka* (Nairobi, 1954); Ronald G., Ngala, *Nchi na desturi za Wagiriama* (Nairobi, 1949); A.H.J Prins, *The coastal tribes of the North-Eastern Bantu: Pokomo, Nyika, Teita* (International Africa Institute, London, 1952); *The Swahili-speaking peoples*; Berg, 'The Swahili community of Mombasa'; Neville Chittick, 'The "Shirazi" colonisation of East Africa', *Journal of African History*, 3 (1965): 275-294; 'Kilwa and the Arab settlement of the East African coast', *Journal of African History*, 4, 2 (1963): 179-190.

[18] For the debate on the origins and nature of Swahili identity, see Carol Eastman, 'Who are the Waswahili?' *Journal of International African Institute*, 41, 3 (1971): 228-236; W. Arens, 'Waswahili: The social history of an ethnic group', *Journal of the International African Institute*, 45, 4 (1975): 426-438; Derek Nurse and Thomas Spear, *The Swahili: Reconstructing the history and language of an African society, 800-1500* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, U.S, 1985); James De Vere Allen, *Swahili origins: Swahili culture and the Shungwaya phenomenon* (James Currey, London, 1993); Alamin Mazrui and Ibrahim Shariff, *The Swahili: Idiom and identity of an African people* (Africa World Press, NJ, USA, 1994); John Middleton, *The world of the Swahili: An African mercantile civilisation* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1992).

anthropologists steeped in the structural-functionalist tradition, the Swahili have provided a source of both enduring fascination and endless difficulty.

Debates regarding Swahili identity have often glossed over the fact that the identity itself (as in the case of most identities) has constantly been negotiated and defined, renegotiated and redefined.[19] In fact, it was significantly transformed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, shifting from an emphasis of one civilizational ideal locally referred to as *uungwana* to another known as *uustaarabu*, the latter marking the significance of Arab prestige during a period of expanding Omani-Arab power (see Chapter 1 below). During this time, a time when previously flexible and sometimes situational racial categories were becoming static, many who regarded themselves, or were regarded by others as Swahili, would increasingly come to neglect previous traditions that located the origins of their identity and culture in African roots, emphasising traditions that located their origins either in the Persian Gulf, that is, Shirazi, or to Arabia.[20] To James De Vere Allen, the 'vehement claims of modern *wa-Shirazi* [Swahili] to specifically Middle-Eastern origins may be no more than a legacy of the colonial era, when it was important to prove "non-African" origins in order to avoid official discrimination'.[21]

In Zanzibar, those who considered themselves as Shirazi (Swahili) violently opposed Arab hegemony in the 1960s – resulting into the 1964 Zanzibar revolution. Similarly, the post-colonial world in Mombasa had shunned an explicit Arabised hegemonic discourse. In contrast to Zanzibar,

[19] For the view that Swahili identity represents a good example of the permeability and fluidity of identity in general, see Kelly Askew, 'Female circles and male lines: Gender dynamics along the Swahili coast,' *Africa Today*, 46 (1999): 66-102.

[20] For Swahili claims of ancient origins in Arabia and/or Persia, see CO 894/12, 'Memoranda on Coastal Strip Enquiry submitted by the Jomvu Social Club to Sir James Robertson,' 15/10/1961; CO 894/13, 'Memoranda on Coastal Strip Autonomy by the Coast People's Party to Sir James Robertson: Signed off by Omar Rashid Bakuli, Acting President,' 20/10/1961; CO 894/13, 'Memorandum by Hyder Mohamed el-Kindy, presented to Sir James Robertson,' 19/10/1961; Midani bin Mwidad, 'The founding of Rabai', *Swahili,* 31 (1960); H.E. Lambert, *Chi-Jomvu and Ki-Ngare,* pp. 70-72.

[21] James De Vere Allen, 'The "Shirazi" problem in East African coastal history', *Studies in History, Trade and Society on the Eastern Coast of Africa,* (1982): pp. 14.

however, those in Mombasa who had been rejected by colonial rule as Arabs, or deemed as lower-status than Arabs, but of a higher-status than Africans, joined Arab intellectuals and politicians in championing the concerns and ideals of an urban, Muslim Arab-Swahili culture as a whole (see Chapter 4 below). This happened in a post-colonial context where the terms and meanings of *uustaarabu*, that is, to be considered a "proper" Arab, or put differently, to claim status as a "proper" (coastal) townsperson, were redefined.[22] With time, those who regarded themselves, or were regarded by others as Swahili, came to pursue largely similar political (and religious) agendas as those of Arabs, in essence, becoming accepted as Arabs in multiple instances – vis-à-vis the agenda of coastal Africans, that is, those who saw themselves as *wamijikenda* (the Mijikenda), and up-country Kenyans, or those locally referred to as *wabara*.

Few studies have interrogated the manner in which such redefinitions of identity, or racial modes of thought, intersected with wider struggles over status, rights and resources.[23] While the term "townspeople", locally known as *wamiji*, refers to the community of people who self-identified as "indigenous" to a narrow strip of coastal territory (or to the coastal towns), it is important to note that during the colonial period, many from the up-country regions of Kenya, or Kenya Colony, *wabara,* would also migrate to Mombasa and other coastal towns. The latter did not necessarily integrate themselves, or were not incorporated, into a pre-existing towns' community, preferring instead, to maintain the roots of their identity in hinterland Kenya. In addition, the diminishing permeability of Swahili identity, through which many from Mombasa's

[22] In this study, the term townspeople, *wamiji* in Swahili, refers to those who claimed that their kinship and social networks were bounded within the coastal town.
[23] Studies that have examined the *uses* of traditions of origin on the East African coast include R.F Morton, 'The Shungwaya myth of Mijikenda origins: A problem of late nineteenth-century Kenyan coastal history', *International Journal of the African Historical Society,* 5 (1973): 397-423; Randall Pouwels, 'Oral historiography: The problem of the Shirazi on the East African Coast,' *History in Africa,* 11 (1984): 237-67; 'The medieval foundations of East African Islam,' *International Journal of African Historical Studies,* 11, 2 (1978): 201-226; Thomas Spear, 'The Shirazi in Swahili traditions, culture and history, *History in Africa,* 11 (1984): 291-304; Allen, 'The "Shirazi" problem; Willis, *Mombasa*.

immediate hinterland could become accepted as people of the coastal towns, or as Arab-Swahili, meant that essentialisms were maintained during the late colonial and post-colonial period that reinforced the distinctiveness of coastal towns' culture from hinterland cultures, and across the same boundary that had divided that which was defined as "African" from non-African, or, in colonial administrative language, native from non-native.[24]

The term townspeople, *wamiji*, is therefore used throughout this study as the name of those who saw themselves, and came to be seen by others, as members of the Afro-Arab community of Mombasa and elsewhere along the towns of the Kenyan coast. In terms of how they thought of themselves against the "Other", that is, against hinterland communities, they thought in a racial logic. They also generally avoided explicit racial language (except during times of momentous political rupture) but emphasized foreign racial origins, or the prestige of Middle-Eastern culture, as a claim to superior status. The term "town" in the appellation "townspeople" connotes the fact that a member of the coastal townspeople community claimed to have possessed social networks that were exclusively created within the coastal town (with links to the Arab-Muslim world) – as opposed to the immediate coastal hinterland.

Publics and Racial Thought

By arguing that racial thought in Mombasa is employed in political action, that is in struggles for status, rights and resources, and in defining "proper" behaviour through moral debates, this study submits that the *uses* of race are usually pursued through both practice and discourse. This study acknowledges that dichotomies such as practise and discourse, including the private and the public,

[24] For the legacy of the imperviousness of Swahili identity to contemporary cultural politics on the Kenya coast, see, Janet McIntosh, *At the edge of Islam,* pp. 1-40.

are viewed in social theory as dynamic and fluid, indistinct and undifferentiated.[25] For clarity, however, political action about struggles over status, rights and resources, between members of mutually exclusive and non-negotiable ethnic and racial categories, will be analysed as a distinct field of action, separate but nonetheless in constant interaction with moral discourses over the need to live a good life, as people struggle to improve their circumstances in a changing environment. In Mombasa and elsewhere on the Kenya coast, moral debate involves discourses over rights and relationships with kin and neighbours, and on proper behaviour or civic virtue amongst people who share a common identity, or some form of tie to one another.

The boundaries are not clear-cut, but the colonial experience disciplined political action and moral debate in specific ways, creating a public for competition by different ethnicities and races over resources that were at the disposal of the state, and other publics where people who shared a common identity debated the meanings and boundaries of kinship, civic responsibility, and "proper" behaviour. Expressed differently, while the categories of "Arab" and "African", or better, town and hinterland, have existed on the Kenya coast in an exclusive manner since the early decades of the twentieth century, the identities themselves are always under constant internal definition and redefinition, struggles that are reflected through debates over morality, virtue, customary law, claim and obligation. In sum, racial thought is not only about domination and being dominated, it is also about defining what it means to be dominant and vice-versa.

It follows that such seemingly incompatible, or contradictory *uses* of identity – as people articulate and advance an amoral and exclusionary political competition with the imagined Other, while at the same time, debating the meanings of claim, obligation and virtue with people whom they share an exclusive category of identity, where racial or ethnic – are convened on two,

[25] See for example, Elaine M. Power, An introduction to Pierre Bourdieu's Key theoretical concepts, *Journal for the study of food and society*, 3, 1 (1999): 48-52.

diametrically opposed levels of publicity. In other words, moral debates about "proper" behaviour are convened *within* the imagined category of identity – or in an *internal* moral public – while political action, and its accompanying debates over competition for status, rights and resources between exclusive categories of identity, are convened on an *external* civic public.

It is important to note, however, that the *uses* of identity have their limits. In one way, there always those within the imagined exclusive group that do not neatly fit. In another, imaginations of identity, including debates about tradition and morality, are usually articulated in terms of ideas and beliefs drawn from the past. These are often reformulated and revised in the context of the present. In this way, exclusive and non-negotiable categories of race in Mombasa and elsewhere were not imagined during colonialism out of thin air, but rather were later products of traditions, customs and categories of identity that had existed long before the imposition of colonial rule, but which were fundamentally transformed by colonial struggles over status, rights and resources.[26]

I use the concept of publicity, or simply publics, as an analytical tool to make sense of how racial thought has, since the colonial decades, influenced debates regarding the distribution of status, rights and resources and debates about morality, tradition and custom. While political action, or physical political struggles, provide evidence of the nature of political competition, more often than not, these are shaped by written and spoken public talk. The focus on publics is therefore used here simply because it is public thought, influenced by changing notions of identity, that shapes political action.

Indeed, publics have been described elsewhere as discursive spaces that are convened by an imagined community of people claiming to have common interests and shared concerns, most

[26] For seminal analyses on the 'limits of invention' see Terrence Ranger, 'The invention of tradition revisited: The case of Africa' in Terrence Ranger, and Olufemi Vaughan. (eds), *Legitimacy and the state in twentieth century Africa* (London, 1993); Thomas Spear, 'Neo-Traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa', *Journal of African History*, 44 (2003): 3-27.

commonly members of what is seen as a national community.[27] However, where such a national community that has formed a state, shares a common national boundary, and is imbued with inclusive notions of origin and descent is non-existent, moral discourses usually take place within multiple and mutually exclusive identities.

Along the East African coast, exclusive publics have historically existed that continue to give expression to two distinctive cultural imaginaries: continental and maritime. It is such divergent expressions, informed by ideas regarding separate racial origins, either in Africa or elsewhere in the Middle-East, that have shaped debates about "proper" behaviour, including competition for status, rights and resources. Drawing from Peter Ekeh, Mahmood Mamdani and John Lonsdale, who have elaborated this view of multiple publics from different perspectives, this dissertation locates the origins of the feature of multiple publics in Mombasa from the institutional legacy of the colonial experience, which in Africa, as the authors have contended, produced two levels of publicity.[28] In one level, debates over morality, claim and obligation, which often take place *within* a mutually exclusive identity, are convened. In another level, debates take place that shape political struggles over status, rights and resources at the disposal of the state, often *between* people claiming to speak (and act) on behalf of mutually exclusive identities. Ekeh, in particular, described the latter as the *civic* level of publicity, and the former as the *primordial* level of publicity.[29]

[27] For this view, see especially, Jürgen Habermas, *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. Translated by Thomas Burger. (MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, U.S, 1989); Michael Warner, *Publics and counterpublics* (Zed Books, New York, NY, U.S., 2002).
[28] Peter Ekeh, 'Colonialism and the two Publics in Africa: A theoretical statement', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 17, 1 (1975): 91-112; Mamdani, *Citizen*; Lonsdale, 'Moral and political argument'.
[29] Ekeh, 'Colonialism'.

In colonial Africa, participation in these two levels of publicity was determined by race.[30] To participate in the *civic* public sphere, that is, to possess the rights of free association and political representation, and therefore to access rights, status and resources, one was to be defined as a non-native, that is, not as an African.[31] Africans, or those who were classified as natives, were expelled from public politics, or from the *civic* public sphere. Participation in public affairs for "natives" was confined within the "tribe", where an enforced tradition and custom was the main discursive repertoire for politics and public life, and for arguments over claims and obligations. This was consonant with the colonial "tribal view of Africa"; an image of clearly defined groups, each with its own uniform political structure, tradition and custom. Mamdani's work has made this point, but did not conceive of debates about custom and tradition within the "tribe" as worthy of constituting a public in their own right. This is perhaps due to his own preoccupation with the technique of power that was employed by the colonial state, and as a result, his analysis elides the much talked about "agency in tight corners" that was exercised by colonial subjects.

Indeed, debates about custom and tradition were the concern of "natives", or were held in the *primordial* public sphere by those who, in Mamdani's view, were the subjects, not citizens, of colonial rule. But within colonial Mombasa, debates over morality, custom and tradition were also held by those who were (or who sought to be) classified as non-natives, that is, the Arabs and the Swahili. Those who regarded themselves as Swahili picked a new term for themselves, that is, the *Ithnashara Taifa*, a term easily rendered in English as the 'Twelve Nations', but who are commonly referred to as the 'Twelve Tribes' of Mombasa. This term was then used for much of the colonial period, by people who now claimed to have distant origins in the Middle East. Kai Kresse, writing about the latter – the predominantly Muslim "townspeople" of Mombasa – has

[30] Mamdani, *Citizen.*
[31] See, Mamdani, *Citizen*, pp. 19.

recently referred to their moral, *internal* discursive spheres as Swahili Muslim publics.[32] Colonial subjects, including those, such as the Mijikenda, who now claim origins in a place called Shungwaya, and who had been classified by colonial rule as "natives", gained the rights of free association and political representation in the late colonial era – decades after the first Arab was elected into the colonial Legislative Council (LegCo). Despite the opening of the political space, members of the Mijikenda community did not abandon *internal* moral debates about claim and obligation – indeed, these were reenergized – but they also found that they had to compete for public resources with the coastal townspeople, that is, those who had been defined by colonial rule as "non-natives", or as racially different from the Mijikenda. In the resulting political struggle for status, rights and resources, explosive debates about citizenship and race erupted, but these debates took place in another level of publicity, that is, the *civic* public sphere.

In this manner, the two levels of publicity that emerged out of the colonial experience, that is, the *primordial* level of *internal* moral debate, and the *external* civic public sphere of political action, became the most defining features of the socio-political history of post-colonial Mombasa, and that of much of post-colonial Africa. This conception of politics has largely been attributed to John Lonsdale, who distinguished between 'moral ethnicity' – the *internal* communal language for debating morality *within* an imagined identity – and 'political tribalism', which refers to the *amoral* competition *between* two or more mutually exclusive identities for access to resources at the disposal of the state. It is this distinction that best explains the origins of Ekeh's two levels of publicity, and as the historiography of African ethnicity (see below) shows, this was largely the result of the colonial institutional framework that sharpened, not only ethnic thought, but as the example of Mombasa shows, racial thought as well.

[32] Kai Kresse, *Swahili Muslim publics and the postcolonial experience* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, U.S, 2018).

The Problem

Ethnicity, or its less regarded cousin, "tribalism", has, for a considerable period of time, not only been viewed by students of African politics as the dominant language for political action, but has also been generally perceived as a problem that complicates the emergence in Africa of a liberal, democratic and issue-based politics, especially by precluding the development of civil and nationalistic communities.[33] Some of those who are less convinced by this view have argued that ethnicity is not only a vehicle for channelling an illiberal and amoral political competition, but that it is also involved – in lieu of a national moral community that continues to elude a majority of African states – in defining morality, or the public good, within specific ethnic discourses.[34]

There is a conceptual flaw in both approaches. While it is largely admissible to state that ethnicity is not only involved in amoral (uncivil) political competition, or what Bruce Berman has referred to as the 'politics of uncivil nationalism', it is also incomplete to perceive of ethnicity as the only language for defining the boundaries of "proper" behaviour, or for debating morality.[35] In fact, for most people, racial (and sometimes religious) modes of thought, including gender and class, have played both roles – amoral political competition and definitions of morality – as well. Simply, the idiom of "tribe", alongside that of sex, God, class and race, have all shaped imaginations of identity in Africa, with significant political and social implications. Ethnicity is

[33] See for example the review of the literature on ethnicity and democracy in Africa in Bruce Berman, Dickson Eyoh and Will Kymlicka, 'Introduction: Ethnicity and the politics of democratic nation-building in Africa' in Bruce Berman, Dickson Eyoh and Will Kymlicka, *Ethnicity and democracy in Africa* (James Currey, Oxford, 2004): 1-26.

[34] See for example, John Lonsdale, 'The moral economy of the Mau Mau: Wealth, poverty and virtue in Kikuyu political thought,' in John Lonsdale, and Bruce Berman, *Unhappy valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa* (James Currey, London, 1992): 265-504.

[35] Bruce Berman, 'Ethnicity, patronage and the African state: The politics of uncivil nationalism,' *African Affairs*, 97, 388 (1998): 305-341.

just one of a number of the ideological resources from which people in Africa have imagined identity and debated morality.

While this study focusses on racial modes of thought in particular, in Mombasa – the focus of this study – like in many other parts of the continent, racial thinking combines and overlaps with class, ethnicity and gender. The argument is that racial thought was sharpened by struggles over status, rights and resources, which intensified during the colonial decades, and that this kind of racial thinking was not only involved in political struggle but in defining morality, claims and obligations as well. For the predominantly Muslim coastal townspeople, racial thinking was central in defining a "good" Muslim, and for the *wamijikenda* and *wabara*, a "good" African and/or Christian. In all these categories, gendered thought featured as well, where morality and race were quite literally inscribed in the bodies of women – as some examples below will show.

The "moral panic" created by Western colonialism led townspeople intellectuals in seeking language for debating religious and social conduct from a reformist Islam with origins in Arabia, prescribing, through such discourses, attributes that emphasise the distinctiveness of townspeople culture from hinterland, non-Muslim, African cultures. The Mijikenda, and up-country Kenyans living in Mombasa, on the other hand, debated the meanings of custom and tradition through an emphasis for common African origins and culture. As we shall see, the very real danger of exclusion from Kenya's political economy and Mombasa's urban Swahili culture unleashed amongst those who saw themselves as Mijikenda a bitter and at times antagonistic *internal* moral politics, especially in debates over claim and obligation, between poor and more fortunate kin. For the predominantly Muslim Digo of Kenya's South Coast, such *internal* debates amongst variously defined relationships of kin, and also over Islam, all featured in their moral discourses.[36]

[36] See for example, Bettina Ng'weno, 'Inheriting disputes: The Digo negotiation of meaning and power through land,' *African Economic History*, 25 (1997): 59-77; Mohamed Ndaro, *Sheikh Abdulaziz Rimo and the Ansari*

Broadly, the two moral and political imaginaries separating out the Muslim townspeople from the people of Mombasa's immediate hinterland, that is, the continental and maritime imaginaries of the coast, have, for a considerable period of time, provided the main socio-religious and political fault lines that have influenced the recent political and intellectual history of the town.[37] At the centre of these distinctions is a hierarchy of racial categories shaped by multiple claims to either foreign (Arab) or local (African) origins. The question, therefore, is what historical processes explain the emergence in Mombasa of mutually exclusive racial identities? What were the consequences of the emergence of such exclusive categories of racial identity for the socio-political history of Mombasa? And what are the lessons, for identity politics in Africa and beyond, that can be drawn from the history of racial thought in Mombasa? Existing studies have largely emphasised ethnicity and the role it plays in public life.[38] Some have paid attention to moral debates *within* the two orientations of the coast (continental and maritime), but have focussed largely on the social aspects of identity, eschewing its political dimensions.[39] This trend, firstly, of emphasising ethnic identity, and secondly, of separating its moral from its political *uses*, is largely in consonant with wider approaches to the study of identity in Africa.

movement: A study of Islamic reform in South Coast of Kenya (MA dissertation, Moi University, Kenya, 2017); David Sperling, *The growth of Islam amongst the Mijikenda of the Kenya coast, 1826-1933* (PhD dissertation, University of London, United Kingdom, 1988).

[37] The concept of intellectual histories within the imaginations of race draws from Glassman, *War of words*; 'Sorting out the Tribes'.

[38] For studies that focus on ethnicity and its role in political competition, see, Willis and Gona, 'Pwani C Kenya'; Willis and Chome, 'Marginalisation and political participation'.

[39] For studies that focus on moral debates amongst the predominantly Muslim Arab and Swahili population of Mombasa, see Kai Kresse, *Philosophizing in Mombasa: Knowledge, Islam and intellectual practice on the Swahili coast* (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2007); *Swahili Muslim publics*. For studies that focus on different social aspects of identity amongst Mijikenda groups, including their moral discourses, see David Parkin, *Palms, wine and witnesses: Public spirit and private gain in an African farming community* (Chandler, San Francisco, 1972); *Sacred Void: Spatial images of work and ritual among the Giriama of Kenya* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991); McIntosh, *At the edge of Islam*.

Identity Politics in Africa

Students of African politics concede that ethnicity in Africa has provided the dominant language for political competition and for debating morality, or the public good.[40] Following from this consensus, debates about the historical origins of ethnic imaginations in Africa abound, revolving especially, around the question of the legacy (or lack thereof) of the "colonial moment". As already mentioned, a body of scholarship on the recent political history of the Kenya coast in general, and of Mombasa in particular, contributes to these wider frameworks for understanding ethnic politics in Africa.[41] Despite this trend (of emphasizing ethnic imaginations) others have discussed, at considerable length, the possibilities for imaginations of identity outside of the idiom of "tribe"; and as part of struggles that have also shaped the history of Mombasa; which can also be considered part of the legacy of its historical relations with a wider Indian Ocean World.[42] However, there is a tendency in the literature to study, separately, the continental and maritime imaginaries of Mombasa and the rest of the East African coast. A general appreciation of how such overlapping and competing social imaginaries can create, not only exclusive categories of race within a common and shared geographical space (in this case, Mombasa), but also, multiple

[40] See for example, Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa works: Disorder as political instrument* (James Currey, Oxford, 1999); Berman, 'Ethnicity'.
[41] See footnote 3 above.
[42] See especially, Roman Loimeier and Rudiger Seesemann, 'Introduction: Interfaces of Islam, identity and space in nineteenth and twentieth century East Africa,' in Roman Loimeier and Rudiger Seesemann, '*Global worlds of the Swahili: Interfaces of Islam, identity and space in nineteenth and twentieth century East Africa*' (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2005): 1-14; Edward Simpson and Kai Kresse, 'Introduction, cosmopolitanism contested: Anthropology and history in the Western Indian Ocean', in Edward Simpson and Kai Kresse, *Struggling with history: Islam and cosmopolitanism in the Western Indian Ocean* (Hurst and Company, London, United Kingdom, 2007): 1-42; Marc Swartz, *The way the world is: Cultural processes and social relations among the Mombasa Swahili* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1991); Nathaniel Mathews, 'Imagining Arab Communities: Colonialism, Islamic reform and Arab identity in Mombasa, Kenya, 1897-1933', *Islamic Africa*, 4, 2 (2013): 135-163.

publics, has been made, but such analyses are limited in that they rarely trace the salience of this multiplicity of identities and publics throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods.[43]

By arguing that racial thought has shaped imaginations of identity not only in Mombasa, but in other parts of Africa as well, this dissertation does not dismiss the rich historiography of ethnic politics in Africa. As stated above, the literature on ethnicity in Africa is germane to this discussion in two main ways – in its explanations of ethnic competition, or 'political tribalism', and its examination of the moral economy of ethnicity, or the *internal* intellectual content of ethnic imaginations.[44] In this way, two broad contrasting views are worth examining in the literature: the constructivist and primordial approach.

The constructivist approach interprets ethnic imaginations of community as the by-product of the colonial experience, where somewhat flexible precolonial identities with permeable boundaries were hardened and fixed by colonial modernity.[45] According to this view, the activities of missionaries, colonial officials and literate African "cultural brokers" combined with colonial administrative and economic systems to categorize, label and most of all, imagine ethnic communities within a wider 'colonial view of tribal Africa'.[46] Archie Mafeje, in an early, influential, and more instrumentalist conception of this view, dismissed ethnicity in Africa simply as a 'false consciousness' that was appropriated by African cultural brokers in order to secure access to the modern resources controlled by the colonial and after that, post-colonial state.[47] The most significant contribution of the constructivist approach is the idea that ethnicity in Africa is

[43] See for example, James Brennan, 'Lowering the Sultan's flag: Sovereignty and decolonisation in coastal Kenya', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 50, 4 (2008): 831-861; Jeremy Prestholdt, 'Politics of the soil: Separatism, autochthony and decolonisation at the Kenyan coast,' *Journal of African History*, 55, 2 (2014): 249-270.
[44] Lonsdale, 'Moral ethnicity'; 'Moral and political argument.'
[45] See, Aidan Southall, 'The illusion of tribe', *Journal of Asian and African Studies,* 5, 1-2 (1970): 28-50.
[46] For this claim, see for example, John Illife, *A modern history of Tanganyika* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1979), pp. 318.
[47] Archie Mafeje, 'The ideology of tribalism', *Journal of Modern African Studies,* 9, 2 (1971): 253-61.

not a pre-modern vestige from Africa's pre-colonial past, but is in fact, a product of colonial modernity. In addition, the constructivists view of ethnicity as a strategy of political competition for resources at the disposal of the modern-state is useful for understanding Africa's 'political tribalism,' except that constructivists have largely overemphasised the social construction of identity, and have ignored the power of the rhetoric of primordialism itself, or the intellectual content of ethnic imaginations.

Taking a cue from social psychology, a number of historians have studied the power of the discursive repertoire of blood, descent, culture and language, and how it works to empower ethnic appeals.[48] In particular, they have derided the constructivist approach for underestimating the agency of African subaltern sources, especially the ability to debate the public good in ethnically specific discourses, and the significance of modes of thought inherited from precolonial traditions.[49] The weakness of the constructivist approach, it has been argued, is that it has failed to account for the powerful force ethnic imaginations continue to play in African politics, or, as Jonathon Glassman describes it, the 'non-rational power of ethnic ideologies.'[50] In the words of Carola Lentz, ethnicity '[cannot, therefore] be simply explained away.'[51]

In his appraisal of the debate, Thomas Spear applied the concept of "neo-traditionalism" to refer to the possibilities for cultural entrepreneurship that the dichotomy created by European colonisation of Africa between "modernity" and "tradition" had made possible.[52] It was through

[48] See for example, Carter G. Bentley, 'Ethnicity and practice', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 29, 1 (1987): 24-55; see also Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic groups in conflict* (University of California, Berkeley, 1985).
[49] For this view, see, Steven Feierman, *Peasant intellectuals: Anthropology and history in Tanzania* (University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1990); Paul Nugent, 'Putting the history back into ethnicity: Enslavement, religion and cultural brokerage in the construction of Mandinka/Jola and Ewe/Agotime identities in West Africa, 1650-1930', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 50, 4 (2008): 920-948; Derek Peterson, *Ethnic patriotism and the East African revival: A history of dissent, 1935-1972* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012).
[50] Glassman, *War of words*, pp. 14.
[51] Lentz, '"Tribalism" and ethnicity', pp. 303.
[52] Spear, 'Neo-traditionalism'.

this powerful distinction, between native and non-native, two publics with conflicting moral foundations, or citizen and subject, that provided the groundwork for much of the invention of new or renewed ethnic identities in colonial and post-colonial Africa.[53] In sum, 'ethnicity was not a novel feature of the colonial world, but the processes through which ethnicities were made and remade gained new force because of colonialism.'[54]

Inquiry into African politics has also focussed on other ways of imagining identity in Africa beyond ethnicity, such as racial thinking. In their discussions of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, and the 1961 race riots in Zanzibar, Mahmoud Mamdani and Jonathon Glassman respectively, have arguably offered the most influential accounts of the possibilities of racial thought (and violence) in Africa.[55] As stated above, both authors have examined the racialization of "ranked ethnic thought" where ethnic categories are imagined as hierarchical strata, and are linked to one another in a dominant and subordinate relationship that structures the entire society. Cases of genocide or exterminatory violence are therefore seen as either an attempt by the subordinate group to throw off the hegemony of those it sees as its oppressors, or the dominant group's attempt to pre-empt such a revolt.

As has already been suggested, tensions in Mombasa between those who were classified by colonial rule as natives (that is, those who became the Mijikenda), and those who were classified as non-natives (that is, townspeople), have taken different forms at different historical periods and under different contexts. Considered with racial thought in Rwanda and colonial Zanzibar, this study's examination of race in Mombasa seeks to make an important contribution to studies that

[53] For example, Christopher Joon Hai-Lee, 'The "native" undefined: Colonial categories, Anglo-African status and the politics of kinship in British Central Africa, 1929-1938, *Journal of African History*, 46, 3 (2005): 455-478; For example, Ekeh, 'Colonialism'; For example, Mamdani, *Citizen.*
[54] Justin Willis and George Gona, 'Tradition, tribe and state in Kenya: The Mijikenda Union, 1945-1980', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 55, 2 (2013): 448-473.
[55] See, Mamdani, *When victims become killers*; Glassman, *War of words.*

interrogate alternative imaginings of social and political subjectivities, and modes of creating difference and imagining identity beyond ethnicity, that have also been at work on the continent. However, the focus by studies of racial thought in Africa on its contribution to spasms of violent conflict – despite the submission that racial modes of thought also have moralistic intellectual content – risks the conclusion that these alternative ways of imagining identity come into being only through unbridled political competition, which at times leads into forms of spectacular violence.

Taking on a different approach, some authors have examined how alternative conceptions of space and territoriality that are linked to alternative imaginations of identity, deriving their ideological foundations from racial modes of thought, religion, and shared regional cultures, etc., have also created considerably productive cultures on the African continent.[56] As Achille Mbembe has shown, regions such as the Sahel, the Swahili coast, and the Great Lakes continue to reorient people's imaginaries in ways that do not 'necessarily intersect with the official limits, norms, or language of states.'[57] These spaces have played host to both violent and peaceful human interactions, and in most cases, have enabled productive relations steeped in the exchange of goods, ideas, and as Abdul Sheriff and Engseng Ho contend, the 'creation of new societies.'[58]

These 'endogenous conceptions of space and territoriality', as Mbembe calls them, have a longer history, and during the late colonial era, they influenced agendas and visions for the future political direction of many parts of continental Africa. In West Africa, a group of politicians and intellectuals imagined a political community of French West Africa, for instance, within a

[56] See for example, Abdul Sheriff, 'Introduction' in Abdul Sheriff and Engseng Ho, *The Indian Ocean: Oceanic connections and the creation of new societies* (Hurst and Company, London, 2014); Prestholdt, 'Locating the Indian Ocean'; Achille Mbembe, 'At the edge of the world: Boundaries, territoriality and sovereignty in Africa', *Public Culture*, 12, 1 (2000): 259-284.
[57] Mbembe, 'At the edge,' pp. 261.
[58] Sheriff and Ho, *The Indian Ocean*.

postcolonial politics that would have allowed a continuing framework with France.[59] As this was happening, a series of political associations with a following amongst the coastal townspeople of Mombasa and elsewhere along the Kenyan coast were advocating for a future autonomous coastal strip (ten-miles in width, and running from the Kenya-Tanganyika border in the south to Lamu in the north) that was not formally colonised by the British (see Chapter 3 below). In other words, the language of 'coastal autonomy' had drawn on analogies of sovereignty and political legitimacy that had existed along the Western Indian Ocean long before European colonialism; where multiple "city-states" such as Kilwa, Zanzibar, Mombasa, Malindi, and Pate, amongst others, 'were bound, not by state power, but through family ties, ideologies of dominance and trade'; in a form of sovereignty that was 'layered' and 'shared'.[60]

These alternative visions of post-colonial Africa, steeped in alternatives bases for imagining identity beyond ethnicity, were ultimately subsumed by overly centralised post-colonial nation-states, but the ideas of sovereignty, citizenship, and legitimate authority that some invoked continued to shape the cultural orientations, moral discourses and political action of the post-colonial African world. An emerging field of study, broadly referred to as Indian Ocean studies, examines the legacy of colonisation and decolonisation over this transoceanic universe, which has continued to be a vessel for the political imagination of people, for geo-political struggles amongst states, and for the articulation of transnational communities beyond the nation-state.[61]

However, Indian Ocean studies have overly focussed on the maritime orientations of the coast, that is, the intellectual concerns of coastal townspeople, who are tendentiously presented as constituting largely "open" and "cosmopolitan" societies – in the words of Engseng Ho, as 'local

[59] See, Frederick Cooper, 'Possibility and constraint: African independence in historical perspective,' *Journal of African History*, 49, 2 (2008): 167-196.
[60] *Ibid*.
[61] Prestholdt, 'Locating the Indian Ocean.'

cosmopolitans' – and as a result, not only have these studies elided the salience of local racial hierarchies, but also the existence of multiple other publics, some of which (such as coastal African publics) have continued to give expression to more continental, as opposed to maritime orientations of the coast.[62]

The historical evidence presented in this study suggests that during the colonial period and after, the intellectual concerns of the predominantly Muslim coastal townspeople were fundamentally shaped by Islamic discourses, but such discourses were also influenced by racial thought. Put differently, the vexing question, of what it means to be a "good" Muslim, could not, for instance, be separated from questions of racial identity, or what it meant to be African or Arab; Arab or Swahili; Swahili or Mijikenda.[63] Race remained a distinctive fault-line in the social and political life of colonial and post-colonial Mombasa. As a mode of thought, it continued to influence the imagination of exclusive, as opposed to incorporative ideas of identity. Essentially, the colonial experience had turned Mombasa into a contested *civic* public sphere: neither Arab, Swahili nor Mijikenda, Kenyan nor Indian Ocean, Islamic nor Christian. Fluid and situational notions of identity that had marked Mombasa at the dawn of the colonial period had, by the late colonial era and after, gave way, amongst a significant portion of the population, to rigid, mutually exclusive racial categories. Each constructed an *internal* public for debating the boundaries of proper behaviour, claim and obligation; even as they competed with each other for status, rights and resources in an *external civic* public sphere. In short, the recent history of Mombasa is a story of *moral debate* and *political action,* and it is through such public debates – about morality and politics – that racial thought was sustained throughout the colonial and post-colonial decades.

[62] For such eliding, see for example, Kresse, *Swahili Muslim*.
[63] See for example, Hassan Mwakimako, 'Muslim Encounters with the Colonial State: The Making of "Qadis" and "Not Quiet Qadis" in colonial Nairobi ca. 1945', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 22, 35 (2002): 35-65. For examples from the Kenya coast, see McIntosh, *At the edge of Islam*.

Methodology and Structure

This study sought to examine the historical processes that explain the emergence in Mombasa of mutually exclusive racial identities. What are the consequences of the emergence of such exclusive categories of racial identity for the socio-political history of Mombasa? To answer these questions, the methodological approach adopted was qualitative. Oral evidence was collected through sixty-four interviews of an average of one hour each. The interviews were conducted in Mombasa and elsewhere on the Kenya coast between January and June 2018. Religious, cultural, and political leaders; administrative officers of long service, long-term residents of Mombasa; and former political activists, were interviewed. The interviewees were selected purposively, and through snow-balling techniques, to help illuminate the political and social history of Mombasa since the late colonial decades. The interview protocol was open-ended, and the interviewer pursued promising lines of questioning in a culturally-sensitive manner. Asking questions around the history of Mombasa through the personal experiences of long-term residents revealed themes that were considered important by the interviewees themselves. An analysis of the interviews suggested, in particular, that the themes of land, employment and identity were considered most important by interviewees. In this way, interviews shed light on the history of patterns of migration into the town over the decades since the 1950s; of land and labour relations; of the growth of neighbourhoods; the operation of kinship and communal networks within Mombasa and its immediate hinterland; of Islamic reform and of electoral politics. This information gave insight into how networks of claim making and social obligation changed over the years, and in turn, how these reflected changes in the imaginations of the bases of identity.[64]

[64] Interview transcripts are deposited at the History Department Archives, Durham University, and are also in the possession of this candidate.

The information collected through these interviews was triangulated with a range of documentary sources: archival and newspaper records, governmental and non-governmental reports, including secondary literature. In particular, records from the Colonial Office were used to complement records stored at the Kenya National Archives, especially, annual reports, handing-over reports, and political record books. It is important to note here that the literature on the politics of identity (especially, that of ethnicity) and their intellectual traditions has produced a debate on historical sources.[65] An over-reliance on oral sources led first to the production of uncritical ethnographic treatises that spoke of the "pristineness", "exclusivity" and "timelessness" of African "tribes", and second, to post-colonial, nationalistic and exclusive ethnic histories written especially by professional historians.[66] The fundamental flaw of such studies was the fact that they seemed tangled up with the politics of historical representation. These problems were clearly exposed after a wider post-structural turn in the social sciences in the late 1970s, and in particular, after the publication in 1983 of the influential volume edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger entitled *The Invention of Tradition*.[67] Since, linguistics, social anthropology and archaeological sources have given richer accounts of the pre-colonial period, and the colonial archive came to provide significant insight on life during the colonial decades. However, an over-reliance on archival documents has also been noted with a preoccupation on official attitudes, and published documents (such as pamphlets, newsletters, speeches, etc.) risk concentrating attention on the

[65] See especially Jan Vansina, *Paths in the rainforest: Towards a history of political tradition in equatorial Africa* (University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1990).

[66] See for example an early critique of the writing of exclusive ethnic histories in John Lonsdale's review of William R. Ochieng's study, *A pre-colonial history of the Gusii of Western Kenya* (East Africa Literature Bureau, Nairobi, 1974), in John Lonsdale, 'When did the Gusii (or any other group) become a "Tribe"?', *Kenya Historical Review*, 5, 1 (1977): 123-135. For an exclusive history of the Arab-Swahili population, see, Idha Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples of Kenya's coast, 1895-1965* (East Africa Publishing House, London, 1973). For an exclusive history of the Mijikenda, see, Thomas Spear, *The Kaya Complex: A history of the Mijikenda peoples of the Kenya coast to 1900* (Kenya Literature Bureau, Nairobi, 1978).

[67] Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger (eds.), *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983).

concerns of literate community notables and audiences.[68] For this study, over 40 oral interviews with less-notable, long-term residents of Mombasa did not only complement archival and other written sources, but captured perceptions that may not have been well-captured by written sources.

Despite the limitations of written sources, these continue to provide important evidence on public debates about moral debate and political action. For this study, newspapers and archival records were extensively consulted. The main newspaper used was the *East African Standard*, established in Mombasa in 1902 as a weekly publication, and is currently Kenya's second-most widely read newspaper. The other newspaper was the *Daily Nation*, first published on 3 October 1960, which became Kenya's most widely read newspaper in later years. Also important was the *Mombasa Times*, whose select copies (and clippings) have been stored at the Kenya National Archives in Nairobi, Kenya, and with records of the Colonial office in London in the United Kingdom. In short, together with archival sources, and newspaper records, interviews helped to provide a fuller-account of the recent, modern history of Mombasa.

This dissertation is organised chronologically. The first chapter is a brief historical background that locates the origins of racial thought in Mombasa from its pre-colonial past, a past involving a gradualist incorporation of strangers into an evolving coastal society, which developed a hierarchy as the society became much more differentiated and unequal. Since the pre-colonial past of Mombasa and the East African coast has already been examined extensively, the first chapter is also a useful summary of this body of work and as such, the discussion is much more

[68] For a study that acknowledges its heavy reliance on pamphlets and newsletters as sources of evidence, see, Kai Kresse, 'Introduction, Guidance and social critique: Mombasa and coastal Muslims through the eyes of Sheikh al-Amin Mazrui, 1930-32', in Kai Kresse and Hassan Mwakimako (eds.), *Guidance (Uwongozi) by Sheikh al-Amin Mazrui: Selections from the first Swahili Islamic newspaper* (Mkuki na Nyota, Dar-es-salaam, 2017): 1-30.

brief and concise, focussing on the development of racial modes of thought that exercised an influence on the reshaping of Mombasa society during the colonial and post-colonial decades.

The second chapter picks from where the first stops, that is, it examines how colonial intellectual work and official policy drew on a past of ambiguous, racial thinking, and as a result, transformed previous categories of race, especially in ways that made these categories less negotiable and permeable. In particular, the second chapter examines colonial policies on land, labour and political representation, and how these influenced, and were in turn influenced by local struggles for status, rights and resources, in ways that would crystallise situational, negotiable and flexible categories of identity around static concepts of race. It is around these static racial categories that exclusive publics for debating the boundaries of proper, or acceptable behaviour were constructed, debates that were also involved in defining what it means to be a "proper" coastal townsperson and/or "true" Mijikenda, that is, coastal African.

The third chapter examines how these newly transformed racial categories were mobilised in debates regarding the post-colonial future of Mombasa, and indeed, the rest of the Kenya coast. In particular, the third chapter focusses on the ways in which the historical tension between the maritime and continental orientations of Mombasa clashed in an expanding *civic* public sphere during the late 1950s and early 1960s to consider the future of the ten-mile coastal strip, which had retained the status of a protectorate since 1895, even as the rest of the territory became Kenya colony from 1920 onwards.

The fourth chapter examines the nature of political competition in Mombasa during the post-colonial period, that is, from 1963 to 1972, looking especially at how this competition was influenced by racial modes of thought. In particular, this chapter examines the ways in which the category of 'Arab', or coastal townsperson, was redefined in the post-colonial period, a time when

an explicit Arab hegemonic discourse was shunned. As a result, some lower-status coastal townspeople, with close ties to "higher" Swahili and/or Arabs, rose through the hierarchy to champion the concerns and ideals of coastal townspeople as a whole, against the advance of hinterland political mobilisation, especially Mijikenda nationalism and up-country politics. These redefinitions of racial identity along the coastal zone and the consequent struggles for status, rights and resources in a post-colonial world of African dominance were reflected in struggles around the control of the formal political institutions of Mombasa: the Municipal council and then the local branch of the then ruling party, the Kenya African National Union, or KANU. The first section of the fourth chapter focusses on these struggles, where a fractious electoral politics, following in the lines of the patron-client politics that had emerged throughout independent Kenya, came to dominate politics in Mombasa. While personal loyalties amongst politicians determined the nature in which political alliances would be made and remade, more often than not, the way in which these alliances were entrenched or deconstructed was influenced by a racial language of antagonism, on which the second part of this chapter examines.

The fifth and last chapter examines the way in which moral debate and political action in post-colonial Mombasa took place under the context of increased migration and as a result, population growth, from up-country Kenya, including the associated anxieties by coastal groups (both *wamiji* and *wamijikenda*) regarding their political marginalisation. The main questions that came to animate moral debate and political action in post-colonial Mombasa, that is, the boundaries of ethnic and racial identity, and how identity continued to influence the distribution of resources, particularly land and employment, are addressed by an examination of how people continued to migrate to Mombasa, or came to find a place to live in the town. The first part of the fifth chapter examines the ways in which the residents of Mombasa came to find a place to live in

Mombasa during the 1960s and 1970s, under a context where bases of identity, distinctly exclusive and racial, had become much more rigid over the years since the early colonial decades. The second part of the fifth chapter focusses on moral debates regarding personal and civic virtue, that took place at a time of increasing social differentiation, possibility and inequality. For some, especially townspeople, such debates became increasingly religious in nature. For many others, ethnic associations, kinship networks, the rural moral universe, etc., continued to provide space for debating claim and obligation, amongst individuals claiming to share an exclusive identity.

While the existence of these exclusive spaces for debating morality and civic virtue reinforced ethnic boundaries, they also served to reinforce racial ones, especially the imagined distinction between hinterland, that is, continental, and coastal, that is maritime imaginaries. These distinctions were carried onto the era of political liberalisation in the 1990s, shaping moral debate and political action in Mombasa in very specific ways.

1

FROM *UUNGWANA* TO *UUSTAARABU*

> They are not…pure Bantu and it is indeed remarkable how frequently the Aryan physiognomy and bearing distinguishes these people from the Africans amongst whom they live.[69]

An 1897 population estimate in Mombasa conducted by Arthur Hardinge, the Consul-General of the newly-established British Protectorate of Zanzibar and the first Commissioner of the British East Africa Protectorate (later Kenya Colony), listed a population of 2, 667 slaves out of a population of 24, 711 free men and women, but did not include a category for Africans.[70] Neither had Bartle Frere – who imposed one of the anti-slave trade treaties signed by the Sultans of Zanzibar, and from whom a mission of freed slaves on the mainland of Mombasa found its name – mention a population of free, and non-ex-slave Africans in his survey of Mombasa. Hardinge and other European observers may have thought of coastal townspeople as "Arabs", but as Richard Stren has pointed out 'how they defined themselves, we do not know'. [71] Stren continues, 'in those

[69] Justus Strandes, *The Portuguese period in East Africa* (Translated by J. Wallwork: East Africa Publishing House, Nairobi, 1961), pp. 74.
[70] Fred James Berg and B.J Walter, 'Mosques, population and urban development', in Bethwell Ogot (ed). *Hadith 1* (East Africa Publishing House, Nairobi, 1968): 47-100.
[71] Richard Stren, *Housing the urban poor: Policy, politics and bureaucracy in Mombasa* (Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1978), pp. 17.

early years, most Africans living in or around Mombasa were converts to Islam, and would probably have been categorized as either Swahili or Arabs.'[72]

Stren's remark was made at a time (in the 1970s) when there was a steady production of studies that were offering considerable insight on the history of the people of Mombasa and the wider East African coast before and during the colonial decades. But the vision of colonial officials and other European observers had been clouded less by a general lack of systematic studies on the local population of Mombasa and the Kenya coast more widely, and more by their own perceptions of identity and how it worked in Africa. The perceptions of officials and other Europeans had also been reinforced by local traditions that were circulating among a majority of the coastal townspeople, especially after the arrival and consequent dominance of Omani Arabs (Busaidis) from the second half of the nineteenth century. In local traditions, coastal townspeople were presenting their maritime coastal culture as the product of Arabs who 'brought civilisation to a primitive continent'.[73]

When most Europeans became deeply involved in the affairs of East Africa, Omani and Hadhrami Arabs were exerting strong economic and cultural influences, occupying the top positions in a hierarchical and increasingly racial system of domination.[74] Architectural styles reflected Arabian and to a lesser extent, Indian features.[75] Hadhrami Sharifian immigrants claiming to be descendants of Prophet Muhhamad, majority coming from the Hadhramaut region of South-West Arabia, became prominent community leaders, attempting to reform coastal Islam along

[72] *Ibid.*
[73] Nurse and Spear, *The Swahili*, pp. vii.
[74] For the consolidation of Omani-Arab power on the East African coast during the nineteenth century, see Christine Nicholls, *The Swahili coast: Politics, diplomacy and trade on the East African littoral, 1798-1856* (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1971); Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*.
[75] Peter Stoke Garlake, *The early Islamic architecture of the East African coast* (Oxford University Press, London, 1966); Jeremy Prestholdt, *Domesticating the world: African consumerism and the genealogies of globalisation* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 2008).

Arabian lines.[76] Coastal townspeople were also developing an interest in Arabian genealogical links (by adopting Arabic *nisbas*, for example), literary traditions, goods and ideas. At the same time, there was a widespread adoption of Arabic vocabulary in local Swahili dialects.[77]

Coastal culture, therefore, was presented as a Middle-Eastern offshoot in cursory European analyses, and putative Persian or Arab origins featured prominently in the oral traditions found along the coastal towns.[78] Writing in the 1890s, Justus Strandes observed of Mombasa:

> Shirazi [Persian] sheikhs are described as the earliest rulers… […] These written accounts are confirmed by the verbal traditions of the native inhabitants. Many buildings now lying in ruins are characteristic of Shirazi building. Even today the inhabitants of whole villages like to boast of Shirazi descent. The fact that it is generally the chiefs, or the village notables, members of ruling families of the past, who usually describe themselves as being descendants of the old Persian emigrants, confirms the credibility of the claim… […] They are not…pure Bantu and it is indeed remarkable how frequently the Aryan physiognomy and bearing distinguishes these people from the Africans amongst whom they live.[79]

Authors such as Strandes would later be joined by professional archaeologists working in the 1960s and 1970s, notably by the influential work of Neville Chittick, in portraying coastal culture as an alien Muslim civilisation divorced from the cultures of indigenous Africans, despite little evidence of Persian or Arabian influence in its pre-Portuguese period material culture.[80] In

[76] Anne Bang, *Islamic Sufi networks in the Western Indian Ocean, 1880-1940: Ripples of reform* (Brill, Leiden, 2014).
[77] Derek Nurse, 'Notes on the classification of the primary dialects of Swahili', *SUGIA*, 4 (1982): 165-205.
[78] Spear, 'The Shirazi in Swahili traditions', pp. 292.
[79] Strandes, *The Portuguese period*, pp. 74.
[80] Throughout his work, Neville Chittick held that there was no evidence of coastal towns in the pre-Islamic history of East Africa, see for example, Neville Chittick, 'The coast before the arrival of the Portuguese,' in Bethwell A. Ogot (ed.), *Zamani* (Nairobi, 1973): 112-13; 'Kilwa and the Arab settlement', pp. 180; For lack of evidence of extensive Middle-Eastern influences in the pre-1600 history of East Africa, see Allen, 'The "Shirazi"

Chittick's terms, 'we should picture this civilisation as a remote outpost of Islam, looking for its spiritual inspiration to the homeland of its religion.'[81] To Peter Storr Garlake, 'the culture was provincial – initiative was always from abroad.'[82]

In casting these views in their historical perspective, this chapter examines the origins of racial thought in Mombasa from its interactions with a wider Indian Ocean world before British colonial rule, and the emergence, in that interaction, of a historical tension between the continental and maritime imaginaries found within the coast of East Africa. This chapter follows the suggestion made by the "limits of invention" school, that such racial categories as Arab and African, which, as the next chapter will show, existed in a hierarchical relationship of domination throughout most of the colonial decades, were not merely "invented" by the condition of British colonialism. In other words, the prestige that was associated with claims of foreign origins in the Middle-East was not an invention of the condition of colonial domination, but as people struggled for status, rights and resources in a rapidly changing environment, the power of such claims was significantly transformed.

