

THE COMORIANS IN KENYA:
THE ESTABLISHMENT AND LOSS
OF AN ECONOMIC NICHE

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ABSTRACT

This study deals, not with the kind of bounded group anthropologists usually prefer, but attempts to document a shifting category, whose ethnography involves an understanding of complex historical processes, and knowledge ranging through time and space.

I aim to show what happened, over a long period, to a category of individuals originating in the Comoro Islands (Ngazija in almost all cases) who migrated first to Zanzibar and then on to mainland East Africa in search of employment. Comorians, like the Swahilis of the East African coast, are of mixed Arab/Bantu African origin, and they speak languages which have diverged from a common KiSwahili origin. The islands formed part of the same trading network as the small Swahili city-states until the twentieth century, and their sultans were related both agnatically and affinally to the Swahili sultans. Comorians thus had much in common, historically and culturally, with the Swahilis among whom they went to find employment.

However, once there, they established for themselves, and had established for them by circumstances, a niche which was compounded of social class, 'race' as defined during the colonial period, and type of employment, which differentiated them sharply from the Swahilis, and which they came to regard as defining their personal as well as their public identity.

When external factors changed after the Independence of the East African countries, the public identity which Comorians had enjoyed became less and less tenable. They had not only to make new economic choices, but also to make a personal adaptation to the fact that the high esteem in which they had previously been held (which depended upon the presence of Europeans) had gone. The effect this had on their private sense of identity, and on their preferences in such matters as residence, marriage and indeed ultimately nationality, are traced out here.

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INTRODUCTION

This study does not deal with the kind of bounded group which anthropologists often prefer, but attempts to document a shifting category, whose ethnography involves an understanding of complex historical processes, and knowledge ranging through time and space.

I aim to show what happened, over a long period, to a category of individuals originating in the Comoro Islands (Ngazija, in almost all cases) who migrated to East Africa in search of employment. There, they established for themselves, and had established for them by circumstance, a niche which was compounded of social class, 'race' as defined during the colonial period, and type of employment, and which they came to regard as defining their personal as well as public identity. When external factors changed after the Independence of the East African countries, the public identity which Comorians had enjoyed became less and less tenable, and they had not only to make new economic choices, but also to make a personal adaptation to the fact that the high esteem in which they had previously been held had gone. The effect this had on their private sense of identity, and in their preferences in such matters as residence and marriage, are traced out here.

Given these research interests, the best way to do fieldwork would have been to be in pre-Revolutionary Zanzibar, in colonial Kenya, and in post-colonial Kenya, Zanzibar and Ngazija. Since this was plainly out of the question, I tried to do the next best thing. In addition to collecting data about Comorians as they were in Mombasa and Nairobi during my fieldwork period, I recorded as much as I could of my informants' memories of colonial Zanzibar and Kenya, and their perceptions and activities in that period. I encouraged them to describe their work, the racial framework within which it took place, and the interpersonal and

congregational (Parkin, 1974) activities of Comorians in East Africa during that period. From Comorians born in Ngazija I learned much about the constraints which membership of towns and kin-groups there imposed upon their lives as migrants in East Africa. I was able to supplement my understanding of Ngazija's social structure by four visits there, totalling in all about three months. The first was before fieldwork in East Africa had begun, the second was when it had just ended, by which time I had a rich network of acquaintances, and the kin of friends in East Africa, to help me. I made two further short trips to the island in 1976 and 1977.

On my return to England I set about reading to give my informants' statements and memories a context, and to check them, as far as was possible, against the recorded events and attitudes of the colonial period.

It also seemed important to set the Comorians themselves in the context of the wider Swahili world, making a comparative exploration of the variations on a common theme of kinship and marriage patterns among Comorians in Ngazija, Comorians living in East Africa, and East African Swahilis. I was eager to do this partly because of the dissonance between the very distinct public identity Swahilis and Comorians had had, by contrast with their highly similar personal identities. Partly too, because no other scholar had attempted a synthesis of Swahili and Comorian material, I felt that, since I was in a strong position to make some progress in that direction, it was my duty to do so.

As a result, I have eventually spread my net wide, writing of Ngazija, Zanzibar and Kenya, through time, and of two overlapping cultures, the Comorian and the Swahili, in order to arrive at an understanding of the self-evaluation, actions and kinship patterns of the Comorians I studied in Kenya in 1973 and 1974. While the fine focus which comes from the study of a settled defined unit such as a village

is inevitably lost to some extent in the process, I would argue that there have been considerable gains, both for our understanding of the processes by which public identity may be modified through time, and even more, in the realm of kinship. The variations in Swahili and Comorian kinship norms can all be seen to be part of a process in which differing groups have made specific adaptations to the situation they found themselves in. As Firth has pointed out: 'The study of a situation over time may be necessary in order to allow the relative movement and weighting of factors to be perceived clearly' (1959: 146).

The thesis is arranged in three sections. In Section I, Public identity: The Comorian employment niche 1840-1970, the establishment of a public identity for Comorians is traced in two distinct contexts in East Africa. Chapter 1, The establishment of Comorians in Zanzibar, looks at the earlier of the two destinations for Comorian migrant labourers in East Africa, and follows their presence there, and the public identity they acquired there, through until 1970. Chapter 2, The strengthening of racial boundaries, examines the processes by which a migrant category of Comorians established themselves in Kenya from Zanzibar, and the particularities of the colonial framework within which their public identity developed.

In Section II: Private identity: Themes and variations upon Swahili-Comorian kinship patterns, three variant modes of the same kinship patterns are examined. Chapter 3, Kinship and marriage among East African Swahilis and the Comorians in Ngazija, characterises the patterns to be found in the area Comorians migrated from, and in that they migrated to. Chapter 4, Kinship and marriage among Comorians in East Africa to 1970, analyses the midway pattern evolved by Comorian migrants as they went to live in East Africa.

Section III: Employment, kinship and the potential for change, examines the situation with which Comorians were presented after the early 1960s, when their public identity in both Zanzibar and Kenya had abruptly collapsed. The section deals exclusively with Comorians living in Kenya at the time of fieldwork, and presents data on two types of topic. Chapter 5, Patterns of residence, household composition, and employment among Comorians in Kenya 1973/1974, presents a statistical analysis of the extent to which Comorians born in different places, Ngazija, Zanzibar and Kenya, had the option of settling permanently in Kenya and effectively becoming Swahilis. Chapter 6, Adaptation and change, complements this data by showing the considerable potential for adaptation which Comorians had, using their bilaterality for extending, rather than consolidating, their options.

Chapter 7, Conclusion, justifies the comparative approach taken in the thesis.

Fieldwork, and fieldwork difficulties

When I first became interested in the Comorians, I had hoped to do fieldwork in the Comoro Islands themselves. Comorians were, to my knowledge, the only matrilineal Swahilis in the East African coastal region,¹ and I was, from the first, interested in a comparative approach which would explain why the Comorian pattern diverged from the Swahili pattern, and how matriliney and Islam would fit together. I had already visited the Comoro Islands once and read a good deal about it when it became clear that, in a tense period when Comorians were agitating passionately for Independence, the French authorities would not grant me permission for field research there.

Instead, I gained research permission to work in Kenya, and was able to work among Comorian labour migrants there from June 1973 until January 1975. Though there are many more Comorians in Tanzania than in Kenya, it was at that period out of the question to hope to do field research in Tanzania, and still less possible to work in Zanzibar.

I worked primarily among Comorians living in Mombasa, but also came to know many Comorians living in Nairobi, during the weeks I was living there applying for research permission. It became clear that Comorians in both towns were in close touch, that Comorian leaders almost all lived in Nairobi, and that if I was to have a clear picture of the Comorian category in Kenya, I needed a familiarity with the Comorians in both towns. I ultimately spent about a third of my fieldwork period in Nairobi, and two-thirds in Mombasa, totalling eighteen months in all.

1 I was wrong on two counts. Comorian matriclans cannot be analysed as matrilineages, and the matrilineal groups they have are exactly replicated among the Mozambique Swahilis.

At the period when I was working in Kenya, many Comorians were uncertain about their own futures. As a relatively successful 'non-native' category during the colonial period, they watched the expulsion of Asians from Uganda, and the non-renewal of Asian work-permits in Kenya, with a sense of threat, fearing that they too might be forced to leave the country. When I had been working in Kenya for about a year, it was announced that the registration of all aliens in Kenya was to become compulsory from November 1974. It can be readily appreciated that, in a climate of uncertainty, an anthropologist who asks questions about place of birth, parents' place of birth, employment, and so on, is feared as a possible government emissary. It made it quite impossible for me to hope to conduct any kind of large-scale survey, or indeed to be welcomed by those who did not know me well. Instead, I concentrated on coming to know relatively fewer households relatively well, and am exceedingly grateful for the trust these individuals placed in me, and for the help they gave me. Though they minimized their Comorian identity in their dealings with non-Comorians, they allowed me to become an honorary Comorian to the extent that I was able to appreciate the personal importance of Comorian identity to them in more intimate dealings.

I lived for the first five months of my time in Mombasa in an Old Town Swahili household which had long-standing affinal and neighbour links with Comorians. The period was a rich one from the point of view of language-learning, and it established me in the eyes of many Old Town individuals as a known and trustworthy person. Much of what I learned about the minutiae of household life, women's networks and the daily life of the mtaa (quarter) were learned in this period. Eventually, however, when the opportunity came to rent accommodation of my own, I took it because it had been difficult for me to entertain individuals

in my hosts' household who were not already their acquaintances too. Some of the poorest of my informants were in awe of my hosts, as well, and were too shy to come to the house.

There were gains and losses in the move. My greater freedom was offset by the loss of the compulsory immersion in Old Town life which I had experienced before, and by lost opportunities for chance meetings. Instead I worked through the making of appointments with individuals I wanted to talk to, and this was not always successful.

As a woman, there are certain advantages to working in a muslim society. Muslim women talk easily to another woman, and muslim men readily see a foreign woman as a social man, in contexts where she is obviously employed in a high status activity such as interviewing and writing. The only areas which were quite out of bounds were mosques and barazas (customary discussion spots), and exclusion from barazas was a big loss. Men sit at barazas at the end of the working day, when they have already ritually prepared themselves for the mosque and would have to go home and wash again if they so much as shook hands with a woman. It is a recognised private time for male gossip and reflection, and many insights would have been gained if I had been able to join them.

A note on usages

I have systematically changed the names of all living (and recently dead) Swahilis and Comorians referred to in the text, to protect my informants, and in a few cases have also changed some minor detail (such as the town within which they live) in case-histories, for the same reason. Comorians and Zanzibar sultans referred to in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries retain their own names, however.

Where transliterations of Arabic words, such as sharif, occur, I have employed the methods of the new edition of the Encyclopaedia of Islam, avoiding longmarks and subscripts. In the case of words which have been borrowed into KiSwahili from Arabic, I have spelled them as they sound in KiSwahili, but followed the same transliteration rules. Thus I write maghiribi not maghrib.

I use the terms wageni and wazalia extensively in the text. They are explained in Chapter 1, but for quick reference here, I define them as follows.

Wageni are 'newcomers', 'immigrants'. I use the term for Comoro-born Comorians working in East Africa.

Wazalia are the 'locally-born'. Comorian wazalia in East Africa may have been born in Kenya, Zanzibar or elsewhere and I always specify this when I refer to wazalia.

The terms used are those employed by Swahilis and Comorians themselves.

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I was fortunate, in my period in Kenya, to have the intellectual stimulus of researching alongside other fieldworkers and researchers with an interest in the Kenya coast or nearby areas. The companionship of Fatma Dharamsi, Shanti Fry, Judy Geist, Simon Coldham, Fred Morton, and Hamo and Caroline Sassoon meant a great deal to me. I would also like to express my thanks for two extremely helpful letters written to me in the field by Maurice Bloch, when I was evolving a conceptual framework for coming to grips with some of my data.

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My thanks to the many individuals I have not named are equally heartfelt, and I hope they will feel that the information they entrusted me with has been fairly employed here.

The writing-up of this thesis has been problematic for both academic and domestic reasons, and my profoundest thanks go to those who were able to offer the encouragement needed to keep going until the end: Melanie Anderson, Jenny Hargreaves, Brad Martin, Johnny Parry, Ahmed Rajab and Hilary Standing. I am also grateful to Pat Lavery and Pam Watson for help with the children while I wrote, and to Jo Foster who not only typed the thesis beautifully, subediting it as she went, but who also gave helpful advice on its final form. I am above all indebted to my husband, who had to endure its long and troublesome gestation period patiently. Without his steadfast belief in the value of the material presented here, it would not have seen the light of day.

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SECTION I: Public identity: The Comorian employment niche
1840-1970

The two chapters in this section analyse the formative period for Comorian identity in East Africa, taking the story up to and beyond the moment of Independence in Zanzibar and Kenya.

Chapter 1, The Establishment of Comorians in Zanzibar, investigates the parent overseas group of Comorians in East Africa. Chapter 2, The Strengthening of Racial Boundaries, turns to an investigation of the Comorians who settled in Kenya and Zanzibar, and later from Ngazija itself.

CHAPTER 1

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMORIANS IN ZANZIBAR

The migration to East Africa of Comorians seeking paid employment and entrepreneurial opportunities predates the colonial period by more than half a century. During this early period, a pattern of service to the Umani sultan, the Umani elite and to resident Europeans was set which was to make it possible for later Comorian immigrants to move into a relatively favourable employment niche after the beginning of the colonial period.

This chapter examines the way in which the Comorians were first established in Zanzibar and then goes on to investigate the development of the Comorian settler population in Zanzibar.¹ This group, which became increasingly endogamous as time went by, was important to Comorian immigrants both in Zanzibar and on the East African mainland since the status it had achieved favourably affected their own under the system of racial categorisations prevailing during the colonial period.

1.0 Comorians in Nineteenth-century Zanzibar

Zanzibar and Ngazija, the northernmost of the Comoro Islands, are only 400 miles apart. Local and long-distance trading vessels made the journey regularly between them long before Sayyid Sa'id, Sultan of Uman,

1 Details of Comorian employment are drawn from the published work of Ibuni Saleh, from the manuscript of Burhan Mkelle (both Zanzibar-born Comorians writing in the 1930s) and from the memories of Comorian informants about their fathers and grandfathers. Mkelle's manuscript is invaluable since it contains over eighty thumbnail sketches of notable Comorians in Zanzibar and the positions they held. I am very grateful to B.G. Martin, both for drawing Mkelle's manuscript to my attention, and for translating parts of it from Arabic for me.

transferred his court to Zanzibar in 1840,¹ and there were a few Comorian artisans and traders there from the end of the eighteenth century (Saleh, 1936: 6). The Swahili² sultans of Zanzibar (whose position was all but nullified by the establishment of the BuSa'idi dynasty) shared common membership of sharif patrilineages with the Comorian aristocracy, and such kinship links would have made it easy for Comorian sharifs to trade and settle in Zanzibar if they wished.

When Sayyid Sa'id came to live in Zanzibar, it marked the beginning of a period of much increased commerce and political importance for the island which was to lead, ultimately, to European colonisation.

This period coincided, for Comorians, with a series of events at home which made emigration an attractive option for many. Malagasy slave-raiders had attacked the archipelago repeatedly from the 1790s to the 1820s; and on Ngazija competition for paramountcy between the island's seven sultanates became increasingly pugnacious between 1830 and 1850

1 Even as early as 1841, 90-100 boats a year traded southwards from Zanzibar to the Comoros, Mozambique and Madagascar (Nicholls, 1971: 372). For details of items traded see Isaacs (1836: 308-309) and Gullain (1856, III: 328-352).

2 Much effort has been expended on trying to define Swahilis as a category. Looked at historically, it is clear that the Swahilis have been coming into existence constantly over about two thousand years at coastal sites where trade and consequent intermarriage took place between Arabs and Africans. Taking advantage of their dual origins, Swahilis have always acted as middlemen between their African and their Arab kin, ruling the settlements at which trading took place and taxing the passage of goods. The pattern was reproduced inland from the nineteenth century onwards at such caravan-route centres as Ujiji, where trade and marriage always went hand in hand. The Swahilis have lost their trading role over the last eighty years, Islam in East Africa no longer has the status it had, and it is consequently harder to define Swahilis than it used to be. However, it is still true that membership of the category 'Swahili' can only truly be accorded to those born to at least one Swahili parent or, in the case of women, to those who marry such men. Men who urbanize, become muslims, and begin to call themselves Swahilis thereafter, are regarded as marginal by those who are Swahilis by birth or affinity: they are not linked by any form of kinship to the settlement.

(Harries, 1977: 112). Many individuals, impoverished or tired of forced participation in the campaigns of their sultans, set off for Zanzibar (Burton, 1872, vol.i: 340; Shepherd, 1980: 74ff.).¹

1.1 Comorians in Zanzibar: 1839-1870

1.1.1 The nature of court life in Zanzibar

The relative importance which Comorians came to have in Zanzibar can only be understood in relation to the highly personal way in which the sultanate was administered under Sayyid Sa'id and his two immediate successors, Majid and Barghash. All three were merchant-princes for whom no formal separation of personal wealth and public moneys existed while government, according to Consul Hamerton in 1855 was '... of a purely patriarchal nature' (Gray, 1963: 219-220). The sultan ruled through a daily baraza (court) which any freeborn man of standing could attend, and relied on three important categories of men rather than ministers with formal portfolios. The approval of the chiefs of the Umani clans represented in Zanzibar was vital for the adoption of new measures. That of religious leaders was also essential: both Ibadhi and Shafi'i kadis were appointed and the sultan took care to avoid being seen as a religious leader himself (Nicholls, 1971: 282). Thirdly, a small highly influential group was composed of the sultan's clerks,

1 Saleh also mentions the eruptions of the volcano, Karthala, on Ngazija, as a reason for the exodus of residents from this island. Records of the volcano's eruptions go back no further than 1857, to my knowledge. However, it erupted five times in fifteen years between 1857 and 1872, its lava overlaying extensive acreages of fertile land. It erupted only seven times more in the whole of the next century, and it is possible that those who lost their livelihood in this period of intense volcanic activity decided to emigrate (Saleh, 1936; Battistini, 1967). Finally, there was a severe famine in Ngazija in the 1850s and another in the 1870s (Harries, 1977: 63, 69).

chamberlains and translators who could read and write Arabic and various European languages. Mkelle tells us of several Comorians who filled these roles; and the importance of such men is testified to by Guillain. Describing Khamis bin Osman, a Lamu Swahili who had learned English as Owen's aide earlier in the century, he commented upon the Sultan's great dependence upon him and remarked, 'If Khamis were to die, it would cause a revolution in Zanzibar's external relations' (Guillain, 1856, II: 34ff, 131; Nicholls, 1971: 269-277).

There were no police. Baluchi or Hadrami garrison soldiers did duty for them when not on active service. When larger numbers of troops were needed, in Sayyid Sa'id's day, they were conscripted in Uman or obtained by request from other rulers in the Hadramawt, the Comoros or Madagascar (Guillain, 1856, II: 237-239; Nicholls, 1971: 255-256).

Finally, it is important to stress how quickly Swahilized the Umani court was. Most Umani men were married to local women, even Sayyid Sa'id having only one Arab wife; Kiswahili was the language of the court from the 1840s onwards and Swahili urban culture dictated the norms of daily life¹ (Guillain, 1856, II: 78, 94; Nicholls, 1971: 279-281).

1.1.2 Comorians in military service

The earliest record we have of Comorians in the service of a Zanzibar Sultan refers to the recruitment of a detachment of soldiers from the Comoros for Sayyid Sa'id's campaigns against Siyu between 1839 and 1845. Both Ngazija and Mohéli provided soldiers for this engagement (Mkelle,

1 Even the difference of muslim sect has often been made too much of. While the formal differences between Ibadhism and Shafi'i Sunni Islam are wide, Zanzibari Umanis were not zealous Ibadhis and the two sects were mutually tolerant in Zanzibar. In Mombasa, the Umani Mazru'i converted to Shafi'ism during the nineteenth century, and the same might well have happened in Zanzibar if the numbers of resident Umanis had been smaller.

1930: 4; Nicholls, 1971: 256) - the two Comoro Islands which Sa'id claimed as part of his dominions (Dubins, 1972: 117). Some of these soldiers must have stayed on in Zanzibar, for after 1856, 130 Comorians were selected as a personal bodyguard for Sultan Majid and a Comorian also became Chief of Police (Burton, 1872, I: 341). The value of Comorians to Majid was no doubt that they were from none of the island's Umani clans - some exceedingly hostile to his selection as sultan - and were unlikely to be supporters of the Mwenye Mkuu, the island's Swahili sultan whose position had been all but usurped by the BuSa'idi dynasty. For the same reason, perhaps, Palace clerks were often individuals who had not been born in Zanzibar.

1.1.3 Comorians with religious posts

As the population of Zanzibar rose and grew wealthier, the town gradually became a centre of Islamic learning, and mosques became more numerous. Ngazija in the Comoros was also experiencing a period of importance as a centre of religious learning from the mid-nineteenth century onwards (the profits to be made in the Comoros from slave-trading attracted sharifs from the Hadramawt who had been able to pursue advanced Islamic studies there) and several trained individuals found employment in Zanzibar as kadis or mwallims (Kur'an-school teachers) (Mkelle, 1930: 1, 3; Shepherd, 1980: 87). The other main sources for Shafi'i kadis seem to have been the Lamu archipelago of Hadramawt itself in this period. Indigenous Zanzibaris were apparently insufficiently learned by comparison with these immigrant groups.

1.1.4 Work for Europeans

Nzwani, more than the other Comoro Islands, had provisioned European shipping en route from the Cape to India ever since the sixteenth

century (Grandider, 1903: 256, 308; *ibid*, 1904: 83-85, 89, 99, 400-401, 365), and continued to do so - despite the development of Cape Colony - until the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. They also provisioned the Portuguese in Mozambique, who found it easier and cheaper to buy food in Nzwani than in their own hinterland (Molet and Sauvaget, 1971: 249).

As a result, many WaNzani spoke some Portuguese, English or French in the mid-nineteenth century, and the Comoro Islands were a spot well-known to British merchantmen (Burton, 1872, i: 340). It was partly a long-standing British connection which encouraged the establishment of a British consul on Nzwani in 1848, though the immediate reason was the fact that France had taken possession of nearby Mayotte.

A small American, British, French and German population of Europeans established itself in Zanzibar during the 1840s, and by Burton's visit in 1857 it had become a common-place for WaNzwani to find employment with them as interpreters and personal aides (Burton, 1972, i: 341-342). Both von der Decken and Livingstone, in the early 1860s, engaged Comorians as personal servants/interpreters on journeys upcountry from the mainland coast (Simpson, 1975: 164; Coupland, 1945: 35).

WaNgazija lacked the initial linguistic advantage of WaNzwani, probably, but those in Zanzibar town quickly acquired some knowledge of English and profited from the fact that Europeans made no distinction between WaNzwani and WaNgazija but called them all Comorian.¹ Rigby,

1 Ngazija, the largest Comoro Island, was called Great Comoro by the British, and the archipelago of which it was the chief, the Comoro Islands. It was thus no great step to coin the term 'Comorian' for the inhabitants of the archipelago. These inhabitants themselves possessed no such term, however, calling themselves by the name of the particular island on which they lived. This problem has still not been solved in fact. Efforts by political leaders to promote the term WaKomoro for Comorians have met with little success. In Zanzibar the problem was eventually solved by calling all Comorians 'WaNgazija' regardless of their island of origin.

in 1860, noted that Comorians were 'an active intelligent race ... brave and industrious and make good domestic servants' (Russell, 1935: 328); Bishop Steere remarked, 'In Zanzibar there are a great number of Comoro men, who are the most active and trustworthy servants....' (1869: 18); and wealthy Umanis (following European precedent or the trust their sultan reposed in them) also employed Comorians as head servants or stewards in charge of slaves (Christie, 1876: 329).

1.1.5 Poorer Comorians

The total number of Comorians in Zanzibar in the mid-nineteenth century was estimated at about 4,000 by Rigby (whose numbers are high for all the groups he lists) and at 2,000 by Burton (Russell, 1935: 328; Burton, 1872, i: 340). They lived almost exclusively in Zanzibar town and both Rigby and Burton, by their own figures, represent them as being perhaps 7% or 8% of the town's population. Burton's estimated total is probably nearer the truth.

The vast majority of these Comorians cannot have been working at any of the occupations so far listed. Three quarters or more must have been employed in ways which brought them less to the notice of Umanis and Europeans. Many, their grandchildren and great-grandchildren have been told, came first as semi-skilled artisans. Zanzibar town was growing fast and many freeborn Comorians had some building skills since (as is still true today) most acted as overseers and labourers in the construction of their own stone houses, calling on specialists only for the most difficult parts of the work. Those who went to Zanzibar hoped to acquire further skills alongside specialist masons and carpenters.

Comorians were good sailors and, although there were only ever a handful of Comorian ships' captains in the nineteenth century (including Mkelle's grandfather and the grandfather of the present Chief kadi in

Kenya), many became ordinary sidis¹ (Burton, 1872, i: 339-342). At this time Zanzibar, according to Rigby, was 'the nursery for most of the sidis or African seamen found in nearly all the native craft navigating the Indian Ocean' (Russell, 1935: 341). Some worked as bumboat men in Zanzibar harbour, selling meat and vegetables to shipping moored in port, and some, if Burton is to be believed, lived by supplying sailors with alcohol and women (1872, i: 326, 341). Still further down the social scale were messengers and dock labourers.

1.1.6 The social class of Comorian emigrants to Zanzibar

It seems, from Mkelle's manuscript, and from information obtained from the descendants of those referred to here, that most Comorian army officers, religious figures and clerks at the sultan's court were from sharif or upper middle-class descent groups in the Comoros. Those who worked as translators or headmen in Zanzibar had probably previously learned their languages through trade in the Comoros and elsewhere, and would therefore also have come from the same class - the trading class par excellence. Though Burton writes contemptuously of many a Comorian who, 'after obtaining a passage aboard our cruisers, insisting upon the guard being turned out, and claiming from our gullible countrymen all the honours of kingdom, has proved to be a cook or bumboatman' (1872: 841).

Mkelle's manuscript and my fieldnotes make it clear that the nobly-born were indeed to be found working at occupations which a European might regard as demeaning. The explanation for this lies partly in age and the fact that such Comorians were migrants. Young male Comorians (from about the age of eleven upwards) went to Zanzibar and worked as servants for

1 For light on the probable origin of this term, see Gregory (1971: 14-17).

Europeans or in the building trade regardless of the fact that they might be from important Comorian kin-groups. When they had accumulated some savings, and acquired a familiarity with Zanzibar and with, perhaps, a foreign language, they might acquire a post more consonant with their birth. In addition, employment acceptable in Zanzibar with the sultan, wealthy Umanis or Europeans as employers, would still have been unsuitable for a Comorian at home in his own island. There has been a tendency, too, among East Africanists from Burton onwards, for trade to be underrated: many important Comorians (and Swahilis) from senior religious figures downwards were also traders, the wealth they acquired enhancing their importance in other spheres. Mkelle (1930: 6) records a Comorian officer in the Sultan's army resigning to become a bumboatman, indeed. Where an English gentleman might regard involvement with trade as a socially inferior occupation, a middle-class Swahili or Comorian regarded it as the only gentlemanly thing to do.

Poorer freeborn Comorians and, according to Burton, freed Comorian slaves from Mayotte,¹ (1872, i: 340) also made their way to Zanzibar on one of the many dhows which made the journey in season. I have no information about Mahorais (from Mayotte) in Zanzibar in the nineteenth century, though their numbers were tiny in the twentieth. It is very clear, however, that poorer Comorians from Ngazija found increasing opportunities to travel to Zanzibar if they were from one of the sultantate towns on the western coast of the island, the side at which international shipping called. The endogamy of the citizens of each of these towns - which was almost total, according to informants, before

1 Though Mayotte's freed slaves were theoretically free to travel abroad, in practice most of them became, and remained, indentured labourers on French sugar plantations on the island until a period long after Burton was writing (Shepherd, 1980: 82-83).

the coming of tarmac roads in the middle of the twentieth century - meant that large numbers of men in the towns commercially linked with Zanzibar could in time claim a kinship or affinal link with someone already settled in Zanzibar town, and become their guests for a while as they sought for work. Those from the same town and sultanate in the Comoros tended to settle close to one another, elected a well-born individual from their number as their shaikh (representative), and continued to make marriages endogamous to their town of origin, as before (Saleh, 1936: 6-7). In such circumstances, poorer Comorians were well-placed to profit from the superior positions a few had already attained.

1.2 Comorians in Zanzibar: 1870-1888

During the 1870s, Zanzibar's affairs began to come more and more under British control. The opening of the Suez canal in 1869 brought the island 2,000 miles closer to Europe and Consul Kirk helped to foster a new dependence on Britain in Sayyid Majid's successor, Barghash. He arranged for the creation of a standing army for the Sultan, led by Sir Lloyd William Mathews, a British naval officer, to enable Zanzibar to increase her control of the mainland coast and enforce the treaty abolishing slave-trading (Gray, 1963: 240; Wolff, 1974: 33-37).

1.2.1 Comorians in military service

The army was about 1,300 strong, and Comorians were well represented in it from the first. They provided fifteen of the officers, a personal adjutant for Mathews - Shaikh Khamis bin Sa'id - and two Chiefs of Staff with special responsibility for Police affairs - Ali bin Hasan and sharif 'Mamboya'.¹ (Mkelle, 1930: 5-6)

1 Mamboya was a town in Ukaguru on the main caravan route to the Lakes. Sharif 'Mamboya' probably obtained his nickname when a detachment of the Sultan's army was stationed there between 1880 and 1885 (Gray, 1963: 249).

1.2.2 The Palace

Comorians held various positions of importance in what was essentially Sultan Barghash's highly personal Civil Service. There were clerks, working both as secretaries and translators; Matar bin Abdallah who, as the speaker of several European languages, was appointed to liaise between foreign consuls and the Palace; and Shaikh Kari ibn al Haj who was made Ra'is al Baladiya (Chief, Governor) of Zanzibar town, representing the townspeople to the Sultan and the Sultan to the townspeople. Sharif Mamboya also became a Court Chamberlain and acted as advisor to both Barghash and Lloyd Mathews (Mkelle, 1930: 5-6).

Shaikh Kari was responsible, in part, for the arrival in Zanzibar of many more WaNgazija during Barghash's reign. In the late 1870s rivalry between Ngazija's two largest sultanates had become civil war. France was supporting Sa'id Ali, Sultan of Bambao, against his rival Mas Fumu of Itsandra. Shaikh Kari persuaded Sultan Barghash to send Nyamwezi troops in support of Msa Fumu, but to no avail: after a seven-month siege of Itsandra, during which many died of starvation, Msa Fumu was captured by his enemies and strangled, and many of those who had been loyal to him fled overseas. Numbers of the Ngazija aristocrats, according to an informant of Heepe's in 1912 (1920: 89-93) went to Zanzibar.

1.2.3 Religious posts

During Barghash's reign, the wali and three Zanzibar town kadis were Comorian, as were almost a dozen of Zanzibar town's mwallims (Mkelle, 1930: 9). The Imam of the town's Forodhani Friday Mosque was Mansab bin Ali al-Husaini, kinsman of the Bambao sultans (Saleh, 1936: 12).

1.2.4 Less important Comorians

During Barghash's reign state buildings such as Beit al Ajaib and Beit al Hukuma were constructed, with the help, among others, of Comorian artisans. Bakari bin Abdallah, for instance, a member of the matriline of the Itsandra Sultans, went to Zanzibar at about the age of thirteen in the early 1870s and was thus employed.

The description Mkelle gives of his father, Muhammad bin Adam, is also illuminating. His father was born in Zanzibar and apprenticed as a young man to an Indian tailor. At last he became highly skilled, with apprentices of his own, and began to undertake commissions for the Sultan and his close kin. As a result, he was given first a workshop and then a house close by the Palace and eventually became one of the Court interpreters (Mkelle, 1930: 24-25).

The availability of slaves in Zanzibar was so great by the 1870s that every free man could afford a few. Many Comorians, according to Christie, would make money by investing in a few slaves, looking after them well and finding them employment as 'under-servants in European houses' or in 'light remunerative work' (1876: 333). Such slaves must have acquired Comorian identity in time.

Other evidence for the activities of poorer Comorians is lacking in this period; probably they were much the same as before.

It is important to stress (since it profoundly shaped subsequent Comorian priorities) that almost no Comorians, however successful they became financially, invested in land in rural Zanzibar. The acquisition of stone houses and slaves in Zanzibar town was much desired, but other Umani goals were not pursued.

1.3 Comorians in Zanzibar: 1888-1902

The death of Barghash in 1888 marked the end of an era for Zanzibar. Three long, relatively independent reigns were followed by a succession of frequently changing sultans all deeply subordinated to British interests and progressively divested of power.

Germany had established a protectorate over parts of Tanganyika in 1885, and her interest in Zanzibar was one of the reasons for Britain's declaration of a protectorate over the island in 1890. Despite Umani protests, many Arab officials were shortly afterwards replaced by Europeans with Lloyd Mathews as Sultan Ali bin Sa'id's First Minister. Upon the Sultan's death in 1893, a British nominee was appointed rather than Barghash's son Khalid, the obvious candidate.

1.3.1 Comorian involvement in anti-British protest

Hamid bin Thuwain, the new sultan, was hardly in a position to oppose the British. However, in 1895 the Mazru'i Umani rose, as they had done before, in revolt against Zanzibar. Their leader, Mbarak bin Rashid, apparently enjoyed much popular support on the mainland; and anti-British feeling in Zanzibar was such that numerous officers in the Sultan's army, including Comorians such as Sharif 'Mamboya', who had served under Mathews for almost twenty years, defected to join Mbarak in fighting against Mathews and Consul-General Hardinge. When Mbarak eventually fled with a thousand of his followers and was offered asylum in German territory near Dar-es-Salaam, the Comorian officers who had joined him went into exile with him for a time (Mkelle, 1930: 23; Low, 1965: 7-8; Henderson, 1965: 136; Flint, 1965: 642-645).

During the diversion occasioned by the Mazru'i uprising, Hamid augmented his bodyguard to a personal army. He invited Salih bin Mshangama Mnambajini to lead it, a Comorian who had been until then

First Officer under Mathews in Zanzibar's standing army. There were sixteen other Comorian officers, and the force came to number in all well over a thousand. The British were quick to demand a reduction in this force, but it was still quite large when Hamid died the following year. Salih bin Mshangama led it in support of Khalid bin Barghash, when he took the opportunity to proclaim his succession, and helped him to take over the Palace. Such anti-British moves were quickly quelled. With the Comorian captain of the Sultan's man-of-war Glasgow watching helplessly, a British frigate bombarded the Palace until Khalid, Salih bin Mshangama and their close associates fled to the German Consulate. They too were later allowed to settle in Dar-es-Salaam (Mkelle, 1930: 5-7, 22-23; Flint, 1965: 645-646).

Some Comorians who had worked as Palace officials began to resign after the abrupt seizure of power by Britain in October 1891. Salih bin Wazir 'Mdachi' ('the German') is an example. He had worked as a translator for Sultans Khalifa and Ali bin Sa'id, and for British officials, but in 1893 he left for Tanganyika to work for the Germans. According to his great-grandson (DDS), he worked as a translator until after the First World War, though he retired among his Zanzibar kin (Mkelle, 1930: 5).

1.3.2 Comorians who remained in Zanzibar

Other Comorians who had held positions of importance in the Palace or the Army continued to live and work in Zanzibar. Shaikh Khamis bin Sa'id, who had been Mathews' adjutant since the 1870s, was appointed one of the four Arab Ministers at Court, and Shaikh Salim bin Azan, a Baluchi-Comorian, was another (Saleh, 1936: 2a). The Palace Treasurer and Paymaster, and the Chief of Security were also Comorian (Mkelle, 1930: 5-7, 22-23).

Those Comorians with religious posts seem to have stayed in Zanzibar as well. Two Comorian walis were appointed; Shaikh Abdallah bin Wazir al-Ntsujini, an old friend of Sultan Ali bin Sa'id, became Mufti and also worked as adviser to Zanzibar's wakf Council, and the reputation Comorians had for religious expertise must have been greatly enhanced by the presence of their compatriot Sayyid Ahmad Abu Bakr bin Sumait al-Alawi. East Africa's most august scholar until his death in 1925, Sayyid Ahmad had returned to Zanzibar after studies in Istanbul in 1888, becoming first kadi and eventually Grand Mufti. His legal skills and his publications made him well-known throughout the muslim world (B.G. Martin, 1971: 541-544).

Hamoud, the Sultan selected by the British in 1896, was an admirer of British ways, but he had nevertheless to preside over a further handing over of the reins of government to Britain. All the officers in the standing army, many of whom were Comorian, were replaced by Europeans, and the legal status of slavery was abolished. Comorian translators, who would previously have found employment in the Umani Court, now worked on the whole for British officialdom on land, and for the British Navy in East Africa at sea. Less qualified Comorians worked as Petty Officers and sidis (ordinary seamen) in the British Navy as well (Flint, 1965: 646; Mkelle, 1930: 26; Saleh, 1936: 'preface').

The end of the highly personal style of government which had been practised in the Umani Court brought to a close also the intimacy which had existed between certain of the Comorian residents of Zanzibar and their rulers. Though many continued to find employment under the British, their influence and importance lessened, as it did of course for the Umanis themselves.

One Comorian was particularly instrumental in shaping the transition in Comorian aspirations from what they had been in the pre-colonial

period to what they were to become under British rule. Sultan Hamoud appointed Mzee bin Sa'id 'Kikae', a Comorian who had worked as an interpreter both for the Palace and for the British, to be his young son's tutor, religious mentor and interpreter while he went abroad for education. Prince Ali had his primary education in South Africa and then went to Harrow. Mkelle, contrasting his education with traditional Islamic studies, called it an education in 'modern sciences' (1930: 5). When Ali returned at the age of seventeen to become Sultan on the death of his father in 1902, one of his first acts was to open a small 'modern' school for Arab boys in the Palace, staffed by an Egyptian teacher and by his long-standing companion Mzee bin Sa'id Kikae. Through the latter's influence, a small number of Comorian boys were allowed to attend. As the following section will show, Zanzibar's Comorian residents were quicker than the Umani Arabs to recognise the advantage of western education for their children, partly because of its early endorsement by one of their own elders (Saleh, 1936: 12; Flint, 1965: 652-654).

2.0 Comorians in Zanzibar 1903-1939

British attitudes to race were to reshape aspects of Zanzibar's social structure along communal lines. The relationship between race and class had been a complex one in the nineteenth century, but it is clear that class had been the more important: Comorians had existed in all classes of Zanzibar society, for instance. The British looked at Zanzibar and saw simply three communities - Arabs, Indians and Africans - rather than the multiplicity of ranked statuses which had made Zanzibar ultimately a single society. They attempted to preserve special privileges for Umanis as a sop for the loss of their social and economic influence, and saw them as land-owning aristocrats, Indians as traders and clerks, and Africans as labourers. As Flint remarks, 'The population

was labelled by race, and race denoted function' (1965: 651-652). Comorians gradually realised that they were to be classified in the third of these categories.

Though the First World War (which had little effect on Zanzibar) provided some opportunities for Comorians to find employment as interpreters, Petty Officers and sidis in the Navy, basically Comorian settlers in Zanzibar were faced with the fact that a system in which they had flourished had come to an end. While Umanis clung to their decaying clove plantations for their income, it was apparent to the predominantly landless Comorians that education was the best investment for their children's future. (Saleh, 1936: 7, 10; Flint, 1965: 657).

2.1 Education

A British report of 1907 had urged that Arabs and Swahilis be trained for jobs in commerce, and accordingly a handful of Government Primary Schools were founded. Response from parents was slow, however. The fact that instruction was in KiSwahili, written in the roman script, rather than Arabic made many suspicious of Christian influence (Flint, 1965: 654).

Comorian parents were a good deal more enthusiastic, however. Some Comorians had lived in South Africa before coming to Zanzibar and could speak with knowledge of the advantages of a European education; indeed one or two Comorian families had already sent a son to study in South Africa or India by the beginning of the First World War. Consequently, when the Anglican Mission ran a Boys' School in Zanzibar between 1907 and 1922, it received numbers of Comorian boys (Saleh, 1936: 12-13). The Arab Boys' School, founded by Sayyid Ali and continued as a Government School, excluded all other races during this period except for a tiny number of Comorian boys for whom exception had been made. An Educational Commission of 1920 supported continued racial separation in the professions

and therefore in schools (which were to be vocational only) despite pleas from the Indian National Association for more liberal policies and integrated secondary schooling up the University Entrance level (Flint, 1965: 658).

In 1924, Comorian boys were admitted, by right, to the Arab Boys' School, but forbidden access to the School's Arabic classes. Since Arabic was the language in which public examinations were taken, Comorians agitated - unsuccessfully - for the removal of this barrier, and over the next few years the elders of the Comorian Association decided to open a communal Comorian school.

The precedents for such a move were the communal schools which Zanzibar's Indians had been founding since 1890 and which had begun to receive government grants-in-aid in 1916 (Gregory, 1971: 406-407). Among the prime movers for the foundation of a Comorian School was the Arabic teacher at the Arab School, a Comorian who resented the exclusion of his young compatriots from his classes, and a wealthy Comorian trader called Turki, whose Mozambiquan Indian-African wife was the first 'native' headmistress of a primary school for girls in Zanzibar. The school opened in 1930, financed by fees, wakf funds (charitable endowments) and voluntary contributions from wealthy individuals. Initially it had no financial support from the government. Using Kiswahili as its medium of instruction, it taught English, Arabic, the study of the Kur'an and religion along with other primary school subjects. From 1932 it also taught French,¹ a suitable teacher being sent and salaried by the French Colonial Government in Madagascar (Saleh, 1936: 13). Though the school was founded for the children of Comorians born in Zanzibar, children of

1 Comorians were French subjects, though long-standing Zanzibar residents regarded themselves as subjects of the Sultan, and were eager to be recognised as such by the colonial government.

immigrants also went, if their parents could afford the fees. There was no primary education available in the Comoro Islands until the 1950s, apart from Kur'an school, and several of my informants were taken by their parents as youngsters to Zanzibar, expressly so that they could attend the Comorian school there. Such parents were of the opinion, their children explained, that just as Comorian scholars had been among the leaders in religious education in Zanzibar, so too a new generation should do well in secular education.

Primary schools remained communal until the Second World War, though the Government Secondary School began to admit non-Arabs in 1935. However, the only form of higher education in East Africa for non-Europeans was Zanzibar's teacher training college. Makerere remained a European preserve until the war (Gregory, 1971: 455-457, 476).

2.2 'Racial' Status

Zanzibar's Comorians felt angered and frustrated by their categorisation as 'Africans' and as 'domiciled Aliens'. They felt doubly penalized - denied the rights of true Zanzibaris, unlike some mainland Africans settled on the island, yet shouldering the many disadvantages attached to racial classification as 'Africans'.¹

Indeed, Saleh's chief purpose for the writing of his booklet in 1936, 'A Short History of the Comorians in Zanzibar', was to draw attention to these anomalies. Although he claims to write for 'the

1 'Natives' of Zanzibar were defined in a 1921 decree as follows: "(it) includes Wahadimu, WaPemba and the members of any indigenous African tribes who may be settled in the Protectorate, but does not include Swahilis nor persons who are or derive their descent from immigrants from the Comoro Islands or Madagascar".

Comorians were also defined as non-Natives in Uganda and Kenya, and as non-Africans in Kenya (Anderson, 1955).

members of my community', the booklet is written in English and dedicated to Sultan Khalifa upon the occasion of his Silver Jubilee. It is very much for public consumption.¹

Saleh lists every point he can think of in an effort to convince the British that, by British criteria, the Comorians are not Africans. Making an implicit comparison with indigenous Zanzibaris who were also classified as Africans, though 'native' ones, he points to Comorian levels of education; to the positions of responsibility they have held; to their 'traditional close friendship with the ruling class'; to their un-African life-style; to the mingled Arab blood in their veins; to their light colouring and to the fact that they have been 'recognised as equals by other civilized communities' and have intermarried with Arabs and Indians (the 'races' with whom the Comorians wished to be reclassified). Bitterly he points out that the only sense in which Zanzibar's Comorians would be happy to be 'African' - that is to be counted as natives of Zanzibar - is denied them. He rounds off his work by urging Comorians to work for their own interest and promote educational advancement, not to sit sentimentally 'lost in despair' bewailing their past importance (Saleh, 1936: introduction, 13-14, 16-17, 19). Saleh's plea - and pressure from the Comorians in Zanzibar as a whole - led at length to their re-categorization as 'Asians' during the Second World War.

2.3 The Comorian Association

There had been some kind of Comorian chama (voluntary association) since the middle of the nineteenth century, though the only concern

1 In 1925 the Zanzibar Khojas (Cutchis) had petitioned for classification as Indians in the Civil Service on the grounds that their own status was inferior (Gregory, 1971: 407). Saleh was suggesting something similar. He felt particularly angered by Comorian exclusion from Jury Service, along with other Africans.

in those days was the purchase of commonly-held land for cemeteries.¹

In 1911 the first modern Association, modelled on Indian and Goan Associations, was founded with the French Consul as patron, and in 1917 a Comorian Sports Club was founded. In 1924 a re-formed Association, with a bigger role for younger Comorians, came into being through the efforts of the sons of Shaikh Muhammad Mlomri, a well-known mosque teacher (Mkelle, 1930: 11). The Association was made various bequests over the years (wakfs) and was registered in 1929 as a body corporate under the (Land) Perpetual Succession Decree, so that it could administer the funds from these properly. It was the Association which initiated and financed the setting up of a Comorian library and then the Comorian School in 1930 (Saleh, 1936: 17-18).