This chapter traces the historical development of claims of foreign (non-African) origins in Mombasa (and elsewhere along the East African coast) by attempting a brief sketch of a past of powerful, if ambiguous, racial thinking, which colonial intellectual work and administrative practices would later draw upon, hardening pre-existing social fault-lines and sharpening racial thought as a result.

problem.'; B.G Martin places the height of Arab migrations to the East African coast between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, see, B.G Martin, 'Arab Migrations to East Africa in medieval times,' *International Journal of African Historical Studies,* 7, 3 (1974): 367-390.

[81] Chittick, 'The coast before the arrival', pp. 112-13.

[82] Garlake, *The early Islamic architecture,* pp. 2.

Mombasa and the Coast before Colonial Rule

Nineteenth century developments had brought to Mombasa not only Europeans, but traders, soldiers, administrators and Islamic scholars from Arabia; merchants and money lenders from India; and slaves from Southern-Eastern Africa.[83] As Margaret Strobel succinctly puts it:

> Trade had brought these disparate peoples to Mombasa, some to sell, some to be sold, some to extend credit, some to collect customs duties, some to work as porters for caravans, some to organise and profit from caravans, and some to unload modern ocean freighters.[84]

Locally, these nineteenth century trends found their organisational and political expression in Zanzibar, which had become the capital of Oman and Muscat in 1840, three years after the defeat in Mombasa of the Mazrui family by Sayyid Said bin Sultan, the Sultan of Zanzibar from 1806 to the time of his death in 1857.[85] Like the Busaidi family of which the Sultans of Zanzibar were members, the Mazrui were part of an Omani clan who had helped the ruling families of Mombasa to dislodge the Portuguese from East Africa in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: only that the Mazrui settled in Mombasa afterwards, and after their faction of the ruling dynasty was dethroned by the Busaidis in Oman, refused to pay allegiance to Muscat.[86]

After taking over Mombasa, Sayyid Said, with the help of the British, went about establishing a merchant, transoceanic state that tapped into the trade networks of the Western

[83] For a nineteenth-century history of Mombasa and the wider East African Coast, see, Fred James Berg, *Mombasa under the Busaidi Sultanate* (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1971); Frederick Cooper, *Plantation slavery on the East Coast of Africa* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1977); Reginald Coupland, *East Africa and its invaders* (Russel and Russel, New York, 1965); *The exploitation of East Africa, 1856-1890* (Faber and Faber, London, U.K., 1934). Nicholls, *The Swahili coast.*

[84] Margaret Strobel, *Muslim women in Mombasa: 1890-1975* (Yale University Press, London, 1979), pp. 22.

[85] See, Norman Bennet, *A history of the Arab state of Zanzibar* (Methuen, London, 1978), pp. 60-164.

[86] See Strandes, *The Portuguese period*; Al-Amin bin Ali Mazrui and James M. Ritchie, *The history of the Mazrui dynasty of Mombasa* (Oxford University Press, London, 1995).

Indian Ocean. This state became the basis upon which Europeans would later exercise greater control over East Africa. The Sultan stationed his agents, that is, administrators drawn from the Sultan's own Busaidi clan, including mercenaries who were mainly recruited from the Baluchistan region of Arabia, at various city-states along the East African coast, from Kilwa in the south to Mogadishu in the north.[87] The towns, including Mombasa, were left to run their own affairs based on pre-existing traditions, as the Sultan's agents exercised, at best, nominal, indirect authority.[88]

Through a combination, or in some accounts, confusion between (written) Islamic and (oral) local customary traditions, land on the immediate hinterland, and that adjoining the towns along the coast fell into the hands of a number of families with origins in Arabia – a considerable majority of them from Oman.[89] Claims to this land by the descendants of earlier generations of coastal townspeople – those who would come to vehemently insist on origins either in Persia or Arabia during the colonial period – and by those who were classified by colonial authorities as "natives", would come to be ignored, or were rejected by the colonial government. By contrast, it was the claims presented to colonial officials by Arabs and Indians – or those who were seen as such – during the first decade of the twentieth century that were disproportionately favoured.

In the nineteenth century, plantations had been established on this land – in areas such as Malindi, north of Mombasa, these reached more than ten miles into the interior – and were worked by slaves, many brought from south-eastern Africa, who grew maize, *simsim*, mangoes and

[87] Nicholls, *The Swahili coast*.
[88] Berg, 'The Swahili community,' pp. 54.
[89] Differences between external Islamic law and local customary traditions regarding land ownership was the main subject in numerous petitions, court cases and public debates during the early colonial decades, especially following a process of land rationalization that intensified after the Land Titles Ordinance was put in place in 1908 (see Chapter 2 below). Where immigrants from Arabia had long believed that they bought the land itself according to Sharia Law, local communities, mostly Swahili, perceived the situation as one in which only usufruct rights had been granted in exchange for tribute recognizing their ultimate traditional, ancestral and spiritual rights to land. For examples of such debates, see Evidence given to the Kenya Land Commission (the Carter Commission) Report of 1933, Evidence Vol. 3, pp. 2706-2711.

coconut trees for copra, to be sold in overseas and regional markets.[90] An estimate in 1896 established that 110, 000 acres, or about 172 square miles, had been cultivated at some time during the second half of the nineteenth-century.[91] But by the 1870s, this coastal plantation economy was already showing its first signs of decline, owing to a number of anti-slavery agreements signed by the Sultans of Zanzibar with the British, and to slave desertion into the hinterland or into coastal towns, especially Mombasa.

As the next chapter will show, the resulting heterogeneous society of Mombasa during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth, was not only an affront to the colonial tribal view of Africa – an image of discreet and clearly defined groups – but it also complicated the three principal preoccupations of colonial rule: alienation of land, recruitment of labour and determination of political rights.[92] As was mentioned, the plantation economy of the nineteenth century had enabled families with origins in Arabia to acquire significant acreages of land on which they built plantations worked by slaves. As a result, the abolition of slavery in 1907 meant that vast areas adjoining the towns along the coast were left uninhabited, with some areas settled by squatters, a majority of whom were ex-slaves and people from the immediate hinterland (a parched wilderness behind the coastal fringe) whom the coastal townspeople, and later the British, referred to as the *nyika*, a pejorative forerunner of the term Mijikenda.[93] At the turn of the

[90] Cooper, *Plantation slavery*.
[91] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 115.
[92] For the heterogeneity of coastal society in the early twentieth century, see, Janet M. Bujra, 'Production, property, prostitution: "sexual politics" in Atu', *Cahiers d'etudes africaines*, 65, 1 (1977): 13-79; Justin Willis, 'Thieves, drunkards and vagrants: Defining crime in colonial Mombasa, 1902-32, in David Anderson and David Killingray (eds)., *Policing the empire: Government, authority and control* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1991): 228-30; Sarah Mirza and Margaret Strobel, *Three Swahili women: Life histories from Mombasa, Kenya* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1989).
[93] The use of the term *nyika* is not meant here to be pejorative or insensitive, but is only used in the sense that it was the appellation referring to the people of the coast's immediate hinterland for much of the period before the term Mijikenda was picked towards the 1940s. Except for references to the administrative district that was actually named Nyika, the term has been italicized throughout the dissertation.

twentieth century, this population of free men and women was engaged in independent cultivation or trading in Mombasa, most eking a life in the town's informal universe.[94]

When Hardinge announced the creation of the British East Africa Protectorate in 1895, distinctions between the coastal, maritime culture and its immediate continental hinterland existed, but many people on both sides had intermarried and shared multiple social ties around which incorporative networks of claim making and social obligation had been constructed.[95] Generally, notions of identity, including ideas of personal virtue, revolved around a system of claim making and social obligation founded around local networks of credit, trade and clientage, and not just origin and descent, or on strict basis of ancestry and skin colour.[96] So incorporative were these networks that towards the end of the nineteenth century people living on the immediate hinterland, that is, those who were referred to as the *nyika*, adopted a tradition of origin that had been in existence on the coastal towns, particularly amongst the Kilindini of the 'Twelve Tribes' of Mombasa and another group, the Segeju, which related ancient origins from a place widely-thought to have been near the Benadir coast of modern-day Southern Somalia referred to as Shungwaya.[97]

In Mombasa and elsewhere along the East African coast, a cultural complex known to have distant origins in the ninth century, and which had spread down the East African coast from the coast of modern-day Southern Somalia, was thus becoming wealthier in the immediate period before colonial rule, and with the arrival of more immigrants from India and Arabia, more stratified

[94] Karim Janmohamed, 'African labourers in Mombasa, c. 1895-1940', in Bethwell Ogot (ed.)., *Hadith 5* (East African Literature Bureau, Nairobi, 1975): 156-179; Strobel, *Muslim women*.
[95] Willis, *Mombasa*.
[96] *Ibid*.
[97] On the Shungwaya tradition, see, R.F Morton, 'The Shungwaya myth'; Thomas Spear, 'Traditional myths and historians' myths: Variations on the Singwaya theme of Mijikenda origins,' *History in Africa*, 1 (1974): 67-84; Thomas Spear, 'Traditional myths and linguistic analysis: Singwaya revisited', *History in Africa*, 4 (1977): 229-46; James De Vere Allen, 'Shungwaya, the Mijikenda and the traditions,' *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 16 (3): 455-485.

and unequal. Incorporation into this culture of people of lower social-status – ex-slaves and the *nyika* – was possible, but such incorporation had been offered on unequal terms, admitting people to an existing hierarchy. In this way, the diminishing of the hierarchy's incorporative potential by Omani and British rule in the nineteenth-century and after, served to push even further into the periphery of Mombasa and coastal town society as a whole, people of lower social status, or those who could not claim origins outside of Africa. And while being Swahili had allowed people to manage the coastal tension between foreign origins and claims to be local, or between maritime and continental imaginaries, that ambiguity became harder to sustain from the nineteenth century and after.

It is, however, important to note that the transformation of the bases of identity, from fluid and flexible bases to notions that emphasised origins and descent, favouring Persian or Arabian sources, was part of a longer historical process. Colonial intellectual work aligned with the oral (and sometimes written) traditions of the coastal townspeople themselves, some of which were present across the East African coast up until the post-colonial period.[98] Despite multiple inconsistencies, these traditions were all united by a central theme: of Shirazi migrations between the tenth and fifteenth centuries.[99]

The Shirazi traditions, as a result, mirrored the complexities of a society that sat at the centre of multiple cultural imaginaries, and which incorporated strangers, both at its upper and lower stratums, despite needing to maintain, or manage change within its distinctive customs and

[98] See for example, Interview 53, Mwinyi Abdulaziz and others, at Tononoka, Mombasa, 19th July 2018, pp. 12-17.

[99] An exception is that of the Jomvu community of Mombasa, who recall Arab ancestors who first moved to Mogadishu on the North-east African coast, before moving to Junda in Mombasa, see CO 894/12, 'Memoranda on Coastal Strip Enquiry submitted by the Jomvu Social Club to Sir James Robertson,' 15/10/1961; Mwidad, 'The founding of Rabai', pp. 144. For more discussion on the Shirazi tradition, see, Spear, 'The Shirazi in Swahili traditions'; Allen, 'The "Shirazi" problem'; Pouwels, 'Oral historiography.'

traditions. It is from this tension, expressed through the concerns and interests of various neighbourhoods and multiple societal strata within coastal society (through dance competitions for instance), that the historical tension between continental and maritime orientations; of African versus foreign sources; of popular traditions of Islam versus literate traditions; of notions of "civilisation" and "barbarism"; of town versus hinterland, was best expressed.[100] In other words, while coastal society remained largely incorporative of strangers throughout the centuries before colonial rule, it was also hierarchical and unequal, where the potential to exclude strangers, through discourses that defined acceptable behaviour and ascribed status through such criteria as wealth, Islamic erudition, claims of foreign (racial) origins, etc. was always possible.

Incorporation and Moral Exclusion

On the East African coast, the tradition of ancient Shirazi migrations was first published in the Kilwa Chronicle, with two (Arabic and Portuguese) versions recorded during the Portuguese period in the mid-sixteenth century.[101] The most widely told tradition is that of seven princesses (or as in other versions, a Sultan and his six sons) setting sail from Shiraz and "founding" seven towns on the East African coast sometime in the 10th century.[102] For Mombasa, a litany of oral traditions and literary references since the nineteenth century mentioned the existence of a Shirazi dynasty during the pre-Portuguese era, from where most of the clans of the town's Ithnashara Twaifa, or the Twelve tribes of Mombasa, claim descent.[103]

[100] For an extensive history of the development of coastal society, see Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*, pp. 6-75.
[101] Chittick, 'Kilwa and the Arab settlement.'
[102] Chittick, 'The "Shirazi" colonisation'; Spear, 'The Shirazi in Swahili traditions'; Pouwels, 'Oral historiography.'
[103] Berg, 'The Swahili community.'

The first recorded mention of a pre-Shirazi dynasty in Mombasa, represented by a Mwana Mkisi, the queen of Kongowea (or Gongwa), came in a poem by a famous Swahili poet, Bwana Muyaka bin Mwinyi Hija, also known as Muyaka bin Haji al-Ghassany, who lived during the first half of the nineteenth century.[104] In 1914, a brief manuscript history, largely reflective of townspeople thought at the time, and which was written by Mbwana bin Mbwarafundi al-Bauri, a member of the Bajuni (the dominant Swahili group in Lamu) elaborated on Muyaka's work, explaining that Shehe Mvita, a foreigner 'who came from the Shirazi towns' settled in Kongowea and supplanted Mwana Mkisi's dynasty.[105] By the time of the appearance of Mbwarafundi's manuscript, Shehe Mvita, rather than Mwana Mkisi, was regarded by Mombasa's Twelve Tribes as the principal founder of their community.[106]

But the question remains, how did these traditions maintain claims of local indigeneity alongside idioms of foreign origins, especially in the face of the rising tide of African nationalism during the late colonial period and after? While the answers to this question will be presented much more effectively in the third chapter, it is important to acknowledge key aspects of the Shirazi traditions that alluded to African culture and roots, but still maintained the prestige of foreign origins in Shiraz and/or Arabia indicating – for the purposes of this discussion – the historical coastal tension between maritime and continental imaginaries.

In following the analytical traditions set in motion by earlier researchers of the Kenya coast, notably Thomas Spear, James de Vere Allen, John Middleton and Randall Pouwels, all of whom

[104] Muhammad Abdulaziz., ed. and trans. *Muyaka: Nineteenth century Swahili popular poetry* (Kenya Literature Bureau, Nairobi, 1994); Berg, 'The Swahili community,' pp. 42; Nurse and Spear, *The Swahili*, pp. 73; Swartz, *The way the world is*, pp. 29.
[105] Berg, 'The Swahili community,' pp. 42.
[106] Berg, 'The Swahili community,' pp. 44.

sought to unlock the meanings of the Shirazi traditions,[107] central aspects of the traditions (discussed below) illuminate the intellectual genealogies of the racial modes of thought that came to influence moral debate and political action in Mombasa during the colonial era and after. It is important to note, therefore, that a version of the Kilwa tradition claims that the Shirazi migrated across the East African coast 'not from Shiraz, but from Shungwaya'.[108] The tradition of Shungwaya origins for the Shirazi was also reported by the Bajuni of Lamu, Kilindini of Mombasa and the Vumba of the Southern Kenya coast.[109] Even Chittick submitted that it is possible that the Shirazi dynasties in the traditions of the Twelve Tribes came from 'primary Asian settlements' on the Southern Somali coast rather than direct from Shiraz in Iran.[110]

A set of core themes in the Shirazi traditions were therefore discernible and significant, that is inter-marriage, conquest, construction of putative ties of descent, patronage and the spread of Islam, through which Shirazi migrants assimilated themselves in an evolving coastal society. As the traditions themselves have it, it was through these sets of "resolutions" between the local inhabitants and the Shirazis that the Shirazi migrants assimilated themselves within pre-existing coastal communities, and as a result, did not only become "owners of the land", or "sons of the soil", but in using their wealth and "superior" claims to Islamic knowledge, became the political and religious leaders as well.

As coastal culture became more prosperous, increasing its contacts with an Indian ocean world of trade and Islam, it became more differentiated, stratified, and unequal. Within the towns, a socio-religious hierarchy for cultural and political reckoning emerged, centred around the

[107] For example, Spear, 'The Shirazi in Swahili traditions'; Pouwels, 'Oral Historiography'; Middleton, *The world of the Swahili*; James de Vere Allen, 'The Shirazi problem.'
[108] Richard Burton, *Zanzibar: City, Island and coast*, Vol. 2 (Tinsley, London, 1872), pp. 362-363.
[109] Spear, 'The Shirazi in Swahili traditions', pp. 300.
[110] Chittick, 'The "Shirazi" colonisation,' pp. 275 and 292. Also, Berg, 'The Swahili community,' pp. 36.

balance of power between a number of wards (sing. *mtaa*, plu. *mitaa*) that hosted distinct groups which were nonetheless linked to one another in a dominant and subordinate relationship that structured the entire society. In this hierarchical and stratified structure, the noble families, or town patricians, referred to as the *waungwana*, assumed the political, cultural and economic positions of influence, through a mode of dominance, that is, an ideal of civilisation called *uungwana*. *Uungwana* (nobility) would then be foregrounded by wealth (especially in land), moral piety, Islamic erudition, hypergamy and the maintenance of prestigious claims of distant Shirazi origins.[111]

Associations of distant Shirazi origins with leadership and dominance in coastal society before the Portuguese period could also be found in some traditions of the Twelve Tribes of Mombasa. Generally, the traditions claimed that the Shirazi ruling families of the pre-1600 era were either extinct or had been supplanted by the Portuguese by the middle of the seventeenth century.[112] However, these traditions also attested to the existence of descendants of Shirazi rulers within some of the existing Twelve Tribes, that is, the Mvita and the Jomvu, some of whom claimed to be descended from both the Shirazi and the Portuguese.[113] The Tangana – one of the Twelve Tribes of Mombasa claiming Shirazi origins – would, alongside the Mvita, come to dominate leadership roles within the Twelve Tribes community of Mombasa from the nineteenth century up to the late colonial period.[114]

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[111] This treatment of the Shirazi traditions can be found in Pouwels, 'Oral Historiography', pp. 240-56; *Horn and Crescent*, pp. 17-54; Spear, 'The Shirazi in Swahili traditions', pp. 295-300; Middleton, *The world of the Swahili*, pp. 27-44; James de Vere Allen, 'The Swahili house: Cultural and ritual concepts underlying its plan and structure,' *Art and Archaeology Research Papers*, Special Issue, (1979): 1-32; 'The "Shirazi" problem', pp. 12-25.
[112] Berg, 'The Swahili community,' pp. 37.
[113] Berg, 'The Swahili community,' pp. 45.
[114] Lambert, *Chi-Jomvu*, pp. 12-13.

The question, whether the ruling families of medieval Mombasa and elsewhere along the East African coast were really *Shirazis*, Persians, has already occupied large provinces of thought and scholarly inquiry, and will therefore not be addressed in detail here. For the purposes of this study, what may be more important to note is that Shirazi traditions largely fell out of usage in Mombasa and elsewhere on the Kenya coast during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, when claims to Arab origins became, instead, more prestigious and widespread amongst the Twelve Tribes. Similarly, *uustaarabu* (Arabness), replaced *uungwana* (Shiraziness) as the ideal of civilisation and mode of dominance.[115] In other words, for the period before about 1850, that is, before the Omani Busaidi dynasty of Zanzibar began to have a political as well as a cultural impact on coastal communities, to be called a civilised person, one did not only have to be a coastal townsperson and a Muslim, but it meant being called a *muungwana*, a term that would be replaced by *mstaarabu*, meaning, essentially, an Arab.[116]

The fact that power in coastal society was traditionally wielded by religious leaders, with a combination of high social status, moral piety and Islamic erudition as the essential pre-requisites for leadership, claims to foreign origins (to the geographical heartlands of Islam) was (in Mombasa and many parts of the Kenya coast still remains) an essential charter that mystified and legitimised traditional (moral) authority.[117] Convictions regarding the nature of Islam, discourses of "civilisation", and legitimate authority were thus intimately bound, and the coastal town became the 'basic ritual and ideological unit among [predominantly Muslim] coastal townspeople.'[118]

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[115] See for example, Allen, 'The "Shirazi" problem.' For more on *ustaarabu*, and related conceptual debates, see, Katrin Bromber, 'Ustaarabu: A conceptual change in Tanganyikan newspaper discourse, 1948-1958, in Roman, Loimeier and Rudiger Seesemann, '*Global worlds of the Swahili: Interfaces of Islam, identity and space in nineteenth and twentieth century East Africa*' (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2005): 67-81.
[116] Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*, pp. 72-73.
[117] See for example, Caplan, *Choice and constraint*, pp. 84-8. For mystification of authority and claims to exclusive traditional knowledge amongst the Mijikenda, see Janet McIntosh, 'Elders and "Frauds": Commodified expertise and politicized ethnicity among Mijikenda', *Africa*, 79, 1 (2009): 35-52.
[118] Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*, pp. 63.

In this context, the term Arab became synonymous with high social status. What was considered as "proper" religious behaviour, or simply, morality, could not be separated from local understandings of race, status and wealth. This definition of race was reflected, for instance, in the derogatory terms that were used for poor Arabs: *washihiri* for poor Hadhrami Arabs and *wamanga* for poor Omani Arabs, both of whom are derisively referred in local parlance as *waarabu koko* (easily rendered in English as 'fake Arabs', or those who did not keep themselves fairly pure of marriage with other Arabs).[119]

In this precedent, the distribution of status within coastal society, and the incorporation and exclusion of poor Swahili, Arabs, ex-slaves and most of all, *nyika*, from the coastal socio-religious hierarchy, was largely determined by such concepts as nobility, moral piety, high breeding, local notions of "civilisation", and most importantly, Islam.[120] *Ustaarabu*, or high social status, could be performative as well as ascriptive. Claims of origins in Arabia, or to possess Arabic somatic traits, were essential but not sufficient. Islam, behaviour and wealth also mattered, and the intellectual history of the coastal townspeople is replete with examples of debates regarding what it means to be a "true" *mstaarabu*."[121]

Colonial intellectual work and administrative practices would then come to draw on this past of powerful, ambiguous, racial thinking, hardening social fault-lines and sharpening racial thought in Mombasa and throughout the Kenya coast as a result. As the next chapter will show, colonial policies on land, labour and political representation deepened pre-existing divisions between town and hinterland, Muslim and non-Muslim, African and non-African, and of local

[119] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*.
[120] See especially, el-Zein, *The Sacred meadows*. Bujra, *Conflict and conflict resolution*; Caplan, *Choice and constraint.*
[121] See for example, Kresse and Mwakimako, *Guidance* pp. 65 (translations from Kiswahili provided by the authors).

notions of “civilisation” and “barbarism”, setting in motion processes that would crystallise situational, negotiable and flexible categories of identity around static concepts of race.

2

COLONIAL RESHAPINGS

> It is, I think, very important for the future of East Africa that a native administrative element should, if possible, be formed and trained up out of the Arabs and higher Swahili.[122]

On the first day of July in 1895, Arthur Hardinge, the Consul-General of the British Protectorate of Zanzibar, addressed a *baraza* (public meeting) in Mombasa.[123] During the ceremony, held in the old section of the town now known as *mji wa kale*, or the 'Old Town', Hardinge announced the creation of a British East Africa Protectorate, which would combine the administration of the Coast Protectorate, ten-miles in width and running from Vanga to Kipini, with that of the East Africa Protectorate, or what would in 1920 become Kenya Colony.[124] Hardinge also proceeded to reassure his audience – most of whom he saw as Arabs – that they were to be employed in judicial and administrative capacities in the new administration, not only along the Coast Protectorate, where the Sultan of Zanzibar would retain nominal sovereignty, but also in the interior.[125] This

[122] *Report by Sir A.H. Hardinge on the condition and progress of the East Africa Protectorate from its establishment to the 20th July* 1897, British Sessional Papers, Africa, No. 7, (1897), pp. 26.
[123] T.H.R Cashmore, *Studies in district administration in the East Africa Protectorate, 1895-1918* (PhD dissertation, Cambridge University, 1965), pp. 145-163.
[124] The Coast Protectorate had been declared part of the mainland dominions of the Sultans of Zanzibar in an Anglo-German treaty signed in 1888. Another Protectorate had been established in Uganda in 1894. For this period of British involvement in East Africa, see Coupland, *East Africa*; *The exploitation*.
[125] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 77; Pouwels, *Horn and crescent*, pp. 166.

promise was partially fulfilled, but was part of Hardinge's reassurance to a community that had expressed concern regarding potential future exclusion. In particular, they were concerned by an imminent end to slavery, which had been their principal source of labour – and hence power – in a thriving plantation-based economy during the second half of the nineteenth century.[126]

Slavery, as Hardinge's audience had feared, was abolished in 1907, and the future Arab ascendancy in the colonial administration that Hardinge promised would be confined along a narrow-strip of coastal territory in general, and in Mombasa in particular. When Hardinge left East Africa in 1904, his successor, Sir Charles Eliot, had made clear his policy of moving attention away from Mombasa and the Arabs of the coast to concentrate on Nairobi and the highlands of up-country Kenya in general – and to (white) European settlers in particular. This shift also favoured non-Muslims in recruitment to the colonial administrative service. Along the coast, and in and around Mombasa, rather than modernize the collapsing plantation economy (especially after the abolition of slavery) or promote a recovering small-scale agricultural production, colonial officials chose to support, rather incomprehensively, the establishment of European-owned plantations.[127]

Some historians, particularly Idha Salim, Randall Pouwels and Karim Janmohamed, saw this shift at the turn of the twentieth century as the genesis of the marginalization of the coastal economy in general, and of Arabs in particular,[128] but as Frederick Cooper noted, such analyses 'failed to reach the heart of the matter.'[129] Indeed, the coastal economy took long to recover (if at

[126] Anti-slave trade treaties had been signed between the British and various Sultans of Zanzibar periodically over the nineteenth century, in 1828, 1873 and 1876.
[127] See, Forbes J, Munro, 'British rubber companies in East Africa before the First World War', *Journal of African History*, 24 (1983): 360-379.
[128] See especially, Karim Janmohamed, *A history of Mombasa 1895-1939: Some aspects of economic and social life in an East African port town during colonial rule* (unpublished PhD dissertation, Northwestern University), pp. 161; Pouwels, *Horn and crescent*, pp. 163-167; Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 100-138.
[129] Frederick Cooper, *From slaves to squatters: Plantation labour and agriculture in Zanzibar and coastal Kenya* (Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH, U.S., 1997) pp. 191.

all) from its colonial restructurings, and a narrative of exclusion and marginalisation by the government based in Nairobi would, as a result, animate politics on the Kenya coast during and after the colonial period.[130] However, as this chapter will show, the legacy of the colonial experience on the coast in general, and in Mombasa in particular, was far much complex.

To impose control over Mombasa, officials spent much time and effort to name and classify coastal space and its residents: so as to alienate land in favour of European planters and for government use; to name and fix the identities of the local population for swift, cheap and efficient administration; and to control labour. These objectives, which were pursued under straitened financial circumstances, insufficient coercive power and a great deal of cultural misunderstanding, imposed new demands upon previous networks of claim making and social obligation, transforming them as a result.[131] The outcome was a general hardening of previously fluid and flexible categories of race. That was combined with the formalisation of a pre-existing racial hierarchy of domination that favoured people, especially Arabs and Indians, or any groups, such as those who were deemed as "higher Swahili", who had – or claimed that they had – racial origins elsewhere.[132] As a result, the racial hierarchy gave primacy to the exotic: to claim origins outside of Africa – whether recent or distant – was to assert superiority and dominance throughout much of the colonial period.

In struggles to reform and transform previous traditions, customs and identities, people looked into the past to reinterpret the colonial condition, with considerable consequences for the transformation of pre-existing racial categories and the mobilization of group ambitions for the post-colonial future of Mombasa (see discussion in Chapter Three). This chapter concerns itself

[130] For discussion of the discourse of marginalisation in coastal politics, see Willis and Gona, 'Pwani C Kenya? Willis and Chome, 'Marginalisation and Political Participation; Chome, '"The Grassroots are very complicated".
[131] This view draws from arguments made in Willis, *Mombasa*.
[132] The term "higher Swahili" is used by Arthur Hardinge in *Report by Sir A.H. Hardinge,* pp. 26.

with the transformations of racial thought in Mombasa during the early colonial decades, and how these transformations were shaped by official policies over the administration of land, control of labour and the determination of political rights. In particular, the chapter examines changes over the meanings of identity, and shows how these were also involved with reinterpretations of tradition and custom, especially regarding morality and civic virtue, within what were increasingly becoming exclusive racial categories and moral publics.

The first part of the chapter examines the ways in which colonial policies – that were involved in the physical remaking of Mombasa – were designed and implemented in the context of a transformation of the social politics of a population facing a changing environment. The result, as the second part of the chapter will show, was the hardening of previously fluid and flexible categories of identity, the sharpening of racial thought and the formalisation of a pre-existing racial hierarchy of domination. As people attempted to better their circumstances under new conditions, the "moral panic" caused by Western colonialism unleashed vigorous debates over tradition, custom and identity, but within increasingly exclusive moral publics.

Land, People and Power

As mentioned, during much of the early colonial decades, British officials were preoccupied with the design and implementation of laws and regulations that would make land available for alienation to European planters and to turn the local population into labourers. To achieve this, officials had to first break-up pre-existing relationships of credit, trade and clientage, most of which had brought the people of the hinterland and those of the coastal towns in relationships of claim making and social obligation, and through which many could avoid the new demands of the

colonial state.[133] Measures and other regulations – to adjudicate and register land titles; to control trade and to plan the town of Mombasa – were all bound up with this objective, and were meant to "free up" the *nyika* population, in particular, from the patronage of the wealthy townspeople of Mombasa.

Rationalising land ownership

The survey of land in Mombasa began in 1912, mostly to pre-empt potential confusion over the legitimacy of land titles that would then be issued all over the Kenyan coast. This came after the establishment in 1905 of a white-settler dominated Land Committee. The committee recommended that since other parts of the British East Africa Protectorate had had no concept of land ownership, a systematic survey of all coastal properties, adjudication of disputed claims and issuance of title certificates along the Coast protectorate was necessary.[134] This followed the fact that recognition of Islamic titles, in the sense that they were seen as legally based in Islam, was part of the agreement made by the British with the Sultans of Zanzibar to uphold Muslim law when the administration of the protectorate was taken over by the British Government in 1895.[135] The problem, for British officials, was the fact that such titles covered areas that had been part of a complex land tenure system. Individuals, extended families and lineages had various and overlapping rights in land in certain areas, while in other parts of the coast, where there was an abundance of land, rights had been defined mainly by having slaves to clear it.[136]

In the face of collapsing plantations that were, after the abolition of slavery, settled and cultivated by ex-slaves and *nyika* small-scale farmers, the first objective of the newly-installed government was to rationalise land ownership and bring it, according to officials, under useful,

[133] Willis, *Mombasa*.
[134] Cooper, *From slaves to squatters*, pp. 192.
[135] NA, CO 533/488, Sir Ernest Dowson to Colonial Office, 14 November, 1938.
[136] Cooper, *From slaves to squatters*, pp. 192.

productive hands – that is, white hands.[137] A Land Titles Ordinance was passed in 1908, and through it, an office of the Recorder of Titles was created, who was then mandated to investigate claims to land, including those that had been recognized by the Sultan, requiring claimants to produce documentary or oral evidence that they had obtained such land through purchase, clearing of bush, or inheritance, and that it had not been abandoned; and where deemed justifiable, grant certificates of title.[138] Making land into property, that is, a marketable commodity, was the major impetus behind deed registration and title allocation, but as Cooper suggests, 'title allocation was not a direct means of grabbing land but an attempt to establish the legal prerequisites of a capitalist economy'.[139] The assumption, amongst officials, was that capitalist principles – even if enforced impartially – would favour people with the proper entrepreneurial skills, most of whom, they believed, had racial origins elsewhere.

The process of land registration in Mombasa, however, came to an abrupt stop in 1924 – long after the European plantations on the coast had collapsed, or failed to take off. By that time 9, 190 titles had been issued at Mombasa and further north of Mombasa, that is, Malindi, Mambrui and Takaungu.[140] The process would not resume until the 1930s, and later in the 1950s, but the dominance of land ownership by individuals who had close ties to the government and those who had, or could prove that they had racial origins outside the African continent, 'cut off the rights to land of people who could not make – or make stick – claims on such an [non-native, non-African

[137] Cooper, *From slaves to squatters*, pp. 193.
[138] The 1908 ordinance did not explicitly prohibit the *nyika* and ex-slaves from claiming title, but as Cooper, *From slaves to squatters*, pp. 193, and Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 124, show, officials favoured claimants from important families, almost all of whom were Arabs, wealthier Swahili and Indians, and paid close attention to written records (deeds of purchase), a requirement that favoured Indians, Arabs and wealthier Swahili who had better access to the lands registry in Mombasa.
[139] Cooper, *From slaves to squatters*, pp. 193.
[140] More than 50% of titles to the land that was adjudicated at Malindi, Mambrui and Takaungu were issued to the Mazrui family, consisting of five blocks of land amounting to 51, 000 acres, with an additional 3, 000 acres just outside of Takaungu as an inalienable family *wakf* for the entire clan, see, Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 124.

and therefore] individualistic basis'.[141] The new landlords, most of whom were categorised either as Arab or Indian, sold and bought land from each other for speculative purposes, without putting the land under any serious cultivation. This was encouraged by a combination of factors: the comforting clarity of titles; expectations of rising monetary values of land in and around Mombasa; and the anticipated commercial and administrative expansion of Mombasa that begun in the 1920s.[142]

Some Swahili (some of whom may have been ex-slaves, or had kinship networks with the *nyika*, but retained close ties with wealthy Arab landlords) lodged their claims and were granted individual freehold title in and around Mombasa.[143] Also, a number of *nyika* living near the areas of Mombasa that had been marked for commercial development, especially opposite the new port at Kilindini on the western edge of the island, were issued titles to plots that they (successfully) proved they had been cultivating for years.[144] Generally, however, very few ex-slaves did acquire title, and most small-scale agriculturalists (poorer Swahili and all *nyika*) did not and simply became squatters on private or Crown Land.[145] In short, the effect of the adjudication and deed registration process was its privileging of individual ownership over communal (or group) claims. In other words, the process favoured British and Muslim land law over customary law, which, on the coast, had long recognized communal ownership of land. The identity and profile of the largest single beneficiary of the allocations, Salim bin Khalfan El-Busaidy, reflected the identity and profile

[141] Cooper, *From slaves to squatters*, pp. 192.
[142] Cooper, *From slaves to squatters*, pp. 203-206.
[143] See for example, Interview 29, Ali Mwinyi Hija, 8th July 2018, at Changamwe, Mombasa, pp. 25-26; Interview 55, Khadija Abdallah Mzee, 18th July 2018, at Mwembetanganyika, Mombasa island, pp. 5-6.
[144] A few titles were issued to *nyika* families at Likoni on the southern mainland of Mombasa, see, Stren, *Housing the urban poor*, pp. 112. Informants reported that most of the individual and freehold allocations to *nyika*, similar to those that were issued to a few ex-slaves, were held by individuals with close ties to wealthy Omani Arabs and administrators in Mombasa. In Likoni Salim Mwabundu stood out, and he later became a government chief in the 1930s, see, Interview 34, Juma Shaban Mwakiroho and Ali Omari Simba, 10 July 2018, at Timbwani, Likoni, pp.7-8; Also, Interview 21, Hamisi Said Chamosi, 14 June 2018, at Bongwe, Likoni, pp. 2-3.
[145] Stren, *Housing policy*, pp. 111.

(well-connected Omani Arabs) of the majority of those who benefited from the land allocation and deed registration process in Mombasa and on the rest of the coast. Khalfan, a Busaidi Omani-Arab, had served the administration of the Sultanate on the coastal-strip in the nineteenth-century as *liwali* (Governor) of Malindi, and as the administration of the coast fell onto the hands of the British government, he became the *liwali* of Mombasa.

Khalfan's wealth, therefore, had its origins in the prosperous nineteenth-century plantation economy at Malindi, evidenced by a generous gesture, after the abolition of slavery, to turn 1, 000 acres of his land at Malindi into an nonalienable *wakf* (trust) for his freed slaves.[146] His two sons, Ali bin Salim and Seif bin Salim were *liwalis* as well, in Gazi and Mambrui respectively, both of which were former Mazrui strongholds.[147] In addition to a retinue of other Omani administrators on the coast – most of whom became large-landowners after 1908 – Khalfan and his sons had been pivotal in the imposition of British rule on the coast, and in crushing local rebellions, especially those led by Rashid bin Mbaruk of the Mazrui. For this role, they were handsomely rewarded with official titles (Ali bin Salim, who succeeded his father as *Liwali* of Mombasa, was knighted), good salaries and most importantly, land. In Kisauni, the mainland north of Mombasa, Khalfan, together with two other leading Omani families – Mandri and Shikeli – received over 1, 000 acres, a third of the Arab share in the area.[148] On the island, Khalfan owned more than half of the land in Hailendi, a quarter dominated by ex-slaves (most of whom he had owned) from Malindi. By the time of his death in 1920, he was the biggest seller of land to the government, and a leading private moneylender in Mombasa, with a large following of clients amongst ex-slaves, *nyika* and poorer

[146] Cooper, *From slaves to squatters*, pp. 188.
[147] For a discussion on the Sultanate and early colonial administration on the coastal strip, see Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 75-86.
[148] Cooper, *From slaves to squatters*, pp. 201.

Swahili.[149] Other major landowners in Mombasa were Rashid bin Sud Al-Shikeli, who died in 1940 owning twenty houses on the island and 200 acres of land on the mainland (mostly Kisauni).[150] The other was Salim bin Khamis Muhashamy, who died in 1910 and whose son, Mohamed Khamis, became *liwali* at Gazi after Salim bin Salim left the post to replace his father as *liwali* of Mombasa. The other major landowner was Kassim bin Rashid bin Abdallah Al-Mandri, who had been buying and selling land since the 1890s, dying in 1932 leaving 168 acres on Mombasa's mainland.[151] These landowners sold their allocations to the government and to Europeans, but the primary buyers were Indians, who were also buying unregistered land from people who identified themselves as Swahili – and later registering the land as theirs.[152] The vendors would later claim (or argue in court) that they always had the right to sell.[153]

A hierarchy of land ownership (and later political power) was being entrenched in Mombasa, and would influence the later politics of the town, featuring in common-place narratives, many years later, regarding the exclusion of poorer Swahili, or lower-status townspeople, *wamiji* and *wamijikenda* from land ownership. The main problem seemed to have been informed by the widening gulf between land use and land ownership, which became a common source of aggravation for a majority of those who were excluded from the land registration process of 1912-1924: 'the result, in Kisauni, is that almost 80% of the residents who have houses have no title deeds until today' stated a local politician during field research in

[149] For details on the wealth of Salim bin Khalfan Al-Busaidi, see, Cooper, *From slaves to squatters*, pp. 206-207.
[150] Cooper, *From slaves to squatters*, pp. 207, see also, Interview 23, Joseph Karisa and others, at Mgongeni, Kisauni, 2nd July 2018, pp. 13.
[151] Cooper, *From slaves to squatters*, pp. 207.
[152] Under Section 17 of the 1908 Land Titles Ordinance, such unclaimed and unregistered land simply became property of the Crown.
[153] Most of the land in the Western mainland of Mombasa (Changamwe), where the railway passed through on its way into the interior, for example, was sold in this manner, see for example, Interview 39, Damau Chengo Mwatsuma, Mwamlai, Changamwe, 12th July 2018, pp. 6 and 10.

2018.[154] 'Much of this problem' according to a government chief in Mombasa, 'is [currently] found in places such as Mwembe Kuku, Kaloleni, Malandini, Machura, Buxton, Bondeni, Floringi and some areas in the Old Town', essentially, a large swathe of Mombasa island today. [155]

By defining who could own land and who could not, colonial officials were dividing the population of the area into discrete groups with separate rights, one landowning and the other landless, and allotted each its own area. The *nyika* were generally confined to the Native Reserves that were created behind the coastal plain, that is, Vanga (later Kwale) and Nyika (later Kilifi), and the coastal Muslim townspeople to a narrow coastal zone and especially, the town of Mombasa.[156] This distinction did not only increase the gulf between land and land use, or landowners and squatters, as shown above. The majority of the landowners did not, in fact, settle on the land, or turn their allocations into plantations. The way in which land was adjudicated thus influenced struggles over rights to land, especially on the more fertile and developing coastal zone, and as a result, the nature of political conflict throughout the colonial and post-colonial decades. Arabs and wealthier Swahilis owned and could sell land and *nyika* could not – 'could not even claim land, in fact.'[157] Racial thought lingered heavy on such distributions of resources during the colonial decades, as would be shown below through other administrative measures to remake the town of Mombasa and its local hinterland.

Aligning with land policies was the creation of new administrative boundaries, especially between 1912 and 1919, that further deepened the distinction between what was becoming the "native" or "African" hinterland of landless people and the "non-native" or Arabised coastal zone of private land ownership. In fact, the boundary separating Nyika and Vanga districts in the

[154] Interview 13, Maur Bwana Maka, at Mombasa Island, 6th June 2018, pp. 15.
[155] Interview 53, Mwinyi Abdulaziz and others, at Tononoka, pp. 7.
[156] Willis, *Mombasa*, pp. 126.
[157] Willis, *Mombasa*, pp. 127.

hinterland from Mombasa and Malindi districts on the coastal zone was put right across the edge to which land had successfully been claimed.[158] In addition, the government chose to administer the two areas differently, expelling Arab officials from *nyika* areas and establishing Local Native Councils there; with half of the membership on the councils, all of whom were government-appointed headmen, to be appointed by the respective District Commissioner.[159]

Arabs and Swahilis were excluded from participation in the Native Councils, an exclusion that was maintained even after a general reorganisation of administrative boundaries in 1924 that joined Nyika and Malindi districts. In short, the two zones, hinterland and coastal, were being placed at the boundary between maritime and continental imaginaries, Islamic and non-Islamic traditions, and for some, "civilisation" and "barbarism." In this framing, those inhabiting the coastal zone, that is, the coastal townspeople, would come to see themselves as forward-looking sophisticates sneering at the *nyika* yokels in the hinterland backwater. Townspeople cosmopolitanism – within townspeople intellectual practice – it was thought, would come to face off against hinterland parochialism (or *ushenzi*), in ways that would influence the nature of political action and moral debate in Mombasa and elsewhere on the Kenyan coast onwards.

Getting people out to work

During those early years of re-organising space in Mombasa and its local hinterland, ex-slaves and the *nyika*, those who officials expected would turn out for work on the European plantations, were not, in fact, doing so in any satisfactory numbers. Officials thought this was the result of relations of credit and debt that had been established in the nineteenth century. These trends had brought many people on the coastal zone and those of the hinterland into multiple relationships of claim

[158] Willis, *Mombasa*, pp. 132.
[159] Willis, *Mombasa*, pp. 133.

making and social obligation. These relationships enabled some *nyika* to escape the demands of the colonial state by becoming Swahili, or people of the coastal towns: townspeople. Involvement of ex-slaves and the *nyika* of the hinterland in such town networks of trade and credit, and their migration from their designated native reserves onto private land in and around Mombasa, had thus become a problem for the government.

In Mombasa and elsewhere along the coastal zone, ex-slaves and the *nyika* would work on a casual basis for Arab, wealthier Swahili and Indian landlords, and would then be allowed to grow annual crops on rented or borrowed land for subsistence and for sale in the Mombasa market. In such a situation, casual labour – before the mid-1920s, casual labour was the main form of labour available in Mombasa – for European plantations, the Mombasa harbour on the north side of the island and for public works, was irregular and expensive. Its control was not in the hands of the government or private European employers, but in the hands of Arab and Swahili landlords. The latter acted as labour agents of groups of clients and followers they had some personal ties with, within the town and in the immediate hinterland.[160]

Before the mid-1920s, when more labourers arrived from the up-country regions of the colony, and before there was an expansion of work in Mombasa, many of these town patrons had not only acquired their authority and status through their knowledge of the town and their wealth in property, but also from their participation in important town institutions around which people would organise, in particular, dance societies.[161] So powerful were the bonds of these town networks that patrons were able to hold out their gangs away from work, by paying them an

[160] For a detailed description of relationships of patronage and clientage between the coast and the hinterland before colonial rule, see Willis, *Mombasa*, pp. 47-76.
[161] For the distribution of dance societies in east and central Africa during this time, see, Terence Ranger, *Dance and society in Eastern Africa, 1890-1970: The Beni Ngoma* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1975).

advance, so as to seek out better terms from prospective employers.[162] Many *nyika*, ex-slaves and poorer Swahili who sought work in Mombasa, especially at the Mombasa harbour, would do so through such town networks of clientage, which would then protect them from the discipline of the work-contract and as such, the demands of the state. The easy availability of casual labour – known in Mombasa as *kazi ya kibarua* – and the anonymity of the casual labour force, was making Mombasa's workforce hard to discipline.[163] But the latter, of course, had also been the result of nineteenth-century developments along the coast, and the special legal designation that Mombasa and the coastal zone came to acquire as a result of the 1895 British-Zanzibar Treaty.

The expansion of trade over the Western Indian Ocean during the nineteenth century had meant that Mombasa grew substantially, but this had happened without planning or central control, and as a result its urban space could not be easily controlled and ordered by the time the British took charge of administration in the area.[164] In respect of, and adherence to the 1895 treaty, most of the land in Mombasa and its mainland areas fell into private hands before and after the 1908 Lands Titles Ordinance – as shown above. In this way, the state could not interfere (with ease) with whatever happened on private property, especially the continued squatting in Mombasa by members of *nyika* groups who had cultivated some form of relationship with the townspeople of Mombasa. The African casual worker, according to Cooper, 'lived in private housing and emerged from it at irregular and uncontrollable intervals to work a day at a time.'[165]

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[162] See Chapter 1 in Frederick Cooper, *On the African waterfront: Urban disorder and the transformation of work in Colonial Mombasa* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1987).

[163] Casual labour in Mombasa had its roots in slave labour in the nineteenth century, when shippers hired slaves at the Mombasa Port to load and unload vessels, and the slaves paid their owners half their daily earnings. This kind of day labour was then known as *kibarua* (Swahili for a miniature letter), which referred to the letter that slaves were supposed to take from their employer to their owner as evidence of what they had earned. *Kazi ya Kibarua*, translating to 'work of the miniature letter', subsequently became the Swahili term for casual labour in the twentieth century. See, Cooper, *On the African waterfront,* pp. 28.

[164] For some detail on colonial attempts to restructure the urban space in Mombasa, see, Stren, *Housing*, pp. 110-133.

[165] Cooper, *On the African waterfront*, pp. 35.

To alter this state of affairs, new regulations in licensing and trading were established to weaken the relationships in trade and clientage between coastal townspeople and the *nyika*, which saw a general expulsion of Arab and Swahili traders from the hinterland. Simply, traders of whom officials disapproved were refused licenses, and trading between townspeople and *nyika* producers was only permitted in newly gazetted and controlled trading centres. The result of these new regulations was not an immediate and complete breakdown of hinterland-coastal zone relationships, as a substantial illegal trade (especially in palm wine) continued, nor did these measures see an immediate increase of *nyika* in the wage labour sector. However, the resultant financial squeeze upon these relationships made them less personal, losing the additional ties and obligations through which *nyika* could become 'people of the town', or simply, Swahili.[166]

Planning Mombasa

The concern with the unpredictability of casual labour was also bound with concerns over the urban structure of Mombasa.[167] A narrative of physical contagion propagated by officials and wider concerns over public health within Mombasa town were adopted in new measures to plan Mombasa.[168] The 'Old Town' section of the island, which had been the main residential and commercial area of Mombasa since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, had been deemed as a huge insanitary location by European observers since the 1860s.[169] It became the most difficult area to plan in all of the British East Africa Protectorate. Not only were the health risks and problems of administration in the area a concern, but the lack of central control in the growth of

[166] Willis, *Mombasa*, pp. 140.
[167] Cooper, *On the African waterfront*, pp. 51.
[168] For a detailed examination of official attitudes over what they saw as the insanitary nature of Mombasa, particularly the 'Old Town' section, see Stren, *Housing*, pp. 114-130.
[169] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 114.

the area was also associated with the casual labour problem in Mombasa. Together with the plantation areas of Kisauni, Changamwe and Likoni, where squatting and housing was reliant, not on central planning, but on personal contact, kinship and patronage, the 'Old Town' area was seen as a large reservoir of a mixed 'floating population' (a term officials used to describe the urban population across British colonial Africa) through which many *nyika* – supposedly under townspeople patronage – would easily get in and out of the formal labour market. This population was composed of almost any individual who spoke Swahili (some of whom came from as far as Tanganyika), ex-slaves, newly-arrived Hadhrami Arabs, and the *nyika*.[170]

In 1926, a Town Planning Scheme was developed, written by the then District Surveyor of Mombasa, Charles Gower Fanin.[171] Fanin had arrived in Kenya in 1919 from Natal in South Africa.[172] In demolitions and clearings that were conducted so as to make way for wider roads and public buildings, the scheme paid compensation only to landowners (most of whom were Arab, Indian and wealthier Swahili) and almost none to house-owners whose houses stood on the land of others (that is, poorer Swahili, *nyika* and ex-slaves).[173] Again, racial differences here were entrenched, as those who could not prove foreign origins (or whose claims to foreign origins were tenuous) and whose claims to land had, as a result, been denied, are also those who suffered the

[170] Strobel, *Muslim women*.
[171] Published in 1926 as the *Mombasa Town Planning Scheme* (Nairobi, 1926), it contained five features, provision of a local authority, that is, the Mombasa Municipal Board, which came into existence in 1928; controlling of development in the scheme area without reverting decisions to Nairobi; pooling and redistribution of private lands; a road network; zoning of the scheme area; restriction of the residential density to 20 dwellings an acre. A copy is stored at KNA AG/4/1348.
[172] Fanin would also play a major role in the setting up of the Mombasa District Committee, which became the Mombasa Municipal Board, and in its politics throughout the colonial period. He died in 1961, and was succeeded as Alderman of Ward 3, which was expanded during the 1961 elections to include Nyali, Bamburi, Shanzu, Three Hills and Kisauni, by his widow, Katherine Mary Fanin. For a brief biographical sketch, see NA, CO 894/12, *Mombasa Times*, 24 April, 1960, newspaper clippings.
[173] For the impact of the clearings to the landless and poor, see Richard Stren, 'A survey of lower income areas in Mombasa' in John Hutton (ed)., *Urban challenge in East Africa* (East African Publishing House, Nairobi, 1970): 97-115.

most from the demolitions. In sum, the land distribution process of the early decades of the twentieth century had created blocs of landlords and residents defined by race and contrasting rights. Most of the clearances took place in the Western parts of the island, that is, to the West of Salim Road (now Digo Road) where huts had grown housing significant numbers of *nyika* and their mostly poorer Swahili relatives (or those who had come to the town earlier and became Swahili). All had found a place to stay through town networks of patronage, as was recounted by a former resident of the area:

> I grew up in Sheikh Jundani [one of the cleared areas] …there at Splendid [a hotel today]. There, I was raised by my grandmother…My grandfather was the first to go there, he was taken there from Nyasaland by Sir Ali Bin Salim [his former master]. It was the laundry centre of Mombasa. We called it *Madobini*…They were people from all over the place. They were people from Uganda, who sold their bodies [commercial sex work] for one shilling, and *washihiri* [poor Hadhrami Arabs] who sold clothes and established the market at Mwembe Tayari.[174]

Others had come as far as Tanganyika, as part of the King's African Rifles regiment during the First World War.[175] On this Western part of the island, which officials called the "hutted area", huts were demolished to pave way for the widening of Macupa Road (now Jomo Kenyatta Avenue) which leads out from the 'Old Town' section on the coastline towards the Western mainland area of Changamwe.[176]

The widening of roads was also done within the 'Old Town' itself, leading to evictions along the affected parts, but it was in an area in the north of 'Old Town', in Bondeni, where a bulk

[174] Interview 36, Hamisi Hassan Mwamzuka, at Maweni, Likoni, Mombasa, 11th July 2018, pp. 3-4.
[175] See for example, Interview 50, Rashid Tewa, at Spaki-Majengo, Mombasa island, 17 July 2018, pp. 3.
[176] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 130-131.

of the demolitions were conducted, displacing *nyika* groups (Ribe and Kauma) that had come to claim the area.[177] Additional legal action was taken in the 'Old Town' area against those who extended their houses to accommodate extra family members, or their clients.[178] The demolition of entire villages, however, was not a one-time event, as has been implied by other studies, especially by Willis and Stren.[179] While some areas of certain villages were demolished immediately, other areas would be demolished years later, when the town continued to expand, as a former resident of Sheikh Jundani explained: 'at Sheikh Jundani, that place was full of Swahili [traditional] houses, the whole place. It was demolished, if I am not wrong it was 1959, before they demolished the place and constructed the big houses.'[180] Another interviewee, who was born at Sheikh Jundani in 1937, recalled being a resident there up until the 1950s.[181] Combined with measures to control trading within the town, the general effect of the town planning scheme of Mombasa was the transformation of pre-existing relationships – between producers and traders, house-owners and landlords, and landlords and squatters – making them less personal and less incorporative, and as a result, the racial fault-lines that had marked those relationships were further entrenched.

With the operation of the town networks that had brought most *nyika* to Mombasa not only to find work and a place to live, but also to become Swahili (people of the town) drastically reduced, many *nyika* came to find work in Mombasa through a different kind of town patron, that is, people who had come to Mombasa from its local hinterland and acquired useful knowledge of the town, but had maintained their kinship networks in the hinterland.[182] From the late 1920s

[177] For demolitions within the Old Town area, see Stren, *Housing*, pp. 123-130; Willis, *Mombasa*, pp. 157.
[178] Willis, *Mombasa*, pp. 158.
[179] See for example, Willis, *Mombasa*, pp. 157; Stren, *Housing*, pp. 122.
[180] Interview 35, Bakari Salim Mwinyi, at Mtongwe, Likoni, 10th July 2018, pp. 3.
[181] Interview 42, Rajab Sumba, at Majengo, Mombasa Island, 14th July 2018, pp. 2-5.
[182] Willis, *Mombasa*, pp. 161-183.

onwards, as has been shown by Willis, many *nyika* would come to find work in Mombasa as *nyika*, not as Swahili, through networks that tied them to homesteads in their rural hinterland.

In their participation in the economy of Mombasa, they became a truly migrant class of labourers, remitting their earnings back into hinterland homesteads, without commitment to life in the town.[183] 'When I came to Mwamlai [an area of rugged terrain in Changamwe at the Western edge of Mombasa], I think I was about twenty years of age…I came from Vikolani [from Duruma in Kwale] after my father died there…when I arrived I was taken up by other Duruma wazees [Old Mijikenda men of the Duruma ethnic group],' recounts a village-elder at Changamwe.[184]

This trend, of *nyika* migration into a pre-established *nyika* community in Mombasa, through hinterland networks, was maintained throughout the remainder of the colonial decades and after. This was rather different from earlier periods, when town networks of patronage had afforded many people from Mombasa's local hinterland an opportunity to escape the rural homestead altogether, cultivate other relationships of claim making and social obligation in town, and become Swahili, as is the story of the grandmother of a Swahili woman who was interviewed in Mombasa:

> My great grandmother…her name was Sada wa Kalama…she escaped from Jilore [in Nyika district near Malindi town] with her two sons, because her brother-in-law wanted to have sexual relations with her and she didn't…her husband was a Giriama, of the *Bithoya* clan, but he had already left for Mombasa and became a Christian at Freretown…she came all the way down…from village to village…then to Kisauni. At Kisauni, she converted to Islam…she bumped into her husband there, but he had already become a Christian, and she was already a *Mdzomba* (Swahili)…therefore, they

[183] Willis, *Mombasa*, pp. 176.
[184] Interview 39, Damau Chengo Mwatsuma, at Mwamlai, Changamwe, pp. 3.

> didn't get back together. She got this plot [at Mwembe Tanganyika in Mombasa island] from an Indian named Msaji, and built this house…she never went back to Jilore.[185]

The legal framework that had been laid down to enforce the separation of the Nyika hinterland from the coastal zone, and of the *nyika* from the coastal townspeople, with separate rights and separate areas of residence, was reinforcing, from the late 1920s onwards, and in locally unprecedented ways, a process of differentiation with origins in the pre-colonial era, 'putting the [*nyika*] *as a group* in a position where their interests could easily conflict with those of the townspeople.'[186] Apart from the small-class of European residents in Mombasa, status, privilege and wealth had been placed largely in Arab and Indian hands, followed by wealthier and higher-class Swahili. Majority of the *nyika* population were pushed even further into the periphery of Mombasa society.

Under this context, poorer Swahili launched a protracted struggle to prove their "non-native" status, in a context where racial thought, but also local traditions and customs, were being transformed as a whole. Amongst the *nyika*, who now faced the real danger of exclusion from both the colonial political economy, that would later be dominated by up-country Kenyans, and an urban, Swahili-Muslim culture (through exclusion from town networks of patronage), explosive *internal* debates over claim and obligation, especially amongst poor and more fortunate kin, erupted.

[185]Interview 55, Khadija Abdallah Mzee, at Mwembetanganyika, pp. 3-6.
[186]Willis, *Mombasa*, pp. 170.

Racial Thought and Moral Publics

The net effect of colonial intellectual work and policies was, therefore, a sharpening of locally evolving racial modes of thought. The majority of the beneficiaries of colonial land policies – as discussed above – were Arabs, or people thought to be Arabs, and especially, those with close ties to the political establishment. For one to access resources, status and rights, claims to foreign origins had become even more crucial, increasing the tension between African and foreign orientations of the coast, or its maritime and continental imaginaries, a tension that intensified during the colonial decades.

This tension was not only reflected in the way the government distributed political rights – providing for an Arab nominated and elected seat on the Legislative Council to the exclusion of those classified as African, or "natives" – but also in the way people talked about community, identity and morality. In other words, multiple divisions amongst the local population – some with nineteenth century continuities – deepened during the early colonial period, and by the late colonial era, multiple languages or public spheres for talking and debating the terms of social obligation and claim making, including proper and acceptable behaviour, had also emerged.

Race and leadership during the Inter-War years

The Arab administrative system – as it had been established under the Zanzibar Sultanate – was absorbed by the new colonial administration: 'it is, I think, very important for the future of East Africa that a native administrative element should, if possible, be formed and trained up out of the Arabs and higher Swahili,' Hardinge, the first commissioner of the British East Africa Protectorate, had suggested, two years after the Protectorate's establishment.[187] During the

[187] *Report by Sir A.H. Hardinge on the condition and progress of the East Africa Protectorate from its establishment to the 20th July* 1897, British Sessional Papers, Africa, No. 7, (1897), pp. 26.

nineteenth century, the efficacy and prestige of the Arab administration along the coast had rested almost entirely on the personal patronage (and the figure) of the Sultans of Zanzibar.[188] Most of the *liwalis*, the Arab governors of the principal coastal towns of Lamu, Malindi, Mombasa, Sofala and Kilwa, were blood relatives of the Sultan.[189]

In the early colonial administration, these Arab officials operated side by side with European administrators, administering justice through a system of Islamic courts, that is, the Kadhis Courts, settling minor political disputes, acting as intermediaries between British officials and the Muslim population, and collecting rents through a system of *wilayarets* and *mudiryets* (administrative districts and sub-districts) under Muslim officials called *mudirs*, most of whom were Arabs or higher-class Swahili.[190] 'This Arab and semi-Arab element is…valuable, as it is on it, and it alone, that the administration depends for its…staff […] Community of religion, language and intermarriage gives them influence over the negro coast population,' wrote Hardinge in his annual report of 1898.[191]

This new administrative hierarchy, of course, was transforming a previously established socio-religious hierarchy along the coast, whose power was now becoming formalised, or given a new impetus, by colonial rule. As a consequence, 'the *liwalis* and *mudirs* lorded it not only over their fellow Arabs and Swahili but also over the African population residing in their *wilayarets* and *mudiryets*,' as was noted by the historian, Idha Salim.[192] The overall effect was a transformation of 'what had become a de-facto social superiority for the Arabs [to a] de jure system

[188] Nicholls, *The Swahili coast*, pp. 295-323.
[189] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 76.
[190] For a discussion on the Sultanate and early colonial administration on the coastal strip, see Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 75-86
[191] *Report by Sir A.H. Hardinge on the condition and progress of the East Africa Protectorate from its establishment to* 1898, British Sessional Papers, Africa, No. 7, (1898), pp. 227.
[192] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 87.

for reckoning racial distinctions and privileges under British rule.'[193] A resident of Mombasa recalled about the 1940s, 'it was all good…but when it came to religion, the Arabs did not like the African, they only liked to use the African, they practised *ubwana* [Lorded it] over us.'[194] In addition, following nineteenth century trends, the new political and religious hierarchy was acquiring an Arab *pastiche*, and the emerging system of cultural and political dominance, *uustaarabu*, would henceforth come to influence much moral debate and political action throughout the colonial decades and after.

Two Omani-Arab factions, that is, the Busaidi and the Mazrui, all of whom had become owners of large landholdings in and around Mombasa, came to dominate the political and religious spheres of the town respectively. Along with the Busaidi and the Mazrui, other Arab families that benefited from the patronage of the Zanzibar Sultanate, and from British colonialism, included the Mandhry, the Maamiri, the Shikely, the Shaksy, as well as several Shariff families (those who claimed descent from Prophet Muhhamad) originating from the Hadhramaut region.[195] These clans and families formed the dominant core of the socio-religious and administrative hierarchy (below Europeans) in Mombasa and elsewhere along the Kenyan coast.

In February 1920, Sir Ali bin Salim, at the time *liwali* of Mombasa, was nominated to the Legislative Council as the representative of Arabs.[196] After opposition to Salim's nomination and agitation by other wealthy Arabs of Mombasa, namely Rashid bin Salim Al-Mazrui, an ex-*liwali* at Takaungu, and Rashid bin Sud Al-Shikeli, a wealthy landowner in Mombasa, an elective Arab seat was created in 1923, and Hemed Mohamed Issa Timamy was elected.[197] However, only Arabs

[193] Randall Pouwels, 'Sh. al-Amin B. Ali Mazrui and Islamic Modernism in East Africa, 1875-1947', *International Journal of Middle-East Studies*, 13, 3 (1981): 329-345.
[194] Interview 36, Hamisi Hassan Mwamzuka, at Maweni, Likoni, pp. 5.
[195] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 87.
[196] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 178.
[197] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 186.

were allowed to vote, in a decision that intensified a growing debate over identity in and around Mombasa.[198] In other words, racial thought, by officials and residents, was exercising much weight in the determinations of political rights.

The official campaign against town and hinterland relationships of clientage, debt and trade that had influenced land and other administrative policies in Mombasa had already reflected official disdain for the urban category of Swahili, where many *nyika* were thought to have "disappeared" into so as to escape the demands of the state. As a result, officials were keen on making Swahili identity less permeable. To escape official discrimination, many who would be referred to as Swahili were, as a result, picking up new appellations for themselves. The appellation of 'Twelve Nations', or 'Twelve Tribes' of Mombasa, 'from which poorer *nyika*, ex-slave, and other recent immigrants would be excluded,' as Willis notes, was widely adopted as a result.[199] In fact, after 1920, officials had stopped using 'Swahili' as a blanket term for all the African inhabitants of Mombasa and instead begun to use it selectively of "real" Twelve Tribes members, encouraging people to differentiate themselves.[200] As a result, "Swahili" 'became almost a term of opprobrium.'[201]

It is also important to note that before 1910, or simply, before the land formalisation process and the determination of political rights begun, Arabs and the Swahili had been classified in all colonial legislation as "natives" and as a composite body. However, after 1910, Arabs, or those who could prove that they were Arabs, were exempted from the Hut Tax that had been imposed on all "natives" since 1901. In the context of these changes, Swahili communal claims to

[198] There were 5 Indian and 11 European elected representatives in the Legislative Council, and 1, unofficial Arab representative, Mbarak bin Ali Hinawy, 7 Europeans and 7 Indians, in the Mombasa Municipal Board that was established in 1928 under the leadership of Fanin. There was no African in both legislative bodies.
[199] Willis, *Mombasa*, pp. 189.
[200] Willis, *Mombasa*, pp. 190.
[201] Willis and Gona, 'Pwani C Kenya', pp. 53.

land in Mombasa would also be rejected, reflecting the privileging of individual land claims by Arabs, or people claiming, successfully at least in the eyes of British officials, Middle-Eastern origins. Explaining the dismissal of the Swahili land claims, Charles Hobley, the Provincial Commissioner of the Coast from 1909 to 1919, argued that the Swahili federations, that is, the 'Three Tribes' (Thelatha Taifa) and the 'Nine Tribes' (Tisia Taifa), all of whom constituted the 'Twelve Tribes', had never appeared before the government as tribal units until 1908 (the year of the Land Titles Ordinance); that the elders' view of custom was engineered to serve their material needs; and that the people that they spoke on behalf of did not exist as an organised tribe.[202] These arguments were repeated by the Attorney-General, who, in addition to stating that the Swahili were not a tribal entity, went ahead to pointing out that they were also not '*bona fide* agriculturalists.'[203]

It was by the same stroke, therefore, that the Swahili would be excluded from the Arab communal roll when it was introduced in 1923, despite their active participation in 1921 during the establishment of the association that had vigorously campaigned for the Arab elected seat, that is, the Central Arab Association (C.A.A).[204] The debate during this time amongst officials regarding race in Mombasa continued to be revealing and instructive. While the Chief Native Commissioner proposed in 1920 that in the matter of taxation and in the general application of the term "native", the Swahili were to be treated and recognized as Arabs, the Senior Coast Commissioner was of the view that since, according to him, the somatic traits of most of the Swahili were indistinguishable from the rest of the African population, only the elders and "better families" amongst the Swahili, that is, those that had kept themselves fairly "pure" of marriage

[202] Cooper, *From slaves to squatters*, pp. 194; Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 128.
[203] Cited in Willis, *Mombasa*, pp. 125.
[204] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 186.

with Arabs, should be considered as Arabs.[205] The matter was compounded by a 1921 Official Gazette notice that defined the term "native" as all persons who, by birth or adoption, belonged to any of the races or tribes of Africa, but excluded Arabs and the Swahili from that category.[206] Despite this exclusion, laws applicable to "natives", especially the Criminal Procedure Ordinance of 1914, continued to apply to both Arabs and Swahilis, who resented such ambiguity, and as a result, campaigned to be accepted into 'full' and unambiguous "non-native" status, on parity with Europeans and Indians.[207]

Official declarations were intensifying existing debates over Swahili identity, especially the idea that Swahili identity can be differentiated depending on "levels of Arab blood."[208] In the 1920s, and with official promises of improved status for the Swahili, some Swahili were themselves eager to take on the responsibility of separating themselves out into "upper" and "lower" categories: 'the former can personally give Arabic clan origin whereas the latter can only show *nyika* origin', the Provincial Commissioner of the Coast explained, in a letter to the Chief Native Commissioner, in 1925.[209] Arabicized names, or Arab-like *nisbas*, as a result, were increasingly being adopted within the Twelve Tribes so as to sort out the Swahili into "upper" and "lower" categories, with the implication that those with lower levels of Arab blood were not true Swahili, but only followers of Swahili.[210] The Kilindini (one of the Twelve Tribes) began calling

[205] KNA, 58/1585, Watkins to PC, Coast, 9/12/1920, Coast Province; See also Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 187.
[206] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 188.
[207] For an extensive discussion, see Idha Salim, 'Native or Non-Native?' The Problem of identity and social stratification of the Arab-Swahili of Kenya,' in Ogot, Bethwell, (ed)., *Hadith 6: History and Social Change in East Africa* (East Africa Publishing House, Nairobi, 1976): 65-85; 'The elusive Mswahili: Some reflections on his identity and culture' in Joan Maw and David Parkin (eds)., *Swahili language and society* (Afro-Pub, Vienna, 1985): 215-227.
[208] Willis, *Mombasa*, pp. 189.
[209] KNA, PC Coast, 1/10/120B, Senior Commissioner, Coast Province to Chief Native Commissioner, 13th May 1925.
[210] Willis, *Mombasa*, pp. 189.

themselves al-Kindy, the Kilifi took the *nisba* al-Kufy, and the Tangana took the name, noble in Islamic history, of al-Taif.[211] The status of these "higher-class" Swahilis, most of whom claimed distant kinship with those who had exercised dominance in the historical *uungwana* society, would receive a major boost in 1952, when they were eventually admitted into the Arab communal voting roll, but this came only after their (political) separation with Arabs, when they had established their own political association, the Afro-Arab Association (A.A.A) in 1927.[212]

As we will see in the next chapter, the political separation of the Swahili from Arabs in the 1920s gave currency to a theme that increasingly emphasised the indigeneity to the coast of the Swahili, yet maintaining claims of distant foreign origins, especially in debates about the post-colonial future of Mombasa in the late 1950s. The formation of the Afro-Arab Association in 1927, and then of the Arab Association (A.A) the following year, was, however, reflective of the racial thinking amongst the townspeople of Mombasa that was being sharpened by official intellectual work, policy and legislation – but also of the changing social politics of a population struggling to improve its circumstances under new conditions.

For those, especially the *nyika*, who were becoming increasingly excluded from town networks of claim and obligation, loyalties shifted to the hinterland homestead, where contending visions of culture and community, bound with renewed debates over claim and obligation, between old and young men, men and women, and especially, poor and more fortunate kin, took centre-stage in multiple moral economies.[213] These debates intensified as many *nyika* continued to face the real danger of exclusion from an urban, Swahili, Muslim culture, but also from the emerging

[211] Pouwels, *Horn and crescent*, pp. 129.
[212] Hyder Kindy, *Life and politics in Mombasa* (East African Publishing House, Nairobi, 1972), pp. 26-45.
[213] For a seminal account, see, Parkin, *Palms, wine and witnesses.* For a comparative analysis, see Lonsdale, 'The moral economy of the Mau Mau'.

colonial political economy, where up-country Kenyans would soon dominate.[214] For many *nyika*, the choice for individual and communal improvement laid, either in becoming Western educated Christians, coastal Muslims, or more "authentically" Mijikenda.[215]

As we shall see below, the dismal provision of public education on the coast did not help matters either. The few mission stations that were spread around the immediate hinterland of Mombasa (discussed below), that taught Christianity, literacy and hardwork, produced a small cadre of educated *nyika* elites.[216] In fact, it was their own anxiety regarding potential alienation from their largely uneducated, rural poor kin (given that permanent life in Mombasa or Nairobi was not assured), that pushed some educated *nyika* elites to establish a Mijikenda Union in the 1940s; and from where the idea of being Mijikenda would be employed in presentations of the continental, African and "black" orientations of the coast.[217] Before the discussion turns to the moral discourses of the Mijikenda, we shall examine moral debate amongst townspeople.

Race and moral debate in town

Amongst coastal townspeople, "Swahili Muslim publics" as recently described by Kai Kresse, were the public sphere through which debates and public discussions regarding the purviews of social and Islamic reform, and of claim and obligation amongst townspeople, took place under the context of British colonial dominance.[218] In a trend that would be maintained throughout the

[214] In the mid-1920s, up-country workers formed the majority of the contracted (formal) labour force in Mombasa, see, Cooper, *From slaves to squatters*, pp. 249.
[215] For the use of the term authentic, see McIntosh, 'Elders and frauds'.
[216] Robert Mambo, *Challenges of western education in the Coast Province of Kenya: 1890-1963* (unpublished PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, New York, 1980).
[217] Willis and Gona, 'Tradition'.
[218] See especially Kai Kresse, 'Colonial experience and future anticipations: Sheikh al-Amin Mazrui and Swahili Islamic Pamphlets, 1930-32, in Kai Kresse, *Swahili Muslim publics*, pp. 61-98; 'Guidance and social critique: Mombasa and Coastal Muslims Through the Eyes of Sheikh al-Amin Mazrui, 1930-32, in Kai Kresse and Hassan Mwakimako (eds)., *Guidance (Uwongozi) by Sheikh al-Amin Mazrui: Selections from the first Swahili Islamic newspaper* (Mkuki wa Nyota, Dar-es-Salaam, 2017): 1-37; Pouwels, 'Sh. al-Amin B. Ali Mazrui'.

colonial and post-colonial decades, the predominantly Muslim townspeople begun engaging with global Islamic discourses as a way of talking about Islamic reform, and wound these discourses with local concerns, within a locally evolving "glocalisation" medium.[219]

From as early as the 1890s, talk of an economic, cultural and political decline amongst the coastal townspeople had preoccupied the minds of local intellectuals, political leaders and officials.[220] For instance, it was the reason behind the public reassurances given by Hardinge to the residents of Mombasa during his public *baraza* on 1 July 1895: that Arabs and "higher" Swahili would become the backbone of the administration of the British East Africa Protectorate. This theme, of an economic and cultural decline amongst the coastal townspeople, also featured in District Annual Reports that were awash with descriptions of the "lazy" and "opulent" coastal Mohhamedan, and of the "moral corruption" of the Arab youth: 'the most regrettable feature of the year is the increase of drunkenness and general moral depravity among the young coast Arabs and better class Swahili,' wrote the Provincial Commissioner in a letter to the Colonial Secretary in 1927.[221]

A drier and more incriminatory remark was made by the District Commissioner of Vanga, later Kwale: 'the coastal Mohammedan whether Arab or Swahili is, as a rule, however, an absolutely hopeless waster. Loafing and *ngoma* [dance] are his sole interest in life and he appears to have no ambition beyond satisfying his immediate personal needs.'[222] The collapse of the nineteenth-century coastal plantation economy; the banning of slavery in 1907; the introduction of "expensive" European goods and tastes; all had, according to both local intellectuals and officials,

[219] See for example, Ngala Chome, 'From Islamic reform to Muslim activism: The Evolution of an Islamist Ideology in Kenya', *African Affairs*, 118, 472 (2019): 531-552.
[220] For discussion on the economic and social decline amongst the coastal townspeople, see, Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 100-138.
[221] KNA, KWL/2, PC Coast to Colonial Secretary, 29 December 1927.
[222] KNA, DC /KWL/1/1, Annual Report of 1915-16, Vanga District.

underwrote the much talked about decline. As a result, much work needed to be done, in their view, to provide townspeople the necessary skills and tools required in an – English-speaking – modern political economy.[223]

An Arab primary school – following the general principle of the racial system of education throughout the protectorate – was established by the government in 1912 – 'if you were African, you were not allowed entry to that school,' recalled a resident of Mombasa, and once mayor of the town in the 1980s,[224] but its ability to attract Arab and those authorities deemed to be "higher" Swahili students remained dismal up until the 1950s.[225] Even the establishment of the larger Mombasa Institute of Muslim Education (MIOME) on the 16th of March, 1950 did not immediately shore up the numbers, especially for Kenyan Arabs. During this time, many Arabs and Swahilis were suspicious of secular education, fearing that their children would veer away from their Islamic culture, as a Muslim-Digo resident of Likoni remembered:

> I started at the Arab school, that is Serani school [its current name] up until class 7…and proceeded to the Arab Secondary School until Form 2…I was to then proceed to Libya for further studies, but my family didn't want me to go anywhere. They were stuck in their old ways.[226]

Fears of loss of their children, either to long-distance travel, or to an alien religious culture, were not, for many, completely unfounded: 'After doing my KAPE [Kenya African Primary Education Examinations] …my headmistress wanted to take me to the United Kingdom, but she first asked that I convert to Christianity. My parents refused. I didn't go. I then took night studies

[223] Pouwels, 'Sh. al-Amin B. Ali Mazrui', pp. 340.
[224] Interview 42, Rajab Sumba, at Majengo, pp. 3.
[225] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 149 and 212.
[226] Interview 35, Bakari Salim Mwinyi, at Mtongwe, Likoni, pp. 2.

with the Union College of South Africa,' a former mayor of Mombasa recalled.[227] Such fears, compounded by the government's own inability to provide sufficient public schooling for the local population, meant that many continued to send their children to traditional Quranic schools spread across the coast, and that these children would take up on the professions of their parents (fishing, boat-making, trade, religious teaching) afterwards, as had been the case in Mombasa and elsewhere along the coast for hundreds of years.

As mentioned by Idha Salim, the resistance to secular education by the Muslim townspeople, which, nonetheless, waned over the years, could not be separated from their own shaken sense of religious, and in more ways than one, racial pride – under the context of the advance of Western civilisation.[228] Through the public intellectual program of Sheikh al-Amin Bin. Ali Mazrui (1875-1947), Kenya's third Chief Kadhi and a respected member of the Mazrui family in Mombasa – with a farm in Changamwe[229] - such concerns also became inexorably entwined with efforts at reforming Islamic life and practice more widely.[230] Sheikh al-Amin Mazrui, in this way, initiated local efforts that sourced their inspiration from broader trends in the Islamic world, that is, the Middle-East, where sentiments regarding the dominance of the West at the expense of Muslim civilisations were widely circulating.[231]

Across a vast swathe of the Western Indian Ocean and elsewhere in the Middle East – regions that had largely symbolised for many centuries the union of Islamic belief and politics – print cultures, emerging especially on the run-up and after of the dissolution of the Caliphate of

[227] Interview 42, Rajab Sumba, at Majengo, pp. 5.
[228] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 153-168.
[229] Interview 56, Harith Swaleh, on 23rd July 2018, at Old Town, Mombasa Island, pp.10.
[230] F.H Elmasri, 'Sheikh Al-Amin Bin Ali Al-Mazrui and the Islamic intellectual tradition in East Africa,' *Institute of Minority Muslim Affairs*, 8, 2 (1987): 229-237; Mohamed Suleiman Mraja, 'Sheikh al-Amin Mazrui (1891-1947) and the dilemma of Islamic Law in the Kenyan legal system in the 21st Century', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 31 (2011): 60-74.
[231] Mathews, 'Imagining Arab communities'; Bang, *Islamic Sufi networks*.

Constantinople (the Caliphate was dissolved in 1924), saw a locally unprecedented deployment of ideas, discussions and debates regarding the future of the Muslim world, as a response to the expanding influence of Europe.[232] Inspired by the works of leading Muslim intellectuals during the second half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries; namely Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897), a Muslim activist and Islamic ideologist who, in life, travelled throughout the Middle-East advocating for Muslim unity as a response to Western dominance; and his disciple Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), once a Grand Mufti of Egypt and lecturer at al-Azhar University:[233] Sheikh al-Amin Mazrui of Mombasa set in motion a local tradition of intellectual critique and guidance through Islamic newsletters and pamphlets. He essentially created, in print, a Swahili Muslim public.[234]

Tapping into common ideas advocating for the modernisation of Islamic life and culture, Sheikh al-Amin Mazrui, through newsletters that were circulating in mosques in Mombasa during the 1930s, told his audience, whom he constantly referred to as *wapwani* (to him, urban Swahili and Arab citizens of "high descent", that is, *waungwana* and *waarabu*)[235] that Islam and modernism were not incompatible, and that modernism was not synonymous with Christianity or Westernisation. In this line of communal guidance, urging the coastal townspeople to adopt those aspects of Western culture, such as secular education, that might be beneficial to them, Sheikh al-Amin also sought to critique key communal customs and traditions, such as entrenched

[232] See for example, Isabel Hofmeyr, Preben Kaarsholm and Bodil Folke Frederiksen, 'Introduction: Print cultures, nationalisms and publics of the Indian Ocean', *Journal of the International African Institute*, 81, 1 (2011): 1-22; Aman N. Ghazal, *Islamic reform and Arab nationalism: Expanding the crescent from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, 1880s-1930s* (Routledge, London, 2010); 'The other frontiers of Arab nationalism: Ibadis, Berbers, and the Arabist-Salafi Press in the Interwar Period,' *Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 42, 1 (2010): 105-122.
[233] For an extensive review, see Albert Hourani, *Arabic thought in the liberal age: 1738-1939* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1983).
[234] Kresse, 'Colonial experience' pp. 87-95.
[235] See for example, Kresse, 'Guidance and social critique', pp. 13.

hierarchical beliefs and what he saw as the blind following of "immoral" Western behaviours – 'we wanted to imitate them [Europeans] in their customs, but all we ever took up was drinking wine and wearing hats,' he wrote in one of his many polemical essays entitled 'Why are we imitating the Europeans?'[236]

By attempting to redefine the concept of *uustaarabu*, Sheikh al-Amin argued that such high social status could only be achieved, not through ascription, familial connections or by race, but by actions (*vitendo*) and hardwork (*jitihada*): 'to depend on family relations and the fame of the elders without any actions like theirs is a major cause among those that make people regress backwards rather than move forward,' he opined.[237] Sheikh al-Amin's social guidance and critique, published in a pamphlet he named *Sahifa* (Arabic for blank surface, or Swahili for blank page), which was followed by a newsletter he named *Al-Islah*, both of which were later republished under the title *Uwongozi* (leadership), were a source of education and entertainment as much as they were also a cause of much consternation and rebuke. Some members of the small class of literate coastal townspeople felt that their long-cherished customs and traditions were coming under severe attack from one of their own.

Important to note, however, is that the debates emanating from Sheikh al-Amin Mazrui's intellectual program had antecedents in the last decades of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth, when different interpretations of religious practice amongst townspeople begun to emerge. People such as Habib Saleh (1844-1935), a renowned, Hadhrami religious scholar who had founded his own institution of Islamic learning in 1878 at Lamu known as the Riyadha mosque college; his student, Zanzibar-based Abdallah Bakathir (1860/1-1925), and Bakathir's contemporary then based at Zanzibar known as Ahmed bin Sumayt (1861-1925), had

[236] Kresse and Mwakimako, *Guidance* pp. 61 (translations from Kiswahili provided by the authors).
[237] Kresse and Mwakimako, *Guidance* pp. 65 (translations from Kiswahili provided by the authors).

all offered conflicting interpretations of Islam before Sheikh al-Amin Mazrui had.[238] At the centre of this *internal* moral debate amongst the predominantly Muslim townspeople were rituals associated with the local brand of Islam that had been a great source of consternation for Islamic reformers such as Sheikh al-Amin Mazrui, and who thought of them as *bid'a*, that is, heretical religious innovation.[239]

Islamic practice along the East African coast has long been predominantly Sunni with a Shafi intellectual tradition, but since the early colonial decades, has consisted of a number of varying and competing interpretations, especially between a form of Islam with a longer history that consists of a bundle of syncretic religious practices widely referred to as Sufi, and newer forms of reformist Islam, such as the one that was espoused by Sheikh al-Amin Mazrui, commonly referred to as Salafist, and equally denounced as *wahhabism*.[240] The Shafii Islamic school emanates from the teachings of Imam Shafi, an Arab Muslim theologian and member of the Sunni branch of Islam, who lived in the Middle-East during the 8th and 9th centuries.[241] The predominance of the Shafi intellectual school in East African Islam was the result of the work of Islamic proselytizers from Hadhramaut, such as Habib Saleh and his intellectual descendants, many of whom spread along the East African coast and in the hinterland of what later became Somalia, Tanzania, Mozambique, and parts of Central Africa, establishing an early system of Quranic schools and mosques where they taught Islam through a pedagogy of recitation, repetition, and memorization.[242]

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[238] For more details, see, Anne Bang, *Sufis and scholars of the sea: Family networks in East Africa, 1860-1925* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003); Farsy, *Baadhi ya wanavyuoni.*
[239] Pouwels, 'Sh. al-Amin B. Ali Mazrui.'
[240] For an extensive discussion, see, Pouwels, *Horn and crescent*, pp. 192-208.
[241] Farsy, *Baadhi ya wanavyuoni.*
[242] Kresse, *Philosophising in Mombasa*, pp. 88; Pouwels, *Horn and crescent*, pp. 192-208.

These Shafii scholars and preachers (most claimed status as direct descendants of the Prophet Muhammad and are known locally as *sharifu*, sing, *masharifu*, plu) used their social status to prescribe local Sufi practices that later reformists termed as *bid'a*. These included certain rituals entailed in often costly celebrations of the prophet's birthday, *maulid*, communal prayer processions to offer protection from 'evil spirits', performance of *dhikri*, a congregational salutation at the end of prayer, and veneration of *masharifu*, amongst others.[243] These practices served to entrench the role of the Shafi clerics (or 'local saints') as mediators between East African Muslims and Islamic knowledge and practice.[244] They also served to put *masharifu*, a revered group of Arab religious scholars, at a position of high-status in the racial hierarchy of coastal town society, above their lower-status townspeople followers.

For the purposes of this discussion, it is important to note that many of these local Sufi practices also gained entry into the local brand of Islam via the increased conversion to Islam (by Habib Saleh and some of his students) of individuals from the hinterland, or members of the lower-stratums of townspeople society. In fact, this invitation of underprivileged and previously excluded groups, that is, ex-slaves, the *nyika* and poor Swahili, to join the Islamic *umma* (the universal community of Muslims) coincided with the controversial introduction of a new form of *maulidi*, the *maulidi al-Habshy* (introduced by Habib Saleh in 1910) where small drums held by the hand, and sometimes played inside mosques, were used as supporting musical instruments.[245] Habib Saleh, himself an upper-class Arab and member of the revered Ba-Alawi clan from Hadhramaut, had questioned the exclusiveness of Islamic education for high-status townspeople.[246]

[243] Parkin and Headley (eds.), *Islamic prayer across the Indian Ocean.*
[244] Pouwels, *Horn and crescent*, pp. 192-208.
[245] Bang, *Sufis and scholars*, pp. 144-152.
[246] Kresse, *Philosophising in Mombasa*, pp. 87.

This is what informed his decision to open the Riyadha mosque college, and for this, he drew much support and reverence from lower-status townspeople, as was explained during field-research by a madrassa teacher at Majengo, Mombasa:

> Religion has been there since the past, but in the beginning, religion they were just teaching it by hiding hiding it, people [lower-status townspeople] were just being taught the Quran, but knowing [the essence] of religion itself, they [high-status townspeople] were hiding it. So, the *shariffus*, when they came to Lamu to teach religion they put it out in public, in open. They were opposed in their efforts but they were successful… […] They were really respected.[247]

It was the resulting popularity of the local brand of Islam amongst lower-status townspeople, under the context of a wider redefinition of identity, where the population was encouraged by administrative policy to differentiate itself into distinct Arab and African categories, that the Islamic reformism espoused by Sheikh al-Amin Mazrui was initially opposed by those whose position and status was being threatened by colonial rule. For the latter, Sheikh al-Amin's reform agenda could easily be associated with the wider Pan-Arabism from which he drew inspiration, and of which many of Mombasa's poorer townspeople were becoming sceptical. In the debate about proper religious practice, which was also expressed through ideas regarding what it means to be a proper coastal townsperson, the strength of the hierarchies and social fault lines amongst townspeople that Sheikh al-Amin sought to redefine trumped over his vision for Islamic modernisation.

Despite this, the reform of Islamic religious practice and modernisation of Muslim public life would proceed, albeit in a slow, gradualist manner, long after Sheikh al-Amin's death in 1947.

[247] Interview 44, Ali Said Ana, at Majengo, 4th July 2018, pp 2-3.

In this post-colonial, intellectual campaign that would be carried on by Sheikh al-Amin Mazrui's students, as we shall see in Chapter 5 below, local ritual practises regarded as heretical religious innovation were likened by townspeople intellectuals to "dirt", within a wider casting of these practises as distinctly African and therefore, non-Islamic. Prescriptions for proper religious behaviour and hence civic virtue amongst townspeople, now also picked up by lower-status townspeople who were renegotiating their moral status in a post-colonial context of African primacy, would continue to valorise exotic, particularly, Arab cultural referents.

In fact, what had been clear in Sheikh al-Amin's intellectual work in the 1930s and 1940s was the appearance in his thinking of the historical tension, yet again, between the maritime and continental visions of the coast. From his own vantage point as a member of an upper-class Arab family, the only other status that Arab and wealthier Swahilis should aspire to was the statuses enjoyed by (white) Europeans and Indians. Conversely, Africans, whom he thought as constituting a future 'Black Peril', *khatari nyeusi,* were threatening to upset the existing racial hierarchy of Mombasa: 'there is not an evening when you would not find them crowding into a school… […] And if ever slavery were to return, it would be us who would be sold by the Kikuyu and bought by the Kavirondo,' he warned.[248] The warning of an impending 'Black Peril', and the talk of *wapwani* [coastal people, or people belonging to the coast] as urban Swahili and Arab citizens of "high descent," exemplified the racial modes of thought inherent in the construction of Sheikh al-Amin's Swahili Muslim public.

Sheikh al-Amin Mazrui himself was considered part of a close-knit circle of Arab religious intellectuals, whose work along the East African coast had contributed more widely to the

[248] Kresse and Mwakimako, *Guidance* pp. 131 and 133 (translations from Kiswahili provided by the authors).

development of Islamic jurisprudence and exegesis.[249] As a scholar of Islamic studies reiterated, in Mombasa and elsewhere along the coast of East Africa, Mazrui's work addressed 'a very small clique of people, those who were, in Mamdani's terms, considered citizens, not subjects of colonial rule.'[250] Simply, the majority of ex-slaves and *nyika* did not constitute part of the audience in Sheikh Al-Amin's Muslim public.

Race and moral debate in the hinterland

The general loss of town patrons by young *nyika* men and women in the 1920s meant that they were now living in Mombasa in far worse conditions than had the urbanised casual labour that preceded them. This was compounded by a steady reduction of wages in the 1920s (due to increasing "up-country" labour) which made it harder for one to live as a permanent townsperson, making the *nyika* more dependent on the hinterland household. In the hinterland, rural household heads had been empowered by this trend, some of whom were appointed as government chiefs and as members of Local Native Councils. However, the general lack of public investments in the area meant that conditions did not improve much either.

Field administrative officials, especially District Commissioners and District Officers, remarked at the very thin resources that the government was committing to the general development of the coast, particularly in the Native Reserves.[251] The increasing unattractiveness of land in the reserves, lack of water and poor soils, forced many *nyika* to move closer to the coastal strip, but since most of the social ties of claim making and social obligation that they had

[249] See for example, Kresse, *Philosophizing in Mombasa*, pp. 93; Abdallah Saleh Farsy, *Baadhi ya wanavyuoni wa Kishafi wa Mashariki ya Afrika* (Book Room, Zanzibar, 1984); Also, Interview 56, Harith Swaleh, at Old Town, Mombasa Island, pp. 8.
[250] Interview 56, Hassan Mwakimako, Mombasa Town, 23rd June 2018 (Interview Notes).
[251] See, KNA, DC/KFI/1/2, Annual Report of 1924, Kilifi.

constructed with the Arabs and wealthier Swahilis of the coastal towns had been curtailed by colonial rule, their claims to land on the coastal zone were becoming more tenuous.[252] South of Mombasa, officials were reporting that the Digo were migrating and cultivating on reserved Crown Land along the strip due to overcrowding in their own reserve.[253]

In addition to these economic hardships, the provision of education in the reserves was, for a considerable period of time, left almost entirely to Christian missions. In Kilifi, missionary activity was concentrated in its southern parts (near Mombasa) where one mission station, the Methodist Mission at Kinango, fell under the Digo (later Kwale) Reserve. The mission stations in the Nyika Reserve (later Kilifi District) included the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) stations at Kaloleni and Rabai, a Methodist Mission at Ribe near Rabai, and a White Fathers Catholic Mission at Mwabayanyundo near Kaloleni. In addition to the Methodist Mission at Kinango was the Waa School (both in Kwale) which was established by missionaries but mainly run by the colonial government.

The first generation of the Western educated coastal African elite had attended these schools. Some had attended the CMS School at Buxton and a school at the Frere Town Mission named Binns, both of which were in Mombasa. A number of them joined the membership ranks of the Local Native Councils and began driving, with subtle official support, social advancement programs.[254] These men – and they were all men – worked towards improving the educational

[252] See for example, NA, CO 822/2142, H. de. W. Waller, 'A report on the problem of squatters on private lands in the coastal strip'; KNA, CA 16/71, Kilifi Monthly Intelligence Report, April 1945; See also, Robert Mambo, 'Nascent political activities among the Mijikenda of Kenya's coast during the colonial era,' *Transafrican Journal of History*, 16 (1987): 92-120.

[253] A reserve, with a communal title, had been created along the Coastal strip for use by the Digo, see, KNA, DC/KWL/1/26, Annual Report of 1941, Kwale.

[254] In Kilifi, three such men, Josiah Rimber, Shadrack Harrison and James Maya, all of whom were educated in the mission schools and had also joined the Local Native Council, would also establish the first known political association amongst the *Nyika*, that is, the Young Nyika Association, in 1931, for details, see Erick Masinde Aseka, *Political activities among the Mijikenda of Kilifi and Mombasa: 1920-1963* (unpublished MA dissertation, University of Nairobi, Nairobi, 1984), pp. 34-40.

facilities in the reserves, setting up new schools and supporting the existing ones.[255] The colonial authorities, not willing to commit to the development of education at the coast themselves, welcomed these efforts.

At Mwavumbo in Mariakani location, a young Jeanne's School teacher called Johnson Mwero became Headman in 1945.[256] In 1947, a mission school educated Digo who had been employed as a health worker by the medical department, Rashid bin Mbwana, became a Headman at Shimba Hills.[257] In neighbouring Mswambweni, a former medical department worker, Salim bin Mohamed, was also appointed as Headman.[258] The Digo Local Native Council had also supported one student at the Alliance High School in Kikuyu in Central Kenya, and another at the Arab school in Mombasa.[259] While the latter joined the medical service, the former passed his entrance examination for Makerere College, the only institution of higher-learning in the whole of East Africa at the time.[260]

The participation of these mission-educated men in the colonial civil service and in the commercial sectors saw their increasing migration into Mombasa (and some to the capital, Nairobi) where, following a trend seen across East Africa, their ethnic consciousness, as members of closely-related ethnic groups, deepened.[261] As part of a broader, voguish and colony-wide post-War aim by the government to support development and associational activities amongst its subjects, these men, fearful of potential alienation by their largely uneducated, poor and rural kin, begun to slowly organise so as to have a voice in the concerns of their communities.[262] The

[255] Mambo, *Challenges of western education*.
[256] KNA, DC/KFI/1/26, Annual Report of 1945, Kilifi.
[257] KNA, DC/KWL/1/26, Annual Report of 1947, Digo.
[258] *Ibid*.
[259] KNA, DC/KWL/1/26, Annual Report of 1942, Digo.
[260] *Ibid*.
[261] For a wider, continental analysis, see Ekeh, 'Colonialism'.
[262] Aseka, *Political activities*.

associations that were founded to achieve this aim were part of the rising number of ethnic associations, trade guilds, and social clubs in Mombasa, where, by the end of 1949, they were said to number over one hundred.[263]

The most prestigious of these associations was the Coast African Association, formed in 1943 in response to a request for support and advice by Jimmy Jeremiah, himself a member of the Taveta community of Taita Hills (who consider themselves a coastal African community), and who had been appointed that year to the Colonial Governor's Advisory Committee on Local Native Councils.[264] In 1948, Jimmy Jeremiah was appointed to represent "African interests" in the LegCo, where he stayed until the first African elections of 1957.[265]

The Coast African Association – which in 1948 claimed to have almost 3, 000 members – was led by men whose experiences had distinctively been shaped by colonialism: Christian, Western educated, working for the government or for the municipality, and many with ex-slave ancestry.[266] Most had been educated at the CMS Mission school at Rabai, and could be considered part of the rising class of pan-ethnic liberals that emerged during the post-war years – their authority, if any, based on education and income, rather than tradition and tribe.[267] Its members, such as Francis Khamisi, Lance Jones Bengo, H.G Shadrack Harrison, Gideon Rimber, Gibson Ngome, amongst others, filled up the membership ranks of the Mombasa African Advisory Council (AAC), a statutory body appointed in 1945 for the purposes of advising the Mombasa

[263] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 72.
[264] *Ibid.*
[265] KNA, CQ1/19/29, Annual Report of 1951, Mombasa District.
[266] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 72; Aseka, *Political activities*, pp. 55-56.
[267] See for example, John Lonsdale, 'Kau cultures: Imaginations of community and constructions of leadership in Kenya after the Second World War,' *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 13, 1 (2000): 107-124.

Municipal board on African affairs, and around which a short-lived pan-ethnic, middle-class African opinion in the city would burgeon.[268]

However, the pan-ethnic liberal politics of both the Coast African Association, which became defunct in 1959, and the AAC, which was dissolved in 1963, would be swept by a more aggressive ethnic mobilisation that tapped onto exclusive ideas of identity and tradition. In fact, dismissing the Coast African Association as dominated by the descendants of ex-slaves, some mission-educated *nyika* men, in their attempts to stem their own potential alienation from their communities, begun distancing themselves from the CAA. At Rabai, a song had already been coined that was widely circulating and which vilified mission-educated Christians, that 'they do not tap palm wine, they do not till the land, their hands just flap about, [and] they walk around aimlessly.'[269] In a way, the charge, from the perspective of a communitarian morality, was that the educated had abandoned their communal obligations, serving, instead, selfish, individualistic ends. Coming from a people facing exclusion and an uncertain future, such criticism could be fatal. As a result, many educated young *nyika* men appealed to the centrality of tradition, emphasising ethnic unity and the authority of traditional elders.

Amongst the *nyika*, the most widely spread oral tradition at the time was that of migration from a place called Shungwaya. There exists considerable debate over the historical veracity of the Shungwaya myth of migration for the Bantu-speaking groups of Kenya and Tanzania in general, and for coastal African groups in particular.[270] Despite the debate, the general consensus,

[268] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 72-73.
[269] Interview, Safari Yeri, at Changamwe, 11 April, 2021 (Interview Notes). The song was put on heavy rotation on Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) radio during the immediate post-colonial period.
[270] For disputations of the Shungwaya myth of origin for Bantu-speaking groups of Kenya and Tanzania, see J. Forbes-Munro, 'Migrations of the Bantu-Speaking Peoples of the Eastern Highlands: A Reappraisal', *Journal of African History*, 8, 1 (1967): 25-28; For debate on Shungwaya origins for coastal African groups, see Morton, 'The Shungwaya myth'; Spear, 'Traditional myths and historians' myths.'

at least since the tradition first found its way in an academic book in the 1950s,[271] is that the Shungwaya myth of migration entered the traditions of the *nyika* only at the beginning of the twentieth century.[272] As mentioned above, the Shungwaya tradition had been in existence alongside the coastal zone – it was first related by the Kilindini group of the Twelve Tribes of Mombasa – but by the 1930s, the trend amongst the Twelve Tribes was to claim recent or ancient origins in the Middle-East.