From the first, the club was primarily for Comorians born in Zanzibar. It was used for recreation and relaxation, and personified Comorian wazalia (the locally-born) to other groups. It was not, like so many urban voluntary organisations in colonial Africa, primarily an agency to help Comorian newcomers to find work and accommodation. It was necessary to make a costly payment for life-membership upon entry, and there were monthly subscriptions as well: it was thus effectively able to exclude Comorian immigrants on financial grounds without spelling out the reasons for their ineligibility.²

1 Muslims bury their dead in the place where they die, rather than making arrangements to send bodies home. However, there is a preference among East African Swahilis and Comorians for burial ideally in the company of close kin, in commonly-held land. Burial in the company of clansmen (members of the same ukoo or inya - see Chapter 3) was the next best thing. In Zanzibar town, Comorians were at least able to be buried in the company of other Comorians.

2 The different character of clubs for first-generation immigrants and second-generation settlers in towns is interestingly analysed for Kumasi, Ghana, by Schildkraut (1974: 187ff.).

2.4 The Comorian areas of Zanzibar town

The division between newcomer Comorians, known as WaNgazija wageni and those born in Zanzibar, the wazalia, was clear to see in the way they were disposed in Zanzibar town. The oldest part of town was the 'stone town' by the harbour. Here, where the oldest quarters were to be found, lived the longest-established Comorian kin-groups. The Comorian Association club building was in the stone town, as was the school. The Sports Club was on the borders of the stone town and Ng'ambo, the mud-and-wattle part of the town which was both newer and poorer.

Just as there were predominantly Comorian quarters in the stone town alongside Umani areas, so there were largely Comorian parts of Ng'ambo. Newcomers lived in Ng'ambo, renting accommodation or 'building three new walls against a kinsman's house' as an informant put it.

2.5 Wazalia and Wageni

In all Swahili and Comorian settlements wageni (immigrants) are secondary in importance to wenyeji or wazalia (locally born citizens). Over time, wageni are woven into the settlement by being encouraged to marry locally, and once they have produced children, new wazalia, they become honorary wazalia themselves.

Among Zanzibar's Comorians, this steady process of assimilation did not universally take place, however. The constant stream of immigrants to Zanzibar from Ngazija¹ between the two World Wars contained wageni who would be incorporated into the settler group, and those who would remain a distinct category. As we have seen, many of the Comorian residents in Zanzibar town - particularly those descended from the

1 Those who did not come usually had ample cash-crop land on Ngazija. First-born daughters, no matter what their social level, were not supposed to leave Ngazija, for they had to make ada marriages on the island and administer the land of their sibling group.

refugees of the 1870s - had come from aristocratic or wealthy kin groups in Ngazija, and had in addition become notable in Zanzibar. Furthermore, they were all from two or three major settlements in Western Ngazija.

Immigrant kinsmen of the wazalia were wageni only temporarily. Their children, if still young, would be reared according to Zanzibar norms and educational standards, and would grow up culturally indistinguishable from wazalia. They were known as wakulea (those reared on the spot). Kin who were as yet unmarried, men or women, were able to contract alliances with wazalia, kin-group, settlement and sultanate endogamy being all highly desirable. Eligible young women were indeed at times brought expressly to Zanzibar to be found suitable husbands, and many male wazalia were engaged, through arrangements made by kin, to girls in Ngazija whom they met only when they came to Zanzibar to be married.

The residual wageni were those unable to ally themselves through marriage to the wazalia. Some were freed slaves, some villagers rather than townsmen, and some were from towns or kingroups not previously represented in Zanzibar. A far broader spectrum of Comorians were thus attracted to Zanzibar in the 1920s and 1930s, but some, however long they stayed, were to remain in a distinct category which became perforce an inmarrying one.

It seems that many set off for Zanzibar uncertain whether they would return or not. 'Zanzibar was our Al-Azhar', said one old Comoro-born immigrant. He meant that just as the Al-Azhar university in Cairo was a great seat of Islamic learning, so, for Comorians, was Zanzibar. Islamic scholars were clustered in Zanzibar town, giving evening teaching to adults both at the mosques and at barazas in their homes. Some migrants seem to have set off for Zanzibar dreaming of studying in their spare time and becoming learned,¹ rather than of ending up working as servants or

1 Trimingham (1964: 85-88) describes Zanzibar's system of adult Islamic education.

construction workers.

The wageni who failed to attach themselves to the wazalia found themselves in fact among immigrants whose orientation remained firmly towards ultimate return to Ngazija. They continued to speak ShiNgazija among themselves, rather than transferring their allegiance to KiSwahili (which they referred to as KiShenzi - Barbarian talk), and their aspirations were fixed on enhanced status at home when they returned with their savings, rather than establishment in Zanzibar. All such immigrants were saving for ada marriages (Shepherd, 1977) and freedmen were also eager to purchase land, especially cash-crop land.

Since they had no intention of remaining in Zanzibar for ever, they tended to send their children only to Kur'an school. The Comorian School would not have excluded their children, but they would have been reluctant to spend their earnings on fees, and were suspicious of secular education. They tended to regard the wazalia as renegades who had allowed their knowledge of Comorian language and their commitment to the islands to atrophy. Since the Comorian Association's aims were not theirs, they formed chamas of their own. Initially there was a chama (voluntary association) for each of Ngazija's sultanates, and in time these united to form the M.M.C. - the MNgazija Mfaransa (French Comorian) Club. The wageni called themselves French Comorians to stress their connection with the Comoro Islands rather than with 'British' Zanzibar: technically all Comorians had French nationality.

Wageni with strong links to the wazalia often went through a period of uncertainty as to their aims. Some were eager to try to combine the advantages of life in Zanzibar with an assured position in their natal towns, and tried to maintain credit in both places. Such men, some years after having lived, worked and married in Zanzibar, would return to the Comoros and spend the money to contract an ada marriage. Their duty

done, they would remain in Ngazija long enough to produce a child or two, and would then return to Zanzibar, usually leaving the ada wife behind but sometimes, despite violent family protests, taking her to Zanzibar. (Polygyny is discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.)

Some wageni who became financially successful in Zanzibar claim that they feared to return home. They feared the envy they would encounter, which might take the form of afflicting them with a jini (djinn); and, though they rarely said so, they were also reluctant to re-enter Ngazija's custom-bound world, where much re-distribution of their wealth would be required, and where they would have to submit to elders whom, by Zanzibar standards, they felt unable to respect. 'We sent money back, but we didn't go back,' said one.

Wazalia, then, were in a somewhat paradoxical position. They rarely visited the Comoro Islands; spouses from the Comoros joined them, but they rarely left Zanzibar to live in the Comoros. Their prime desire was to be of good standing in Zanzibar, and to this end they spoke KiSwahili in preference to ShiNgazija, gave their children Zanzibari muslim names rather than Comorian muslim names, and spent money in ways which would bring them status in Zanzibar rather than in the Comoros.

At the same time, it was as Comorians that they existed in Zanzibar. The positions of trust which earlier Zanzibari Comorians had held under the Umani sultans and under the British had earned Comorians as a whole a good name, and wazalia (like wageni) were full of communal pride. Culturally distinctive Comorian practices were thus a part of communal identity, setting them apart, above all, from Zanzibar's indigenous Swahilis. Although Comorian wazalia and wageni (of the Comoro-oriented kind) only met socially at weddings and funerals, when all those of a particular sultanate were invited regardless of status, an outsider would have noted very great apparent cultural continuity between the two

groups. Indeed, although the status difference between wazalia and wageni was great, and their long-term goals differed, they were not as aware of their separateness, at this stage, as I have made them sound. Wageni profited from the communal position wrought for Comorians by the wazalia, and some would refer to the most highly regarded wazalia as wazee wetu ('our elders').

2.6 Comorian cultural distinctiveness

Comorians looked and dressed like Swahili muslims, lived in the same kinds of houses, ate the same kind of food, were, like Swahilis, Sunni, Shafi'i muslims. To write of their cultural distinctiveness, then, is to focus on fine detail for the most part, and on detail noticeable to Swahilis rather than other groups. The ways in which the Comorians made themselves distinctive to Europeans will be noted afterwards.

2.6.1 Religion

In Ngazija, Islam was particularly profoundly fused with the social structure. The children who had attended Kur'an school together formed an age set which proceeded through a series of named purchased ranks conceptualised as age-grades. The passage into the first of the 'elder' grades could only be accomplished by the making of a costly customary marriage, and only elders thus defined could hold political office in that particular settlement. Members of each grade had to stand together on Fridays to pray in the mosque, those who had successfully made their customary marriage had their own entrance-door to the mosque, and each of the benches in the mosque courtyard for relaxation before or after prayers were reserved for members of one grade only. (Further detail on the relationship between Islam and Ngazija's social structure is to

be found in Shepherd, 1977.) Such complexity was not transportable to Zanzibar, partly because customary marriages were concerned with the acquisition of status and subsistence land in one particular Ngazija polity only. However, Comorians continued to be zealous and enthusiastic muslims in Zanzibar. Many Comorians, as we have seen, had held important religious posts in Zanzibar since the mid-nineteenth century; sufic prayer circles (dhikri) in Zanzibar had in some cases been introduced by Comorians (Shepherd, 1980: 87); and Comorian veneration of sharifs probably exceeded that of local Swahilis because of their continued political importance in Ngazija (Shepherd, forthcoming). Some Comorian walimu (teachers) also made an income from working Islamic magic, divination and astrology.¹ Though there were also Shirazi - rural Zanzibari - walimu, the existence of important Comorian religious figures in Zanzibar added particular lustre to the Comorian walimu, so that they were generally regarded as more endowed with baraka (holy power) and efficacy. Finally, Comorian men were regular worshippers at mosque prayers, and Comorian women prayed assiduously at home. For all these reasons, Swahilis in Zanzibar regarded Comorians as pious and knowledgeable muslims, and Comorians responded to their opinion.

2.6.2 Ritual observance

Comorian and Swahili practice in most of the rituals of the individual's life-cycle were similar.

Although customary (ada) marriages could not be celebrated in Zanzibar, since they concerned transfers of rights tied to specific localities in Ngazija, the flamboyant costliness of Ngazija's big

1 Details of the activities of walimu - all applicable to Comorian walimu - can be found in Trimmingham (1964: 122-124).

marriages was certainly emulated among Comorian wazalia marrying in Zanzibar. Such Comorians competed with one another in the staging of lavish weddings, on a scale which out-did Zanzibar's Swahili weddings.

The events comprising a wedding in Zanzibar were similar whether Comorians or Swahilis organized it, but Comorian weddings were additionally distinguished by their celebrations of the sultanate(s) of origin of the bride and groom in distinctive song and dance, and by the serving of food thought of as especially Comorian. In addition to the Swahili pilao, cooked bananas, sago and a spicy sweetmeat known as ladu might be served.

At Comorian funerals - again otherwise indistinguishable in ritual from Swahili funerals - a custom long-dead among East African Swahilis but still important in Ngazija was enacted. The corpse on its bier was halted, as it was carried out from ritual washing on its journey to the grave, by a group of men demanding mwongoleo (mollification, compensation), from the deceased's close kinsmen. The customary payment was exacted by elders of the deceased's sultanate, and by a representative from each of Ngazija's other sultanates, as a recognition of their loss of a companion.

Such ritual details (even though they tended to differ slightly from their counterparts in Ngazija) served to reinforce Comorian distinctiveness among the Zanzibar Swahilis. Above all, Zanzibar Swahilis recall Comorian lavishness on such public occasions, which went beyond anything they attempted themselves. Competitive display as a way of winning public approbation is a long-standing feature of Swahili and Comorian culture (Harries, 1967; Shepherd, 1977), but the stakes seemingly stood higher for Comorians than for Swahilis in the Zanzibar of this period. The importance of such display in Ngazija itself was no doubt one contributory factor, and a desire to emulate Zanzibar's Umani Arabs - who were trying

to maintain an ostentatious ceremonial style despite mounting debts in the 1930s (Flint, 1965: 662) - perhaps the other.

2.6.3 The wabuki spirit cult

Comorian women had their own spirit-possession cult similar to the cults of Swahili women (Trimingham 1964: 117-120; Topan, 1971), except for the distinctive Malagasy origin of the spirits by which they were possessed.

Possession by Malagasy spirits existed in Mayotte and Nzwani among the Comoro Islands, but not to my knowledge in Ngazija. Its appearance among Comorian women in Zanzibar of Ngazija origin is thus of interest. Those possessed by wabuki spirits (Madagascar is Bukini to Swahilis, Bushini to Comorians) in the Comoros spoke Malagasy while possessed; those similarly possessed in Zanzibar spoke phrases of ShiNgazija, according to informants. There thus seems little doubt that the wabuki cult in Zanzibar was related to the sense Comorian women had of a cultural identity distinct from that of their Swahili neighbours.

A kibuki spirit-possession event would be announced three or four days in advance and was a public occasion at which non-Comorians were welcome. Money would be collected so that goats could be purchased for meat, and alcohol (usually whisky) was also needed since the wabuki spirits were 'Christians'¹ - being Malagasy - and always demanded it. Women who 'owned' wabuki spirits underwent preliminary purification (kuena) and would then sit in a circle, while one, holding a spear, sat

1 As far as I could establish from Zanzibar-born informants (Comorian and non-Comorian), the sole sense in which the wabuki were Christian was in their love of alcohol. The spirits were thought of, simultaneously, as the djinns or shaitans of King Solomon - Islamic beings of a sort, therefore. It is perhaps relevant to the 'Comorian' nationality of the wabuki that King Solomon is especially associated with Ngazija by Comorians, who believe his magic ring lies deep in the crater of the island's volcano, Karthala.

in the centre and began to chant Comorian place-names rhythmically. One by one those in the circle would become possessed and would stand and begin to dance.

The fact that a kibuki session was performed in public, and that Comorian place-names were chanted and ShiNgazija phrases uttered, seems very much to suggest that Comorian women participants were in part celebrating their differentness from Zanzibar's Swahili women. Furthermore, their non-Comorian largely female audience had to do honour to them. Comorians and non-Comorians believed that wabuki spirits would cause those whom they had mounted to attack any elaborately dressed member of the audience. Onlookers had to stand barefooted, without a buibui (black overgarment) on, and with their hair simply dressed. Any women with elaborately arranged hair would have it torn down by one mbuki-possessed participant or another. Comorians and non-Comorians born in Zanzibar both agreed in associating the kibuki cult with Zanzibar town's Comorians. The link between wabuki spirits and Comorians can indeed be seen as an urban variant on the pattern reported by Caplan in Mafia (1975: 22), where particular descent groups had their own peculiar possessing spirits.

2.6.4 Broader distinctiveness

The wealthiest and most successful Comorian wazalia felt that their lifestyle marked their distinctiveness out not only to Swahilis but also to Umanis, Indians and Europeans. I have no way of knowing whether this was true or not, but presumably many of their activities did offer a contrast with Swahili lifestyles to anyone who thought about the subject. They mixed socially with the Umani elite; arranged sporting fixtures with Indian and Goan clubs, and their library and communal school showed their awareness of sources of knowledge and styles of education scarcely

recognised by indigenous Zanzibaris or island Comorians. The standards set by the Comorian wazalia were a source of pride to many other Comorians, even if they could not emulate them themselves. All Comorian men aimed, however, to possess some smart well-cut European suits for the successful presentation of self in 'European' contexts, and an Umani joho (a long gold-embroidered woollen cloak worn over the kanzu or long white whirt) and a turban for important Islamic occasions. Several informants told me that Comorians were noted for their smart appearance in public.

2.6.5 Employment

In the period before the Second World War there is no way of arriving at an accurate statistical picture of the pattern of Comorian employment. It is implicit in Mkelle's manuscript that the important governmental positions which Comorians had held in pre-Colonial Zanzibar were not at first offered to them under the British. Mkelle lists only kadis and mosque teachers as 'important' Comorians in the years between 1911 and the writing of his manuscript (1930). Saleh's bemoaning of the past in 1936 tends to endorse this interpretation, as well.

However, informants' memories would suggest that, if the elite had had to accept a more limited public role, the vast majority of ordinary Comorians found ample opportunity for employment. For over a decade after the end of the First World War Zanzibar's economy was buoyant (Flint, 1965: 657) and large numbers of immigrants from Ngazija came during this period,¹

1 The economic situation in the Comoros had not improved, overall, as a result of the islands' becoming French colonies. While inter-sultanate wars had been terminated, land concessions granted for French individuals and companies had alienated much good fertile matrilineal land in Ngazija and the other islands from the 1880s onwards; local industries (such as salt, soap and sugar-making) were suppressed; and trading by dhow became less important. The Comoros were administered as a far-flung province of Madagascar, and little was consequently spent on public works, by comparison with that in Madagascar's chief towns. Comoro Islanders therefore went as migrant labourers wherever they had contacts: in Madagascar or Zanzibar or elsewhere.

many smuggled, paperless, into Zanzibar by dhow. By 1936, according to Saleh. (1936: 17), there were 1080 Comorian wazalia and 1620 Comorian wageni in Zanzibar, practically all in the town. As in the nineteenth century, there was plenty of work for construction workers, skilled or unskilled, and plenty of opportunity to learn a skill such as carpentry, masonry, tailoring and the like through apprenticeship to a skilled man. Employment as stewards in European hotels, clubs and private houses was also readily available. As the next chapter describes, opportunities in this type of activity were rapidly expanding in mainland East Africa as well, and a pattern began to emerge in which Comorian wageni would take a first job as a servant in Zanzibar, where they could learn KiSwahili and a little English, and where the likelihood of finding kinsmen to stay with was greater, and would then move on to Nairobi in search of higher wages. Few Comorian artisans moved from Zanzibar to the East African mainland however; the typical Comorian making this move was an unskilled mgeni from one of Ngazija's smaller settlements, who lacked close kinship links with any middle-class wazalia in Zanzibar.

In addition to such time-honoured occupations as petty-trading between Zanzibar and Ngazija, working as sailors, finding employment in the Palace as servants¹ and working as walimu (Islamic astrologers), British rule brought many new opportunities for employment, which Comorians hastened to take up. Some became shopkeepers on a small scale while others found employment in retail stores owned by others (usually Indians). Wazalia who had been to school and could read and write English became junior Civil Servants, and a handful of wazalia worked as school-teachers. Some wageni who had worked with the British

1 There were still a few Comorian concubines at the Palace until well after this period.

during the First World War - having come expressly from Ngazija in order to do so in some cases - had the chance to learn skills, including the English language, which launched them into careers as skilled manual workers or occasionally the Civil Service.

Despite all these opportunities, the ability to profit from them depended considerably on the individual's rearing and family circumstances. Consider the following three cases:

(a) Himidi Muhammad was born in about 1895 in Ngazija. He was the son of a man who had worked in South Africa, Madagascar and Mozambique, and who had come to see the value of European education. He took Himidi to Zanzibar about 1903 in order to enrol him in a school, and Himidi grew up to find employment with the Zanzibar Government as an Assistant Agricultural Officer in the 1920s and 1930s. He married one of the daughters of Saleh bin Wazir 'Mdachi' in Zanzibar, became an important Comorian Association elder, and eventually retired to his home town in Ngazija wealthy enough to rebuild his town's Friday mosque and establish many new coconut plantations.

(b) Jawadh was born of a sharif family in Ngazija in about 1913 and reared in Zanzibar. He had a traditional Islamic education and then went on to Lamu for higher Islamic studies, financed by his kin. (He, like the sharifs who ran Lamu's mosque college, Riyadha, was a Jamal-al-Leil sharif.) He subsequently had a career as a kadi in Mombasa, Kisumu and Lamu.

(c) Muhammad Yusuf was born in a small Ngazija town in 1913, and was reared by his parents in Zanzibar. His parents made no attempt to place him in any school other than Kur'an school, and when he grew to adulthood he went to Nairobi and found work first as a steward and then as a barman, working alongside older kinsmen.

These three examples show how differently those of the parental generation perceived the advantages that Zanzibar had to offer for their children. The third case is particularly interesting, for it suggests how little

the thinking of Comorian wazalia in Zanzibar on the subject of childrens' education was likely to be familiar to Comorian wageni. Muhammad Yusuf might just as well have been reared in Ngazija, for all the difference his rearing in Zanzibar made to his long-term employment prospects.

3.0 Comorians in Zanzibar 1939-1963

The Second World War and its aftermath brought much change in Zanzibar as it did elsewhere in East Africa. It stimulated the island's economy, and precipitated changes in the Administration which (following the trend in Britain itself) now sought to promote greater social equality and a gradual end to the communalism which had caused such rancour in the 1930s (Flint, 1965: 667).

3.1 The Second World War and Zanzibar's Comorians

As in Kenya, Comorians recall that rations during the Second World War were distributed on a communal basis, and 'European', 'Asian' and 'African' rations varied both in the type and quantity of food available. Comorians were accorded 'Asian' rations, and thus at last their campaign to escape from 'African' identity was won. In fact these formal categories were to become less important legally in the post-war period, though they retained their social significance.

A few Comorian wazalia worked for the British Army during the War in mainland East Africa; some signed up with the Navy, and one worked for British Intelligence in the Gulf States. But on the whole Comorians were little affected by the War in any direct way. However, the split in France between those who supported the Pétain government and those who supported de Gaulle and the Free French was played out in miniature in Zanzibar. Very broadly, Zanzibar's wazalia supported de Gaulle while wageni, born in Ngazija and with kinsmen fighting in the French army in

some cases, supported Pétain. As a result the Comorian school, largely an establishment for the children of wazalia, had its French funding withdrawn in 1942 and was closed down for some years.

3.2 The Zanzibar Social Survey of 1948/1949

The Zanzibar Social Survey was commissioned as a result of the Zanzibar Government's desire to plan a thoroughgoing development programme for the island after the Second World War. A 21-volume report was submitted, under the direction of Edward Batson of the University of Capetown. The Survey provides wide-ranging information on many topics and is invaluable for assessing the position of Comorians in Zanzibar after the Second World War, since they are treated as a separate category in all the tables. (The other categories Batson employs are 'Arabs', 'Asians', 'Indigenous Africans', and 'Mainland Africans'.)

In the Zanzibar Census of 1948 (to which Batson's survey was in most ways supplementary), the Comorians on Zanzibar Island were recorded as 2,764, or 1.8% of the population. That they occupied a more prominent position in Zanzibar society than such small figures might suggest was due to two factors. Firstly, almost all these Comorians lived in one place, Zanzibar town, and were only found in three or four mitaa there. Secondly, as the following tables show, although Comorians formed only about 2% of those with urban employment in Zanzibar (and 5.6% of Zanzibar town - Prins, 1967: 19), a relatively high proportion of them had upper-middle or middle-level occupations.¹

1 The upper level was composed of over 100 top professionals and owners of large export firms; the upper-middle level was composed of about 1000 school-teachers, kadis, head clerks, store-owners, etc; the middle level was made up of about 7,000 clerks, Kur'an teachers, small shopkeepers, and of skilled manual workers such as carpenters, tailors, taxi-drivers and dhow-builders; the lower-middle level was made up of about 36,000 food vendors, cooks, servants, office messengers and overseers; and the lower level was made up of palm-tappers, labourers and porters (Batson, Survey, vol.5).

Table 1a: Urban Class Structure in Zanzibar by Occupation

<i>Occupation level</i>	<i>Arabs</i>	<i>Asians</i>	<i>Indigenous Africans</i>	<i>Mainland Africans</i>	<i>Comorians</i>	<i>Totals</i>
upper	4.2	95.8	-	-	-	100
upper-middle	21.8	49.4	5.3	7.1	16.5	100
middle (non-manual)	25.3	32.3	26.5	12.8	2.8	100
middle (manual)	5.7	33.2	11.5	44.7	4.8	100
lower-middle	16.8	4.6	53.1	23.6	1.8	100
lower	13.4	0.9	36.5	48.2	1.0	100
% of urban population	16.5	8.0	44.4	29.1	2.0	100

(adapted from Batson, Survey, Vol.5, Occupations; and from Lofchie, 1965: 89)

The table shows how Comorians were considerably over-represented in upper-middle level occupations and somewhat over-represented in middle-level occupations for their numbers, thereby following the Asian and Arab pattern more closely than either of the African patterns. Even more strikingly, Batson's figures show the comparisons that can be made between 'racial' categories by showing what proportion of each category falls within the upper, upper-middle, middle group of classes rather than the lower-middle, lower group.

Table 1b: Urban Class Structure in Zanzibar by Occupation

<i>Occupation level</i>	<i>Arabs</i>	<i>Asians</i>	<i>Indigenous Africans</i>	<i>Mainland Africans</i>	<i>Comorians</i>
upper/upper-middle/middle	18	62	6.5	9	33
lower-middle	62	35	73.0	49	54
lower	20	3	20.5	42	13
Totals	100	100	100	100	100

(source as Table 1a)

When the percentages are arranged by racial category in this way, it becomes even clearer that Comorians were second only to Asians in their preponderantly middle-class profile. A third of all Comorians were in middle or upper-middle-class occupations, and the bulk of the remainder were working in lower-middle-class occupations. Their 'racial' position overall was thus not only vastly superior to that of either African category, but was also noticeably better than that of urban Arabs.

Comorian wazalia outnumbered wageni at this period by a ratio of 2:1 (Batson, Survey, vol.1), so the Comorian pattern was predominantly their creation. A breakdown of the industry of Comorian occupations indicates that, among the 850 Comorians reported as gainfully employed, the following industries were the most significant: manufacturing (300); commerce (170); transport (80); public administration (80); professional (80) (Batson, Survey, Vol.13). The absence of domestic servants from this list is noteworthy, for the situation was quite other in Kenya, as the following chapter will show. The position as domestic servants which Comorians had held in Zanzibar forty or more years previously had withered, as the wazalia had moved on into better employment, and it had been left to the two categories of Africans.

All in all, then, the Survey shows that the Comorians were objectively (as they themselves believed they were) a prominent group in Zanzibar life, despite their small numbers, by 1948. The gloom which Ibuni Saleh had evinced fourteen years previously had been ill-placed, and though the Comorian elite were never again to be the intimates of Zanzibar's rulers as they had been in the nineteenth century, they had worked their way back into a creditable range of positions of importance.

3.3 The wazalia in the post-war period

The two decades from 1939 to 1959 were a period of successful development and new wealth for Zanzibar. Clove harvests were good and Britain established a recast Civil Service in Zanzibar (entitled His Highness' Zanzibar Service) which aimed to train new young administrative officials to take over from British officians (Flint, 1965: 666-670). The children of the Arab, Asian and Comorian elite were eager to see the island develop in this way and were themselves to profit from it.

Those wazalia who had their education after the Second World War had greater opportunities for advancement than any previous generation. Among those of them whom I encountered during fieldwork in Kenya were, for example, a chartered accountant whose father had been a palace servant; a BBC employee whose father had been a messenger; a teacher whose father had been a construction worker, and a university lecturer whose father had been an islamic astrologer.

The Comorian school, when it re-opened, was the cornerstone of young Comorians' educational achievements. Communal pride was such that Comorian children were brought up to believe that good educational results were one of the distinguishing features of Zanzibar's Comorians. School finished at lunchtime, but in the afternoons some younger children would return to be coached by older children. Secondary school students came to coach younger Comorians trying to get into Secondary School, 'O' and 'A' level candidates, at a later stage, were helped by older students who had already passed these examinations, and those who had gone on to higher education helped those aiming for it, when they returned home for the holidays.¹ The result was that Comorians did better, for their numbers, in their

1 The coaching system had evolved, I was told, because Comorian parents could not afford to pay for the private tuition many Indian boys had. In time the Arab School made an unsuccessful attempt to imitate the Comorian School system.

examinations (and later in the number of scholarships and awards for study overseas) than any other Zanzibar group.

Initially, the parents of the post-war generation of Comorian wazalia in Zanzibar were somewhat confused about what was best for their children beyond the Comorian Primary School. The school itself taught French and was visited every so often by Zanzibar's French Consul. A few boys were offered scholarships for further primary education in Madagascar, but Comorian parents quickly realised that they were not progressing towards secondary and higher education and withdrew them after a year or two. Some parents still believed that Arabic education was the only long-term education of any worth, and sent their boys to the Hadramawt to study in the old way, living with a teacher, acting as his servant, and apprentice-like learning what he knew slowly over several years. Some were sent to Cairo and fared better in that they followed prescribed courses and in a few cases were able to enter the University of al-Azhar. Comorian parents were influenced on the one hand by the choice of Western higher education being made by Asian parents for their children, and on the other by their children's Kur'an school teachers, many of whom made no bones about the fact that they considered Western education a complete waste of time since it would be of no value after death. One Comorian said, 'We were terribly confused. We didn't know who was right; we felt half French, half muslim, half British...'.¹

Gradually it became clearer what Western education consisted of at its higher levels, and parents of younger children were able to learn by the mistaken choices of parents of those who had gone before. A further problem now presented itself: the Umanis, who disliked the Comorians but had the especial ear of the British, tried (according to my informant) to prevent young Comorians from advancing too far or too fast.¹ When

1 'The Umani children were too lazy to study, but the Comorians worked hard because they had no land', commented a Zanzibar mzalia who had been a child in this period.

Comorians won places at Makekere (the then University college in Uganda), they were told by the Zanzibar Government that they might only go for teacher training and nothing more, for instance. Numbers were still weighted strongly in favour of Umanis at the Government Secondary School as well. Comorian children had to do very well, in the circumstances, if they were to achieve entrance to secondary and higher education. Only those who attended the school regularly (whose parents were permanently resident, for instance, and who did not move their children to and from between Zanzibar and Ngazija as some of the wageni did) could hope to achieve a high enough standard. The Comorian Association did its best to help the children of its members, allowing them to use the building as a quiet, electrically lit place for homework, and collecting funds for the assistance of children who had the qualifications to study abroad but whose parents could not send them unaided.

In Zanzibar town, Comorian wazalia and wageni lived surrounded by Comorian kin, neighbours and activities, the wealthiest, longest-established 18% living in the stone town, and the remainder across the creek in Ng'ambo, the mud-and-wattle quarters (Batson, Survey, vol.19, Housing). Life for most Comorians is remembered as exceedingly pleasant in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Material comforts were increasing, life was leisured, civilized, seemingly full of hope. Male informants remember evening barazas (places where men of the same class met to chat and relax together) and weekend country picnics at which theological discussion alternated pleasantly with gossip and the analysis of current affairs. Women remember the lavish scale of Comorian weddings, and the way in which there was enough money for other competitive activities. In one case, for instance, two school friends who spent alternate Sundays with one another had new dresses almost every week in which to make these visits. When Zanzibaris, and other coastal Swahilis such as Mombasans

think nostalgically about the Zanzibar destroyed by the 1964 Revolution, it is of this halcyon post-war period that they are thinking, above all.

3.4 The end of an era

As Clayton comments (1981: 42), the period in Zanzibar from 1952 to 1960 was one during which the social climate changed from one of peace to one of suspicion and racial hostility.¹ Though, by the beginning of the 1960s, a generation of well-qualified professional Comorian wazalia were returning to Zanzibar from overseas, the Zanzibar they had left was already a thing of the past.

The Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP) was formed in 1954, when Arab political leaders began to demand progress towards self-government, and common roll elections. Though led by Arabs, it originally attracted many non-Arab supporters because it was well-organised, nationalist and muslim. Within its ranks, however, those of widely varying ideological beliefs were to be found - conservatives, and representatives of both Chinese style and Russian style socialism - who were united predominantly because they were 'Arab' in the social sense. That is to say, they were (or wished they were) among the upper middle class members of Zanzibar's Umani-Swahili-Comorian category.

The Afro-Shirazi party, a successful coalition of 'Mainland Africans' and 'Indigenous Africans', was formed in 1957 and was overtly anti-Arab from the start.

Predictably, most of Zanzibar's Comorians, especially the wazalia, joined the ZNP. Because so many Comorians were Civil Servants in this period, support for the party was intellectual rather than practical,

1 Lofchie (1965) and Clayton (1981) are the best guides so far to the events which were the forerunners of the Zanzibar Revolution in 1964.

though there were a few activists. Those Comorians who joined the Afro-Shirazi party when it came into existence were predominantly those who were self-employed, or held a fairly lowly place as employees. Ex-slaves joined the ASP, and so did a tiny number of well-educated young wazalia who did so for ideological reasons. On the whole, though, ASP members were ill-educated, and would for that reason, if no other, have been uncomfortable in the ZNP.

In 1957, the first common roll election was held. Only Zanzibar subjects were allowed to vote and Comorians who had retained their French nationality were courted by the ZNP to pay their naturalisation fees in return for their votes. Since, about the same time, the Zanzibar Government issued a decree stating that only the children of Zanzibar nationals would thenceforth be eligible for overseas scholarships, some wazalia who had hitherto proudly retained their French nationality relinquished it for the sake of their children's education. Comorian wazalia who were teenagers at the time remember sitting together wondering whether they should take up 'full' Zanzibari identity, or whether the time had come to follow the Comorian name they had grown up with to its source, and go to try life in the Comoros themselves. The idea of being a Zanzibari and being a Comorian had not previously been in opposition for them. Nobody that I have heard of actually returned to Ngazija in this period, but it was the first occasion on which Zanzibar's wazalia Comorians were forced to make a decision about their priorities, and Zanzibari identity was in fact that preferred.

In 1963 only a little over six months before Zanzibar's independence, Abdel-Rahman Muhammad Babu, an Arab/Comorian who had been General Secretary of the ZNP, resigned to form the Umma ('masses') party. His resignation was a protest at the ZNP's continued use of communal strategies when planning their election campaign (Lofchie, 1965: 258-259), but it also

highlighted the deeper discord which existed between his Chinese socialism and the party moderates' notions of unity through Islam. While many Comorians were left in the ZNP when Babu departed, the Umma party, according to the Zanzibar wazalia, was predominantly Comorian. When he was still in the ZNP, Babu, through his excellent overseas contacts, had enabled many young secondary school leavers to go on to higher education in Russia and the Eastern Bloc. On the whole these individuals had been unsuccessful in getting to Makerere or England and tended to be from poorer Comorian families. They had been encouraged to support Babu while they were abroad, and on their return they joined the Umma party at once when it was formed. Older Comorians were highly suspicious of these youngsters with their beards and afro hairstyles ('revolutionary-style, only no-one knew that then', mused a Comorian woman who had been about 25 at the time); their talk of equality and democracy in a highly stratified society; and their open boyfriend-girlfriend relationships. When the parents of these young graduates complained, they went off to live in apartments with their friends and mistresses. Suspicion and confusion about the meaning of the socialism which Umma stood for was crystallized in dislike of the new manners of these young returned Comorians who, it was felt, showed no loyalty to the parents who had reared them nor, more broadly, to the entire parental generation of Comorian elders. From the point of view of these youngsters, indeed, 'Comorian-ness' had been renounced in favour of an idealistic new Zanzibari identity. Babu's party capitalised on the feelings of these ex-ZNP Youth Wingers and of other youngsters who had been sent to train in Cuba.

By the end of 1963, with Independence imminent, communal hatred, expressed in party politics, was still growing, rather than being appeased. Youth wingers of the ZNP and ASP fought street battles (Clayton, 1981: 48, n55) and even dhikri groups (ecstatic prayer circles) became

associated exclusively with particular political parties, and recruited their members on that basis. Among the Comorian wazalia, age, class and wealth were the factors which decided party membership. Sultanate affiliation (which profoundly shaped party membership patterns in Ngazija when political parties were first allowed) had no political importance in Zanzibar, but remained confined to matters concerning marriages and funerals.

4.0 Revolution and after: Comorians in Zanzibar from 1964 onwards

Zanzibar obtained its independence on 10 December 1963, and on 12 January 1964 a revolution overthrew the government. Who the prime movers of this revolution were is still not perfectly clear. Lofchie (1965) and Clayton (1981) exclude the involvement of Babu, but Comorian wazalia are less certain. Though Babu was in Dar-es-Salaam on the night of the coup, a group of his Cuban trained revolutionaries had set off to Zanzibar the night before, acquired arms in Zanzibar at an early stage and were important organisers for the next few days. During the first wave of killings [Clayton estimates that, in all, there were perhaps 8,000 deaths (1981: 80)], some of these Comorians reputedly killed some of their own kinsmen, and when detention camps for Arabs were set up they were to be seen helping with the distribution of food. Comorian wazalia find it inconceivable that these individuals had not been briefed by Babu, and that he had not been one of the revolution's planners.

What was particularly shocking to Zanzibar's Comorians was that the strong and close ties which had always bound them together could be so lightly severed. The following story is told, for instance:

Badi 1964

Badi was one of Babu's followers, a 'Komredi' as they were called in Zanzibar. After the Revolution, one of the detention centres used was a large school compound and here, for several days, Arabs sat, slept and ate. Food was short, and was

distributed by the Komredis, who were distinguished by their black arm-bands, Badi among them. As it happened, Badi's father and family were in this particular camp. When they saw him, the father called out to him for food and help. Badi turned and cried, 'How dare you try to get food out of turn? You are no more important to me than any other person here.'

While any favoritism to his father could not have helped Badi or his family in the circumstances, Comorians who heard of the incident were particularly shocked that a father could be treated so brusquely in a public and humiliating way. The father disowned his son after he was released and never spoke to him again.

Pale-skinned, 'Arab'-looking people were killed indiscriminately during the first few days after the revolution. A few Comorians were killed, some imprisoned, and many others fled Zanzibar. The only individuals confident of their safety were those who had been members of the ASP before Independence. The new Revolutionary Council was eager to hasten the departure, one way or another, of as many 'Arabs' as possible, and to this end perhaps 5,000 were packed on to dhows and taken to Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, Aden¹ and even Egypt (Clayton, 1981: 96, n130). Comorian refugees were also taken to Ngazija by ship: the French Consul in Zanzibar (who was at this period a Comorian) arranged their transport. On the whole, those who decided to go as refugees to the Comoros, rather than to mainland East Africa, were wageni or those with limited educational qualifications, though there were several police officers and ZNP youth wingers among their number.

The Zanzibar Revolution sent shock waves throughout the Comorian population in the Comoro Islands and in mainland East Africa. The

1 They were not allowed in to Uman until after the 1970 coup d'etat in that country. There the 10,000 or so who ultimately went there became noted for their professional skills (Clayton, 1981: 96, n130).

hostility of the Umma loyalists to the ZNP Islamic moderates, and the fact that Babu and the Umma party were assumed to be implicated in the revolution meant that non-Zanzibari Comorian onlookers felt they were witnesses to Comorian turning brutally upon Comorian. Those who had not been involved in the last years of Zanzibar's colonial period assumed that all Zanzibari Comorians had turned into makomredi (komredi, sing). And both Comorians in Ngazija and Comorians in Kenya feared that, just as the Zanzibar-born Comorians had turned upon one another, they might bring danger and trouble to other Comorians when they went to live among them. The high level of education which many Zanzibar wazalia had reached was for a while seen as the root of the discord which had broken out among them in Zanzibar.

For the Zanzibar wazalia themselves, the revolution was the end of a communal way of life which had developed peaceably over more than a century. The Comorian Association and the Comorian School ceased to exist; their leaders were scattered abroad and many newly qualified youngsters hastened to seek work elsewhere.

Over the next few years, Karume and the Revolutionary Council made it very clear that Comorians, especially highly educated young male Comorians, were not welcome in Zanzibar. Although the majority of the Comorian wazalia would have preferred to stay, even with their public identity in tatters, a succession of moves against them decided many individuals that the time had come to move elsewhere.

The first of these occurred in 1965. It was announced that secondary school admission would be organised so that pupils were admitted by racial category according to the proportion of the Zanzibar population each represented. This would work out as an 80% share of available places for Africans, 5% for Arabs, 4% for Asians and 1% for Comorians (Clayton, 1981: 133). Since Comorians had always taken a much greater

share of secondary school places than this, parents felt their children's exclusion keenly. However, a Comorian schoolteacher who spoke out angrily in public against the new ruling narrowly escaped Zanzibar with his life.

The second, apparently deliberate, check on Comorians in Zanzibar occurred in 1968. At a public meeting of the Zanzibar Revolutionary Council, Karume announced a new definition of Zanzibar citizenship which made non-citizens of most Comorians overnight, and said that (non-citizen) Comorians would have to renounce their country of origin, and Comorian civil servants must resign and reapply for their jobs and for citizenship or repay their earnings. The old definition of citizenship had granted it to anyone born in Zanzibar, or whose parents were born there. The new definition gave citizenship by right only to those who had been Zanzibar citizens at the time of the First World War, and particularly singled out those from countries under French or Portuguese¹ colonial rule (i.e. in Zanzibar, from the Comoros or Mozambique) as non-citizens. This epoch was thought to have been made the crucial one because Comorians resident in Zanzibar at the time had insisted upon their French nationality in order to avoid conscription as African porters (Clayton, 1981: 119, n26).

The change of law was plainly calculated to give offence to Comorians, and it did. If citizenship was revokable at any time, they said, what was the point of reapplying for it, as they were being invited to do? Their statements reveal their confusion, and their assumption, hitherto

1 Some Comorian informants are convinced that Karume's chief aim, when he changed the rules of citizenship, was to oust Babu. Babu's Comorian father was a mgeni. Karume assumed he therefore had French nationality as Comoro Island residents had, and his first edict reputedly mentioned only compulsory resignation for those with French nationality. When he discovered that Babu's father had Portuguese citizenship, because he had worked in Laurence Marques, he proscribed those of both French and Portuguese nationality.

unchallenged, that they had a choice of identities. On the one hand, they were incensed at not being regarded as true Zanzibaris. Yet simultaneously, they complained that France was being laggardly in protecting their interests, and that if white Frenchmen were being mistreated in Zanzibar, Karume would not be able to get away with it. At this period, to their chagrin, Karume (and reputedly Nyerere) quoted Ibuni Saleh's little book of 1936 at them. Since the book had been a disquisition upon the subject of the non-Africanness of Comorians, and indeed the superiority of Comorians to Africans, a better stick to beat Comorians with could hardly have been found.

In the event, the move fizzled. Long-established Goans complained at the way the ruling affected them, Portuguese Makonde objected (and as Africans, the ruling had presumably not been intended to affect them) and Comorians were incensed. Some re-applied for citizenship, many left, especially civil servants, and some did nothing. Feeling against Karume ran high, not least because he himself was of Malawian origin. Probably the main reason why more Comorians did not leave was that those emigrating were required to pay 5000/- (£250) to the Zanzibar Government for the education they had received, and most could not afford to do so.

Finally, in 1970, Karume again moved against the Comorians still left in Zanzibar or Pemba, dismissing virtually all public servants, and again revoking their citizenship. The move caused great administrative disruption, but was justified by the Commissioner of Police who stated that it was almost always persons of Comorian origin who were responsible for acts of 'political intrigue'. A procession was organised by the Afro-Shirazi Youth League who marched through Zanzibar town shouting 'Comorians go away!' (Keesing's Contemporary Archives, December 1970).

5.0 Conclusion

This chapter has set out the context within which Comoro Islanders first settled within East Africa and has explained how, by contrast with other Swahilis, Comorians were able to establish an enviable economic niche for themselves during the colonial period. The information is important, not only because the Comorian migrants who established themselves in Kenya usually came from Zanzibar, but also because a crucial category among the Comorians whom I found resident in Kenya during my period of fieldwork in 1973/74 were Comorian wazalia from Zanzibar. They had found work in Kenya during the previous decade as a result of the changed fortunes of Comorians in the post-Revolution era in Zanzibar, and were in the process of establishing relationships with Comorian wageni born in Ngazija, who had lived in Kenya for far longer. Although some wazalia from Zanzibar had been in Kenya some years by the time the fieldwork period was beginning, it was still nevertheless true that all were still in the process of adapting to the shock of the contrast between the style of life they had known in the 1940s and 1950s, and that they had begun to experience from 1964 onwards.

Among those living in Kenya were men who had left Zanzibar in fear of their lives, and women who had left secretly in order to avoid forced marriages with members of the Zanzibar Revolutionary Council. Less dramatically, there were many others who had left not because they were under personal threat, but because employment options in Kenya were far superior to those in either Zanzibar or the Tanzanian mainland.

The next chapter follows the parallel but distinct fortunes of the Comorians who worked in Kenya from the early twentieth century onwards. Though the constraints on and opportunities for employment in Kenya, together with the creation of a distinct 'Comorian' identity, form the chief subject matter of the chapter, and the Comorians in Zanzibar are

only occasionally mentioned, it is important to bear it in mind that Comorians in both places were highly aware of one another and that immigrants to Kenya from Zanzibar were being constantly incorporated.

CHAPTER 2

THE STRENGTHENING OF RACIAL BOUNDARIES

1.0 Introduction

This chapter attempts to document Comorian fortunes in Kenya from 1900 to 1970, a little more than the entire period of British colonial rule. The picture presented relies heavily, as far as Comorians are concerned, on the memories of informants about the period, and about themselves, and on their ability to relate what they know of the generation which preceded them in East Africa.

An attempt has been made to investigate two things. Firstly, in Part 1 of this chapter, the employment niche carved out by Comorians for themselves is looked at against the background of the way in which opportunities for employment in Kenya developed.

Secondly, in Part 2, I investigate Comorian claims, consistently made to me, that they 'did better' than the Swahilis of the Kenya coast in the kinds of jobs they secured for themselves and the incomes they earned, and that they did a great deal better than wage-earning Africans.

Part 2 is based upon an analysis of Kenya Government Reports and Censuses. Though it is in a sense arbitrary to separate the information it contains from that in Part 1 of the chapter, I have found that a more coherent picture emerges when its statistical information is kept together, rather than being spread through Part 1.

1.1 Models for colonial rule

Although Comorian migration to Kenya had hardly begun at the beginning of the twentieth century, the period is important for understanding the original terms of incorporation, under the British, of the various categories of immigrants to East Africa.

(i) India

The pattern which emerged drew, not surprisingly, upon British experience of colonial rule elsewhere. Profound familiarity with India, for instance, produced not only much legislation based upon Indian precedents and the initial use of rupees, annas and pice for currency, but also the employment of Indian subordinate staff and artisans in East Africa in the roles they had originally been allotted in British India. Goans and Parsees, with their reputations for loyalty and efficiency, were employed as administrative staff, Goans in addition working as customs officials, train-guards and grocers and caterers to Europeans; Punjabis worked on the construction of the Uganda railway and Sikh troops were used to pacify the countryside, and both groups were subsequently to be found employed predominantly as artisans, soldiers and later policemen. Just as many of these men continued doing work with which they had long been familiar in India, so too were some early British administrators actually seconded from the Indian Civil Service (Mangat, 1969: 27-28, 74-75; Ogot, 1974: 255).

The early advantages of transferring trained staff¹ from one part of the Empire to another were obvious. That they were also transferring something of the Imperial Indian model of reality to East Africa, the British were probably less aware.

(ii) South Africa

South Africa was a second important model. There, Europeans had already created a three-tier society of Europeans, Asians and Africans in which race and class were intentionally closely aligned. Indeed,

1 German officials in the days before the First World War commented to Hardinge, Consul in Zanzibar, how much they envied the British staff they had to hand (Mangat, 1969: 45).

white settlers immigrated from South Africa eagerly and it is clear that for decades Kenya settlers cherished hopes of an East African Federation similar to the Union of South Africa in being controlled by Europeans (Gregory, 1971: 3).

The fight for political equality which Indians were to wage in Kenya had already been fought and lost in South Africa by 1885. In both countries, white supremacy was steadily consolidated. In Kenya, pass laws for Africans came into effect after the First World War and racially linked pay-scales, established in the early years of the Protectorate, were further elaborated throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In the same period legislation in South Africa also grew increasingly racially discriminatory (Mangat, 1969: 155; Gregory, 1971: 299-300, 318, 355; Clayton and Savage, 1974: 250).

(iii) Zanzibar

The third model for Kenya, in its early days at least, was Zanzibar itself. Britain had come to know East Africa through Zanzibar, and the East Africa Protectorate was administered from Zanzibar for the first nine years of its existence, until 1904. Zanzibar was another hierarchical society, albeit a much more fluid one than South Africa, headed by Umani Arab landowners and the Umani Sultan. It allotted a middle role to other Arabs and to the mainly muslim Indians whom the sultans had encouraged during the nineteenth century to settle as financiers, businessmen and craftsmen, and put Africans, especially non-muslim mainlanders, at the bottom. The British Government was to superimpose itself upon this hierarchy, rigidifying it in the process and respecting it to the extent of granting Arabs along with Asians superior 'non-native' status in Zanzibar and Kenya.

The crucial difference between the coastal hierarchy in reality, and the way it was perceived by Europeans, was this. Coastal Africans, Swahilis and Arabs were far from being totally endogamous categories. Women flowed up the hierarchy from the bottom, and immigrant men, coming to East Africa without Arab women, were constantly incorporated at middle and upper levels. The whole of coast society constituted an elaborate chain of affinally linked, hierarchically ranked sub-groups, in consequence. The British, by their use of the categories 'native' and 'non-native', tried to draw a boundary between Arabs and Africans. The task was an impossible one, but the existence of this artificial boundary was to benefit Comorian labour migrants for many years.

2.0 Kenya and the Comorians 1900-1930

2.1 Kenya

In the period 1900 to 1930,¹ the pattern for colonial rule was established. The Mombasa-Uganda railway made the immigration of large numbers of Europeans and Asians possible, and legislation helped to establish the former largely as privileged farmers in the Highlands, and the latter largely as urban and rural traders. Despite the protests of Asians, differentials were created between European and Asian civil servants in the matter of salaries, income tax, housing allowances and living areas in town, and it was here that a status hierarchy was first formalised.

Africans were predominantly rural workers, farming their own land or working on the land of white farmers. However, an important minority

1 Information for this section is drawn from Ross (1927: 100); Bennett (1965: 286); Wrigley (1965: 235); Mangat (1969: 249); Ogot (1974: 254-267); and Clayton and Savage (1974: 83-84, 89, 100, 126, 150-152, 210).

worked during the First World War in the Carrier Corps, and had the opportunity to witness the effectiveness of formally organised action. When, after the War, Africans began to protest to the British about a range of issues from pass laws to increased import duties, many of their emergent leaders were Carrier Corps veterans who had settled in Nairobi.

African workers in towns were not expected to establish themselves permanently and imitation of a European lifestyle was strongly discouraged. Nevertheless, rural and urban wage-rates were such that a strong pull to the town was exerted. In 1918, for instance, houseboys could earn at least twice the wage of farm labourers, and by 1927 over 22,000 Africans were in domestic service, about one in seven of the African labour-force. Despite poor living conditions in the native locations, aggregation rules and pass-laws, the attractions of a large town such as Nairobi were great.

2.2 'Natives' and 'Non-Natives'

All the Kenya censuses until 1948 dealt exclusively with 'Non-Natives', and the early decades of colonial rule saw far more preoccupation with them than with 'Natives' - Africans. Problems arose early over the Kenya-born, predominantly urban Swahilis because, though 'native', they did not think of themselves as African and naturally wished to be accorded the privileges of 'Non-Natives',

In Mombasa, for instance, the Swahili-Arab elite was composed firstly of those of Umani descent, who had ruled the town for a century from 1735 and then seen it brought under the Umani Sultan of Zanzibar. Secondly there were the far longer-established Swahilis, who were ultimately of South Arabian descent paternally. They had ruled the town in the more distant past and ruled themselves on a communal basis under the Sultan of Zanzibar, being accorded certain privileges by him (Salim, 1973: 27-28). If the designation 'Non-Native' implied class or cultural

superiority to Africans, Swahili-Arabs would fight for it.¹

In fact the position of both groups declined under the British. With the abolition of slavery much of their land went out of cultivation and was made Crown Land in 1908; pre-colonial leadership roles lost their meaning and few new ones were offered; Western education was not offered on a scale sufficient for paid employment to become an alternative to the poverty loss of land was causing (Salim, 1973: 73-99, 149-152). However, since rule in Zanzibar was nominally through the Umani Sultan, Umanis in both Zanzibar and Mombasa found themselves in a more privileged position than the Swahilis. The implication was that they were more truly Arab, though in racial terms most were probably as intermarried with Africans as the long-established Swahili families were.

The confusion, in British eyes, in attempting to define the official racial status of the coast Arabs, seems to have turned on the meaning of the term 'native'. Was this to be a euphemism for 'African', or simply to mean 'native-born'? A brief summary of British attempts to come to grips with the problem shows some of the difficulties.²

1 When considering Swahili attitudes to Africans and their continued sense of superiority to them, it is worth recalling that Mombasans claim that there were still slaves in the town until at least the Second World War, working for their masters, although technically they had been free since 1907.

A Mkamba informant (encountered in Kitui) also claimed that when his father had been working in Mombasa in the 1930s, Africans were still occasionally kidnapped near the old harbour and hustled aboard dhows for sale and export. His father worked for a Goan who bought food wholesale for a hotel and this employer warned him never to go down to the dhow harbour/fish market area without him, for this reason. He is of the opinion that there was some illicit enslavement until perhaps the 1940s. Clayton and Savage (1974: 2) suggest the same thing.

2 Material for this section relies on Salim (1973: Ch.5) and Kindy (1972: Chs.4 and 5).

- 1901 All born locally, Arabs and Africans alike, paid a 3 rupee Hut Tax.
- 1910 The Hut Tax (Amendment) ordinance provided that Arabs, and those who could prove that they had Arab blood, were exempt.
- 1912 The Non-Native Poll Tax Ordinance was introduced, imposing an annual tax of fifteen rupees (£1) on Europeans, Asians and Arabs; this was a very large sum for poor and rural Swahilis.
- 1914 The Criminal Procedure Ordinance defined a 'native' as any native of Africa not of European or Asiatic extraction, and included Arabs as natives of Africa.
- 1920 Watkins, the Chief Native Commissioner, proposed that for taxation purposes, and the application of the term 'native' at the Coast, the Twelve Clans¹ were to be treated and recognised as Arabs along with the Umani (whose Arab status was not in doubt in British eyes despite their partially African parentage), while other Swahili were not.² However, the Senior Coast Commissioner recommended that only Twelve Clans elders and the 'better families', those who had kept themselves 'pure' by marriage with Arabs, should be considered as Arabs, because of the administrative difficulties of distinguishing them all from Africans.
- 1921 The term 'native', in a notice of September 1921, was redefined as 'All persons who by birth or adoption belonged to any of the races or tribes of Africa'. Arabs were excluded from this for tax purposes, but in criminal matters, the 1914 Ordinance stood.
- 1934 The Definition of the term 'native' Ordinance was passed. It removed the Umani Arabs and those members of the Twelve Clans who could establish Asian descent paternally or maternally from the operation of certain (but not all)

1 The problem about 'Swahili' as a category was that it was an open one. Freed slaves and newly arrived labour migrants tended to islamize and would then call themselves Swahili, particularly if racial advantage might thereby accrue.

2 These Swahilis, often referred to as the 'Twelve Tribes', are discussed in Chapter 3.

Ordinances affecting Africans. These two categories escaped at this point into 'non-native' 'Arab' status,¹ leaving the Bajuni of the Northern Kenya Coast, and many Swahilis, behind as discontented 'Africans' and 'natives'.

As Salim remarks (1973: 200):

'In the Kenya of the 1930s racial politics ruled supreme and every group was bent on ridding itself of disabilities and accretions of inferiority and at the same time striving for the benefits enjoyed by the privileged.'

Swahilis were bitter about the distinctions which had been created (on the advice of the Umani Coast Liwali, Sir. Ali bin Salim, they felt) first between the Umanis and themselves, and secondly within their own ranks. The Mombasa Umani were no more than primus inter pares as far as the Swahili Twelve Clans were concerned, and were closely intermarried with them, for instance. Furthermore, it is clear that the British never really understood that there was an ancient Swahili aristocracy in Mombasa onto which the Umani Mazru'i had been grafted by marriage, as well as the heterogenous category of more or less recently islamized Africans to be found there.

2.3 The 1920s

Meanwhile East Africa, Kenya in particular, was becoming an increasingly attractive destination for migrants. Kenya's economy flourished from 1922 to 1929, the railway was extended and the Mombasa docks enlarged. British companies began to transfer their headquarters from Zanzibar to Kenya (Wrigley, 1965: 239-240). Indian immigrants flocked

1 In the early part of the twentieth century, the Arab mosque (Mandhry) and the Swahili mosque (Bashaikh) were used on alternate Fridays as the Friday mosque. The Swahili Twelve Clans had no desire to call themselves Arabs at this stage. That came only when British rule presented them with only two options - to be 'Arab' or to be 'African'.

in, despite Kenya's political disadvantages, because of its enormous opportunities for middle-level employment in commerce, industry and the professions (Mangat, 1969: 132). There were immigrants from the Hadramawt and the Seychelles, and a comparison of the 1920 and 1931 Zanzibar censuses indicates such an impossibly low apparent rate of population growth for all racial categories on that island that extensive out-migration to East Africa can be posited (Gregory, 1971: 4).

2.4 The Comorians

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Comorians already had well over half a century's experience of wage labour in Zanzibar in a variety of capacities, as the previous chapter has shown. Some too had lived and worked in the old Arab trading ports of North-West Madagascar, such as Majunga. Some were drawn to South Africa during the Rand Gold Rush of the 1880s (Saleh, 1936), and Comorians reputedly fought on both sides during the Boer War. There were also established opportunities for paid employment in Portuguese East Africa. Several of the Comorians who settled in Zanzibar after the assumption of British rule already had wide experience of work with Europeans and spoke one or two languages to some degree. They also had some picture of where they might fit in a racially stratified society, for those who had worked in South Africa had on the whole married South African coloureds (and brought them back to live in the Comoros in some cases), while in Portuguese East Africa marriage with Portuguese-African or Indian-African women is reported by their descendants.

Comorians, with the exception of the Comorian sharifs who taught and studied in the small town of Lamu 200 miles north of Mombasa had little reason to explore the East African mainland before the establishment of British rule. Although there is a record of a Comorian clerk and

factotum, hailing from Zanzibar, who worked for the Kabaka of Buganda in the 1870s (Oded, 1974: 86), and of Comorians working for Livingstone in East Africa a few years earlier (Coupland, 1945: 35), these are very much the exception.

The first Comorians I know of who travelled to the East Africa Protectorate did so in about 1911. They invariably came from Zanzibar.

Ahmad Anwar (Time: 1911 onwards)

Ahmad Anwar was born in Zanzibar in about 1899. His father was a Swahili-Arab, but his mother was Comorian, and through her he identified himself strongly with Zanzibar's Comorian wazalia. At the age of twelve or so, he and a young Comorian friend signed up for employment on a dhow engaged in the carrying trade between Zanzibar and Mombasa. On the first, or a subsequent ship, they jumped ship in Mombasa together. Ahmad found work as a hide and skin selector in Mombasa Old Town near the dhow harbour working for an Arab trader, and later married locally and became one of the founder members of the Mombasa Comorian Association.

The 1921 and 1926 Kenya Censuses record only 8 and 12 Comorians in the country, respectively, and though there is no reason to regard these numbers as precise case histories appear to confirm the picture of small numbers they suggest. Some Comorians entered Mombasa without passing through immigration (as, presumably, did Ahmad Anwar and his friend); some, questioned for a census, may have returned themselves as 'Arab'; undoubtedly some, since the censuses were for non-natives only, would have been passed over if they lived in 'African' quarters of Mombasa.

Numbers began to increase rapidly in the later 1920s and on into the 1930s, however. When the Comorian club-houses were first established, in Mombasa in 1930, and in Nairobi in 1935/36, one of the most important reasons for so doing was the fact that the numbers of Comorians now arriving and looking for work were beginning to be too great to be coped with by the hospitality of individual Comorians. The club-houses were

acquired with the aim of providing cheap sleeping and eating accommodation for Comorians as yet unestablished in work and living quarters of their own.

The picture of employment for Comorians at this early stage is a fairly varied one. On the one hand there were those who came from Zanzibar to Mombasa without work and sometimes without contacts, and hoped for the best. Older Mombasa residents remember Comorian dhobis (laundry-men) and Comorian butchers and bakers who would begin work apprenticed to established Arabs or Goans and then hope to set up alone. All these kinds of employment were intended to serve the Europeans, not the local market, and some Comorians were no doubt recruited into employment with Europeans as servants directly, having first established contact through such work. Meanwhile they lived in the mitaa (quarters) of Mombasa where other immigrant coastal people rented rooms, went to the mosques regularly, and kept their ears open for information about work opportunities.

The other path to employment in Kenya was a more certain one. Some Comorians who had worked for Europeans in Zanzibar (usually through introduction by a Comorian kinsman already in European employment) were brought to Kenya by employers themselves transferring and uncertain of what the servant situation would be the other end. Such employees were then in an excellent position to introduce Comorians of their own choice to their employers, and their employers' friends.

Mساهazi Muhammad (Time: about 1915 onwards)

Mساهazi Muhammad was born in about 1900 in Mitsamihuli, a town on the northern end of the largest Comoro Island, Ngazija. The town was engaged in regular dhow trading with Zanzibar, and when he was about 15 Msahazi travelled to Zanzibar and began to work as a houseboy for a British couple. They transferred to Nairobi about 1919 and he was taken with them and promoted to cook. His employer's post involved

regular travel to the Nandi reserve, and Msahazi married a Nandi woman and had a daughter by her in the early 1920s. He visited the Comoros every few years and was instrumental in encouraging several men from Mitsamihuli to come to East Africa. In the mid-1930s he called his sister's son over, found him work with Europeans in Meru who knew his employer, and gave him his daughter to marry.

The chain effects of such migration patterns were very striking, in the Comoros. Almost all the long-term migrants in Kenya came via Zanzibar, from a handful of towns and villages in the north and north-west of one Comoro Island - Ngazija.

Comorians were fortunate in their employment opportunities in Kenya, for the earlier reputation others had created in Zanzibar went before them - a reputation for close dealings with and trustworthy personal service to Europeans and well-born Arabs. The rough-and-ready racial and ethnic stereotypes bandied about at this period were no doubt the result of past British experience with subject peoples, coupled with a limited perception of other social forces at work on the spot, but they stood the Comorians in good stead.

For instance, coastal peoples in East Africa, the Comorians among them, could generally command higher wages than inland Africans in the early decades of the century, partly because of the 'greater familiarity of the Coast peoples with European ways, which appeared to employers as greater skill' (Clayton and Savage, 1974: 15),¹ and partly because muslims, as followers of a universal religion, were regarded as further along the path to civilization than Africans.

1 Lord Cranworth's guide-book for potential settlers praises Swahilis as cooks, butlers, safari headmen and foremen of labour-gangs (1919: 89-93). The chapter contributed by his wife, 'Hints for a woman', suggests Goan cooks and headmen at £5 - £7 a month as the best, Swahilis at £3 a month as a second choice and Africans, at £1 a month as a poor third choice. A sensible household, she suggests, has a Goan cook, a Swahili head houseboy and Africans as underboys (ibid: 115-116).

It is clear that Europeans tended to perceive Africans as lazy and unreliable because of high absenteeism rates, desertion and lack of enthusiasm for work, which were really an aspect of the subsistence farmer's reluctance to treat wage-labouring as a full-time occupation. Nevertheless, from the European point of view, workers who had had to come from a distance to work were more reliable than those from nearby reserves, even if this 'reliability' was in fact only an aspect of the cost in time and money of a journey home.

3.0 Kenya and the Comorians 1930-1945

3.1 Kenya 1930-1939

During the 1920s, the African population, which had been declining, began to rise sharply at rates approaching 1.75% a year. The rise was to continue over the next two decades with the result that spare reserve land was speedily taken up and soil erosion was observed in some areas (Middleton, 1965: 337; Wrigley, 1965: 253-255; Wolff, 1974: 106).

Presumably as a result of the land squeeze, larger numbers of Africans than before began to look to towns for employment. More Africans found work in transport, construction and in domestic service, though as yet most urban residence was only part-time until the Second World War: it is estimated that one man's job over a year was commonly done by from two to two-and-a-half men (Clayton and Savage, 1974: 180; Stichter, 1975b: 27).

Africans were discouraged at first from settling in town,¹ and the

1 As might be expected, sex ratios among African migrant labourers showed a marked excess of men. In the 1940s the proportion of men to women was 5:1 in Nairobi, 2:1 in Mombasa with its core of long-standing residents, and about 2:1 among residents on settler farms (Middleton, 1965: 347). Women who wished to earn a living in town could easily do so by prostitution, selling cooked food to workers or, especially in Nairobi, keeping house for groups of men (Middleton, 1965: 385; Clayton and Savage, 1974: 149; Hake, 1977: 54, 66).

sick and unemployed were supposed to return to their reserves, though this was not rigidly enforced until the 1950s, because a labour surplus suited employers (Hake, 1977: 60). Non-native immigrants, by contrast, were expected to be resident for long periods. Similarly, low African wages demonstrated assumptions that workers were young and single or that dependants were being supported by subsistence production in the reserves.

During the 1930s the situation began to change as government housing schemes for Africans began to be built in Nairobi and Mombasa. By 1941, the Nairobi Municipal Affairs Officer could report, 'Labour has passed from the migrant stage to that of temporary or permanent urbanisation' (Stichter, 1975b: 35).

The change was marked by a great growth of urban associations, tribal and trantribal, whose purposes ranged from recreation to job-protection and the improvement of working conditions. European and Indian associations seem to have provided the model for these, not only in the creation of such obvious cases as the African Civil Service Association (constituted after the Asian and European equivalents), but also in the case of those based upon tribal origin, which imitated the (European) Colonists' Association and the Indian Association, both in existence since the turn of the century. By the end of the Second World War, these African Associations numbered over two hundred (Middleton, 1965: 388-389; Mangat, 1969: 100, 103).

By the end of the 1930s, Nairobi had become East Africa's largest and wealthiest town, outstripping both Zanzibar town and Mombasa. Mombasa, poorer and older, with a long-established indigenous population and long-term, long-distance labour migrants totally dependent upon their wages for subsistence, was an earlier scene of labour disputes than Nairobi. Here, too, clashes expressive of racial tensions were more

common, with coastal workers angered by the low wages upcountry migrants would work for, and these migrants resentful of the proportion of those wages claimed by the Hadrami Arab landlords and shopkeepers in the suburbs where they lived (Clayton and Savage, 1974: 220-222; Stichter, 1975b: 33, 37).

Indians had done well financially during the 1930s, and the tensions which arose among Africans and Swahilis over wages and living conditions were of less direct relevance to them. Their bitterness was directed towards their poor social conditions by comparison with Europeans. They paid higher taxes than Europeans, yet received poorer education for their children, poorer housing, medical facilities and pensions and had no right of trial by jury. In addition they had none of the social contact with British officials outside office hours which gave other whites special advantages (Mangat, 1969: 154-155; Rothchild, 1973: 63-65, 70-73, 91).

By the end of the 1930s the racial hierarchy, built on complex political, legal and economic foundations, had reached its apogee, and an acute racial consciousness had been formed.

3.2 The Comorians 1930-1939

3.2.1 Mombasa

The earliest Comorian migrants in Kenya came from Zanzibar and lived in Mombasa. Already by the mid-1920s they appear to have held a fairly clear-cut middle-class position in Mombasa, for we hear of Comorian membership of the Villa Club, whose members consisted of (Umani) Arabs, Twelve Clans (aristocratic) Swahili, Baluchis¹ and Comorians

1 The 'Baluchis' were descendants of the Baluchi soldiers who were garrisoned at Fort Jesus in Mombasa for the Busaidi Sultans of Zanzibar. Many of these soldiers married Swahili women and settled for good in Mombasa and their descendants were more intermarried with Swahilis than with any Indian category.

(Kindy, 1972: 36). The earliest recreational clubs for Arabs and Swahilis in Mombasa were football clubs imitated from those of the Europeans and Indians. In the case of the Swahilis and Arabs, football-club membership was based upon residence in particular quarters of the town and tended therefore to express class and race differences. The Villa Football Club was in Kibokoni, on the whole a quarter of long-established comfortably-off Arabs and Swahilis, and in 1920 the Villa Club was formed, nominally as the team-supporters' club, presumably. In fact it became a meeting-place for adult Kibokoni men to chat and relax in (Kindy, 1972: 94). The Villa Club ceased to exist in 1928 as the result of internal rivalries, and in 1930 the Comorians founded their own Comorian Association.

They rented a Swahili house on the Salim Road near the Khonzi mosque as their club premises. This was more or less at the town boundary in those days, near the first site of the railway station, and it faced coconut shambas which were already rapidly being eaten into by the westward spread of thatched, mud-and-wattle suburbs. While earlier Comorian immigrants had lived in the heart of the old town, the congestion and expense there had become such that many were already living beyond Salim Road in newer quarters such as Sheikh Jundani, Timboni and Bondeni along with other mainly muslim immigrants.

A long-standing Comorian resident recalled in 1974 how the high spots of the year used to be when Comorians from Zanzibar or the Comoro Islands would come to Mombasa by dhow en route for the pilgrimage to Mecca and stop to meet friends and relatives for a day or two. There would be receptions for them at the club, with prayers and refreshments and perhaps a pilao or a biriani. Similar welcomes would be arranged if an important Comorian sharif or sheikh came to visit Mombasa. On these occasions all the Comorians in Mombasa would do their best to attend.

During the early 1930s there were perhaps forty to sixty active members of the club in Mombasa. Many met daily since the club-house was near a mosque, and those who could went to that particular mosque for the sunset and evening prayers and could sit together talking between times. The club thus functioned on a day-to-day basis as a baraza - a meeting place for peers to exchange news and opinions. Such barazas are a long-standing tradition in Swahili and Comorian daily life, though they usually occupy open-air benches,¹ rather than rented premises.

On occasion, the club could act to collect money for specific purposes. Funerals were commonly mentioned as important responsibilities of the club (as they are of so many urban associations). Muslims believe that bodies should be buried quickly, not transported to the deceased's home town, but since the rituals accompanying a muslim burial are normally the responsibility of kin, other muslims who knew the deceased must act when a man dies far from home. Apart from the preparation of the body and the interment itself, it is customary for a three-day mourning period to follow, during which the Kur'an is read aloud in its entirety each evening, food is cooked and sent to the local mosque for the poor, and on the third day a mourning feast is eaten by the bereaved themselves. The Comorian Association could organise the funding and the labour for a funeral, and it could also organise effectively at times of crisis, making contributions in time and money if a member fell ill and was unable to support himself and his dependants, for instance.

Bi Dodo (Time: about 1935 onwards)

Bi Dodo is an elderly Banjuni woman from Shela who, many years ago, 'before the war with the Italians' (the Second World War), met and married a Comorian in Mombasa who worked in the market. She described with great pride how she had been helped by the Comorian Association when he had died abruptly. She was

1 The baraza benches are known as bangwa in Ngazija.

presented with the result of a collection made for her, and was later given money to enable her to return to her home town on the far northern coast of Kenya. She eventually remarried and returned to Mombasa, and retained a life-long admiration for Comorians, hanging framed photographs of eminent Comorian shaikhs on the walls of her sitting room.

The club was an important informal forum for the exchange of information about jobs, current rates of pay, and so on, newcomers in particular having much to gain from easy access to older and more established migrants.

The Comorian Association never built or bought itself premises in Mombasa. The idea must have occurred to its members, for virtually all the various Indian sects and sub-castes in Mombasa had done so, and the Comorian Association in Zanzibar owned two if not three club buildings in Zanzibar town at this stage. Perhaps the close links between Zanzibar and Mombasa made such an investment seem unnecessary. At any rate, the Mombasa branch did not do so. Instead, it moved twice, first to the quarter of Sarigoi - a cheap mud and wattle area where increasing numbers of Comorians were to settle after the Second World War, and then, in the 1950s, to Mwembe Tayari, a quarter near the market. The first move occurred because the original house was to be pulled down with a whole area of Swahili housing which was to be replaced by concrete buildings. The clubhouse in Sarigoi was not nearly so well sited. It was not on a main street or near an important mosque and was, members recall, in a muddy unattractive corner of the quarter. Eventually the better Mwembe Tayari house was found, though it was even less centrally sited. Like the others, it could be used to provide temporary accommodation for Comorians passing through or just arrived, but its position made it less well-used as a baraza.

In Mombasa, Comorians as a group had a place in the local Swahili scheme of things in that Comorians and Swahilis felt culturally akin.

Moreover, the prestigious position held in Zanzibar society by some Comorians gave individuals coming from Zanzibar to Mombasa a certain amount of reflected glory. One or two marriages occurred in the 1920s and early 1930s between upper middle class Mombasan Swahilis and Comorians from Zanzibar, which apparently helped to set the tone for the way in which Comorians were regarded there. Significantly, women were both given and received. 'We have married and we have been married,' a Comorian explained with much satisfaction in the 1970s.

Ali Bakari (Time: about 1920)

Ali Bakari had been born in the Comoro Islands, in the town of Mitsamihuli in north-west Ngazija, in about 1895. He was taken to Zanzibar as a child and grew up to become a clerk in a kadi's court. In 1919 he transferred to Mombasa and was given work as a court clerk there also. A year later he married Fatuma, daughter of a neighbour in Mkanyageni, the quarter where he lived. Fatuma's mother was Twelve Clans Swahili and her father had been an Umani Arab from Muscat, engaged in dhow trading between Muscat and Mombasa.

In this case, Ali Bakari's birthplace and the social status of his kin played very little part in his being regarded as a desirable husband for a girl who was expected to marry well, though enquiries must have been made to establish for certain that he was not of slave descent. It was his Zanzibar provenance and white-collar skills, apparently, which won the day.

Mwana Chipe (Time: about 1928 onwards)

Mwana Chipe was born in the Comoro Islands in about 1913, in the sultanate of Mbude. Her father had been on periodic trading trips to Zanzibar and in the 1920s when Mwana Chipe was ten or so, he moved the family to Zanzibar to pursue his business from there. In Zanzibar he made friends with a Swahili originally from Mombasa who was a dried-shark wholesaler. Eventually the friendship resulted in Omar Abdurahimu the Mombasan being given Mwana Chipe as a wife by her father.

The couple lived for a year or two in Zanzibar and then deaths among Omar Abdurahimu's kin in Mombasa decided him to return home. Mwana Chipe was the first Comorian woman actually born in the Islands to settle in Mombasa. She must have gone there about 1931.

A third example of a marriage between a Comorian and a Mombasan acts as a reminder that there were important links maintained between the Comoro Islands and Lamu, on the coast far to the north of Mombasa, before the start of the colonial period.

Mama Ayesha (Time: about 1935)

Mama Ayesha was born in Lamu in about 1920 of a local Arab mother and a Comorian father from the island of Nzwani in the Comoros. He was a trader who went regularly to Lamu to sell sugar, Mama Ayesha thinks. The family moved to Nzwani when she was small, and returned to live in Mombasa when the father died and when Mama Ayesha was about fifteen. Shortly afterwards, Mama Ayesha was married to Ahmad, a young man of Three Clans descent. She has spent the rest of her life based in Mombasa, but occasionally has classificatory children and grandchildren from Nzwani to stay with her.

These marriages, and a few others like them, classified Comorians very favourably, since they had demonstrated their ability to marry relatively high in the local hierarchy.

The Swahili associated Comorians with religious piety and learning. This was, in fact, because of the concentration of Comorian sharifs and men of learning in Lamu, and of Comorian kadis in Zanzibar. That many of the Comorians arriving in Mombasa were not especially learned did not seem to detract from the respect generally afforded to Comorians as a category.

3.2.2 Nairobi

While Comorians in Mombasa were living in a town very much like Zanzibar and engaged in a lifestyle familiar from home which was built

on the rhythms of daily prayer and the annual cycle of muslim festivals, moving to Nairobi was a step much more into the unknown. Yet even there, the oldest African locations had a strong muslim flavour, created originally by the coastal porters who settled there, and maintained by the conversion to Islam of a steady stream of upcountry Africans (Hake, 1977: 48-49; Bujra, 1975: 226-227). Kiswahili, too, was the lingua franca.

In 1935 a Nairobi branch of the Comorian Association was founded by Mzee Bwana bin Saleh, a Comorian with a good job at the Nairobi or Milimani Club - the most exclusive officers' and gentlemen's club in Nairobi (Smith, 1976: 433). The branch was affiliated to the parent organisation in Zanzibar. Since Nairobi had become the most important town in mainland East Africa, it was decided that a clubhouse should be built there for those passing through, or those temporarily jobless, who might well have nowhere else to stay. Contributions towards the cost of the building were collected, it is said, from every Comorian Association member - those in Zanzibar and those in mainland East Africa - from individuals within the Comoro Islands and from 'other Comorians overseas' - perhaps the independent Comorian Associations in Mozambique and South Africa. It is remarkable that these contributions were apparently so forthcoming, especially those made by Comorians who did not live in Nairobi or Kenya. It must indicate that Nairobi was regarded as a potential future destination for many Comorians eager to try new employment opportunities. How precisely the money was collected, and by whom, I have not been able to find out. Association membership fees were paid monthly (2/- in the 1940s), and perhaps the occasions on which these were collected were used to raise money for the clubhouse. Some of the Zanzibar-born Comorians had long experience of the administration of public funds and they probably organised a large part of the fundraising.

By 1938, at any rate, the club was built. It was of stone and was sited by the African location Pumwani. It had eight rooms opening off a central courtyard, used at times for cooking, at times for religious study-sessions, and at times for large-scale celebrations such as the reading of maulidi prayers on the Prophet's birthday. The building also had a room reserved for the washing and laying out of the dead.

Very early on it became the tradition that each of the eight rooms where Comorians could be accommodated was allotted to those from the same area of origin (one-time sultanate) in the Comoros. There had been seven sultanates on Ngazija and one on Nzwani in the nineteenth century, and the rooms were given out on that basis.¹ Quarrels and fighting between sultanates had been bitter in the nineteenth century and enmities are recalled to this day. It seems likely that the rooms were thus allotted for pragmatic rather than sentimental reasons.

The clubhouse was in part a social centre but was mainly, as one Comorian put it, 'to help each other in that big town of Nairobi, and to advise newcomers of vacancies, positions ...'. While there were some jobs to be found in Nairobi itself, many involved working for Europeans in the Highlands, either as private stewards in households or in 'Europeans only' clubs in smaller towns such as Nakuru. News of posts of this kind could only come through the word-of-mouth information system, of which the clubhouse became the centre point.

3.2.3 Employment advantages for Comorians

For the Comorians, the 1930s was a successful period. In 1934 Comorians were effectively granted 'non-native' status with the passing of the 'Interpretation and General Clauses Ordinance'. Its wording

1 Islanders from Mwali and Maore rarely went as migrants to East Africa.

ran as follows:

'In this Ordinance and in every other Ordinance, unless there is something in the subject of context inconsistent with such construction or unless it is therein otherwise expressly provided, each of the terms African and Native means any person who is a member of, or one of whose parents is or was a member of an indigenous African tribe or community, in which expression are included the people known as the Swahili; but neither of the said terms shall include:

- (a) an Arab, or a Baluchi born in Africa; or
- (b) a Somali, an Abyssinian (Amhara, Tigre and Shoa), a Malagasy or a Comoro Islander, unless it is expressly stated that such terms shall include such persons or any of them....'

(Anderson, 1955: 93)

This was not the result of a concerted campaign among Comorians in Kenya, as it was in Zanzibar. Comorians and their employers had tacitly concurred on their 'Non-Native' status for some time, over some issues. The most notable of these, for Comorians, was the right to handle alcohol in their work. Access to imported liquor was strictly forbidden for Africans and so stewards, club-barmen and waiters had to be 'Non-Natives'.¹ The jobs tended to fall to Goans, Somalis and Comorians, and an unofficial 'Non-Native' rate of pay became the established norm. It became such a custom that men who served drinks were muslim (and were therefore thought not to be likely to drink, themselves) that some Goans, say Comorians, would dress as muslims for work in a long white kanzu and white cap or red tarbush (fez).

Any newly arrived Comorian looking for work in Kenya had already one supremely important asset: his nationality. Europeans had regarded Comorians as reliable employees (in Zanzibar) since at least the mid-

¹ I am grateful to Professor Jean La Fontaine, who first acquainted me with this piece of information.

nineteenth century. This reputation, turned stereotype, was of most importance at the beginning of a servant's career, when there were no testimonials from other employers to show, but only word-of-mouth recommendation from another Comorian.

I was told by a Bajuni from Shela, near Lamu, something of the days when, as a young man in the 1940s, he had worked on a ship which used to carry passengers between England and Kenya. He recalled how he used to overhear the conversations of outward-bound newcomers, and returning settlers and officials, about the relative merits of various African tribesmen and foreigners in Kenya, and the types of work each was best suited to. Comorians always came well out of these sessions, in which the greenhorns were effectively handed a charter for future attitudes. Comorian sobriety, loyalty and cleanliness used to be praised, and it was made clear that Comorians worked as stewards for 'top people' - Provincial Commissioners, District Commissioners and the like. As a result, my informant told me, Comorians were often hired in Mombasa as soon as newcomers came off the ship, and would then be taken to Nairobi or up-country with their new employers.

Comorian admiration for Europeans was in return unfeigned, and their admiration helped them to regard their own position as fortunate and enviable. After all, those with the best jobs among their numbers worked in exclusive clubs where only upper-class whites were admitted, and they themselves ranked among the more important non-whites at work in such places.

To see work for Europeans in the way the Comorians saw it, it is necessary to compare their position with those of Africans and Swahilis on the coast, rather than with Asians. Comorians could not hope to compete with Asians for jobs where literacy in English was required, or where a good command of spoken English was important. They could write

KiSwahili and ShiNgazija in Arabic script and understood basic arithmetic, but these skills were not sufficient for them to be classified as other than illiterate.

But if they were compared with Africans, their position looked much better. Most Africans had received little or no Western education. In 1936 the education budget allotted over half of its funds to the non-African 3% of the population, and even by 1945 only a shilling was being spent on the education of each African child for every 150 shillings spent on a European child (Rothchild, 1973: 93-94): Comorian illiteracy could not count against them, then, in a comparison with Africans. The vast majority of Africans in paid employment (between 130,000 and 200,000 in the 1930s - Stichter, 1975b: 29) worked as unskilled labourers, in town or on the land, and although roughly 10-14% were domestic servants¹ and a handful were clerks or skilled workers, the typical African was clearly a labourer. To a Comorian, the important difference between his work and an African's was that he himself was engaged in clean, indoor 'white-collar' work, was perhaps entrusted with the keeping of stores or accounts and had close contacts with members of the ruling race. Even where he was working alongside Africans in domestic service it seems (though it is difficult to prove at this remove of time) that he was usually better paid and given a superior role.

Mwanjie Fumu (Time: 1930 onwards)

Mwanjie Fumu is a man of over sixty who began work as a house-boy for Europeans in Zanzibar in the 1920s. He rapidly learned KiSwahili and in time a little English. He remembers that his first wage in Zanzibar was 40 shillings a month. Later he came to Nairobi, summoned by a letter from a previous employer in Zanzibar, and worked with him first in Nakuru and subse-

1 e.g. Clayton and Savage, 1974: 150-151 for 1927.

quently in Thompson's Falls where he became head boy, in charge of ten servants. Gradually his salary rose until when he at last left, in 1957, he was earning 300 shillings a month. He left because he thought he was not well paid enough.

When Mwanjie first came to Kenya, African wages for unskilled labour (excluding benefits in kind) ranged between 10 shillings and 30 shillings in Kenya (Clayton and Savage, 1974: 167-168). By 1940 the salaries of domestic servants ranged between 20 shillings and 80 shillings (ibid: 232, 237), and Mwanjie must have been at the top of this range or higher, assuming he had become head boy by then. The 300 shilling wage is harder to assess. It can be compared in a rough and ready way with a Family Budget Survey conducted in Mombasa in 1955, however, which shows that around 20% of the Africans questioned in the survey earned over 300 shillings a month. Mwanjie seems to have lost ground in the racial pecking order, by this stage. But by the 1950s there were of course larger numbers of Africans in clerical and skilled posts and work in domestic service had declined in relative prestige.

Nevertheless, domestic service in the 1930s and 1940s was regarded as highly desirable by many categories of people. It offered security, free accommodation and not very arduous work, in return for attractive rates of pay.

Comorians also impressed Europeans favourably in comparison with Kenya's Swahilis. Where Comorians were eager to obtain employment and careful to maintain their reputation for good service, the coastal Swahilis seemed indolent. Some of these differences are very easy to explain. Comorian labour migrants were not from wealthy families, they had their spell as employees far away from their own homes and with luck they returned successful men able to marry and live a leisured life for years to come. The Mombasa Twelve Clans, by contrast, were in many cases in a state of decline from an aristocratic golden age. While they had any

land left, many were determined to live the old life, albeit in straitened circumstances, rather than take up humiliating employment under the noses of their old rivals for status and prestige. The lack of primary schools at the coast, which contrasted strongly with provisions for Arab schooling in Zanzibar, meant that very few had been able to take the graceful way out of their changed circumstances by taking up some form of white-collar or professional employment. Unable to stoop to life as shopkeepers or servants, they suffered genteelly. The Comorians tend to reiterate what was no doubt the British view of the matter, that 'Mombasans do not know how to work'.

Another factor that apparently gave Comorians an edge over the Swahilis with Europeans was quite simply the geographical situation of the Comoro Islands. Although it may have been understood by Europeans that both the Swahilis and the Comorians were of mixed Arab and African descent, this does not seem to have suggested to them that they were similar in terms of Kenya's racial hierarchy. That Comorians were not indigenes of the African mainland, that their islands were far out in the Indian Ocean, like those of the Seychelles, and linked politically to Madagascar, suggested rather that they were more non-African than many Swahilis. Comorians think that their political status as French subjects weighed with Kenya's Europeans too.

For all these reasons, and no doubt others too, Comorians seem to have been regarded as different from the Mombasa Swahilis and to have partaken of some of the superior qualities attributed to other non-Africans.

Comorians (who are of course far from unique in this) took pleasure in acquiring for themselves certain of the objects they had grown used to seeing in European homes. Framed studio photographs were very popular, and so were clocks and later radios. They also took care to teach their wives - both those acquired for the migrant years in Kenya, and those

married at home in the Comoros - how to serve tea, on occasion, with its full accompaniment of pretty tea-cups, teaspoons and lace mats on trays. Above all (and the Comorians became famous for this among the Swahilis and prided themselves upon it too), they dressed extremely smartly. When working they wore immaculate muslim dress and the tarbush, imitated from Egypt via Zanzibar. Off-duty they wore suits which they saved for with great diligence. A Comorian whom I met in 1974 told me that he had owned 15 suits in Nairobi in the 1930s. 'You wear suits to make people think you are better off than you are,' he explained. A Zanzibar-born Comorian with whom I was discussing the Comorian love of smart clothes commented, 'Comorians like to show off, as far as dress goes. There's nobody to beat them - they're like American Blacks. And the Europeans were impressed.'

3.3 Kenya 1939-1945

There was no major East African campaign during the Second World War, which brought both short- and long-term benefits to many East Africans.

Between 75,000 and 100,000 Kenyan men were recruited, just under 20% of the total male African population. The health of those who served improved and many acquired skills useful to them after the war was over, such as learning to read and write English, driving, vehicle maintenance, metal and electrical work, signals and despatch riding, working as a clerk, instructor, cook or medical orderly. The hitherto mainly unskilled quality of African labour was changed for good, for Africans with some artisanal skills were being turned out at the rate of 300 a month (Middleton, 1965: 386). Many Africans travelled widely, and had the opportunity to see that the position Europeans and Asians occupied in their country was not duplicated everywhere (Clayton and Savage, 1974: 230-234).

Nevertheless, in the short run, settlers lost no ground in Kenya, but indeed rather enhanced their racial position. As had happened in the First World War, they demanded and got improvements in their situation in return for increasing their volume of food production: they managed to have controls on Indian immigration pushed through and gained increased representation on governmental committees and boards (Bennett, 1965: 330; Clayton and Savage, 1974: 231).

Rationing began in March 1943 for non-Africans - maize, wheat, bread and rice being controlled and rationed out to men, women and children. Africans in registered employment in towns were also eligible for a ration-card (Clayton and Savage, 1974: 242; Stichter, 1975b: 40). Africans felt that, even in the matter of rations, they were being offered the third-rate, after European and Asian tastes had been satisfied. The facts were that those paid daily (kibarua workers), who were mostly Africans, were allowed rations of 1½ lb of posho (maize-meal) a day; those on monthly salaries, on the other hand, of whom some were African but the majority European, Asian or Arab, were also eligible for sugar and rice.¹ Even then, non-Africans reputedly got more sugar than Africans (Clayton and Savage, 1974: 268, n19, 269).

The war gave Kenya a great developmental boost. The employment rate was never higher; Africans had acquired a host of new skills which could be further developed in peacetime continuation courses for qualifications as artisans, primary-school teachers, agricultural instructors, clerks and social welfare assistants (Hake, 1977: 56, 62; Clayton and Savage, 1974: 234). Africans began retail trading in competition with Indians

1 Swahilis seem not to have understood the basis on which rations were allotted either. There was much dissatisfaction in families where one brother got 'Arab' rations and another 'African' rations, as they were thought of. 'Ndugu yangu amepata Uarabu: mie, sikupata', people would say, reputedly. (My brother was granted Arab identity and I wasn't.)

in earnest, and made big inroads in the Kikuyu and Nyanza areas; the small but growing African middle class grew more vociferous on the subjects of equality with Indians and land in the Highlands. Kenya's primary products sold well for a decade from 1942, Government funds grew and were put to better use, and there was a new influx of foreign skills and capital. Kenya was being racially transformed (Middleton, 1965: 387-392; Wrigley, 1965: 264).

3.4 The Comorians 1939-1945

The outbreak of war had very little disruptive effect on those Comorians already working in European households or clubs. Indeed, it quickly became apparent that, since some Kenyan Africans were being drawn away from their usual jobs into the war-effort, it was a good moment to encourage younger kinsmen to come and get established. The Government employed a great deal of foreign labour during the war years, and there continued to be free movement between all the East African territories and free access for those from overseas who wished to immigrate (Clayton and Savage, 1974: 245).

Some Comorians got the chance to travel or obtain more education, or qualifications as a result of the war. Several worked on British shipping, and some were with the Army in the Middle East or elsewhere. For young men, in particular, it was a not-to-be-missed opportunity.

Mwallim Abdal Halim (Time: 1941 onwards)

Mwallim Abdal Halim was born in 1926 in Zanzibar, of Comorian parents. His father, who was already very old, died soon afterwards, and his mother was left a widow with four children to rear. Although she was not without support, Abdal Halim was eager to help her, and when war was declared he decided to join the Army. In 1941, when he was only 15, he succeeded in convincing the recruiting officers that he was eighteen (he is a large, strong man) and signed up. He was drafted to

Mombasa into the Signals, as an Instructor, and it was his job to take Primary school students from Standards 6 and 7 through a 32-week training course as signallers, morse operators and so on. During the course of the war he was able to send his mother enough money for a new concrete and corrugated iron house. As the war progressed, Primary school students down to Standard 4 began to be trained, the bright ones being sent to jobs where literacy was required, and the 'ones who could hardly hold a pencil' being taught to ride motor-bikes as despatch riders. His experience enabled him to go into Primary School teaching in Kenya after the war.

Comorians living in East Africa were faced with a political choice during this period, since most were nominally French subjects. When Paris fell, Madagascar - and by extension the Comoros - opted to support Pétain; that is the resident French Administration did. Many Comorians in East Africa, however, joined the Free French and some volunteered for the British Army as a result of this decision.

Many Comorians seem to remember no more vivid event from the war years than rationing. To them, and to the Swahilis, the superior rations Comorians got at that point, as non-natives and as salaried employees, were important confirmations of status. African women married to Comorian men were regarded with envy by their kin because of the sugar and rice they received.

By and large, those Comorians already in employment when war broke out seem to have continued in the same post, or one very like it, throughout the war. They thereby missed the opportunities which Africans were able to profit from to learn English, or a new skill, though this ought not to surprise us: moving from the known to the unknown when it is not compulsory is an unlikely action for migrants with a secure niche. And there was no way in which they could know that this niche was to be threatened by the events of the post-war period.

4.0 Kenya and the Comorians 1945-1963

4.1 Kenya

The third phase of Kenyan colonial history is that of rapidly growing African political consciousness and the adjustment to it which the Administration, settlers, Asians and the British Government had to make in consequence.