The initial adoption of the Shungwaya tradition by the *nyika*, as was explained by R.F Morton, was partly due to the intellectual work of townspeople men working in the early colonial administration as Muslim judges and interpreters.[273] They recorded the tradition in the Arabic *Kitab al Zanuj*, a collection of local customs and traditions that appeared in the 1890s and quickly became the central reference document of local traditions in court cases involving Africans, Arabs and the Swahili during the early years of the colonial administration. Child pawning, a local practise adopted by the *nyika* especially during periods of famine and draught, where *nyika* children would be exchanged for grain with an Arab or Swahili family, had irked British officials as inimical to the wider goals of abolishing slavery. In arguing that the practise was a long-established local tradition, the authors of the *Kitab al Zanuj* claimed that child pawning had been practised at Shungwaya as well, what, according to them, was the original homeland of both the *nyika* and the Swahili.[274] It was the idea that *nyika* groups had migrated from Shungwaya together with the Swahili that quickly spread by word of mouth, from court witnesses, interested bystanders, and most importantly, from an influential court interpreter in Mombasa, a freed slave named

[271] Prins, *The coastal tribes.*
[272] See Willis, *Mombasa*.
[273] Morton, 'The Shungwaya myth.'
[274] *Ibid*.

William Henry Jones.[275] Jones was attached to the CMS Station at Rabai, just outside of Mombasa.[276]

For Justin Willis and George Gona, the success of the spread of the Shungwaya story amongst the residents of Mombasa's immediate hinterland was also the result of their cultural affinity:

> Multiple circumstances contributed to the adoption of this story. There is considerable linguistic continuum amongst this population, and though this can be categorised into discreet languages, the linguistic boundaries are hazy and there is substantial inter-comprehensibility. There is a long history of intermarriage and migration that has spread words, names and practices, creating complex patterns of linguistic and cultural affinity and difference that are not easily mapped onto any single ethnic schema.[277]

To Morton, 'the spread of Shungwaya, therefore, could [also] be tied up with the growing inclination in the 1940s on the part of the nine groups known collectively to outsiders as "WaNyika" to think of themselves as Mijikenda.'[278] At the heart of the idea of Mijikenda (and the Shungwaya myth of origin) lay the sentiment of common exclusion from Mombasa, and of the general conditions arising from being classified as "natives" in a system of distribution that was based largely on racial exclusion. Colonial officials, Christian missionaries, and townspeople in general, had all denigrated *nyika* ritual practices as backward, and as a result, many *nyika* had

[275] William Henry Jones was the father of Lance Jones Bengo, a member of the Mombasa African Advisory Council and Coast African Association, see. Interview 22, Reginald Jones Bengo, at Kisauni, Mombasa, 15th June 2018, pp. 3.
[276] Morton, 'The Shungwaya myth,' pp. 418 and 419.
[277] Willis and Gona, 'Tradition,' pp. 453.
[278] Morton, 'The Shungwaya myth,' pp. 422.

internalised a degree of shame toward their customs, adopting Christianity or Islam as a result.[279] In this context, the term Mijikenda promised a new moral order for a population faced with exclusion and consisting of incompatible ideological sources for debating claim and obligation.[280] Given that the *nyika* were now living in Mombasa and in the hinterland in conditions of serious impoverishment, 'finding themselves on the lowest rung of the ladder of capitalism and feeling like outsiders' in a region they considered their own, the idea of an exclusive and essential identity as Mijikenda was significantly appealing.[281]

In spaces of public talk (at family gatherings, funerals, weddings, public meetings, in the hinterland home, etc.) the term Mijikenda became a useful concept for a population facing exclusion and an uncertain future, and where disputes about bridewealth, inheritance, customary land tenure, and over other claims and obligations, could easily become bitter.[282] Shungwaya, as a result, assumed the symbolic representation of Mijikenda kindredness and unity, and became a mythical source for all Mijikenda customs and traditions.

This mythical place of origin also occupied a central place in the imagined (and increasingly real) separation of the coastal towns from the hinterland, of coastal townspeople from Mijikenda, of Muslim from non-Muslim, and of the continental from the maritime orientations of the coast.[283] Under the context of the exclusion of the *nyika* from the town networks of Mombasa, the Shungwaya myth of origin – which had largely been dropped by the Twelve Tribes during the first two decades of the twentieth century in favour of claims to Middle-Eastern origins – became the charter for ethnic, and in a way, racial unity amongst the Mijikenda.

[279] McIntosh, 'Elders and frauds', pp. 38.
[280] Willis and Gona, 'Tradition,' pp. 454.
[281] McIntosh, 'Elders and frauds', pp. 37.
[282] Parkin, *Palms, wine and witnesses*.
[283] See for example, Willis, *Mombasa*, p. 184-200.

Debates over morality and customary law amongst and within the nine groups that made up the Mijikenda (that is, the Giriama, Digo, Rabai, Duruma, Ribe, Kauma, Chonyi, Kambe, Jibana) would come to constantly define and redefine the boundaries of Mijikenda identity, and what it means to be a "true" Mijikenda. The educated elite, in particular, found themselves in a tenuous position, between an urban, town world of English, trousers and technical know-how, and a rural hinterland of tradition and custom.[284] This uncertain stuff of Mijikenda history and identity would also be kept alive, in the years leading up to Kenya's independence from British colonial rule, in intense struggles over status, rights and resources against *wamiji* and *wabara*. Disputants would come to frequently sought historical backing for their claims to coastal primacy through stories of common exclusion, dispossession and indigeneity.[285] These debates took place in the expanding *civic* public sphere along the coastal strip and across Kenya Colony in the latter half of the 1950s (see Chapter 3 below).

In 1955, the government allowed the formation of political organisations by Africans up to the district level, proscribing nation-wide organisations. The colonial state's obsession with racial identity, and of mapping these onto geography and separate rights, encouraged, in the post-War era, an African and rural population at the coast to think of themselves as an excluded group whose identity was being threatened and ignored. The term Mijikenda would, as a result, be appropriated by coastal African politicians with membership in one of the nine Mijikenda ethnic groups in their imaginations of a new racial category (in ways officials and the coastal townspeople had imagined racial categories in the early decades of the century so as to use to advance their interests). The

[284] See for example the discussion in Frederick Cooper, 'Modernising bureaucrats, backward Africans and the development concept' in Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard (eds.), *International development and the social sciences: Essays on the history and politics of knowledge* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1997): 64-92.

[285] Jeremy Prestholdt, 'Politics of the soil: Separatism, autochthony and decolonization at the Kenyan coast', *Journal of African History*, 55, 2 (2014): 249-270.

latter was also part of local strategies to cast the Kenyan coast as "black" land and distinctly continental in culture, as opposed to maritime.[286]

The conditions for the success of the Shungwaya tradition of origin and of the idea of being Mijikenda, that is, the presence of people who claimed the coast as their homeland, yet felt a common exclusion from Mombasa, had been set by years of Omani influence and British colonial rule. So successful was the adoption of the term Mijikenda that the government added it "onto the list of tribal names used in the 1962 census."[287] A historiography that bases the unified and discreet Mijikenda identity in a history of shared migration became an accepted truth, taught in schools and widely published, its veracity confirmed by constant repetition.[288] Yet, as has been shown, the adoption of the Shungwaya tradition by the people of Mombasa's local hinterland, and of a new ethnic identity, was a result of far more recent experiences.

The formation of the Mijikenda Union at a public meeting held in Rabai in 1944, which was convened by mission educated *nyika* men living in Mombasa and Nairobi, when they invited a number of *nyika* elders, was the pivotal moment around which a growing ethnic consciousness amongst the Mijikenda groups (and of racial separateness from the coastal townspeople) flourished in the years that followed.[289] In fact, the Mijikenda Union was largely the successor to another association, the Mboze Matsezi Union, which was formed in 1941, and which had picked on the names of the mythical founders of the Mijikenda groups in Shungwaya.[290] As a result, two diametrically-opposed racial categories, the townspeople on one hand, and the Mijikenda on the other, who were emphasising the maritime and continental orientations of the coast respectively,

[286] *Ibid*.
[287] NA, CO 822/3177, 'Report on the Kenya population census,' D.G. Christie Miller, 31 August, 1962, pp. 2
[288] Willis, *Mombasa*, pp. 202.
[289] Willis and Gona, 'Tradition'.
[290] Aseka, *Political activities*, pp. 54.

had been re-defined, in a context where people were struggling to improve their conditions under colonial domination, and in ways that would come to influence their antagonistic ambitions for the future. In particular, the Mijikenda and the coastal townspeople came to increasingly view each other as racially different, even as the internal boundaries of what it means to be a "proper" coastal townsperson, or a "true" Mijikenda, remained open for debate and contestation.

These internal debates over identity and morality constituted internal intellectual histories that kept these exclusive categories distinct. The historical tension between the maritime and continental orientations of the coast would become sharper; the boundary between Arab and African became clear cut, fixed, and slow to change; even as these identities were themselves constantly being defined and redefined in internal debates over custom and tradition, claims and obligations. As the prospect of Kenya's independence from British colonial rule became more imminent, debates between Arab and African would not only become more public, but also antagonistic and bitter.

3

FROM *MWAMBAO* TO *MAJIMBO*

> There was no foreign nation which came to Africa with cargoes of soil from their homes, so, there is no foreign soil here on the East African coast. This is black land, and the indigenous people are black, from the outset, and it must remain in black hands until the end of the world.[291]

A few weeks after Kenya's independence elections in May 1963, a letter was sent to the departing colonial governor by two residents of Mombasa. Fearful of potential domination by people from the up-country regions, the authors of the letter, Alex Karisa and Rogers Msechu, both of whom saw themselves as coastal Africans, stated that 'Coastals are different from the rest of [Kenyans] in their distinctive outlook and way of life…which had given them a greater measure of peace, harmony and regard for each other, and sense of toleration than had existed elsewhere in Kenya.'[292] In their conclusion, Karisa and Msechu stated that 'the only solution is for Britain and the Sultan to return to the coast people their former autonomous status [which was foregrounded by the 1895

[291] *Sauti ya MADU*, 20 July 1958.
[292] NA CO 822/3073/E17 (XIX), 'Committee of the Coast United Front to Malcolm McDonald', 31 July 1963'.

Treaty between the Sultan of Zanzibar and the British over the Coast Protectorate] in order to preserve their identity.'[293]

Karisa and Msechu wrote on behalf of what they called the Coast or Mwambao United Front, a coalition that brought together people who had recently been bitter rivals in debates regarding the future of Mombasa and the Kenya coast more widely. What is interesting is that Karisa and Msechu's demand had initially been promoted by their adversaries in debates over the future of the coast – that is, the coastal townspeople, or those who, at least at the time, did not consider themselves as Africans. In making their demands – for some form of autonomy for the Coast Protectorate in the event the rest of Kenya, that is, Kenya Colony, becomes independent – the townspeople had supported political associations all of which became part of what was referred to as the movement for (the autonomy of) *mwambao* (Swahili for coastal strip), a movement that both Karisa and Msechu had vehemently opposed.[294]

Despite Karisa and Msechu's new enthusiasm for the autonomy of the coast, the fate of the future of Mombasa and the Kenya coast had already been sealed. A few months later, on the 8th of October 1963, the Colonial Secretary, Duncan Sandys, and the Prime Ministers of Zanzibar and Kenya, Mohamed Shamte and Jomo Kenyatta respectively, met in London and abrogated the 1895 treaty, after which the Coast Protectorate was simply transferred to an independent Kenya, and champagne was toasted.[295] From 1964 onwards, Kenya became a Republic with a strongly centralised political system ruled by an Executive President.[296]

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[293] *Ibid*.
[294] Idha Salim, 'The movement for "Mwambao" or coast autonomy in Kenya: 1956-63' in Bethwell, Ogot (ed.), *Hadith 2: Proceeding of the 1968 conference of the Historical Association of Kenya* (East African Publishing House, Nairobi, 1970): 212-228.
[295] Prestholdt, 'Politics of the soil'; Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 244; Brennan, 'Lowering the sultan's flag' pp. 858; Willis and Gona, 'Pwani c Kenya' pp. 58.
[296] For analyses on Kenya's post-colonial political system, see, Cherry Gertzel, *The politics of independent Kenya: 1963-68* (East African Publishing House, Nairobi, 1970); Henry Bienen, *Kenya*: *The politics of participation and control* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1974); Keith Kyle, *The Politics*

In fact, in the view of British officials, the unification of the Coast Protectorate with independent Kenya had been a foregone conclusion by 1961, three years before the abrogation of the 1895 Treaty.[297] As mentioned, the idea of a separate future for Mombasa and the Kenya coast had raised strong opposition, first from African politicians within the newly-formed Kenya African National Union (KANU), namely Jomo Kenyatta, Tom Mboya and Jaramogi Odinga, and from those claiming to represent coastal African opinion, such as Karisa and Msechu, and in particular, Ronald Ngala, a coastal Christian Mijikenda, and President of the Kenya African Democratic Union, or KADU, KANU's competitor.[298] A commission of inquiry to look into the matter was appointed and sent to the coast in October 1961, where local intellectuals – similar to their counterparts in Zanzibar – created a locally hegemonic discourse of racial difference.[299]

This discourse revolved mainly around two questions: one dividing opinion between those who saw themselves as Africans, as black, and those who had long claimed origins in the Middle-East; and the other dividing opinion between coastal and "up-country" Africans, or *wabara*. The first question was, when British rule ended, would the Coast Protectorate, or the Ten-Mile strip, be part of an independent Kenya, or would it be ruled by the Sultan of Zanzibar? After the first question was largely settled with the abrogation of the 1895 Treaty, a second question emerged, now regarding the future status of a region of the coast – larger in size than the Ten-Mile strip – within independent Kenya. The second question was, if the Ten-Mile strip were to be a part of

of the independence of Kenya (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1999); Goran Hyden, Robert Jackson and John Okumu, (eds.), *Development Administration: The Kenyan experience* (Oxford University Press, Nairobi); Joel, D., Barkan, 'Legislators, Electors and Political Linkage,' in Joel D. Barkan and John J. Okumu, (eds.), *Politics and public policy in Kenya and Tanzania* (Praeger Publishers, New York, 1979): 64-92; Jennifer Widner, *The rise of a party-state in Kenya: From "Harambee" to "Nyayo"* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1992); Daniel Branch and Nic Cheeseman, 'The politics of Control in Kenya: Understanding the bureaucratic-executive State, 1952-78,' *Review of African Political Economy*, 33, 107 (2006): 11-31.

[297] See for example, NA CO 822/2151 'Draft for a preliminary discussion with Governor: The Coastal Strip', 15 June 1961'.

[298] George Gona, 'Portrait of a nationalist: The life of Ronald Ngala,' *Hekima*, 4, 1 (2009): 145-62.

[299] For late colonial politics in Zanzibar, see Glassman, *War of words, war of stones*.

Kenya, would the coast be allowed a degree of autonomy, to guard against potential domination by up-country groups? In the debate elicited by the first question – over the future of *mwambao* [coastal strip] – *wamijikenda*, joined by *wabara*, went up against *wamiji*, townspeople. In the debate elicited by the second question, over the future of a proposal for *majimbo*, a quasi-federalist system, *wamijikenda* were opposed by sections of *wabara*, especially the Luo and Kikuyu, the primary groups supporting KANU at the time.

During the debate over *mwambao*, divergent cultural and spatial, that is, continental and maritime imaginaries of the coast, which were conceptually linked to race (and to an extent, religion) were exposed and encouraged.[300] These imaginaries had been hardened by the experience of the Sultan's rule since the nineteenth century, and of British colonisation afterwards. As a result, 'Arabs looked down on Swahili, and Swahili looked down on those they called WaNyika.'[301]

Despite their official designation as "natives", the Swahili were popularly viewed as "non-natives", that is, as Arabs. In fact, in 1952, the then *liwali* of the Coast province, Sheikh Mbarak Ali Hinawy, successfully agitated for the reclassification of the Twelve Tribes as Arabs, and Twelve Tribe leaders, through the Afro-Asian Association (AAA), sought the right to enrol their children in Arab schools.[302] Thus, when political thinkers in Zanzibar and along the Kenyan coast began in the 1950s to flirt with the idea that Zanzibar, Pemba and the Coast Protectorate could be unified as a single, seaboard state,[303] the possibility that the Kenya coast would be ruled by the

[300] See for example, Prestholdt, 'Politics of the soil,' pp. 251-252.
[301] Willis and Gona, 'Tradition,' pp. 462.
[302] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 213.
[303] See for example, Brennan, 'Lowering the Sultan,' pp. 842-845; Glassman, *War of words, war of stones*, pp. 130; Thomas Burgess, *Race, revolution and the struggle for human rights in Zanzibar: The memoirs of Ali Sultan Issa and Seif Sharif Hamad* (Ohio University Press, Athens).

Sultan of Zanzibar in future became alarming for those who had been excluded from these Arab or Arabised coastal identities.[304]

This chapter examines the ways in which the resulting debate over citizenship and the future of Mombasa and the coastal strip would be influenced, specifically, by racial thought. In Mombasa and elsewhere on the Kenya coast, the debate took place within a nascent *civic* public sphere, where debates about the future distribution of status, rights and resources were vigorously convened.[305] This debate also featured, quite visibly, on memoranda sent to the commission that was appointed to determine the future of the Coast Protectorate. In the responses to the commission, explosive debates over citizenship, which were themselves encouraged and complicated by overlapping registers of belonging (a consequence of the position of Mombasa at the intersection of continental and maritime imaginaries), erupted. In particular, status, rights and resources (especially land) were imagined to flow from historical, communal and exclusive relationships to territory.[306]

Centred around a theme of common migration from Shungwaya (that is, from within the African continent), the Mijikenda saw and presented themselves essentially as Africans (and as black) and in using the same stroke, saw the coastal townspeople (Arabs and Swahilis) as non-African, or as non-black, and therefore, foreign. If, as the preceding chapter has shown, coastal townspeople had *used* claims of foreign origins to not only distinguish themselves (in racial terms) from the people of Mombasa's immediate hinterland; during the late colonial period, people of Mombasa's immediate hinterland, or those who had been classified by colonial rule as "natives", were now *using* ideas of being local and being African in distinguishing themselves from the

[304] Willis and Gona, 'Tradition,' pp. 462.
[305] See, Prestholdt, 'Politics of the soil'; Brennan, 'Lowering the sultan's flag'; Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 203-246.
[306] See for example, Prestholdt, 'Politics of the soil', pp. 251.

coastal townspeople. In this way, race was linked to continental geography (overlooking, or dismissing diasporic, oceanic ties) and African nationalist political thinkers imagined postcolonial states that emphasized their continental, dismissing their maritime orientations.[307]

The debate over *mwambao* effectively came to an end in 1963, when the 1895 treaty was abrogated. However, the fear by coastal African groups of potential up-country domination of the coast brought people such as Karisa and Msechu in a brief alliance with the former supporters of *mwambao*. Despite this, post-colonial politics in Mombasa would not proceed on the lines of a united coastal front against up-country Kenya. Rather, specific racialized discourses in Mombasa and elsewhere on the coast would continue to influence struggles for status, distribution and resources.

The first part of this chapter examines the rise of formal politics in Mombasa and its immediate hinterland, where the racial categories of Arab-Swahili on one side, and the (less ambiguously African) Mijikenda on the other, were being defined and redefined, and consequently mobilised on the run-up to the first African elections in 1957. It was in this expanding political space, or *civic* public sphere (as the second part of this chapter will show) that debates about the future distribution of status, rights and resources would be convened. This chapter specifically illustrates the racial language of these debates.

Early Political Mobilization

All over Kenya Colony and Protectorate, political struggle during the inter-war years would centre on deliberations around the determination of political rights within the racial colonial system, in particular, the handling of grievances that arose from the nature in which the government had

[307] *Ibid.*

distributed land and rights since 1908.[308] In other words, the terms under which the colonial government sought to reshape the city of Mombasa and its immediate hinterland, so as to create a new modernizing force, redefine physical space, and enact measures to control labour, would come under intense debate and contestation in the years leading up to the Second World War.[309] Across the territory, such concerns were at the centre of the process that culminated in 1923 in the Devonshire White Paper, where the principle of "African" paramountcy was first declared, and during the deliberations following the appointment in 1930 of the Joint Parliamentary Select Committee on Closer Union.[310]

The Joint Select Committee – composed of members of both chambers of the British parliament – was established to collect views on the viability of bringing closer the management of common services across the East African territories of Britain, and to further determine the nature of political representation within the colonies.[311] Following the communal (in actual sense, racial) voting system that had been in place since the establishment of the Legislative Council in 1907, the residents of the territory in Kenya took the opportunity to lobby the Joint Select

[308] On 31st December 1920, the East Africa Protectorate, encompassing the territory lying outside of the Coastal Protectorate, became Kenya Colony, as the Coastal Strip maintained its Protectorate status. The Protectorate status of the Coastal strip came to an end in 8 October 1963, after the 1895 British-Sultan Treaty was abrogated.
[309] See for example the analysis in Tiyambe Zeleza, 'The moral economy of working class struggle: Strikers, the community and the state in the 1947 Mombasa general strike', *Africa Development*, 20, 3 (1995): 51-87; Frederick Cooper, 'Urban space, industrial time and wage labour in Africa' in Frederick Cooper (ed.), *Struggle for the city: Migrant labour, capital and the state in urban Africa* (Sage Publications, California, 1983): 7-50.
[310] For a general political history of colonial Kenya, see George Bennet, *Kenya: A political history* (Oxford University Press, London, 1963).
[311] The other commissions formed around the same time, which also gave an opportunity for political expression amongst the various racial and ethnic groups of Kenya are the Kenya Land Commission, popularly known as the Carter Commission, that was appointed in 1932, and the Commission on the Administration of Justice Amongst Africans, also known as the Bushe Commission, appointed in 1933.

Committee on matters affecting their designated racial groups: European, Indian, Arab and African.[312]

In Mombasa, the issue dividing the coastal townspeople, that is, Arabs and the Twelve Tribes, exploded in their response to the formation of the Joint Select Committee, as those who had been appointed to represent their concerns, that is, the Member of the LegCo, Hemed Mohamed Issa Timamy, and the assistant at the Coast Provincial Commissioner's office, Mbarak Ali Hinawy, were both Arab.[313] As such, members of the Afro-Asian Association (the political association dominated by and representing the views of the Twelve Tribes) chose instead to send their grievances to the Joint Select Committee through the European delegation.[314] As the Twelve Tribe's leadership used the occasion to express their grievances over the denial of their communal land claims in 1913 and of voting rights in 1923, generally, both the Arabs and the Twelve Tribes sought greater status for themselves within the existing system (better infrastructure provision, education, removal of taxation, more representation, etc.) – demanding racial parity with Europeans and Indians.[315]

The official position during this time was that there were no Africans capable of representing the African view.[316] Following this, it came as a surprise to the administration at the coast when an unregistered organisation calling itself the Young Nyika Association (YNA) presented a memoranda to the Joint Select Committee, signed by Josiah Rimber, Shadrack Harrison Karisa and James Maya, all members of the Kilifi Native Council, who listed in their

[312] At this time, the Twelve Tribes were viewed by officials as Arabs, but Twelve Tribe leaders protested this on the basis that they hadn't been accorded the same status as Arabs, see, Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 189-191.
[313] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 190.
[314] *Ibid.*
[315] For a discussion of the Arab and Twelve Tribes' grievances addressed to the Joint Select Committee, see Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 192-195.
[316] George Bennet, 'The development of political organisations in Kenya', *Political Studies*, 5, 2 (1952): 113-130.

memorandum concerns that were already populating much official reporting regarding Mombasa's local hinterland at the time.[317] Reacting to the petition, the District Commissioner for Kilifi noted:

> Both internally and with its neighbours, the people have been peaceful. An attempt was made by Josiah Rimber and a certain other young Nyika to form an association to represent the Wanyika Community. They were in touch with the Kikuyu Association and addressed a memorandum to the Joint Committee on Closer Union.[318]

The founders of the Young Nyika Association (YNA) had listed the deteriorating economic conditions in the hinterland that had been exacerbated by land hunger; the low agricultural potential of the existing land; the unpopularity of contract labour and the Native Hut and Poll tax; and frequent droughts: all of which were causing continued movement by the *nyika* towards unoccupied land in Mombasa and other areas of the coastal zone.[319] On reaching the coastal zone, Arab and Swahili landlords were increasingly asserting their private legal-hold of the land.

Contact had been established earlier between the founders of the YNA and leaders of the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) through James Beauttah, who, after attending the CMS School at Rabai, where Rimber had worked, became involved in the establishment of the first political association in the colony to mobilise the African opinion, that is, the East African Association (EAA).[320] After the arrest in 1922 of its leader, Harry Thuku, the EAA broke into a number of factions, including the KCA. For officials, the fear lay in the potential, according to them, of the KCA to influence political mobilisation on the immediate hinterland of the coast around land

[317] Aseka, *Political activities*, pp. 34-40.
[318] KNA, DC/KFI/1/25, Annual Report of 1931, Kilifi.
[319] *Ibid*.
[320] For a comprehensive history of African politics in colonial Kenya, see Carl G. Rosberg and John Nottingham, *The myth of the Mau Mau: Nationalism in Kenya* (Praeger Publishers, London).

grievances (as this had been the KCA's chief mission on the Central regions) and as a result, potentially stoking conflict along racial lines. Indeed, as late as 1938, the official view of the *nyika* is that there were largely a peaceable and apolitical population, as was noted by the DC in Kilifi:

> The tribe is not vocal and it is often difficult to get at the real truth. Big barazas are difficult to collect and always the people are outwardly agreeable to development schemes that are put up by the DCs. But it is hard to obtain any criticisms or questions in barazas.[321]

As a result, Rimber, Harrison and Maya were quickly arrested and held at Kilifi town, only to be released after officials were satisfied that the three had become unpopular amongst the *nyika*, and after they had run a campaign which involved public meetings, where the three were publically vilified as troublemakers. The District Commissioner noted:

> Timely reference to a large and representative meeting of the Giriama elders revealed strong opposition on their part to Rimber's activities and resolutions were recorded for his removal from the local native council and the local advisory board and the prohibition of such Association.[322]

The silencing of the YNA and its founders was successful for some time, but questions regarding how the government had distributed land in the early decades of the century would continue to influence political discourse and action on the immediate hinterland of the coast, especially on the run-up to the post-colonial period.

[321] KNA, DC/KFI/1/4, Annual Report of 1938, Kilifi.
[322] KNA, DC/KFI/1/25, Annual Report of 1931, Kilifi.

Two Reserves behind the coastal zone had been set aside for use by the *nyika* during the land registration process of 1910-1924, but most of the land was not arable. In addition, individual alienation (or to sell and buy land in the area) had been prohibited by law. The assumption, amongst officials, was that people residing on the Nyika reserves (and on all Native Reserves that were established across Kenya Colony) did not possess any concept of individual land ownership; and since officials viewed these people as members of exclusive and discreet African "tribes" that had always held land communally under customary law, they sought, instead, to "protect" them from the "corrupting" influences of the emerging land market in the urban areas, especially in and around Mombasa.[323] In any case, the *nyika* had been seen by officials only as potential labourers, not as landlords or independent producers. Before 1946, they were also prohibited from trading in milk – a trade that was preserved for Arabs and Indians – despite the fact that they were the main producers.[324]

In the Northern Nyika reserve, or Kilifi, where the reserve was 1.3 million acres by 1920-21, only 31% of it was arable, compared to 79% of arable land on its coastal zone.[325] Closer to the coastline, where many were migrating to in search for better soils, they had little idea that they were supposed to claim ownership of the land that they had been cultivating for years, or how to go about it.[326] Some *nyika* had been rendered squatters, eking out a living on Arab-owned land along the coastal zone. When the government tried in 1914 to evict *nyika* squatters, almost all of whom were members of the Giriama ethnic group from fertile lands north of the Sabaki River and

[323] Such a discourse of "corruption" and "contagion" had been central in official attempts at separating out the *nyika* from the coastal townspeople, see Chapter 2 above.
[324] KNA, DC/KFI/1/26, Annual Report of 1946, Kilifi; See also, Interview 10, Gabrielle Hinzano Ngala, 9th February 2018, at Mombasa Town, pp. 4.
[325] KNA, DC/KF1/1/25, Annual Report of 1920-21, Kilifi.
[326] Willis, *Mombasa*, pp. 123.

repatriate them back to the Nyika reserve, a major rebellion erupted, followed by famine.[327] The government backed off afterwards, and the *nyika* returned to coastal lands. In 1924, the District Officer at Malindi enumerated 2, 436 *nyika* living on Arab-owned land on the coastal zone.[328] Except for areas that were alienated for the establishment of Christian missions, public schools and government offices, that is, areas that had become Crown Land (or Government Land after 1963), no adjudication and deed registration had been deemed necessary in the Nyika reserves.[329]

The new administrative and landowning categories that had emerged across the Kenya coast, including Mombasa and its local hinterland, therefore, had changed the spatial dimensions of the area, contributing to its social reshaping, and putting the *nyika*, later calling themselves collectively as the Mijikenda, and the coastal townspeople in a position where their interests in land were set to clash. These struggles continued into the late colonial period (and after), when debates over the future of *mwambao* were raging, and as the land situation on the coast remained unaddressed.

In 1958, the DC in Kilifi noted: 'The Arabs [have] become increasingly sensitive to African claims of the Coastal strip.'[330] The Malindi-based and Arab-Swahili dominated Kilifi Protectorate Nationalist Party (KPNP), addressed its complaints further afield, to the Sultan of Zanzibar:

> Many of your highness' subjects, though holding proper titles to their land find
>
> themselves faced with a serious situation because of a large number of Miji Kenda squatters

[327] For an extensive study of the Giriama rebellion, see Cynthia Brantley, *The Giriama and colonial resistance in Kenya, 1800-1920* (University of California Press, California, 1981).
[328] Esmond Bradley Martin, *History of Malindi: A geographical analysis of an East African coastal town from the Portuguese period to the present* (East African Literature Bureau, Nairobi, 1977), pp. 117.
[329] An attempt by European settlers to alienate land in a native reserve in Western Kenya – after discovery of deposits of gold in the early 1930s – led to an outburst from the local population, an event that has been credited for the origins of Abaluyia ethnic consciousness, see Julie MacArthur, 'How did the Luyia (or any other group) become a tribe?' *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 47, 3 (2013): 351-363.
[330] KNA, CB1/22/5, Annual Report of 1958, Kilifi.

who have illegally settled on their land and refuse to pay rent or move.[331]

Observers of early *nyika* politics make note of the significance of a growing labour politics on plantations of the immediate hinterland of the coast (where some *nyika*, pushed by harsh economic conditions, had taken on contract jobs) and in particular of labour politics in Mombasa, as having a significant effect on hinterland political consciousness.[332] However, the Mombasa "labour unrests" of the 1930s and 1940s – which have been well documented by Cooper – were largely led by *wabara*, particularly Kikuyu, Luo and Luhya, all of whom had become a significant part of the "floating population" of Mombasa by this time.[333] As early as 1925, statistics were suggesting that they had become a significant part of the cohort of registered and contracted labourers in Mombasa, that is, 26% were Luo and Luhya (lumped together by officials as "Kavirondo"); 20% were Kikuyu; and only 17% were from the coast (including both *nyika* and coastal townspeople).[334] In addition, opportunities for casual labour in Mombasa had continued to exist for many *nyika*, allowing them to escape the harshness of the hinterland plantations, but these opportunities would also be made available through hinterland networks that extended into town, not the other way around.

The organisation of the Namba dance, for instance, had become important in such *nyika* networks, and did not only entrench *nyika* ethnic consciousness in town, but became the way through which the *nyika* would settle and come to claim certain parts of Mombasa as Mijikenda in later years. A long-term, Giriama resident of Mombasa recalled:

[331] CO 822/3073/E17 (iii), Petition of KPNP to Sultan of Zanzibar, n.d. [c. 29 August 1963], encl. in Hussein to Sultan 29 August 1963.
[332] See for example the analysis by Mambo, 'Nascent Political Activities'; Aseka, *Political activities*.
[333] Cooper, *On the African waterfront*.
[334] Cooper, *On the African waterfront*, pp. 29.

> When I came to Mombasa [in 1960], at Mikindani *ya Kwa Shehe* [Changamwe], it was full of Giriamas. Giriamas were so many there dancing the Namba dance…here at Ziwa La Ngo'mbe and in Bamburi [neighbourhoods in Kisauni] there was a Namba dance organiser… […] Mzee Ngolo wa Baya…That is how the Giriama came to say that these areas belong to them, despite being squatters.[335]

For the *nyika*, it was the future of their place and status in Mombasa, more than in the workplace, that was of greater significance. In fact, during the late colonial period and throughout the post-colonial decades, when most of them had come to see themselves as Mijikenda, Mijikenda politics within Mombasa would come to exist in an uneasy relationship with the agitation of *wabara*, as *wamijikenda* would increasingly claim primacy at the expense of both *wamiji* and *wabara* when it comes to the redistribution of resources and rights.[336] It is for this reason that the most significant event for coastal hinterland politics was perhaps the formation at Rabai in 1944 of the Mijikenda Union, rather than the formation at Mombasa three years later of the African Workers Federation (A.W.F).[337]

The Kenya African Union (KAU), founded in 1944, and in more ways than one a successor to the Kikuyu Central Association, did not only have close links with the AWF, but had maintained contact with a few Mijikenda notables on the coast. Through its Vice-President, Tom Mbotela (with freed slave ancestry) KAU had attempted to recruit some *nyika* onto its ranks.[338] But it was perhaps in Mombasa, with a significant up-country population, that KAU was well received. On

[335] Interview 25, Ngala Charo Mose, 3rd July 2018, at Junda, Kisauni, pp. 13.
[336] See for example, Interview 6, Kasena Yeri, 7th February 2018, at Malindi, pp. 12-14; Interview 12, Safari Yeri, at Mombasa Island, 19th April 2018, pp. 9-10.
[337] For Mijikenda suspicions of the AWF, see, Aseka, *Political activities*, pp. 53.
[338] See, KNA, CB1/22/5, Annual report of 1952, Kilifi.

the 26th of August in 1951, KAU held a mass meeting in the town, attended by a crowd of about 2, 000 people.[339] The meeting was attended by Jomo Kenyatta, KAU's President, and was addressed by Mbotela.[340] At the meeting, the General-Secretary of the Transport and Allied Workers Union, Mwinga Chokwe (from Rabai), was elected Chairperson of the Mombasa branch of KAU.[341]

Amongst the *nyika*, it was in Kwale on the south of Mombasa that KAU gained some noticeable traction. In 1952, KAU held a meeting at Vuga, Shimba Location, that was also attended by Jomo Kenyatta, and which led to the formation of a local branch.[342] Said Mwamgunga was elected Chairman, Juma Hamisi Bilashaka Secretary, and Salim Mbodzembodze Athman Treasurer.[343] 'As a result of the meeting, many locals joined KAU', the District Commissioner reported.[344] By 1953, however, KAU had been proscribed, and the leader of its Mombasa branch, Mwinga Chokwe, arrested under the Emergency Regulations of 1952 (or Operation Jock Scott), to be released in 1959.[345] Mwamgunga, Bilashaka and Athman were arrested by the District Officer in September of 1953 with forty other individuals under the Native Authority Ordinance, and sent to Mombasa.[346] They would later be taken to Hola, a detention camp for Mau Mau suspects, and where Mwamgunga would pass on.[347] The hitherto tenuous KAU influence on the coast had been tamed. As early as 1951, the District Commissioner at Kilifi had remarked:

> An effort by KAU early in the year to interest the Giriama in African politics was a failure.

[339] KNA, JA/16/123, Annual Report of the African Affairs Department, 1951, Municipal Board of Mombasa
[340] *Ibid*.
[341] Aseka, *Political activities*, pp. 61.
[342] KNA, CC1/3/27, Annual Report of 1952, Kwale.
[343] Interview 3, Hamisi Bilashaka with Hamadi Boga, at Vuga, Kwale, 4th February 2018, pp. 1-3.
[344] KNA, CC1/3/27, Annual Report of 1952, Kwale.
[345] KNA, CB1/22/7, Annual Report of 1959, Kilifi.
[346] KNA, CC1/3/27, Annual Report of 1952, Kwale.
[347] Interview 3, Hamisi Bilashaka, pp.1-3

> The people were generally not interested in Colony politics and did not wish to support idealistic movements that were far removed from reality.[348]

The tepid reception by the Mijikenda of such up-country driven agitation would grow into open-hostility in future debates about *majimbo* (see below). A few Mijikenda maintained their association with politicians that had been associated with KAU, but excepting Chokwe – after his release from detention, Chokwe won the Mombasa West LegCo seat in the elections of 1961 – they were unable to turn such association into real political capital. Tom Mbotela was assassinated in Nairobi in 1952 by suspected KAU militants.[349] After his release from detention, Bilashaka ran and lost the parliamentary seat in both the 1961 and 1963 elections in Kwale West to Robert Stanley Matano, a KADU candidate.[350] In Kilifi, the political careers of two former KAU members, Killian Ngala, a headmaster at the Catholic Mission of Schools at the Mwabayanyundo Missionary Station, and Gideon Rimber, the son of Josiah Rimber and once Provincial Secretary of KAU, ended in oblivion.[351] In fact, Rimber died in 1952, a year before KAU was proscribed.[352] Killian Ngala failed to turn up for KANU's nomination for the Kilifi parliamentary seat during the 1961 elections, where he was supposed to run against Ronald Ngala, his younger cousin.[353] Ronald Ngala subsequently won the seat on a KADU ticket, serving until 1972, when he died after sustaining injuries from a fatal road accident.[354]

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[348] KNA, CB1/22/5, Annual Report of 1951, Kilifi.
[349] Lonsdale, 'KAU Cultures', pp. 121; See also, Interview 19, Price Uledi, at Kongowea, Mombasa, 12th June 2018, pp.7-8.
[350] Interview 3, Hamisi Bilashaka, pp. 15.
[351] See, Interview 10, Gabrielle Hinzano, at Mombasa Island, pp. 14-15.
[352] Aseka, *Political activities*, pp. 62.
[353] KNA, CB1/22/7, Annual Report of 1961, Kilifi.
[354] Erick Aseka, *Ronald Ngala* (East African Educational Publishers, 1993).

In sum, for hinterland politics, it was the cultural and moral impact of the Mijikenda Union – embedded in multiple areas of discourse and practice – rather than the influence of KAU and labour union politics, that directed political agitation and public life for much of the three decades that followed the Second World War. Important to point out is the Union's organisational failure – elaborately discussed by Willis and Gona – that was occasioned by a 'combination of poor management, official hostility and embezzlement.'[355] By the late 1940s, the Union had almost collapsed, but the very inventiveness of the term Mijikenda, and its lending of an expression to the continental orientations of the coast, left a lasting legacy.[356]

In the letter that was addressed to the Coast Provincial Commissioner on the 5th of November 1944 that announced the creation of the Union, an admission was made by the letter's authors that the nine "tribes" they sought to represent had previously been more often regarded as several separate groups or – when they were given any collective identity at all – were 'better known by the term Wanyika.'[357] The adoption of the term Mijikenda, as was explained in Chapter 2 above, was closely entwined with the spread amongst the *nyika* people of the Shungwaya tradition of origin, which, in fact, had not existed along the coast's immediate hinterland before the twentieth century.[358] At the heart of the idea of Mijikenda (and of the Shungwaya myth of origin) had laid the sentiment of common exclusion from Mombasa, and of the general conditions arising from being classified as "natives", in a system of distribution that was based largely on racial thinking.

In the context of increasing Mijikenda migration onto the coastal zone, and of up-country migration into Mombasa, the term Mijikenda would spread through intense struggles for status,

[355] Willis and Gona, 'Tradition', pp. 452.
[356] *Ibid*.
[357] Willis and Gona, 'Tradition', pp. 453.
[358] Morton, 'The Shungwaya myth,' pp. 422.

rights and resources in Mombasa and elsewhere along the coastal strip, and where disputants frequently sought historical backing for their claims to primacy. The rise of African nationalist thought had meant that the discursive plane would shift in favour of claims to be local, to be African, and to be black. In the years leading up to Kenyan independence from British colonial rule, a common *use* for the Shungwaya tradition of origin, and of the name Mijikenda, adopted by people who felt a common exclusion from a town they felt was designed to favour people claiming foreign origins, was thus found.

Ronald Ngala, a Christian Giriama, perhaps unleashed the most successful campaign to appropriate the Mijikenda ethnonym in public debates regarding the future of Mombasa and the rest of the Kenya coast.[359] The term, similar to the term Kalenjin or Abaluyia elsewhere in Kenya, offered a readily available ideological resource for exploitation. It not only conjured a political constituency (to be named and defended, that was African but distinctly coastal) from a bundle of multiple, overlapping moral ethnicities, but became the basis for many (not only political leaders) through which the coast would increasingly be cast as distinctively African and black. It also provided a tool through which those who saw themselves as "indigenous blacks" of the coast claimed a nativist primacy against the claims of others in the distribution of status, rights and resources.

Ngala's background and start in politics and public life had naturally placed him into the vision of African politics (of "responsible" African opinion; of legitimacy based on education, Christianity, government service and income) that colonial officials flirted with during the post-War years.[360] Ngala had attended the CMS school at Kaloleni and proceeded to the prestigious

[359] See, Erick Aseka, *Ronald Ngala*.
[360] See for example, Daniel Branch, 'Loyalists, Mau Mau, and elections in Kenya: The first triumph of the system,' *Africa Today*, 52, 2 (2006): 27-50.

Alliance High School and later Makerere College.[361] He started work as a teacher and taught at the CMS school at Taita, and later at the CMS School at Buxton, Mombasa, where he also became headmaster.[362] In Mombasa, where he would buy a house near a Municipal public housing estate at Tudor, Ngala was appointed as the government nominee to the Mombasa African Advisory Council (AAC).[363] At the AAC, Ngala impressed some of the European councillors of the Municipal board, growing particularly close to Charles Gower Fanin, who had established the board in 1928 and prepared Mombasa's Town Planning Scheme two year earlier.[364] In 1954, the Minister for local government nominated Ngala as one of two Africans to sit on the Mombasa Municipal board. [365] The other was Francis Khamisi, who had been nominated to the Mombasa Municipal board in 1951.[366] Khamisi had been a member of KAU and the Coast African Association, and was the first African editor of the Nairobi-based Swahili newspaper, *Baraza*.[367]

Ngala resigned from the Municipal board in 1957 (Khamisi would resign in 1958) to campaign for the Coast seat in the first African elections for the LegCo that year. He won, defeating Khamisi and Jimmy Jeremiah.[368] For the Coast LegCo seat, Ngala had been nominated by H.G.S Harrison, whose father, Shadrack Harrison Karisa, was one of the founders of the Young Nyika Association (YNA) in the 1930s.[369] Like Ngala, H.G.S Harrison had attended the CMS School at

[361] George Gona, *A political biography of Ronald Ngala* (MA dissertation, University of Nairobi, 1990).
[362] See a brief biographical sketch in NA FCO 31/1192.
[363] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 78.
[364] For record of the close relationship between Ngala and the Fanin family, see NA, CO/894/4, 'Discussion with Mrs. Fanin, Government House, Mombasa,' 9th October 1961.
[365] KNA, UY/12/855, Minutes of the Municipal Board, 6th July 1954.
[366] KNA, CQ1/19/29, Annual report of 1951, Mombasa.
[367] Lonsdale, 'KAU Cultures', pp. 121; Stren, *Housing*, pp. 77. For evidence that Khamisi edited *Baraza* long after Kenyan independence, see Interview 12, Safari Yeri, at Mombasa Island, pp. 3.
[368] For Khamisi's resignation from the Municipal board, see KNA, UY/12/812, Minutes of the African Affairs Committee, 16th June 1959. For details on the 1957 elections for the Coast seat, see KNA, CQ1/19/29, Annual report of 1957, Mombasa; KNA, CQ1/19/5, Monthly report of March, 1957, Mombasa.
[369] Aseka, *Political activities*, pp. 53.

Kaloleni neighbouring his childhood home.[370] H.G.S Harrison had also served as the President of the Coast African Association and in 1957 – when Ngala became a LegCo member – was the Deputy African Affairs officer at the Municipal board of Mombasa.[371] In January 1958, Harrison became the first coastal African to be appointed M.B.E by the Queen of England.[372]

Important to note is that it was not Ngala's association with the leading African middle-class men of the post-War era at the coast that endeared him to his political base in the years that followed. In 1949, Ngala had written a small book about Giriama custom and history, where he briefly acknowledged the new term Mijikenda.[373] By 1959, 'he was using the term Mijikenda to assert the right of squatters to take ownership of land in the coastal strip.'[374] A branch of the Mijikenda Union – by the late 1940s, the Union had effectively collapsed – was registered in Mombasa in 1955.[375] Four years later, Ngala was addressing a meeting of the Union at Mombasa's Tononoka Social Hall – a government-run facility for recreational use by Africans.[376] Since his election to the LegCo in 1957, where he won in Kilifi and Kwale in the immediate hinterland and further inland in Taita, but lost Mombasa to Khamisi; Ngala had found that he had to dislodge the influence of Khamisi's party, the Mombasa African District Union (MADU), which had appeared in November of 1955.[377] Ngala did this by doing something that Khamisi, a member of the ex-slave community, could not: appealing explicitly to an exclusive ethnicity.

In 1958, when Khamisi stood for the newly-created, Mombasa West LegCo seat, Ngala supported the candidature of a freed slave descendant adopted into the Rabai ethnic group, Edward

[370] See for example, Interview 10, Gabrielle Hinzano Ngala, at Mombasa Island, pp. 4-5.
[371] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 78.
[372] *Ibid*.
[373] Ronald Ngala, *Nchi na desturi za Wagiriama* (Eagle Press, Nairobi, 1949).
[374] Willis and Gona, 'Tradition,' pp. 464.
[375] KNA, CQ1/19/13, Monthly report of December, 1955, of the District Officer, Majengo.
[376] KNA, CQ1/19/13, Monthly report of October, 1959, of the District Officer, Majengo.
[377] KNA, CQ1/19/5, Monthly report of November, 1955, Mombasa.

Binns.[378] Binns had been one of the founding members of the Mijikenda Union.[379] Khamisi won the seat, defeating Binns, but he found that he had to prevent the collapse of his own party due to internal leadership wrangles, with *wabara* and lower-status coastal townspeople wrestling against each other to control the party.[380] In fact, Khamisi briefly lost the party's presidency in early 1959 to Dennis Akumu, the Luo General-Secretary (and Tom Mboya's protégé) of the Dock Workers Union.[381] As this was happening, Ngala was encouraging the establishment of the Midzichenda Cooperative Society, which by 1960 had assumed the identity of the Mijikenda Union.[382] He also took to wearing a bearded cap given to him by traditional Mijikenda elders (or people claiming that role) and which was widely believed to contain a powerful magic charm.[383]

The Mijikenda Union, and the men associated with it, asserted a primacy that rested on tradition, was not a political party, and its activities were not restricted to one district – the law, between 1955 and 1960, confined African political associations within districts – giving Ngala a platform to organise across three districts, Kilifi, Kwale and Mombasa.[384] For instance, in 1959 alone, Ngala, who hailed from Kilifi, held sixteen meetings in Kwale, where he traversed the district with leaders of the Kwale African Democratic Union.[385] In Kilifi, Ngala formed an alliance with a number of vocal Mijikenda elders who constantly invoked the distinction, not only between the educated elite and the uneducated (vilifying the former for abandoning their culture) but also between the Mijikenda and the coastal townspeople.[386] These included Mwachiti Nyawa, a former

[378] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 78; For the possibility that Ngala supported Mwinga Chokwe, a Mijikenda KANU candidate, for the Mombasa West seat during the 1961 elections against Francis Khamisi, who was then a KADU candidate, see, Interview 12, Safari Yeri, 19th April 2018, Mombasa, pp. 3.
[379] Willis and Gona, 'Tradition,' pp. 455-456.
[380] For MADU's wrangling, see, KNA, CQ1/19/29, Annual report of 1959, Mombasa.
[381] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 79-80.
[382] KNA, CA/16/73, Monthly intelligence report of September, 1958, Kilifi.
[383] Willis and Gona, 'Tradition,' pp. 465.
[384] Willis and Gona, 'Tradition,' pp. 464.
[385] KNA, CC1/3/27, Annual report of 1959, Kwale.
[386] *Ibid*.

government chief, Mwanyanje Vali, jailed in 1948 for embezzling the funds of the Mijikenda Union, and Birya wa Masha, a member of the Kilifi African District Council.[387]

Ngala's association with these men, combined with the institutional backing he enjoyed as the LegCo member for the Coast, later Coast rural, gave him an advantage over his contemporaries, and as a result, he was able to assert himself as the coast regional spokesperson representing African opinion. The other, equally significant aspect of Ngala's political strategy, of channelling an explicitly ethnic mobilisation driven by multiple languages of grievance and moral ethnicity, and through which the coast would be cast as distinctly African and black, was the alienation of the small class of cosmopolitan Mijikenda elites.[388] In a way that would continue to influence *internal* moral debate amongst the Mijikenda in future, Ngala's choice of appealing to an essential and exclusive tradition and identity stood against, not only the urban, maritime orientations of the coast (as we shall see in the next chapter), but constantly threatened the position – in multiple debates over claim and obligation amongst the Mijikenda – of the educated, Christian Mijikenda elites.