4.1.1 Africans

About 97,000 Kenyans had served in the East African fighting forces during the war and their reintegration into civil society, among other factors, shifted the chief locus of African paid employment away from agriculture to the towns. By 1947, over 62% of African wage-labourers had become non-agricultural (African Labour Census, 1947: Table 9). African employment patterns were thus in the process of changing, even if they could not yet hope to challenge the Asian position where over eighty per cent were employed in private industry, commerce, finance, insurance, building and contracting (Mangat, 1969: 140).

It was clear that Africans were no longer prepared to return to racially differentiated payscales. The 1947 Mombasa general strike was partly called over this very issue and in the same year the African Workers' Federation marched through Mombasa with banners saying, 'Away with the Colour Bar' and 'Equal Pay for Equal Work'. In 1947 too Eliud Mathu campaigned successfully for the abolition of the kipande, the pass (bearing fingerprints) which all African workers had had to carry since 1920 when outside the reserves (Clayton and Savage, 1974: 278-281, 295; Bennett and Smith, 1976: 112).

A welter of new religions, semi-political groups, 'Land Committees' for the protection or recovery of African land and small African newspapers

sprang up after 1945 among Africans, and testify to the ferment that was going on. In 1946 Kenyatta had returned from his 15 years in Europe to an enthusiastic welcome, and the following year he was elected president of the Kenyan African Union.

Europeans were unprepared for this new militancy and excitement and seem, with hindsight, to have greatly misjudged its strength. European immigrants, expecting pre-war rights and conditions, were arriving in large numbers as new settlers, and proposals for equal representation for all races in the Central Legislature, for instance, were violently rejected by whites.

Political ferment gave way to escalating violence in 1952 until a State of Emergency was declared in October, and British security forces were moved in to contain the Mau Mau movement (Bennett and Smith, 1976: 129). It took the government some time to realize that supplies for the fighters were being organised from Nairobi, where Mau Mau had strong if tacit support among landless squatters, the unemployed and unskilled lower-paid workers (Stichter, 1975a: 264-265). By 1954 it was clear that one of the movement's aims had become Kenyan Independence under African leadership.

In 1952 and 1953 thousands of Kikuyu, Embu and Meru without employment certificates or residents' permits were sent home from Nairobi and Mombasa, and in 1954 'Operation Anvil' began, in which the government screened all the male Kikuyu living in Nairobi, perhaps 25,000 of them, and passed them through detention camps (Stichter, 1975a: 268; Bennett and Smith, 1976: 133). The mass exodus of the Kikuyu and their Mt. Kenya neighbours left vacant jobs and housing behind in Nairobi and Mombasa which were eagerly filled - in Nairobi mainly by Kamba, Baluhya and Luo, and in Mombasa mainly by Kamba (Clayton and Savage, 1974: 353, 358). There was a building and manufacturing boom while the Emergency was at

its height and Africans with the right to live in town were readily employable. However, African residential areas were re-organised so that policies of tribal segregation could be implemented and a nightly curfew imposed (Stichter, 1975a: 269).

The Emergency made it obvious, to state a truism perhaps, that once Africans had perceived their own importance, there could be no going back to a previous state where they acquiesced in their own neglect. For instance, in the mid-1950s money for education was still spent largely on European children. An enrolled African child had just under £6 p.a. spent on him, an Asian child £21, and a European child £85. Similarly, 79% of funds for school buildings were spent on European schools, 11% on Asian schools, 1% on Arab schools and 10% on African schools (Rothchild, 1973: 56).

In London, thinking towards Kenya in fact changed at a great rate during the 1950s, and by 1959 Independence was a foregone conclusion, the Emergency was over, and the reservation of the White Highlands was terminated.

4.1.2 The Coast

The Arabs and the Swahilis of the Coast experienced the period very differently from the Africans. While some of the young may have been caught up in the excitement of impending Independence, older coast dwellers were more aware that they were being left out in the schemes for parity between Europeans, Indians and Africans which preceded it. Beside this, the removal of the legal distinction between Arabs and Twelve Clans Swahilis in 1952 - of such moment as an issue thirty years earlier - was almost insignificant (Salim, 1973: 207-208, 213).

Nevertheless, they were to experience a cultural and educational renaissance in the early 1950s which made Mombasa seem worlds away from

Nairobi and the tensions caused by Mau Mau. The prosperity which so much of Kenya enjoyed in this period took a consciously Islamic form on the coast and led on to an abortive political movement.

In 1948 a scheme was launched for the building of the Mombasa Institute of Muslim Education (MIOME), a quarter of a million pounds being put up jointly by the Government, the Aga Khan and the Sultan of Zanzibar, for the purpose. It was seen as the precursor of a future Muslim University, and incorporated the Coast's first and long-overdue Arab secondary school. The school was opened in 1950 and the Institute (which also took post-Primary boys) in 1951, offering a variety of practical and technical courses¹ to just over a hundred students. The project was a source of pride to Mombasans though it did not, in the long run, fulfil its initial promise.

Mombasa's own radio programme, Sauti ya Mvita (The Voice of Mombasa), was also important. It began as an information programme in the days after the Mombasa General Strike in 1947, and by 1954 it was being allotted 9 hours a week on the air. Run by the Liwali for Mombasa and a team of volunteers and invited guests, it broadcast muslim news and discussions of theological issues, mingled with programmes of Swahili music and literature. It also featured live broadcasts of important events in the Islamic year and special programmes for the holy nights of Ramadhan (Salim, 1973: 216). Its mixture of the intimately local and the Pan-Islamic helped to forge a new cultural self-confidence.

Arabs and Swahilis grew determined to combat the fate they foresaw for themselves in an independent Kenya run by Africans. They attempted

1 The curriculum offered marine and electrical engineering, navigation, seamanship, agricultural and veterinary studies, masonry and carpentry, combined with muslim religion and culture. It opened with 57 boys from Kenya, 16 from Tanganyika, 30 from Zanzibar, 3 from Uganda and 2 from Somalia (Salim, 1973: 210).

to draw attention to what they saw as their trump card - the technical terms of the 1895 treaty under which Britain leased the Kenya coastal strip from the Sultan of Zanzibar, but left sovereignty in the latter's hands. They debated the possibility of the coastal strip retaining a link with Zanzibar after Kenya's Independence, or even of its becoming independent¹ in some measure itself.

Yet simultaneously, and for the first time, coastal Africans were being made aware that their own future interests might lie in a different quarter from that of their Swahili-Arab neighbours. Coast Africans had been forming welfare and education associations since just after the Second World War, but these did not take on overtly political functions for another decade. In 1957 Ronald Ngala, a newly elected African member, began travelling among his fellow Giriama, and the Digo, and urging them to fight against minority privilege; tension broke out in Malindi between African squatters and Arab and Swahili land-owners; and, significantly, in 1958 the Bajuni united to form the Bajuni union, a tribal association representing some 20,000 Bajunis as an African tribe (Salim, 1973: 208, 224-225).

In 1960 a nine-member delegation of Swahilis and Arabs flew to Zanzibar to see the Sultan just before a visit he was due to make to London where, it was feared, pressure would be put upon him to renounce his sovereignty over the protectorate. For a while the Mwambao (coast-line) movement had united Mombasan Arabs and Swahilis, and even some Asians and Europeans, but it was to be short-lived. Neither the Sultan and the Zanzibar Nationalist Party nor the British administration in

1 The fervour and nationalist slogans of the Arab-led Zanzibar Nationalist Party, who had been fired by contacts with the Middle East, especially Nasser's Egypt, influenced Mombasa's Arabs, suggests Salim (1973: 220).

Kenya¹ were prepared to countenance the idea. The Mwambao cause died out and was superseded by the countrywide cry for regionalism (majimbo) as a way of protecting tribal interests after Independence (Salim, 1973: 241). Finally, even hopes for some sort of regional autonomy died.

4.1.3 Independence

Independence in December 1963 called for considerable stocktaking among all groups, and initially both hopes and fears about the future were unrealistic.

European settlers felt betrayed; Asians were apprehensive at the effects for them of Africanisation policies, and Africans had unrealistic hopes about the speed with which transformations could be effected.

In the event, change took place at a rate speedy enough to take some of the tensions out of the situation for Africans, yet in such a way that foreign skills and capital were only gradually phased out (Rothchild, 1973: 129, 145). Throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s, as it turned out, Europeans and Asians continued to be needed in certain sorts of agriculture and in some managerial, professional and technical occupations. Qualified non-Africans, despite their fears, were to fare quite well in the first crucial period immediately after Independence (Rothchild, 1973: 54, 145).

4.2 The Comorians

4.2.1 Wageni

After the Second World War a new period of enthusiastic Comorian immigration to Kenya began. As before, most came from Zanzibar, though

1 Any lingering doubts in British minds as to where secession might take Kenya's Arabs must have been scotched by the Anti-Arab riots in 1961 in Zanzibar (Salim, 1973: 238).

some appear to have arrived directly from the Comoro Islands to join kin already established. Zanzibar was still the easiest landfall for a man straight from the Comoro Islands: a place where he could learn KiSwahili in the company of large numbers of Comorians he already knew, or knew of. The numbers arriving in Kenya slowed down only late in the 1950s, it seems, when it became clear that Independence, with all its uncertainties, was imminent.

The position of Comorians, relative to that of Africans, was to become much less significant in this post-war period though they were still in a strong position as regards Arabs and Swahilis. African education, inadequate as it had been, had nevertheless seen a minority through mission schools and the Kikuyu independent schools to a point where a much wider range of posts were open to young African adults than previously; and the training many had received as a result of the war could be added to the record. Africans, as a category, had definitively broken out of their undifferentiated classification as unskilled labourers, by 1947 when over a third in wage-employment already held semi-skilled or skilled posts (African Labour Census, 1947: Table 9).

Comorian employment in Kenya had been more diversified in the 1920s and 1930s than it later became. Comorians moved steadily into employment as stewards and barmen and stayed there, consolidating their position until they worked only in the homes of senior European officials or in hotels, clubs and restaurants reserved for Europeans. These posts had their greatest attraction when they could be viewed as a desirable but unavailable pinnacle of achievement for others such as Africans. When Africans themselves could begin to move into other white-collar jobs, perhaps as clerks, domestic service began to lose some of its prestige.

In Zanzibar, the long-established Comorian settlers were deeply involved in Zanzibar Arab life, including its politics, while this was

not replicated among Comorian migrants in Kenya. The involvement of Comorians in political events in Kenya was as bystanders rather than actors in all but a few isolated cases.¹

Comorians were in fact a great deal more involved with Africans than their constant efforts to outshine them might lead one to suppose. In Nairobi, especially, Comorians lived side by side in African locations with Africans from all over Kenya, and many had married muslim Kikuyu, Kamba or Nandi women. The occasional Comorian disappeared almost without trace among his affines, abandoning the types of employment normally taken up by Comorians and setting up in a remote area as a butcher or muslim astrologer/doctor. While no Comorians, to my knowledge, directly assisted the Mau Mau movement, there were several who helped to hide the identities of Kikuyu living in Nairobi's African locations by insisting that they were muslims who should not, therefore, be taken back to the Kikuyu reserve. (There were, reputedly, many Kikuyu conversions to Islam during the 1952-1954 period.) Several Comorians who normally had their wives and children with them in Nairobi sent them away (usually to the wife's home area) during the Emergency, in anticipation of violence. Overall though, the Emergency and the removal of so many Africans from

1 I cannot resist appending the following rather extraordinary example:

Saidi Mbaye (Time: 1946)

Saidi Mbaya is an elderly Comorian now more or less retired in Nairobi. He has worked for the British for most of his life in various capacities and was assistant cook and steward on the passenger ship which, in 1946, took Kenyatta back to Kenya. Saidi Mbaye asserts that the British made an attempt to poison Kenyatta on this voyage which he (Saidi) somehow got wind of. He rushed to the table where Kenyatta was about to start eating, snatched away the poisoned plate of food and gave it to a ship's cat which subsequently died. Kenyatta never forgot this incident and Saidi Mbaye has always, since Kenya's Independence, been able to ask favours of him at will. 'He can go and see him anytime', asserted younger Comorians. He has certainly been able to get Kenya citizenship where many other Comorians have been unsuccessful.

Nairobi did the Comorians nothing but good, and many newcomers from Zanzibar found work. If they were aware that their position was being eroded as more and more young Africans acquired basic educational skills - especially knowledge of English¹ and literacy in it - they have forgotten, for it is Independence or immediately before it that is remembered as the first moment of change. Many of those who were the most senior members of the Comorian migrant community at the period when I did fieldwork first arrived from Zanzibar around 1950, sometimes following in the footsteps of older brothers, sometimes coming with no close prior link and still establishing themselves successfully.

Abdallah Ramadan (Time: 1949 onwards)

Abdallah Ramadan was born in Moroni in about 1910, the son of a kadi. He went to Zanzibar as a young adult, married a Comorian woman and became a well-known tailor. In 1949, when nearly 40, he moved on to Nairobi, encouraged by the stories of the good life he had heard from Kenya Comorians on leave in Zanzibar. At first he worked for an Arab tailor with a shop in Nairobi which did a good deal of contract tailoring for the government. Later, when the Arab opened a branch of his business in Kitui, Ukambani, Abdallah Ramadan was sent to run it. There he married two Kamba wives and, rather later, the daughter of the local kadi, who was a Somali from Brava. He had stayed there ever since and seen one of his children get to Alliance High School, Nairobi, and to the Universities of Dar-es-Salaam and Nairobi.

Shamsuddin Katib (Time: late 1940s)

Shamsuddin Katib was born of Comorian parents in Majunga, the town on the north-west coast of Madagascar where a large Comorian wazalia community lived until 1976. In the late

1 Africans were very aware of the vital importance of English, as the Dow Report (1955: 184) makes clear. Africans insisted to the Commission that it was English, not Swahili, that they wished to learn at school, and the report recommended that they be taught it as young as possible.

1940s, when he was about 20, he went to visit kin in Zanzibar and learned some Swahili and English. By chance he met an Englishman there who worked in the Speke Hotel in Uganda, and he obtained employment with him. In 1952 he transferred to the elite Muthaiga Club in Nairobi and moved eventually to the Executive Club, also in Nairobi. At the same time he engaged in trade and after Independence he eventually became part-owner of the Executive Club.

Several men from the same village of origin - Bangwa-Kuni, in the extreme north of Ngazija - obtained work at this period in the New Stanley Hotel in Nairobi, through the initial placement of an older kinsman. The group have held on to their position in the hotel over all the intervening years to the present so successfully that the hotel is referred to among Comorians as the Bangwa-Kuni hotel.

The period seems also to have encouraged Comorians with some religious learning to come and work in Kenya. Islam was spreading fast among some of the inland tribes, beginning among those of their members who had worked in the large towns, but also to be found in much tinier centres, and it was often Comorians who were found in out-of-the-way places working as shaikhs, teachers and converters. It is not clear why Comorians were found working in this way more than coastal Kenyans: Comorians think that their Kur'an schools in the Comoro Islands teach children more thoroughly than is the case in Kenyan Kur'an schools, since they have all-day instead of half-day sessions. Perhaps they are right.

Sheikh Nur-al-Din (Time: early 1950s)

Sheikh Nur-al-Din was born in the province of Washili, in eastern Ngazija, in perhaps 1905. He married on the western side of the island, in Itsandra. and after some years decided to go and work in Johannesburg in a religious capacity. From there he moved to a post as Imam in a mosque in Delagoa Bay (Mozambique) and afterwards had a similar spell in Majunga

on the north-west coast of Madagascar. From there he moved to Zanzibar and at length, in about 1950, he came to be Imam of the mosque in Pumwani, Nairobi. He retired to the Comoro Islands in 1970, leaving a son behind him in Nairobi.

All in all, there seems to have been a spate of Comorian immigration at this period, which only slowed as Independence became imminent. Since it was the latest point at which unskilled or semi-skilled non-Kenyans could hope to enter the country and find work (although they did not know this at the time), the Comorians who arrived at this time were to find themselves increasingly isolated as the years went by, for although most continued to work in the jobs they had, the fluidity of their previous situation went, and they were no longer able to find work for younger kin, or even change jobs easily themselves unless they were lucky.

4.2.2 Comorian wazalia from Zanzibar

A new category of Comorian began to arrive from Zanzibar early in the 1950s, and the presence of these individuals was to be very important for others like them, after the Zanzibar Revolution. These Comorians were unlike previous Comorian immigrants to Kenya from Zanzibar in that they were all Zanzibar-born or reared, and had consequently all had at least primary education. Their rearing meant that they knew little or nothing of the Comoros and its language, ShiNgazija, but regarded Zanzibar as their home and KiSwahili as their first language. Their education meant that they spoke fluent English.

All these factors made it most unlikely that a move to Kenya would take place under the wing of an Ngazija-born migrant already established as a servant, tailor, etc. Rather, young men came as educational opportunities presented, or as a post as a clerk or teacher was offered to them. A few Comorians were able to obtain places at MIOME (the Mombasa

Institute of Muslim Education) when it first opened and have pursued highly successful careers as a result of the training they then received. One who trained in marine engineering and navigation is now a ship's captain, for instance, and another who studied electrical engineering eventually became a Civil Aviation Air Traffic Controller working in East Africa, the Comoros and eventually Uman.

Students recall the enthusiasm and excitement in Zanzibar when MIOME first opened, the competition among fourteen- and fifteen-year-olds to obtain a place there and the unique mixture of technical and Islamic learning with which students were presented.¹

Others came, or stayed, to work as Kenya experienced the dramatic post-War boom which lasted until 1956 (Hake, 1977: 62).

Mwallim Abdal Halim (Time: 1944-1963)

Mwallim Abdal Halim (see page 97 above) continued to be employed by the British Government, after the Second World War, first in Ethiopia, and then in Somalia, as a school teacher. He learned Somali (and married a Somali wife) through his five-year stay in Mogadishu, Merka and Kismayu and when, in 1950, he transferred to the employment of the Kenya government, he was sent to the Somali town of Wajir, in Kenya's NFD (Northern Frontier District). He was given a lift from Kismayu to Wajir by the then Provincial

1 A student at MIOME in 1954 recalls a visit to the Institute of the internationally known scholar Saiyid Umar Abdallah 'Mwenye Baraka' (a Comorian sharif with qualifications from both Al-Azhar University in Cairo and Oxford University). After a lecture on religious matters, Saiyid Umar encouraged questions from the students on topics of interest to Muslims. A student asked him what the Islamic attitude to birth control was, and before he could reply, a teacher sprang to his feet shouting that contraception was a filthy invention, banned for all Muslims. The Saiyid used the occasion as one on which to exemplify the style of argument used by the ulama. He asked the teacher politely his authority for his statement, and was told, 'Mwallim Goso' (a Lamu-born shaikh who had been a local kadi). Saiyid Umar then revealed his authority for a reverse opinion: a 1,000-year-old book in the Al-Azhar library.

Commissioner of the NFD, Richard Turnbull (later to be Governor of Tanganyika), who was returning in convoy from a boundary inspection. Chatting as they travelled, Turnbull discovered that Abdal Halim was to be getting 'Asian-rate' wages in Wajir and in addition a 4 shillings-a-day hardship allowance for having to work in the NFD. He angrily told Abdal Halim that he had Arabs working for African wages in the NFD, and that he would personally write a letter recommending that he got only 'posho' allowance ('maize-meal' - i.e. African rates) too. Abdal Halim, upon arrival in Wajir, sat down and drafted Turnbull a heated letter. 'I was brought up on bread and butter just like you, and I can't start eating "posho" now,' he wrote. After this, events moved fast. Turnbull came to the Wajir school, and there was a fierce exchange of words which led at length to Turnbull throwing the blackboard ruler at Abdal Halim, who then threatened him with a chair. Abdal Halim was suspended without pay and in due course transferred to Mombasa. Amazingly, Abdal Halim was not only offered Asian rates in Mombasa, but when his back pay from the suspension period came through, that was at Asian rate too. From Mombasa he was transferred to Faza (in the Lamu archipelago), to Naivasha, and eventually, just before Independence, back to the NFD to Wajir, and then Marsabit. By the standards of other young men of his age, 'race' and education level, he had already had a spectacularly successful career, with a salary rising from 65 shillings a month when he first worked as a Signals Instructor in the early 1940s, to 900 shillings at Independence.

Abdal Halim is amazed, in retrospect, that he had the courage to stand up to a man in a position of such authority, but thinks that at the time he was so certain of his rights as a Comorian that he could only react with outrage when they were challenged.¹

Another Zanzibar-born Comorian who came to Kenya after incomplete schooling was Ali Hamid Yunus. He, like Mwallim Abdal Halim, was

1 Alas, I do not have Turnbull's version of this story!

attracted by what he perceived as greater opportunity than existed in Zanzibar.

Ali Hamid Yunus (Time: late 1940s, early 1950s)

Ali Hamid was born in Zanzibar in about 1928. His parents had both been brought as children to Zanzibar and reared there, so he was virtually a third generation Comorian. His parents lived in the town-quarter of Malindi - a solidly Comorian and aspirant middle-class area - and his father worked in the Palace as a personal servant of the Sultan. Ali Hamid went to the Comorian primary school and on to the government secondary school, but before he had completed his time there or had the chance to aim for higher education (as Comorians of his background were beginning to), his father died. He took a job as a clerk and moved to Kenya in the early 1950s, where he began as a book-keeper and worked his way up until at length he became a chartered accountant with an international company.

Comorians such as these who had, by the 1970s, been in Kenya many years and who had lived through the Mau Mau period and the country's Independence, have often been given nicknames indicative of their long involvement: names such as 'Kikuyu', 'Kenya', 'Kariuki' (a common Kikuyu name) and so on. It is also true that the general suspiciousness observable in 1973/74, which was shown in Kenya towards Zanzibar-born or reared Comorians by those migrants born in the Comoro Islands, was least in evidence with the Zanzibari Comorians who had come before Kenya's Independence and Zanzibar's Revolution.

4.2.3 Contrasts between Comorians in Mombasa and Comorians in Nairobi

It is possible to make the very broad generalisation that, for Swahilis, Arabs and Comorians, Zanzibar town offered the most satisfying life for those with some claims to prestige among Muslims, or those who wished to be at the centre of Islamic learning in East Africa. Nairobi,

on the other hand, was the place where it was easy to become wealthy and where the pleasures of modern European living could be enjoyed. Mombasa's position was somewhere between these two, but with its orientation strongly towards Zanzibar.

As one result of this, the Mombasa branch of the Comorian Association had more of the characteristics of that pre-colonial Swahili and Comorian institution the baraza, and in this more closely resembled the Zanzibar Comorian Association, while the Nairobi branch represented more closely the new style of urban voluntary association catering to the needs of migrants. By the 1950s this difference had become very marked, because in Mombasa a generation of members had grown up who were locally-born offspring of marriages between Comorians and Swahilis.

For these individuals, the Association's chief function was not help in settling in; rather, they seem to have regarded membership as something which distinguished them - to their own advantage - from the Swahilis, among whom no such institution existed in quite that form. They valued the precise and specific link the Association gave them to Zanzibar, and to the Comorian Association there with its many facilities and its middle-class, wazalia membership. 'Being Comorian', then, for them, drew its meaning from the existence of the Zanzibar wazalia, rather more than from the image the British held of migrant Comorians. Several individuals with only the most tenuous of links to Comorian identity managed to become members, for reasons bearing almost no relationship to the Comoro Islands themselves.

Such Association members in Mombasa were not of course confined in their jobs to the normal specialities of Comorian migrants. One or two worked as fresh and dried fish wholesalers, several became clerks and one or two primary school teachers. One of the sons of Ali Bakari managed to buy an old second-hand car and became a salesman of herbal and magical

medicines (dawa) to rural ritual specialists, curers and sorcerers among the Mijikenda and the Kamba. He would disappear with a fully loaded car sometimes for weeks at a time and eventually made enough money to run a second-hand car business in Mombasa. Another, a sharif reared from early childhood in Mombasa, though born in the Comoros, was able to take advantage of primary schooling quite unavailable in the Islands at the time and found work with Barclay's Bank in the early 1950s. He rose to become a senior counter clerk.

There were also Comorian migrants in Mombasa who had come to Kenya as adults. It seems to have been quite common to change jobs every few years, trying out life in Nairobi, Mombasa, the White Highlands and Uganda. Here is the complete work record of one migrant who came to Nairobi in 1937 at the age of 15 and returned to the Comoros ready to make his ada marriage (Shepherd, 1977) in 1961, when he was 40.

Bwana Tayyibu (Time: 1937-1961)

1937-38 worked in Nairobi with a private family as a houseboy
 1938-38 worked in the Nairobi Civil Service Club as a barman
 1938-40 worked in the Karen Club, Nairobi, as a barman
 1940-41 worked in the Queen's Hotel, Nairobi, as a barman
 1941-47 worked in the 400 Hotel, Nairobi, as a barman
 1947-48 worked in the (Shida) Kasbah Restaurant, Msa, as
 head barman
 1948-49 worked in the Nyali Beach Hotel, Mombasa, as head
 barman
 1949-61 worked in the Lake Victoria Hotel, Uganda, as head
 barman

One of the most prominent Comorians in Mombasa in the 1950s was in fact a migrant, though perhaps not an entirely typical one.

Sheikh Ali bin Saad (Time: 1940s and 1950s)

Sheikh Ali came from a notable family in the one-time sultanate of Itsandra, in western Ngazija. He went originally to East Africa to study further rather than to work and moved to

Mombasa from Zanzibar in the early 1940s for reasons which I have not been able to ascertain. There he lived in Makadara (a middle-class Swahili and Baluchi mtaa) and acquired a reputation as a mwalimu - a religious specialist with knowledge of astrology, curing and Islamic magic. He gained a particular reputation for his ability to help women who were having difficulty in conceiving (and therefore ran the risk of divorce), and was also skilled at love-potions. He worked by day as a shop-assistant.¹

He became friendly with other men in positions of religious authority and with several Three Clans (elite) Swahili families and used to be a regular contributor to the Sauti ya Mvita radio programmes. His closest friend became Himidi, a Swahili at the heart of the Twelve Clans ceremonial life whose wife was the keeper of the regalia of Mombasa town (the cowhorns decorated with metal rings blown only at the town's annual New Year festival and at important weddings). The friendship was sealed in the early 1950s by a marriage arranged between Himidi's son and Ali bin Saad's sister's daughter, who was brought from the Comoro Islands specially. Over the years, and with the deaths of Himidi and Sheikh Ali, this marriage has become an increasingly important pivot-point for Comorians still remaining in Mombasa.

I have not heard of tensions in the Mombasa Comorian Association between locally-born and Comoro-born Comorians (as there were beginning to be between the two categories in Zanzibar), but it seems to have been clearly understood that it was the locally-born who dominated it. KiSwahili was the language spoken at meetings there (unlike the Nairobi branch), and there were functions for women which had no counterpart, to my knowledge, in the Nairobi branch. At these events, women with a

1 This dissonance between having been held in high regard in areas outside the Western cash economy, and having unremarkable status within it, is frequently found among Swahilis and Comorians who have not had the chance of a Western education. In such cases overall social status seems to take little account of the job done.

Comorian parent and coastal women married to Comorians would take part and, it is remembered, about fifty women would turn up. They would be the ones to organise large-scale food-cooking on occasion and would collect the money for funeral or wedding contributions. Unlike the newly-islamized African wives of Comorians who married up-country, they knew exactly how to organise the ceremonial which accompanied such events.¹ One half-Comorian woman still living in Mombasa remembers the 1950s vividly and wistfully as a time when being a member of the Comorian Association really meant something for women. Now, with the Association almost defunct, the women who used to participate just see one another vivi-hivi tu - by chance - and each is now peke yake tu - alone, a separate individual - where they used to be a group.

The Nairobi Association presented a striking contrast to its Mombasa counterpart in the 1940s and 1950s, a contrast which could be summed up by the virtually compulsory use of ShiNgazija (Comorian) in the club premises at all times. The language made it quite clear that it was migrants from the Islands who were in charge, not those born in Kenya or in Zanzibar, and that those who would not, or could not conform were unwelcome. For the full implications of this to be clear, it is necessary to understand the situation in Zanzibar.

In Zanzibar, good KiSwahili had such high prestige that it was invariably the language of choice for second-generation Arabs and Comorians. Even those brought as children often grew up speaking

1 It is striking that the customs and rituals thus organised by women were organised according to Swahili norms. At times these actually also resembled Comorian norms, which were often similar, but where some uniquely Comorian features would have been important to Comorian women in Zanzibar, they were generally unknown in Mombasa. Thus Mombasa 'Comorian' women did not have dance groups drawn from and commemorating the seven Ngazija sultanates.

scarcely anything of their parents' mother tongue. Comorians newly arrived from the Comoro Islands, though, regarded their own language as richer than KiSwahili and, though they learned KiSwahili for working purposes, preferred of course to relax in their own first language. The speed with which their language was lost in Zanzibar, and the fact that Comorian wazalia there did not bother to teach it to their children, was a scandal to them.

The Nairobi Comorian Association catered mainly to wageni and a certain latent hostility to Zanzibar-born Comorians seems to have existed.¹ An incident is remembered, for instance, in which an elderly Comorian was so incensed over the inadequate degree of respect shown him by a young Zanzibar-born Comorian (deference to the old is much more important in the Comoros than in Zanzibar) that he chased him, waving his stick, into the Pumwani mosque, and there beat him soundly. It is an incident which it is hard to imagine having taken place in the Mombasa Association context.

One of the young Zanzibar-born Comorians who had gone to MIOME in Mombasa in its early years went on afterwards to Nairobi to look for work, and stayed in the Club-House. His readiness to learn ShiNgazija and his politeness to those with whom he shared the Moroni room warmed them to him, and he later became an important mediator between the two categories of Comorians. But he remembers that he was regarded with suspicion at first. It was not until they learned that he was attending adults' darasas (evening classes) in the Pumwani mosque that they decided his piety made him a 'real' Comorian. Several of the older men he shared with at the time now claim (fictive) kinship with him and encourage him

¹ Many of the migrants in Kenya had begun their working lives in Zanzibar, it should be remembered.

to behave like a son to them.

Comorians were naturally in greater contact with Africans in Nairobi than in Mombasa. Many had married African women, lived in urban locations alongside Africans and worked as the immediate superiors of Africans in places of employment. According to those who are the Kenya-born offspring of African mothers and Comorian fathers, Comorians were respected in the pre-Independence period because they were felt to be 'more advanced' or thought to have 'a special relationship with Europeans'. Marriage with Comorians was looked upon as access to help from Europeans. In addition Comorians, like those coastal Kenyans from the Lamu archipelago, were thought to be devout and learned Muslims who were at the forefront of the spread of Islam and the creation of converts to it. Since conversion to Islam among Africans in East Africa has often been a part of permanent change to urban employment and the abandonment of tribal claims, Comorians could be seen as elder-statesmen of urban life - born into a culture and lifestyle others had to acquire as adults. The most popular and best-attended Maulidi (Prophet's Birthday) Celebration in Nairobi was always that of the Comorians; it was held in the club-house.

That Comorians were differently regarded by co-townsmen in Nairobi and Mombasa is not surprising, given the towns' differences. Nevertheless, the Associations in both towns continued to be affiliated to, and apparently subordinate to, that in Zanzibar. The Zanzibar branch was the oldest and Zanzibar itself was the matrix from which Comorians' chances in Kenya had developed. Many Comorians in Zanzibar were also better established and wealthier than any of those on the mainland. As a result of these facts, disagreements and outright quarrels¹ between club members in Kenya were

1 The stereotype of Comorians among Swahilis and Africans is that they do whatever they do with great energy (*bidii*). 'They have big quarrels, they work hard, they buy a lot of clothes and they have expensive weddings', said a Bajuni (Swahili) informant.

at times arbitrated by the arrival of the President, or some other senior official, of the Zanzibar Comorian Association. Salim (1973: 144) cites evidence for similar procedure in the case of religious disputes: it is as if a pseudo-genealogical model is used for the settling of disagreements.

4.2.4 Comorians and politics

At the very end of the colonial period some Comorians became involved in two political movements. Some second generation Comorians in Mombasa became active in the Mwambao movement, while in Nairobi a Kenya branch of MOLINACO - 'Le Mouvement pour la Libération Nationale des Comores' - was opened.

Mwambao attracted some of Mombasa's Comorians because they felt strongly that they did not want to see the legal link to Zanzibar (however tenuous it was in daily life) destroyed. It would force them to make a choice between Kenya citizenship and Zanzibari citizenship which they were reluctant to make. No doubt they also shared Swahili fears about rule by up-country Africans. A second generation Comorian woman, Mama Ayesha, was among the members of the delegation who went to Zanzibar to urge the Sultan not to renounce his claims to the 'ten-mile strip'; she went as the representative of all Mombasa Swahili women, not particularly of Comorian women, however.

When the Sultan of Zanzibar went to Britain - to discuss the future of the coastal strip, Mombasans were certain - everyone tuned in constantly to the BBC, waiting for news. At last the announcement came: The Treaty was to be annulled and the rights over the coastline to be handed to 'kina Kenyatta' (Kenyatta's faction, i.e. Africans) as coast people termed it. There was, by all accounts, uproar in the Old Town. Indoors, Swahili and Comorian women met and swore to punish (kumwapiza)

the Sultan of Zanzibar in their own particular way. They decided to lay a curse on him by sitting up all night and making an entire reading of the Kur'an against him, together with certain other holy texts (such as Ahl-al-Badri).¹ A normal complete reading of the Kur'an bestows communal blessing upon those who take part, which may be made over, with the consent of the participants, to a third party such as one recently deceased. In this case the power generated by the readings was used to wish for the death of the Sultan: he died not long afterwards of diabetes complicated by gangrene.

When the Mwambao cause died and an attempt was made, just before Independence, to create a Kenya divided into semi-autonomous regions, several Comorians working in outlying areas feared that they would not subsequently be able to move about in search of work, and hastily made for Nairobi or Mombasa. Mwallim Abdal Halim, the primary school teacher working in the NFD in Marsabit, was informed by his Somali affines that a Somali invasion was brewing and that he must be prepared to hide men and provide food or else be killed. He tried desperately to obtain a transfer to another school outside the region, but was prevented by the political structure of the moment, so resigned instead,² and went to Mombasa and then Zanzibar.

MOLINACO had been founded in 1963 in Dar-es-Salaam, just before Zanzibar's Independence. Its inspiration was FRELIMO, whose headquarters were also in Dar-es-Salaam, and the timing of the founding of both was closely connected to the fact that all four British East African

1 See Trimingham (1964: 122ff.).

2 Because he had an expatriate rate of pay he had the option of retiring on a pension at Kenya's Independence. He was able to draw this after his resignation - he was 37 at the time - and then look for other work. 'Safety first!', he said ruefully, telling the story.

possessions had just become independent, or were about to become so. MOLINACO's founder members were those who had close ties with Ngazija, but who had also been in contact in East Africa with ideas about the inevitability and dignity of independence from colonial rule. MOLINACO's chairman, for instance, Abu Bakar Boina, was born in Ngazija, and then worked first in north-west Madagascar and afterwards, from 1962, in Zanzibar as the Comorian School's French teacher. MOLINACO's earliest adherents were Zanzibar wazalia with an interest in the Comoros, because they had kin there in the parental generation.

The three Comorians in Nairobi who decided to form a Comorian Independence movement in 1964 as a response to the creation, in Dar-es-Salaam, of MOLINACO were all born in Zanzibar, though they had lived in Kenya for some time. After some discussion with Tom Mboya, with whom one of them was friendly, they abandoned their original idea of a separate organisation, and founded a branch of MOLINACO. Both Tom Mboya and Kenyatta himself were early members and supporters of the movement. The three Comorians rallied members from many towns in East Africa and, importantly at that early stage, managed to persuade elders and leaders of Comorian groups in every key town except Entebbe to become members. Although the Tanzanian branch of MOLINACO was always the more internationally significant,¹ the

1 MOLINACO, rather than Comorians within the Comoro Islands, was the first group to campaign for Comorian Independence and to attract the interest and sympathy of the UN and the OAU. Even in 1968, Comorian students in Paris were utterly caught up in French politics and had not begun to campaign for Comorian Independence. When the cause of Comorian Independence began to be taken up by Comoro Islanders, in the early 1970s, MOLINACO gradually became irrelevant. Comoro Islanders were grateful for MOLINACO's initiatory role, but were not interested in giving its leaders prominence within Comorian politics. This was because MOLINACO leaders tended to have weak links with the Comoros, by local standards, and because most Comoro Islanders were highly suspicious of Tanzanian socialism and were afraid that MOLINACO, Trojan-horse-like, might introduce Tanzanian-style politics to the Comoros. These fears were shared by France, and members of MOLINACO found it difficult to obtain visas for visits to the Comoro Islands.

Kenya branch was to become of considerable moment among Comorians resident in Kenya, as Chapter 6 relates.

5.0 Conclusions

At Independence, the Comorians in Kenya numbered about 800 adults. Of these, less than 30 were born and/or reared in Zanzibar, perhaps 250 were born in Kenya and 500 were born and reared in the Comoro Islands. This last category had probably already reached zero growth before Independence, since the skills it had monopolized could be acquired by Africans once racial restrictions on types of work done were removed. The other two categories were to grow in the 1960s, however, the one from natural increase, the other from extensive immigration.

5.1 Employment

It should be clear by this stage that, while Comorians in Kenya - even more than those in Zanzibar - had enjoyed the benefits of their position in the racial pecking order, the range of marketable skills they had to carry over into the Independence period was lamentably narrow. While the Comorians in Zanzibar, wageni and wazalia, had many qualified professionals, civil servants and skilled artisans among their ranks, in Kenya the range of employment for Comorians was much more limited than it had been in the 1930s, when they were first working there in some numbers. At that period there had been Comorians in skilled manual occupations, while, by Kenya's Independence in 1963, virtually all Comorian wageni were working as stewards or barmen. Tiny numbers of wazalia born in Kenya or Zanzibar worked in Kenya as businessmen or clerks, but their numbers scarcely altered the overall picture.

While Comorians in Zanzibar had been able to improve upon their employment position over the decades, and to diversify, Comorians in

Kenya had concentrated increasingly upon one early speciality - that of service to European residents. Only those who could find employment in the tourist industry were to find it easy to continue working after Independence. The difference between the employment profiles of Comorians in Kenya and Comorians in Zanzibar could be explained partially as the difference between predominantly mzalia and predominantly mgeni categories; but it is also true that the type and scale of society represented by Kenya and by Zanzibar differed widely and presented Comorians in the two countries with differing opportunities.

5.2 Political changes affecting Comorians in Kenya in the post-Independence period

While Comorians living in Zanzibar had to begin to make radical adaptations to change only a month after the island's independence, Comorians living in Kenya were not immediately to experience much change in their circumstances. However, over the decade from 1963 to 1973, as Chapter 6 explains, Comorians in Kenya lived through a series of events the cumulative effect of which was to unsettle them considerably.

Firstly, the independent Kenya government showed itself hostile, on various occasions, to non-Kenyans. Both Somalis and coastal Tanzanians at times suffered xenophobic treatment. Uganda's treatment of its Asians also sent a shiver through Kenya's non-native population, including Comorians.

Secondly, the East African Community began to break up during the 1960s. Tanganyika and Uganda had felt that Kenya was profiting unfairly from the Community during the colonial period (Elkan and Nulty, 1976: 334ff.), and with the departure of Britain as an overarching unifying force, dissatisfactions became more overt and breaches wider. While the Community existed still, there was free movement of labour, goods and

capital between the three East African countries. Comorians used this freedom to seek work all over East Africa and when, after Kenya's independence, the employment of 'non-natives' was clamped down on, Comorians sometimes allowed it to be thought that they were Tanzanians. Finally, when Kenya ceased to allow Tanzanians or Ugandans to work freely within her borders, opportunities for Comorians to work in Kenya were much curtailed.

It was in consequence during the decade following Kenya's independence, rather than at the moment of independence itself, that Comorians in Kenya had to begin to work out adaptations to changed employment opportunities, and to the loss of the Comorian public identity (linked to the colonial racial hierarchy) which had served them so well.

CHAPTER 2 PART 2

EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES IN KENYA 1926-1963

1.0 'Others'

In using official publications to analyze the wage and employment position of Comorians in Kenya, a certain amount of guesswork had to be employed since Comorians are very rarely listed by name, but are included in a residual 'non-native' category - 'Others'¹ - along with Seychellois, Ethiopians, and small numbers of individuals of other provenance.

1 The categories employed in the non-native Censuses and Reports during Kenya's colonial period are generally: European, Indian, Goan, Arab and Other. No clearer statement of how the terms were used exists, to my knowledge, other than that in paragraph 30 ('Race') in the preface to the Report on the Census of the Non-Native Population, 1948, page 7:

'In Census schedules for completion by the general public the term "race" refers to a combination of colour and basic country of origin. The terms European, Indian, Goan, Arab, etc., cannot be strictly defined as they do not rightly refer to any ethnic group. Europeans include all persons of European origin whose colour is white, while Indian refers to persons whose ancestors were resident on the continent of India. There is no political significance in the term 'Indian' and this definition has no connection with the two States of India and Pakistan. Goans are classified as a separate race, although they have arrived from the continent of India, because of their importance in the life of the community. Arab refers to those persons whose ancestors came from the States of Arabia. Included in Arab will be some offspring of Arab-African unions, as the Arab race permits such children to be termed Arab. Included in 'Other' will be the different types of peoples such as the Chinese, Comorians, Seychelles, Mauritians, Ceylonese, etc., who could not be enumerated in the races enumerated above. Again the definition is a combination of colour and basic country of origin, but this classification has become generally accepted in African territories. Any other classification, although more academically correct, would not have been recorded accurately and would be of little value to either the Administration or the general communities.'

The only full breakdown of this category which I came across was that made in 1947, when a rough-and-ready Census of urban employees was made by issuing ration-books with covers on which basic census information had to be filled in. With the results, it was possible to arrive at the following analysis of those classified as 'Others' in Kenya:

Table 2: Numbers of Comorians in the category 'Others' - 1947

<i>Peoples</i>	<i>Numbers</i>	<i>%</i>
Seychellois	1331	51.7
Comorians	428	16.6
Abyssinians	256	9.9
Chinese	123	4.8
Mauritians	83	3.2
Small numbers of many other groups	354	13.8
Totals	2575	100.0

Source: Report on the Non-Native Population of Kenya from an analysis of information obtained from the Issue of Series V Ration Books by the Commodity Distribution Board during January 1947. Nairobi: Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Statistical Section, 1974: 3.

Comorians thus constituted only 17% of this category, even at this point. In what sense can investigation of the wage and employment history of the category shed light on Comorians for us?

Firstly, many of the occupations which emerge as typical for 'Others' in Census reports and the like tally closely with what Comorians have related about the occupations they and their predecessors had. Thus investigation of the category 'Others', as it is contrasted with the other non-native categories, gives us some insight into the validity of the beliefs of Comorians about their relative position in the colony.

Secondly, it is clear that, in terms of wage-levels, 'Others' rated lower than Europeans, Indians and Goans as a rule, but were often slightly higher than Arabs, and of course always higher than Africans; this too tallies well with what Comorians remember of themselves.

2.0 Employment until 1930

The 1926 Kenya Census included valuable information about two broad occupational categories of importance to Comorians - skilled manual occupations and domestic employment. Table XXIX in the Report on the Non-Native Census 1926 (Nairobi, Government Printer, 1927) shows that Arabs and 'Others' had the highest proportional representation in Tailoring and Foodstuff Preparation (work as cooks, bakers, etc.), both occupations frequently associated with Comorians in the early years. Even more interesting is the breakdown of those working in domestic occupations, especially when the involvement of women is recorded. European women are shown to be numerous in domestic employment in 1926 and in 1931 (figures from the two years are here tabulated together for comparison), a fact which may have helped to give the occupation a certain lustre in the eyes of the non-Europeans also working in it.

Table 3: Domestic employment by race and sex in 1926 and 1931, percent

<i>Race</i>	<i>Men</i>		<i>Women</i>	
	<i>1926</i>	<i>1931</i>	<i>1926</i>	<i>1931</i>
Europeans	5.0	3.6	19.4	15.6
Indians	34.5	30.3	0.9	2.1
Arabs	15.1	20.8	0.4	2.4
Others (inc. Goans)	19.0	-	5.7	-
Goans	-	16.5	-	1.3
Others	-	1.6	-	5.8

1926: 1271 = 100%

1931: 1786 = 100%

Percentages expressed are percentages of these totals.

Sources: Compiled from Table XXIV, Report on the Non-Native Census for 1926; Table XVIII (pp.98-102), Report on the Non-Native Census for 1931.

The table shows that, in the early years, Indian and European men and women were important in domestic employment in Kenya. As they began to move out of this occupation, Arabs began to move into it and, as we know, so did Comorians.

3.0 Changes in employment patterns between 1926 and 1948

An overview of the employment position of Arabs and 'Others' compared with the other racial categories, and over the longer term, can be obtained from Table 4. Based on the 1926, 1931 and 1948 censuses, the table ranks the chief occupations of each racial category in order of importance as measured by numbers of employed males in each occupation. (Occupations are ranked no further than the tenth in numerical importance and not so far in cases where low numbers of employees are quickly reached.)

The table makes it clear that over the twenty-two years it covers, there is a tendency for all racial categories to come to concentrate on one or two specialities, which are held, or moved into more completely, while others lessen in importance.

Europeans

Agriculture retains absolute primacy throughout the period, with Government Service close behind. Participation in Commerce wanes a little and in artisanal, domestic and personal employment Europeans become much less significant. Meanwhile the proportion in professional occupations increases strikingly.

Indians

Commerce is the chief activity of Indians throughout the period followed by skilled manual occupations. Government Service remains steadily in third position. However, Indians grow much less significant in domestic and personal occupations, and in professional occupations, and their involvement in agriculture becomes too unimportant to be listed. While some

Table 4: Occupational categories by order of numerical importance in each racial category, 1926, 1931 and 1948

<i>Employed males only</i>	<i>Europeans</i>		<i>Indians</i>		<i>Arabs</i>		<i>Goans + Others</i>		<i>Others</i>		
	1926	1931 1948	1926	1931 1948	1926	1931 1948	1926	1931 1948	1926	1931 1948	
Agricultural occupations	1	1	5	5	2	3	2	5	6	5	7
Fishing (separate only in 1926)	-	-	7	-	5	-	-	7	-	-	-
Government Service	2	3 2	3 3	4 4	5 5	7 7	1 1	2 1	3 4	4	
Military Service	.	7	.	9	5	8	
Local Government	.	10	.	-	.	-	.	.	-	-	
Commercial	3	2 4	1 1	1 1	1 1	1 1	2 1	7 2	6		
Clerks and typists	.	5	.	2	.	5	.	2	5		
Road transport	.	-	.	8	.	4	.	-	-		
Sea and air transport	.	8	.	-	.	10	.	-	-		
Domestic/Personal	6	6 9	4 4	7 4	4 4	3 4	4 4	4 4	2		
Professional occupations	5	5 3	6 6	10 10	7 6	8 8	6 6	5 8	6 10		
Industrial (all)	4	4	2	2	3	2	3	3	1		
Metalworkers/mechanics	.	6	.	5	.	9	.	6	1		
Precious metal workers	.	-	.	-	.	-	.	-	9		
Carpenters	.	-	.	3	.	-	.	9	3		
Tailors	.	-	.	6	.	6	.	3	-		
Food preparers	.	-	.	-	.	-	.	10	-		

Sources: Calculated from Report on the Non-Native Census, Kenya Colony and Protectorate 1926 (Table XXIV); 1931 (Table XVIII); 1948 (Appendix XII). Nairobi Government Printers, 1927, 1932 and 1953.

have evidently moved into newer occupations such as Military Service and Road Transport, it seems that more and more have clustered in the Indians' first three occupations.

Arabs

Like Indians, Arabs are chiefly involved in Commerce throughout the period, followed by Agriculture (including fishing). Domestic and personal service has become a little more important over the period and industrial activities a little less, and they have fallen behind in Government Service posts and in Professional occupations. Their long-standing involvement with water-transport (not recorded earlier because figures are unavailable) seems to have encouraged them, by 1948, into considerable participation in occupations concerned with road transport.

Goans

Government Service is the chief employment of Goans throughout the period, followed by Commerce (clerks and typists in particular, apparently). Industrial occupations, tailoring above all, have tended to run third and domestic and personal service fourth. Change over the years can be observed in the shrinking proportion of those professionally occupied, and the almost complete departure of Goans from agricultural occupations. The relatively great involvement of Goans in Military Service is probably a reflection of their pre-existing commitment to Government Service.

Others

For 'Others', artisanal work as mechanics and carpenters has a reliable and growing importance, while, by 1948, tailoring and foodstuff preparation have apparently lost their earlier significance. Their involvement in Commerce, the Professions and Agriculture has decreased, and has also done so to a slight extent in Government Service. 'Others' have clearly increased their representation in Domestic Occupations (they and the Arabs are the only two categories to have done so). They have a fair representation in Military Service as well.

To summarise these changes by occupation, it can be said that, by 1948, agriculture is mainly in the hands of Europeans, among non-natives, followed (far behind) by Arabs; Government Service is most steadily important to Goans and Europeans, while other categories lose their representation; Indians and Arabs are the most thoroughly committed to Commerce, while other categories tend to drop out; Arabs, followed by Europeans and Indians, are the most involved in transport; Europeans are the only category to increase the proportion of their numbers in the professions - all others lose the representation they began with in 1926, to some extent; on the other hand work in industrial occupations remains important to all categories but Europeans, who have moved out of most of the artisanal occupations they were to be found in, in 1926. 'Others' have the greatest commitment to work in personal service by 1948: it is their second most important occupation. Arabs have slightly increased their representation in this occupation and Goans have never lost their early commitment to it, but Indians and Europeans have abandoned it to a considerable extent.

Table 4 refers only to men. Until 1948 Indian, Arab and Goan women worked in such minute numbers that they have been excluded from consideration. 'Other' women worked extensively in personal service (they were mostly Seychellois nannies, serving-women and maids, if Comorian memories can be trusted), but in little else in large numbers. Only European women worked in several types of employment from as early as 1926. The result is that, whereas the general picture for men from 1926 to 1948 is one of increased specialisation, the picture for women is generally one of diversification. Appendix XII in the Report on the Census of Non-Natives in 1948 shows that European women work chiefly, in order of numerical importance, as clerks, in the professions, in Government Service, in personal service, in agriculture, in commerce

and in Military service. Indian women work in the professions, in commerce, in Government Service and as clerks. Goan women work in the professions, as clerks and in Government Service. Arab women work as seamstresses and textile workers, in agriculture and in commerce; and 'Other' women work in personal service and as seamstresses, and there are a few in professional occupations, doing military service and working as clerks.

The trend towards the occupational positions each racial category is occupying by 1948 can be plainly observed years earlier in the statistics compiled in the port of Mombasa on the intended occupations of new non-native immigrants to the colony. Relatives and friends already working in Kenya must have sent information to those planning to follow them about types of employment available, for the immigration pattern conforms closely to the trend and no quota system was being operated by immigration officers in this period. Table 5 gives information about such immigrants in the years 1930 and 1935 ranked, as in Table 4, by order of numerical importance so that comparison can easily be made.

4.0 Changes which resulted from the Second World War

Africans have not so far been mentioned in this summary. Until the Second World War the vast majority of those in paid employment were unskilled labourers - urban or agricultural. But the war gave many the chance to acquire skills, and the African Labour Census of 1947 presents a surprisingly changed picture. As Table 6 shows, there were (probably for the first time) over half as many semi-skilled and skilled employees among adult African males as unskilled labourers, in 1947: a clear indication that the old part-time pattern of employment had been left behind by many urban Africans. 'Non-natives' in general were probably

Table 5: Occupational categories by order of numerical importance in each racial category of immigrants for the years 1930 and 1935

Occupations	Europeans		Indians		Arabs		Goans		Others	
	1930	1935	1930	1935	1930	1935	1930	1935	1930	1935
Agricultural occupations (inc. fishing)	1	3	10	10	-	-	-	-	5	4
Government Service	2	2	5	4	4	-	2	2	4	6
Commercial, excluding: Clerks/typists	3	1	1	1	1	1	-	5	2	1
	5	5	3	3	4	4	1	1	6	3
Transport and communications	7	7	-	-	2	3	-	-	3	-
Domestic/personal	-	8	8	8	3	2	3	4	1	2
Professional occupations	4	4	9	9	5	5	-	-	7	-
Sports professionals	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Industrial:										
metal workers/mechanics	6	6	6	5	-	-	-	-	-	5
builders/contractors	8	-	4	7	-	-	-	-	-	-
carpenters	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	8	-
tailors	-	-	7	6	-	-	4	3	-	-
printers, photographers	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-
mining and quarrying	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Sources: compiled from Statistical Summary of Migration through the Port of Mombasa for the year 1930.

Nairobi: Department of Statistical Research, British East Africa, 1931 Appendix III.

Statistical Summary of Migration through the Port of Mombasa for the year 1935.

Nairobi: Department of Statistical Research, British East Africa, 1936 Appendix IV.

unaware of this dramatic shift, partly because they were assured of racial superiority by racial wage differentials and were able therefore to maintain their pre-war view of the racial hierarchy. In consequence, they were quite unprepared for the changes soon to be forced upon them. The overt racism of ranked payscales was inconspicuous while racial overlap in occupations was minimal as far as Africans were concerned, but the War and its labour requirements utterly changed the earlier picture.

Table 6: Male African Employees by Occupation: 1947

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Numbers</i>	<i>%</i>
PRIVATE EMPLOYERS		
Non-agriculture:		
Clerical staff	3,019	1.1
Shop, office and store boys	8,848	3.1
Domestic servants	21,917	7.8
Mechanics	1,097	0.4
Carpenters	716	0.3
Masons and stone dressers	2,834	1.0
Drivers (motor vehicle)	2,353	0.8
Other trained, skilled workers	3,463	1.2
Factory skilled workers	3,414	1.2
Semi-skilled workers	6,297	2.3
Unskilled labourers	40,087	14.2
Agriculture:		
Office staff	938	0.3
Domestic servants	5,603	2.0
Skilled workers	3,518	1.2
Labourers	96,492	34.2
GOVERNMENT SERVICE		
Clerical staff	3,226	1.2
Office and store boys	2,752	1.0
Domestic servants	1,617	0.6
Artisans and mechanics	5,095	1.8
Other skilled workers	21,561	7.6
Labourers	47,010	16.7
<hr/>		
Total	281,857	100.0

Source: Stichter, 1975b: 39. Based on Kenya Colony and Protectorate, African Labour Census 1947, Table 9 (Nairobi, East African Statistics Department, 1948).

Table 6 shows a work-force of just over 280,000 adult African males, a total which represented roughly 20% of the African adult males in Kenya and perhaps 5% of the total African population, estimated in 1948 to be 5,251,120. Of the total employed, 65.1% or 183,589, worked as unskilled labour and the rest, 34.9% or 98,268, worked as skilled or semi-skilled workers. The true measure of this figure can be taken when it is set beside that of non-natives. The total number of adult male non-native employees in 1947 was only 16,176. There were, in 1947, several thousand African mechanics and under 2,000 non-native mechanics; over 2,800 African masons and only 1,041 non-native masons; 6,245 African clerical staff and 3,848 non-native clerical staff, and so on. Although skilled clerks and artisans formed a tiny percentage of the total African work-force, as Table 6 makes clear, in sheer numbers skilled Africans had begun to be a real challenge to non-natives by 1947. (Comparative figures based on Census of Non-Native Employees 1947 Appendix I Table II, pages 1-6).

It would be interesting to plot continuing changes in occupation patterns through the 1950s to Independence. Unfortunately this information is not available in the annual Employment and Wages reports, for employment is recorded by industry not by occupation. However, the impression given in the 1954 report, which measured change by setting figures for that year against a 1949 baseline, is that, while wage differentials between Europeans, Asians¹ and Africans had been reduced over the five-year period, employment opportunities continue to expand

1 After the partition of India in 1947, the term 'Indian' in East Africa was replaced by 'Asian', a term which had been used before that time to specify a broad non-African category including Indians, Goans, Seychellois and sometimes Arabs, Malagasies, Comorians, Ceylonese, etc. By the early 1950s all non-Africans who were also non-Europeans were categorised as 'Asians' in official documents.

faster for Europeans than for Asians and faster for Asians than for Africans (Reported Employment and Wages in Kenya, 1954: paragraphs 29 and 33).

By the end of the decade other patterns were of course emerging. African unskilled labour had become much more expensive, for legal minimum wages had risen sharply since 1954 and overheads (such as housing for employees) had become more costly. Greater industrialisation in any case called now for more semi-skilled and skilled workers (Reported Employment and Wages in Kenya 1948-1960, paragraph 14). Servants were more expensive, relatively speaking, than they had ever been before, and employers began to make do with fewer. This, coupled with the fact that by the early 1960s an exodus of Europeans had begun, made many domestic servants redundant, particularly those without long service or especial skills (Reported Employment and Earnings in Kenya 1962, paragraph 20).

Europeans and Asians continued to hold their own, however, right up to Independence. The pattern of occupations indicated in the 1962 Census (Volume IV, Non-African population) is as it had been for years with Europeans clustering in the most skilled occupations, followed by Asians (i.e. 'Indians'), then 'Others', then Arabs.¹

1 In the top ten occupations for each 'race' tabulated here, Europeans have most professional occupations, Asians and then 'Others' most skilled artisanal occupations, and Arabs most semi-skilled occupations.

Leaving servicemen aside, 57% of the economically-active male European population were clustered in professional and managerial posts in Kenya in 1962. In the Census held in Britain in 1951 only 16% of economically-active males were in such posts (Kenya Population Census, 1962, Volume IV, paragraph 189).

Table 7: Chief occupations of non-native adult males in each racial category in order of numerical importance, 1962

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Europeans</i>	<i>Asians</i>	<i>Arabs</i>	<i>'Others'</i>
Teachers	10	8	-	-
Clergy	7	-	-	-
Accountants	6	-	-	-
Directors and managers	2	2	1	4
Engineers	5	-	-	-
Farmers	3	-	5	-
Executive Officers (Govt)	3	-	-	-
Clerks	8	1	4	2
Shop assistants and salesmen	-	3	2	8
Foremen and chargehands	-	-	-	7
Mechanics	9	4	7	1
Joiners, carpenters	-	6	-	6
Tailors, cutters	-	7	-	-
Masons	-	9	-	-
Other skilled artisanal	-	5	-	3
Drivers	-	-	6	-
Domestic servants, waiters	-	-	9	5
Messengers, nightwatchmen, etc.	-	-	8	-
Other semi-skilled manual	-	-	3	9
Occupations not otherwise described	-	10	10	-
Servicemen	1	-	-	-

Source: calculated from Appendix 8 page 92 Economically active adult males by race and occupation, Kenya Population Census, Vol.IV, 1962.

5.0 Wages - the pre-War period

Wage differentials, like other aspects of the racial hierarchy, were to become more entrenched before they were officially done away with at the approach of Independence. The wage structure which developed in the 1920s and 1930s, so important for understanding Comorian self-evaluation and their position in the eyes of others, was the result of a combination of chance and design. In the early years of the colony, European skilled and even semi-skilled artisans were to be found alongside Indians in some numbers, female European domestic servants were common and Indian and Goan clerks were of great importance in the Civil Service. But as time went by, there were systematic attempts to make the economic hierarchy fit the racial one. European servants and manual workers became rarer and 'poor whites' were discouraged from immigration. Certain Indian Civil Servants were replaced by Europeans, especially in the higher posts and little effort was made to transform Africans from unskilled to skilled labour. Where there remained an overlap, with a particular occupation common to more than one race, the pay-scale hierarchy pointed up the difference which actually existed. In the 1930s and 1940s the African:Indian pay-scale ratio for corresponding posts on the railways was 50:100, for instance, while Indians received only 55% of European salaries, job for job. Stichter, from whom these figures are drawn (Stichter, 1975b: 36) suggests that, overall, average income differences were probably even wider than this. The private sector, after all, was not bound by fixed pay-scale differences as the public sector was.

Decisions about pay within the Civil Service must illustrate the trend in the early years, in default of data from the private sector. Before 1927 there had been two classes of Clerical Civil Servants, Europeans and non-Europeans. In that year three rates were established - a European rate, an Indian rate (including Goans), and

an Arab¹ and African rate (Clayton and Savage, 1974: 250). Only the first two rates carried pension rights: it was assumed that Africans would retire to the reserves, but no thought for the retirement of Arabs was seemingly taken.

In 1935 European and Indian rates were set further apart, with the Indian maximum standing at £502 while the European scale rose to £2,117. This represented not only a wage differential but also introduced a maximum level of seniority for Indians some way below that for Europeans. As a result, Europeans were gradually substituted for Indians in higher posts (Mangat, 1969: 155). Pay-scales for Clerical staff in 1936 at the time of the Pim report were as follows:

Table 8: Clerical staff pay-scales 1936 (per annum) (£)

	<i>Learners</i>	<i>2nd grade</i>	<i>1st grade</i>
African clerks	12-36	38-54	57-90
Asian clerks	30-72	90-240	252-330
European clerks	180-200		340-500

Source: Clayton and Savage, 1974: 250.

In 1942 it was suggested that War Bonuses be paid only to members of the European and Asian Civil Services and not to members of the African service. The initial proposal was reversed because of the outcry from African Civil Servants, but that it could even be suggested is indicative of thinking on race and wages at the time (Clayton and Savage, 1974: 250).

1 This point was a significant demotion for the Arabs, who had originally counted as the racial equals of Indians rather than Africans. They protested bitterly but unsuccessfully about this, and the lack of pension rights which went with it (Salim, 1973: 196).

In the light of the foregoing, it is not difficult to see why Comorians felt themselves more fortunate - and indeed more valuable - than Swahilis. While Swahilis only had the option of escaping African status for Arab status, Comorians were lucky enough to be regarded as 'Asians' rather than 'Arabs' by the British Administration. Where pay-scales were three-tiered (European/Asian/African), Comorians were paid according to the second, and where they were four-tiered (European/Asian/Arab/African), this was still true.

That ranked pay-scales helped to strengthen value-judgements about the virtues of particular 'races' is not difficult to prove. In 1948, for instance, the Holmes Commission examined racial pay-scales (about which African protest, in particular, had become vociferous) and came out in favour of the status quo, insisting that the rates were based on 'other, more fundamental grounds' than race - i.e. on the unequal quality of the work-forces. Non-European scales were to be fixed at three-fifths of European scales (Clayton and Savage, 1974: 293).¹

Before the Second World War, such protest as there was at ranked pay-scales had come from skilled non-native non-Europeans. Africans themselves were for the most part unskilled and were consequently not presented directly with the consequences of different pay for the same job.

1 An example of pay-scales at the time of the Holmes Commission is the following:

Table 9: Public Sector Rates, 1948 (per annum) (£)

	<i>European</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>African</i>
Engine Driver (Grade 1)	330	236	90
Lowest clerk rate	150-420	90-300	36-54

Source: Clayton and Savage, 1974: 293.

Yet in fact African unskilled labour was very badly paid throughout the 1930s and by 1939 the average African wage (unreached, of course, by many thousands) was only 23/57 shillings a month (Hake, 1977: 51-52). For men with no artisanal skills and who could not read or write English, domestic service was by far the best option. Accommodation was usually provided, and in 1940 monthly wages ranged from 20 to 80 shillings a month (plus food) according to type of job, skills and testimonials. During the War, while African soldiers were earning only 12 to 14 shillings a month (plus Board, rations and uniform), the servants of soldiers in the Signals or Pay Corps earned 30 shillings a month. And after the War, servants could command between 35 and 90 shillings.¹ (Clayton and Savage, 1974: 232, 237, 245).

6.0 Wages - the post-War period

After the War, however, African demands for higher pay began to be linked more consistently with demands for equality with Indians and Europeans. The report of the Phillips Committee in 1945 recognised that Africans, particularly the skilled, had a genuine grievance, but its revelations about African poverty were regarded by the Kenya Government as subversive at the time, and the report was suppressed (Stichter, 1975b: 36; Clayton and Savage, 1974: 271-274). Europeans seemed oblivious, by and large, of the thrust of African demands and their implications in the 1940s. Large numbers of new European immigrants arrived to settle after the War, and the clear intention was that the racial nature of employment 'would continue to be fixed by common understanding in the European

1 There was a temporary shortage of jobs at this point, however, since Europeans living in towns had been forced to limit the number of their servants to three, to help ease rationing and accommodation problems.

community rather than by legislation which was likely to be vetoed by the Secretary of State' (Clayton and Savage, 1974: 170).

Racial discrimination in middle-class jobs continued to be experienced by Asians, of course, but although Asians and Africans had earlier made common cause at times (the 1939 Mombasa dock strike was an instance of this), after the War Asians were left on one side by Africans. Asian living standards were in some ways more of a target for Africans than those of Europeans, for it was Asian jobs and pay levels which more immediately outshone their own. And on the issue of land in the Highlands, where Europeans had to be confronted directly, Africans had no kind of interest in combining forces with Asians (Mangat, 1969: 196; Stichter, 1975b: 23).

A detailed picture of pay levels among all 'races' may be obtained from Tables 10 and 11. Table 11 lists average monthly wage rates in a variety of occupations (selected because they are all ones in which 'Others' - the category containing Comorians - are commonly represented). It is compiled from the Reports on the Censuses of Non-Native Employees for 1947, 1948 and 1949 and monthly wage levels have been averaged for the three years in each type of employment in an attempt to combine valuable but patchy information. There was in fact a general though slight tendency for wage levels to rise over the three years. In virtually all cases the European male wage level for any occupation greatly outstrips all others and where European females are also found their pay-level, while lower, is often higher than that of all others too. Ranking between Indians and Goans, Arabs and 'Others' is somewhat variable, but an overall pattern is not hard to discern. Indians and Goans rank next highest to Europeans in two-thirds of the occupations listed here, while 'Others' are in this position in one third of cases. Arab rates are clearly the lowest. Thus, among non-European non-native - the 'middle' category

Table 10: Average monthly basic cash* wages by occupation - adult male African employees, 1947

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Shillings</i>
Clerical staff	62
Artisans	
drivers	77
carpenters	79
masons	60
Mechanics	57
Skilled workers	61
Skilled factory workers	37
Domestic servants (indoor)	40
Shop, office and store-boys	39
All semi-skilled workers	38
Domestic servants (outdoor)	29
Labourers, not agricultural	25
Labourers, agricultural	
sisal	19
sugar	19
tea	16
coffee	16
pyrethrum	14
mixed	15

* Excluding all other advantages of employment.

Source: Stichter (1975b: 40), based on East African High Commission, East African Economic and Statistical Bulletin, Number 3, March 1949, Table 6.

Table 11: Average monthly wage rates (shillings) in selected types of employment, 1947-1949: non-native employees

Type of employment	MALES				FEMALES	
	Euro	Indian & Goan	Arab	Other	Euro	non-Euro
Farm managers/overseers	1006	484	-	582	481	417
Farm fundis (mechanics)	773	532	515	515		
Other agricultural occupations	608	238	115	132	699	
Blacksmiths	-	461	185	410		
Machine turners	755	429	-	682		
Mechanics	1180	525	330	496		
Garage mechanics	790	470	264	481		
Welders	908	508	-	560		
Electricians	1018	456	133	254		
Other skilled workers in category	763	443	-	462		
Tailors	500	344	80	70		
Food-makers - foremen	1093	428	-	535		
Butchers	964	-	-	574		
Other skilled food-workers	1236	463	-	574		
Furniture-making foremen	895	614	-	600		
Carpenters	645	462	143	404		
Masons	744	428	-	370		
Painter/decorator (skilled)	1080	320	-	527		
Commerce - owners/managers	1760	631	289	280	733	384
Salesmen/shop assistants	1048	349	110	159	508	274
Lorry-drivers	742	312	143	169		
Taxi/bus drivers	-	246	114	125		
Dock foremen	1015	1081	-	834		
Other skilled (transport) workers	1149	514	-	688		
Domestic servants (indoor)	-	225	71	100	140	46
Barmen	482	401	160	154		
Club stewards	-	359	86	114		
Hotel/Club cooks	1200	374	133	236(1)		
Others in personal service	1044	311	101	134		
Clerks, typists	862	464	245	364	613	269
Book-keepers (unqual.)	1254	522	217	618	638	342
Other clerks	965	454	243	393	529	238
Storekeepers	957	436	222	582	486	275
Watchmen	-	137	80	70		
Teachers	890	460	-	-	580	281

(1) The figure for 1947 is 475, for 1948 it is 289, and for 1949 it is 183.

The 1947 figure was ignored as too high, and an average taken of the other two figures.

between Europeans and Africans - there is fairly clearcut internal ranking. Comorians turn out to be perfectly justified in their claims, made to me twenty-five years or more later, to have been in a better position not only than Africans, but also than Arabs: the status of 'Others' makes that clear.

'Others' are better paid than Indians and Goans in a somewhat arbitrary selection of occupations - food preparation being perhaps the only one of significance. As far as domestic service is concerned, 'Others' are better paid than Arabs, but are far from challenging Indian and Goan levels of pay.

The picture remained very similar for the next few years, although the ideology underpinning the wage-structure was undergoing change. Two months after the declaration of a State of Emergency in Kenya in October 1952, the Colonial Secretary in London declared his opposition to racially ranked pay-scales in Kenya, and in April 1953 the Governor of Kenya told the African Civil Servants' Association that racial scales in the clerical Civil Service were to be abolished. The Lidbury report on the matter, published in 1954, also announced the abolition of racial housing zones on Government housing estates in Nairobi and Mombasa. The demands of highly qualified Africans, who had studied at Makerere and overseas, had been seen as particularly pressing. In 1954 too, the Carpenter Report on African Wages formally recognised for the first time an African's right to maintain his family in town on a permanent basis and suggested far higher minimum wage levels as a result. 'A stabilised urban working population,' it stated, 'is essential to the creation of an effective labour force.' (Clayton and Savage, 1974: 372-374).

In 1954 summary figures in the Reported Employment and Wages in Kenya, which was the first such to combine information on both native and non-native employees, indicated that European employees continued

to earn on average twenty times as much as African employees and two-and-a-half times as much as 'Asian' employees. 'Asians' themselves averaged earnings of about eight-and-a-half times those of Africans (Reported Employment and Wages in Kenya, 1954, p.2, Nairobi: East African Statistics Department, 1955).

A slightly more dramatic picture of the racial wage differences which were now due to be modified can be obtained from figures compiled for 1955 by Rothchild (1973: 54). He divides the aggregated wages earned by each race by the total number of individuals in each: a somewhat artificial exercise (because of the great differences within each racial category) which nevertheless shows how much money there was available per head of the population, in a general way.

Table 12: Wages per head of population (per annum), by race: 1955

<i>Race</i>	<i>Numbers (total)</i>	<i>Total wages</i>	<i>Average per head</i>
Africans	6,769,000	£29.3 million	£4.33
'Asians'	142,000	£15.1 million	£106.34
Europeans	49,000	£22.7 million	£463.26

Source: Rothchild, 1973: 54

The Dow Report (1955) recommended that all wage grading by race should disappear and thereafter the demise of the old system was only a matter of time. Minimum wage rates moved upwards sharply from sh.53/50 in 1953 to sh. 94/25 in 1960 and sh. 115/- in 1963 (Clayton and Savage, 1974: 445, 446, 451). Though there were many inequalities left to be removed at Independence in 1963, the principle of equality had at last been admitted.

For Comorians, as for others in the 'non-native' category, the gaining of rights for Africans was simultaneously a loss of privilege for them. That Comorians only experienced this loss at the moment of Kenya's independence (and after) was a function of the slow rate of implementation of changes which had actually been inevitable from the mid-1940s onwards. Thus, although the heyday of racial privilege in Kenya had been in the 1930s, the flattering personal identity and public identity Comorians acquired in that period still had meaning for them and others in Kenya thirty years later.

SECTION II: Private identity: Themes in and variations upon
Swahili-Comorian kinship patterns

The first two chapters elucidated the specific historical framework within which a Comorian economic niche - and the public identity which went with it - developed.

As far as external relations with Europeans, Asians and Africans were concerned, the internal structure of Comorian culture was irrelevant. But when we come to investigate the adaptation made by Comorians when their opportunities for work began to draw to a close, it becomes vital to understand the kinship and marriage concepts upon which they structured their society in East Africa. The following two chapters equip us to do so.

Chapter 3, Kinship and marriage among East African Swahilis and the Comorians in Ngazija, makes a comparison between two rather distinct forms of the same cultural matrix - those at each end of the Comorian migrant's journey.

Chapter 4, Kinship and marriage among Comorians in East Africa to 1970, examines the intermediate pattern evolved by the Comorians who migrated to East Africa.

CHAPTER 3KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE AMONG EAST AFRICAN SWAHILIS AND THE COMORIANS
IN NGAZIJAIntroduction

This chapter makes an extended comparison of kinship patterns among the Swahilis of East Africa and the Comorians who live in the Comoro Islands, Ngazija especially. There are two reasons for this.

Firstly I am concerned to stress the fundamental common ground between Comorians and Swahilis. If the point is laboured, it is because no previous writers on either people have attempted the synthesis presented here. That both bodies of material have been elaborated with little reference one to the other is largely a result of historical chance: France claimed the Comoro Islands and Britain the Swahili coast. In time indigenous trading networks, which had so closely knitted up the two areas, were weakened or destroyed by political and economic changes tending to turn the Comoro Islands towards Madagascar and the Swahili coast towards the mainland interior. Not surprisingly, perhaps, European sociologists and anthropologists have tended subsequently to work within the confines of particular colonial boundaries and languages.

Secondly, we need to know what Comorian migrants to East Africa were familiar with at home and what they adapted to where they went to work. Here differences within the larger pattern of unity have to be stressed, and again the two distinct colonial presences had an important indirect impact.¹ While the available evidence suggests the striking similarity

1 Umani overlordship, while it was a reality in parts of East Africa before colonial times and was absent in the Comoros, is a far less important variable here. The Umani sultans' rule was light so long as taxes were paid and, culturally, they themselves became almost totally assimilated to the Swahilis.

of many institutions in the pre-colonial period, these have changed or faded more quickly among Swahilis than has been the case in the Comoro Islands. The difference must be attributed to a rate of social transformation far greater under the British in East Africa than under the French in the Comoros. Zanzibar and Mombasa were at the centre of British investment and influence and new educational and employment opportunities created a world in which some Swahili institutions became irrelevant. The Comoros, by contrast, were administered from Tananarive as a distant, insignificant Malagasy province in which little financial investment or structural alteration was made. Though the sultanates were formally abolished, the new colonial administrative system established was geographically based on old sultanate boundaries, and used members of the old ruling families as its local officials. The provision of Western education was tardy and limited and much of the detail of daily life went on unchanged into the 1960s and 1970s.

1.0 Kinship terminology

Swahili-Comorian kinship terminology is broadly generational (Hawaiian) in type, that of the Swahili displaying in addition something of the bifurcate-merging pattern common to many Bantu peoples (Lowie, 1968: 39ff). A glance at Prins (1967: 84, 86) will show that, while there is some variation from area to area among the Swahilis, terms distinguishing cross from parallel kin are universal in the parental generation and quite often found in ego's generation and in that of his children.¹ In

1 Certain Swahili and Comorian areas display 'preferred spouse' terminology of Dravidian type. The words for cross-cousin found in some areas - mpwa (northern coast, Prince, 1967: 84), binamu (Kilwa and elsewhere, Leinhardt, 1968: 31), mkoï (Vumba area, Wijeyewardene, 1959: 14) and mshemwananyangu (Domoni, Nzwani, Comoros, Ottenheimer, 1971: 86) - all imply marriage. Most areas, whether or not a cross-cousin term is employed there, require a nominal 'waiving-of-rights fee' to be paid to a man before his female cross-cousin can be married to an unrelated suitor, instead of to him.

the schematic diagrams which follow, Swahili kinship terminology in Mombasa and Ngazija Comorian terminology in the Islands are categorised as they were at the time of fieldwork.¹

Since the Comoro Islands have long been settled by Arab-African inhabitants who share common origins with the Swahilis, it is interesting to set the greater Comorian stress on ranking by age and status beside Lowie's remark (1968: 49) that 'emphasis on status and seniority would cause a drift from the bifurcate-merging towards the generation pattern'. The simplicity of Comorian terminology in the parental generation appears to bear this out.

2.0 Swahili and Comorian kinship conceptions

2.1 Bilaterality

Swahili and Comorian kinship conceptions are fundamentally bilateral,² though local circumstances may call forth a variety of different types of descent groups: the straightforwardly cognatic, or others with a more pronounced patrilateral or matrilateral tendency. The ego-focussed kindred is universally important, whatever the descent group pattern.

Kinship systems of this kind are of course widely found in the Indian Ocean and in Malayo-Polynesia, but are rarer in Africa. As in Polynesia, Swahili and Comorian descent groups are not exogamous and thus the individual is likely to find that his parents share membership of particular descent groups (Firth, 1957: 4-8; 1968: 213-218). Both definitive and optative systems, in Firth's terms, are found. Most of

1 A full comparative listing of Mombasa Swahili and Ngazija Comorian kin and affinal terms is to be found in Appendix I.

2 It was probably Murdock (1949: 152, 158) who first associated generational terminology with bilateral residence and bilateral kindreds.

Figure 1: Hawaiian generational terminology - Swahili kinship and affinity schematized

GRANDFATHER		GRANDMOTHER		GRAND FATHER	GRAND MOTHER	Kinship and affinity fused
FATHER	MOTHER'S BROTHER	MOTHER	FATHER'S SISTER	ALTERNATE GENERATION AFFINE*		
SIBLING				OWN GENERATION AFFINE		Kinship and affinity fused
CHILD				ALTERNATE GENERATION AFFINE*		
GRANDCHILD				GRANDCHILD		
Kinship				Affinity		

* The same term is used in both generations

** The same term is used in both generations

Figure 2: Hawaiian generational terminology - Comorian kinship and affinity schematized

GRANDFATHER		GRANDMOTHER		GRAND FATHER	GRAND MOTHER	Kinship and affinity fused
FATHER	MOTHER		MALE ALTERNATE GENERATION AFFINE*	FEMALE ALTERNATE GENERATION AFFINE**		
SIBLING				OWN GENERATION AFFINE		Kinship and affinity fused
CHILD				MALE ALTERNATE GENERATION AFFINE*	FEMALE ALTERNATE GENERATION AFFINE**	
GRANDCHILD				GRANDCHILD		
Kinship				Affinity		

the Swahilis are found in optative systems where descent is thought of as being traced through the father, but where permanent affiliation through the mother is statistically also frequent. Affiliation is often through both concurrently for different purposes, or through both consecutively at different stages in the developmental cycle. Among the Comorians living in the Comoro Islands (as opposed to migrants), however, definitive systems like those of the Ontong Java and Pukapuka are found, 'in which descent units with patrilineal predominance are combined with house-and-garden owning units of matrilineal character and with normal uxori-local residence' (Firth, 1968: 215).

Among islander Comorians uxori-locality is an absolute rule and Comorian fathers must provide houses for each of their daughters at marriage; among the Swahili uxori-locality usually remains no more than a tendency which appears to increase with the age of the wife.¹ Swahili women frequently live virilocally or neolocally when young, though the high divorce rate² means that many return to their mothers' homes after a while. While women are not endowed at marriage with any substantial property from their parents, they inherit a share along with their brothers when a parent eventually dies; in Mombasa at least, if there are both houses and land to be inherited by a sibling group, the houses are frequently allotted to women to live in, if not to own outright. Mombasa Swahili women who earn or inherit money always make the purchase of a house a high priority too. In either case, an older woman's marriage is more likely to be uxori-local. What is more, since children usually remain with their mother after their parents divorce, many spend some of their childhood living matrilocally.

1 In Tundwa (Lamu Archipelago), however, Bujra (1968) records that 86.5% of houses belong to women and that the vast majority of marriages are uxori-local.

2 Divorce is discussed in 7.5 below.

2.2 Sibling groups

Wijeyewardene suggests that the best way of viewing Swahili kinship is as a series of relationships between individuals rather than between groups (1959b: 1, 15). Indeed, even where descent groups are encountered, these are in fact constructed out of a series of one-to-one filiatory links, so that Fortes' distinction between descent and filiation becomes meaningless here. Wijeyewardene points to the sibling group, the sole exogamous unit, as the fundamental building block out of which other kinship units are constructed. However, he tends to identify the sibling group with the household, even while allowing that the marriage which gives birth to the sibling group is not in itself very important and is likely to end in divorce.

In fact the ease and frequency of divorce among Swahilis and Comorians highlights the fact that there are two overlapping sibling groups in the household, analytically speaking - the children of the father and the children of the mother. The two may be completely congruent but the implications of the situation become clearer if the biological parents go on to make other marriages and have other children. The 'children of the mother' will eventually only partly overlap with those of the father and each group will come to contain members which it does not share with the other.¹ The idea of half-brothers and half-sisters is quite alien to Swahili and Comorian thinking which suggests that siblings are regarded as such by virtue of a shared link to a particular parent (and thence that parent's siblings) rather than to both parents as a fused unit. In this way ego's sibling groups are linked, through

1 A Swahili, introducing a sibling or a cousin will call him ndugu (sibling). If more information is asked for he will say ndugu halisi (shared F and M); ndugu baba moja (shared F); ndugu tumbo moja (shared stomach, i.e. M) or describe the cousin relationship by reference to sibling relationships in the senior generation.

filiation, with those of his father and mother, and through them again to the sibling groups of the grandparental generation. The range of larger kinship units found among Swahilis and Comorians (to be discussed below) all, with the exception of the arab patrilineages to which some belong, grow logically out of a particular sibling group's continuation through time in the persons of its children, grandchildren and more distant descendants.

The extent to which such groups continue to have significance for ego depends of course on the rights which still descend from such earlier members. Land may be the crucial asset, but houses, boats, fishing rights, the right to burial in ancestral graveyards or the status of descent from an important ancestor all have their value. In the past it is probable that rights of access to trade were significant too. Although rights fall jointly to the sibling group, individuals within it can pick their way as they choose among the kinship rights available to them.

2.3 Descent groups and economic activity

In some parts of the Swahili-Comorian area, especially in the past, there have often been two distinct types of economic activity to be found side by side: long-distance trading, or labour migration, and agriculture. In such circumstances it seems to be the case that the activity linked to an international economy, or to travel, is associated with Islam, men, and descent groups traced through the father, while subsistence is associated with women and descent groups traced through the mother. There is some evidence that this was indeed an Indian Ocean-wide pattern, wherever Islam penetrated.

Among the Swahilis in the past there has been a constant falling away from this pattern. Individuals, descent groups and indeed whole towns have lost the links to supralocal economic activity they once

commanded, for centres of trade change over time, opportunities for labour migration end, and kin groups may lose numbers or wealth.¹ It seems likely that as other pursuits became unavailable and agricultural activities became the primary livelihood of all, women lost some of their special association with subsistence, and virilocality rather than uxorilocality became the stated - if not the universal - norm. Such an impression is certainly gained by comparing the observations of Europeans a century ago with the situation among the Swahilis today. Bishop Steere wrote, 'It is the rule on the Swahili coast that the bride's father or family should find her a house and that the husband should go to live with her, not she with him...' (Steere, 1870: 490). Burton noted that among poorer Swahilis in Zanzibar children belonged more to their mother's brothers than to their fathers (Burton, 1872, vol.II: 437). Guillain, somewhat earlier, noted a similar pattern (Guillain, 1856: II: 111).²

In present-day East Africa where most Swahili villagers are engaged only in agriculture and small-scale fishing, we can see the end of the process. As Caplan's (1975) monograph documents in detail for the island of Mafia, individuals ally themselves with particular descent groups they have membership in as their individual needs and circumstances dictate: but all descent groups offer similar assets and membership may not be activated in more than one at once.

Alternatively, as has happened in larger towns, descent groups may wane greatly in importance as more and more functions are lost. In

1 Town rulers seem always to have renewed links to the international economy where they could, through marrying a daughter to an incoming Arab with genealogically and economically good connections.

2 Trimingham notes that mosques in old Swahili centres have or had provision for women as well as men to worship there, perhaps a further indication that Swahili women have been more important in the past than they are today (Trimingham, 1964: 85).

Mombasa, for instance, the twelve miji (non-exogamous clans) and their component mbari (largely patrifiliatory cognatic groups)¹ lost their political position and much of their land in the early years of British rule in Kenya (Salim, 1973: 27-28, 98-99). Today, as the practice of mji endogamy decreases and the residential quality of the mji is yearly eroded, these descent groups are left with little but their commemoration at weddings and a lively existence in the minds of older people.

In Ngazija, by contrast, descent group membership, through both mother and father severally, still brings distinctive benefits. Access to houses and descent-group land comes through the mother while access to individually-owned land, long-standing cashcrops (trees of various kinds) and business enterprises comes through the father. So, too, in the past did dhow ownership and overseas trade. The fact that the Comoros are small, overpopulated islands and that male labour migration has been an important feature of the economy until very recently, has probably been significant in the maintenance of these distinctive patrilineal and matrilineal rights. In addition, Comorian identity in Ngazija is still thought of as conferred by the mother and Arab identity (where applicable) by the father.

2.4 Bilaterality and Kur'anic law

Basically Swahili-Comorian kinship stresses laterality, while the kinship model implicit in the Kur'anic inheritance laws is a patrilineal one. Except for close non-lineal kin such as the deceased's mother, uterine siblings, paternal and maternal grandmother and spouse, only agnatic kin may inherit. As for a woman who has a right to inherit by virtue of her lineage membership, she inherits half the share of her

1 Mombasa's miji and mbari are discussed in more detail below.

brother, whatever it is. In addition, certain categories of uterine kin (known collectively as the Dhul Arhami) may inherit if none of the categories of normal heirs are alive and if there is no State Treasury - in unlikely circumstances, in short.¹

For Swahilis and Comorians; these rules exclude certain very important kinsmen such as mother's siblings, father's sisters, sister's children and the children of uterine siblings. Under the Shari'a, links through men take precedence over links through women in ways which run counter to true bilaterality, and in consequence both peoples take steps to modify its effects as best they may.

Swahilis are very reluctant to see husbands inheriting rights in their wives' immovable property (or vice versa) and if the Shari'a is followed the siblings of the deceased usually try to buy out the inheritor immediately afterwards (Bailey, 1965: 161). The individual may bequeathe up to a third of his property to whomsoever he likes, the rest being distributed in laid-down proportions to specified kin categories. Swahilis may take this opportunity to will property to kinsmen otherwise inadequately provided for by the Shari'a. Property can be given away before death to anyone the giver chooses, with no upper limit on the proportion of the estate thus disposed of. Furthermore, under the Shafi'i school of interpretation followed in East Africa, wakf may be left for descendants. Wakf is an endowment left in perpetuity by an individual; it is usually left to a religious foundation or for a religious purpose, but at times it may be left to his descendants. In rural Zanzibar, for instance, a piece of land could in the past be left for joint and equal use by a group of siblings and their descendants in perpetuity, such land

1 This exceedingly brief summary is drawn from the comprehensive handbook on Koranic inheritance written by Shaikh Ali bin Hemedi el Buhriy, one-time kadi in East Africa.

being known as kitongo (Middleton, 1961: 24-25). The Kur'anic rule of half-shares for sisters is not here applied, evidently. Bailey (1965: 180-181) notes that it is believed among the Swahili that the laws of wakf were laid down to protect women.

There is some evidence that the Shari'a has been applied with more vigorous rectitude in the recent past than in the remoter past. Evidence presented in the previous section suggested a more prominent role for women a century or more ago and it is possible that, when the Swahilis were still entirely independent, there was more systematic provision for customary law (ada or mila) alongside the Shari'a, which would have underpinned this role. The legal position of women was probably gradually eroded when patrilineal Umani rulers took control in East Africa. The Umani Mazrui dynasty governed Mombasa and its dependencies on the northern Swahili coast and in Pemba in an unbroken line from 1730 until 1836, by which time the Umani Busaidi dynasty was firmly established in Zanzibar. While each dynasty in turn was considerably swahilized in language and custom, largely through members' marriages with Swahili women, close continued contact with patrilineal kinsmen in Uman and membership of the somewhat puritanical Ibadhi Islamic sect were likely to have favoured an orthodox interpretation of the Shari'a. The greater patrilinearity noted by Middleton among the Pemba Swahilis and that characterising the Mombasa Swahili clans was probably due to early Mazrui influence.

In Zanzibar, the Busaidi sultan Barghash began in the 1870s to insist upon a more patrilineal model among the island's Swahilis. He sent kadis into the smaller towns to administer the Shari'a correctly (Middleton, 1961: 9); in 1873, when the Mwenye Mkuu (chief) of the Hadimu died, he refused to allow the chief's sister to step into his place (as was her right in the absence of further brothers) (Bailey, 1965: 104).

Among Comorians in Ngazija, Kur'anic inheritance laws also need to be skirted in order for kinship needs to be met. Here, where all marriage is uxorilocal and where therefore towns are centred around a core of daughters of daughters of daughters, kin groups come to look very matrilineal even though no true corporate matrilineage may exist.

Comorians avoid the strictures of the Shari'a in three ways. Firstly, the most important transfers of property are made long before the deaths of its owners. All girls are provided with a house upon marriage, the firstborn usually getting her mother's own house and the others houses built for them by their fathers. Ancestral lands held by sibling groups are passed to the children of the women of each sibling group: men have usufruct rights merely in the lands of their sisters and mothers. Where men have purchased pieces of land for the growing of cashcrops they usually try to hand them on to their sons, in consequence, again in advance of their own deaths.

Secondly, a wakf-like institution which closely resembles the Zanzibari kitongo is found in Ngazija and in its neighbour island Mwali. Manyahuli, as it is known, is supposed to be registered with a kadi though this is not always done. A manyahuli is land which, once it is so designated, becomes the common property of a sibling group and of the children of the women of the group. Over time it comes to belong to a group of mothers, daughters and grandchildren and is administered by the oldest woman in the group. Individual men who privately own pieces of land they might prefer to reserve for their sons, find much pressure put upon them to add land to the manyahuli. The institution is thus in more active and fluctuating use than the kitongo and can be seen to give women not merely equal but superior land rights to men (Fort, n.d.).

Thirdly, customary law among Comorians thrives alongside the Shari'a in a way which we surmised might have been so in the past for the Swahilis, but which has long been submerged. In the context of inheritance this means that a spouse remains the owner of his or her property throughout marriage, without any marital pooling taking place, and that neither can expect to inherit from the other upon his or her death.

3.0 Types of kinship unit among Swahilis

3.1 The Swahili maximal unit

The most common term among the Swahili for the cognatic descent-group equivalent of a maximal lineage, is the ukoo. It tends to be a somewhat diffuse unit, for while its members may know their own relationship to the founder, and that of some of their closer kinsmen, they might not be able to trace the whole group. Informants are clear that the ukoo always excludes affines, however.

An ukoo may be anything from four to ten or more generations in depth. In Mafia island, south of Zanzibar (where this maximal unit is known as the koo or kikao), certain descent group elders memorise genealogies of up to ten generations, so that lapsed rights may be reactivated by potential members (Caplan, 1975: 20-22). In rural Zanzibar, however, the ukoo is never more than seven generations deep (Middleton, 1961: 18-19).

Ukoo endogamy is the ideal throughout the Swahili area, and in consequence it is rare for an individual to belong to more than four koo (plural) in practice (Middleton, 1961: 18-19; Caplan, 1975: 31). In Mombasa, indeed, it is rare for a Swahili to refer to membership of more than two koo - his ukoo wa kuumeni or ukoo wa kulia ('male' or 'righthanded' ukoo) and his ukoo wa kuukeni or ukoo wa kushoto ('female' or 'lefthanded' ukoo). The patrilateral stress is such that only the

koo of the FFF etc. and the MFF etc. are regarded as important. I have heard a Mombasa informant complain, 'If your mother's and father's family marry, you have no separate koo'.