In the 1950s, Ngala strode to rise above, or dominate a fractious African political leadership in Mombasa and its immediate hinterland. During this time, African opinion in Mombasa was mobilised through the names of a number of ephemeral local parties that except for MADU, would eventually be dominated by Ngala. Ngala's base included the briefly existing Kilifi African Peoples Union (KAPU), whose establishment preceded Ngala's entry into the LegCo, but quickly came under his influence.[389] The other party was the Coast African Peoples Union (CAPU), a

[387] *Ibid*.
[388] See for example, Interview 10, Gabriel Hinzano Ngala, at Mombasa Island, pp. 9.
[389] See for example KAPU's application for registration recorded in 1955-6 in KNA, CB1/22/10, Handing over report of 1955, Mr. DW Hall to Mr. JM Normand, Kilifi; KNA, CB1/22/5, Annual report of 1956, Kilifi; For Ngala's association with KAPU, see, KNA, CB1/22/7, Annual report of 1959, Kilifi; KNA, CB1/22/11, Handing over report of 1959, JAB Smith to NH Kitching, Southern Division, Kilifi.

rebranded KAPU, formed after the ban on organising African parties beyond the district level was lifted in 1960.[390] Although a local branch of CAPU in Mombasa remained active and relatively independent of Ngala until 1963, the party was one amongst many parties across the colony that joined-up in mid-1960 to form KADU, the colony-wide party that elected Ngala as its president.[391]

The other body of African opinion in Mombasa, the one under MADU's influence, consisted of the up-country base of *wabara* and lower-status coastal townspeople, brought together by their common experience as the landless residents of the Majengo neighbourhood of Mombasa.[392] The presence of Luo, Luhya and Kikuyu in Mombasa, as mentioned above, had begun exercising an influence in the life and politics of the town beginning in the 1930s, through workers' strikes largely led by them, and which culminated into a district-wide strike in 1947. This event is considered a watershed in the history of African labour union politics, not only in Mombasa, but across the colony.[393] The leader of the strike, Chege Kibachia, then a resident of Majengo, was Kikuyu.[394]

By the late 1950s, about four thousand new up-country immigrants were arriving each year in Mombasa.[395] This up-country segment of Mombasa's population, in particular the Luo, had formed a sizeable part of the contracted workers at the Port and would come to dominate the Dock

[390] For the formation of CAPU, see KNA, CQ1/19/29, Annual report of 1960, Mombasa.
[391] For CAPU's merger with other parties to form KADU, see, KNA, CQ1/19/29, Annual report of 1960, Mombasa; For CAPU's activity in 1963, see, KNA, CQ1/1/2, Annual report of 1963, Mombasa.
[392] The demolitions of the "hutted" areas West of Salim Road (now Digo Road) that begun as part of the Town Planning scheme of 1926 had pushed most of the landless population, *nyika* and poorer Swahili, away from the eastern parts of the island, nearer the Old Town area, to the western parts of the island, towards Majengo. By the late 1940s and early 1950s, private landowners, Arabs and Indians, were pressing their claims to land on the island, building on areas where Africans lived in previously, and pushing them further west, into a crowded and distinctively informal Majengo neighborhood. See, KNA, JA/16/122, Annual report of 1947 of the African Affairs Department, Mombasa Municipal Board.
[393] See, Zeleza, 'The moral economy of working class struggle'; Cooper, *On the African waterfront*.
[394] Zeleza, 'The Moral Economy of Working Class Struggle'.
[395] NA, CO, 822/1810/3, EAC, (57), 3. For attempts to restrict immigration into Mombasa, see, KNA, JA/16/122, Annual report of 1947 of the African Affairs Department, Mombasa Municipal Board.

Workers Union that was formed in 1954.[396] It was from this population that KANU – dominated by Luo and Kikuyu elites – would organise a local presence, competing for pre-eminence with Ngala's KADU, and debating the future of *majimbo* during the early 1960s. The latter struggle lasted four years (1960-1964), after which Ngala dissolved KADU and joined KANU, Kenya's first post-colonial ruling party. These growing coastal founts of African opinion, articulated in public meetings in Majengo's *uwanja wa maskini* (the field of the poor), the Tononoka Social Hall, and in print publics through newspapers such as *Baraza* and *Sauti ya MADU* (the Voice of MADU), both of which were edited by Francis Khamisi, constituted an alternative to, and a united front against the rise in the 1950s of Indian-Ocean inspired, pan-Arabic Muslim publics amongst higher-status coastal townspeople.[397]

Building on the novel infrastructure of print, radio and Townhall meetings, local thinkers and political leaders in Mombasa would proceed in the 1950s to mobilize their people (by invoking connections of blood, language and culture) as members of moral communities, defending their specific ways of life against potential (or ongoing) injustices. It was through these multiple internal publics, pitying the coastal townspeople versus those who came to increasingly define themselves as African, that specific demands for the future of Mombasa would be made, setting off within an expanding *civic* public sphere a locally hegemonic discourse of racial difference and bitter public debates regarding race and citizenship.

[396] Cooper, *On the African waterfront*, pp. 204.
[397] See for example, Mathews, 'Imagining Arab communities.'

Debating Race and Citizenship at the Dawn of Independence

The rise of African politics in Mombasa during the post-War period had in fact coincided with a revival of "forgotten" traditions amongst the coastal townspeople. In their efforts to convene an integrated, biddable public, townspeople leaders had all been concerned, in the years before the war, by what they saw as the moral disarray, cultural amnesia and political disunity amongst a community that was nonetheless well-aware of its sectional differences and multiple hierarchical categories. These leaders included Sir Ali bin Salim (he died in 1940); his successor as *liwali* of the Coast province, Mbarak bin Ali Hinawy (who died in 1959); Hinawy's successor, the last *liwali* known as Salim Mohamed Muhashamy; and the most eminent public intellectual amongst townspeople, Sheikh al-Amin Mazrui (who died in 1947).

In the 1920s, sectional differences amongst townspeople had led to the founding of the Afro-Arab Association, to represent the views of the Twelve Tribes after they had been locked out of the Arab voting roll, and then of the Arab Association (A.A), to represent the views of those who had been classified as Arabs.[398] In the 1950s, the Afro-Arab Association was functioning largely as a 'social club' as the Twelve Tribes had been reclassified as Arabs (in 1952) – on Hinawy's insistence.[399] A Central Arab Association was founded in 1943 by Sir Ali bin Salim's son, Sud bin Ali, after he was nominated to the LegCo to replace Hemed Issa Timamy, who resigned his post in 1942. The Central Arab Association came to replace the Arab Association in influence and as a result, provided the main nucleus around which a fractious politics amongst notable townspeople would revolve from the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s.[400]

[398] Kindy, *Life and politics in Mombasa*, pp. 26-45.
[399] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 205 and 213.
[400] See, Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, Ch. 6.

Coeval with the founding of the Central Arab Association was the growth in number of efforts aimed at reviving, and in the process redefining the civilizational discourses of the past, centring around the symbols of the Sultanate of Zanzibar.[401] This cultural and political revival lay on the bedrock of concerns regarding economic stagnation amongst Arabs, that had occupied the minds of officials and local intellectuals during the first two decades of colonial rule (see Chapter 2 above). Attention first turned to the provision of education, as is evidenced by the topics covered on the Swahili pamphlets of Sheikh Al-Amin Mazrui in the 1930s and 1940s.[402] In this way, claims by townspeople for participation and citizenship, in the wake of post-War colonial policies that were aimed at hastening African participation in local governance, intertwined with social reform programs and wider strategies to re-energize the maritime imaginaries that had defined public life along the coastal strip during the pre-colonial era.[403]

In June 1948, a government scheme to open the first Muslim – in correspondence by Hinawy and the then colonial governor, Phillip Mitchell (1944-52) it was also referred to as an 'Arab' – secondary school, combined with the generous patronage of the Aga Khan to launch the Mombasa Institute of Muslim Education (MIOME, today's Mombasa Technical Training Institute).[404] However, as remarked by Salim, the Institute 'fell lamentably short of the high hopes of its sponsors', as it only attracted Indian Muslims, and was largely avoided by the vast majority of Kenyan Arabs.[405] The secondary school, built on land offered on the cheap by Hinawy's friend, Khamis Mohamed Bin Juma, was a much more preferred option for many of the young coastal townspeople, due to its emphasis on academic training and the prospects that that offered,

[401] Brennan, 'Lowering the Sultan's flag', pp. 841-845.
[402] Kresse, 'Guidance and social critique', pp. 7.
[403] Andrew Cohen, *British policy in changing Africa* (Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1959).
[404] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples,* pp. 210-211
[405] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples,* pp. 211.

especially access to "white-collar" jobs.[406] Perhaps, then, the most remarkable aspect about the Institute was found in its symbolism (it was built in Moorish style, emphasising its Indian Ocean, Islamic inspiration) rather than in its achievements. Its opening, on the 16th of March 1950, was attended by Phillip Mitchell, the governor, Hinawy, the coast *liwali*, and the Sultan of Zanzibar: an event that evoked memories of the Arab bias that was preferred, and of the Arab ascendancy that was promised by Arthur Hardinge in 1895.

In 1952, Hinawy instructed the newly-established *Sauti ya Mvita* (the Voice of Mvita) to begin a one-hour radio programme for Arabs and Muslims generally.[407] Two years later, broadcasts in Swahili and Arabic totalled nine hours, increasing to twelve a week thereafter. The Sultan's national anthem opened each morning and evening broadcast, and recordings of his speeches would be played regularly.[408] This was a significant development, as according to James Brennan, up to 53% of the households of townspeople had a radio in the 1950s, against a town average of 15%.[409] Radios had also become regular features at coffee shops, restaurants and public squares, especially in the Old Town section of Mombasa.[410] Salim, commenting on the radio's cultural impact, stated:

> Improved transmission by the mid-1950s revived the medieval cultural unity of the coast from Somalia to Tanganyika, across the sea to Zanzibar and Pemba and north-eastwards across the Indian Ocean to South Arabia… […] Great Muslim festivals like the *Idd* prayers or the Maulid (celebration of the Prophet's birthday) were broadcast live. At the same time, the famous annual Maulid of Lamu, read in the celebrated Riyadha Mosque, which

[406] *Ibid*.
[407] KNA, CQ1/19/29, Annual report of 1952, Mombasa.
[408] Brennan, 'Lowering the Sultan's flag', pp. 844.
[409] *Ibid.*
[410] *Ibid*.

> attracted thousands every year from all over the East Coast, was recorded and broadcast. Special programmes were arranged for Ramadhan's Holy nights.[411]

In addition, symbols of the Sultan, especially the Sultan's flag, proliferated along the coast after the Second World War.[412] The practise (of flying the plain red flag over Fort Jesus and other administrative offices in Mombasa and elsewhere along the coastal strip) dated from 1895, and had been progressively standardised over the 1930s and 1940s.[413] In addition, 'special large flags of the Sultan were flown on Fridays, Islamic holidays, Empire Day, the King's Birthday, and Christmas Day.'[414]

The significance of the flag of the Sultan, following the 1895 treaty, and where the idea of the sovereignty of the Sultan over the Kenya Coast Protectorate hovered throughout the colonial decades, was also foregrounded by the fact that over the Protectorate, only the Sultan's flag could be flown from poles affixed to the ground – the Union flag could only be flown from British buildings.[415] In the 1950s, officials were making note of the significance of such symbols as the Sultan's flag to the coastal townspeople, amidst demands for a second elected Arab seat on the LegCo, and increased Arab-led political agitation in Zanzibar.[416] It was in the context of this cultural revival, and as Britain's hold on its East Africa's colonial possessions began to wane, that political leaders and intellectuals amongst the coastal townspeople began to theorize about the nature and content of citizenship, race and identity in Mombasa and elsewhere along the coastal strip.

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[411] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 216-217.
[412] Brennan, 'Lowering the Sultan's flag', pp. 841.
[413] *Ibid*.
[414] *Ibid*.
[415] Brennan, 'Lowering the Sultan's flag', pp. 842.
[416] Brennan, 'Lowering the Sultan's flag', pp. 841.

As early as 1948, Mbarak Ali Hinawy, together with two leaders of Zanzibar's Arab Association, had visited London to petition the Colonial Office for 'Arab independence' to be based at Zanzibar.[417] At the same time, Kenyan Arabs joined their counterparts in Zanzibar in populating the pages of the Zanzibar-based *Mwongozi* newspaper that was associated with the Arab-dominated Zanzibar National Party (ZNP), ruminating over the post-war outlook of the Arab world – of which Zanzibar and Kenya's coastal strip, according to them, would be a part.[418] In 1953, Arabs from all over British East Africa met in Mombasa to form the East African Arab Union and sought, unsuccessfully, to improve the terms of the 1895 Treaty by increasing the annual rent of £10, 000 paid by the British government to the Sultan of Zanzibar.[419]

A proposal in 1956 by the European party, the Federal Independent Party (FIP), to divide Kenya into five provinces – one European, three African and 'possibly' one coast Arab province – and where Mombasa would be European-dominated, irked two of the three Arab members of the LegCo, Sheikh Mahfudh Saleh Mackawi (the elected member), and Sharif Abdallah (the nominated unofficial member).[420] The proposal sparked debate on the status of the 1895 Treaty on the print media, with Mackawi and Abdallah warning 'for one to suggest that His Highness [the Sultan] cannot, but only the British government could, bring the Treaty to an end is the height of pedantry.'[421] The media debate was followed by a proposal by Mackawi and Abdallah regarding the future of Mombasa and the rest of the coastal strip – to be governed by a provincial council with a deputy governor as chairman, and where half the seats in the council, which would later become a legislative council, would be reserved for Arabs.[422]

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[417] Brennan, 'Lowering the Sultan's flag', pp. 846-847.
[418] On the *Mwongozi* newspaper, see Glassman, 'Sorting out the tribes.'
[419] Brennan, 'Lowering the Sultan's flag', pp. 847.
[420] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 219.
[421] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 220.
[422] *Ibid.*

The proposal by Mackawi and Abdallah did not exist beyond the purview of private discussions, but the question over the future of Mombasa and the coastal strip, centring on arguments around the 1895 Treaty, did. On 10th October 1957, an Arab author of a letter to the *Mombasa Times* opined, 'the atmosphere is challenging…other races have come out in their true colours…the coast is protected for us but it is nevertheless part of Africa… […] Things are moving fast and disintegration looms like a nightmare.'[423] When the Colonial Governor, Evelyn Baring (1952-59), declared in an address to the LegCo on the 4th of November 1958, that the 1895 Treaty would remain the basis of administration on the coast, the Arab LegCo members, Mackawi and Shatry, demanded for a statement from the governor declaring the coastal strip a separate entity.[424]

As this was happening, an Arab study group was being formed in Mombasa, establishing itself as a public debating forum where speakers were invited to address members on various topics of Arab concern, including the question of 'Arabs and Slavery', and on 'Arab settlement on the East African coast.'[425] In 1958, an Afro-Arab Youth League, dominated by graduates of the Arab secondary school in Mombasa, and founded on a redefinition of coastal identity to include lower-status coastal townspeople – those who had been enamoured by MADU – was also formed.[426] A month after the establishment of the Afro-Arab Youth League, the president of a revamped Afro-Asian Association (AAA) opined on the pages of *Mombasa Times* that 'it is true that this [the Coast Protectorate] is our country but we must make ourselves alive and march with the times.'[427]

The "times" that the president of the AAA referred to were not only marked by a rise in African nationalistic thought and political action, but were also replete with recurrent reports from

[423] *Mombasa Times*, 10th October, 1958.
[424] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 229.
[425] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 224.
[426] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 225.
[427] *Mombasa Times*, 23rd January 1958.

Mombasa's immediate hinterland regarding disagreements that pit Mijikenda squatters and Arab landlords. In Gongoni, Kilifi district, Jibana squatters had forcibly removed survey beacons on land belonging to an Arab that had been put in place by a new buyer, the Vipingo Estate.[428] Years later, Mijikenda claims on coastal strip land had become more frequent and intense.[429] In 1959, traditional elders at Rabai, encouraged by Julius Mwatsama and Sammy Omari, founders of KAPU, laid claim and asserted authority over all land in the local administrative location.[430] In Malindi, KADU (through KAPU), intervened in a case where Mijikenda rights to trees they were forced to plant in 1937 so as to prevent soil erosion were denounced by Arab landlords.[431] In Takaungu, KADU directed its activities at Mazrui landholdings, where Mijikenda squatters had refused to pay land rent.[432]

In all these disputes, debates over identity, race, land and citizenship abounded.[433] In the debates, those who saw themselves as coastal Africans argued, bitterly and as publically as ever before, that the coast was African territory, and as such, belonged to Africans, not people with origins (or people who claimed origins) in Arabia and elsewhere in the Indian Ocean world.[434] Explaining this position on *Sauti ya MADU*, Francis Khamisi wrote:

> There was no foreign nation which came to Africa with cargoes of soil from their homes, so there is no foreign soil here on the East African coast. This is black land, and the indigenous people are black, from the outset, and it must remain in black hands until the

[428] KNA, CB1/22/5, Annual report of 1950. Kilifi.
[429] KNA, CB1/22/5, Annual report of 1958. Kilifi.
[430] KNA, CB1/22/7, Annual report of 1959. Kilifi.
[431] KNA, CB1/22/7, Annual report of 1960. Kilifi.
[432] *Ibid.*
[433] Willis and Gona, 'Pwani C Kenya', pp. 52-56.
[434] See for example, Interview 12, Safari wa Yeri, at Mombasa Island, pp. 14; Interview 14, Antony Chome, 6th June 2018, at Mombasa Island, pp. 4-5; Interview 4, Khamisi Athman Bwika, 4th February 2018, at Ukunda, South Coast, pp.12-14.

end of the world.[435]

Despite commanding significant public attention in Mombasa and elsewhere on the coast, the question over the fate of the 1895 Treaty would not feature in the first independence constitutional talks that were held in London in January 1960. Instead, the task, of determining the political future of the coastal strip, was first given to a Commission of Inquiry. Appointed in late 1961 and sent to the coast in October, the one-man commission, chaired and led by Sir James Robertson, ex-governor of Nigeria, held private and public meetings in Mombasa and throughout the coast, and in the process, sparked an intense public discourse on race and citizenship.

It was in submissions to the "Robertson commission" – as it became known – that political thinkers sought to imagine and articulate a vision of the future of Mombasa and the coastal strip, evoking memories of dispossession, settlement and injustice, and reworking histories of migration and common understandings of race and descent. Observers of this debate, namely James Brennan, Idha Salim, Justin Willis and George Gona, have written of the power of a distinctive coastal language of political legitimacy on which the *mwambao* movement based its claims for coastal autonomy, and of the role of the fear that was commonly felt by coastal townspeople regarding a future dominated by Africans.[436] With the exception of Jeremy Prestholdt, less emphasis has been placed on the specific racial language, of concerns regarding the threat to "civilisation" and the advance of "barbarism", that were also involved in the debate over the future of *mwambao*.[437]

Racial thought, long extant in Mombasa and elsewhere along the coastal strip, came to influence popular ideas about citizenship at the dawn of Kenya's independence. These ideas would

[435] *Sauti ya MADU*, 20th July 1958.
[436] See for example, Brennan, 'Lowering the Sultan's flag'; Salim, 'The movement for "Mwambao"'; Willis and Gona, 'Pwani C Kenya.'
[437] See for example, Prestholdt, 'Politics of the soil.'

link citizenship to geographical territory (the soil), and from which rights to status and resources would be imagined to flow.[438] In other words, exclusivist claims to territory and resources saw land becoming inexorably linked to racial identity in a context where race had defined the boundaries of citizenship, political participation and ultimately, access to status, rights and resources.[439] Consonant with a common intellectual development of the modern era, political thinkers in Mombasa and its immediate hinterland developed an intellectual paradigm where humanity was assumed to be divided into mutually exclusive racial (and ethnic) groups, each of which ought 'naturally' to control its own polity,[440] as was vividly expressed by a resident of Majengo. Asked to explain how the Twelve Tribes came to be, he stated:

> You know when God created the world and his people, he created the world and its tribes, he created the world and its nations. For example, in Europe now we have white people but they are of different nations. So, we just came and found ourselves we are already here because God creates people and places them somewhere. So, the origins of this town [Mombasa] is these people [the Twelve Tribes].[441]

In this way, the process of imagining a post-colonial coastal community involved looking out as well as in, and defining community in terms of who does not belong as well as in terms of who does.[442] In a speech that he issued at the beginning of 1960, Sheikh Muhashamy, Hinawy's

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[438] *Ibid*.
[439] For the legacy of this conceptualization of politics on post-colonial Kenya, see, Gabrielle Lynch, 'Negotiating ethnicity: Identity politics in contemporary Kenya,' *Review of African Political Economy*, 33, 107 (2006): 49-65; Sarah Jenkins, 'Ethnicity, violence and the immigrant-guest metaphor in Kenya, *African Affairs*, 111, 445 (2012): 576-596.
[440] See for example, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of Nationalism* (Verso, London and New York, 1983). Liisa Malki, *Purity and exile: Violence, memory and national cosmology among Hutu refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1995).
[441] Interview 53, Mwinyi Abdulaziz and others, at Tononoka, pp. 14.
[442] For comparative analysis, see, Glassman, 'Sorting out the tribes.'

successor as the Sultan's representative on the coast, that is, as *liwali*, stated that 'Arabs living in the Protectorate are not only an indigenous people, they are an indigenous people living in an Arab country… […] The Protectorate is basically Arab by tradition, by culture and by outlook.'[443] James Mbotela (the father of Tom Mbotela), who was himself not a strong advocate for the autonomy or independence of *mwambao,* but lent expression to the idea of cultural distinctiveness separating out the coastal strip from the rest of Kenya, told Robertson that 'the Muslim culture and tradition walked hand in hand with the Western civilisation on the coast, [that] both civilisations had hundreds of years of culture behind them, whereas the people of up-country had none whatsoever.'[444]

In this framework, coastal townspeople were not only fearful of 'the thought of an African government being given powers over them…afraid for their property and families,' as has been stressed elsewhere, but they also thought of Africans as 'pagans [who had] no holy book and were uncivilised.'[445] 'There was a clear and sharp distinction,' according to individuals claiming to represent the opinion of Muscat and Omani Arabs, 'between them and *wabara* as regards their religion, their civilisation and their customs.'[446] In fact, 'they regarded [Africans] as being ingrates; [that] the British had done everything for them, had civilised them…and now they only want to drive them away for their own material gain.'[447]

Concerns regarding threats posed by an advancing African nationalism against an Arab-Muslim civilisation along the coast had found sympathy (in fact, explicit support) in Phillip

[443] NA, CO 894/4, Speech by Sheikh Muhashamy on 28th January 1960, Office of the Chief Secretary, Mombasa.
[444] NA, CO 894/4, Note of a meeting between Sir James Robertson and J. Mbotela, held at 3.45 PM on Friday, at Government House, Mombasa, Office of the Chief Secretary.
[445] NA, CO 894/4, Note of a meeting between Sir James Robertson and five former members of the Arab Rifles, at 3:30 PM on Friday, at Government House, Mombasa, Office of the Chief Secretary.
[446] NA, CO 894/4, Note of a meeting with representatives of the Muscat and Oman Arabs, held at 10:30 AM on Monday, 16th October, at Government House, Mombasa, Office of the Chief Secretary.
[447] *Ibid.*

Mitchell, the governor of Kenya between 1944 and 1952.[448] During the Second World War, when he was the chief political officer in the Middle-East, Mitchell had developed a post-War Imperial strategy for Britain that would have been centred on the Western Indian Ocean, and which would bring Britain's colonial possessions in the region around a single political directorate (to be dominated by Arabs and British Arabists). The directorate would not only administer the coastal zones from Aden to Tanganyika, but would also serve as an effective bulwark against nationalist agitation in Africa and India.[449] Driven by his own coastal Islamic sympathies, Mitchell attempted to revamp the Victorian concept of "civilisation" as the basis for self-governance, at a time when the Colonial office, led by Arthur Creech-Jones, was more interested in "development" and African participation in local government.[450]

'"Civilisation", as Brennan aptly describes, disappeared unremarked; its sweeping pretensions and plain hierarchies no longer endorsed as an administrative language upon which to build future policies.'[451] To Mitchell, Brennan continues, 'people either had histories or did not; those with histories by extension had a culture upon which economies and polities could be built; those without histories, namely Africans, had only to pursue the slow work of imitation of those who did.'[452]

During his time as governor of Kenya, Mitchell, who frequently travelled to Mombasa, developed a liking for the iconoclasm of Islam and austere yet sophisticated alternative that the town offered to the modern bustle of Nairobi.[453] Whilst visiting Mombasa, Mitchell would be

[448] See, James Brennan, 'Sir Phillip Mitchell and the Indian Ocean, 1944-49,' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 45, 6 (2017): 998-1025.
[449] *Ibid*.
[450] Cohen, *British policy*.
[451] Brennan, 'Sir Phillip Mitchell', pp. 1010.
[452] Brennan, 'Sir Phillip Mitchell', pp. 1002.
[453] Brennan, 'Sir Phillip Mitchell', pp. 1013.

hosted by Mbarak Ali Hinawy, whom he described as an 'out of the ordinary intelligent man who can be trusted not to do anything embarrassing.'[454] Upon Hinawy's requests, Mitchell would furnish the *liwali* with old treaties between the Sultan of Zanzibar and Britain, which would then set into motion a series of legal questions upon which claims over *mwambao* would later be based.[455] Such informal official support encouraged or dovetailed with specific visions for the potential autonomous coastal polity that local advocates of *mwambao* would later demand, including specific proposals regarding the nature of its citizenship, which emphasised exclusive notions of 'civilisation.'

One such vision was prepared and presented to James Robertson by the Arab – and European – dominated Coastal League.[456] To the League, the potential autonomous coastal polity would be known as the 'State of Azania,' which they claimed would be 'governed on democratic principles,' but with primacy given to those they described as '*wenyeji*', that is, 'those who live on the coast.'[457] The League articulated a vision of a state with its own Legislature and Executive, where the Sultan of Zanzibar would remain as constitutional monarch, and which would, 'until such a time autonomy is granted', be protected by the British government under the terms of the 1895 Treaty.[458] The League, however, struggled to define a non-exclusive vision of citizenship for this potential state. The term *wenyeji* – in their own admission – was rather vague. 'The electorate', their petition stated, '[should] be restricted to bona fide inhabitants and permanent residents of the Protectorate,' but a 'formula of "permanency" [would] have to be worked out.'[459]

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[454] Cited in Brennan, 'Sir Phillip Mitchell', pp. 1008.
[455] Brennan, 'Sir Phillip Mitchell', pp. 1009.
[456] See, NA, CO 894/12, Memorandum by the Coastal League, Mombasa, to Sir James Robertson, Commission of Enquiry: Written Evidence.
[457] NA, CO 894/4, Note of a meeting between Sir James Robertson and a Coastal League Deputation, at 9:30 AM on Monday, 16th October, 1961, at Government House, Mombasa, Office of the Chief Secretary.
[458] NA, CO 894/12, Memorandum by the Coastal League, pp. 1.
[459] NA, CO 894/12, Memorandum by the Coastal League, pp. 2 of Appendix A (1).

The League wrote that bona fide residents of the Protectorate 'should be owners of freehold land or land held on lease for a term of at least 25 years; persons born in the protectorate; and persons who have continuous residence in the protectorate for a "qualifying period" of not less than 12 years.'[460] This awkward and vague definition of citizenship in the potential autonomous state along the coastal zone ended, perhaps, in the part of the petition where the League wrote, quite explicitly, that 'by indigenous peoples we mean, primarily, members of the Twelve Tribes and established immigrants from Arabia."[461] 'We do not include in this category the many Africans, particularly in Mombasa, who own temporary houses which they built on private land as licenses or tenants at will,' the petition concluded.[462]

Land adjudication and titling, which had been influenced in the early decades of colonial rule by racial thinking (see Chapter 2 above) was being used in the late colonial period to define the nature of post-colonial citizenship. In this thinking, those who belong are those who own land – majority of whom had been classified by colonial rule as non-natives. 'Members of the Twelve Tribes, and of the immigrant Arab communities are easily identifiable,' the petition of the League continued,[463] but the challenge 'would be [the difficulty] to determine who were bona fide African inhabitants of the coast,' due to what the petition termed as 'infiltration into Crown land and land in private ownership,' including in reserves for ex-slaves and *mahaji* (Muslim Africans) 'by *nyika*.'[464] At this time, descendants of Muslim ex-slaves, most of whom had retained their residence along the former plantations between Mombasa and Malindi in the north, including the descendants of Islamised *nyika* along the strip, chose to stake their claims with the townspeople,

[460] NA, CO 894/12, Memorandum by the Coastal League, pp. 3 of Appendix B.
[461] NA, CO 894/12, Memorandum by the Coastal League, pp. 1 of Appendix B.
[462] NA, CO 894/12, Memorandum by the Coastal League, pp. 3 of Appendix B.
[463] *Ibid.*
[464] NA, CO 894/12, Memorandum by the Coastal League, pp. 2 of Appendix B.

by separating themselves out from *wamijikenda* and *wabara*, and presenting themselves, through arguments over first-comer status, as the "true" autochthons of the coast. A memorandum to the Robertson Commission by people claiming to be residents of Mtwapa, Mavueni, Takaungu, Kilifi, Roka, Mtondia, Mida, Gede, Malindi and Mambrui, stated:

> We…are the descendants of the original settlers of Mwambao… [….] Our history goes back to more than 1, 000 years…proved by ancient monuments which can be seen all along the Coast. It is our earnest desire to see that Mwambao is separated from the Crown Colony of Kenya. We wish to inform you that the Jomvu tribesmen were the first people to come and settle in Mombasa.[465]

Such thoughts regarding who should have access to rights, status and resources along the coastal strip were based on an intellectual paradigm that assumed the civilizational hierarchies of the past, that is, of citizenship defined by claims of foreign origins, land ownership and other cultural attributes that had defined a proper coastal townsperson (see Chapter 1 above). To Sheikh Muhashamy, 'the [Muslim] Wadigo were the only indigenous African tribe on the Coastal strip. The Giriama were outside the Protectorate.'[466] Such intellectual work did not only preoccupy the minds of members of the Coastal League and the coast *liwali* – that is, of conservative and elite Arabs. They were also at the centre of the imagination of the more 'articulate and aggressive' [*mwambao*] party – the Coast People's Party (CPP).[467]

[465] NA, CO 894/12, Memorandum by residents of Mtwapa, Mavueni, Takaungu, Kilifi, Roka, Mtondia, Mida, Gede, Malindi and Mambrui to Sir James Robertson, Commission of Enquiry: Written Evidence.
[466] NA, CO 894/4, Note of a meeting between Sir James Robertson and Sheikh Salim Mohamed Muhashamy, Liwali for the coast, at 8:30 AM on Monday, 9th October, at Government House, Mombasa, Office of the Chief Secretary.
[467] This description borrows from Brennan, 'Lowering the Sultan's Flag', pp. 845-846.

While the CPP is now remembered as 'the party that offered the most progressive political vision among *mwambao* parties,' by attempting 'to mobilize a wider "Swahili" population to include those Africans who identify with coastal culture,' its vision of citizenship was, in actual sense, not very different from that presented by the Coastal League.[468] The president of the Coastal League, Sheikh Naaman Ali Muses, was a successful businessman and deputy *tamim* (deputy traditional chief) of the *Tisia Twaifa* (nine tribes), but he was also known to have Mijikenda kinship roots.[469] In addition, the committee of the League included a number of members with Digo [Mijikenda] roots, such as a well-known Mombasa-based qur'anic teacher, Maalim Juma Mwinyijaka, and others such as Mwinyi Haji Swaleh and Sheikh Abdullah Mwinjamui, all of whom lived in Mtongwe just opposite the Kilindini Harbour.[470]

Similarly, Maalim Omar Rashid Bakuli, another individual with Digo roots, but who, like Sheikh Muses, Maalim Juma, Mwinyi Hija and Sheikh Abdullah had long been incorporated into the coastal townspeople community, was the President of the Coast People's Party (CPP). Bakuli had been approached to join CPP at his office on Mackinon Road by CPP's deputy secretary known as Sharif Nassir.[471] Sharif Nassir would later become a long-time MP and Cabinet minister in post-colonial Kenya.

In sum, both the Coastal League and the CPP did envision a multi-racial coastal society, based, however, on a qualification that defined citizenship on the basis of self-ascribed notions (similar to *uungwana* and *uustaarabu*) that denoted "civilisation" in the coast's intellectual history.

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[468] For the idea that the CPP was the most progressive *mwambao* party, see, Brennan, 'Lowering the Sultan's Flag', pp. 846.

[469] See, NA, CO 894/4, Note of a meeting between Sir James Robertson and a delegation representing the nine tribes, at 4PM on Friday, held at Government House, Mombasa, Chief Secretary, Mombasa; On details regarding Sheikh Muses's Mijikenda origins, see, Willis, *Mombasa*, pp. 193.

[470] See, NA, CO 894/4, Note of a meeting between Sir James Robertson and a Coastal League Deputation; See also, Interview 27, Mwalimu Hiro with Ngala Mose, 4th July 2018, Kisauni, Mombasa, pp. 1; Interview 35, Bakari Salim Mwinyi, at Mtongwe, Likoni, pp. 1.

[471] See, Interview 12, Safari Yeri, Mombasa Island, pp. 17.

In addition to admitting individuals describing themselves as African within its leadership ranks, 'the League, in fact, has many African members', the Coastal League also included the Twelve Tribes in their definition of the term Arab.[472] It was this definition of citizenship that represented continuity with a past of racial thought along the coast, where hierarchical status groups, based on a civilizational discourse informed by an Arabist, or Indian Ocean culture, was the basis around which status, rights and resources were distributed. According to the vision articulated by the League and the CPP, people who would be described, or would describe themselves as African, could be admitted, or work their way up into the "civilised" coastal community and become "proper" townspeople by adopting the "right" behaviour, as it had been in *uungwana*, and to an extent, *uustaarabu* society.

An even narrower definition of coastal citizenship, or limited autochthonous claim inspired by older ideas about *uungwana* society, existed that excluded both Arabs and Africans. This vision was articulated by some individuals claiming to speak on behalf of the Twelve Tribes: 'the formation of these groups [*Thelatha Twaifa* and *Tisia Twaifa*] was considered necessary so that they could keep themselves distinct from any possible influx of new comers,' went one such claim.[473] However, this latter definition of community amongst some Swahili intellectuals was always complicated by repeated claims amongst individuals claiming to speak for other Swahili groups of ancient origins in Arabia, as did members of the Jomvu social club:

> We wish to inform you that the Jomvu tribes men were the first people to come and settle in Mombasa. It was they who called Mombasa by its ancient name, Mvita…before them Mombasa was barren inhabited by birds and wild animals… […] They originated from Jeda, in Arabia, and arrived at

[472]NA, CO 894/12, Memorandum by the Coastal League, pp. 2.
[473] NA, CO 894/13, Memorandum by Hyder Mohamed ElKindy, presented to Sir James Robertson, Memoranda to Kenya Protectorate Commission.

> Junda near Kisauni…their leaders were Mwidani bin Mwidani, Hamisi bin Mwinyi Haji and Mwidani bin Mwinyi.[474]

The counter, led most vociferously by Ronald Ngala, Francis Khamisi, Sammy Omari and Alex Karisa, was that 'the days of Arab supremacy over the African are no longer acceptable to the African people.'[475] In addition, racial thought was not the preserve of townspeople' intellectuals: 'the Arabs did not marry trees and bushes to have these half Africans and half Arabs…. […] We have mixed marriages all over the world but still the Country is under the hands of the indigenous people [who are] unaffected by mixed marriages,' a statement by CAPU addressed to the Robertson commission stated.[476] Johnson Mwero, now a government chief at Mariakani, also sent a memorandum to the Robertson commission peppered with an obsession with race, stating:

> I know some people say, only for the sake of saying no doubt, that Mombasa and consequently, the Coastal belt belongs truly to the Thelatha Taifa and others say to the Ithnashara Taifa. How possibly could these tribes have originated if it was not for the fact that their mothers were African and fathers were some Arabs, Indians, including Pakistanis and others Chinese etc.?[477]

A KADU branch in Msambweni weighed in:

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[474] NA, CO 894/12, Memorandum on Coastal Strip Enquiry, Submitted by the Jomvu Social Club to Sir James Robertson, Commission of Enquiry: Written Evidence.
[475] NA, CO 894/12, *Mombasa Times* (newspaper cuttings), 17th May 1960. Commission of Enquiry: Written Evidence.
[476] NA, CO 894/12, CAPU to Sir James Robertson, Commission of Enquiry: Written Evidence.
[477] NA, CO 894/13, Memorandum by Johnson Mwero, Chief, Mariakani to Sir James Robertson, Memoranda to Kenya Protectorate Commission.

> In the past, we didn't have knowledge of White nations. After a long time, these nations started coming…from Arabia, from Portuguese, and India. We welcomed them with peace and we traded with them…. then they started stealing our children, both men and women, taking them to Arabia and turning them into slaves…the women were forcefully married, persecuted…many died.[478]

This racial thinking accompanied actual threats of violence, especially towards the end of 1961, the time the Robertson commission was collecting its evidence on the coast. Reports of rising racial tensions in Mombasa appeared on the press on the first working day of the commission: 'outbreaks of racial violence between Africans and Arabs were narrowly averted at Mombasa yesterday as tension mounted on the first working day of the one-man Commission of Inquiry into the Coastal Strip,' an article on the *Daily Nation* reported.[479] 'At Mombasa's Mwembe Tayari market' the *Daily Nation* continued, 'the intervention of three platoons of General Service Unit policemen, plus other police reinforcements, prevented a possible riot as a crowd of 300 to 400 anti-autonomy Africans faced a crowd of Arabs across the road. Both groups were armed with sticks and knives.'[480]

In Kwale, where Rashid Bakuli, the leader of CPP, was born, 'Digos were told Bakuli wants to sell them to the Arabs…to protest, they staged a mock-funeral of Bakuli and *mwambao* by carrying the trunk of a banana tree that symbolised Bakuli's body and sinking it into the Indian Ocean at the Likoni channel,' recalled a long-term resident of Ukunda, Kwale.[481] Rogers Msechu, this time the Coast Regional Secretary of KADU, wrote to the CPP, threatening Bakuli: 'I think Bakuli, you are His Master Voice on behalf of the Arabs… […] We are prepared to face you in

[478] NA, CO 894/13, Kenya African Democratic Union, Msambweni Branch, to Sir James Robertson, Memoranda to Kenya Protectorate Commission.
[479] NA, CO 894/2, *Daily Nation*, 'Race tension mounts at the coast' (newspaper cuttings), 10th October 1961,
[480] *Ibid.*
[481] Interview 04, Khamis Athman Bwika with Badi Boga, at Ukunda, Kwale, pp.13.

peace, words and even with clubs if you do not stop this [*mwambao*] movement.'[482] Speaking to the press after leading a delegation of Mijikenda elders to speak to the Sultan of Zanzibar, 'to ask the Sultan to use his good offices to restrain the Arabs in the Protectorate and to implore them to stop their provocative campaign,' Mwinga Chokwe, now member of the LegCo for Mombasa West, warned that 'the violence that has occurred in Zanzibar would be on a small-scale compared with what could happen in the Coastal Strip.'[483] On 17th December 1961, Ngala took to the town of Malindi and "lowered" the Sultan's plain red flag in front of a crowd of his supporters in a defiant act of political theatre – the actual flag of the Sultan flew nearby.[484] At this time, Malindi was the base of another *mwambao* party, the Kenya Protectorate Nationalist Party (KNPP), that was led by Mohamed Bin Hussein bin Mabruk Jongoo, and which resented what they saw as Mombasa's dominance over the *mwambao* debate.[485] While some mistakenly thought that Ngala had performed an act of treason, Malindi, in fact, was the part of the coastal strip (and the centre of the Giriama rebellion in 1913-1919), where the land-squatter conflict that pit Mijikenda and Arab, or Mijikenda and coastal townspeople, most vividly intersected.

An Arab resident of Malindi recalled, 'politics [in Malindi] became dirty, the language dirty, they [Mijikenda] wanted to take the land, they had even marked some of the houses that they would take.'[486] And perhaps, it was in Malindi where a distinctively Mijikenda politics, recasting the coast not only in racial terms (as African and as black) but also in ethnic terms (as Mijikenda

[482] NA, CO 894/13, S.R.D. Msechu, Coast Regional Secretary, Kenya African Democratic Union, to the publicity committee of CPP, Memoranda to Kenya Protectorate Commission.
[483] NA, CO 894/2, *Mombasa Times*, 'Delegation to Zanzibar: Sultan gives Assurance on Coastal Strip' (newspaper cuttings), 20th October, 1961.
[484] For details, see Brennan, 'Lowering the Sultan's flag.'
[485] For KNPP's disenchantment with Mombasa's leadership, see Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 233.
[486] Interview 2, Salim Bakshwein, 4th February 2018, at Malindi Town, pp. 2.

territory) flourished.[487] In fact, racial and ethnic tensions have proceeded in Malindi for many years after the 1960s.[488]

In Malindi, Mombasa and Kwale, the debate over *mwambao* would revolve around parties such as the Coastal League, the KNPP and the CPP, whose adversaries included KANU and the local affiliates of KADU, most notably CAPU and the Digo Political Union. In the Northern coast, that is, Lamu and Tana-River, a Central Bajuni Association, led by Bwanaobo Din and Ahmed Mohamed Shallo, demanded that Lamu District be included in the Coast Protectorate in a revised 1895 treaty, a demand that was opposed by the hastily formed Tana and Lamu African United Front.[489]

These multiple parties notwithstanding, the most outspoken advocates and opponents of *mwambao*, in the years leading up to Kenya's independence in 1963, were the CPP and CAPU respectively. Largely a successor to the Afro-Arab Youth League, the CPP attempted, quite unsuccessfully, to disassociate coastal town's identity from its Arab inspiration, in fact, demanding for the Sultan of Zanzibar to relinquish his sovereign status over *mwambao*; and for the coastal strip to become an independent political unit within an East African Federation.[490] Such matters of political detail constituted the main difference between the CPP and the Coastal League, for instance, but not in their vision of citizenship on the coast. In fact, included in the same petition

[487] See for example, Interview 6, Kasena Yeri, at Malindi Town, pp. 9.
[488] See for example, McIntosh, *At the edge of Islam*.
[489] See, NA, CO 822/2151, President, Central Bajun Association to Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs, Future of Kenya Protectorate (Coastal Strip) Miscellaneous Representations; NA, CO 822/2151, Note of a discussion between Sir James Robertson and the Central Bajuni Association at 3 P.M on 11th October, 1961, at Government House, Mombasa; NA, CO 822/2151, Note of a meeting between Sir James Robertson and members of the Tana and Lamu African United Front, held in Government House, Mombasa, at 12 Noon on 11th October, 1961.
[490] NA, CO 894/13, Memorandum on Coastal Strip Autonomy by the Coast People's Party, to Sir James Robertson. Signed off by Omar Rashid Bakuli, Acting President, Memoranda to Kenya Protectorate Commission.

where the CPP outlined its vision for the future of Mombasa and of the coastal strip, primacy was given to foreign origins:

> History records that Arabs, Persians, and other 'foreigners' arrived in the East African Coast scene more than 1000 years ago. According to Mr. Ngala, a leading MijiKenda tribesman, and now Leader of KADU and of Government Business his own people the Wagiriama arrived on their present land about 310 years ago. This we find in a book written by Ngala IN 1949, when political considerations did not cloud his thinking. The Mijikenda claim to the whole of the coastal strip has therefore neither historical foundation and is not supported by facts of settlement.[491]

The CPP's popularity received a major boost when Abdillahi Nassir, a former secretary of the Afro-Arab Association, joined the party and became its secretary and spokesman. In the 1961 general-elections, Nassir defeated Sheikh Mahfudh Saleh Mackawi for the Mombasa Central seat.[492] The 1961 general-elections had been conducted under a new constitutional dispensation (agreed to at the Lancaster constitutional deliberations of 1960) where a common electoral roll was introduced for the first time, and a majority of LegCo seats landed in African hands.[493]

KANU emerged as the dominant party in Kenya overall. It won 19 out of 33 open seats, while KADU won 13. After KANU refused to form the government, demanding Kenyatta's release, Ngala, then leader of KADU, became the leader of government business. In Mombasa and elsewhere on the coast, the constitution under which the 1961 elections were conducted had created, in addition to the Mombasa Central seat, two additional electoral seats for Arabs, a

[491] *Ibid.*
[492] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 236.
[493] See, George Bennet and Carl Rosenberg, *The Kenyatta election: Kenya, 1960-1961* (Oxford University Press, London, 1961).

Protectorate seat, running from Vanga in the Tanganyikan border to Lamu, and a national Arab seat, won by Omar Salim Bassadique and Mohamed Aziz Alamoody respectively. Both Bassadique and Alamoody came from Malindi, and Bassadique's candidature, in particular, had been supported by the KNPP. An open seat in the Lamu/Tana area was won by Ahmed Jeneby, the candidate and leader of the Shungwaya Freedom Party, a successor to the Central Bajuni Association, and an advocate for *mwambao*.[494] In the formal campaign for *mwambao,* both inside the LegCo and in the second Lancaster House constitutional conference in 1962, it was Nassir and Bassadique that would take the lead. In his maiden speech at the LegCo in May 1961, Nassir quickly became the target of heckles and jeers by African politicians. On Nassir's demands for the independence of *mwambao*, KANU's then rising political star, Tom Mboya, shouted 'Go back to Arabia!'.[495]

When the Robertson commission report was published the following year, all *mwambao* parties were disappointed, as it recommended the abrogation of the 1895 treaty and unification of the Coast Protectorate with Kenya. Disappointment was expressed in a number of letters to the Colonial Secretary in London, where CPP had sent a resident spokesman, Said Mohamed Said.[496] In the constitutional conference of 1962, Nassir and Bassadique, learning that the recommendations of the Robertson commission report would carry the day, refused to append their signatures on the transference of the Coast Protectorate to the Kenya government.[497] Nassir and Bassadique, castigated at home for having "sold" the Protectorate to Kenya, abandoned politics altogether, but Nassir would continue his life as a public intellectual in the years after Kenya's

[494] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 233 and 236.
[495] This episode is well narrated by Prestholdt, 'Politics of the soil', pp. 249-250.
[496] NA, CO 822/2151, Draft letter, Lady Tweedsmuir, MP., House of Commons, for signature by the Secretary of State, Future of Kenya Protectorate (Coastal Strip) Miscellaneous Representations.
[497] Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 244; Brennan, 'Lowering the sultan's flag' pp. 858; Willis and Gona, 'Pwani c Kenya' pp. 58.

independence.[498] Before he joined politics, Nassir had set-up a coast employment bureau in 1960 meant to correct the imbalance that he saw in the distribution of formal employment in Mombasa where *wabara* were dominating in the workforce.[499] This concern, however, would later be expressed much more publically and bitterly by Nassir's adversaries in his vision for the future of *mwambao*, that is, CAPU.

CAPU, which, according to a former member, was formed to 'fight *mwambao* with maximum intention and energy',[500] turned its attention against *wabara*, explaining to coastal African youth that '[CAPU] would fight for the independence of the Coast province to protect our jobs,' the former member recalled.[501] These were the beginnings of *majimboist* thought amongst those who saw themselves as coastal Africans, where a form of regional decentralisation within independent Kenya was seen as a bulwark against potential domination of the coast by people from the rest of Kenya; especially the Luo and Kikuyu ethnic communities whose elites dominated KANU, the leading party after the 1963 independence elections.[502] In political meetings held in Mombasa in the early 1960s, and during the independence constitutional talks in London, the leadership of KANU under Jomo Kenyatta did not hide its disdain for *majimbo*, the regional system supported by KADU, the most popular party on the coastal region amongst coastal Africans at the time.

The most ardent supporters of *majimbo* had adopted an extremely exclusivist language by 1962: 'We do not want any Wakamba, Luos and Kikuyus to take any responsible [sic] in our

[498] For claims that Nassir and Bassadique had been bribed to abandon the issue of mwambao, and for their consequent unpopularity amongst townspeople, see, NA, CO 822/2151, Note for Record of Meeting between Secretary of Commission of Inquiry into the Status of the Coastal Protectorate and Said Mohamed Said of Coast People's Party, Future of Kenya Protectorate (Coastal Strip) Miscellaneous Representations.
[499] By 1959, out of 58, 000 Africans in employment at the coast, only 25,000 were from the coast, a fact noted by Robertson, see, Salim, *Swahili-speaking peoples*, pp. 234.
[500] Interview 12, Safari wa Yeri, at Mombasa Island, pp. 9.
[501] *Ibid*.
[502] Kyle, *The politics of the independence*, pp. 136.

district, they should be under our responsible in this Region, or to be removed away from our reserves and back to their own regions,' Bakari Kitauro, leader of the Digo Political Union, protested.[503] Such exclusivist (and ethnic) claims to territory and resources were not uncommon in Kenya. They had been part of a central element in Kenya's political thought.[504] In this ideology, land was becoming inexorably linked with ethnic identity, and ethnicity defined citizenship, political participation and ultimately, the distribution of status, rights and resources.[505]

Sensing that KANU would keep its promise to remove *majimbo* from the constitution after it took power in 1963; denying those who considered themselves as indigenous to the coast a formal, legal recourse for exclusive access to local resources; coastal African supporters of *majimbo* turned to their former adversaries, the coastal townspeople, to demand a complete secession of the coast.[506] In this "new" (non-racial) strategy, they had to recalibrate old notions of citizenship, however, which had led to contending visions for the future of Mombasa and the rest of the coast; by affirming that all coastal people, regardless of whether they could trace their origins in a much more ancient immigration from Arabia, or from the immediate hinterland of the coast, belonged to a discrete historical territory and were members of a common identity.[507]

Writing to the departing colonial governor, Malcolm Macdonald, the new supporters of this idea, some of whom had also been members of CAPU, and who had now become members of the Coast or Mwambao United Front, stated that 'from time immemorial, the coast had been recognized geographically, historically, linguistically and ethnologically to be a country with a

[503] NA CO 897/1, 'Bakari Kitauro, Digo Political Union, DC Kwale', 18 September 1962.
[504] See for example, Lynch, *I say to you*.
[505] Jenkins, 'Ethnicity'; Lynch, 'Negotiating Ethnicity'.
[506] See, KNA GO/GO7/6A, 'Coast Region – autonomous/secessionist trends', Deputy Director of Intelligence, 25 June 1963; NA CO 822/2151, 'Alex Karisa, President, CAPU to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 September, 1962; Prestholdt, 'Politics of the soil' pp. 269; Willis and Gona, 'Pwani' pp. 60.
[507] Prestholdt, 'Politics of the soil' pp. 269.

separate identity of its own',[508] much like the CPP and the Coastal League had argued. Yet, as shown in this and previous chapters, this was not the way in which race and citizenship had always been conceptualized in Mombasa, or elsewhere along Africa's Indian Ocean rim. Following in this precedent, the reconceptualization of identity and citizenship by the members of the Coast or Mwambao United Front would be short-lived. Fault-lines that had been hardened by the experience of the sultan's rule in the late-nineteenth century, and by British colonisation afterwards, proved to be more durable. A factional electoral politics, following in the lines of the patron-client politics that emerged throughout independent Kenya, would come to dominate politics in Mombasa during the post-colonial decades. While personal loyalties amongst leaders in Mombasa determined the nature in which political alliances would be made and remade, more often than not, these would come to align with a localised racial discourse.