Though the ukoo is not in itself a residential unit, most ukoo members are likely to live near to one another and, particularly in smaller towns and villages, the ukoo and the mji (the town itself) are regarded as having linked identities.¹ However, ukoo membership is nowhere forfeited by non-residence and is, therefore, an unrestricted descent group (Bailey, 1965: 133).

3.2 The Swahili operational descent group

Segments of the ukoo, of shallower depth, are often the chief groupings for all normal purposes. Indeed, where resources such as land are in shorter supply than they are, for instance, in Mafia (Caplan, 1969: 425), the maximal ukoo may lose all significance, and a smaller segment become not merely the means of allotting rights in detail, but actually the largest recognised unit. Terms for segments are various, the two commonest being mlango (doorway - to a larger unit)² and tumbo (stomach/uterus). The terms are used interchangeably in some areas, to the exclusion of each other elsewhere, and occasionally side by side with distinct meanings.

Among the Hadimu Swahilis of south-east Zanzibar, for instance, the tumbo is a completely bilateral ukoo segment 'differentiated from co-ordinate matumbo (pl.) by reference to its maternal origin'. It is

1 These terms imply both descent and residence in the way kainga and kainanga do in Melanesia and Polynesia (Goodenough, 1968: 205ff).

2 Compare Sudanese Arabic khashm-beit (doorway of the house), which is used to mean minimal lineage.

the significant group for the joint inheritance of residential and agricultural land, for farming, the paying of bridewealth and for the right to be buried in jointly held grave-sites. The mlango, 'differentiated by paternal origin from co-ordinate milango (pl.) of the same ukoo' is patrilaterally biased, the children of women in the group being regarded as second-class members. It is often a residential group, residence being generally virilocal, and it is through mlango links that kinship to more distant kin is calculated (Middleton, 1961: 19-23). The tumbo, that is to say, concerns itself with land rights and the mlango with more general status rights.

Among the Tumbatu Swahilis of northern Zanzibar the mlango has taken over more of the functions of the tumbo and is more strongly patrilateral. Further north in Pemba the distinction between types of segment is completely lost and the words ukoo, mlango and tumbo are used interchangeably to refer to kin-groups composed of the descendants of an FFF or FF, with the agnatic descendants having predominance (Middleton, 1961: 33, 53-54).

Lienhardt (1968: 33-36) presents a similar picture for Kilwa Kivinje on the southern mainland coast where ukoo, the sole term heard, is used both for all the descendants of an ancestor in the FFF generation and also for segments of this group. The koo traceable through the FF or MF are more important than those of the FM or MM.¹

Mafia islanders use koo, mlango and tumbo interchangeably for descent group segments as entirely bilateral as the parent kikao (Caplan, 1975: 22).

1 The phrase 'mwenye ukoo' - 'of good family' - is used of those from freeborn, wealthy and, above all, large ukoo (Lienhardt, 1968: 36).

To complete these examples of the variations to be met with, there is Wijeyewardene's material from the villages of Aleni and Tongoni on the mainland coast opposite Pemba. Here land is plentiful, its heritability unimportant (distinguishing it sharply from some of the island situations encountered) and other property is individually owned. All descendants of an individual in the FF or FFF generation will regard each other as members of the same mlango, ukoo, nasaba or nyumba (these last meaning 'pedigree' and 'household' respectively), but such descent groups are scarcely corporate and are limited in function to occasional cooperation in agriculture, fishing or at key moments such as funerals. The notion of a maximal and a minimal unit is virtually absent, though villagers occasionally claim that the whole village is one mlango (Wijeyewardene, 1959: 1, 10; 1961: Ch.12 *passim*). In these circumstances it is scarcely surprising that the notional descent group is readily confused with the kindred, and Bailey's censure of Wijeyewardene for failing to find descent groups is unwarranted (Bailey, 1965: 136-137).

3.3 Swahili kinship in larger settlements

In the older towns such as Mombasa, Pate and Lamu, kinship units have in the past been more complex because of the bigger and more diverse numbers of townsmen to be accommodated within a kinship idiom.

In Mombasa today, for instance, the Swahilis of long-established descent belong to one of twelve named miji ('towns')¹ which have nearly

1 Occasionally these are referred to as mataifa (nations) as well. In the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century the Swahilis in larger towns such as Zanzibar and Mombasa, where Umanis ruled, showed a tendency to 'rearabize' their culture and their language (Allen, 1974: 132ff). A wave of new Hadrami immigrants reinforced the effect. In Mombasa not only did such Bantu kin terms as mji tend to be replaced with similar Arabic terms (taifa here) but the Twelve Clans names acquired arabicized counterparts as if they were 'really' Arabian tribal names (Prins, 1967: 83). This can be understood in the context of the attempt by Twelve Clans Swahilis to persuade the British to grant them Arab status along with the Umanis (Ch.2).

all been in existence since the sixteenth century (Berg, 1971: 31). It has been the custom for English speakers to refer to these as the Twelve Tribes, but a much clearer notion of their composition and function is arrived at by thinking of them as non-exogamous clans. I accordingly always refer to them as the Twelve Clans. Each is made up of several mbari (largely patrifiliatory cognatic descent groups), actual kinship links being traceable only to the boundaries of the mbari and no more than an ideology of kinship being expressed beyond, within the mji.

The miji do bear the names of towns in Mombasa's hinterland or on the northern coast of Kenya, but the linking of particular mbari together within a given mji seems often to have been a matter of political expediency. Mji Pate, for instance, contains mbari members from the towns of Pate, Lamu, Manda, Shela, Kitau, Barawa and elsewhere (Berg, 1971: 33).¹ Thus the two levels we have already encountered - maximal ukoo and its component segments - are here replicated, though the town's scale has meant that Mombasa's miji are not the sum of their segments in literal genealogical terms; similarly the town is 'owned' (in Swahili terms - see 2.5.4) not by one ukoo but by a confederation of descent groups who are united under the name Miji kumi na mbili or Thenashara Taifa - The Twelve Clans.

Recruitment to the mbari² (without which mji membership is impossible)

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- 1 There is a complete listing of the component mbari of each mji in Berg (1971: 69-73). He lists 106 mbari with a range of from 4 to 37 per mji.
- 2 The term mbari is found among several of the non-muslim Bantu groups living inland from Mombasa. In every case it refers to a descent group, though there is some variation in the size of unit implied. The Digo mean a whole tribe by it, the Kauma and the Chonyi refer to patriclans as mbari and the Giriama use it for the patrilineage. Among the Duruma, Rabai and Digo mbari is also used to designate 'male' and 'female' descent groups in which women are always recruited to those of their mothers and men to those of their fathers (Prins, 1952: 61ff). Further inland we find that the Kamba use mbai (mbari) for all levels of patrilineal descent group (Martin Hill, personal communication) and the Kikuyu use mbari, their chief land-inheriting descent-group, in the same way (Muriuki, 1974: 8-9, 34-35).

is ideally through a patrifiliatory link, but informants in 1974 were clear that membership of the mother's mbari was automatic for those whose father was an immigrant lacking mbari affiliation and might also occur in the case of children reared with their mother's people after their parents' divorce.

Occasionally in the past adoption into a mbari seems to have been possible for the odd individual on payment of a fee (Berg, 1971: 25, 59. See also Topan, 1971: 41ff). More recently, however, mbari membership has been an exclusive way of marking off the coastal Swahilis of long standing from others who have merely 'become' Swahili through adopting Islam and a Swahili lifestyle. A Twelve Clansman explained that members of Mombasa's mbari knew the names of the other similar mbari to be met with in Pemba and the towns of the Lamu archipelago. It was thus a simple matter to find out by enquiry whether or not a newly encountered stranger was a member of this coastal aristocracy or not. The polite way to do so was to ask, 'Where do you bury each other?' for all mbari have their own burial grounds.

For day-to-day purposes sections of the mbari, usually referred to as milango or koo and two or three generations deep, are the most important kin units.

3.4 Descent, residence and the polity among Swahilis

There is a profound synthesis of descent and residence concepts among the Swahilis, and neither is sufficient without the other. If you are a Swahili by birth, you are closely defined by the particular place you come from. Swahilis call themselves WaAmu, WaMvita, WaUnguja and so on - Lamuans, Mombasans, Zanzibaris. Citizenship is a prerequisite of kinship.

Similarly if you are, by birth, an African or an Arab who comes to live in a Swahili town, you can only establish citizenship rights by making a marriage to a Swahili and thereby making the first move towards kinship. Indeed you should do so: co-residence ought to imply kinship in the making and a willingness to acculturate, in Swahili thinking.

3.4.1 The mji

The word mji or one of its cognates is widely found in Bantu languages with the core meaning 'kingroup', 'homestead' or 'people and place of origin'. Thus 'town', the usual translation of the word from KiSwahili, is too one-dimensional.¹

It is also true, however, that Swahilis pride themselves upon the urban quality of their culture and their settlements and regard it as a defining feature of their identity. Even small rural 'villages', whose inhabitants are almost wholly dependent upon subsistence farming and fishing, are made up of rectangular houses built closely together and present a striking contrast with the dispersed hut-settlements of their non-Swahili neighbours. The identification with larger towns not wholly based on subsistence, with an originally non-indigenous housing style (and perhaps also with Islam as seen in the shape of its mosques) could not be clearer. Swahili settlements are ideally socially and ritually corporate and were originally politically independent from one another as well. Their individuality remains a source of pride and many of the distinctive KiSwahili dialects are named after specific Swahili settlements (Wijeyewardene, 1961: 8, 11; Caplan, 1975: 90).

1 Other usages in KiSwahili round out the meaning of the word. The placenta of the foetus is known as its mji - a wonderful metaphor for descent and residence. The 'ground' of a woman's leso cloth, the colour upon which patterns are superimposed, is also known as the cloth's mji.

In small miji (pl.) in particular, but observable even in as large a town as Mombasa in Twelve Clans' attitudes, inhabitants are divided into wenyeji (owners)¹ who have full rights, and wageni (newcomers). All the wenyeji of a small settlement ought to be members of one ukoo (Middleton, 1961: 48) while, among the wageni, those already the affines of wenyeji and thence the parents of wenyeji are regarded as 'closer' than unrelated strangers who have settled there. These ought in time to become muslim, if they were not before, and to marry wenyeji. The 'full rights' of wenyeji can be summed up as full political rights together with inalienable land-rights acquired through being the child of a mwenyeji. Nowadays these rights have been eroded, however, by the incorporation of Swahili settlements into modern states.

Even where a town is too large to be owned by the members of one ukoo, wenyeji talking of or to others in the same mji will try to use kin or affinal terms² and the daily, weekly and yearly cycles of public rituals (all cast in a strong Islamic mould even if not all of Islamic origin) are performed as if they served to strengthen the kinship component of settlement identity (Wijeyewardene, 1959: 3, 7; 1961: 100, 124, 146ff). Being a muslim and being a townsman were very tightly fused ideas in East Africa until recently and can still be appreciated even in a large town like Mombasa where the Swahilis' 'own' town now exists only as a part of an international seaport others own - and as a construct in their minds. Mombasa Swahilis nowadays live surrounded by immigrants to the town who have not felt constrained to convert to Islam and be incorporated in the

1 In some Swahili settlements in the past, the town's ruler was known as the mwenye mkuu - the Great Owner.

2 In Mombasa this is true of even very casual interaction. I remember a Hadrami butcher for instance who called all his obviously coastal-muslim male customers shemegi (affine).

old way. Such immigrants are absent from the annual Swahili ceremony for the blessing of the town and are present merely as uncomprehending onlookers at the big Islamic rituals such as Maulidi (the Prophet's birthday) or Ramadan.

3.4.2 The mtaa

Just as the ukoo is made up of segments, so is the mji made up of quarters called mitas or vitas. In small stable settlements ukoo segments are the co-resident 'owners' of mitaa both in the sense of jointly owning the land, and in the sense of being original inhabitants with prior rights to those of later settlers. Among the Hadimu, for instance, in rural Zanzibar, the ukoo segment known as the tumbo jointly held both settlement land and farming land (mtaa and kitongo respectively) using settlement land in addition for the graves of tumbo members (Middleton, 1961: 17, 20-25). The mji here was clearly the sum of the people, living and dead, and the two kinds of land.

In larger towns a mtaa becomes a place where people of the same kind live - this similarity resting upon similar origin, similar class and similar length of residence in the town¹ ideally. While, in town, mtaa residents are most unlikely to hold corporately owned land and may not even own the land upon which their houses are built, nevertheless the notion of being wenyeji of their mtaa is strongly held. The mtaa's longest-established residents - always heavily intermarried - provide the core around which mtaa loyalties accrete; the mosques, clubs and barazas (customary discussion spots) reinforce interaction between men

1 This aspect of residential life is beginning to break up in Mombasa as non-muslims with better incomes than most Swahilis begin to move in to Old Town mitaa. Informants in 1974 commented that for the first time thefts from washing-lines were occurring as strangers moved in to the mtaa.

of the mtaa at the end of the day, while between women close interaction goes on all day long. The duty of helping neighbours is stressed in the women's proverb kwanza jirani, halafu jamaa (neighbours first, kindred afterwards) and is very obviously in evidence at all life crises.

3.4.3 Town moieties

Middleton is of the opinion that all Shirazi (old Swahili) towns once had moieties, though he found in the late 1950s that only the more remote Zanzibar and Pemba settlements had retained the feature (Middleton, 1961: 17). However, vestiges of moiety organisation are still in evidence in much larger centres such as Lamu, Mombasa, Zanzibar and even Dar-es-Salaam.

The moiety is usually a broad grouping of mitaa; it may be known as mkao or kikao (living area), upande (side) or mtaa in which case its component areas will be known as vitaa (sing. kitaa). Lamu's moieties, Langoni and Mkomani, once had significant political functions of which only the memory is retained today in competitive singing, dancing and fighting on ritual occasions (Prins, 1971: Ch.3; El-Zein, 1974: 11ff.). Mombasa's moieties originally involved only the Twelve Clans Swahilis. The Nine Clans, living in the oldest part of the Old Town, regarded the Three Clans - who settled further south near the town's old Portuguese fort - as immigrants of recent date. The two groups had political functions until the beginning of the twentieth century, their rivalries again subsequently played out only in dance society activities (Prins, 1967: 90; Berg and Walter, 1968: 47ff.). More recently, Mombasa's moieties have become the Old Town (as a whole) versus the newer suburbs (Strobel, 1979: 162).

Sometimes moieties represented a formal grouping of wenyeji (original inhabitants) and wageni (newcomers) as in Lamu and Mombasa. Sometimes they were regarded as structural equals, as in the villages of rural Zanzibar and Pemba described by Middleton, and the equality was maintained by moiety exogamy (1961: 56).

3.4.4 The political aspect of descent and residence

Prins (1967: 92ff.) has a full summary of the variant Swahili political structures as they were. My concern here is to show where residential organisation and descent met and meet in the context of political action.

In Mombasa, the Twelve Clans had corporate administrative functions until the end of the nineteenth century (Berg, 1971: 30-31). [Each clan was represented externally by its shehe, and the mashehe (pl.) of the Three Clans group and the Nine Clans group each elected an individual from among their number to represent them to the Busa'idi Governor of Mombasa.] These structures were not continued when Britain took over the administration of Mombasa, and both levels of office languished.

Internally, the mji was headed by a group of male and female elders (wamiji) who were chosen informally by mtaa so that they represented specific areas as well as descent groups. The public functions of wamiji¹ are nowadays on the wane, but are not yet defunct: they seem chiefly to concern legitimation. Firstly they authenticate the claims of individuals, at their weddings and funerals, to be true Twelve Clans members. Secondly they legitimate the Twelve Clans as true wenyeji of

¹ Strobel records much interesting information about wamiji (1979: 80-84, 133), but finds their functions obscure: the interpretation here offered is mine.

Mombasa on the occasion of the New Year ceremony of mwaka.¹ Indirectly, too, they testify to the free birth of Twelve Clans members: slaves are 'people without wamiji' (Strobel, 1979: 202).

Looking at the other literature on the coast, it is clear that elders (whether called wazee or wamiji) are universally important politically (Caplan, 1969: 422, 425; Wijeyewardene, 1961: 124; Middleton, 1961: 16-18, for example) in Swahili society. Whether their role as legitimators is always important, as it is in Mombasa, it is hard to be certain. What is clear is that, wherever there is such legitimation, the legitimators have to be given a customary payment known as ada. In the past - and still today in certain contexts - cloth was the only acceptable payment.² Strobel observes this (1979: 10, 81), and there is a record of payments of cloth to all 'the townspeople' - the Twelve Clans Swahilis - at the installation of the Mazrui governor Salim bin Hemed in 1825 (Boteler, II, 1935: 206-207).

However, these are all very minimal political roles that descent group elders can nowadays hold among the Swahilis. Their position was taken first by Umanis, then by the British and now by independent Africans. In this they differ very much from elders in Comorian society.

1 This takes place at the tomb of Shehe Mvita, founder of Mombasa's last Shirazi dynasty which came to an end in 1592. Buffalo horns, the last vestiges of the Shirazi regalia of Mombasa, presumably, feature in the mwaka ceremony; horns are associated with legitimation the length of the Swahili coast. In 1974 when I watched the ceremony, a small group of elderly male and female wamiji danced the gungu the appropriate dance, and Mzee Chuba (the oldest mmiji present) wept for the past. It was explained that his tears were both a conventional mourning of Mombasa's past independence and a personal sadness as he recalled wamiji now dead who had danced before him.

2 It was a gift of cloth which legitimated the first immigrant settler at Kilwa, according to the myth preserved in the Kilwa Chronicle.

4.0 Comorian kinship

When we turn to Ngazija in the Comoro Islands we find, instead of an optative bilateral system, a non-optative virtually bilineal one. Membership of matrifiatory, uxori-local units engaged in land-holding and householding is apparently universal. Simultaneously, membership of patrilineages is important for those with attestable links to patrilineages originating in South Arabia or occasionally, Uman. The most important patrilineages, whose members have a genealogical knowledge extending afar in time and space, are the sharif lineages. Patrilineages will be dealt with in a separate section below.

Among WaNgazija without noble patrilineages, matrifiation is still the abiding principle: my evidence suggests that there has been no drift towards increased patrilinearity, such as has probably happened among the Swahilis. It is important to stress here that since writers on the Wangazija have tended to gather information from inhabitants living in the wealthier coast towns, it might be supposed that the inhabitants of upland villages have a rather different kinship system. However, this was not the picture presented by the migrants from Ngazija with whom I talked in Kenya, most of whom were from just such villages. They were clear that matrifiation remained crucial for land and house rights while, though there were no patrilineages, patrifiation was important for certain specific purposes, the most significant being the acquisition of birthrank as freeman or slave. These findings are corroborated by the unpublished work of Menard in the upland village of Helendje (Menard, 1963: 13-14). It is important to remember that male labour migration has been a vital source of income in these villages, leaving women as the chief organisers of subsistence agriculture on the land they administer and uxori-locality the universal rule. The sharp sexual division of labour has retained subsistence within the sphere

of women, in contrast to some of the Swahili areas discussed in earlier sections.

In Nzwani, the other large island in the Comoro archipelago, the situation is somewhat different from that found in Ngazija and deserves brief mention.

Whereas in Ngazija membership of noble patrilineages, where relevant, has been woven in with the finally more important membership of autochthonous matrilateral groups, in Nzwani greater dislocation of the original situation has taken place. Here, the equivalent matrilateral groups live on the heights of the island,¹ enclaved by a much wealthier coastal population of later immigrants who are essentially bilateral. The two appear to form separate endogamous groups. This coastal population continues to live uxori locally after marriage (Robineau, 1966: 93) but in other respects presents a more patrilateral pattern than either the WaNgazija or the WaNzwani of the heights, the WaMatsa. Sharif patrilineages are of course found among the coastal dwellers as in Ngazija. Robineau (1962: 83-84, 104) thinks that Arab immigrants must have settled in greater numbers in Nzwani, since they were able to dispossess the indigenous population of a good deal of its land, and offers this as a reason for the fact that, while women are the inheritors of land in Ngazija and the Nzwani heights, it is men who get it on the Nzwani coast. Nevertheless, the kinship terminology is the same in both the coastal and the upland groups, Nzwani's chronicles make it clear that, initially, Arab immigrants grafted themselves onto the indigenous population by marriage just as in Ngazija, and it must have been only later that they deprived them of their land and drove them away from the coasts.

1 These WaNzwani have been little studied but it is perfectly clear from the descriptions of Hébert (1960: 101-116) and Robineau (1966: 57-59) that they are essentially similar to the WaNgazija and that earlier authors' guesses that they might be 'Bushmen' were wide of the mark.

4.1 The maximal unit among Ngazija Comorians

4.1.1 The inya as matriclan

It is difficult to present a full picture of the Ngazija inya from the evidence I have, and more fieldwork in the Comoros is needed to complement what is presented here. However, the article by J. Martin (1968: 40-63) is a valuable summary of some of its aspects, especially of the situation in the past.

In the island large matriclans continue to exist which are known as inya, a word deriving from the Bantu root connoting defaecation/parturition and cognate with nya, the mother as genetrix rather than mater. Membership of the inya is derived from the mother,¹ though since marriage is ideally endogamous to the inya, Comorian histories can surprise occasionally by producing lists of fathers and sons within particular inya in a confusingly patrilineal-sounding way.

As far as I can ascertain, although the whole of the Ngazija population has membership of one or another matrilateral group, inya membership is not universal. All those who are members of an inya are naturally also members of smaller matrilateral groups which form its segments, but not all small shallow groups can link themselves to an inya. This is a situation analogous to that in Mombasa where not all Swahilis can claim membership of one of the twelve miji.

Tradition has it that at least some of the inya were founded before the arrival of the Shirazi immigrants (see 5.1) in the 14th/15th centuries and that these important patrilineal immigrants were incorporated into the inya system through marriages with the sisters and daughters of

1 The plural of inya is manya, placing the word in nominal classes 5/6 which can connote size. Inya might thus be translated as 'great mother'.

important men.¹ (Such incorporation has continued until virtually the present without extinguishing either inya or patrilineage affiliations.) Inya are all named, some after their (male) founders and some after local places apparently. The eleven inya clans extant at the time of the Shirazi arrival are listed in J. Martin (1968: 43). They were obviously tightly linked to the little sultanates to be found on Ngazija and as the number of sultanates shrank to seven, so did the number of clans. Sultanates ceased to exist towards the end of the nineteenth century and probably the matriclans would have disappeared in time too had it not been for the laissez faire style of French administration which followed. Positions of local authority offered to Comorians all went to those who had headed the precolonial system, new administrative units devised followed old sultanate boundaries, and the new colonial capital was, until 1962, situated on Mayotte, another island in the archipelago, and had little influence in Ngazija. Only since 1962 when the capital was transferred to Ngazija has the speed of change increased (J. Martin, 1968: 57) and have matriclans lost their interest for all but the elderly.

4.1.2 The inya as matrilineal descent group

The word inya appears also to be used for a lower level of aggregation among Ngazija's Comorians, comparable to Mombasa's mbari. All such inya have a specific town of origin in Ngazija - invariably one of the seven towns which were the one-time seats of sultanates - though inya

1 The pre-existence of local women for immigrants to marry is a feature of Comorian myth and chronicle. Just as the Shirazis found pre-existing women who held the power of granting legitimate settlement in the island through marriage, mythic speculation about the peopling of the island has the Shirazis' predecessors coming to the island and seducing, marrying and converting local female djinns.

members may of course be living in a town which is not their home town. Because of the uxorilocality of marriage and the ownership of houses by women, a town's population usually consists of a core of women whose mothers and grandmothers have all lived there before them and of men who are present by virtue of their link to mother, wife, sister or (in the case of a very old man) daughter, and who live with one or another category of these women.

The inya plainly has certain similarities to the Swahili ukoo despite the fact that it is recruited exclusively matrilocally rather than cognatically. Its segments, discussed below, are the corporate groups which deal with the allocation and inheritance of land and houses, and as an entity its chief task is representation of its members politically and socially at town level - a function which also invites comparison with Mombasa's mbari in the nineteenth century.

Within the town, the town's own inya rank against one another in importance according to the total numerical strength of each, to the numbers of sharifs each can boast, to the glorious or inglorious history of each inya in the days of the sultans, and finally to the number of men from each to be found in the highest age-grades (see 6.3). Since advancement in the age-grade system demands payments, this latter criterion is also an indirect indicator of the relative wealth of a given inya. The rank of one's own inya can still have importance for marriage, and for personal status.

There are at least eleven town inya in the town of Itsandra on the west coast of Ngazija, ranked according to informants in 1974 and 1977 in roughly the following way:

Makabaila (inya with many sharif members: 'noble' inya)

Inya mwa elezo

Inya mwa kodo

(One informant also mentioned mwatsa pirusa and mdombozi among the makabaila. These are clan-level inya from two other towns, who have representatives living in Itsandra.)

Wandru hafifu (ordinary or 'light' people)

Inya fedes)

bandamaji)

karatassi)

zirumbeni) no internal ordering implied here

bandani)

magobani)

mwakondo mtsambujuu)

Walozi (fishermen)

mhumwambwa

nkotso

The eleven inya of Itsandra town listed here (excluding the clan-level inya from other places) are all members of the clan associated with Itsandra town and Itsandra sultanate, which is called Inya Fumbaya or simply Itsandraya. Each inya is headed by its oldest living member the itswa daho (head of the house).

An aspect of the inya which must have been of significance for koo in various parts of the Swahili world, but which has only been mentioned to my knowledge by Hafkin for the Mozambique Swahilis and by Zein for the WaAmu in the Lamu archipelago (Hafkin, 1973; El-Zein, 1974) is the fact that the presence of patrilineally-descended sharifs who are also local descent-group members creates a certain complexity. In Ngazija, some inya are almost entirely composed of sharif members, some have a few and some have none. As elsewhere in the Swahili area, a sharifa must be married to a sharif. Where most of the women of an inya are of sharif descent, so too will their husbands and their children

be. In the past sultans and their viziers were always drawn from such inyas and carefully arranged endogamous marriages tended to keep such rights within particular inyas.¹ As an elderly informant explained in 1974, the inya took precedence over sharif descent, however. To be a sharif immigrant without inya affiliation, or to be a sharif born into an insignificant inya, gave the individual little social or political importance in comparison with someone bearing both sharif status and membership of a high-ranking inya.

These town inya have waned in importance wherever secular education and the acquisition of white-collar posts have undermined the original path to seniority: in Moroni, the island's capital, and among the ranks of the young Ngazija élite who have had the chance of Western education. Also migration abroad and more travel within the island - to work on the plantations of the French Company Société de la Grande Comore for instance - have tended to change residence and marriage patterns, reducing the commitment of individuals to their inya (J. Martin, 1968: 54). They still have a surprising strength among older men and in towns which have undergone less change however. Since only just over 8% of the Comorian population could speak French at the time of the archipelago's last census (Comorian Census, 1966: 47), and even now only about 30% of children attend primary school, it is easy to see that the rate of change will continue to be slow.

4.2 The operational descent group among Ngazija Comorians

As we have seen for the Swahilis, segments of the ukoo/inya are the most important kinship corporations for everyday affairs. At this level it becomes much easier to see the great similarities between

1 See Appendix 3,

Swahili and Comorian thinking, despite the apparent difference between pseudo-matrilineal, cognatic and pseudo-patrilineal groups. Close focus reveals that the key relationship is the sibling group and then the relationships between sibling groups of senior and junior generations, as before. However, in Ngazija the relationship to the maternal sibling group is of great importance, while the relationship to the paternal sibling group is slight unless the two parental sibling groups are co-ordinate segments of the same inya. More functions are left to these units in Ngazija than to their equivalents on the mainland coast, and it is through them that the individual can lay claim to Comorian identity.

The term used for this minimal descent group in Ngazija is inya mba, which literally means 'inya part', or 'little inya'. Those who lack, or have lost knowledge of membership of an inya call the members of this small descent group their wanduhuze, and lack a term for the descent group itself.

This small descent group is composed essentially of the descendants of a common MM or, more usually, MMM. Land, and the food it can grow, are the key assets of the group, with houses also of importance where these are substantial long-term buildings. Decisions about marriage and the property transfers which accompany it are the concern of this group and ideally new marriages will take place between its junior members.

4.2.1 Land

Ancestral, matrilaterally inherited lands are transferred within this group. Women are the ultimate owners of such land, and will pass it on to their daughters, while men have usufruct rights on the lands of their mothers, sisters and wives. The land may be divided equally between sisters, when they inherit, or if a manyahuli (family wakf) has

been made, it will be administered and cultivated by common agreement, sections being allotted to particular individuals and the oldest female with rights in the manyahuli being the ultimate arbiter. Such an arrangement appears to work well when the manyahuli land remains rural and primarily for subsistence use. It is a great deal more problematic when an individual plants semi-permanent cashcrops on it or when the terrain has gradually become urban land, wanted for the building of houses to which individual title is required. About 30% of Ngazija's land and town houses were manyahuli property in the early 1960s (Robineau, 1962: 121).

Land is added to the descent-group's pool from time to time by fathers who buy land for their children, knowing that it will be passed matrilaterally in subsequent generations. Land specially purchased in this way is almost always created a manyahuli and is given during the father's lifetime, not upon his death. Such a gift can cause friction if sisters' children perceive themselves as short of land and their mother's brother as neglecting them; but frequently father and daughters are members of the same descent group and the land thus given spares other land for sisters' children.

4.2.2 Houses

All Ngazija women are given a house at marriage, which will be theirs for as long as they need it - usually until their own daughters are grown up. The oldest daughter often gets her mother's own house and houses are built for the others at their father's expense, the mother's brother only being bound to assist if the father dies or divorces his wife. Again, this transfer of property, which appears to cross descent-group boundaries, must be viewed in the context of a strongly advocated inya-section endogamy.

4.2.3 Food distribution

The inya mba is the chief unit within which food is produced and distributed. At any one moment a man may be working land in his sisters' manyahuli and sending some of the produce to them; on land individually owned by his wife, to whom he will give most of the produce; and on land he owns himself, the produce of which he will split between his wives and perhaps his sisters and mother, as well as reserving some for sale. Similarly a woman, when she comes to cook for her children, may have at her disposal food she has produced herself on her own land, food her husband has provided, and/or food from brothers, sons or father and mother (Robineau, 1962: 118-122). As Robineau points out, a man's usufruct rights, which shift over a lifetime, may have more practical value than the land he personally owns.

4.2.4 Marriage and the inya mba

Important property is transferred in Ngazija customary marriages which the immediate kin of bride and groom are instrumental in providing, to some extent. These are dealt with in detail elsewhere (Shepherd, 1977).

Basically, the bride's inya mba and, through them, the wider matrilineal kin group, have to assemble a very great deal of food - some bought, some grown - which will feed guests for a seven-day period. The groom has to be able to present his bride with a tray full of gold jewellery, some of which he has bought and some of which his inya mba should help him with.¹ Informants state that half the gold needed should come from this kin group, though it is often less. A man's sisters, at least, should give him some of their own jewellery to help him with his marriage, and his mother will help him too if she has any jewellery left.

1 Its total value, in 1974, was about £1,500.

If the preferred alliance, that of patrilateral cross-cousin marriage, is successfully contracted in several consecutive marriages over a generation or two, the gold will be alternately given and received by co-ordinate sibling groups within the inya mba.

4.3 Descent, residence and polity among Ngazija Comorians

It can be seen from the foregoing that the interplay of descent and residence is no less important among Ngazija Comorians than among Swahilis. However, it is true to say that the land rights of women, and through them the various levels of inya, are still fundamental to all Ngazija notions of residence, and that loyalty to town and sultanate area was only the logical outcome of this simpler allegiance. Many Swahili townsmen have lost such land rights and the nature of identification with the town is therefore different. That the whole of Ngazija is muslim is important too: it means that the East African opposition of townsman-and-muslim and countryman-and-non-muslim has no force in Ngazija. Townsmen and countrymen differ merely in rank and wealth. However, the opposition of citizen (mzalihani) and newcomer (mjeni) replicates the Swahili model except that, to be a mzalihani of importance, a marriage endogamous to the town must also be made for continued residence in the town to be possible. The incorporation of wajeni is an endless process, but many customary payments, in the form of feasts for elders, would have to be made before such a man could have a political voice in the town.

4.3.1 The Ntsi

Although all but one of Ngazija's seven sultanates (faume)¹ ceased

1 These were Itsandra, Mbajini, Bambao, Mitsamihuli, Washili, Hamahame and Mbude. The last sultan of all handed over power to France only in 1912.

to exist a century ago, the continuity provided by French use of sultanate boundaries for administrative purposes, and the fact that most marriages are endogamous to the old sultanate areas, means that these entities still have a meaning in descent and residence terms. Nowadays each is referred to not as ufaume (sultanate) but as ntsi (country), even though the actual area of each averages only about 60 square miles.

Inhabitants of an ntsi conceive of themselves as each other's kin, in a general ideal sense, and particularly vis-a-vis other ntsi. Within an ntsi, of course, more specific kin relationships are a prior consideration and individuals are aware of those with whom they do not share kinship. For instance, those of slave descent who were or are attached through slave-status to freeborn ntsi-members have formed marriage-pools endogamous both to the ntsi and to their status. To some extent the sharifs have done the same. Nevertheless, the fact of co-residence creates intimate superficially kin-like patron/client relationships within the ntsi between those of all ranks.

Attitudes of friendliness or hostility between members of different ntsi very frequently still reflect the alliances and enmities of the sultanates in their wars of the nineteenth century, and this factor has coloured both colonial and post-colonial party politics in the island.

4.3.2 The mraa

In Ngazija the word mraa (the equivalent of KiSwahili mtaa) has two distinct meanings. Firstly it is used for a residential area, and secondly for a non-residential entity which I translate as 'moiety'.

(i) The residential mraa (sometimes heard as mraya)

In this sense the word is used exactly as it might be in a Swahili town or village to mean a quarter where kinsmen live together. In a small centre the inhabitants of a mraa will tend to be close kin, while

in a larger town the mraa will house a wider range of kinsmen. In Ngazija and Nzwani the largest towns contain several distinct quarters for each of the following social categories: sharifs, freemen who are not fishermen, fishermen and slave descendants. Even here, the likelihood that most mraa residents will share kinship and affinity with their neighbours is greater than it would be in a similar-sized Swahili town, because the immigration and incorporation of complete strangers takes place at a slower rate everywhere except in Moroni, the capital.

(ii) The non-residential mraa

The moiety system as it is found in Ngazija is still probably livelier than anything to be found nowadays on the Swahili coast.

In the past, moieties in Ngazija were always exogamous, and young men tended to join the moiety of their mother's brother. Nowadays there is at times a greater tendency to choose to affiliate with the father's moiety.¹ Once the choice was made it was permanent, and affected the individual's choice of mosque for day-by-day attendance, and thence the hirimu (mosque age-set - see 6.2) he joined, membership of which remained of crucial ritual importance throughout life. Women, who were enthusiastic mraa members, say they followed the affiliation of their brothers. In towns with a population of fishermen (regarded in Ngazija as freeborn but lowly), there is also a fishermen's mraa which is compulsorily endogamous and, unlike the other two, almost completely residential as well. Fishermen usually have their own mosque or mosques.

1 Informants were vague about the criteria for choice. Prins (1967: 100) made it clear that some choice of moiety membership was open to Lamu's inhabitants, but had insufficient evidence to explain how the choice was made. It seems to me that inter-moiety relations were at the heart of the choice. If moiety exogamy was fully practised, the patterns of patrilateral cross-cousin marriage would be set up, and the individual would affiliate with the moiety of his mother's brothers. If exogamy had broken down, then he would affiliate with his father's moiety.

The main moieties were always supposedly class equals. However, informants in the small town of Bangwa Kuni in 1974 explained how the normal competitiveness expected between miraa had got so out of hand that the two were refusing to exchange women and a pattern of angry endogamy had begun to be established. Unfortunately I have no idea what happened subsequently. In most of Ngazija, miraa were expected to be equals, to exchange women, to split the village-level political roles allotted under the French system between them, and to be more or less equally represented in the highest grades of the title-taking indigenous age-grade system.

At one of Ngazija's huge customary marriages, which are always between two individuals of the same town, the entire town would be involved, since everyone would be a member of either the bride's or the groom's moiety. Each would house the guests of its members from other towns; the bride's moiety (responsible for the provision of much of the food at the marriage) would feed its own members rather better than it fed those of the other moiety; the two mraa bands, groups of young men with drums, guitars and arab lutes, would attempt to outperform each other and collect larger contributions from onlookers - money to be spent later on more musical instruments.

In the past, when Nairuzi or Mwaka (Swahili New Year) ceremonies were more important than they have now become, relatively good-natured fights between opposed groups of mraa youth (destined to become brothers-in-law) were held on the beach.

Informants are clear that the miraa had no political functions and were concerned with competitive behaviour in the realm of local custom and prestige. Although they were not geographically discrete like some of those found in East African coast towns, they were nevertheless special purpose groupings of kinsmen and were tied to specific towns.

4.3.3 The political aspect of descent and residence

As we have seen, the original political functions of the inya did not automatically disappear when Ngazija was ruled by France.

In particular, town councils remained relatively important. Individual males could sit on their town's council if they fulfilled two conditions. They had to have been born in the town; and they had to have purchased a graded series of titles to membership of named groups conceptualised as age-grades, the completion of a costly ada (customary) marriage counting as an entry permit to the first of the grades with council-membership rights. Informants say that within the council, which might have fifty members in a large town, town inya measured their numerical strength against each other, and the wealthier inya helped their own members to purchase the right to council membership young, so that they were well represented as a group. Council members were known as wafaume wa mji ('princes of the town').

These councils settled matters concerning public behaviour and dealt with disputes between individuals or households where the elders of the manya concerned might be expected to have some influence. Only if some matter were not resolveable by 'our own town shari'a', as an Itsandra informant put it, would it be laid before the French-appointed 'chef de village'. Straightforward Islamic law was dealt with by the local kadi and supra-local level affairs perforce by the colonial government. At town level the inya and ada-based councils were important until 1976 when the Revolutionary Government of Ali Soilihi swept them away. It seems, however, that after his death in 1978 they began to meet again.

J. Martin describes the articulation of these village councils with higher administrative levels in the period of the sultanates (1968: 51) - wafaume wa mji being responsible to their regional sultan, and representatives of sultanates sitting on the council of the Tibe, the paramount

sultan of the whole island. This structure was abolished in 1891 by France, but the new structure which ultimately came into being - chefs de canton and a chambre de députés - bore a resemblance to its predecessor, as did the personnel who filled the available posts. Even in the 1950s and 60s, the leaders of the two Comorian political parties, Said Mohammed Sheikh and Said Ibrahim, were senior representatives of the two clans which, throughout the nineteenth century, had fought to see one of their own members in the position of paramount sultan (Martin, 1968: 53-56).

The continuity of precolonial structures into the near present has given Comorian elders a greater sense of their own importance than is to be met with anywhere on the Swahili coast today. It is noteworthy too that Comorian elders are still to be seen with their shawls of office, which are worn as turbans by the most senior council members and which give them a direct link with the Shirazi regalia of the sultans in a previous era.

5.0 Supra-local kinship: the patrilineage among Swahilis and Comorians

The only Comorians and Swahilis who can claim to be members of patrilineages as well as members of local bilateral or matrilineal descent groups are the sharifs, the descendants of the Prophet. All are descended from various Hadrami sharif lineages, the earliest of which must have had members in East Africa from at least the thirteenth century (Serjeant, 1957: 24-26; Shepherd, forthcoming).

Throughout the next six or seven hundred years people known on the coast as Shirazis traded and ruled in Swahili and Comorian commercial centres: it will be argued here that this elite were not only the most important members of local bilateral kingroups, but also members of Hadrami sharif patrilineages and that it was this double strength that gave them their unique position.

In the East African context, being 'Shirazi' originally meant being from one of the wealthy and noble Arab-African families from the Banadir ports of Southern Somalia, where a syncretic Swahili culture first evolved. These Shafi'i Sunni muslims were in no sense Persian (Trimingham, 1964: 6-11; Sutton, 1973: 21). Indeed, the proof that the Arab element in the Shirazi mix was that of South Arabian sharifs emerges from the Shirazi tradition of origin itself, if Levi-Strauss' methods are applied, though this seems hitherto to have gone unremarked.

5.1 The Shirazi tradition of origin

The tradition exists in several versions,¹ the earliest recorded dating from about 1530. They tell of a variable number of brothers, the children of Sultan Husain bin Ali, who left the Persian Gulf and went to settle in East Africa. The list of destinations varies with the place and period in which the tradition was recorded, but usually mentions important trading ports. The Comoro versions² tell of the migrants having been led by Muhammad bin 'Isa, and most versions suggest that the migration was a response to some threat or disaster.

Both the names contained in these myths indicate that the immigrants were sharifs. All sharifs are 'children of Husain bin Ali' - the Prophet's

1 I am aware of the following versions of the tradition. De Barros records two, one concerning Mogadishu and one concerning Kilwa, dating from about 1530 (Freeman-Grenville, 1962b: 31-32, 75-76). An Arabic version of the Kilwa chronicle dates from the 1860s (ibid.). A chronicle of Mayotte, in the Comoros, contains the myth as recorded in 1870 (Govrey, 1972: 37). Gullain (1845: 357 n6) heard the myth recounted in north-west Madagascar. Sa'id Ahmad Ali (1927) records it in his chronicle of Nzwani, as does Sa'id Ali Amir (1961). Harries (1977: 80) mentions an unpublished chronicle Afrika Sherkia (n.d.) which also contains the tradition.

2 The Comoro versions are important because Comorians continued to be ruled by Shirazis until very recently, and their chronicles have therefore been carefully preserved.

grandson - and all South Arabian sharifs (Yamani and Hadrami) regard their common ancestor as Ahmad bin 'Isa 'The Immigrant'.¹ He left Basra with other sharifs in 930 AD and went to Yaman and then the Hadramaut (Serjeant, 1957: 8; B.G. Martin, 1974: 373; El-Zein, 1974: ii-iii).

The disaster which the sharifs fled was probably the economic decline of Basra. It had been the Gulf's chief port, but when its waterways began to silt up in the ninth century its trade went to Siraf, the seaport for Shiraz (Ricks, 1970: 344).

Ahmad bin 'Isa went from the Gulf to South Arabia, and his descendants went on from South Arabia to East Africa at a time when much Gulf trade was shifting to the Red Sea. The Shirazi myth adds an East African chapter to South Arabian sharif tradition, telescoping the details (as so often happens in genealogies) so that the migrants appear to come directly from the Gulf.

Confusingly, only Mogadishu's version of the myth, the earliest of the set, names a starting point near Basra - Al Hasa. The other versions, which concern Kilwa or subsequent dependencies of Kilwa, make Shiraz the starting point for the sharif exodus. Since Kilwa was probably developed by kinsmen of Mogadishu's sharif rulers, why did her version not also name al-Hasa or Basra as the starting point?

An explanation demands a line related to the Mogadishu sharifs but using the nisba 'al-Shirazi': perhaps a Yamani lineage with representatives in both Mogadishu and Siraf. Siraf's extensive eleventh-century trade with East Africa (Ricks, 1970: 351-352) would have made it advantageous to have kinsmen at both ends of the voyage, and East African sharifs have

1 Ahmad bin 'Isa was descended from a line especially noted for trading activity (Haxan, 1973: 172-173). The names Ahmad and Muhammad are variants on the same Arabic root and often have a sense of interchangeability for Arabic speakers.

always traded through kin networks. When, sometime after this, Mongol invaders swept through Persia, I suggest that these sharifs fled to join their Mogadishu kinsmen, taking the nisba 'al-Shirazi' with them.¹

5.2 The patrilineage and trade

The Shirazis spread southwards from the Banadir ports, establishing a distinctive style of polity. All the East African coast ports in the pre-Portuguese and pre-Umani era, and many during and after, had rulers who called themselves Shirazis and who were related to one another, lineally, and by marriage (Berg, 1971: 25-26).

It is worth considering, at this point, what the advantages might have been for those who could boast membership of dispersed patrilineages - the Shirazi sharifs, that is to say - when they were living among predominantly bilateral peoples.

We have first to understand the nature of monsoon trading. There was only one time of year when long-distance shipping could arrive from Arabia or the Gulf, and within weeks these same ships had to return, to catch the northerly monsoon before it began to blow so strongly that travelling became dangerous (Nicholls, 1971: 76-77). This meant that international ports in East Africa had to have their goods ready for a brief trading season, and that local traders had to have the capital to spend the rest of the year buying and holding goods, and making local coasting trips within East African waters.

It was this local carrying trade which the Shirazis and their descendants came to control, in an area stretching eventually from the Banadir ports in the north to Madagascar, the Comoros and Mozambique in

¹ It seems that, once having left Siraf, some merchants took the nisba 'al-Shirazi' to indicate their region of origin (Ricks, 1970: 356 n87).

the south. They were not to lose their position as coasting traders until the early twentieth century. At all periods the chief port for international shipping (be it Mogadishu, Kilwa, Pate or Zanzibar) was the meeting place of Shirazi local trade on the one hand, and Persian Gulf Arab and Indian long-distance trade on the other.¹

It can be seen that, though sharif immigrants direct from the Hadramawt have always been important for their prestige, it was the East African born Afro-Arabs, with their vital local knowledge, who controlled local trading. It was their migrations, within East Africa, to found new trading ports on East Africa's coasts and islands, which were the unsung but economically more significant ones. The genealogies of East African-born sharifs gave them trading advantages over non-sharifs. At the same time, speaking the local language, being full members of local bilateral or matrilateral kingroups and understanding local norms, gave them advantages over sharif kinsmen directly from South Arabia.

In fact there seems always to have been an exchange, valuable to both sides, between Arabia-born and East Africa-born members of the same sharif patriline; for that reason, the East African sharifs have never been regarded as second-class lineage members, despite their African mothers. From the point of view of Hadrami sharifs, their East Africa-born kinsmen had vital local knowledge and were widely distributed in

1 East African sailors traded in dhow-like boats known as pangaio or bangwa, which resembled the much more recently extinct mtepe, until the nineteenth century. They were constructed without nails out of timbers sewn together with coir rope, and caulked with resin. They were sturdy and coped well with rough, reef-strewn coastal waters, but were unsuited to long-distance voyaging. Some sense of the extent of the pangaio trade can be gained by knowing that in the fifteenth century there were already some thirty-seven towns on the East African coast between Kilwa and Mogadishu, all of them committed to local rather than international trade (Strandes, 1961: 80-81; Mathew, 1963: 113ff.).

trade centres worth settling in as advantaged immigrants.¹ From the East African point of view, the immigration of Hadrami sharifs brought the opportunity of reinvesting a ruling house or a group of kinsmen with charisma fresh from the Arab heartlands. Such immigrants were always quickly made the sons-in-law of locally important men.

Whatever the pride in the patriline, Swahili-Comorian kinship patterns are dominant on a day-to-day basis, even in sharif families. Since Hadramis never allow Hadrami women to emigrate, they always take wives from among those where they settle and thereby acquire firm local rights in subsistence land and a useful range of affines. Their children generally spend their entire lives in East Africa. Individuals from the Hadramawt are thus plaited into local patterns with little difficulty, their children and grandchildren forming sibling groups defined by reference to them in which the rights of sisters and sisters' children are usually much augmented by comparison with norms inside the Hadramawt. That two sets of kinship norms do not meet head-on is the result of the different spheres in which they operate: the effective localised kin-group is always the Swahili-Comorian bilateral or matrilineal one, while the patrilineage, for those with continuing membership of one, was significant for the role of middlemen in trade. The only difference between the Swahili and the Comorian context, when it came to the blending of patrilineal with local kinship patterns, was this. In Ngazija local land rights invariably came through the mother and her sibling group, and the patriline was associated only with other, usually supra-local, matters. Among Swahilis, where local rights, as we have seen, might well be selected patrilineally, sharif fathers were the ones who endowed

1 Van den Berg, writing of Hadrami trade in nineteenth-century Java, noted that it was unheard of for a sharif to arrive as a migrant in a centre where he had no prior contact (1886: 123-124).

their children with both local and supra-local kinship rights.

5.3 Genealogies

Genealogies are crucial for the advantages I am suggesting sharifs had, and sharif patrilineal genealogies had many advantages over Swahili genealogies. A lineage is selective enough, in whom it records as a member, to permit of much persistence over time and space. Swahili bilateral genealogies are too broadly based and unwieldy for any task but the maintenance of local land and residence rights over a few generations. The Shirazis (the East-African sharifs) had the trading advantage of kin in every port, individuals tied to one another by common membership of an extended patrilineage which provided supralocal networks, and a degree of trust to replace the hazards of a contractual relationship with strangers. While these lineages were not, to my knowledge, run as business corporations, they provided frameworks within which members had clear potential advantages over non-members and in which a freemason-like readiness to help junior members could be relied on.

One obvious result of the effectiveness of the sharif patrilineage genealogies over time is the fact that, though we know that Hadramis of all classes must have immigrated to East Africa over the centuries, the only evidence that remains to us is evidence of sharif immigration.¹

Acutely aware of the importance of their genealogies, the Alawi (Hadrami) sharifs have kept registers of patrilineage members since the eleventh century, when their sharif status was questioned and they had to send representatives to Basra to re-establish their link with the

1 Van den Berg's description of the situation among nineteenth-century Indonesian Hadramis is strikingly similar: 'Les descendants des Arabes dans l'Archipel Indien ont une tendance marquée à retomber dans la société indigène, à moins qu'ils n'appartiennent à des familles distinguées' (1886: 110).

sharifs still living there. Registers are kept by lineage heads in the Hadramawt and it is the duty of lineage members wherever they may be to report births and deaths to their munsib (lineage head) regularly (Serjeant, 1957: 11-11, 25-27; Van den Berg, 1886: 50). In East Africa, for instance, a sharif in the Jamal-al-Lail lineage keeps a genealogy of the East African branch of the lineage in Mombasa. He regularly keeps it up to date by corresponding with other lineage members in East African towns, the Comoros and Madagascar, urging them to report genealogical information to him, and he periodically communicates with the Jamal-al-Lail munsib in the Hadramawt. The system is a relatively effective one and opportunities for falsely claiming sharif status are slight. Not all sharifs have bothered to maintain their lineage membership, however.¹

5.4 The sharif patrilineage today

The old Shirazi class of Arab-African sharifs had already been ousted by Umanis in Zanzibar and much of coastal East Africa by the end of the nineteenth century. In consequence sharifs were accorded no political roles under the British and their one-time importance has perhaps been underestimated by most writers on Swahilis. By contrast, present-day inhabitants of Ngazija and Nzwani, which had an unbroken history of rule by sharifs (even under the French) from the 12th century until very recently, still express uneasiness as to the morality and propriety of accepting the idea of political office for any but sharifs.

1 At certain times and places, the half indigenous descendants of sharifs have felt their interests to be local rather than international, and have allowed their lineage membership and sharif status to lapse. Such has been the case, for instance, among the one-time Ba-Fakih sharifs of the Antaimoro in south-east Madagascar (B.G. Martin, n.d: 9) and certain Jamal-al-Lail sharifs in Western Sumatra (Van den Berg, 1886: 224). Hadramis call them the mutawahhish - 'those who have turned wild'.

In the Comoros, all who can claim to be sharifs do so, and take care to behave with the particular kind of grace which creates around them the aura of holy baraka. In Mombasa, sharifs are not universally honoured, many non-sharifs are irritated by sharifs' behaviour and by their highly conservative theological beliefs, and in consequence not all those who have the right to claim sharif identity do so, particularly if they are not working in a religious capacity.

The connection between sharifs and trade¹ has similarly been overlooked by scholars working on the Swahilis because East African sharifs no longer trade, and have had the variety of their previous activities reduced to the religious sphere only. Here, nevertheless, patrilineage membership is still beneficial. In the realm of religious education, it is still rare for those without membership of a sharif lineage to progress to the higher levels. Sooner or later this requires travelling elsewhere to study, perhaps under another important sharif in the Swahili-Comorian area, but ultimately in the Hadramawt or Cairo. Kin contacts become very important at this remove. Such religious higher education still provides some with a career as kadi (shari'a lawyer).

In the Comoros, while sharifs no longer now trade in their own boats as they used to, many work as successful import-export agents and many are to be found in the highest levels of the civil service and in positions of political authority. In addition, some of the most august religious

1 It is demonstrated elsewhere (Shepherd: n.d.) that, from the thirteenth century to the nineteenth century, the presence of sharif patrilineages in the Comoros co-varied with the scale of trade there. I feel that their role in trade has been overlooked partly because of a certain Christian ethnocentricity about the proper activities of holy men, and partly because hagiographies of well-known sharifs only mention their religious achievements and pass over their economic activities as uninteresting. Van den Berg noted in nineteenth-century Java that sharif lines were common in prosperous towns and rare in undeveloped or declining centres (1886: 159ff.).

experts and saints in muslim East Africa have come from the ranks of the Comorian sharifs. They have maintained both their wealth and their baraka (holy charisma) in a way which contrasts strongly with most of East Africa's other sharifs.

6.0 Age as an organising factor

The importance of age, and of informally or formally organised age-groups in Swahili and Comorian society is great.

6.1 Generation

Where public life in a lineage-based society might revolve around inter-lineage relations, here the civic expression of kinship is that of the relationship between generations.

As a result, the complementarity Levi-Strauss posits in the relationship between ego and his F and MB disappears: both are in an authority over him because the relationship is one of senior to junior generation. Indeed, as Wijeyewardene (1961: 243) says, 'there is a tendency for the system to become completely subordinate to age, ignoring genealogical connections'. For instance, the stress found in Swahili society on the rearing of the children of kin contributes to the strengthening of generation over lineality (Lienhardt, 1968: 32). Similarly actual age is more important than genealogical age. Comorian and Swahili men of similar age but different generation genealogically play down the difference by avoiding kinship terms to one another and calling one another 'friend' (mwezangu/mwezani). Kin marriages are sometimes contracted between men and women of similar age despite the fact that genealogically, and by the tenets of the Kur'an, the marriage ought not to take place. I have examples among both Swahilis and Comorians of men having married their classificatory (or in one case actual) sister's daughter.

Swahilis and Comorians recognise five living generations, as Wijeyewardene points out (1959: 3), each being marked by specific rituals.

- 1 For the mtoto mchanga (newborn baby) there is a naming ceremony.
- 2 For the mtoto (child) there is circumcision if he is a boy, and the ceremonies surrounding puberty and the first onset of menstruation for a girl.
- 3 For the kijana (youth) or msichana/mwanamwale (nubile virgin) there is marriage.
- 4 For the mtu mzima (adult man) there is the achievement of office as an elder (mmiji in Mombasa) and the pursuit of personal economic success. For the mwanamke (married woman) there is entry upon the status of being a mother (mama).
- 5 For the mzee (old person), the respect due to old age leads on to death and the funeral ceremony.

Customary payments (ada) are associated with each of these passage rites among both Swahilis and Comorians, the implication being that the increased status which comes with age is bought. Chronological age becomes social age through payment - for permission to move up the status hierarchy - to those already on higher rungs.

Small pieces of ceremonial highlight the individual's status progress as he or she moves up through the generations: a boy at his circumcision is dressed like a little bridegroom and decorated with henna, as if to figure the next status change he will make; an adult bridegroom is dressed as a beturbanned Arab at his wedding, as if the passage-rite of marriage increases the volume of arab blood in his veins and decreases his degree of africanness; because unmarried Swahili and Comorian girls are forbidden to smoke, married women smoke furiously on public occasions, even if they smoke at no other time.

The stress on the importance of age as the chief organising factor in Swahili and Comorian society means that, though the sibling group is an undifferentiated unit in its dealings with others similar, it is

internally ranked. KiSwahili has the terms dada (older sister) and kaka (older brother), while in Ngazija the oldest sister, who has special responsibilities, is known as itswa daho ('head of the house'). Older brothers and sisters have virtually parental duties towards their younger siblings, and it is clear that, here again, the stress on actual age pulls against a genealogical interpretation of generation.

6.2 Age groups

Ngazija still has a complex age-grade organisation which cannot now be exactly paralleled among Swahilis, except in a few highly specific contexts.

The Ngazija hirimu¹ (set of male age-mates) is a kind of social sibling group whose members refer to one another as brother (mwananya/mwanama). They go through life as a group of friends, are seen together at all social gatherings and have important roles in life-crises. The hirimu begins as a group of boys who are from the same town, are of similar age and birth rank, and who attended the same Kur'an school class at the same mosque (Rouveyrans and Djabiri, 1968).

The hirimu, mosque age-sets, go through a series of named age-grades, daraja, detailed below. However, though there is pressure on members of the same hirimu to pass through the grades at the same rate, each hirimu member makes the transition from grade to grade individually, by making ada payments - feasts in this case - to the members of the next higher grade.

There is a clear resemblance between this system, and that of the social generations just described, though the Ngazija version is much more elaborate. When I told some well-read Swahili informants in Mombasa

1 The word is derived from the Arabic حريم (friend, companion) and is cognate with حرام haram (holy, forbidden).

about the Ngazija hirimu, they got very excited and said that references to such hirimu on the East African Coast existed in old Swahili poetry, but that it was difficult to know, from such sources, what they would have been like. Certainly age-grades entered by the offering of feasts to their members were reported in Vumba in the past (Hollis, 1900: 278-279), and something similar seems to have existed among the Giriama, Digo and Duruma (Prins, 1952: 74-76). Perhaps the pattern still to be found in Ngazija was much more common among the Swahilis in the past.¹

Nowadays, as Prins suggests (1967: 92), traces of a former age-organisation are chiefly found in the organisation of competing dance clubs. The younger hirimu in Ngazija still often form dance bands, collecting money to buy musical instruments and hurricane lamps so that they can outperform each other at weddings (Menard, 1963: 15). Similarly in Tongoni, where Wijeyewardene worked, each informal age-group had its own club and courtyard where dances were performed (1961: 250). In women's spirit cults and lelemama dance associations on the Swahili coast, internal ranking based upon the purchase of titles (Topan, 1971; Strobel, 1979: 163-165) apparently preserves a hint of a once more universal structural feature of society.

1 The grades were the means of access to political office. In Ngazija, each grade has authority over the one below, and somewhere in each settlement is a small forum or square, kabari, where political discussion and ritual events take place. This arena is flanked by benches, each reserved exclusively for members of particular grades. A similar arrangement was reported by Ibn Battuta in medieval Mogadishu (Freeman-Grenville, 1962a: 30), and may be the explanation of the tiered stone seating found in the ruins of Kilwa.

6.3 Ngazija age-grades

The daraja in Ngazija are as follows:

<u>wanamji</u> - sons of the town	1 <u>washonje</u>	'foxes', 'rats'
	5 years old to puberty	Those attending Kur'an school
	2 <u>wazugua</u>	'those in transition'
	puberty to about 20	Young men who have as yet made no marriage of any kind
<u>wafoma wa mji</u> - rulers of the town	3a <u>wafaume wanamji</u>	'princes among sons of the town'
	about 25	Young adult men in their prime, perhaps already husbands in a 'little' marriage and preparing to make a costly ' <u>ada</u> ' marriage
	3b <u>maguzi</u>	'dead coconut trunks'
	35 years or more	Men who are past the youngest age for an <u>ada</u> marriage, but who have not yet been able to do so, for financial reasons.

<u>wafoma wa mji</u> - rulers of the town	4a <u>wanatsi kofia</u>	'those whose heads are covered with caps'
	young adult to middle-aged	Men who have completed their <u>ada</u> marriage property and have slaughtered up to ten cattle with which to feast the town
	4b <u>watsiliji</u>	'those who have eaten'
	middle-aged	Poorer men who have been allowed to complete a cheaper <u>ada</u> marriage than the town's norm, because of some extenuating circumstance. Only two or three cattle are slaughtered and the resulting status is lower.
<u>wafoma wa mji</u> - rulers of the town	5 <u>wafaume wa mji</u>	'princes of the town'
	middle-aged to old	Those who, after many years as <u>wanatsi</u> <u>kofia</u> , have been promoted because their firstborn son or daughter has had an <u>ada</u> marriage.
	6 <u>wazee wa mji</u>	'elders of the town'
	old	These men make all the important town decisions, and their president is the oldest among them.

All wanamji (grades 1-3) are expected to be prepared to run errands at any time for any of the wafoma wa mji (grades 4-6) and are chastised by their own classificatory parents if they do not (Ottenheimer, 1971: 59-60). The elders of grades 4-6 are recognisable at all times by the clothing they wear, especially the shawl worn over one shoulder by rank 4, and wound into a turban by ranks 5 and 6. The members of each daraja stand together to pray in the mosque on Fridays, and those who are wafoma wa mji enter the mosque by a special door. At ada marriages one of the chief fixed costs arises from the fact that each of the wazee wa mji must have a whole front leg, and each of the wafaume wa mji half a back leg when cattle are slaughtered to feast the town. In Itsandra in 1974 there were seventeen of the former and fifty-one of the latter alive: at that stage the minimum number of cattle a man could decently slaughter for an ada marriage was about twelve.

It can be seen that such a system was highly coercive. It will become clear later in the thesis that many of the Comorian migrants working in East Africa were afraid of the shame which would await them if they returned to Ngazija with insufficient means to make an ada marriage. Those who came to Ngazija as adults - such as Hadrami traders - found that they could not establish themselves in local life unless they paid their way hastily through the lower age-grades and made an ada marriage. Even the Comorian élite, who had received higher education in France and who live in the archipelago's capital, Moroni, have usually capitulated and made an ada marriage in the end, whatever their original contemptuousness of the idea, because they found social and political life difficult until they did.

7.0 Marriage

Although marriage as a topic has been implicit in much that has gone before in this chapter, several aspects are as yet unexplored and are tackled here.¹

7.1 The importance of marriage

Marriage is important for several reasons, none of which depend on the long-term continuance of the marriage.

Firstly, marriage, especially first marriage, marks an important status change for men and women. A woman's first marriage marks her passage to adulthood, and a man's first marriage records the level of achievement he has so far reached. Marriage is by far the most important passage rite among both the Swahilis and the Comorians, though in the latter case ada (customary) marriage has a particularly complex importance because it is embedded into other institutions.

Secondly, marriage is as essential as birth for the definition of a Swahili or Comorian. While, in societies with lineages, it can be said that a total social identity is delivered to the individual at birth (or soon after), among Swahilis and Comorians, the potential of the individual at birth must be made actual by a suitable marriage which clarifies the individual's position as a member (or non-member) of the local residential group, and clarifies his or her rank within it. This is why both Swahilis and Comorians place so much emphasis on a child's rearing, for the givens of birth may be modified considerably by the context in which he/she is

1 I make no attempt to describe marriage ceremonies here. Strobel (1975) describes these among Mombasa Swahilis; Le Guennec-Coppens (1980) does so for Lamu Swahilis. Appendix 2 (Shepherd, 1977) contains information on Ngazija marriage ceremonies, as does Rouveyran and Djabiri (1968); Robineau (1966) contains information on Nzwani weddings.

reared, augmenting or reducing the child's ultimate marriage potential by comparison with what it seemed to be at birth. Historically, Swahilis and Comorians have all been brought into existence by marriages which incorporated strangers into local groups and, by definition, had matrilineal and patrilineal kin with different tribal or national identities from their own. Such people can hardly have unbending rules stressing descent at the expense of marriage, and indeed even origin myths in the area begin with marriages rather than autochthonous emergence. In Ngazija, for instance, it is believed that the earliest (male) immigrants to the island found it inhabited by female djinns whom they converted and married.¹ Similarly El-Zein (1974: 19-26) recounts the Lamu myth which explains why a group of already resident women were available for immigrant men to marry. 'Baba kiazzi, mama muhogo', joked a Swahili informant in Mombasa, explaining the nature of the Swahilis to me: 'father potato, mother cassava'. He meant that mothers are indigenous - he thinks of cassava as a low-status indigenous crop - while fathers are higher status immigrants, like the relatively newly-arrived European potato in Kenya.

Thirdly, the marriage of particular individuals is important not just for their own status, but also for the future status of their siblings and their children. Again, the marriage itself need not endure so long as children have been born to it: their existence as legitimate acknowledged children is not affected by divorce. If the marriage was a successful one in terms of rank for the two partners, the existence of children born to it serves as a benchmark, even after the marriage's termination, which will positively affect the marriagability of the younger siblings of the one-time couple. It is particularly true that women may affect the

¹ Thus both the grafting of outsiders onto original inhabitants and the linkages between Shirazi ports are enshrined in myth and chronicle. Here we have the core of the two kinship systems: the local and the supra-local.

marriage chances of their siblings - usually adversely. The extreme importance of virginity at marriage among Swahilis and Comorians (and therefore the great duty young women have to preserve it until marriage) is connected with the hymen's symbolic association with ascribed status. Just as the hymen exists at birth and must be preserved until marriage, so too, a woman is born as a bearer of her descent-group's (or sibling-group's) status, and she must do her best to honour it until marriage. While a man's marriages may improve in rank as he gets older and achieves more, a woman's best marriage is always her first in rank terms, even though she may be happier in a later marriage.¹

7.2 Preferred marriage

In any marriage system where kin endogamy is enjoined, there are always two conflicting desires: the desire to marry kin (usually for property reasons rather than sentiment) and the desire to keep a range of options open which are gradually lost if all marriages are highly endogamous. The greater the heterogeneity of local wealth and status, the greater the likelihood of hypergamy, rather than endogamy, in fact.

If a kin marriage is to be made, the desired match is that between the children of a brother and a sister among both Comorians and Swahilis. In both cases such a match would compensate for rights which would otherwise be lost: among Swahilis, the children of sisters tend to have inferior property rights by comparison with those of brothers, and among Comorians the children of brothers have inferior property rights by comparison with those of sisters. For the purposes of property inheritance, one might almost say that these marriages made good the failure of brother and sister in the parental generation to marry one another! Some

¹ Compare Tambiah (1973: 191ff.).

parallel cousin marriages take place as well in both areas - the children of brothers marrying among Swahilis, and the children of sisters in Ngazija¹ - but these are never the stated preference.

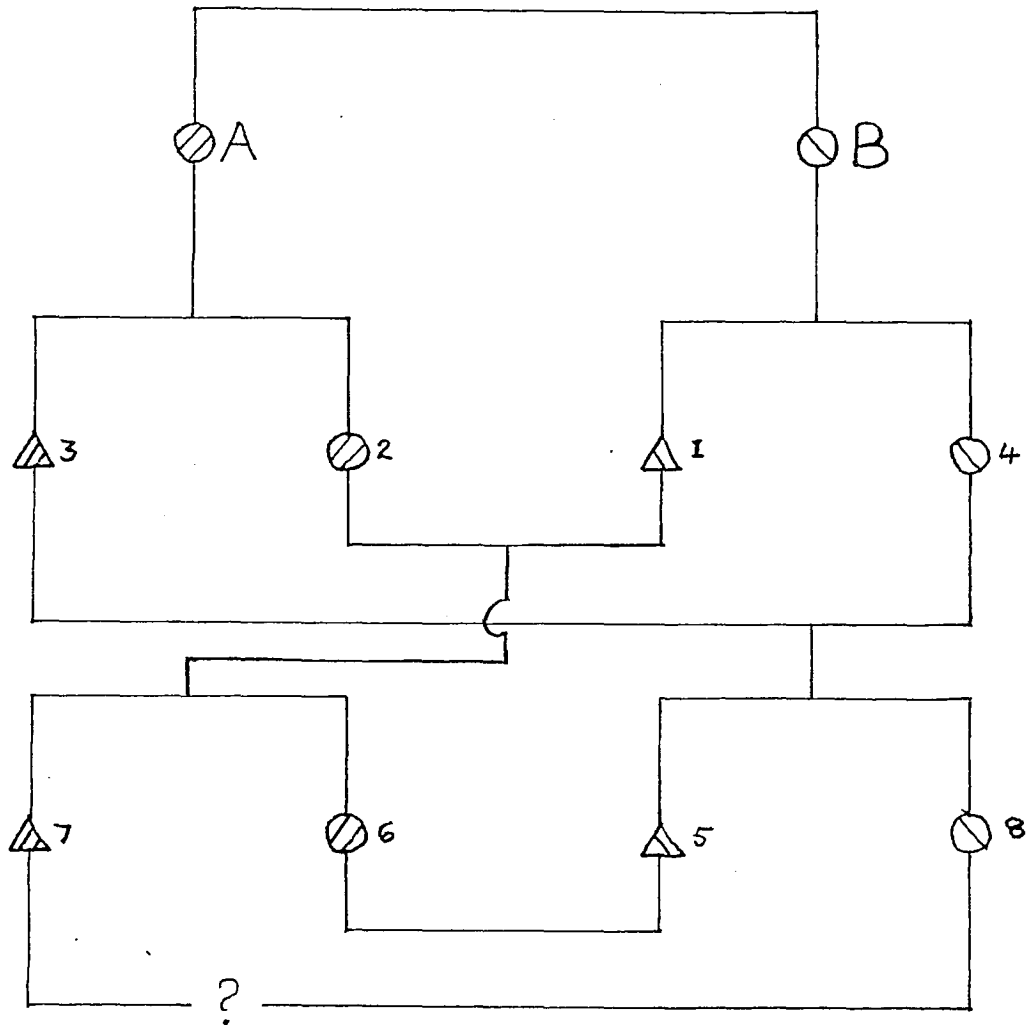
Whether or not a kin marriage is made, there is a strong desire, on the part of mothers and children, for a marriage to be made endogamous to the town of birth. Daughters especially want to live near their mothers after marriage.

Swahilis and Comorians, involved as they are in a ranked marriage system which in that respect resembles the Indian caste system, are forever seeking to maintain equality at any level where it has been established. High status individuals in particular insist upon immediate or slightly delayed sister-exchange between kin-groups, so that one party does not fall into the role of wife-giver to the other. This is true of both kin and non-kin marriages. Over time, a pattern of alternating patrilateral cross-cousin marriage is established, between the two affinal sibling groups. Each new marriage affirms loyalty and a lack of rivalry with the other group.² In one case I heard of in Ngazija which I believe to be common, a heavy and extremely valuable gold necklace (a kidani) changed hands against a woman in a series of marriages between two closely inter-related kingroups. The chain would be given, as part of the prestations of an ada marriage, by the husband to the wife. She, when one of her brothers or sons came to marry, would give it to him, to help him in the prestations he would have to make to his bride - a woman from the wife-taking group. The chain became, in fact, a deposit against the return of a woman.

1 The Kur'an forbids marriage between the children of sisters. In Ngazija it is allowed so long as the two have not both suckled from the same woman at any point. If they have, they count as full siblings and cannot marry.

2 Peters' material on affinity in the Lebanon is a wonderfully detailed working out of this point (1976: 27-29).

Figure 3: Sister exchange and the passing of a *kidani* (heavy gold necklace) at *ada* marriages between kin



⊗ The descendants of grandmother A

⊙ The descendants of grandmother B

The passing of the *kidani*

1 - 2 H to W as 'marriage gift' [passes from group B to group A]

2 - 3 Z gives it to B to help him marry 4

3 - 4 H to W as 'marriage gift' [passes from group A to group B]

4 - 5 M gives it to S to help him marry 6

5 - 6 H to W as 'marriage gift' [passes from group B to group A]

6 - 7 Z gives it to B to help him marry 8

However, 8 runs away from Ngazija and marries a non-Comorian. Her action means that group B owe a woman and are owed gold. Considerable tension exists between the groups while debts remain outstanding.

Swahili and Comorian beliefs about correct marriage owe something to the notion of kafa'a (marriage eligibility) as it is interpreted by sharifs in East Africa. In the Hadramawt, where the term originates, an eligible marriage partner is defined by personal virtue rather than birth rank, but the interpretation of kafa'a current in East Africa stresses both birth status (slave, freeborn or sharif individual) and the rank achieved by the marriages of the previous generation (Serjeant, 1957: 21-23).

7.3 Marriage through time

In the Swahili and Comorian kinship and marriage system, it can be seen that, over a period of time, a given group is sustained and maintained by marriage, not descent. While an original marriage continues to be repeated, the marrying back of kin endogamously reiterates the importance of the existence of the group. If, however, commitment to that endogamous group lapses, the group itself will eventually evaporate as the individuals once within it make marriage choices committing their loyalty elsewhere. It will be seen that ceasing to marry back into what was once an endogamous category was what began to mark off the Comorians living in Zanzibar from those living in Ngazija.

Another pattern which becomes readily visible over time is the result of the hypergamous marriages which are usually made when the pressure to make kin-marriages is insufficient. Women move up the system, creating a shortage at the bottom and an excess at the top. Historically, the availability of unmarried, well-born women in Swahili and Comorian trading towns has always been important. They have been given in marriage to wealthy immigrant traders from elsewhere in the Swahili-Comorian area, or from South Arabia, and have thus attracted

new wealth and trading contacts for their own kin.¹ Simultaneously, the offering of these women to outsiders (and the ability of wealthy local men to marry more than one wife) has created a shortage of women at the poorer levels. Slave-wives were one answer until the abolition of slavery, and I suspect that, on the mainland coast, the taking of free-born coastal African wives from such groups as the Mijikenda is one reason why Mijikenda men have to pay such high brideprices to get a wife at all: they are competing with the higher status of urban, islamized men. A by-product of hypergamy, as can be seen from this brief description, is that a very vast area becomes linked in a marriage chain whose links constantly break, but which re-form according to the same principles as before. Comorians, Swahilis and coastal Africans are potentially affinally related, and form a vast pool of potential kin.² It is important to remember that the Comorians who went as labourers to East Africa, and the Swahilis among whom they lived, were aware of this, though they would not have expressed it in quite the same way. By contrast with inland Africans, they would refer to one another collectively as jamaa (distant

1 Discussions of hypergamous systems rarely seem to identify the structural effects of women moving up the system upon men. Although the ideology states that men are the superiors of women, it is important to be aware that generally brothers become the inferiors of their sisters, whom they give to men from whom they receive no return. In East African history it is abundantly clear that high-status immigrants, arriving as wife-takers, can pass on this status to their sons only until the next wave of new, wealthier immigrants arrives. At that point they drop into second position as the highest of wife-givers. Over the centuries, originally important immigrants may be buried so many layers deep, as they are pushed further and further down the system by the constant incorporation of newer immigrants, that their own claims to original supremacy are no longer believed. This is the case with the Shirazis of rural Zanzibar, for instance (Shepherd: forthcoming).

2 The Mijikenda Africans who live in Mombasa's hinterland recognise this when they refer to the Swahilis collectively as wazomba 'sister' sons', and to islamizing as Kwenda uzombani - 'going to sisters'-son-land'.

ego-focussed kin), and to coastal Africans as those who lived kwa sisi ('with us').

7.4 Polygyny

Polygyny was much more common, in my experience, among Comoro Islanders than among Swahilis. In Mombasa, only a handful of wealthy coastal men have more than one wife, for instance: the cost of maintaining more than one establishment (since co-wives never share a house) deters almost everybody. On the other hand, illicit affairs are agreed by Swahilis to be virtually universal. A reliable informant in Mombasa said he thought that 100% of men and 80% of women had an extra-marital affair at some point in their lives.

In Ngazija, polygyny is an important factor in society. In the last Comoro Islands Census (INSEE, 1966), nearly 25% of men had more than one wife at the time of census-taking, a very high rate among muslims.¹ Men with more than one wife may have them in the same or adjacent settlements and should spend equal numbers of days with each. However, Ngazija polygyny differs from Swahili polygyny in that Comorians have institutionalised two distinct types of wives. Both types are fully legitimate wives, but some are formally regarded as equals and others as inferiors. While the latter need not be slave descendants, there are echoes here of the old distinction between well-born wives and concubines. Wives who are equals are known as wanazidakani, 'daughters of the wall-niches'. They have been secluded before marriage, and until recently might go out only at night, veiled and accompanied. These are the women

¹ Census data for certain Mediterranean Arab countries (Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Iraq, urban Jordan and five Palestinian villages) collated from Goode (1963) gave an average polygyny rate in the 1950s of 6% only.

who are married in a customary ada ceremony. Wives who are inferiors are wandruruma, 'women for use', and they are married simply. Their marriages are referred to as mna daho 'small house' marriages. The higher status of wives who have had ada marriages is normally reflected, not only in their finer houses (provided by their fathers) but also in the extra attention and money lavished on them by their husbands: the Islamic injunction to treat wives equally is consequently ignored in Ngazija. Comorian labour migrants who married cheaply in East Africa, while achieving an expensive ada marriage in Ngazija, were thus maintaining two unequal households at once in a way already familiar to them in their home island.

8.0 Divorce

Swahilis and Comorians expect divorce to occur at some point in their lives, and build it into their concept of marriage. Swahili men and women are aware that the 'correct' first marriage they are expected to make (to a status equal who is frequently a close kinsman) may be less happy than one made later with a partner one has selected oneself. WaNgazija know that they are likely to make different kinds of marriage over a lifetime.

But over and above these relatively practical attitudes to divorce are other factors which contribute to the fragility of all marriages among Swahilis and Comorians. The likelihood of divorce is very great, for there has been one divorce for every two marriages on the Kenya coast for many years (Strobel, 1979: 88), while in Ngazija the divorce rate (by the same criterion) was virtually the same at the time of the last Census (INSEE, 1966).

Firstly, it is an anthropological commonplace that where women have a degree of economic independence, the divorce rate is high (Fortes,

1950: 283; Mair, 1971: 183). Both Swahili and Comorian women have male kinsmen who see it as their duty to help them, and the former sometimes and the latter always possess immovable property into the bargain.

Secondly, there appears to be a potential correlation between a high divorce rate and the existence of societies (of which there are many around the Indian Ocean littoral) with bilateral kinship systems and Islam. Many of these societies, for instance the Malays (Djamour, 1965) and the Laccadives (Dube, 1969) originally left subsistence agriculture predominantly in the care of women while men engaged in trade. Indeed they are muslim societies not because they were conquered, but because muslim traders came to their shores and married. In these societies a considerable degree of economic independence for women seems to have been the norm.

Thirdly there is the question of property. Among Swahilis and Comorians no joint conjugal fund is set up at marriage such as is found in most European bilateral systems, where monogamy and kinship terminology alike have 'the effect of isolating the conjugal dyad and its offspring' (Goody, 1973: 25). Where divorce demands complex decisions about pooled property, it is likely to be rarer. Swahili terminology, by contrast, stresses the siblinghood of brothers and sisters by reference to two senior sets of siblings, rather than by reference to the parental marriage. Indeed Swahili customary law even denied a spouse the right to inherit from a deceased spouse's estate: the property passed on to those with prior kinship rights, the deceased's children and other kin (Middleton, 1961: 25).

In sum, the sibling relationship is strong among Comorians and Swahilis and therefore, as Levi-Struass teaches, the husband-wife

relationship is weak.¹ This is very striking in Ngazija at the time of an ada marriage, when the bridegroom's oldest sister (who may have spent months helping him prepare for his marriage) has an important public role at the wedding and publicly expresses her devotion to him, while the bride displays a marked negative attitude to her husband.

9.0 Conclusion

In this lengthy chapter, an attempt has been made to show the profound continuities which existed between Swahili and Comorian kinship and marriage concepts. I think it is clear that, despite many minor differences between Ngazija and muslim East Africa, any Comorian who decided to live and work among Swahilis had a valid kinship charter with which to operate when he arrived.

The main differences he would encounter would be, firstly, a much decreased formalisation of the respect for age upon which Ngazija society was founded. In East Africa, Swahili elders had been left with little more than ritual authority, and customary law had ceased to have validity.

Secondly, if he wished, he could escape from the duty of performing a costly ada marriage.

Thirdly, he would experience a considerable change in the weighting of his two roles as mother's brother and father. Though individuals, acting as mother's brothers, seem frequently to have invited their sisters' sons to come and become established in employment under their guidance,

¹ A friend in Ngazija was telling me how much he was charmed and amused by a rather giggly younger cousin he had (an MBD). 'Why don't you marry her, then?' I asked, since he had just been talking about the difficulty of finding a wife he wanted to marry. 'Oh, no!' he replied, 'I like her too much to marry her!', and went on to explain that if he turned her into an affine she would become an enemy instead of a friend.

they were generally, in the absence of their sisters, free of many of their inya duties in East Africa. On the other hand, any marriage they made would provide them with wives far more financially dependent upon them than are the women who cultivate in their own right in Ngazija, and make a considerable contribution towards the household's food.

Fourthly, WaNgazija had to exchange membership of large land-owning kin groups for a fragmentary network of kin who might be able to provide accommodation, but could by no means automatically provide a living.

Finally, and this is the story of the following chapter, a Comorian had to decide sooner or later whether to continue to make kinship investment in Ngazija, or whether the initially tenuous new kin and affinal links being built up, willy-nilly, by his presence in East Africa, would eventually draw him fully into new commitments there.

CHAPTER 4

KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE AMONG COMORIANS IN EAST AFRICA TO 1970

1.0 The flexibility of bilaterality

In most studies of Swahili and Comorian kinship the potential of bilateral systems under urban wage-earning conditions have not been explored. In Caplan's work, for instance (1975), an individual Swahili is presented with a series of choices dependent upon the range of descent groups he has rights in, but though they vary in detail, all the choices involve staying in Minazini and cultivating. Some of the Comorians I studied, by contrast, could use their kin-links to be farmers in Ngazija or wage-labourers in one of several East African towns, while their children could often choose whether to be identified as Comorians or as something else. The bilateral ideology underlying Comorian kinship made it as legitimate to affiliate with a non-Comorian as with a Comorian parent, or grandparent. As in Minazini, present choices did not preclude changes of affiliation in the future.

In looking at the patterning of Comorian and Swahili kinship in East Africa, it is important to remember that kinship and marriage can barely be distinguished analytically, in a cognatic, endogamic system where marriage creates kin, and kin are expected to become marriage partners. When Comorians first went to East Africa they tended to bring wives from their own sultanate to live with them in Zanzibar. However, when at a later stage Comorians moved from Zanzibar to the East African mainland in search of work, they married stranger women they found there. On the coast these were Swahilis, but inland they met, converted, and married women from a range of other Bantu tribes. 'Everywhere a Comorian goes, he likes to marry', said one old migrant, explaining that marriage brought morality and that a wife gave you legitimation and contacts where

you happened to find yourself. The belief that the mother and the father give their children distinct destinies added to the value of these marriages in the eyes of men, and wherever possible, Comorians married women with useful local connections.

For Comorians born in Zanzibar, alliance marriages with strangers were few in number by comparison with marriages which reaffirmed full rights among the wazalia themselves. Although this group lacked land which might need to be guarded by close endogamy, the status and prestige which they had achieved over the years was a more valuable asset to them than diffuse options.

Since both descent and residence are fundamental components of Swahili/Comorian kinship concepts, the most important kin are the co-resident ones. By the same token residence in a strange place ought to lead to marriage there so that affines and, for the next generation, kin are created. The most attractive of the options opened will be strengthened by the marriages of this generation. The high endogamy of the wazalia in Zanzibar was not arbitrary, then, but the result of individuals with a variety of options consistently choosing Zanzibar and marrying into that group of Comorians, over many decades.

Comorians working in East Africa often made both stranger and kin marriages over the course of a lifetime.

Bakari (Time: 1872 onwards)

Bakari went to Zanzibar to work in about 1872, when he was twelve years old. He made three marriages in Zanzibar over the next 40 years, one with an Indian woman, one with a Swahili-Arab, and one with a divorced Comorian woman to whom he was not related. When he was 60 the pressure from his family to make an endogamic customary marriage caught up with him. He returned to Itsandra, his native town, in Ngazija, and married a kinswoman 16 years of age. He stayed there long enough for his wife to give birth to two children but then took her back to Zanzibar with him.

1.1 The modification of Comorian kinship norms in East Africa

1.1.1 The wazalia

Since there was no land held by Comorian kingroups in Zanzibar, the pronounced matrilinearity of kinship norms in Ngazija was reduced. Without the land, there was less stress on the mother's importance, and more on the status drawn from the father's level of education and employment. As Chapter 3 has shown, Swahili customary law had been abolished in Zanzibar, thus reducing women's rights from full bilateral inheritance of land, to those specified by Shari'a law, half those rights of their brothers.¹ The result was a much more important role for Comorian fathers than was to be found in Ngazija.

In consequence, matrilineal kin had only a secondary role in Zanzibar. Membership of matri-clans, so important to both men and women in Ngazija, distributed neither material rights nor social status within Zanzibar, and men, accordingly, took little interest in their matri-clan affiliation. Male matriclansmen were of little significance to Comorian children born in Zanzibar. Women, however, continued to concern themselves with matriclanship, but in a single area only: the arrangement and celebration of their children's marriages.

This was the case for two main sets of reasons. Marital residence was always virilocal in Zanzibar, while it was always uxorilocal in Ngazija. Virilocality was supported in Zanzibar by prevailing Umani norms. Secondly, in contrast with Ngazija where a man might maintain several households at once, in Zanzibar polygyny was rarer. As a result, a household consisting of mother, father and children was normal, and the father became the main source of status. The wazalia elite in

¹ Caplan (forthcoming) associates the implementation of Shari'a law in the nineteenth century with the establishment of a plantation economy.

Zanzibar used surnames which were the name or nickname of the FF or FFF, saying, 'He is a Fum', 'She is one of the Mbambas'. This represents a very patrilateral shift by comparison with the wageni who used their sultanate of origin as a referent.

The atrophy of male matriclanship is strikingly illustrated in the following case.

Salha (1968)

In 1968 Salha's mother and father left Zanzibar for good, and took their children to Ntsujini, their town of origin in Ngazija. It was the first time the children had ever been to Ngazija. Salha, who was about 17, was astonished when the daughters of her father's sister immediately began to ask her father what jewellery and land he was going to give them now that he had come back from Zanzibar. She saw him give them things she had assumed were hers by right, and concluded that she had 'a very unkind father'. Nothing in Zanzibar had prepared her for her father's significant role as a mother's brother in Ngazija.

When Comorians had first started in the middle of the nineteenth century to come and live in Zanzibar, few were ready to cut their ties with their home island. In consequence, despite some inconvenience, each man made a customary (ada) marriage in Ngazija, at some stage in his lifetime. Since women who have made ada marriages cannot leave the Comoros because of their administrative responsibilities, such marriages often involved long and frequent separations. By 1900, when there had been Comorians resident in Zanzibar for 50 years, certain elders began to say that the expense and complexity of making ada marriages should be avoided by Comorians now committed to living in Zanzibar. The issue split them into violently opposed factions, the Yaminis and the Shamalis. Those who opposed ada marriage took an oath (yamin - right hand) that they would not make such marriages. They were younger, had had more

contact with European ideas, and had their own Zanzibar-related prestige. Their opponents, who felt that options should not be closed and that those who did not follow Ngazija's customs could not call themselves Comorians, formed a group called the Shamalis (left-handers). The issue was a lively one for many years, and several Yamanis found themselves constrained eventually to make ada marriages, but by the 1930s, Comorians born in Zanzibar were very unlikely to make an ada marriage, and very likely to marry wazalia like themselves. This represented a further shift away from a nexus of matrilateral commitment.

Whereas the key identifying qualities, for the status of the individual in Ngazija, were birth status (sharif, freeman or slave), and the level reached in the customary payment system leading to public office, in Zanzibar the criteria were birth status and economic achievement of a less specific kind.

Informants say that, as a result of all these factors, individual wazalia began to feel increasingly distanced from their Ngazija kin. One, summing up this social distance, explained, 'if a relative of my mother came to visit from Ngazija, I would get told off for saying "Your brother has come", rather than "my mjomba [MB] has come".'

1.1.2 The wageni

Among Ngazija-born wageni working in mainland East Africa an even greater shift away from matrilateral patterns was caused by the fact that they rarely married Comorian women there. Their children, if they wished to think of themselves as Comorian, could only do so in terms of a patrilateral link, which in the Comoros would normally have been insufficient. Some of these men, eager to give a particular child strong rights in Ngazija, bought land for them in the island, since they would otherwise have had none, or arranged a marriage for them with a Comoro-

born individual. Most children of wageni, in Kenya, however, were counted as Comorian among Comorians resident in Kenya, but would have been unwelcome, because propertyless, in Ngazija. They have opted, in the long term, for the identity of their matrikin, as their fathers probably expected them to.

1.2 The making of kinship claims

1.2.1 The jamaa

The ego-focussed kinship category known as the jamaa among Swahilis and Comorians is as extensive as the individual's personal knowledge. One's jamaa tends to get bigger as one gets older, and in the case of Comorians it may also extend to several different places.

The effective as opposed to the potential jamaa is however limited by fairly specific criteria: genealogical, geographical and social class distance. Kin who live geographically close and like each other count each other as close kin even if they are genealogically distant. Class too has come to play an important part in the selection of 'close' jamaa for the successful Zanzibar wazalia. One mzalia when I told him that I had met a classificatory mother's sister of his, brusquely rejected the woman's kinship claim made to me and said, 'You can't start calling everyone who is in your jamaa "kinsman" - there would be no end to it.' I suspect that this woman was rejected both because she was poor and because she lived in another town, although the second reason was the only one my informant volunteered. The reverse process can of course also happen:

Bi Lulu (1973)

When I asked Bi Lulu how she had come to know her friend in Mombasa Bi Momo, she explained it as follows. In 1973, her brother and Bi Momo's brother both attended a funeral in Zanzibar. They did not know each other, but an old man

at the graveside explained the rather distant bilateral links which joined them, saying, 'I don't suppose you two knew you were related'. As the two men talked, they discovered that each had a sister living in Mombasa, and they hastened to inform their sisters of the fact.

The two women have become very good friends, spending much time in one another's company. Though they explain the relationship in terms of kinship, it is notable that they are both middle-class, Zanzibar-born Comorian women somewhat isolated in Mombasa.

It is interesting that Swahilis and Comorians see nothing illegitimate in vague kinship claims. There is a verb kuhusiana meaning 'to be related somehow or another', which is frequently employed, and it seems that individuals are not especially interested in working out their precise genealogical relationship so long as they like one another and wish to uphold the idea of common kinship and can think of a kinsman who could work out the link for them if necessary. Such a lack of interest in specifics would be inconceivable in a lineage-based society, but it is only to be expected where a wide, shallow range of bilateral relationships are what counts.¹

1.2.2 Choice of identity

Swahili and Comorian brothers and sisters do not always select the same social identity for themselves. What happens it seems, is that women tend to follow the self-identification of their mothers and mother's mothers, while men followed that of their fathers and father's fathers. Comorians describing marriages in Ngazija would sometimes say, for instance, 'The husband was an Arab and the wife a Comorian.' It would then turn out, when a genealogy was taken, that each spouse had an equal

1 Djamour comments upon a similar vagueness among the bilateral Malays (1965: 102).

right to claim either identity. Women seemingly claimed primary membership of the maternal group which gave them important rights, while men claimed primary affiliation with the patriline.

It would seem, from the Kenyan Report on the Census of the Non-Native Population for 1948, that varying self-identification by men and women with genealogically identical origins had confused the results obtained for the category 'Arab' in Kenya. The Report comments, with some puzzlement, on the asymmetry of the Arab age-pyramid, with a predominance of males in all age-groups.

'The large preponderance of males in the ages over sixty was most unusual and might be accounted for by the small number of women who entered the territory many years ago. Although the heavy weighting of males in the higher age-groups might be due to the Arab male arriving in Kenya Colony and taking an African wife, this reason would not account for the large percentage of males in the earlier age-groups. It is difficult to discover why there were so many more males than females in the younger age-groups when the population has been resident in the colony for a long period of time.'

(Report: 40 para.85).

Evidently, while men had returned themselves as Arabs, women had given their identity as something else, presumably Swahili.