In sum, the differences that emerged amongst the local political leadership in Mombasa during the post-colonial decades, including ideas and debates about proper behaviour, would largely be determined by Mombasa's historical position at the intersection of continental and maritime social imaginaries. This would encourage overlapping registers for imagining community and citizenship, and as the next two chapters will show, this multiplicity of contending visions of community lent Mombasa a distinctive political history, as compared to the rest of Kenya, where ethnicity has been deemed to be the dominant fault-line.

[508] NA CO 822/3073/E17 (XIX), 'Committee of the Coast United Front to Malcolm McDonald', 31 July 1963.

4

TOWNHALL AND PARTY POLITICS

> They used to say that Mombasa would not be ruled by *mahando* [traditional attire usually won by Mijikenda women] … […] but by the *buibui* [traditional attire usually won by Muslim women].[509]

In late 1961 – at the height of debates over the future of *mwambao* – Alex Karisa, President of CAPU, wrote to the Provincial Commissioner of the Coast asking him to advise *wakamba*, a community with up-country origins at Mariakani, Kinango and Shimba Hills to 'evict as soon as possible.'[510] After a warning from the Provincial Commissioner to desist from such threats, Karisa "clarified" his earlier statement, that it was not a threat but a 'piece of advice to *wakamba* leaders such as Paul Ngei whose statement on land threatened investors and European settlers in [Kenya's Central] highlands.'[511] The Giriama at Mariakani, the District Commissioner of Kilifi had noted, 'had objected strongly when the *wakamba*, whose ancestors had been welcomed as settlers during a great famine in 1836 started to enclose their *shambas* by planting sisal' – an objection that CAPU

[509] Interview 14, Antony Chome, at Mombasa Island, pp. 6.
[510] KNA, CQ1/1/2, Annual report of 1961, Kilifi.
[511] *Ibid*.

was exploiting.[512] In Mombasa, CAPU was also embroiled in frequent disputes with up-country workers, including the Dock Workers Union, prompting Dennis Akumu, the Union's Secretary-General, to write to Karisa threatening a strike action if he didn't 'stop his interference.'[513] Less than half of the 3, 000 dockworkers who were permanently employed by the largest cargo-handling company at the Port were from the coast.[514] CAPU's Secretary-General, Sammy Omari, who, together with Julius Mwatsama had founded CAPU's predecessor, the Kilifi African Peoples Union, or KAPU, had lost to Akumu in his bid to become the Secretary-General of the Dock Workers Union in 1962, 'after which he vehemently championed the rallying call of *wabara kwao* [up-country people to their home areas] and *uhuru na majimbo*, [freedom and regionalism]', remembers a former member of CAPU.[515]

CAPU made vitriolic attacks against the advocates of *mwambao* – warning that they will 'use peaceful means to oppose but if this isn't successful, CAPU has a plan'.[516] The target of this Mijikenda-led vitriol had shifted, between late 1961 to 1963, from coastal townspeople to *wabara*.[517] In other words, 'to avoid chaos and bloodshed on the coast,' warned Katana Juba, CAPU's treasurer, the 1895 treaty would have to be abrogated.[518] But once this was done in 1963, CAPU turned its attention to Kenyans from the up-country regions, warning, amongst other things, 'that no up-country politicians opposed to provincialism [*majimbo*] would be allowed to address a

[512] KNA, CB1/22/7, Annual report of 1961, Kilifi.
[513] KNA, CQ1/1/2, CAPU, 1 July 1962. For more on *wamijikenda-wabara* feuds in Mombasa, see, Interview 6, Kasena Yeri, at Malindi Town, pp. 12-13.
[514] Richard Sten, 'Factional politics and central control in Mombasa: 1960-1969,' *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 4, 1 (1970): 33-56.
[515] Interview 12, Safari Yeri, at Mombasa Island, pp. 6-7; See also Stren, *Housing*, pp. 84. Also, Clyde Sanger and John Nottingham, 'The Kenya General Election of 1963', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 2 (1964): 1-40.
[516] NA, CO 894/12, *Daily Nation* (Newspaper Cuttings), 2nd October 1961. Commission of Enquiry: Written Evidence.
[517] *Ibid*.
[518] *Ibid*.

trade union or political gathering in the [Coast] province.'[519] In sum, CAPU came to champion an exclusivist and nativist imagination of citizenship that defined coastal territory and rights first in racial (African/black) and then in ethnic (Mijikenda) terms.

The defeat of the clamour for the independence or autonomy of *mwambao*, together with the Zanzibar revolution of January 1964, had brought to an end an explicit appeal for an Arab, or an Arabised identity on the coast – townspeople identity had to be redefined, yet again, in the context of a hegemonic African nationalist discourse. A new cast of leaders emerging from the community of lower-status townspeople, *wamiji*, or those who had dominated the Majengo neighbourhood, came to define a townspeople politics that stood against the nativist-ethnic mobilisation of Mijikenda politicians who dominated CAPU and KADU (and of the ex-KADU supporters who joined KANU from 1964).

Higher-status townspeople took on a muted public profile, especially in representational politics: 'when it came to politics, many did not participate, they just did business, bringing things from Muscat from here and there…It was very rare to see the Shikelis, Mazrui, Mandhry, vying to join parliament or the [Municipal] council,' a Government Chief at Tononoka explained.[520] It was a new group of townspeople leaders, after independence, that came to champion the communal concerns of townspeople culture as a whole in the post-colonial era; interestingly, they had been part of a category that had been thought by colonial officials to be the followers of the upper-status Swahili and Arabs, and who could only show *nyika*, as opposed to Arabic clan origins.[521] In other words, leaders associated with this category emerged in a context where identity was being

[519] KNA, CQ1/1/2, Annual report of 1961, Kilifi.
[520] Interview 53, Mwinyi Abdulaziz and others, pp. 20-21.
[521] KNA, PC Coast, 1/10/120B, Senior Commissioner, Coast Province to Chief Native Commissioner, 13th May 1925; See Ch. 2 above.

reshaped along the coastal zone by "expanding" the community of coastal townspeople to include "lower-status" Swahili, and by muting explicit claims to foreign (Arab) origins.

In this way, the term Swahili in post-colonial Kenya was excavated from the archaeological sites of Arab disdain and British suspicion to claim the identity as distinctly African, with African origins, but maintaining the prestige of foreign, or in Ho's terms, local cosmopolitan influences.[522] The term *Ithnashara Taifa* and its constituent categories, *Tisia* and *Thelatha*, appeared in public and intellectual discourse less frequently. In Carol Eastman's words, what had been 'the [colonial] myth of Swahili became reality in [post-colonial] Kenya.'[523] As part of attempts to deemphasize Arab or Persian roots, townspeople intellectuals picked the term *wangozi* to replace *washirazi*, for instance.[524] Other terms, such as *wenyeji* (the owners of the coastal strip, or the sons of coastal soil) and *wamiji* were widely adopted and *used* in strategies where those who came to identify as Swahili distinguished themselves from others, especially from prominent Arab families (due in part to their chequered history of privilege now resented by the majority of Africans), *wabara* and most of all, *wamijikenda*.[525]

While anxieties existed amongst coastal townspeople over their failed clamour for a separate political entity based on Islam and maritime orientations (that is, over an autonomous *mwambao*), they nonetheless still respected Islam and Arabic cultural attributes as markers of superior status over the 'barbarians' of the coast's immediate hinterland and further in up-country

[522] See, Ho, 'Names beyond nations.' For literature that stresses the "African" roots of Swahili identity and culture, sometimes to the exclusion of Arab and Persian influences, see Nurse and Spear, *The Swahili*; Allen, *Swahili origins*; Mazrui and Shariff, *The Swahili: Idiom and identity*; Middleton, *The world.*
[523] Carol Eastman, 'Swahili ethnicity: a myth becomes reality in Kenya,' in David Parkin (ed.), *Continuity and autonomy in Swahili communities* (SOAS, Vienna and London, 1994): 83-97.
[524] See for example, Hussein Soud Elmaawy, *The Swahili: Their culture* (Docucare Ltd., Mombasa, 2012), pp. 19; Africa's Asian Options, Afraso, 'Afrasian memories in East Africa: A film by John Njenga Karugia and Khamis Ramadhan, *YouTube* < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1NceCl8KPlM> 20 July 2020; Also, Interview 53, Mwinyi Abdulaziz, at Tononoka, pp. 12-13.
[525] See for example, Interview 53, Mwinyi Abdulaziz, at Tononoka, pp; 12-17.

Kenya.[526] For townspeople, Islam continued to provide the main ideological resource for debating "proper" and "civilised" behaviour.[527] The distribution of status would, as it was in the past, be determined by wealth and such concepts as nobility, moral piety, local notions of "civilisation" and most importantly, Islam. High social status – or the ways in which one became a "proper" coastal townsperson – could be learned and performed, perhaps more than it had ever been during the colonial period, affording many lower-status coastal townspeople, including individuals with Mijikenda origins, an accepted means to work their way up into an established hierarchy.[528]

In this way, the hierarchies of the past, reformulated under a new context of African primacy, would nonetheless be maintained into the post-colonial world. Those who saw themselves as members of a redefined townspeople community would also see themselves as forward-looking sophisticates sneering at the "yokels" in the immediate "hinterland backwater."[529] In Janet McIntosh's reading of Carol Eastman's view of the redefinition of Swahili identity in the post-colonial decades, such 'participants in a Swahili pattern of culture increasingly distinguished between "insiders" and "outsiders", while enhancing "boundary mechanisms" that reify the idea of their distinctiveness, which they attach in part to their [claimed] Arab [or cosmopolitan] connections.'[530] In ways that would influence the nature of moral debate and political action in Mombasa and elsewhere on the Kenyan coast, Swahili cosmopolitanism, local intellectuals and politicians thought, continued to face off against hinterland parochialism.[531]

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[526] For a comparative view, see, Glassman, 'Sorting out the tribes,' pp. 403.
[527] See for example, Kai Kresse, '"Swahili enlightenment"? East African reformist discourse at the turning point: The example of Sheikh Muhammad Kasim Mazrui', *Journal of religion in Africa*, 33, 3 (2003): 279-309.
[528] Most of the individuals who could pass off as proper townspeople but also had kinship origins in the immediate hinterland of Mombasa were of the predominantly Muslim Digo, Mijikenda group. The example of Maalim Juma Mwinyijaka, a Digo born at Matuga in Kwale, and once an executive member of the Coastal League, stands out.
[529]See for example the discussion in Kresse, *Philosophizing in Mombasa*, pp. 36-69.
[530]See, McIntosh, *The edge of Islam*, pp. 10. The work by Eastman is, 'Swahili ethnicity'.
[531] Kresse, *Philosophizing in Mombasa*, pp. 36-69.

Such was the racialized language which deemphasised exogeny under which the struggles to control the local KANU party branch and Mombasa's Municipal council took place in the second part of the 1960s. The first section of this chapter examines these struggles for the post-colonial town that Mombasa had become after 1963, while the second section discusses the racialized language that was involved in those struggles. The argument is that it is this racialized discourse of politics, evoking separate ideas of culture, identity and political community, that came to define moral debate and political action in post-colonial Mombasa.

The most common distinction within these separate imaginaries was a reductive definition of Mombasa and the Kenya coast more widely as either maritime or continental in orientation, where a maritime and predominantly Swahili-Muslim coast continued to be imagined across the coastal towns of the littoral and a narrow strip of land around them, and a continental/African imaginary would be imagined in the hinterland. In sum, while the Swahili came to symbolize an urban "non-tribal", "open" and "cosmopolitan" face of coastal society,[532] the Mijikenda continued to evoke images of a "rural" and "pristine" African tribe.[533]

Struggles for the Town

By struggles for the town, I do not refer to the multiple ways in which individuals and groups, by way of complex situational networks, came to find employment, a place to stay, and also claim certain parts of the town as their 'homeland.'[534] I refer, instead, to the struggles involving political

[532] Berg, 'The Swahili community.'
[533] See for example, Spear, *The Kaya Complex*.
[534] See for example, J. Clyde Mitchell (ed.) *Social networks in urban situations: Analyses of personal relationships in Central African towns* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1969); Frederick Cooper (ed.) *Struggle for the city: Migrant labour, capital and the state in Urban Africa* (Sage Publications, Los Angeles, 1983).

leaders to control the political institutions of a town, struggles that nonetheless intersect, or are even driven by the more complex social struggle by groups to claim a town.

Broadly, individuals sought to enlist the new institutions of party and the Municipal council in Mombasa so as to find patronage and support, a function that had been met by complex social structures of claim and obligation that had intervened between workers, capital and the state in colonial Mombasa. In the struggles to control the nominal political institutions of the town, the broad and more exclusive webs of race, class and ethnicity replaced the more fluid and inclusive webs of affiliation that had once meant so much in the struggle for patronage, land and employment.[535] According to Richard Stren, these political struggles were intensified by two factors: the fact of Mombasa's significance as the second largest town in Kenya, meaning that control over its politics was a prerequisite to controlling the politics of the entire Coast province; and as a bargaining chip for national politics, which also invited the attention of political leaders controlling the centre of the state in Nairobi.[536] What existing analysis has overlooked, however, is the explicit racial language that was involved in these factional struggles, or as Lonsdale puts it 'the stuff of local, competitive ethnic myth.'[537]

The independence elections of 1963, held between 18 and 26 May under the Republican independence constitution, saw Kenyans voting for candidates to fill the 41 seats of the Senate, 129 seats of the House of Representatives, and seats of six of seven Regional Assemblies.[538] Nationally, KANU took 72 seats of the House of representatives, defeating its main challenger,

[535] Cooper, *On the African waterfront*, pp. 245.
[536] Sten, 'Factional politics,' pp. 43.
[537] Lonsdale, 'KAU Cultures', pp. 117.
[538] For details on the 1963 Kenya elections, see Sanger and Nottingham, 'The Kenya General Election.' For a more recent analysis, see, Justin Willis, Gabrielle Lynch and Nic Cheeseman, 'Voting, nationhood and citizenship in late-colonial Africa,' *The Historical Journal*, 61, 4 (2018): 1113-1135.

KADU, which won 32.[539] In Mombasa, KADU won all of the House of Representative seats - that is, Mombasa Island North, Mombasa Island South and Mombasa Mainland – as well as the Senate seat and a strong majority of the Coast Regional Assembly.[540]

Sammy Omari, whom Dennis Akumu had defeated in 1962 in his bid to become the Secretary-General of the Dock Workers Union, defeated Akumu for the Mombasa Island South seat. Akumu performed dismally, actually, taking only 212 votes out of the 25, 563 votes cast.[541] In Mombasa Island North, or what would later become Mombasa Central, Ngala's ally, Anaant Pandya, a non-Muslim Indian, and who had been a strong opponent of *mwambao,* won the seat on a KADU ticket.[542] The Mombasa Mainland seat, what would later become Likoni, Kisauni and Changamwe constituencies, was won by Ngala's protégé, a former clerk with the Navy base stationed at Likoni named Mwinyi Babu.[543] During the elections, Babu had defeated KANU's candidate, a young Digo who and Organising Secretary of the Dock Workers' Union named Juma Boy.[544]

While a few KANU candidates found their way into the Coast Regional Assembly – such as Ahmed Jeneby from the Bajuni community of Lamu; Maalim Juma Mohamed, a Giriama qur'anic teacher, whose Islamic erudition had gained him entry into the townspeople community of Mombasa, and who had been elected as KANU branch Chairman – the majority of the members

[539] See, Sanger and Nottingham, 'The Kenya General Election,' pp. 34.
[540] See, Wanyiri Kihoro, *Politics and parliamentarians in Kenya: 1944-2007* (Centre for Multi-Party Democracy, Nairobi, 2007), pp. 50-51; Also, Stren, *Housing*, pp. 86.
[541] See, Sanger and Nottingham, 'The Kenya General Election,' pp. 32.
[542] Wanyiri Kihoro, *Politics and parliamentarians*, pp. 51.
[543] Kihoro, *Politics and parliamentarians*, pp. 51. However, the author incorrectly records Babu as a KANU candidate. For how Babu was drafted into politics by Ngala, see Interview 31, Malau Kombo and Chimoyo Katana with Safari Yeri, 9th July 2018, at Magongo, Changamwe, pp. 21.
[544] Interview 1, Safari Yeri, at Mombasa Island, pp. 13-19; Interview 31, Malau Kombo and Chimoyo Katana with Safari Yeri, at Magongo, Changamwe, pp. 21.

had won their seats on a KADU ticket.[545] Ngala was elected President of the Coast Regional Assembly, and deputised by Robert Matano, the KADU MP for Matuga constituency in Kwale. This foregrounded Ngala's dominance in coastal politics.

It was only in the Municipal council elections where Ngala's dominance was reversed, and KANU took a slight lead over KADU among the eighteen non-official councillors. This was due to the organisational efforts of a notable member of the lower-status townspeople of the Majengo neighborhood known as Msanifu Kombo.[546] Kombo's involvement in politics begun when he was a youth organiser with MADU, leading the townspeople segment of the party with Shekue Ali, a townsperson with Digo kinship origins.[547] The lower-status townspeople community that Kombo and Ali led had learnt earlier – during the post-War labour strikes – to organise politically with the up-country residents of Mombasa, particularly the Luo and Kikuyu. As a result, poorer *wamiji* and *wabara* became strong supporters of Francis Khamisi's MADU before they parted ways briefly, after which they joined KANU when it was formed in 1960.

Worth considering is that part of the lower-status townspeople community of Mombasa were also people from Tanganyika considered to be of Digo origin, sometimes referred to as Shirazi, Vumba or Fundi, and especially a community from the Congo known as Manyema, or *wamanyema* in Swahili.[548] Through child-pawning, marriage and blood brothership, all these were incorporated into an expanding Swahili, or lower-status townspeople community.[549] Illuminating

[545] Interview 6, Kasena Yeri, at Malindi Town, pp. 3; Interview 57, Abdallah Ali Mnyenze, at Msambweni, Kwale, 3rd February 2018 (Interview Notes).
[546] For brief biographical notes on Kombo's political life, see, Interview 55, Khadija Kombo, at Mwembetanganyika, Mombasa Island, pp. 9-13.; KNA, UY/12/855, Minutes of the Municipal Council held on 10/09/1963; KNA, UY/12/855, Minutes of the Municipal Council held on 7/07/1964; Stren, 'Factional politics.'
[547] KNA, UY/12/855, Minutes of the Municipal Council held on 10/09/1963; Stren, 'Factional politics.'
[548] See Interview 49, Anza Mwatsahu with Sophia Ibrahim Kasu, at Majengo, Mombasa Island, pp. 4; Interview 11, Juma Bezimba with others, at Kisauni, 10th February 2018, pp.9: For a detailed description of the ethnic medley of Majengo in the 1960s and 1970s, see Interview 51, Sonia Abdallah, at Tononoka, Mombasa Island, 18th July 2018, pp. 8-11.
[549] See for example, Sonia Abdallah, at Tononoka, Mombasa Island, pp. 11.

the sense of the identity of lower-status townspeople, those who locally came to be referred to, and referred to themselves as *wamiji* or Swahili for much of the post-colonial period, a resident of Majengo recalled:

> To say the truth, at Mwembe Tanganyika [a neighbourhood in Majengo] many of the original people are those who can be described as those who came [*waliokuja*, or migrants] and intermarried with the original Swahili, that is the Kauma, Duruma, Giriama [the respondent listed these Mijikenda groups as Swahili]. In fact, all those houses when I was growing up there belonged to people like us [those who defined themselves as Swahili]. It is only recently, from the early 1990s to date [2018] that is when they [houses] went back to these people of white skins [Arabs].[550]

To a youth organiser in the early 1960s, it was these lower-status townspeople that formed the bedrock of support for KANU between 1960 and 1964: 'from Majengo to King'orani to Tononoka…to Mwembe Tayari, there were so many Tanganyikan Digos and *wamanyema*…in fact, there were *wamanyema* dances organised every weekend. It was them who joined up with the Luo to give KANU a lot of support those years.'[551]

From as early as April 1960, the Mombasa Freedom Convention Party (a breakaway from MADU) that was led by Shekue Ali and Msanifu Kombo, was already being described by the administration as the nucleus of the Coast branch of KANU.[552] Three years later, when Kenya became independent, Kombo was serving his first-term as the KANU Mayor of Mombasa; Ngala

[550] Interview 51, Sonia Abdallah, at Tononoka, Mombasa Island, pp.17.
[551] Interview 11, Juma Bezimba with others, at Kisauni, pp. 9.
[552] KNA, CQ1/19/29, Annual report of 1960, Mombasa District.

was the KADU President of the Coast Regional Assembly; their offices on Mombasa island situated a few hundred metres apart.[553]

On 10th November 1964, 'Ngala declared in Parliament that his party [KADU] had dissolved and its supporters were to join KANU in the interest of Kenya's unity.'[554] Ngala's decision – by no means widely popular – had been preceded by a year of cajoling and harassment by a KANU government that was committed to building a strong central government based in Nairobi, and which perceived the regionalist (*majimbo*) constitution as 'destabilizing in its design and "tribalistic" in its intentions.'[555] The KANU government had denied development funds to KADU strongholds and withheld resources to Regional Governments by deferring the financial transitional powers of the Regional Assemblies.[556] An additional array of executive instruments, such as a ban on opposition political meetings and withdrawal of trade licences to KADU supporters, had served to pull some KADU members onto the government-fold by mid-1964, after which the government introduced a bill in parliament that would turn Kenya into a Republic under an Executive President, and do away with the regional governments, KADU's brainchild.[557]

On the evening of 15th November 1964, a day after Kenya had become a Republic, Ngala was confronted by a 'large crowd of KADU youths and angry supporters' outside KADU's now former offices at Majengo in Mombasa.[558] 'Women were crying you would think they had been bereaved,' remembers a former KADU youth organiser, who also recalls that 'there was a group

[553] The first unelected African Mayor of Mombasa (he was appointed in 1962) was David Kayanda, an Alliance High School graduate from Taita District, see, Interview 58, Dishon Kayanda, at Nyali, 18th January 2018 (Interview Notes).
[554] KNA, CQ1/19/5, Monthly report of November 1964, Mombasa District.
[555] Ngala Chome, 'Devolution is only for development'? Decentralisation and elite vulnerability on the Kenyan coast,' *Critical African Studies*, 7, 3 (2015): 299-316.
[556] Gertzel, *The politics of independent Kenya*.
[557] Kyle, *The Politics of the independence*.
[558] KNA, CQ1/19/5, Monthly report of November, 1964, Mombasa District.

that had prepared to heckle Ngala during his speech at the offices.'[559] John Bao, KADU's Mombasa branch chairman, together with KADU's Secretary-General, Martin Shikuku, had organised 'for Ngala not to be allowed to announce that he had dissolved KADU,' remembers a former KADU youth leader.[560] 'We no longer recognize him [Ngala] as leader of the Coast people,' Bao proclaimed.[561]

It was probably the intervention of Mijikenda youth organisers, namely Sulubu Ndoro and Juma Bedzimba, both of whom feared that Ngala's national stature would be tarnished by such local developments, that protected Ngala from the planned chaos.[562] Ngala, it has been reported, thought that 'political security as well as economic development could each be obtained more easily by joining the centralists [KANU] in a single party than by remaining in opposition,' but there were other political considerations.[563] There is no known 'explicit evidence of a deal' between Ngala and national KANU leaders, in particular, Tom Mboya, KANU's Secretary-General, that informed Ngala's decision to dissolve KADU and to join KANU.[564] However, while addressing a group of KADU youth at the Majengo office in Mombasa, Ngala – as a KADU youth organiser remembers – explained:

> [Impersonating Ngala] It wasn't even a month after we went to parliament before we realised that there were three groups there. Kenyatta's group, Mboya's group and Odinga's group… […] And each group was trying to convince us to join them…I convened a KADU meeting to decide on which group to support, and I picked Kenyatta's group…so that if we overturn that group,

[559] Interview 1, Safari Yeri, at Mombasa Island, pp. 26-28.
[560] Interview 1, Safari Yeri, at Mombasa Island, pp. 26.
[561] *Mombasa Times*, December 6, 1964.
[562] Interview 1, Safari Yeri, at Mombasa Island, pp. 27; Interview 11, Juma Bezimba with others, at Kisauni, pp.16.
[563] See for example, Gona, *A political biography*, pp. 194.
[564] As argued by Stren, *Housing*, pp. 88; 'Factional politics,' pp. 44.

> we could get the government [end of impersonation] But Mboya chose to support Ngala, and Ngala and Mboya appeared in public together, so as to challenge Odinga's group, even though Ngala would always inform Kenyatta's group of Mboya's every move.[565]

In early 1965, Mboya, as KANU's Secretary-General, appointed party provincial re-organisation committees in former "KADU areas," that is, the Coast, Rift-Valley and Western Provinces, so as to absorb former KADU leaders into KANU.[566] In this planned re-organisation, Ngala was appointed the chairman of the caretaker committee that would organise KANU branch elections in Mombasa slated for June 1965.[567] Instructive to note is Ngala's role in 1965 in challenging the position of the Odinga-led radical KANU left-wing group in parliament, after he had joined the ranks of the Mboya-led moderate KANU parliamentary group.[568] For Mboya's struggles in national politics, Ngala became a useful ally.[569] But for Ngala to maintain the stature of a dependable local political boss – now that the regional governments had been abolished – he had to show that he can take over the nominal offices of the Mombasa Municipality, and especially, the local KANU party branch.[570]

The Chairship of the KANU branch in Mombasa, however, was in the hands of Msanifu Kombo's ally, Maalim Juma. Kombo himself was serving his second-term as the Mayor of Mombasa.[571] In the consequent struggle to control the local KANU party branch, former CAPU-KADU activists – majority of whom were Mijikenda – faced off with their long-term adversaries,

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[565] Interview 1, Safari Yeri, at Mombasa Island, pp. 27.
[566] Gona, *A political biography*, pp. 201.
[567] Gona, *A political biography*, pp. 202.
[568] For details see, Gertzel, *The politics of independent Kenya*.
[569] For this argument, see, Gona, *A political biography*, pp. 201-202.
[570] For seminal analyses of power struggles in post-independence Kenyan politics, see, Barkan, 'Legislators, Electors and Political Linkage'; Bienen, *Kenya*.
[571] KNA, UY/12/876, Minutes of the special meeting of the Municipal board held on 7th July 1964.

that is, the Swahili of Mombasa. 'That is when the violence begun…our house was set on fire,' Msanifu Kombo's ex-wife recalled.[572] At a press conference that he held on the run-up to the June 1965 KANU branch elections in Mombasa, Msanifu Kombo announced – due to threats against his life – that he was retiring to his farm in Kwale and would not seek re-election either as Mombasa's Mayor or as KANU branch Chairman.[573] A few days later, a group of KANU youth organisers interrupted a branch Governing Council meeting held to discuss the forthcoming branch elections. Declaring that the meeting was over, they picked up the chairs and forced people out of the room, after which they named Ngala as the interim Chairman of a new roster of branch officials.[574] Branch elections were postponed, but when they were held a few weeks later, Ngala narrowly defeated (by 107 to 101 votes) Maalim Juma Mohamed.[575]

Kombo, who was losing his control of the local KANU party branch to Ngala, was strengthening his grip at the Municipal council, however. During the June 1965 mayoral elections, Kombo defeated Councillor John Mambo (a Mijikenda and Ngala's ally) and became Mayor of Mombasa for a third-consecutive term.[576] In fact, this was not the first time Kombo had defeated Mambo in the mayoral elections of Mombasa. He had done so in the previous elections in 1964.[577] John Mambo, a telephone operator with Barclays bank, and who was from Kaloleni near Ngala's rural home, had joined the Municipal council in 1964 to fill a vacancy left by Councillor Sydney Grant Ralph.[578] Ralph had fallen ill that year, and was the representative of Likoni, Kongowea, Kisauni and Freretown, the seat that was once held by Charles Gower Fanin.[579]

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[572] Interview 55, Khadija Kombo, at Mwembetanganyika, Mombasa Island, pp. 8.
[573] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 88-89.
[574] For details on this event, see Stren, *Housing*, pp. 89; Gona, *A political biography*, pp, 203.
[575] KNA, CQ1/19/7, Chief's Monthly Report, Majengo Ward, October, 1965; Stren, *Housing*, pp. 89.
[576] Interview 1, Safari Yeri, at Mombasa Island, pp. 33.; Stren, *Housing*, pp. 89; 'Factional politics,' pp. 45.
[577] See, KNA, CQ1/19/5, Mombasa District Monthly report, June and July 1964.
[578] Interview 18, Frederick Uledi, at Freretown, Kisauni, 11th June 2018, pp. 4; KNA, CQ1/19/29, Mombasa District Annual report, 1964.
[579] KNA, CQ1/19/29, Mombasa District Annual report, 1964.

Despite Mambo's loss of the mayoral seat to Kombo, Ngala, Mambo's backer, bagged a number of victories between 1965 and 1966. During the senate elections of 1965 (the senate would be abolished in December 1966, its members becoming MPs in newly created constituencies), Ngala supported the candidature of Soud Mandano, who defeated David Musyoka Kioko, Kombo's ally and a former Organising Secretary of the Mombasa KANU branch.[580] In a KANU conference in Limuru on March 1966, Ngala used his increasing influence within the party branch in Mombasa to bring a throng of delegates who elected him one of eight Vice-Chairmen of the party. In a cabinet reshuffle in May 1966 that followed Jaramogi Odinga's resignation as Vice-President that April, Ngala was appointed Minister for Co-operatives and Social Services.[581] During the mayoral elections of July 1966, Msanifu Kombo lost to John Mambo – Mambo won with 14 votes to 12 – an outcome that was followed by a much protracted and accentuated struggle between the Ngala and Kombo factions to control Mombasa's main political institutions: the local party and the Municipal council.[582]

After the defeat and ejection of his group from the local party branch and the Municipal council, Kombo retreated to his farm at Shimba Hills, Kwale, and briefly flirted with the Kenya People's Union (KPU), Odinga's party after his resignation as Vice-President.[583] KPU had also attracted ex-Mijikenda Union and CAPU supporters who had become resentful of Ngala's leadership at the coast. It was during the run-up to the August 1968 local government elections, which required all candidates to acquire the official backing of a party so as to stand for office,

[580] Stren, 'Factional politics,' pp. 43-44; Interview 11, Juma Bezimba and Others, at Kisauni, pp. 6 and 12.
[581] For details on these events, see Gona, *A political biography*, pp, 203-212; Stren, *Housing*, pp. 88-90.
[582] For Mambo's victory, see KNA, UY/12/881, Minutes of the Municipal board of Mombasa held on 5/07/1966; For the ensuing political struggle, see, Interview, 1, Safari Yeri, at Mombasa Island, pp. 20-32; Interview 14, Antony Chome, at Mombasa Island, pp. 3-4; Stren, *Housing*, pp. 90-100; 'Factional Politics', pp. 46-51; Gona, *A political biography*, pp. 227-239.
[583] Stren, 'Factional politics,' pp. 46.

that Kombo re-emerged – seeking to regain control of the local party branch and of the Municipal council, the Townhall. Since the party branch was in the hands of Ngala's faction, the new regulation requiring aspirants for political office to acquire the backing of the party meant that Kombo's group was facing the prospect of total exclusion from both the local KANU party branch and the Municipal council.

Flanked by the Provincial Commissioner, Isaiah Mathenge, Kombo held a press conference at the Coast Provincial Headquarters in Mombasa in January 1968.[584] During the conference, Kombo announced that he had resigned from KPU and that he had re-joined KANU. Kombo's comeback – after which he would vehemently challenge Ngala's leadership over Mombasa's political institutions – was partly influenced by Mboya's changing fortunes at the national political stage. Mboya's steady rise within the party and in government, combined with Kenyatta's failing health – in May 1968, Kenyatta had suffered a serious stroke at his Bamburi beachside home in Mombasa – had come to concern a group of politicians hailing from Kenyatta's Central Kenya region, some of whom expected to inherit the presidency after Kenyatta's departure.[585] To prevent a potential Mboya succession, a campaign ensued to weaken Mboya's political allies – and Ngala fell victim.[586] 'To those prone to detect central interference in a local political quarrel, Kombo's announcement in the approving presence of the president's personal representative was too much of a coincidence', noted Stren.[587]

In Mombasa, Kombo's return was marked by a heightened newspaper war against his rivals, that is, the Ngala group. Taking advantage of the expanding *civic* public sphere, Kombo

[584] *Daily Nation*, 13 January, 1968.
[585] See for example, Daniel Branch, *Kenya: Between hope and despair, 1963-2011* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 67; David Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: The man Kenya wanted to forget* (Nairobi and London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1982), pp. 271-272.
[586] Gona, *A political biography*, pp. 227-228.
[587] Stren, 'Factional politics,' pp. 46.

argued that according to Section 4 (e) of the KANU 'Limuru' constitution, no national office bearer (Ngala was one of KANU's eight National Vice-Chairmen) could hold office in a local party branch.[588] Ngala countered by stating that the 1966 party constitutional amendment allowed national officials to take on local responsibilities if so "requested" by local party members.[589] By the following year, in 1969, Kombo was arguing publically that 'Ngala should not become the branch Chair of KANU, Mombasa branch, as long as he remained the MP of Kilifi'.[590]

This struggle, conducted vociferously on newspaper pages, was taken to the streets, quite literally. On the run-up to the 1968 local government elections, a group of 20 youthful supporters of Kombo's attempted to take over the local KANU branch office in Majengo, and youth wingers loyal to Ngala stopped them, leading to a street brawl outside the office between the two groups.[591] To lower the rising political temperatures, the provincial administration, led by Mathenge, allowed the Kombo group to hold political meetings in Mombasa so as to air their grievances. A meeting to broker peace was held at the Townhall in April 1968, but differences persisted.[592] To complicate Ngala's influence in the party nomination process (due to his control of the local party branch), the Kombo group formed four sub-branches in areas in which there was as yet no formal organisation: Bondeni, Sargoi, Tononoka and Mivundheni.[593] In addition, Hyder Kindy, the former Deputy Tamim (traditional Deputy Chairman) of *Thelatha Twaifa* (the Three Tribes), challenged the legality of an existing branch, the Kuze sub-branch in Old Town, after they refused him

[588] *Daily Nation*, 12 February, 1968.
[589] *Daily Nation*, 4 March, 1968.
[590] See, KNA, CQ1/19/29, Mombasa District Annual Report, 1969.
[591] Stren, 'Factional politics,' pp. 47.
[592] See, KNA, CQ1/19/29, Mombasa District Annual Report, 1968.
[593] Interview, 1, Safari Yeri, at Mombasa Island, pp. 34; Stren, *Housing*, pp. 92.

nomination. In the day-long public trial, where Kindy and Ngala argued their cases at the Mombasa Resident Magistrate's court without lawyers, Kindy won the case.[594]

Both Stren and Gona, keen observers of these events, submit that the fault-lines marking the Ngala and Kombo groups were racial and religious.[595] However, as Hyder Kindy noted in his autobiographical account, Ngala had picked up dictatorial tendencies that alienated many people, including some of his Mijikenda allies, and that due to this, Kindy thought that the local party branch ran the risk of 'having inexperienced politicians and councillors.'[596] While Gona notes that Ngala took over a poorly organised local party branch and sought to revitalise it, it is also important to state that he would easily suspend branch and sub-branch officials who did not toe his line: as was the case with the suspension and consequent replacement in March 1966 of the branch secretary MA Ongalo, who was replaced by David Ogina.[597]

When, in 1968, Ngala assured Kombo that he would be granted nomination by the party branch in that year's local government elections, many sub-branch officials feared that if they were to give Kombo a nomination, Ngala would bring his own people into the sub-branch committees, forcing out the sitting officials in the process.[598] It is under this context – of Ngala's alleged dictatorial tendencies – that Julius Mwatsama, a former Ngala ally, founder of KAPU and Kilifi North MP from 1963 to 1969, joined the chorus by Msanifu Kombo 'to compel Mr. Ngala to resign as the chair of KANU's Mombasa branch.'[599]

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[594] Kindy, *Life and politics*, pp. 197-198.
[595] See for example Stren, *Housing*, pp. 92; Gona, *A political biography*, pp. 231.
[596] Kindy, *Life and politics*, pp. 198.
[597] For the suggestion that Ngala revitalized the local party branch, see Gona, *A political biography*, pp. 204. For the removal of Ongalo as branch secretary, see, KNA, CQ1/19/15, Mombasa District Monthly Report, March, 1966.
[598] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 93.
[599] KNA, CQ1/19/6, Chief's Monthly Report, Tudor/Tononoka Ward, Mombasa, January and February, 1968.

In an event that saw the direct intervention of Jomo Kenyatta in mid-August 1968, party nominations were cancelled. A list of 12, each representing the Ngala and Kombo factions, were elected unopposed. All KPU candidates, representing the opposition, were disqualified. Kombo was elected mayor, defeating John Mambo, the then incumbent, by 20 votes to 8.[600] Of the new 24 councillors, 18 were Muslims, up from 12 in the previous council, and only six had completed as much as two forms of secondary school.[601] Ngala did indeed have some Muslim allies, but it was Kombo's group that had taken the victory. Abdallah Mwidau, Kombo's ally, had become Kombo's deputy; Maalim Juma, another ally of Kombo's, had found his way into the council; all Chairpersons of the council's standing committees were also Kombo's allies.[602]

In suggesting that senior politicians close to Kenyatta had backed Kombo against Ngala, a former KADU and KANU youth-winger stated that Kombo had possibly been instructed by Kenyatta beforehand to select 12 names.[603] The most prominent of the individuals Kombo selected were Abdallah Mwidau, Juma Boy, Hyder Kindy and Maalim Juma, all of whom considered themselves, and were considered by others as townspeople.[604] In a meeting at State House Mombasa in mid-August 1968 that was chaired by Kenyatta, and where the Kombo and Ngala factions were expected to iron-out their differences, a former KANU youth-winger recalled that:

> Ngala was told by Kenyatta to provide 12 names but he gave 24 instead, of people he claimed had been backed by the local party branch. Kombo was ready, he already had 12 names. Kenyatta took the list of 12 from Kombo and 24 names from Ngala, and plucked 12 from Ngala's list, remaining with 12. In addition to Kombo's 12, the remaining 12 from Ngala's list became the official KANU

[600] KNA, CQ1/19/29, Mombasa District Annual Report, 1968.
[601] Gona, *A political biography*, pp. 231; Stren, *Housing*, pp. 94.
[602] *Ibid.*
[603] Interview 1, Safari Yeri, at Mombasa Island, pp. 12.
[604] *Ibid*, pp. 34.

candidates, and after KPU candidates were denied registration, they were all elected unopposed.[605]

In what was the perhaps the only recorded public confrontation with Kenyatta, Ngala walked out of the meeting.[606]

The following year, the year of Mboya's assassination in Nairobi, the battle was taken to the local party branch.[607] Through Maalim Juma, the Kombo group unilaterally held local party branch elections and Juma was elected branch Chairman in January of 1969 – the results were quickly recognized by the Attorney-General's office in Nairobi.[608] In February, the following month, the sub-branches loyal to Ngala applied to hold their own elections, and the administration gave its approval. As the February branch elections were proceeding, Mohamed Jahazi, a nominated MP from 1963 to 1969, and once a Vice-Chairman of the party branch under Ngala, but who had gravitated towards the Kombo group by 1968, led an angry delegation to the Provincial Commissioner's office stating that his faction would stop at nothing to make Mombasa 'too hot' for Ngala.[609] As if to carry out Jahazi's threat, a group of Maalim Juma's supporters matched onto their rival faction's office on Lohana Road – where sub-branch elections were being held – and met clubs and stones: four of the matchers were taken to hospital by the police, one in a critical state.[610]

It was after this violence that the then District Commissioner of Mombasa, Eliud Njenga, closed the offices of both factions, Kombo's faction's office at Kikowani, and Ngala's faction's office along Lohana Road, requiring both groups to issue certificates of legality of their

[605] *Ibid*, pp. 35.
[606] Gona, *A political biography*, pp. 231.
[607] Tom Mboya, Kenya's Economic Minister in 1969, was gunned down along Government Road in Nairobi by an assassin on the 5th of July 1969.
[608] *Daily Nation*, March 22, 1969.
[609] *East African Standard*, 26 February, 1969.
[610] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 94-95.

branches.[611] The matter had been complicated by the fact that Ngala had been recognized as the Mombasa branch Chairman by KANU's Organising Secretary, Nathan Munoko, after the February elections by sub-branches loyal to him. Later, the District Commissioner, Mr. Njenga, gave the keys for the Lohana Road office to Maalim Juma, after which 'we were beaten by the police and kicked out of the [Lohana Road] office, and in were brought Msanifu Kombo's and Abdallah Mwidau's group,' recalled a KANU youth-winger and member of Ngala's faction at the time.[612]

In March, Ngala tendered his resignation as an official of KANU, at both the National Executive Committee and the local party branch, citing the administration's constant meddling in politics. Ngala's resignation was rejected by Tom Mboya, but was enough to allow another group, led by Salim Balala Mohamed, a Hadhrami Arab trader's leader and nominated MP from 1963 to 1969; and Mwinga Chokwe, at the time a former Speaker of the abolished senate: to elect Chokwe as the new National Vice-Chairman of KANU representing the Coast Province.[613] In fact, three days before Mboya's assassination, representatives from seven sub-branches of KANU in Mombasa that were loyal to Ngala had elected Ngala the Chairman of KANU, Mombasa branch, Sharif Nassir, a former secretary of the Coast People's Party (CPP), as Vice-Chairman, and J.J Mugalla as Secretary.[614] The membership of the local party branch was under intense contestation, more than it had ever been since KADU's dissolution.

During one of his routine visits to Mombasa in August, 1969, Kenyatta received an unexpected delegation of youth loyal to Ngala who demanded full branch elections so as to sort out the mess.[615] On the spot, Kenyatta ordered public sub-branch elections followed by branch

[611] Gona, *A political biography*, pp. 234.
[612] Interview 1, Safari Yeri, at Mombasa Island, pp. 39.
[613] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 97.
[614] *Ibid*.
[615] Interview 1, Safari Yeri, Mombasa Island, pp. 40-41.

elections, to be held one day apart.[616] Ngala conducted a quick but vigorous campaign, and in the event, won in all seven sub-branches loyal to him.[617] The next day, at the Municipal Stadium, Kenyatta chaired the election of the branch Chairman, and Ngala was elected unopposed. The closest contest was witnessed, perhaps, during the sub-branch elections held at the Tudor/Tononoka sub-branch. There, candidates backed by Ngala defeated Mwinga Chokwe, who had vied to become a member of the sub-branch committee; Abdallah Mwidau, the deputy mayor, who had vied to become the sub-branch Vice-Chair; and Mohamed Jahazi, the specially elected MP who had vied to become the sub-branch secretary.[618] The tense struggle for the local party branch reduced in intensity when in October 1969, following a public spat between Kenyatta and Odinga in Kisumu, the KPU was proscribed and its leaders detained without trial. As there was no opposition, any candidate who was a fully paid up member of KANU was allowed to stand for party primaries (primaries were by secret ballot and adult suffrage) and after winning, would become sitting MPs in early 1970. Nominations by district party branches was not a prerequisite to becoming a candidate.

In the event, Ngala's fortunes during the 1963 elections were reversed in 1969, and all the candidates he backed lost. In Mombasa North constituency, Kisauni from 1988, a young Rabai medical intern who was convinced by Ngala to join politics, Anderson Chibule wa Tsuma, was narrowly defeated by a former Digo seaman, Ibrahim Mwaruwa Abdallah.[619] Another Ngala-backed candidate, who was also Ngala's cousin, Maurice Mboja, was defeated by David Kioko for the Changamwe constituency seat; while Mwinyi Babu, a Ngala protégé since 1963, was

[616] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 97; Gona, *A political biography*, pp. 236.
[617] For details on this campaign, see, Interview 1, Safari Yeri, Mombasa Island, pp. 41-42.
[618] Gona, *A political biography*, pp. 236.
[619] Interview 9, Anderson Chibule wa Tsuma, at Mombasa Island, 9th February 2018, pp.3 and 4.

defeated in Mombasa South, Likoni from 1988, by Khalif Salim Mwavumo.[620] In Mombasa Central, Mvita from 1988, Annant Pandya, a Ngala ally since 1963, was defeated by Mohamed Jahazi.[621] Ngala performed well in his own Kilifi South constituency, Kaloleni from 1988, where he defeated Mwinga Chokwe. However, in a tragic event that would reduce the tensions around the struggles over Mombasa's political institutions, Ngala died after a road accident near Konza on the Mombasa-Nairobi road that took place on 25 December 1972 – his death sparking mild rumours of an assassination.[622] A public inquest led by Senior Resident Magistrate, S.K Sachdeva, concluded that Ngala had died from injuries resulting from the accident.[623]

On the same year that Ngala died, Kombo's ally and Ngala's perennial competitor for the KANU branch Chairship, Maalim Juma, also passed on. During the same year, Abdallah Mwidau defeated Msanifu Kombo on his second-term as Mayor of Mombasa. For his first term beginning 1970, Mwidau had defeated John Mambo; Kombo did not contest, citing dangers to his life.[624] Perhaps what was more significant after Ngala's death was the rise in the politics of Mombasa of Sharif Nassir, the former deputy secretary of the defunct CPP, who also became MP for Mombasa Central (Mvita from 1988), from 1974 to 2002. While the return to multi-party politics in the 1990s saw the enduring battle to control Mombasa's political institutions continue between Nassir and new Mijikenda politicians, notably Emmanuel Karisa Maitha, a Giriama clinical officer who began his political career as a municipal councillor;[625] the discussion at this juncture will turn towards

[620] See, Kihoro, *Politics and parliamentarians*, pp. 52; Interview 9, Chibule wa Tsuma, at Mombasa Island, pp. 4.
[621] Interview 9, Chibule wa Tsuma, at Mombasa Island, pp. 4.
[622] See, Willis and Gona, 'Tribe', pp. 472; Gona, *A political biography*, pp. 266-273.
[623] Gona, *A political biography*, pp. 272-273.
[624] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 100.
[625] Emmanuel Karisa Maitha begun his political career as a municipal councillor in Mombasa in the 1980s, eventually becoming Mp for Kisauni in 1997. He died while serving as a Cabinet minister in 2004.

the racial language of antagonism that was used during the immediate post-colonial struggle for the town's political institutions.

Town v/s Hinterland: A Localized Racial Discourse

Race in Mombasa – given the legacy of slavery and the tense debates over the future of the Kenya coast in the 1950s – is often discussed by residents in subtle ways, and in situational and contextual language. Racial discourse in Mombasa often involves terms of wider social discourse and the application of specific rhetorical strategies and arguments.[626] Terms such as *wajomba* (a Swahili word, *plu*, for 'Uncle', a term that is often used by the Mijikenda in reference to 'townspeople') *wanyika, ustaarabu*, or *ushenzi*, etc., are all prominent in a localised racial discourse.[627] These 'hidden transcripts' – to use James C. Scott's phraseology – give meaning to the hierarchical nature of cultural difference in coastal society, that is often foregrounded by different traditions of origin and evokes multiple and hierarchical visions of culture, progress and generally what it means to be modern and civilised.[628]

This social differentiation, pitting the Mijikenda against coastal townspeople, is, in the words of Janet McIntosh, 'laced with inequality.'[629] It is also marked with mutual exclusion and suspicion: 'powerful prejudices and essentialisms circulate among [townspeople] and [Mijikenda] communities, shaping their discourses about their own identity and the alterity of the other group.'[630] As the title of her book, *The edge of Islam*, suggests, the Mijikenda, who, at the turn of

[626] See, Kresse, *Philosophising in Mombasa*, pp. 5.
[627] See for example, Interview 39, Damao Chengo, at Mwamlai, Changamwe, pp. 5; Interview 55, Khadija Kombo, at Mwembetanganyika, pp. 2; Interview 14, Antony Chome, at Mombasa Island, pp. 4-5; Interview 51, Sonia Abdallah, at Mwembetanganyika, pp.9-10.
[628] James C. Scott, *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance* (Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1985).
[629] McIntosh, *At the edge*, pp. 8.
[630] McIntosh, *At the edge*, pp. 10.

the twentieth century could much more easily "become Swahili", came to 'find themselves [during much of the colonial and post-colonial period] on the margins of a spatial and metaphorical geography, peering in at a life of greater privilege and sometimes cognizant that they are on the brink of access but not quite able to break through.'[631]

In addition, local conceptions of civilisation would continue to be defined in a context where the category of those who had been deemed to be 'civilised' – that is, "higher status" Swahili and Arabs – was expanded to include "lower-status" townspeople. With the effective end of the *mwambao* debate in 1963, shortly followed by the ending of the *majimbo* debate and dissolution of KADU, the focus of political contest, as the previous section has shown, moved away from what structure government should take and to the control of the local institutions of the ruling party. However, the dynamics of that contest remained similar: it was in effect racialized, with an underlying logic of Africans versus non-Africans.

Yet at the same time there was some redefinition of those categories internally, particularly amongst those whom Ngala and his supporters characterised as the 'Other', that is, the townspeople community. Rhetorically, townspeople entirely abandoned claims to exotic origin, rather presenting themselves as distinctly townspeople (a categorization that avoided the stigma of allochthony and laid rightful claim to the town), but some within that group *used* the struggle with Ngala to redraw the lines of racial hierarchy within town society. This reaffirmed town society as culturally distinct, Muslim and urban, but also opened up the possibility of political advance to those who might previously have been of lower status on racial grounds.

Cultural, religious and most notably, clientage and kinship networks with coastal Arabs had also proved significant for "lower-status" townspeople seeking higher status, rights and

[631] McIntosh, *At the edge*, pp. 8

resources in the post-colonial world. Such conceptions of society, ostensibly inclusive yet contributing to hierarchical beliefs and practices that look uncomfortably like "racism", were affecting not only social relations in post-colonial Mombasa, but the town's politics as well.[632] The factional lines drawn in the struggle to control Mombasa's political institutions in the immediate post-colonial decade had aligned with more familiar lines of class and personal alliance, but they generally reflected the cultural distinctions that had defined Mombasa's history since the town's medieval origins – put simply, the tensions between its continental and maritime orientations.

Kombo, whose Kenyan citizenship became a subject of contention in public quarrels with his rivals, had begun his political career as a youth organiser.[633] Kombo 'successfully kept [the youth and women's section of the Mombasa Convention Party] busy singing songs in lorries, distributing leaflets, disrupting meetings, and even intimidating opponents.'[634] Stren described Kombo as a Shirazi [a community of Muslims on the South coast of Kenya claiming Shirazi, or Persian origins], but his ex-widow "clarified" that 'Shirazis are Digos [an African Mijikenda group], don't listen to people telling you different.'[635]

Kombo was born, raised, and was buried at Sargoi in the Majengo neighborhood of Mombasa.[636] Together with Shekue Ali, Kombo was part of the community in Mombasa that had been rejected as "true" Swahili, or "real coastal townspeople" during a time (the colonial period) where to be accepted as "true" Swahili, one had to emphasize, or convince officials, of one's uncontested Arab, or 'non-native' roots.[637] It was during the immediate post-colonial period that

[632] For a useful comparative analysis, see, Glassman, *War of words*, pp. 10-11.
[633] For evidence of public exhortations against Kombo's Kenyan citizenship, see Interview 14, Antony Chome, at Mombasa Island, pp. 4; Stren, *Housing*, pp. 91.
[634] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 80.
[635] Interview 55, Khadija Kombo, at Mwembetanganyika, pp. 10.
[636] *Ibid*.
[637] Shekue Ali became a councillor in the 1960s representing Majengo ward.

Kombo and his community came to champion the interests of Mombasa's townspeople as a whole, vis-à-vis the challenge that was mounted by Ngala, a Mijikenda politician.

To the Mijikenda who paid attention to the public affairs of the time, 'they [the Kombo group] had aligned themselves to that [Arab] side of the top, and were being used by those people of the top [the Arabs],' recalled a former KADU youth-winger.[638] But the ties were deeper than would be in an unprincipled contractual relationship. Kombo's ex-widow was the great-granddaughter of a Giriama woman who had been incorporated into the townspeople community during the last decades of the nineteenth century.[639] Kombo's closest political ally, Maalim Juma, was a Giriama from Kaloleni, Ngala's birthplace, who 'knew how to read the Quran better than Arabs', and due to this, had been incorporated into the townspeople community as a respected qur'anic teacher.[640] Not only were "lower-status" townspeople attempting to simply work their way up the hierarchy, they were redefining the hierarchy altogether.

The other key member of the Kombo group was Abdallah Mwidau. Like Kombo, Mwidau's Kenyan citizenship became a matter of public debate fuelled by his rivals; and like Kombo, Mwidau's roots were on the most southerly parts of the Kenyan coast bordering Tanzania.[641] He was born and raised in Mombasa and married into a middle-class Swahili family, later becoming the business partner of another of Kombo's ally, Mohamed Jahazi.[642] Jahazi was himself married to the daughter of Sheikh Hyder Kindy, the former Deputy Tamim of the Three Tribes, in other words, a notable townsperson.[643] The other member of the group that challenged

[638] Interview 12, Safari Yeri, at Mombasa Island, pp. 16.
[639] Interview 55, Khadija Kombo, at Mwembetanganyika, pp. 1-4; For more evidence of incorporation of *nyika* women into the urban category of Swahili, see Strobel and Mirza, *Three Swahili women*.
[640] Interview 27, Mwalimu Hiro with Ngala Mose, at Kisauni, Mombasa, pp. 1; Interview 35, Bakari Salim Mwinyi, at Mtongwe, Likoni, pp.1.
[641] For evidence of public exhortations against Mwidau's Kenyan citizenship, see Interview 14, Antony Chome, at Mombasa Island, pp. 4; Stren, *Housing*, pp. 99.
[642] Sten, *Housing*, pp. 99.
[643] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 93.

Ngala's leadership of political institutions in Mombasa was Salim Mohamed Balala, a Hadhrami Arab.

In the ensuing struggle, Msanifu Kombo and his allies 'thought Ngala should not become the branch chair of KANU, Mombasa branch, as long as he remained the MP of Kilifi and National Vice Chairman of KANU representing the Coast Province.'[644] This charge was taken to the press by Kombo, where a print *civic* public sphere, with origins in the late 1950s, was becoming well established. As one of Ngala's supporters remembers:

> what they [Kombo's group] really hated, Ngala is a Member of Parliament in Kilifi, Ngala is minister in the national government, but Ngala is also the Chairman of KANU in Mombasa… […] And everytime they tried to defeat him they couldn't. They wondered what strength Ngala had yet to them he was just a *mnyika*! He should go to Nyika! [hinterland]. They used to say that Ngala should go to his homeland [Kilifi], that's what they used to say the Mohamed Jahazis.[645]

The fight that broke out in 1968 outside the main Mombasa KANU office on Lohana Road revealed the identities of the rank and file members of the Kombo-Ngala factions. From media reports out of the ensuing trial of those charged with fighting, the youth wingers defending the offices had Mijikenda names, while Kombo supporters were persons with primarily Arab and Swahili names.[646] Given such desperate measures by Kombo's faction to regain control of the party branch and the Municipal council, the Provincial Commissioner, Isaiah Mathenge, allowed

[644] KNA, CQ1/19/29, Mombasa District Annual Report, 1969.
[645] Interview 14, Antony Chome, at Mombasa Island, pp. 8.
[646] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 92.

for more open discussion of the contentious issues dividing the two factions.[647] Three years earlier, in 1965, while addressing members of Mombasa's Municipal council, the Provincial Commissioner had 'urged the people of Mombasa through the elected councillors to forget the past tribal and racial differences and feelings of superiority or inferiority.'[648]

These differences, in actual sense, persisted throughout the post-colonial period, and as the Commissioner's statement implies, were informed by a past and present of privilege and injustice along racial lines, separating the interests of the townspeople from those of the Mijikenda. Even more important is the fact that the differences were underscored by the hierarchical relationship of cultures [maritime over continental] that were increasingly being imagined in mutually exclusive ways. As McIntosh explains, the hierarchies that also mark the distinctiveness of Mijikenda from the townspeople community are often expressed in the emotional lives and the ontological claims of Swahili [townspeople] and Giriama [Mijikenda] alike.[649] In addition, 'patterns of speech and behaviour, greetings and terms of status and emotional states of being,' as Kresse explains, '[reflected] the underlying idiom of social hierarchy' in coastal society as a whole.[650]

Some with kinship origins in the immediate hinterland of Mombasa, in this context, came to assume urban, supposedly more sophisticated [Swahili/Arab] identities in town, that at times they would claim, later, had no ethnic or racial relations in the hinterland.[651] In Likoni on the southern mainland of Mombasa, people were aware of distinctive qualities marking out urbanised Digos from Digos deemed to have more hinterland roots, as was explained by a Digo resident of Likoni:

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[647] *Ibid*.
[648] KNA, UY/12/881, Minutes of the Municipal Council held on 5/10/1965.
[649] McIntosh, *The Edge of Islam*, pp. 10.
[650] Kresse, *Philosophising in Mombasa*, pp. 55.
[651] For a refusal of Swahili relations with hinterland communities, see, Interview 53, Mwinyi Abdulaziz, Tononoka, Mombasa Island, pp.16

> Most Digos here in Likoni came from Kwale District, Bombo and Ukunda, mostly, but they got stuck here. Now, Digos of Kwale and Digos of Likoni have differences even in the way they speak the Digo language. The Digos of Kwale speak like Kwale Durumas, unlike the Digos of Likoni. For instance *rora* [for "look", by Kwale Digos] and *lola* [for Likoni Digos] … […] They are differences including in how we prepare food… […] The Kwale Digos also took up more of Western education than Likoni Digos. [Under the influence of urban, Swahili culture] Likoni Digos feared they would become Christians.[652]

A resident of Changamwe explained that such differences, between Mijikenda groups in town and those in the hinterland, had even led to the emergence of new identities:

> These Duruma [Mijikenda of Duruma ethnicity] who live in Mombasa it came a time when they didn't want to be called Duruma, they wanted to be called *mwambao*, because they had been hoodwinked by these Arabs. It is because of a lot of *uswahili* [literally, Swahiliness]. But only these Durumas of Mombasa, who call themselves Changamwe [classifying themselves as one of the groups amongst the Three Tribes] didn't want to be called Duruma. The ones in Kinango [in Kwale District] call themselves Duruma… […] There is this thing of being called *mnyika*, that they [Durumas living in Mombasa] didn't want to be called. That's how the name Changamwe came to be.[653]

Similarly, McIntosh reported that 'middle-class Swahili women sometimes express revulsion at the prospect of marrying a Giriama, while many Giriama harbour moral antipathy toward Swahili, whom they tend to see as self-serving elites.'[654] Yet, as we shall see in the next

[652] Interview 37, Mwanajuma Hamisi Mwarika, at Mtongwe, pp.12-13.
[653] Interview 39, Damau Chengo, at Mwamlai, Changamwe, pp. 5.
[654] *Ibid*.

chapter, such criticism was also levelled at educated, often Christian Mijikenda, who, in multiple debates over claim and obligation with their less educated or uneducated kin, were cast as unhelpful and selfish. Facing marginalisation within Kenya's political economy, the ability of Mijikenda elites to advance the exclusive interests of their kin was constrained in comparison to *wabara* elites, and as a result, they were '[seen] as [not] "getting" their kin [the] jobs and the right connections the way their up-country counterparts supposedly do.'[655]

The Giriama of Malindi, where McIntosh conducted her study, also resented their structural role as petty wage labourers in a steep hierarchy, and sometimes politically agitated in ways that pit them directly and deliberately against Swahili.'[656] As reported by Willis, 'the Swahili', in these stories, 'occupy a nebulous middle ground sometimes described as shameless Mijikenda turncoats denying their origins and at other times dismissed as being the same as Arabs, unrelated to the Mijikenda.'[657]

Using a similar interpretative frame to explain the factional struggles to control Mombasa's political institutions in the immediate post-colonial decade, a former KANU youth activist who served in that role in the 1960s explained, 'Ngala wanted to fight the influence of *Uislamu* [literally "Islamness" or an Islamic pattern of culture, as opposed to the theology of Islam].[658] The latter also aligns with Marshall Hogdson's idea of the "Islamicate", which refers not directly to the religion, but to the social and cultural complex historically associated with Islam and Muslims – both among Muslims themselves and even when found among non-Muslims.[659]

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[655] Chome, '"The grassroots are complicated"', pp. 254.
[656] *Ibid*.
[657] Willis, *Housing*, pp. 194.
[658] Interview 1, Safari Yeri, at Mombasa Island, pp. 29.
[659] Marshall Hodgson, *The venture of Islam: Conscience and history of a world civilisation* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1974).

Seen in this manner, the battle for Mombasa's political institutions was also a struggle between two visions of culture and community. These visions had co-existed in an unequal and hierarchical relationship. On one hand was a "rural", continental and "African" oriented vision that was being articulated more aggressively by those who became Mijikenda, vis-à-vis an urban, maritime, and "Islamic" oriented vision of society which was being redefined in the post-colonial decades from within, and which was represented by those who became part of the townspeople community.

During the post-colonial era, the vision of Mombasa evoked by townspeople leaders was hardly different from that expressed by Sheikh Mohamed Muhashamy during debates over the future of *mwambao*, when he proclaimed that the 'Protectorate [Kenya coastal strip] is basically Arab by tradition, by culture and by outlook.'[660] Conversely, for Ngala, it continued to be 'an undisputable fact that the Coastal Strip [is] a part of Africa… […] and that the land belonged to the Africans and no one else."[661] Racial thought lingered on in post-colonial Mombasa in this manner, and came to assume a central place in the ongoing battle between Islamic and non-Islamic traditions, "African" and "non-African" cultural modes, and between local notions of civilisation, *uustaarabu* and barbarism, *ushenzi*.[662]

The most consistent claim by the Kombo group against Ngala's predominance of the local party branch and the Municipal council had been that Ngala was tribal, that is, he overly favoured members of his own Giriama ethnic community.[663] After the fight that broke outside of the local party branch office, during which Msanifu Kombo was attempting to regain control of the local

[660] NA, CO 894/4, Speech by Sheikh Muhashamy on 28th January 1960, Office of the Chief Secretary, Mombasa.
[661] CO, 894/4, Notes of a meeting between James Robertson and a delegation from the Mijikenda Union, headed by Hon. R. Ngala, at Government House, Mombasa, at 9 AM on 11th October, 1961, Office of the Chief Secretary, Mombasa.
[662]This description is borrowed from Glassman, *War of words*, pp. 3.
[663] KNA, CQ1/19/6, Chief's monthly report, Tudor/Tononoka Ward, Mombasa, January and February, 1968.

party branch, the Provincial Commissioner allowed Kombo to hold public meetings in Mombasa. In one major meeting on the 21st of March 1968, where Kombo and his allies faced a crowd of about 3, 000 people, Ngala was unanimously denounced as a tribalist, but the charges went further than that.

Addressing the audience, Kombo's speech looped back around tropes of 'dirt' and 'filth', that he claimed had been introduced into the local party branch by the Ngala group, and which he told his audience he was prepared to "clean it up."[664] This language contrasting "dirt" and "cleanliness" was repeated *ad nauseam* by Kombo and his faction on the run-up to the 1968 local council elections.[665] In meetings not covered by the press, the language was less innocuous, however, as an observer of Mombasa politics at the time remembers:

> they would really insult the Mijikenda, that they are *wanyika*, *washamba* [rural], and that they dress in *mahando* [Mijikenda traditional attire won by women] … […] They used to say that Mombasa would not be ruled by *mahando*, but by the *buibui* [traditional attire usually won by Muslim women].[666]

A meeting amongst Mombasa's political leadership held at the Townhall, the headquarters of the Municipal council, barely succeeded in brokering a truce, and during a subsequent meeting to present the results of the discussion, Ngala insisted that he was not a tribalist, and presented a list of the local party branch officials to prove it.[667] Defending him, Ngala supporters claimed that he was the one responsible for the nomination to parliament of Salim Mohamed Balala, a key

[664] *Daily Nation*, 24 January 1968.
[665] Interview 14, Antony Chome, at Mombasa Island, pp. 6; Interview 1, Safari Yeri, at Mombasa Island, pp. 29.
[666] Interview 14, Antony Chome, at Mombasa Island, pp. 6.
[667] *Daily Nation*, 14 April 1968; Stren, *Housing*, pp. 93.

member of the Kombo faction, for a second term – Balala was subsequently appointed an Assistant Minister, a senior government position. This, as the claim goes, came after a delegation went to visit Kenyatta in Nairobi that was led by Mohamed Jahazi, where the group allegedly reported their concerns to Kenyatta that if Ngala was given the role of picking a name for the position of nominated MP from the Coast region, he would suggest 'a Kazungu or Charo [common Giriama names]' yet [in Mombasa] we are Muslims, it will bring problems.'[668] Given that a Giriama can also be a Muslim, Jahazi and his faction, in essence – and if the assertion holds – was offering a categorical framework that was explicitly Muslim, but also implicitly racialized.

To simultaneously respond to the charge that he was a tribalist and to counter the influence of Mombasa's maritime orientations, or Islamic patterns of culture as discussed above, Ngala closed ranks with the former deputy secretary of the now defunct Coast People's Party (CPP), Sharif Nassir, whom he thought he would later control.[669] Despite his membership to a party that had clamoured for the independence of *mwambao* during the late colonial period – the project supported by "higher" Swahili and Arabs – Nassir had been derisively regarded as a *mwaaarabu koko*, literally fake Arab, or an Arab whose ancestry had mixed with Africans.[670] The assertion, according to an observer of Mombasa politics at the time, continued, that:

> he [was] not a pure Arab, to them ["higher" Swahili and Arabs], he was like a *bastardised* Arab, you know? So, they didn't accept him, you see?' And for those in the middle ground [literally middle hierarchy, and in reference of Kombo's faction] they saw Nassir as too superior for them, because he had *nywele za singa* [straight hair], are you understanding me, you see?

[668] See, Interview 14, Antony Chome, at Mombasa Island, pp. 8.
[669] For details on how Shariff Nassir joined the Ngala-led faction, see, Interview 1, Safari Yeri, at Mombasa Island, pp. 37-38.
[670] Interview 14, Antony Chome, at Mombasa Island, pp. 4.

> So Shariff Nassir was looking for a place to be accepted, okay? That is how he begun identifying with the *mnyika*, you see? That this *mnyika* had a [large] following, that this *mnyika* had a big constituency, which is the Mijikenda, if I stick with them, I will inherit the Mijikenda vote. And that is exactly what Sharif went for.[671]

Shariff Nassir had first been introduced to Ngala's group by John Mambo, who had defeated Msanifu Kombo for the mayoral seat in 1965.[672] It was during his term as mayor that John Mambo established a business partnership with Shariff Nassir, whose family owned a maritime business company.[673] In the meeting to discuss Nassir's entry into Ngala's group, only Henry Farrah, a councillor from Freretown ward and Ngala's relative by marriage, opposed the move, citing Nassir's past association with the *mwambao* movement as a problem.[674] To Ngala, the plan was to present Nassir as Mohamed Jahazi's challenger for the seat of Mombasa Central during the then up-coming 1974 general-elections, 'so as to stop *Uislamu* in Mombasa.'[675] As a result, to an observer of Mombasa politics at the time:

> Sharif Nassir came to extend *unyika* [literally 'Nyikaness'] supremacy in Mombasa…and he would be challenged by the Jahazi group not because he was an Arab, but because he had joined *unyika*… […] To them, Shariff Nassir was not one of their own [townspeople]. They would say that Shariff Nassir had sold Islam cheaply, and had closed ranks with the *nyika* and Christians, that he was building and contributing to the building of churches, that [on that account] he was no longer one of their own. So, they presented themselves as more Muslim, Jahazi, Msanifu Kombo…they became

[671] *Ibid.*
[672] Interview 1, Safari Yeri, at Mombasa Island, pp. 37-38.
[673] Interview 14, Antony Chome, at Mombasa Island, pp. 5.
[674] Interview 45, Safari Yeri, at Mombasa Island, 16th July 2018, pp. 37-38.
[675] *Ibid.*

more Muslim than Shariff Nassir since, to them, Shariff Nassir had become a *mnyika*.[676]

As Ngala had wanted, Nassir defeated Mohamed Jahazi during the 1974 general-elections to become the MP for Mombasa Central, a position he held until 2002. It was Rogers Msechu – Ngala's former ally who had served in the 1964-1965 Senate – who did the talking during Shariff Nassir's campaign meetings – as it was feared by the administration that Nassir would stoke controversy over the circumstances surrounding Ngala's death.[677]

It wasn't long, however, before Nassir was thought to be turning against key areas of Mijikenda social, economic and public life in Mombasa; a move that was perceived by some Mijikenda as an attempt by an Arab politician to "purify" Mombasa town of its "excessive" hinterland influences.[678] In other words, once in a position of authority, Nassir sought to assert his own claims to cultural superiority and status by defining town-life as distinct from the hinterland. In this debate, tropes of "dirt" and "cleanliness" were once again repeated.

Similar to a trend that was well noted by Louise White in her social history of colonial Nairobi, migration by women from Mombasa's immediate hinterland (that is, *nyika* or Mijikenda women, depending on the period) had long been adopted as a strategy meant to escape the patriarchal control of the hinterland household.[679] In the event, 'the Mijikenda community invaded town' in a wider post-colonial trend suggested across interviews where the neighbourhoods of Kisauni, Changamwe and Likoni came to be increasingly settled by new migrants.[680] While

[676] Interview 14, Antony Chome, at Mombasa Island, pp. 5.
[677] Gona, *A political biography*, pp. 274.
[678] Interview 14, Antony Chome, at Mombasa Island, pp. 10-11
[679] See, Louise White, *The comforts of home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1990). For examples from Mombasa, see, Strobel, *Muslim women*; *Three Swahili women*; Willis, *Mombasa*.
[680] For quote, see Interview 14, Antony Chome, at Mombasa Island, pp. 10; For post-colonial migration trends to Mombasa, see Interview 30, Kalume Kathengi, at Migadini, Changamwe, 8th July 2018, pp. 3; Interview 41,

opportunities for incorporation of Mijikenda women into the townspeople community had seriously diminished, many were still able to establish a life in Mombasa independent of the security that would be offered by the hinterland household – eking precarious lives as concubines, sellers of palm wine and collecting rent from lodgers of rooms in traditional Swahili-type houses they owned.[681]

When Daniel Arap Moi became President, succeeding Jomo Kenyatta after Kenyatta's death in August 1978, Nassir besieged the new President to impose a rather vague, but effective ban on palm wine.[682] Nassir also put to use his growing close association to Moi and addressed part of Mombasa's land problem, that emanated from the land rationalisation policies of the early colonial period (see Chapter 2 above). In Mwembetanganyika, a location within Majengo, a large Hadhrami land owner, Swaleh Nguru, was convinced to subdivide and sell part of his large estate to the small house owners who had built on it.[683] Such successful lobbying, however, was limited within Nassir's own Mombasa Central constituency, residentially dominated by "lower-status" townspeople. An attempt by Mijikenda party activists to remove him from the local party branch as Chairman during the second half of the 1970s failed, after which, as a former KANU youth-winger remembers:

> all Mijikenda [party] youth wingers were removed one by one and all the Digo women, and Giriama women, were all replaced by light-skinned Swahili women, who played the *vugwe* dance [favoured by townspeople] …very light-skinned women; and he organised

Karisa Kombe Nzai, at Bangladesh, Changamwe, 11th July 2018, pp. 10-12; Interview 26, Norman Samuel Bari, at Kisauni, 4th July 2018, pp. 3-5.

[681] Interview 37, Mwanajuma Hamisi Mwarika, at Mtongwe, Likoni, Mombasa, 11th July 2018, pp. 10; Interview 51, Sonia Abdallah, at Tononoka, pp. 7; Interview 49, Anza Mwatsahu, at Majengo, 20th July 2018, pp. 5.

[682] Interview 14, Antony Chome, at Mombasa Island, pp. 12.

[683] Interview 53, Mwinyi Abdulaziz and others, at Tononoka, pp.10; Interview 51, Sonia Abdallah, at Tononoka, pp. 14-17.

> Swahili youth into clubs, such that when the president visited Mombasa, it was only *wamiji* who would be seen in front singing, dancing and cheering.[684]

In sum, townspeople had regained control of Mombasa's formal political institutions through Nassir's eventual dominance over the local party branch. Coupled with the mayoralty of Abdallah Mwidau, who was succeeded as mayor of Mombasa by another townsperson, Rajab Sumba, there was a sudden retreat of the Mijikenda in Mombasa's political life, a trend that would slightly be halted with the rise of the political career of Karisa Maitha, who eventually became MP for Kisauni in the 1990s.

Meanwhile, between the 1960s and 1980s, there was a steady growth in Mombasa's population, and new migrants into the town, many of them from up-country Kenya, dwarfed the size of the townspeople community. Townspeople would continue to valorise exotic religious and cultural referents from Arabia, and with the possibilities of incorporation into the coastal townspeople community diminished, ethnic boundaries and essentialisms were emphasized as people, especially new migrants, struggled to improve their circumstances in a post-colonial town.

As a result, broad and more exclusive webs of race, class and ethnicity came to replace, in the post-colonial era, the more fluid and inclusive webs of affiliation that had, at the turn of the twentieth century and before, meant so much in the struggle for patronage, land and employment. Generally, the lesson is that categories of race remained powerful as discursive and affective force, mobilising political action, and that the tension between the maritime versus continental imaginaries of the coast remained fundamental – but at the same time, these categories, especially for townspeople, could be renegotiated to some extent from within. In the context of national

[684] Interview 45, Safari Yeri, at Mombasa Island, pp. 10.

politics that were dominated by up-country Christian elites on one hand, and the emerging geopolitical significance of the Middle-East on the other hand, the townspeople community came to find themselves domiciled in a double-periphery.[685]

These concerns were expressed through various Swahili Muslim publics, where attention was not only placed on political questions, but also on prescriptions of "appropriate" social behaviour and civic virtue, or simply attributes that sought to emphasize the distinctiveness of townspeople culture from the hinterland. These *internal* moral discourses also took place in a context where the structure of land ownership in Mombasa and elsewhere on the Kenya coast, and hence, of privilege and status, had changed very little since the Land Titles Ordinance of 1908.

[685] Kresse, 'Muslim politics.'

5

WABARA, WAMIJI, WAMIJIKENDA

> The typical squatter was poor, uneducated and Mijikenda, while the typical coast landlord was relatively wealthy, did not work the land himself…and was likely to be an Arab or an Asian.[686]

On 31st January 1966, some squatters attacked a group of land surveyors and police officers who were surveying a farm owned by a European in Ukunda in Kwale District.[687] A few days later, coastal MPs, led by Sammy Omari of Mombasa West, moved and supported a motion in parliament urging the government to form a special commission that would have investigated how Arabs and Asians came to acquire land on the Kenya coast.[688] Consequent debate following the motion saw a repeat of arguments made by opponents of the *mwambao* debate in the late 1950s and early 1960s.[689] Addressing parliament, Mr. Omari stated that 'coast Africans were illiterate and ignorant and never bothered to go to the land office [during the land titling and adjudication process of 1912-1924] to register the land because they knew very well that it belonged to them.'[690]

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[686] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 167.
[687] *Ibid*.
[688] Government Printer, *Official Report, House of Representatives, Vol VIII, Third Session*, 3 February 1966, (Nairobi, 1966).
[689] Debate on the motion took place between February 4 and 10, 1966, see, *Official Report, House of Representatives*, pp. 559-66, 694-705, 755-62.
[690] Government Printer, *Official Report, House of Representatives, Vol VIII*, pp. 696.

Omari continued:

> 'When a man does not pay the rent [on private land they do not own] he is taken to a magistrate by the Indian advocate and, because the present Government's policy is just the same as the Sultan of Zanzibar's policy and British colonial policy, the Indian landlords and Arab landlords are given the rights.'[691]

To the government, the issue of squatters on the coast threatened political stability, as their conflict with landlords could easily be mapped onto antagonistic categories of class and race.[692] 'The typical squatter' Richard Stren, writing in the 1970s opined, 'was poor, uneducated, and Mijikenda, while the typical coast landlord was relatively wealthy, did not work the land himself (and often did not live on his land) and was likely to be an Arab or an Asian.'[693]

Indeed, the way in which the colonial government had distributed status, rights and resources, in particular, land, was continuing to exercise a much visible influence on the social, economic and political trends of post-colonial Mombasa and the Kenya coast more widely. The structure of land ownership after colonialism had changed little: yet the population of Mombasa was growing; a new language of African primacy, pursued more aggressively by those who came to see themselves as Mijikenda, was predominant; and up-country migrants, known locally as *wabara*, were increasing their influence (and numbers) within the local political economy. Much like the 1920s, when a new, modern port was constructed at the Kilindini Harbour on the

[691] *Ibid*.
[692] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 167.
[693] *Ibid*.

southwestern parts of the island, Mombasa was experiencing rapid growth in population, commerce and industry in the 1960s and 1970s.

In 1917, the East African Cargo Handling Services (EACHS), the largest employer, had registered 1, 800 dockworkers, but at this time when casual labour was dominant, only 171 had worked over 15 days per month.[694] By 1969, EACHS was supported by a workforce of close to 10, 000 men.[695] This growth in the workforce coincided with the size of goods handled at the Port. In the ten-year period from 1964 to 1974, the volume of cargo handled at the Port of Mombasa grew 1.6 times.[696]

In 1921, the population of Mombasa was determined to be 32, 234.[697] In 1969, it had grown to 247, 073.[698] From the latter, those listed as "Africans" numbered 187, 147, which was up from 111, 847 in 1962, and 42, 853 in 1948.[699] In essence, the town was becoming increasingly African, black and continental in orientation, a trend that concerned townspeople thinkers and political leaders. Asians, the second largest group in 1969, numbered 39, 049, followed by Arabs, who numbered 15, 863 and Europeans, who numbered 4, 925.[700] The Swahili, who had not been counted as a single community since the 1920s, were most certainly enumerated amongst Africans or Arabs, depending, of course, on the responses given by those counted. Official thinking, since at least the 1950s, was that the Swahili were Arabs, despite some divergences of opinion – albeit later in the decolonisation period – from notable members of the Swahili groups themselves.[701]

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[694] Cooper, *On the African Waterfront*, pp. 31.
[695] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 16.
[696] Government Printer, *Statistical Abstract, 1974*, (Nairobi, 1974), pp. 190.
[697] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 17.
[698] Government Printer, *Kenya Population Census*, 1969, Vol. I, (Nairobi, 1970), pp. 81.
[699] See, Government Printer, *Kenya Population Census*, 1948 (Nairobi, 1948); *Kenya Population Census*, 1962 (Nairobi, 1962); *Kenya Population Census*, 1969.
[700] Government Printer, *Kenya Population Census*, 1969.
[701] Writing in the 1950s, the colonial government's anthropologist, H.E Lambert, divided the Arab community of Mombasa into four categories: Omani, Hadhrami, Swahili and Sharif. See, KNA, GP 301 WIL, Chapter 2, 'The Arab Community of Mombasa' in *Mombasa Social Survey*, Part 1. See also Harm J. de Blij, *Mombasa: An*

The increase in the size of the population of Mombasa over the years, like that of many other African cities, had been driven by an increase in opportunities for employment and trade. For central government and local authority officials, a most significant and urgent question since the Town Planning Scheme of Mombasa was (partially) implemented in the latter half of the 1920s (see Chapter 2 above) was the provision of adequate housing for Mombasa's expanding workforce. This question was bound up with the way in which the colonial government had distributed land in Mombasa between 1912 and 1924. The emerging "land question' was now inextricably linked to the question of identity, and in Mombasa in particular, the question of race.

Unlike Nairobi and other towns in up-country Kenya, where much of the land is on lease from the government, much land on areas that were formally under the Coast Protectorate (or coastal strip), including much of Mombasa, is freehold land owned by individuals. Most of these individuals had defined themselves as non-native, or non-African, and were predominantly Arab and Indian. Given that land in Mombasa became primarily an issue of urban housing, this meant that the majority of the population lived on land they did not own – elsewhere in Kenya, land was about farms, not urban residence.

A persistent tension with continuities in the colonial period became salient in a conflict between the interests of squatters and landowners. This tension was routinely racialized; squatters asserted the legitimacy of their claims in racial terms. Partly for this reason and for lack of capital to redevelop their holdings, the mostly Arab and Indian owners of the land were unable to consistently assert control over their property, or to regularly extract rent for its use. Landowners

African city (Northwestern University Press, 1968), pp. 31. For the separation of Swahili from Arab, see NA, CO 894/13, Memorandum by Hyder Mohamed ElKindy, presented to Sir James Robertson, Memoranda to Kenya Protectorate Commission.

and squatters, in the end, both found themselves in a vulnerable position that demanded constant argument and negotiation, as we shall see below.

These struggles took place within a wider context of political marginalisation, by predominantly up-country, Christian, and Western-educated elites, perceptions that would be expressed vividly by those who came to consider themselves as indigenous to the coast. For a majority of the growing population of Mombasa, claim and obligation to variously defined relationships of kin, within exclusive webs of ethnic and racial identity, were vital for urban survival, or simply in finding work and a place to live. The latter in itself unleashed multiple debates over obligation between the fortunate and less fortunate members of an imagined identity. The Mijikenda, who had now largely been excluded from town networks of claim and obligation, or from townspeople society, also felt excluded from Kenya's political economy. Resulting debates about claim and obligation amongst *wamijikenda*, although much less publicised than *internal* debates about proper religious practice by townspeople, became tense and bitter.

A general concern amongst townspeople following increased migration into Mombasa by non-Muslims, a town many townspeople considered Muslim in orientation, coincided with debates amongst townspeople intellectuals regarding the boundaries of proper behaviour, claims and obligations. Such debates emanated from a reformist Islam with origins in Arabia, prescribing, through religious discourse, attributes that implicitly emphasised the distinctiveness of townspeople culture from hinterland, non-Muslim, African cultures. Put differently, Islam, in this context, was not explicitly racial but it was self-consciously not national, or even African – and its referents or sources of cultural (and actual) capital, were Middle Eastern.

This had great valence for lower-status townspeople, or *wamiji* – made uncertain of their status as Africans by colonial and postcolonial politics; looked down on by Arabs; and looking to

assert their moral status. Reformist Islam, in this way, afforded *wamiji* an accepted means to work their way up an established hierarchy, but its denunciation of local practices and valorisation of knowledge of Arabic language and of behaviours exemplified in the Middle East allowed its implicit insertion into localised racial logics.

The first part of this chapter shall examine the ways in which the residents of Mombasa came to find a place to live in Mombasa during the 1960s and 1970s. These trends are examined against a framework where bases of identity, distinctly exclusive and racial, had become much more rigid over the years since the early colonial decades. It is from this history that those main questions that came to animate political action in post-colonial Mombasa – of ethnic and racial identity, and how this influenced the distribution of resources, particularly status, land and employment – would be based.

The second part of the chapter focusses on the moral debates regarding civic virtue, claim and obligation, that took place at a time of increasing social differentiation, possibility and inequality, within exclusive moral publics. Both parts of this chapter show the persistence – and strength – of the two distinct ways of thinking about moral community and status in Mombasa, influenced, as shown in previous chapters, by a tension between the maritime and continental orientations of the Kenyan coast.

Mombasa Neighbourhoods in the Post-Colonial Era

Colonial rule fundamentally reshaped Mombasa. In particular, colonial laws and policies weakened ties between *nyika* groups and Mombasa landowners, especially Arab, Asian and wealthier Swahili, exercising a financial squeeze upon these relationships, making them less personal, and as a result, losing the additional ties and obligations through which *nyika* would

become 'people of the town', or simply, Swahili.[702] Much of the changes in Mombasa that were brought about, first by the Town Planning Scheme of 1926, followed by the construction of the Kilindini Harbour on the southwestern side of the island throughout the 1920s, meant that the Old Town section of Mombasa, in exception to some road widening, was left largely unmodified.[703] On the new area of activity along the Kilindini artery, a modern central business district emerged, meaning that the old and new business areas would continue to develop adjacent to each other. Even the old Mombasa Harbour was not demolished.

It was a substantial number of huts behind Salim Road, as was noted in Chapter 2, that were demolished so as to make way for the development of the new central business district, established between the Old Town and the Kilindini artery, and to allow for the widening of Makupa (now Jomo Kenyatta Avenue) Road. Landowners, who now wanted to redevelop their land in anticipation of Mombasa's growth, also evicted people – most of whom had benefited from their patronage as clients – away from the "hutted area."[704] In this way, much of the population residing in the demolished areas was pushed further westwards, many of them taking up residence in a sprawling Majengo neighborhood – where a number of Arab and Asian landlords had already taken legal ownership of the land.

From 1930-1960, Mombasa experienced further growth, and Majengo quickly became overcrowded, with many more people taking up residence in the mainland areas of Changamwe, Kisauni and Likoni, and as a result, creating a mainland sprawl that would become a distinctive marker of Mombasa's growth during the post-colonial decades. The majority of this population – a report by the Government Town Planning Department gave an estimate of 66% in 1968 – lived

[702] Willis, *Mombasa*.
[703] For this view, see, de Blij, *Mombasa*, pp. 41-42.
[704] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 131.

in what on the East African coast has long been referred to as the Swahili house.[705] Stren describes a 'Swahili House' as the most common urban house type along the East African coast, with distinctive features that include a rectangular design, a covered verandah at the front, independent rooms that are rented individually leading off the main central corridor, a courtyard (often enclosed) to the rear, and utility rooms (usually including a store, toilet, and cooking room) adjoining in the back.[706] In other words, 'no fewer than 140, 000 [out of a population of 235, 000 in 1968] Africans and Swahilis [this distinction is made by the cited reference] lived in Swahili housing.'[707]

It is this type of Swahili house that had once dominated in the Old Town and hutted areas, and then the Majengo neighborhoods. It later spread further onto the mainland areas: Kisauni, Likoni and Changamwe. For many of Mombasa's unskilled and semi-skilled workers, the Swahili house was affordable and a better fit for their social condition, that is, dependence on pre-existing kinship networks in town. Entering Mombasa for the first time, the advantages of the Swahili house for these individuals were obvious. He/she was able to rent a room, share in the house's activities, use community services, use his/her own language – since ethnic and racial groups tended to coalesce in particular locations – and experience a more gradual transition than he/she otherwise may not in public housing or privately-owned flats.[708]

Swahili houses were built either in unplanned, irregular plots, or on planned village layouts regulated by the Municipal council. Irregular land fragmentation in Mombasa, on which laid the construction of majority of the Swahili houses, is a legacy of the 1895 treaty between the British and the Sultan of Zanzibar in respect, and consequent formalisation of a freehold system of land

[705] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 37.
[706] Sten, *Housing*, pp. 33. This reference also includes a floor plan of a typical Swahili house.
[707] Sten, *Housing*, pp. 37.
[708] de Blij, *Mombasa*, pp. 71.

tenure that had pre-existed the establishment of the Coast and British East Africa Protectorates. This is why, unlike Nairobi and other towns in up-country Kenya, where much of the land is on lease from the government, much land on areas that were formally under the Coast Protectorate (or coastal strip), including much of Mombasa, is freehold land owned by individuals. As such, by the time of the 1908 Land Titles Ordinance, the Islamic titles on the Coast that the British colonial government agreed to uphold covered areas that had been part of a complex land tenure system, with individuals, extended families and lineages possessing various and overlapping rights.[709]

In areas that had come under Muslim influence, meaning that Muslim law was applied in arbitration and management of relations, a landowner could invite another person to cultivate and build his hut on his land on a tenant-at-will basis, entitled to no more than one month's notice of eviction.[710] It is through this system, as we shall see below, that *wamijikenda* (the Mijikenda), joined later by *wabara*, came to reside in Mombasa, especially on the mainland areas, as squatters on privately-owned land.[711] The landowners, as noted above, were mostly Asian and high-status townspeople, that is Arab and those who had been described by colonial officials as 'higher Swahili'.

Important to note, is that on the Kenya coast, these terms – *landlord*, *landowner* and *tenant* – acquired different connotations from what is implied in their universal application. Since landowners often lived in the Old Town area, far from their mainland holdings, and often did not interact on a day-to-day basis with tenants on their land, the term *landlord* was (and until today is)

[709] Cooper, *From slaves to squatters*, pp. 192.
[710] See, Stren, *Housing*, pp. 109.
[711] See for example, Interview 39, Damau Chengo, at Mwamlai, Changamwe, pp 13-16; Interview 40, Mumba Ida Akida, at Maganda, Changamwe, 11 July 2018, pp 6.; Interview 41, Karisa Kombe Nzai, at Bangladesh, Changamwe, 11 July 2018, pp 10-13; Interview 23, Joseph Karisa and others, at Mgongeni, Kisauni, pp 22.; Interview 24, Ngala Charo Mose, at Junda, Kisauni, 3rd July, 2018, pp 13-16; Interview 34, Juma Shabaan Mwakiroho and Ali Omar Simba, at Timbwani, Likoni, 10th July 2018, pp 16-22.

commonly used to refer to houseowners instead, especially by tenants (or logders) of rooms in Swahili-type houses. In this way, the term *landlord*, in local usage, translates to the Swahili term *mwenyenyumba* (houseowner). The latter also applies in Nairobi and other up-country towns. Tenants (*wapangaji* in Swahili) referred to lodgers renting out rooms, in this case, of Swahili-type houses. In Mombasa and elsewhere on the Kenya coast, a vast majority of houseowners do not own the land on which their houses are built, and are often referred to as squatters, or *skwota* in Swahili. The phrase 'tenants-at-will' is almost never used.[712] Logders are often also referred to as squatters, in the sense that they too, do not own the land.

The other aspect of Muslim land tenure of consequence to Mombasa was the custom of dividing property among several heirs. The rules are complex, but generally all close relatives of the registered landowner, including wives, are legitimate heirs and often receive varying portions of the land at the time of the owner's death. In this way, single large plots, divided over several generations of polygamy and large families, became many irregular small plots over the years, owned in varying fractional proportions by several distantly related individuals.[713] These individuals would then rent out their plots to people who would construct Swahili houses on them, and would charge the houseowners monthly ground rents (*ijara* in Swahili), normally paid from monthly rent collections from lodgers (*wapangaji* in Swahili); or would themselves build Swahili houses to live in and to also rent out to lodgers.[714]

In some areas, especially the outlying areas of the Municipality in Changamwe and Kisauni, and where larger plots or farms were concerned, the entire landholding would simply be

[712] This phrase is used throughout Stren, *Housing*.
[713] See for example, Interview 37, Mwanajuma Hamisi Mwarika, at Mtongwe, Likoni, 11th July 2018, pp 7-8; Interview 55, Khadija Kombo, at Mwembetanganyika, pp 4.
[714] For a detailed description, see, Interview 26, Norman Samuel Bari, at Swalihina, Kisauni, 4th July 2018, pp 4.

sub-divided by an original squatter, a custodian of the holding, normally a Mijikenda or poorer Swahili, without consultation with the Municipal council or the landowner.[715] Such unplanned and irregular subdivision – whether or not it was approved by the landowner and the Municipal council – led to the development of what officials considered "slums".[716] While this unplanned and irregular subdivision played a crucial role in the mainland sprawl that was witnessed during the post-colonial era, it later led to multiple court battles between squatters and landowners demanding monthly ground rents or seeking to redevelop their land.[717] These struggles would easily take on a racial dimension, promoting a bitter language of racial antagonism in local politics, especially when increased migration into Mombasa in the 1990s coincided with political liberalisation.

The first solution, designed and implemented by colonial officials, in order to tame the adverse effects of land fragmentation that supported much of the construction of unplanned Swahili housing, was a village layout scheme. The second, which became a reality only after the Second World War, was the provision by the Municipality of public housing. The village layout system, approved in 1927, was proposed by Charles Gower Fanin, its requirements subsequently incorporated into the Municipal board's by-laws. [718] The layout system was designed to house those who had been displaced from the hutted area by the implementation of the Town Planning Scheme in the late 1920s. Since the Municipal board ran out of funds to carry out public housing for this displaced population, and hence to carry out an important phase of the Town Planning Scheme, the village layouts, encouraging self-help building at minimal standards and an organised plot layout with internal roads and open spaces, became an obvious fall-back plan.

[715] See for example, Interview 24, Ngala Charo Mose, Junda, Kisauni, pp 10-15; Interview 41, Karisa Kombe Nzai, at Bangladesh, Changamwe, pp 10-13; Interview 40, Mumba Ida Akida, at Maganda, Changamwe, pp 6.
[716] de Blij, *Mombasa*, pp. 71.
[717] Interview 40, Mumba Ida Akida, at Maganda, Changamwe, pp 6.
[718] For details, see, Stren, *Housing*, pp. 131.

The layouts, locally known as *majengo*, proved popular with landowners too, as they provided an official outlet for plot subdivision and renting. By 1941, there were 57 such layouts on the island – majority of them becoming part of an expanding Majengo neighbourhood.[719] While houseowners were still not protected from potential evictions, the layouts increased the proportion of houseowners amongst non-Arab and non-Asian groups in Mombasa. In 1962, 28.2% of all African households in Mombasa lived in their own houses as a result.[720] A vast majority of these houseowners, as a survey of 535 respondents that was conducted on the island by Richard Stren in the 1970s revealed, were Muslim Africans and poorer Arabs with longer residence in Mombasa – what this study has referred to as lower-status townspeople, commonly calling themselves Swahili or *wamiji* during the post-colonial period (see Chapter 4 above).[721] However, while the village layouts helped to diminish pressure for public housing, by the 1930s they had become a veritable cause for concern within official circles regarding overcrowding and public health.[722] Despite this, it is important to consider that the layouts on the island – there were only two on the mainland areas – had better sanitation than unplanned Swahili housing on the mainland areas.[723]

As a result, the quality of housing in Mombasa would generally decrease when one moved further from the island – a pattern that also aligned with the spatial distribution of racial identities.[724] A resident of Mwembetanganyika, a location in Majengo, and who described herself as a Swahili, revealed that she was encouraged – in the context of a later gentrification of Majengo, when Arabs were redeveloping or selling much of the land – to sell her plot and move to Kisauni,

[719] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 131-132. For details on the development of a Swahili house on a village layout, see, Interview 49, Anza Mwatsahu, at Majengo, pp 9.
[720] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 132.
[721] For Stren's Survey, see, Stren, *Housing*, pp. 255-275.
[722] See Stren, *Housing*, pp. 133-143.
[723] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 137.
[724] The major exception is Nyali Estate on the Northern mainland adjacent to Kisauni, where the most high-end, expensive European-style housing was developed beginning in the 1930s.

'as she has the face of a Kisauni resident', meaning she was non-Arab.[725] Arabs and wealthier Swahili, that is, higher-status townspeople, resided on permanent, two-storey buildings, mostly in the Old Town area; Asians in modern, Western-style private flats on exclusive neighborhoods on the island; lower-status townspeople, *wamiji*, in planned but overcrowded village layouts in the Majengo neighborhood; and Africans, especially *wamijikenda*, together with poor up-country migrants, *wabara*, in unplanned, irregular, and also the most unsanitary Swahili housing found on the mainland areas.

For *wamijikenda*, the further they were from the island (and this indeed became the trend in post-colonial Mombasa), the further they were from *wamiji*, Asians and Arabs, including townspeople culture as a whole; and the more preoccupied they became with the concerns of their rural homesteads in the immediate hinterland, that is, in Kilifi and Kwale districts.[726] The gulf this socio-geographical distance created served to further reinforce the divisions between the two cultural imaginaries of the coast: maritime and continental.

It is important, however, to also make note of some serious hierarchies within townspeople society as well, which were also reflected in the pattern of landownership in Mombasa. Indeed, some lower-status townspeople, that is, most *wamiji* residing on layouts on the island, benefited by purchasing the plots on which their houses stood from landowners who were willing to sell.[727] But the dominant trend throughout the post-colonial decades, apart from squatters on government land, or on land owned by public and private corporations (poor *wabara* and *wamijikenda* dominated this category of squatters), majority of the *wamiji*, almost all poor Mijikenda, and many

[725] Interview 51, Sonia Abdallah, at Mwembetanganyika, pp 10-12.
[726] Interview 25, Ngala Charo Mose, at Junda, Kisauni, pp 3. Interview 47, Kasiwa Ngasho, at Jomvu, Changamwe, 16th July 2018, pp 5-6; Interview 48, Charles Mvuu Tungwa, at Allidina, Changamwe, 16th July 2018, pp 7-10.
[727] See for example, Interview 49, Anza Mwatsahu, at Majengo, pp 7-10.

other poor *wabara*, all remained squatters on land owned by Asians, wealthier Swahili and Arabs.[728] This, in effect, meant that despite the close, cultural and at times kinship networks most *wamiji* had established with upper-class Arabs and some Asians, many were in actual effect squatters on Arab and/or Asian-owned land.[729]

Even the provision of public housing did not alleviate the problem of squatting on privately-owned land and of unplanned Swahili housing, especially on the mainland areas. Beginning in 1949 with the Port Tudor estate, which was constructed on the north-western parts of the island adjacent to Changamwe mainland, most public housing was taken up by skilled, salaried, middle-class Africans, majority of whom were from up-country Kenya. Under the context of the post-colonial language of African primacy that became ubiquitous during the immediate post-colonial decades, three more public housing schemes for Africans were constructed in Mombasa: at the site of a public commonage in Likoni; near the Port Tudor estate at a location known as Makande; and an additional scheme at Changamwe. Despite this enthusiasm for provision of houses to Africans, the trend, as Stren shows, was that all were taken up by middle-class, professional Africans, most of whom were also from up-country Kenya. In fact, two of the schemes in their entirety, and more than half of the third scheme, were leased directly to large corporations in the town, ceasing to be public housing as such.[730]

The sphere of public-housing provision, in the sense that it did not shape, and was in turn not shaped by local networks of squatting and kinship, did not, as a result, upend the structure of privilege and the local hierarchies that had also aligned with the structure of land ownership in

[728] See, Interview 53, Mwinyi Abdulaziz, at Tononoka, Mombasa Island, pp 16-18; Interview 13, Maur Bwana Maka, pp 13-15; Interview 23, Joseph Karisa and others, at Mgongeni, Kisauni, pp 30-32.
[729] Interview 53, Mwinyi Abdulaziz, at Tononoka, Mombasa Island, pp 16-18.; Interview 49, Anza Mwatsahu, at Majengo, pp 9.
[730] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 233.

Mombasa. The residents of the Swahili village layouts on the island, that is, of the Majengo neighbourhood, remained predominantly *wamiji*; Muslim; less educated; informally employed, or self-employed; and were more likely to own the mostly overcrowded houses they lived in.[731] Those in public housing units were predominantly up-country Kenyans (Kikuyu, Kamba, Luhya and Luo, in particular, were disproportionally represented); were Christians; were more likely to be better educated; were formally employed; were more ethnically exclusive; and were more transient, returning to their up-country homes after retirement.[732]

A resident of a village layout in Majengo recalled:

> I can't really remember how people used to get houses at Makande [public housing project]. We just found people had already taken up residence. And these people were rich, they had their own money, their children used to speak English. Us we were just children of *mtaani* [layouts], of the ghetto, for us it was just Kiswahili throughout. We just used to go there to play with the children there, that's it…They were the first to ride bicycles and things like that.[733]

The resident also recalled that 'the first to take up residence [at the Jomo Kenyatta Flats in Makande] was John Mambo', Ngala's political ally and once mayor of Mombasa.[734] The other notable resident, she stated, was Mohamed Jahazi, Ngala's political rival and once elected Mp for Mombasa Central.[735] In sum, the public housing schemes were dominated by middle-class, up-country migrants to Mombasa, though some were taken up by a small number of wealthier,

[731] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 255-275.
[732] See, Stren, *Housing*, pp. 255-275; Interview 49, Anza Mwatsahu, at Majengo, pp 9.
[733] Interview 49, Anza Mwatsahu, at Majengo, pp 9.
[734] *Ibid*.
[735] *Ibid*.

educated coastals, most of whom were also salaried employees. The public housing schemes reflected, perhaps more than anything else, the new class distinctions that were emerging in post-colonial Kenya than any serious change in the relationship between the majority of *wamijikenda*, poor *wabara*, *wamiji*, and higher-status townspeople. In short, despite the development of public housing, the majority of Mombasa's residents continued to prefer affordable, low-cost Swahili housing.

So popular had Swahili housing become to the growing population of Mombasa that in the late 1960s, the Town Planning Department of the national government began encouraging the Municipal council of Mombasa to promote the development of privately built Swahili housing, in both planned or unplanned layouts.[736] While the Municipal council took up the advice, helping landowners to subdivide their plots either formally (in areas where subplots could be sold) or informally (in areas where subplots couldn't be sold), the general intention to supervise and control such plot subdivision was constrained by the council's own resource and staffing problems. Enforcement of land-use and building regulations became particularly difficult for a local bureaucracy that kept (throughout the 1960s and 1970s) one qualified planner, and a building inspectorate too small to examine all buildings developing within its jurisdiction.[737]

Indeed, in parts of the mainland areas closer to the island, that is, closer to the physical headquarters of the Municipality, officials were involved in plot subdivision, as was lucidly explained by a resident of Kisauni, regarding the process a new migrant to Mombasa seeking to build a Swahili house on privately-owned land (in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s), would follow:

[736] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 147.
[737] Stren, *Housing*, pp. 55.

> The land belonged to *waarabu* [Arabs], but they used to live in Old Town. Here they just used to come to visit. What used to happen is that there would be a person on whose custody the land had been granted by the Arab landowners called *mdzomba wa chungani* [an overseer]. It is this person who would show you where to buy, and would inform the owner of the land, and you would go to *manispaa* [Municipal council] for them to draw a plan for you, and then you come and build. But you would have to pay ground rent to the owner of the land after every six months. That is how people started coming.[738]

In areas further removed from the physical headquarters of the Municipality, especially most parts of Changamwe, and where a boom in Swahili housing was particularly noticeable in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, plot subdivision was not as orderly, or at least, all plot subdivision did not involve the supervision of Municipal officials. In fact, in larger plots and farms, even landowners were excluded from the process, as the example of a location called Mkupe at Bangladesh, a village in Changamwe, revealed. According to a village-elder there:

> Kalume and Masha [Mijikendas of Giriama ethnicity] were the overseers of this particular farm, working as *shamba boys* [gardeners] for the landowner who as a Barawa [an Arab]. The owner left Kenya after independence. My brothers [Kalume and Masha] did not follow up on the papers of the farm. Kalume was seen by others as the owner of the farm, planting trees and farming the plot. It was like he owned the place. So, when he was getting older, some people advised him to begin subdividing the farm, as he couldn't farm the entire area. That's how he started subdividing the place, for people wanting to build 4-room Swahili houses, like that, like that. Slowly, the place became a neighborhood. That is how all other areas here, Owino Uhuru, Allidina, became what they are today.[739]

[738] Interview 26, Norman Samuel Bari, at Swalihina, Kisauni, pp 4.
[739] Interview 41, Karisa Kombe Nzai, at Bangladesh, Changamwe, pp 16-18.

A similar story was repeated in another part of Changamwe by a local village-elder:

> in '74, '75, '76, here it was just Durumas and Mijikendas. This neighborhood was started by Mlai, that is why it is called Mwamlai. It was in '79 that we began to receive *wabara* here. One would come and say, ah, Mzee Damau, can I get a plot, of like say, a two-room [Swahili] house? Like that, so, I would give them and they give me some small *kajama* [traditional payment], sometimes it won't even be close to Ksh. 5000 [$50] … […] The land was owned by an Asian. We can't say there were no owners… […] The people we invited to build houses here also became squatters like us. We would just tell them, come and build, if they come and demolish our houses [laughter] a mass funeral is like a wedding ceremony [a Swahili proverb]![740]

Good access to the docks and proximity to an industrial park serviced by the rail had turned freehold land in Changamwe into prime residential property. But officials noted that without comprehensive temporary village layout master plans for Changamwe, it would become difficult to co-ordinate and plan future residential development in the area.[741]

Despite this, the development of unplanned Swahili housing in Mombasa's mainland sprawl proceeded unabated even in areas closer to the island. While landowners exercised closer scrutiny of house construction in Kisauni, Likoni and on the island, collecting ground rents more efficiently than was the case in Changamwe, cases of houseowners refusing to pay monthly rents would become more common in future, especially with political liberalisation in the 1990s.[742] Such struggles saw a routine invocation in public political discourse of what was now becoming familiar

[740] Interview 39, Damau Chengo, at Mwamlai, Changamwe, pp 16-18.
[741] See Stren, *Housing*, pp. 147.
[742] See for example, Interview 23, Joseph Karisa and others, at Mgongeni, Kisauni, pp 28-35.

language – pitting African primacy against Arab privilege – that had underlined the *mwambao* debates of the 1960s.

In the middle of these struggles was Karisa Maitha, who had emerged in the 1980s to champion, like Ngala did before him, a Mijikenda mobilisation that challenged Arab landownership, privilege and status in Mombasa and elsewhere on the Kenya coast. Granted, at the forefront of this struggle against the privilege of landowners in Mombasa and on the Kenya coast were the *wamijikenda*, or people claiming to speak on their behalf, but poorer *wabara* and a significant number of *wamiji* had also joined the ranks of the population of squatters (on Asian and Arab-owned land) in Mombasa. Squatters increasingly asserted the legitimacy of their claims in racial terms, as did the village-elder at Mwamlai, Changamwe:

> to say the truth, this land it's like it was stolen from us…our elders invited the Arabs, and the Arabs stole the land, created title deeds, and sold to Indians…but here in Changamwe it was only Mijikendas here…even the name Mombasa is a Duruma name.[743]

A resident of Majengo repeated the theme of theft by a foreign race, that 'these Arabs took the land by force, using the system of the *liwali*.'[744]

Partly for this reason, and partly due to an inability to redevelop the land, the mostly Arab and Indian owners of the land were then unable to consistently assert control over the land or even to regularly extract rent for its use. As a result, landowners and squatters both found themselves in a vulnerable position, necessitating constant argument and negotiation. These struggles intensified with increased migration into Mombasa by people from its immediate hinterland, that is,

[743] Interview 39, Damau Chengo, at Mwamlai, Changamwe, pp. 6 and 8.
[744] Interview 53, Mwinyi Abdulaziz and others, at Tononoka, Mombasa Island, pp. 4.

wamijikenda, and up-country Kenya, *wabara*. The increased migration of non-Muslim Africans from the hinterland was also concerning to a people who had long perceived of Mombasa essentially as a Muslim, Arab town. For the latter, such broad concerns would be expressed in religiously-informed debates regarding proper behaviour, virtue, claim and obligation. As this was happening, the Mijikenda, who continued to form a majority of the increasing African population of Mombasa, engaged in debates about claim and obligation amongst themselves, especially between the fortunate and less fortunate, in a post-colonial context where many Mijikenda came to find themselves on the lowest rung of the modern political economy.[745]

The point the next part of this chapter emphasises is that such concerns were expressed in moral discourses that were exclusive and distinct, shaped by years of separation of townspeople from the Mijikenda, a separation that was itself based on racial thinking. Such distinctions served, as a result, to sustain the tension between the maritime and continental orientations of the coast, a tension that continued into the 1990s decade.

Racial Thinking and Moral Debate after Independence

One way in which the political and intellectual leadership of Mombasa and its immediate hinterland sought to convene multiple, integrated, biddable publics, that they would then speak on behalf of and defend, was to prescribe within these publics the boundaries of acceptable, or moral behaviour. In other words, leaders worked with ideas around what it meant to either be a proper or good African, in the case of the Mijikenda and up-country Kenyans residing in Mombasa, or a good Muslim, in the case of townspeople. Increasingly, ideas around what it meant to be a good

[745] McIntosh, 'Elders and frauds', pp. 37.

Muslim would be wound with ideas that valorised exotic, particularly, Arab cultural referents, as was explained in Chapters 1 and 2.

In Mombasa, colonial intellectual work and administrative practices, as we have seen, drew on a past of powerful, ambiguous, racial thinking, and in the end, hardened social fault-lines and sharpened racial thought. Through a localised discourse, racial thought would be discharged vividly, especially regarding the gulf that was being emphasised through colonial policies over land, people and representation, between the coastal town and its local hinterland; Muslim and non-Muslim traditions; African and non-African; and local notions of "civilisation" and "barbarism." Otherwise situational, negotiable and flexible pre-colonial categories of identity, as a whole, crystallised the imagination of static categories of race.

Such imaginations remained powerful as discursive and affective force, mobilising moral debate and political action in post-colonial Mombasa even as they were renegotiated to some extent from within, especially for townspeople. While townspeople dropped explicit claims to racial origins in the Middle-East, due to a political environment that now emphasised primacy for what was deemed as African, their culture continued to valorise linguistic and cultural referents that tended to be exotic, foreign and mostly, Arab. In other words, the racial distinctiveness of the category of townspeople, rethought and redefined, would be emphasised through prescriptions of proper religious practice and personal conduct, that were, in general, inspired by cultural, linguistic and religious frames from Arabia.

Following in this precedent, Islam maintained its position as a major reference point for normative debates and arguments in social life,[746] and socially-accepted behaviour amongst urban

[746] Kresse, *Philosophising in Mombasa*, pp. 33.

Swahili Muslims was expected to keep to high standards of sophistication, civilisation and breeding.[747] In a recent commentary on townspeople society, Kai Kresse noted that:

> characteristics [expected of a proper townsperson] are obviously, descent and town dwelling, but also refined behaviour, politeness and best manners adequate for people of the highest status… […] This includes language, a refined [Swahili] vocabulary and the most elaborate ways of talking. Furthermore, being Muslim is part of this conception, and being wealthy (through trade).[748]

With the possibilities of incorporation into this redefined and imagined category of townspeople now diminished, racial and ethnic boundaries and essentialisms were thus emphasized, as people, especially new migrants to Mombasa, struggled to improve their circumstances in a post-colonial town. The tension, between the maritime versus the continental imaginaries of the coast remained fundamental – but continued to be subject to debate even from within. Most significantly, the battle between "civilisation" and "barbarism" was waged, for townspeople, not only against those who came to see themselves as Mijikenda, including *wabara*, but also against rituals that had long been accepted by townspeople (especially lower-status townspeople), that some now deemed improper for a civilised and moral Islamic community.

As a result, for *wamiji*, the improvement of their moral status within townspeople society laid in redefining what it was to be a good Muslim. Following this, interpretations of the Quran, the *Hadith* and the *Sunnah* were produced in order to justify, purify or contest established practices of behaviour, and rivalry between competing Islamic positions, especially in the 1980s, became

[747] See, Strobel, *Muslim women*, pp. 43.
[748] Kresse, *Philosophising in Mombasa*, pp. 52.

antagonistic and bitter as a result.[749] An underlying tension, between entrenched local rituals, perceived by their critics as heretical religious innovation, or *bid'a*, and a strict universal outlook of Islam as a global doctrine, but often inspired by reformist Middle-Eastern Salafist thinking, was sustained throughout the post-colonial decades.[750] The latter trend, which took root in the 1970s and 1980s, was fuelled by the external influence of Islamic reformism financed especially from Saudi Arabia, but also Egypt, Pakistan, Sudan, and Kuwait.[751]

For *wamiji* looking to assert their moral status, the increased availability of scholarships for both Islamic and secular study in the wider Muslim world was significant, as this afforded them a means for gainful employment, influence and ultimately, social prestige.[752] While reformist Islam offered an accepted means to work one's way up an established hierarchy, its denunciation of local rituals and valorisation of knowledge of Arabic language and of behaviours exemplified in the Middle East sustained the tension between the maritime and continental orientations of the coast. In other words, reformist Islam implicitly inserted itself into the local framework for reckoning not only religious, but also racial difference.

Following their insistence for a "purified" Islam, some *wamiji*, as a result, came to join a section of high-status townspeople, especially Omani-Arabs, not only in denouncing the syncretism of the local brand of Islam, through which certain rituals thought to have origins in the hinterland had been absorbed, but in looking down upon non-Muslim, hinterland cultures in

[749] For examples, see, Chande, 'Radicalism'; Ndzovu, 'Kenya's Jihadist clerics'.
[750] For discussions on the tension in Islamic discourse and practice between local customs and what is deemed as 'proper' religious practice amongst townspeople, see, Ann Patricia Caplan, *African voices, African lives: Personal narratives from a Swahili village* (London, Routledge, 1997), pp. 152; Mark Horton and John Middleton, *The Swahili: The social landscape of a mercantile society* (Oxford, Blackwell), pp. 180; Middleton, *The world*, pp. 162; Kresse, *Philosophising in Mombasa*, pp.80-89.
[751] See for example, Mohamed Bakari, 'The new Ulama in Kenya', in Mohamed Bakari and Saad Yahya (eds.), *Islam in Kenya: Proceedings of the national seminar on contemporary Islam in Kenya* (MEWA, Mombasa, 1995), pp. 168-193.
[752] Bakari, 'The new Ulama in Kenya', pp. 172.

general as backward and uncivilised.[753] Collectively, local traditional practises, of a variety that had mixed with African cultures, were increasingly viewed as threatening purist Islamic ideals, posing the danger of *shirk* (polytheism).[754] As per the reformist agenda, spirit possession; use of drums in the celebration of the prophet's birthday; recitations and intercessory prayers such as *dhikri*, *khitma* and *tahlil*; and traditional healing, *uganga*, etcetera, had all to be uprooted from the local brand of Islam: 'to try to bring Islam back to its status of cleanliness,' as Sheikh Muhamed Kasim Mazrui (1912-1982), Sheikh al-Amin's nephew and student, and Kenya's first post-colonial Chief Kadhi (1963-1968), opined in one of his small Islamic booklets.[755]

Islamic reform, it is important to consider, was also about the modernisation of Muslim public life. In other words, to "purify" local Islam was to move closer to the ideal of modernisation, that is, civilisation. In this perspective, undue religious innovation persists due to ignorance, akin to *ushenzi* (barbarism).[756] According to Sheikh al-Amin Mazrui, in an essay entitled 'The obligations of Muslims today', to move away from ignorance into proper religious knowledge and practice, 'is to open the way that will lead us to…greatness, and there is no other way except KNOWLEGDE that has combined religious and worldly matters'.[757] Since he also wrote from a modernist perspective, as Kresse put it, 'emphasizing the compatibility of Islam with modern science and secular education',[758] Sheikh al-Amin's vision for Islamic reform, which was subsequently publicised by his students during the immediate post-colonial period, perceived of the project of purification of the local brand of Islam as synonymous with its modernisation. The

[753] See for example discussion on Sheikh Nassor Khamis, an Islamic reformer of Digo, Mijikenda ethnicity, in Bakari, 'The new Ulama in Kenya', pp 183-184.
[754] Kresse, *Philosophizing in Mombasa*, pp. 82.
[755] See, Muhamed Kasim Mazrui, *Hukumu za Sharia* (Second volume, Mombasa, H.O Adam and Sons, 1971), pp. 42.
[756] For discussion on the dichotomy between 'barbarism' and 'civilisation' in townspeople society, see, Kresse, *Philosophizing in Mombasa*, pp. 37 and 51-52.
[757] Kresse, *Guidance (Uwongozi)*, pp. 171.
[758] Kresse, 'Guidance and social critique' pp. 5.

point is that the inspirational source for that purification was foreign and exotic, that is, they were based on a strict adherence to religious knowledge emanating from Arabia, across the Indian Ocean, and that this distinctive cosmopolitanism of Islamic reform meant that it could easily be cast locally in an adversarial role to the more continental (or African) orientations of the coast.[759]

Such debates, about proper religious practice, or what it means to be a good Muslim, which were in turn wound with ideas about what it means to be a proper townsperson, constituted a central discursive thread in the local, Islamic discursive repertoire of post-colonial Mombasa. They were held at mosques, at the verandah or benches known locally as *baraza* or *maskani* (usually integrated into the outside walls of the Swahili house),[760] and in opinion issued on newsletters circulating in mosques, or sold in 'almost every little religious bookshop.'[761] This world of public debate and discussion is what constituted Swahili Muslim publics.

The return home of graduates from leading centres of Islamic study in the wider Muslim world – a trend that was common in the 1980s – some of whom were long cast as lower-status townspeople and were now seeking to improve their status by claims to Islamic knowledge, saw an explosion of religious debates within these Muslim publics.[762] This situation obtained throughout the 1990s, when religious symbols, imagery and language were vigorously entering public discourse regarding political participation and the public good.[763] This time was, however, contrasted by respondents to an earlier era, when religious debate, according to them, was quietist and the social environment more accepting of religious innovation and difference. Speaking about the 1960s, a long-term Muslim resident of Majengo stated:

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[759] See for example the discussion in David Parkin, 'Swahili Mijikenda: Facing both ways in Kenya,' *Africa*, 59, 2 (1989): 161-175.
[760] For a discussion on *baraza*/*maskani* discursive cultures, see, Kresse, *Philosophising in Mombasa*, pp. 72-80.
[761] Kresse, *Philosophising in Mombasa*, pp. 97-98.
[762] See, Chande, 'Radicalism', pp. 351; Bakari, 'The new Ulama in Kenya', pp. 172.
[763] Deacon, *et al*, 'Preaching politics'.

> those times there were not so many people talking about religious issues in the radio… [I remember] only one programme…talking about religion, once a week, on VoK [Voice of Kenya] And they mixed religious issues with [local] culture. It was not like today. If you don't cover your hair, its sin, if you don't wear a long skirt, its sin… [but in the past] we were not keen on religious differences, we were all one people, we all celebrated during Christmas, we all celebrated *Idd* together, we used to even go to the Church during Christmas, to go and sit with each other [with Christians]. But these days I don't know which devil has come. The Muslim doesn't like the Christian, the Christian doesn't like the Muslim. Of which in the past, we used to be like one thing. We used to wear the same clothes…we didn't even used to wear the *buibui*, even my mother never used to wear the *buibui*.[764]

Religious debate, in fact, did exist in the 1960s, continuing into the 1970s and 1980s. It is the extent at which debate became publicized, vigorous and more dogmatic over time that the respondent above was making note of. 'Differences in practice and understanding of Islam, which were once tolerated' Kresse remarks, 'turned to spark off animosities, and the intellectual centre of reformist ideology shifted from an internal to an external position.'[765]

As was mentioned in the second part of Chapter 2 above, debate regarding proper religious practice amongst Mombasa's townspeople predated Kenya's independence from British colonial rule, but it was confined amongst a small elite of townspeople religious scholars. As Kresse notes, they 'were linked by an underlying continuity of their common framework of education and scholarship along the [East African coast]'.[766] In other words, religious debate was not only less publicised, confined amongst a small class of educated religious scholars trained in the intellectual

[764] Interview 49, Anza Mwatsahu, at Majengo, pp 9-10.
[765] Kresse, 'Swahili enlightenment?', pp. 280.
[766] Kresse, *Philosophising in Mombasa*, pp. 91.

traditions of reformist or *Shafii* Islam, but it was also more intellectual and less confrontational. This changed with a new trend in religious debate and intellectual practice that begun in the latter half of the 1960s and throughout the 1970s, turning more public, bitter and dogmatic in the 1980s, when multiple Islamic groups around the world sought to increase their influence and support locally.

This trend can been traced back to the work of two important townspeople intellectuals, namely Sheikh Muhamed Kasim Mazrui and Sheikh Abdallah Saleh Farsy (1912-1982), both of whom had studied under Sheikh al-Amin Mazrui.[767] The students and followers of their reformist doctrine, such as Sheikh Harith Swaleh (born in Lamu in 1937); Sheikh Mahmoud Msallam (born in Lamu in 1947); Sheikh Ali Shee (born in Lamu in 1950); Sheikh Nassor Khamis (born in Kwale in 1955); and Sheikh Abdulaziz Rimo (born in Kwale in 1949, passing away in 2015), amongst others, continued the campaign in post-colonial Kenya to reform Islamic practice and modernize Muslim public life.[768] Rimo, in particular, has recently been described as 'the forbearer of jihadi ideology in Kenya', becoming particularly active in Kwale and Mombasa from the late 1980s until the 2000s.[769]

At the time of the emergence of this group of intellectuals – almost all of whom lived in Mombasa at one time or another – townspeople society had been redefined from within, as was noted above. Increasing opportunities for scholarships to study elsewhere in the Muslim world meant that lower-status townspeople could improve their prestige, using their claims to Islamic

[767] See, Bakari, 'The new Ulama in Kenya'; Kresse, 'Swahili enlightenment?'
[768] Bakari, 'The new Ulama in Kenya', pp. 182. The dates of birth are from Kresse, *Philosophizing in Mombasa*, pp. 93. On Rimo, see, Ndzovu, 'Kenya's Jihadi clerics', pp. 361.
[769] Ndzovu, 'Kenya's Jihadi clerics', pp. 362.

knowledge to assert their moral status. In particular, Sheikhs Nassor and Rimo, both of whom were of Digo Mijikenda origin, espoused this latter trend much more vividly.[770]

During the second-half of the 1960s and in the early 1970s, post-colonial Islamic reformers had all fallen under the ideological influence of Sheikh Saleh Farsy, through the mosque sermons and lectures he issued, three days in a week at regular intervals, at the Shibu, Nur and Musa mosques of Mombasa.[771] An Omani-Arab, Sheikh Farsy had arrived in Kenya from post-revolutionary Zanzibar in 1968.[772] In Kenya, he became a naturalised citizen, and through his close association with Sheikh Kasim, then Chief Kadhi, managed to succeed him to become Kenya's second post-colonial Chief Kadhi, serving from 1968 until his death in 1982.[773] Finding space in Mombasa to articulate his ideas for Islamic reform, in a way he couldn't in Zanzibar, Sheikh Farsy took to the mosque platform, giving seminars and issuing lectures that attracted hundreds of listeners not only during Ramadhan, but throughout the year.[774] Bakari records that Sheikh Farsy's lectures took on a controversial tone, where he concentrated on the Quran and lambasted local rituals he deemed as unacceptable religious innovation.[775]

As already stated, in his and Sheikh Kasim's analysis, the persistence of what they regarded as 'anachronistic practises amongst East African Muslims'[776] was the consequence of a generalised lack of proper religious education or knowledge, where religious instruction for the vast majority

[770] As was explained in Footnote 528 above, most of the individuals who could easily work their way up the hierarchy in towns' society but also had kinship origins in the immediate hinterland of Mombasa were of the predominantly Muslim Digo, Mijikenda group, as was illustrated by the example of Maalim Juma Mwinyijaka, a Digo born at Matuga in Kwale, and once an executive member of the Coastal League, a *mwambao*-project supporting party.
[771] Bakari, 'The new Ulama in Kenya', pp. 181; Interview 56, Ustadh Harith Swaleh, at Old Town, pp 7.
[772] See, Roman Loimeier, *Between social skills and marketable skills: The politics of Islamic education in 20th century Zanzibar* (Leiden, Brill, 2009), pp. 393-400.
[773] Interview 56, Ustadh Harith Swaleh, at Old Town, pp 7.
[774] Bakari, 'The new Ulama in Kenya', pp. 181.
[775] *Ibid*.
[776] This description draws from Bakari, 'The new Ulama in Kenya', pp. 181.

of townspeople had, even in the 1970s, largely relied on recitation, repetition and memorization, without proper intellectual engagement with religious texts.[777] A resident of Majengo, who grew up in Mombasa in the 1970s, remembered:

> The way we were being taught in the past it was just cramming the Quran, but there was no translation even, furthermore, those things of covering our heads when you're young, many of these things they didn't know. Eventually they had to send many scholars here to teach them and to do scouting and pick some good Islamic teachers to go there and study the religion thoroughly and then come back here and…correct, rectify, and teach people thoroughly, not repetition.[778]

The religious obligation of the Muslim, reformers such as Sheikhs Farsy and Kasim proclaimed, was to seek proper Islamic knowledge through reasoned judgement, hardwork (*jitihada*) and engagement with religious texts, and not to rely on the religious mediation that had long been offered by the *masharifu*: 'God should give us the strength to read and to understand and to consider His holy book, so that we can receive his good teachings' Sheikh Kasim stated towards the end of the second volume of one of his religious booklets.[779] But since 'there were no [proper] madrassas at the time,' as the Majengo resident quoted above noted,[780] Sheikhs Farsy and Kasim had themselves to take on the responsibility of imparting religious knowledge, and in the process, prescribing proper religious behaviour and personal conduct (virtue) amongst the

[777] See for example, Interview 56, Ustadh Harith Swaleh, at Old Town, pp 7.
[778] Interview 49, Sophia Ibrahim Kasu, at Majengo, 20th July 2018, pp 9.
[779] Muhamed Kassim Mazrui, *Hukumu za Sharia* (Second edition, Mombasa, H.O Adams and Sons, 1971), pp. 42.
[780] Interview 49, Sophia Ibrahim Kasu, at Majengo, 20th July 2018, pp 9.

predominantly Muslim townspeople. In these efforts, the theme of purification, of the local brand of Islam, was maintained.

To impart this knowledge, Sheikh Farsy held regular classes with students at evening mosque seminars.[781] Similar to the agenda of his teacher, Sheikh al-Amin Mazrui, Sheikh Farsy's emphasis on the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet, i.e. the *Hadith* and the *Sunna*, was an affront, not only against local Sufi rituals, but also the hegemony of traditional Sufi-Shafi scholars, the *masharifu*, whose religious authority was largely based on the success of *Sufism*. As a result, he drew the ire of the intellectual descendants of Habib Saleh (introduced in Chapter 2 above), some of whom, like Sheikh Abdulrahman Badawy (1920-2005), also known as Sharif Khitamy, were Saleh's relatives, meaning that they also claimed descent from the Prophet Mohamed.[782]

Sheikh Farsy campaigned vigorously against saint veneration, simply, the veneration of *masharifu*, a group that had dominated religious authority in East Africa for almost a century. This meant that the status of *masharifu* would also be challenged in this debate about proper religious practice, not only by fellow Arabs (especially Omani-Arabs), but also by lower-status townspeople, who could now much more easily become respected religious scholars in their own right. Much like Msanifu Kombo had *used* his struggle against Ronald Ngala in the 1960s (see Chapter 4 above) to redraw the boundaries of townspeople society, men like Sheikhs Nassor and Rimo *used* the debate regarding proper religious practice to assert the moral status of *wamiji* when it comes to religious authority. As a result, both Nassor and Rimo opened the space for younger Muslim scholars from the lower-stratums of townspeople society to also talk about Islam in public, in a context, especially in the 1990s, where political invocations of Islam in public would be made,

[781] Bakari, 'The new Ulama in Kenya', pp. 181.
[782] *Ibid.*

not only by religious scholars, but also by Muslim professionals, students, activists, women, and disenfranchised youth.[783]

As already mentioned, the tenor and tone of *internal* moral debate amongst townspeople about religious practice, and about the way in which they should self-position themselves in post-colonial Kenya and in the world, changed with the return to Kenya of those who had travelled and enrolled in centres of Islamic study in the Middle-East, and in other parts of the Muslim world – a trend that begun and become much more common in the 1980s. They had received scholarships to study at universities such as the University of Medina in Saudi-Arabia; al-Azhar University in Egypt; the Omdurman Islamic University in Sudan; and the University of Benghazi in Libya, amongst others.[784] While there, they were exposed to the works of leading Muslim intellectuals of the Arab-Muslim world, and acquired a more globalist view of Islam – at the core of which were, however, essentially Middle-Eastern, Arabic concerns.[785]

Eager to challenge local senior Muslim scholars, and in the process, improve their moral and social status within townspeople society, many of them abandoned the rhetorical strategies of argument and debate common in Swahili intellectual discourse – an intellectual tradition that, in any case, many had been excluded due to its association with high-status townspeople – and instead, adopted a rather antagonistic and dogmatic tone.[786] After their sojourn in the Arab world, they had become impressive in the Arabic language, but often less eloquent in giving religious speeches in local languages[787] – reifying, in the process, Arabic cultural and linguistic referents.

[783] See for example, Mwakimako and Willis, 'Islam and democracy'.
[784] Bakari, 'The new Ulama in Kenya', pp. 182.
[785] Chande, 'Radicalism', pp. 351.
[786] Kresse, *Philosophising in Mombasa,* pp. 92, 94, 101 and 102.
[787] Kresse, *Philosophising in Mombasa*, pp. 94.

Putting their networks and contacts in the Muslim world, particularly Saudi-Arabia, to use, they became responsible for the establishment of a dense trans-regional network of Islamic charities, study groups, and Muslim youth associations. In Mombasa and Kenya more widely, these included organisations such as *Dar-al-iftah*, World Assembly of Muslim Youth (W.A.M.Y), *Rabitah*, including many local chapters of international reformist-oriented organisations such as *Hizb ut Tahrir* and *Tablighi Jamaat*.[788] Through these organisations, a puritanical and uncompromising Salafist-reformism would be aggressively articulated and propagated in local religious discourse from the 1980s and after.

As a result, if '[in the 1960s and 1970s] there were not so many people talking about religious issues in the radio'[789] as was stated by a resident of Majengo, this had changed in the late 1980s.[790] There had been a shift (since the 1960s and 1970s) from scholars like Sheikhs al-Amin Mazrui, Muhamed Kasim and Saleh Farsy, to foreign educated and more radical clerics in the 1980s.[791] In fact, studies have now traced the later explosion of violent Islamist ideas in Kenya in general, and in Mombasa in particular, to the activities of these radical reformist clerics, or new *Ulama* – to use Mohamed Bakari's characterization[792] – during the 1980s.[793] What existing analysis has failed to account for, however, is that at the heart of this shift, from moderate to more radical reformist discourse, was a struggle to redefine status, by a people whose status had been made uncertain as Africans by colonial and postcolonial politics; who had been looked down on by high-status townspeople; and were now looking to assert themselves as proper townspeople.

[788] Bakari, 'The new Ulama in Kenya', pp. 172; Mwakimako and Willis, 'Islam and democracy'.
[789] Interview 49, Anza Mwatsahu, at Majengo, pp 9-10.
[790] Ndzovu, 'Kenya's Jihadi clerics', pp. 360.
[791] See for example, Kresse, 'Swahili enlightenment?' pp. 280.
[792] Bakari, 'The new Ulama in Kenya', pp. 183.
[793] See for example, Chome, 'From Islamic reform', pp. 540; Ndzovu, 'Kenya's Jihadi clerics', pp. 362.

In fact, Kresse – suggesting a similar line of argument – noted that these 'young reformists were often perceived as attempting to make a name for themselves by opposing others solely for the sake of opposition.'[794] They may not have 'always [known] very well what they were talking about or fighting for'[795] as Kresse notes, but they were surely looking for recognition in a historically exclusive hierarchical system. In their overly aggressive pursuit to "purify" the local brand of Islam, they came against practices that had been deemed locally as African and therefore not only unIslamic, but also barbaric and uncivilised, implicitly inserting their project for Islamic reform within localised racial logics. Emphasising a strict adherence to *tawhid* (monotheism) against the prevalence of a litany of cultural practices common amongst the predominantly Muslim Digo, Sheikh Abdulaziz Rimo, who had studied at the University of Medina, alienated popular practices and the supposedly tolerant Islam of local Muslims.[796]

For the Digo, as Ndzovu reiterated, 'questions of adherence to texts, details of Sharia and points of doctrine were perhaps less meaningful'.[797] In the end, Sheikh Rimo was left with a small band of followers, united with the goal of living in a Sharia-based political order and withdrawing from a community that, due to its acceptance of traditional African customary practices, they deemed apostate.[798] Rimo's ideological influence, instead, resonated more with the *wamiji* of Mombasa, particularly in Majengo, where his ideas would later be credited for influencing an entire generation of future violent Islamists.[799]

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[794] Kresse, *Philosophising in Mombasa*, pp. 101.
[795] *Ibid*.
[796] Sheikh Rimo begun his Islamic propagation activities at the Coast in the mid-1980s, see, Ndaro, *Sheikh Abdulaziz Rimo.*
[797] Ndzovu, 'Kenya's Jihadi clerics', pp. 363.
[798] For a comparative analysis, see Eric Morier-Genoud, 'The Jihad insurgency in Mozambique: Origins, nature and beginning, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 14, 3 (2020): 396-412.
[799] See, Ndzovu, 'Kenya's Jihadi clerics', pp. 362.

Meanwhile, while Rimo was being rejected by his community for his vociferous attacks of local customary practices, Sheikh Nassor Khamis, who had also attended the University of Medina, and 'had a special appeal amongst the Islamised African peoples like the Digo [and] Duruma'[800], was in conversation with high-status townspeople in Mombasa to establish a large Islamic school that will provide proper religious knowledge.[801] It is instructive to note that Sheikh Nassor's father was himself a traditional healer, *mganga*, and was well-respected amongst the Digo.[802] In his struggle to rid the local brand of Islam of its excessive hinterland influences, amongst a community described as the 'most superstitious African ethnic groups in the country'[803] Sheikh Nassor was treading a fine path, in a situation where he found that he had to deal with two opposing demands: the maritime and continental visions of the coast.

If local, African traditions had become anathema to a vast majority of townspeople intellectuals, for *wamijikenda*, they were *used* as ideological resources for articulating a distinctive coastal African vision of morality and community. Expressed differently, adherence, or respect for local traditional customs had increasingly become important in Mijikenda imaginations of moral purity/piety and ethnic/racial unity.[804] At the heart of this was a racial logic – to be Mijikenda was to be both African and coastal. Underlying these (re)imaginations of community amongst *wamijikenda* was a moral panic that had been driven by the increased migration into Mombasa by *wabara*, but much more significantly, by the separation of *wamijikenda* from *wamiji*, and the resultant exclusion of *wamijikenda* from the maritime orientations of the coast.[805] In sum, essential traditional knowledge, history and rituals provided for *wamijikenda* a communicative tool for

[800] Bakari, 'The new Ulama in Kenya', pp. 184.
[801] *Ibid.*
[802] Bakari, 'The new Ulama in Kenya', pp. 183.
[803] *Ibid.*
[804] Parkin, *Sacred void*.
[805] For a detailed discussion, see, McIntosh, *At the edge*.

accessing, rebuilding and maintaining a past 'Edenic order…where the [imagined] balanced perfection of social relations [had] not yet suffered [the] decay that [was affecting them in post-colonial Kenya].'[806]

This also came at a time when, with the sudden death of Ronald Ngala in 1972, the idea of Mijikenda had become difficult for *use* in political mobilisation. Yet, many of those of who came to consider themselves as Mijikenda felt the real danger of exclusion, not only from townspeople society, but also from Kenya's modern political economy.[807] In this way, the idea of being Mijikenda, which had only come into existence towards the middle of the twentieth century, suddenly became very important in daily urban life, influencing discourses over claim and obligation, especially between the educated and often fortunate, and the less educated, often poor ethnic kin.[808]

In a way, the content of these *internal* moral debates over claim and obligation had been shaped by the kind of political mobilisation that Ngala promoted in the 1950s and 1960s amongst the Mijikenda. As has been shown in Chapter 3, Ngala's explicit nativist appeals to an exclusive identity, which he *used* in debates and struggles for status, rights and resources against townspeople, casting the coast as distinctively African and black, had also served to alienate the educated, Christian coastal African elite. Ngala was himself educated and Christian. His start in politics was facilitated by some of the most prominent middle-class coastal Africans during the 1950s, and his background, based on education, Christianity, government service and income –

[806] Michael Herzfeld, *Cultural intimacy: Social poetics in the nation state* (New York, Routledge, 1997), pp. 109. The same quote is also cited in McIntosh, 'Elders and Frauds' pp. 35.
[807] For MijiKenda narratives of exclusion in post-colonial Kenya, see, Chome, '"The grassroots are very complicated"'; Willis and Chome, 'Marginalisation'.
[808] See, Interview 39, Damau Chengo, at Mwamlai, Changamwe, pp. 5; Interview 41, Karisa Kombe Nzai, at Bangladesh, Changamwe, pp. 10; Interview 47, Kasiwa Ngasho, at Jomvu, Changamwe, pp. 10; Interview 30, Kalume Kathengi, at Migadini, Changamwe, pp. 4.

aligned with the vision of "responsible" African politics that colonial officials flirted with during the post-War years.[809] Yet, his aggressive ethnic mobilisation from the middle of the 1950s, tapping into exclusive ideas of tradition, custom and identity, largely swept away the pan-ethnic liberal politics in which he had initially been recruited. Two *internal* visions of community amongst the Mijikenda, one cosmopolitan and Western, and the other exclusive and traditional, would come to exist in an uneasy tension throughout the post-colonial decades as a result.

In this way, urban and Western educated Mijikenda, most of whom were also Christians, would come to internalise a degree of shame toward their customs.[810] However, unlike a majority of the townspeople intellectuals discussed above, they could not openly oppose traditional customs and rituals, as doing this would risk alienation, especially given their already tenuous position in the rural moral universe.[811] Incorporation into the maritime orientations of the coast was impossible, given that they were Christian and African, yet, due to the dominance of up-country Christian elites in post-colonial Kenya, their position in the modern political economy was also unassured.[812] They were, veritably, a 'vulnerable elite'.[813] This tension, between two opposing visions of community amongst the Mijikenda, had also featured in *internal* differences of opinion amongst Mijikenda politicians regarding the vision of post-colonial Kenya.

It is instructive that Ngala, who rode on nativist mobilisation, also charted a regionalist vision of post-colonial Kenya, while those who supported a nationalist vision, that is, the few Mijikenda politicians who had supported KANU, also espoused a more cosmopolitan, Western vision of modernity for the Mijikenda. Mwinga Chokwe, perhaps the most prominent Mijikenda

[809] For more details, see, Lonsdale, 'KAU cultures'.
[810] McIntosh, 'Elders and Frauds' pp. 38.
[811] Interview 10, Gabriel Hinzano Ngala, pp. 9.
[812] Chome, '"The Grassroots are very complicated"', pp. 254.
[813] For this coinage, see, Chome, 'Devolution.'

KANU politician before the dissolution of KADU in 1964, was routinely chastised by other Mijikenda for having married a Kikuyu wife, instead of a fellow Mijikenda.[814] The son of Killian Ngala, a relative of Ronald Ngala whose political career came crushing under the weight of Ngala's nativist Mijikenda mobilisation, stated:

> My father's politics were nationalistic, but [Ronald Ngala] was saying no to the Kikuyu and *wabara*, that they would take our things. [Despite the fact that] that has been proved, but we [the family of Killian Ngala] have as well proved something because we have some people who are doctors and leading PhD contenders like you [this candidate]. If it wasn't for a fellow like Killian standing his ground then maybe we couldn't even have the few that we have. Those opportunities that we had a lot of them were taken up by the Arabs. So today I am able to see it this way, if we had many people, if we had many people supporting the nationalistic push, it would have scared the Arabs here.[815]

These discourses obtained throughout the post-colonial period amongst the Mijikenda. Mombasa, which at the turn of the twentieth century had provided the peoples of its immediate hinterland a place to escape the demands of the state, through multiple avenues for becoming Swahili, now seemed distant and strange. 'There were very few people here' was the constant refrain, from a generation of Mijikenda residents of Mombasa who witnessed its post-colonial expansion, and now felt excluded from a town they considered their homeland.[816] Post-colonial Mombasa, for a majority of *wamijikenda*, had now become a place of insecurity: a family member

[814] Interview 12, Safari Yeri, at Mombasa Island, pp. 4.
[815] Interview 10, Gabriel Hinzano Ngala, pp. 9.
[816] See, Interview 25, Ngala Charo Mose, at Junda, Kisauni, pp 6; Interview 47, Kasiwa Ngasho, at Jomvu, Changamwe, 16th July 2018, pp 13-15; Interview 48, Charles Mvuu Tungwa, at Allidina, Changamwe, 16th July 2018, pp 9.

could get "lost" there, failing to meet his/her obligations to the extended family in the rural homestead[817]; an Arab landlord would constantly threaten eviction;[818] *wabara*, majority of whom were better qualified, dominated better-paying jobs.[819] This necessitated the constant need for negotiation and debate with those who were more fortunate. However, facing an insecure position in the modern political economy themselves, urban Mijikenda became increasingly constrained in sustaining their roles as patrons, and found themselves in the middle of opposing demands: between the needs of the rural moral world, and those of the nuclear (or immediate) modern family.

In this context, *internal* moral debates over claim and obligation amongst the Mijikenda became tense and increasingly antagonistic, as had been reflected, years ago, in the lyrics of a song originally coined at Rabai, the home of the first missionary station in Kenya. Vilifying mission-educated Christians, that 'they do not tap palm wine, they do not till the land, their hands just flap about, [and] they walk around aimlessly',[820] the song sought to simultaneously shame and guide the educated Mijikenda to toe the lines of a communitarian morality, or local conventions of civic virtue. In short, it meant to educate them on what it means to be a "true" Mijikenda or African. It was under this context that the moral politics of the Mijikenda entered the decade of the 1990s. Mijikenda politicians, many of them also educated and wealthier than a majority of their largely Mijikenda constituents, would be expected to respond to various demands for patronage: bursaries, wells, schools, roads, fertilizer, jobs, food, money, etc. But they would also be expected to address various key areas where majority of the Mijikenda felt particularly marginalised within Kenya, especially land provision, employment at the docks, and in education.[821] But as George Gona put

[817] Interview 30, Kalume Kathengi, at Migadini, Changamwe, pp. 3.
[818] Interview 23, Joseph Karisa and others, at Mgongeni, Kisauni, pp. 12, 13, 18.
[819] Interview 6, Kasena Yeri, at Malindi Town, pp. 12-13.
[820] Interview, Safari Yeri, at Changamwe, 11 April, 2021 (Interview Notes).
[821] Chome, '"The Grassroots are very complicated"', pp. 251.

it, 'the elected leadership [at the coast] failed the [region] because when it came to making hard choices and decisions on issues that they promised in campaigns to address (crucially the land question, perception of marginalisation, and the quest for equitable redistribution of national resources) the leaders always [walked] away from [them].'[822] This theme of failed leadership, and of marginalisation within Kenya, would be repeated throughout the 1990s by various individuals claiming to speak on behalf of another imagined community, that of *wapwani*, meaning an imagined community of Arabs, *wamiji* and *wamijikenda*, or all those considering themselves to be indigenous to the coast.[823] The imagined community of *wapwani* would prove difficult to mobilise, however, as it was complicated by salient fault-lines, fundamental of which was the historical gulf between the maritime and continental visions of the coast, as has been shown above.

In speaking about community and morality, intellectuals, activists and political leaders in Mombasa would therefore come to constantly reify these two visions of the coast – continental and maritime – which were also linked to distinct racial imaginaries. Through multiple, ephemeral cultural organisations, the idea of Shungwaya continued to issue a unified and exclusive Mijikenda identity, presented with a history of shared migration, customary and ritualistic unity, and on which debates regarding what it means to be a "true" Mijikenda were convened.[824] For townspeople, debates about what it means to be a "proper" townsperson continued to be convened in the 1990s along various Swahili Muslim publics, from the mosque platform, print and digital technologies to the Internet.[825]

[822] George Gona, 'Changing faces on Kenya's coast, 1992-2007', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 2 (2008): 242-253.
[823] See for example, Willis and Chome, 'Marginalisation',
[824] See for example, Chome, '"The Grassroots are very complicated", pp. 257-258.
[825] Mwakimako and Willis, 'Islam and democracy'; Deacon, *et al*, 'Preaching politics'.

The quest, to articulate a distinct Muslim agenda in Kenya's national politics in the 1990s, begun with the establishment of an Islamic Party of Kenya in early 1992, commonly known as the IPK. The IPK's application for registration was rejected by the government, after which the idea of IPK came to influence the distinctive character of Muslim politics in Kenya in general, and in Mombasa in particular, throughout the 1990s and early 2000s.[826]

Emmanuel Karisa Maitha, a Giriama and Mijikenda politician who came to articulate an exclusive nativist Mijikenda vision of coastal politics, participated in complicating the rise of the popularity of the IPK by supporting the emergence of a rival outfit, the United Muslims of Africa, or UMA. In an attempt to brandish the IPK as a racist party seeking to champion the exclusive interests of Arabs, or the high-status townspeople of Mombasa, UMA, as its full title suggests, mobilized solely on race, encouraging the African, or continental orientations of Mombasa. This strategy seemed to have had some success.[827]

Yet, Maitha's influence would be felt much more effectively in his political rivalry with Said Hemed, another prominent townsperson, whom he defeated in 1997 to become MP for Kisauni. Their conflict, much like the conflict between factions supporting Ronald Ngala and Msanifu Kombo in the 1960s, embodied the continuing tension between the maritime and continental visions of Mombasa. These visions, this study has argued, were linked to distinct racial imaginaries.

[826] Oded, 'Islamic extremism'.
[827] See, Ndzovu, *Muslims*, pp. 90-99.

Conclusion

Through an examination of moral debate and political action over almost a one-hundred-year period, this study has shown how racial thinking has influenced the social and political imagination of the residents and officials of the town of Mombasa, one of the largest on the East African seaboard. It has shown how racial thought has provided the battleground between maritime and continental imaginaries, Islamic and non-Islamic traditions, "civilisation" and "barbarism", including the way in which it has influenced the imaginations of moral and legitimate political communities. Most importantly, this study has shown how racial thought in Mombasa has been at the centre of the struggles for status, rights and resources.

Racial categories in Mombasa, fluid and situational, and whose boundaries have hardened over the years due to colonial policies on governance, land law and political representation, were found to exist in a hierarchical nature. While studies of African ethnicity have predominantly focussed on vertical or regional divisions between what were once thought of as "tribes", studies of African racial thought, including this dissertation, examine the racialization of ranked ethnic thought, where categories of identity are imagined as hierarchical strata, and are linked to one another in a dominant and subordinate relationship.

In Mombasa, racial categories have not only encouraged people to identify their loyalties and enmities on the basis of ancestry and skin colour, as shown above, but have also been based on a structure of privilege revolving around land ownership, political power and religion. This structure of privilege, as the dissertation has shown, has been maintained across the colonial and post-colonial decades. Racial thought in Mombasa has also drawn on multiple claims to foreign (Arab/Persian) origins, alongside or vis-à-vis other claims to (African) local origins – claims that in effect, have racialized local identities across time and space. Such racialised identities are also

linked to spatial imaginations, especially divisions between maritime and continental orientations of the coast, or between town and hinterland. The historical processes that explain the emergence in Mombasa of mutually exclusive racial identities is a pre-colonial past of ambiguous racial thinking, in combination with colonial policy and intellectual work, and post-colonial political, economic and religious changes. The emergence of these racialised identities, African and Arab, Swahili and Mijikenda, came to influence local political rivalries, Mijikenda political organisation, debates over the late colonial *mwambao* movement, and reformism amongst the town's Muslim community.

In examining racial modes of thought in Mombasa, this study drew from a body of work that has examined racial thought in Africa more widely, and which has contributed especially in expanding the study of race beyond the West.[828] The study followed in the lines of conceptual reformulations that perceive of racial thought as a shifting field of discourse, and approached the study of race as a topic of intellectual history, rather than a doctrine – synonymous with nineteenth century European science – that categorizes and ranks humanity in specific biological terms.[829] This literature has stood against conventions that race was invented in the West – as a scientific doctrine – and carried to the rest of the world in the toolbox of colonial rulers.[830] The approach to the comparative history of race adopted by authors such as Miles and Brown – including the one adopted in this study – abandons the fixation on scientific doctrines and instead recognizes racial thought as a general set of assumptions that humankind is divided among constituent categories, each of which is distinguished by inherited traits and characteristics.[831] Since societies across space

[828] Glassman, 'Slower than a massacre'; *War of words, war of stones*; Mamdani, *When victims become killers.*
[829] See for example, Robert Miles and Michael R. Brown, *Racism* (Routledge, London and New York, 2003); Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without groups* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, United States, 2006).
[830] Glassman, *War of words, war of stones,* pp. 10.
[831] *Ibid.*

and time have often developed discourses that divide humankind in constituent categories, each distinguished by inherited traits, the task of the researcher – these authors have suggested – is to examine how particular ways of categorizing humanity become important modes of organizing social and political action than others, and at particular times and places.[832]

The implication of this study for wider conceptions of race, and as explained by authors such as Etienne Balibar, is that a "racism without races", has and continues to exist, that is, "a racism whose dominant theme [or primary motivation] is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences."[833] These cultural differences, combined with other criteria as nobility, Islamic erudition, moral piety, high breeding, and other concepts convergent with the ideal of civilisation, ostensibly inclusive yet contributing to hierarchical beliefs and practices, have also occurred, not only in the intellectual traditions found along the East African coast, but in many other non-Western traditions as well.

The examination of the political history of Mombasa and its local hinterland across the colonial and post-colonial decades is not only important to wider debates on racial thought, but is also important to scholarly debates regarding the nature of racial thought in Africa, and to understandings of the local implications of the reorganisation of macro-spatial relations along Africa's Indian Ocean rim during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This study found that the most durable feature organising the moral and political universes of Mombasa since its precolonial past has been a tension between its maritime and continental orientations, which have also been linked to distinct racial imaginaries. This tension, the study concludes, represents the most fundamental and enduring feature of Mombasa's modern socio-political history.

[832] Brubaker, *Ethnicity*, pp. 3-4.
[833] Etienne Balibar, 'Is there a "Neo-Racism?" in Balibar, Etienne and Wallerstein, Immanuel, (eds)., *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous identities* (Verso Books, London, 1991): pp. 21.

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