1.3 Bilaterality and burial

Burial in land owned by one's own kin - broadly defined - is important to Swahilis and Comorians, the belief that kin should live in proximity extending to burial. Burial is with matrilateral kin in Ngazija, and in the land of the descent group of one's father among Swahilis. Graveyards communally held by the Comorian Association were purchased in Zanzibar for Comorian burial, while in towns such as Mombasa a section of the

municipal cemetery was reserved for Comorians. While burial is not the central rite of Swahilis and Comorians as it is among the Merina (Bloch, 1971b), the place where a Comorian is buried is nevertheless of significance to his or her offspring, for an individual has the strongest claim to Comorian identity in the place where a cluster of his or her kin are buried. However, since Muslims do not send corpses on long journeys, it may happen that an individual who might have preferred to be buried in a particular place - for example, Ngazija - dies and is buried elsewhere.

Graves are more than a mere reminder of those who have died in a particular settlement; they come almost to personify kinsmen to descendants living nearby. A Mombasa Swahili told me wistfully that he would prefer to be buried in the ground of his matrilateral kin because he liked their company, but that his patrilateral kin would insist that he be buried with them. Similarly, a Comorian born in Zanzibar remembered how on his first visit to his mother's town of origin in Ngazija, his mother's brother had taken him to the plot of ground where his matrikin were buried as a first duty. He expected to have the graves of his kinsmen pointed out to him: instead his mother's brother pointed him out to them, explaining where he had come from, and whose child he was.

2.0 The choice of marriage partners

Marriage is important among Swahilis and Comorians because of the specific alliance contracted, and once children have been born to that marriage in a sense its task is performed, and it can be ended at any time. A woman's status can never be higher than it is at first marriage: any subsequent marriage must by definition be lower. The marriage potential of any of her children in the future finds its upward limit in their mother's status at first marriage. It is therefore supremely important

that a woman's first marriage be the best that can possibly be arranged for her.

For a man the situation may be reversed. If a man makes several marriages in his lifetime it is quite likely that as he gets older and his achievements accumulate, his marriage chances will be enhanced. However, the parents of a well-born son are eager for him to marry a similar woman as a first marriage.

There is a conflict between the desire of parents to see their daughters well-married, and their duty to marry children to those of siblings: normally a high kin-endogamy rate indicates substantial corporate property, and its absence produces low endogamy rates.

The ideal endogamous matches are those between the sons and daughters of a full brother and sister, with sister exchange taking place between the two coordinate sibling groups. But such marriages are not always demographically possible, or even desired, and Comorian parents say that in fact boys can make any marriage they like so long as they do not change their religion. Girls must have their marriages planned, though, because wanawake wanapoteza damu; wanaume wanaleta damu: 'women lose blood; men bring blood'. This appears to mean that the kingroup's marriage status, lifeblood which should be carefully conserved, might trickle away into unworthy channels if a woman makes an unsuitable marriage. Men on the other hand may bring useful new alliances to the kingroup.¹

1 Though women are clearly primary in the preservation of the status of their sibling group, Swahili and Comorian conception beliefs (the two areas appear to have very similar beliefs) do not give primacy to the woman's role in the creation of new individuals. As one might expect from bilateral societies, each parent is thought to make a contribution. Statements vary, but the following are typical: 'the child is of the father, from his sperm, but mixed with the juices of the mother'. 'If the man loves the woman more, the child will have his face, but if the woman loves the man more, it will have hers.'

A woman's marriage, therefore, should be planned to fulfil several criteria. The woman's birth rank (sharif, freeman, or slave) and class should be matched by that of her spouse even if he is not a kinsman, and in the case of Comorians, her sultanate of origin should also be the same as that of her husband. The following case shows that kinship cannot outweigh birthrank, in particular, should these come into conflict.

Bi Khadija and her daughter (1939)

A Comorian woman of slave origin living in Zanzibar had had a single daughter by a sharif husband, who had subsequently died. The mother was poor, and because she was unwilling to disgrace her daughter's sharifa status, she refused to marry her to any but a sharif. No suitors presented themselves, and the girl was still unmarried at thirty. People began to say anaoza (she is rotting) as they do of old maids. In desperation, the mother approached her sister, who had an unmarried son of a suitable age, and suggested the match. Although the man was only a messenger, Bi Khadija was delighted when he accepted.

However, the sharifs in Zanzibar were scandalised at the match between a sharifa and a man whose ascribed and achieved status was so low, even though it was a close kin-marriage. The town's kadis (who are always sharifs) refused to a man to perform the marriage. Bi Khadija approached the D.C., an Umani, who tried in vain to persuade the local kadi to solemnize the marriage: the kadi said he preferred to lose his job.

Bi Khadija then tried a more oblique approach. Her elderly mother had a friend who was the somo (confidante and sexual counsellor) of Sayyida Matuke, one of the wives of the Sultan, Sayyid Khalifa. Through this chain of women the Sultan was acquainted with the situation, and he ordered the Chief Kadi to perform the ceremony. 'Of course the woman must marry,' Sayyid Khalifa reputedly said.

Bi Khadija's daughter was married, though Zanzibar's sharifs organised gangs to beat up her husband after the wedding.

2.1 Wazalia

In fact as time went on in Zanzibar similar class became tacitly a more important criterion than birth rank, or sultanate of origin. Homogamy began to replace endogamy. The children of the elders who had at one time or another been presidents of the Comorian Association became an intermarrying group, for instance. Presidents were selected from among those with the most prestigious jobs, who tended to be descendants of the earliest settlers in Zanzibar, who lived in the oldest parts of Zanzibar town, and who were usually also wealthy. Just before the Second World War the top half dozen families of this kind began to practise sister-exchange as if they were closely related sibling groups rather than friends, of a similar class.¹ For the first time planned marriages, highly desirable to both sides, straddled sultanate boundaries.

Eligible persons, previously not related, were made into kin, and some of their children have repeated the pattern of sister-exchange marriage, though now, in so doing, they are reinforcing existing kinship alliances. Thus endogamous ranked subgroups began to emerge among Zanzibar's wazalia and were reinforced by subsequent marriages.

Failing sister-exchange, Zanzibar's wazalia said unatazama mlango, 'you look at the doorway', i.e. you look at the immediate kin of the possible spouse for your child, checking for slave origins, good marriages previously made by siblings, and educational level. Sultanate of origin had become of lesser importance than these factors.

Among Shafi'i muslims the concept of kafa'a - marrying a woman to her social and genealogical equal or superior - has a semi-religious importance. Some Comorian women made hypergamous marriages which took

1 Cohen (1965) describes something similar among the Arab notables of the Triangle villages in Israel, who turned from in-hamula marriage to marriage across hamula-lines with those of similar class.

them outside the Comorian category, with Hadrami sharifs or, very occasionally, with Umanis born in Zanzibar. (The children of these marriages were invariably regarded as Comorians, and thought of themselves in the same way.) While such marriages were regarded as individually suitable for the girl concerned, Comorians thinking generally about ideal marriage patterns for their group tended to feel strongly that women should be given only to groups from which women could be taken. At the back of their minds was their concept of the rank of the Comorian wazalia as a whole against that of other groups in Zanzibar. To be a group who gave too many women upwards was to resemble too closely the position of non-Muslim Africans, who were wife-givers to Muslims, but never received wives from them. In fact, such women as were lost to the Comorian wazalia through hypergamous marriages were amply compensated for by the steady drift of Ngazija-born girls brought to Zanzibar for marriage with successful male kinsmen or co-sultanate members.

It continued to be important for Zanzibar wazalia even if they had no intention of ever making an ada marriage in Ngazija, to make a marriage with a well-born never-before-married Comorian girl in Zanzibar. The wazalia elite were often in a position to make this their sons' first and only marriage. Other Comorian men might not be in a position to make such a marriage until they were older and so had previous insignificant marriages, often with non-Comorian women. The point of making such a marriage was to insure that one's children were provided with the full potential for matrilineal Comorian identity.

2.2 Wageni

The Ngazija-born wageni had more complex problems to solve through marriage than did the wazalia. They left Ngazija eager to return eventually but planned to spend many years working in East Africa.

They tended to make several marriages in East Africa concurrently (or serially) as they moved from place to place, but had also to plan for an ada marriage in Ngazija at some stage. At times, a migrant made a marriage in Ngazija with the woman who would be his ada wife some years before he could afford the full ceremony, converting the marriage upwards at a later stage. Sometimes he made his ada marriage, but continued to work in East Africa afterwards to pay off accumulated debts. Such an arrangement meant that the individual migrant was able to pursue his interests simultaneously in at least two places at once.

Such a pattern appears to long predate the era of migrant labouring and to have been adapted from the practises of muslim traders in the precolonial period, when seamen would establish wives and households in several of the ports they sailed between.¹ One of my informants in Mombasa was a Bajuni woman whose husband was a Comorian resident in Nzwani who made business trips to Mombasa no more than twice a year, but who had married her expressly so that he could stay with a wife rather than in a hotel while abroad. He made no financial contribution to the household except when he was resident in it, had no children by this wife, and his primary wife was in Nzwani. He said that he felt it was more honourable to trade from the basis of a household than to stay in a hotel and be tempted by prostitutes.

1 'If he (the Arab navigator) tells you he has a wife in Muscat and another in Zanzibar, these different households cost him little or nothing to maintain; they are for him a kind of hotel where he pays, when he is there, for his board and lodging; his wives do business ... and thereby contribute to their expenses during their husbands' voyages. In addition to the domestic advantage of such pieds a terre the husbands thereby have access to a series of houses which are ready-made storage points where unsold ... merchandise can be kept.'

Gullain, quoting Loarer's Report (1956, vol.III: 364). Land-based Swahili traders living on the coast but trading with African traders from upcountry, would also have both Swahili wives and African wives from the group they traded with, so that they were trading with affines (Guillain, 1856, vol.III: 373-375). As Prins points out (1967: 91) such multiple marriages serve to promote uxorilocality,

The marriage strategies of Comorian wageni changed slightly over the period 1920-1960. Initially young Comorian migrants took a wife from Ngazija to Zanzibar with them. Such wives were never ada-marriage wives, but mna daho (little, unimportant) wives. A little later it was more usual to go as a single man to Zanzibar, make what was effectively a mna daho marriage with a Comorian woman encountered there, and then if employment opportunities took him to the East African mainland, he would migrate alone, spending only periods of leave in Zanzibar. Although one or two such wives accompanied their husbands to Kenya, it was unusual. They preferred to be among numerous other Comorian women in Zanzibar, on the whole. Later still, when employment niches for Comorians were well established on the mainland, Comorians would migrate directly there from Ngazija and make marriages with Swahili or African wives.

Mlamali Sa'id (1925 onwards)

Mlamali came to Zanzibar at the age of 16, in 1925, and shortly afterwards married a Comorian wife he met there. Some years later he married a second, Zanzibari Swahili, wife but she had two children in two years and he hastily divorced her because of her high fertility. In about 1935 he went to Nairobi to work, and married a Muslim Kikuyu woman. This marriage, which produced no children, lasted until 1974, when I met him in the process of making a final return to Ngazija to make an ada marriage to a girl of 22. I subsequently heard that he was unable to bear life in Ngazija, and two years later returned to Nairobi to live out the rest of his life with his Kikuyu wife.

It is interesting to observe that Comorian wageni making marriages in mainland East Africa avoided marriages with absolute strangers when they could. If it was possible to build on marriages of earlier migrants, they did so. For example, the sister of an African woman already married to a Comorian mgeni would be selected, and at times it was possible to marry a woman who was already a kinswoman. Several Comorian men were

first found employment in Kenya by older mother's brothers who had married African women some years earlier. Such a mother's brother, if he had an old enough daughter, encouraged his sister's son to marry her on arrival: the old ideal in a new context. One migrant, describing such marriages to me, called them marriages which "return a woman to her kin".

Several marriages appear to have been contracted on the basis of British 'racial' characterisations of ethnic categories in Kenya. Among those regarded as 'non-natives' in Kenya were Comorians, Asians, Goans, and Somalis. While marriage with Muslim Indians had occurred earlier in Zanzibar, the marriages which several Comorians contracted with Somalis and Goans seem somewhat curious at first sight. However, since Comorians, Goans and Somalis, as 'non-natives', tended to work in the same employment niche, as club stewards, barmen, and head houseboys, the circumstances which brought them together inclined them to see one another as equals in rank. A few Goan girls converted to Islam and were given by their fathers to Comorians. Somalis and Comorians were, of course, fellow Muslims.

For non-Comorians, marriage with Comorians has been seen as desirable by various groups, as the marriage analysis which follows will show. During the colonial period an African girl who married a Comorian gained desirable access to certain things only allowed those of Asian status. Islamisation was in any case usually regarded as a move up the social scale. For these reasons, African girls who married Comorians were usually delighted to do so.¹

1 The Africans married by Comorians were 'those who islamised easily' - Kikuyu, Kamba and Nandi. Professor Jean LaFontaine has pointed out that tribes which already practise circumcision are much more likely to allow their women to marry muslims than those which do not.

Those Comorian wageni who married coastal muslim girls were usually unable to find wives from among the Mombasa elite: the Twelve Clans. Instead, they tended to marry women of Bajuni origin (from the remoter parts of the Lamu archipelago) who had already migrated to Mombasa or Nairobi.

The dower (mahari) was low for both Bajuni and African women,

2.3 A statistical picture of marriage partners chosen by Comorian wageni and wazalia living in Kenya

The information on which Table 13 is based was collected in 1973/1974, but all the marriages used in the sample were in existence by 1970. The data are selected on that criterion and are in no sense random: they represent merely marriages where I knew the partners. There is therefore no significance in the numbers of a marriage where a partner was born in one or another of the places categorised. However, the table does confirm very satisfactorily the impressionistic material so far presented on the correlation between likely choice of marriage partner and place of birth.

Table 13 documents 125 marriages between 98 men and 125 women¹ in which one or two partners categorised themselves as Comorian (WaNgazija). Of the 125 marriages, 60 (48%) are endogamous to the broad category 'Comorian' and 102 (81.6%) are endogamous to the category Swahili-Comorian. Women were more likely to be married endogamously to the category 'Comorian' than men, however. There are only 17 marriages between a Comorian woman and a non-Comorian man (13.6% of the sample), while there are 48 marriages between a Comorian man and a non-Comorian woman (38.4% of the sample).

¹ Of these men, 79 were monogamous, 12 had 2 wives, 6 had 3 wives and 1 had 4 wives. All the polygynists were Comorians, and such marriages represent 19.4% - almost a fifth - of the total sample.

Table 13: Marriage preferences of spouses in 125 Kenya-based marriages in which at least one partner is Comorian

		W O M E N							
		Comoro -born Com.	Zanz -born Com.	Kenya -born Com.	Kenya -born Swa.	Zanz -born Swa.	'Non- Native' women ¹	African	Total husbands
M E N	Comoro -born Com.	73.6 14 24.5	18.1 6 10.5	44 11 19.3	9 9 15.8	3 3 5.3	5 5 8.8	9 9 15.8	57 57 100
	Zanz -born Com.	5.3 1 2.7	66.7 22 59.5	4 1 2.7	7 7 18.9	3 3 8.1	3 3 8.1	0 0 0	37 37 100
	Kenya -born Com.	5.3 1 7.1	6.1 2 14.3	8 2 14.3	8 8 57.2	0 0 0	1 1 7.1	0 0 0	14 14 100
	Kenya -born Swa.	10.5 2	3.0 1	24 6	- -	- -	- -	- -	9 9
	Zanz -born Swa.	5.3 1	6.1 2	0 0	- -	- -	- -	- -	3 3
	'Non- Native' men ²	0 0	0 0	20 5	- -	- -	- -	- -	5 5
	African	0 0	0 0	0 0	- -	- -	- -	- -	0 0
	Total wives	100 19	100 33	100 25	24 24	6 6	9 9	9 9	

Data not provided in cases where neither partner is Comorian.

Abbreviations: Com - Comorian, Swa - Swahili

Notes: 1. 'Non-Native' women (Goans, Ethiopians, Somalis, Afro-Indians)

2. 'Non-Native' men (Muslim Indians)

There is least outmarriage among Zanzibar-born Comorian men and women (35% and 9% respectively); a middling outmarriage rate among Comoro-born Comorian men and women (46% and 16% respectively); and a high outmarriage rate among Kenya-born Comorian men and women (64% and 44% respectively).

In fact, it is clear that Kenya-born Comorian men are not so much failing to marry endogamously to the Comorian category as choosing to marry endogamously to the local Swahili category. Since 44% of their sisters are being taken in marriage by Comoro-born men, and another 44% by Kenya Swahilis and Indians, it is arguable that they are failing to make marriages endogamous to the Comorian category because it is too difficult to find a woman available in that category, however. Whatever the reason, the result is that, among second-generation Comorians in Kenya, marriage figures suggest that women are marrying back into the category 'Comorian' more than men, probably because their fathers arrange such marriages for them.

Careful study of Table 13 sheds a good deal of light on the marriage preferences (or options) of various categories of Comorian.

It becomes clear that Comoro-born and Zanzibar-born individuals place a very high value on endogamy to their own category.

If Zanzibar-born men fail to marry within this category, they turn to (middle-class) Kenyan or Zanzibari Swahilis, or to 'non-native' women, rather than to the generally poorer Comorian women of other categories. However, despite the tendency for class to outweigh ethnic identity once the boundary of their own immediate group is crossed, 64.9% have still married endogamously to the category Comorian.

Comoro-born men who do not marry a woman of their own category turn first to Kenya-born Comorian women and then to Kenya Swahilis and Africans. They are the only category of Comorian men or women

prepared to marry Africans.¹ Only 54.3% of them have made a marriage to a Comorian woman of any kind, in this sample.

Kenya-born Comorian men, it has been noted, mainly marry Swahili women. But, since their second, third and fourth choices are various categories of Comorian women, it is arguable that Swahili women are married faute de mieux. Only 35.7% of the sample here have managed to make a marriage with a Comorian woman.

Zanzibar-born Comorian women marry their own category for preference, Comoro-born men next, and Kenya-born Comorian men as a third choice. Over 90% of their marriages are endogamous to the category 'Comorian'.

Comoro-born women also have a high preference for marriage within their own category, followed by a more or less equal readiness, it seems from this sample, to marry various other categories of Comorian or Swahili men. In aggregate, 84.2% of their marriages are within the category 'Comorian' however.

Kenya-born Comorian women are more married to Comoro-born men than to any other category, but they stand only about a 50:50 chance (56%) of marrying a Comorian of any kind; the next greatest likelihood is that they will marry a Kenya Swahili.

3.0 Divorce

As we have seen, the divorce rate in East Africa and the Comoros tended to be high. Among Comorians in East Africa, my data are more impressionistic, but it was very clear that divorce was relatively rare

1 Their readiness to do so should be taken in the context of their aim of ada marriage in Ngazija, however. In their own eyes, they are looking in East Africa for a mna daho (little house) wife who is ultimately regarded as temporary, though she may turn out not to be.

among the wazalia elite in Zanzibar¹ and more common among wageni in Kenya. Divorce rates thus closely matched polygyny rates.

This tended to come about because the marriages of the wazalia elite were important to all parties, while marriages among migrant wageni frequently served only a temporary function and had no alliance or property implications. Since polygyny was the norm among wageni but wives were almost invariably in different towns, or even different countries, it follows that any individual wife was likely to be without her husband for long periods. Sexual infidelity was virtually expected in such circumstances, and was indeed commonly joked about. A proverb for instance runs as follows: "Chelewa chelewa kuta mtoto si wako" ("If you stay away too long you'll find a child who is not yours in the household.") A migrant in Kenya who already had an ada wife in Ngazija might learn to his chagrin that she was pregnant, even though it was months or years since he had been home himself. Such situations would be joked about too. I was once told, tongue in cheek, 'Yes, Comorians have such a command of Islamic magic that they can project their sperm through time and space....'

Women left alone in this way are expected to avoid having illegitimate children, even if they are sexually unfaithful. If such a wife is young, and tired of marriage to an absent husband, however suitable the match may originally have been, she may eventually beg her father to help her obtain a divorce. A potential new husband is not hard to find for a young girl, and once there is a possible suitor, the father may write to

1 One of the few divorces among wazalia of this class that I heard of was the divorce of a woman who had proved to be infertile after some years of marriage. Her kin were much angered by the divorce, which placed great strain on the hitherto close social relations they and her husband had been accustomed to. They felt that he should have taken a second wife without divorcing and ceasing to support his first.

his daughter's husband saying "I have received an offer of marriage for my daughter. What would you like to do about it," Upon this, the husband is more or less duty-bound to divorce her unless he can take her to live with him or come back to live with her. It is only older wives unlikely to be able to remarry who accept the disadvantages of an almost permanently absent husband, because of the concept of stara ('modesty'). It is more modest and respectable to be married than divorced, even if one is a sexually unfaithful wife.

Again, this pattern is not a new one. The low sexual fidelity of Swahili wives was remarked on by many European visitors in the nineteenth century (Guillain, 1856, Vol.II: 248; Burton, 1872, Vol.I: 419; Greffulhe, 1878: 212) and is analysed by Tanner (1962). Men who must work away from their homes and in other towns and who leave their wives in charge can expect nothing else.¹

Although divorce is rarer among those making highly endogamous, homogamous marriages, and commoner among those who do not, the structural implications of divorce have an underlying similarity in both cases. By Swahili/Comorian custom the rights of children to count their descent from both mother's and father's descent groups were not weakened by divorce. Although in practice a divorce almost invariably caused children to feel a greater personal affection for and involvement with matrilineal kin since it was usual to stay with the mother after divorce, these sentiments did not formally weaken their rights in their father's kin groups. The parents' separate and equal rights in the children continued beyond divorce and incidentally make it clear that in a Swahili/Comorian marriage a man acquires rights only in uxorem

1 Their husbands blame themselves, not their wives, for such infidelities.

and not in genetricem. His position as a father is thus not indissolubly linked to his position as a husband.

In the case of the offspring of a Comorian father and a non-Comorian mother in Kenya, children frequently continued to claim the Comorian public identity bestowed by a departed father because of its prestige during a colonial period. This did not necessarily imply a wish for greater involvement with patrilateral kin however.

Maimuna (1938 onwards)

Maimuna's father married her mother (who was his Nandi/Comorian MBD) in Nairobi, in 1938. By 1940 he had divorced her and gone to work in Jinja in Uganda. There he married a Ganda/Comorian woman. Maimuna was invited for holidays to Jinja from time to time, but she was hostile to her father because she sensed her mother's anger about the divorce. On a trip to Uganda when she was about 16, she met and fell in love with a Nkole/Shi'a Indian, Juma. At this point, her father suddenly announced his plan to organise an ada marriage for her in the Comoros, saying that he had already promised her to a Comorian friend working in Kenya.¹ She was furious, eloped with Juma, and has remained happily married to him ever since. She has scarcely seen her father since this time, and had no wish to go and live in Ngazija, 'so far from my mother', as she put it.

Despite this history she has always clung passionately to self-identification as a Comorian, and her primary network of friends in Mombasa is composed of those who similarly identify themselves.

Not only may the divorce of their parents be no disadvantage to the children, it may even provide them with greater opportunities over time, through their parents' subsequent marriages. This is particularly so in the case of children whose mother is divorced when she is still relatively young and so are they, because a subsequent marriage may provide them

1 Many years later, she encountered this Comorian in the streets of Mombasa. He was slightly drunk, tried to hit her and insult her, and kept saying, 'Your father promised you to me, and you married an Indian.'

with a stepfather who brings them up almost as his own children. They may thus acquire affectionate pseudo-kin in a third descent group particularly if some of its members are close at hand.

Finally, there are only two important attitudes to divorce. It is very important for a woman to lose her virginity to a worthy partner, preferably a kinsman, but, once she has done so, her divorce and subsequent remarriage to a partner of her choosing is not very reprehensible. Secondly, while divorce in the first three or four years of marriage is not regarded very adversely, men are strongly censured for divorcing a woman to whom they have been married for many years, and by whom they have had several children. Such men are regarded as weak and dishonourable for it is invariably a much younger wife who attracts them away.

4.0 The nature of the two Comorian wazalia categories in Kenya

There are two categories of Comorian wazalia in Kenya about whom something should be said. These are, on the one hand, the children of Comorian male migrants, of whom there were clusters in Mombasa and in Nairobi, and a few isolated individuals elsewhere in Kenya. On the other hand there was a rather specialised group in Lamu, who were mostly sharifs and who had settled as a result of the creation of the Lamu Mosque College, Riyadha, by the Comorian saint Habib Sualeh, who died in 1937. There were very few social or kinship links between these two sets of wazalia, and so they will be discussed separately. However, it is worth noting that the processes by which the two types of wazalia had become established in Kenya exactly replicated the way in which the original Zanzibar wazalia category had formed, and if external conditions had favoured it, each would have eventually become as tightly endogamous. The Lamu wazalia group, having been established earlier, exhibited

considerably more of the features of the Zanzibar group than did the other Kenya wazalia.

The Swahili-Comorian ideal of marriage with a kinsman or affine meant that in any economically or socially attractive centre, such as Lamu late in the nineteenth century, immigrants could attach themselves by marriage to a pre-existing nucleus and create an in-marrying group. Within a generation, a group of co-residential individuals with multiple kin and affinal links among themselves would be created.

Such a pattern, well-established in Lamu by the 1930s, was beginning to emerge in Mombasa in the 1950s. If Independence and much changed political realities had not intervened in Kenya, a similar group of Comorian wazalia would probably have emerged there.

4.1 The Mombasa wazalia

The process is easier to recognise in Mombasa than in Nairobi partly because it began earlier in the former city and partly because marriages made by Comorians in Mombasa were usually with coastal women, who were also bilateral in kinship organisation. In Nairobi, by contrast, Comorians married women who had come from predominantly patrilineal societies, and who in any case as townswomen were somewhat depaysées.

It seems to me that, in addition, the original nucleus of a group of wazalia is significant here. In Zanzibar, Mombasa and Lamu, the core marriages around which other Comorians sought to cluster were made by sharifs or other notable Comorian immigrants. Less important immigrants were able to follow their lead, through the sultanate membership they shared with them. In Nairobi, however, the process was rather different because all the Comorian immigrants were of similar insignificant status in Ngazija.

The core marriages around which the Mombasa wazalia group began to grow are those already detailed in Chapter 2. They were crucial for the early establishing of Comorians in Mombasa as a high-status group recognised by the town's Swahili elite (The Twelve Clans) as equals.¹

However, in Mombasa an integrated wazalia group did not finally emerge for several reasons.

There was no steady flow of Comorian women being brought to the town from Ngazija, as there was in Zanzibar, and as there had been, for a period, in Lamu. While a category such as the Zanzibar wazalia could sustain marriages by a few of its members with non-Comorians, the shortage of Comorian women in Kenya meant that large numbers of Mombasa wazalia were at best only half Comorian. To be a chotara, or hafkasti - to have parents of two distinct ethnic origins (neither KiSwahili word bears the pejorative load of 'half-caste' in English) - can offer all sorts of advantages; but an in-marrying group may not endure through time if formed entirely of such individuals.

A second problem was the small number of Comorians in Kenya, not only lower than the Zanzibar total, but also composed of individuals spread out in several towns instead of being clustered in one. Even if a Comorian were keen to marry a woman of partly Comorian origin, it might be almost impossible to find a suitable partner where he lived.

A further obstacle to the formation of a solidary wazalia community in Mombasa was the problem of class. In Zanzibar some lower class men had sisters who married hypergamously, and so affinal links were formed

1 It became customary for the Swahili elite on such occasions as weddings to extend them formal recognition as equals, as they already did to Baluchis and Hadrami Arabs. This was done at the moment when huge trays of meat and rice were served to men, by naming aloud the ethnic category for whom the tray was intended. The ceremony implied a sense of respect for and kindred with those named.

with upper class men. The ideology of intra-sultanate marriage sometimes compensated for a bride's lower class position. In Mombasa, by contrast, affinal links between upper class and lower class men could not usually be forged because there were so few Comorian women of any class being brought from Ngazija. In the absence of these women, sultanate membership was not a compensating factor, and each class of Comorian man tended to marry non-Comorian women of the same class.

Kenya-born Comorians of this type again did little to demonstrate their Comorian origins behaviourally, conforming to Mombasa Swahili norms in most things. They made no attempt to subdivide into small groups along sultanate (mji) lines as Comorians in Zanzibar did, for instance. But they were felt by the Swahilis to be distinct nevertheless, mainly because of the Mombasa Comorian Association, which had considerable local prestige.

The Association drew in people in the town with rather slight claims to being Comorian, simply because it had local status, in part derived from its link to the equivalent Association in Zanzibar and the Comorian wazalia there. One Mombasa-born individual, for instance, became interested in reactivating his claims to Comorian identity mainly because of a visit to Zanzibar.

Salim Muhammad Al-Kumry (Time: 1948 onwards)

Salim Muhammad was born in Mombasa to a Twelve Clans Swahili mother and a father of distant Comorian descent who was a shaikh from Lamu. In 1948, when he was in his mid-twenties, and training to be a shaikh himself, he, his two brothers and a friend went on a trip to Zanzibar. They were all keen football supporters and went to see the final of the East African Challenge Cup, the Gossage Cup; they had themselves been involved in earlier rounds of it. They seem to have gone with no clear idea where they would stay in Zanzibar town. After all, if the worst came to the worst, they could always sleep in a mosque. However, they happened upon the Comorian

Sports Club and there met a Club Committee member who was also a keen footballer, Ahmad Babu. He offered to put them up in a new house he had been having built, which was barely finished, and over the next few days they all became good friends. A correspondence grew up between them after the Mombasans had gone back home, and in time Ahmad Babu was invited back to Mombasa. Friendship was turned into affinity - its logical outcome in coastal thinking - when a marriage was arranged between Salim Muhammad's younger brother and a classificatory daughter of Ahmad Babu. Salim Muhammad's trip to Zanzibar seems to have greatly impressed him with the enviable position of Comorians there, their communal élan, and their Association's extensive property, and he set about joining the Comorians in Mombasa.

Since he was already a learned young man and was making a career in religious expertise, the Comorian Association had everything to gain, in its own eyes, from admitting him. He would lend lustre to their number, and enhance the reputation Comorians had already for devotion to Islam and knowledgeability about it. However, there had to be a concrete Comorian connection for a person to be admitted. Salim Muhammad knew that his FFF had gone from Ngaziya to Lamu in about 1820, and married a Bajuni woman there. The claim was a somewhat weak one, however, in Comorian eyes, since neither Salim Muhammad, nor his father (who was still alive in Mombasa) knew which sultanate their ancestor had come from: normally the first enquiry made by Comorian wageni. Thus no-one could check the claim. On the other hand, it was not very surprising that, over three generations, the sultanate had been forgotten in East Africa: no descendant of the original Comorian had apparently stressed his Comorian identity, until Salim Muhammad decided he wanted to.

Nevertheless, within a couple of years, Salim Muhammad had become Secretary of the Association, and became President shortly after. He added al-Kumry to his name ('the Comorian') as a lakab (Arab tribal surname).

4.2 Comorian wazalia in Lamu

Ngazija genealogies show that there were extended sharif lineages such as the Jamal-al-Lail, with members in the Lamu Archipelago and in the Comoro Islands from as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century (B.G. Martin, 1974: 367ff.). Towards the end of that century the head of the Jamal-al-Lail in East Africa left Pate (Lamu Archipelago) to settle in Ntsujini, on the west coast of Ngazija. He married and died there. Several of his sons became Islamic scholars, and one, Ali, found employment in Lamu. In 1866 Ali's brother's son Sualeh spent a holiday with him and liked Lamu so much that he insisted on returning the following year to begin his studies under his FB. By 1880 he had obtained his ijaza (licence) as a mosque teacher (El-Zein, 1974: 117-119).

Sualeh and Ali were not the only Comorians in Lamu in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the inter-sultanate wars which racked Ngazija throughout the century, captives from the losing side were at times sold into slavery. Comorians were renowned sailors and many of these captives were purchased by Lamu residents on trading trips to the Comoros to work on Lamu dhows subsequently. When sultans fought in Ngazija their private armies were composed of African slaves led by Comorian free men, and aristocrats. The slaves purchased by the WaAmu contained members of each of these categories, therefore. A descendant of Sualeh explained to me that when the Ngazija kin of the enslaved free men heard that they were in Lamu they raised money to purchase their freedom and set sail to rescue them. When they reached Lamu and went to the owners of the captives, and when the owners realised who their slaves were, they refused to take money for them, but freed them of their own goodwill. Many of these captives, in fact, had been given positions of trust and authority because they were obviously educated, and many opted to remain in Lamu as free men because they were tired

of the strife in Ngazija. Comorian women already married to WaAmu stayed on as free wives; freed Comorian men married locally available Comorian women, or brought wives from Ngazija in the course of trading voyages between the two centres. The Comorians built themselves their own mosque, and were among the first of the students of Sualeh, the young sharif who was to become Muslim East Africa's most renowned saint. He too chose wives from the Comorian women locally resident (El-Zein, 1974: 130). This group of Comorian sharifs, free men and slaves, tended towards endogamy from the first. Over time, contact with Comorians in Ngazija has ceased, except that between co-lineage members of the Jamal-al-Lail living in both places. Within Lamu itself, the group has maintained a very strong sense of distinct Comorian identity, though this is mainly related to the prestige of Habib Sualeh and that of the Mosque College, Riyadha¹ (in which his descendants teach), coupled with patterns of factionalism and endogamy in Lamu town. One of Sualeh's SSS told me 'I am a Mkenya first, a MwAmu second, and a MNgazija third.' For this group of Comorian wazalia then, being a Comorian has none of the political significance which it acquired for Comorians elsewhere in Kenya and Zanzibar. There are about a hundred adults in Lamu who think of themselves as Comorian by their own criteria, and another fifty in the nearby town of Mambroi - a faction of the Lamu group who moved there in the early 1940s after a dispute among Sualeh's descendants about the next head of the Mosque College.²

1 The Mosque College and its sharifs have been written about by Leinhardt (1959) and in an extended structural analysis by El-Zein (1974).

2 I made no attempt to study the Lamu-based Comorian wazalia. However, I visited Lamu three times during my fieldwork and had the chance to discuss with some of them their history, and the extent of their contact with other groups of Comorians in East Africa. In Mombasa, I knew one of Habib Sualeh's sons' sons, and his grown-up children, and was able to interview them intensively.

5.0 The importance of women

Until now, we have considered kinship and marriage predominantly from a male viewpoint, but, as the previous chapter has shown, both Swahili and Comorian kinship norms actually give women an important place, considering that this is a muslim society.

The same also holds true for Comorian women resident in East Africa, though their roles have been different. Taken away from the land which they cultivated and administered with and for their brothers in Ngazija, they have in many ways formally lost status. The opportunity to obtain income and to satisfy basic needs is no longer mediated through kinship as it was in the subsistence economy, but is now a matter of direct access to the labour market. Comorian women did not in the main participate in the labour market, and were thus denied one of the primary sources of male status. For women, as before, status still came from the successful arrangement of suitable marriages for their daughters, and from the competitive life-crises they organised, such as weddings and funerals. In these areas, women's activities were as economically calculated - in the broad sense of the word - as were men's. Women were the primary custodians of matters concerned with kinship and marriage, but men knew that, should the need arise, women would usually have kept primary kinship networks in good repair.

5.1 Female wazalia in Zanzibar

Zanzibar's female wazalia were the chief custodians of links with Nagzija. They maintained letter contact with kinswomen in their sultanate of origin; it was they who made a point of finding out who newly arrived Comorians in Zanzibar were, which sultanate they had come from, and what kin and affines they already had in Zanzibar. For this reason Comorian men in Zanzibar, until the 1940s, often tried to make a marriage with a

woman recently arrived from the Comoro Islands. They would marry back into their own sultanate of origin, knowing that through the woman their own rights in the sultanate would be re-activated. In the 1950s and 1960s such marriages became rarer, but the Comorian women in Zanzibar continued to stress the importance of knowledge of kin in Ngazija even though the men appeared to have lost interest. All the Comorian women in Zanzibar belonged to one of several clubs (vyama) each exclusively for members of one sultanate in Ngazija.¹ Sultanate of origin was always a matter of matrilateral ties in Ngazija, and recruitment to the clubs in Zanzibar worked on the same principle. Because of these clubs children grew up aware of their parents' sultanates: on festive occasions such as weddings, the sultanate(s) of the bride and groom were honoured by dancing groups from the vyama concerned, for example. Mothers, more than fathers, were the ones who took time to teach children the names and inter-relationships of ancestors.

Women in Ngazija, in considering the rights of all kin to the lands they had inherited, occasionally contacted kinswomen in Zanzibar to consult them. While no-one outside Ngazija inherits land in the sense that they may well it, and dispose of the proceeds, land rights are not extinguished for those living abroad as long as anyone in possession of the relevant genealogical information is still alive (C.B. Caplan, 1975: 19-20). Informants' statements seemed to suggest that when available subsistence land in Ngazija had to be shared out between large numbers of local residents, kin living in Zanzibar were not contacted. But when land was plentiful, or when a question of selling a piece of communally-owned land arose, then kinswomen in East Africa were informed.

1 There is more information on these in 6.2 below.

Mwana Esha (1960s)

A woman in Ngazija all of whose children were living or working in East Africa including even her ada daughter (formally forbidden to leave Ngazija) because her husband had wanted to take her to East Africa, wrote to each child in turn in an attempt to persuade someone to come and inherit the land from her since she believed she was at the point of death. Since none of her daughters would return she had to give the land to a non-matrilateral kinsman, or sell it, since she lacked sisters. Rather than sell it she was eventually able to persuade the children of one of her sons by a half-Somali, half-African wife to come and settle in Ngazija.

Bi Fedha (1974)

This case involves a woman born in Zanzibar whose mother had also been born there. Land rights descended unused from mother to daughter, who had no intention of taking them up either, since she was a trained nurse and had more opportunities for work in Zanzibar. She never married. When she was on her death-bed, she received a letter from male kinsmen in Ngazija asking her if she would give them permission to sell the land. Before agreeing, she had her mother's mother's sister's daughter's daughter's daughter who was living in Nairobi brought to her, and asked her whether she or any of her siblings would like the land kept for them. Only on receiving a negative answer from these last recognised matrilateral kin did she agree to the breaking up and sale of the land.

The contribution which women were able to make to the status of their kin group was by insuring that their daughters adhered to norms of conduct which did not lower the public regard in which the group was held. Unlike a man - who can improve his desirability as a marriage partner by his professional achievements - a woman's status at birth - the result of her father's rank and achievements, and her mother's rank and virtue - could at best be guarded and preserved until marriage.

Her marriage is thus part of a chain composed of the marriages of female kinsfolk before and after hers. It is for this reason that her status at puberty must not be lower than it was at birth. Comorian women guided their daughters through these dangerous years, and though they had the help of their male kin, the chief burden of responsibility fell upon them. Once the important transition from virtuous childhood to married adulthood had been successfully made, a girl's subsequent behaviour was of much less importance. (The polite word for the hymen is indeed kizingiti - threshold.) Thus it was common for an unmarried but nubile girl seen alone even for a moment to provoke the anxious comment "Mwanawale wa nani?" - 'Whose virgin is that?'. If the girl herself and her mother between them had made it possible for her to arrive at marriage with her status and virginity intact, both were rewarded by ceremonial payments made by the husband during the course of the wedding.

It was the mother's responsibility in Zanzibar to decide whether or not their children would need continued direct kinship links with Ngazija. One of them - ideally a daughter - had to make a marriage which would involve subsequent residence in the Comoros, if the sibling group as a whole was to obtain land rights there. Such a decision was in fact rarely made after the 1940s.

In East Africa the oldest sister of a sibling group was free from the special responsibilities of land allotment among the siblings which she had in Ngazija. But she seems to have continued to have a special role. After the death, or in the absence of her parents, she took over her mother's duty to make the best marital arrangements possible for the others, concerning herself not only with sisters' but also with brothers' marriages.

Bi Safia (1958)

A Zanzibar-born Comorian man was living in Kenya and had already made a marriage to a Somali woman with whom he was happy. His dada (oldest sister) kept writing to him from Zanzibar telling him it was time to make a marriage with a Comorian woman. He would write back saying he didn't want to and couldn't afford to. She would reply that she would pay the dower if that was the problem. Eventually he explained to his Somali wife that he might have to marry a Comorian and she agreed. Some time later a mother, father and daughter, friends of his sister, he was told, were sent to Mombasa to stay with him for a holiday. He fell for the girl, suggested marriage to her and she told him to talk to her parents. When everything was fixed, he belatedly realised that his sister had arranged the whole thing. The match was a highly suitable one, the partners being matched evenly even in the fact that each had had a sharifa mother and a non-sharif father. In the end, he and his sister paid half the dower (mahari) each: £50 in all.

It was the oldest sister, too, who took responsibility for the correct rearing of younger brothers and sisters. If there were many, each older sibling would take special responsibility for one younger sibling of the same sex, supporting him or her morally and financially until married or professionally launched.

However inconvenient to her, it might also be the oldest sister who had to go back to Ngazija to take on land responsibilities, if the circumstances were such that one sibling had to go.

A sister, seeing that she and one of her brothers had children who would ultimately be of suitable ages to be marriage partners, would be the one to approach her brother with the suggestion, and would do her best to make sure that the children knew and liked one another long before puberty. 'Oh, yes! Salma is a long-term planner,' said one Comorian mzalia in East Africa to me in English, laughing, as he explained the intentions of his sister to me. And a Comorian woman, explaining the

rules of the endogamous marriage ideal to me, said proudly, 'Tunaoana kwa mlango, hatuoani vivi hivi' ('We marry systematically - we don't marry any old how').

A Comorian mzalia woman explained to me that in a Comorian sibling group in East Africa the sisters form the main members of the group to a greater extent, she felt, than was the case in Swahili families. In her opinion the brothers were 'tacked on' as it were to an inner circle of sisters. This became more evident as the group grew older. Sisters would help one another's children more readily than they would those of brothers. It is certainly true that Comorian sisters frequently raised children for one another.

5.2 Comorian wageni

It should by now be evident how much of a disadvantage the Comorian wageni were at by comparison with the Zanzibar wazalia, because of their lack of fully Comorian women. For the children of wageni, identification as a Comorian patrilaterally was useful politically in the colonial period, but was one-dimensional when unsupported by all the activities of Comorian women which made up being Comorian in the fullest sense. Although there were a handful of Comoro-born and Zanzibar-born Comorian women in Kenya, they were never able or never at any rate tried to establish even nominal sultanate vyama, for instance. This meant that, while Comoro-born men of course knew where their origins were, their children frequently did not. On the whole the children of wageni also seemed vague, when questioned, about Ngazija's matrilateral focus. To some, my description of land inheritance patterns in Ngazija was a genuine shock. A Mombasa-born woman, for instance, daughter of a local Swahili woman and a Comorian born in Ngazija and reared in Zanzibar, who had gone to Mombasa and married in the 1940s, told me innocently

how unfair it was that her father's sister's children (who had been reared in Zanzibar and whom she had frequently visited) had just inherited considerable property in Ngazija. 'Hawaturaliki' ('they do not invite us to inherit') she commented bitterly. Since she was only familiar with Swahili inheritance norms, to her brothers' children should have had better rights than sisters' children to houses and land. She was amazed when I explained why she had not been able to inherit.

Since access to Ngazija for the children of wageni had to be through their fathers, the likelihood of their being incorporated into their father's kingroup there depended on paternal whim rather than hard-and-fast rights. It occasionally happened that a Comoro-born man, although he would be reluctant to take his African wife to Ngazija, would have reasons for helping some of his children become Comorian in a fuller sense. A mgeni I knew, for instance, had had only daughters in two marriages to Comoro-born women, and his first son was born to his African wife. In these unusual circumstances, he was determined at all costs to take the boy to Ngazija with him, and did so when he retired. Another example is that of a Comorian who had a son by a Goan woman in Nairobi. The boy did well at school, and his father helped him to become a successful entrepreneur, first travelling between Kenya and Ngazija, and finally settling in Ngazija. In the case of Maimuna (p.237 above), the father was eager to establish his daughter in Ngazija for two reasons: he had promised her to a man to whom he had obligations, and, having already made his own ada marriage, he was eager to move into the higher age-grade of those with a daughter or son married customarily. Maimuna was his oldest child and would have given him this honour earliest. However, such examples involve considerable expense for the father, since he will usually have to buy such children land, or help them with a costly marriage.

The women to whom Comorian wageni have been married in Kenya have had their own commitment to kinship networks, of course, and such activities have a countervailing influence which may draw their children away from Comorian identity and into Swahili or inland tribal identity.

5.3 The kinship activities of older women

During fieldwork, I gradually became aware that Swahili and Comorian women, particularly those whose child-rearing activities were over, spent what seemed to me an enormous amount of time on protracted visits to kin all over East Africa. Sometimes they went for a specific event, such as a wedding or a funeral, though if they did they often stayed on for a month or more afterwards. Many of their visits, though, were, as they said, kutembea, a word which implies rather aimless, frivolous travel. I gradually realised that such women were the only contacts between disparate pockets of kin immobilised by the rearing of young children, or commitment to employment. Although none of these women suggested that their travels were carried out with the purpose of maintaining kinship networks, this was most certainly their result. Here are some examples of travel within a single year:

(1) A Mombasa-born Comorian woman spent three weeks with her father's sister in Zanzibar; three weeks at a funeral in Arusha; four weeks with her sister in Zanzibar; and three weeks with two brothers in Dar-es-Salaam.

(2) Another Mombasa-born Comorian woman spent two weeks at a funeral in Dodoma (Tanzania); two months with her father's sister's daughters in Zanzibar; and a month with her sister in Zanzibar.

(3) A woman born in Zanzibar and living in Mombasa went to Zanzibar for six months to look after her youngest siblings, while her parents went on the Haj to Mecca, and afterwards.

(4) A Nairobi-born Comorian woman living in Mombasa spent a month visiting her mother's sister's children in Kampala; six weeks with her daughter in Nairobi; three weeks with her son in Nairobi (on another occasion), and a week with another son in Tanzania (town unknown).

Women unable to travel because still rearing their children much enjoyed visits from women who were more mobile. Some entertained only relatively close kin, but others were known to enjoy entertaining and were visited by an enormous range of people. Examples of the former kind of kinship visiting are as follows, for a period of one year:

(1) A half-African Comorian woman born in Nairobi and living in Mombasa entertained two of her sisters from Broderick Falls for a total of six months, and her husband's brother from Zanzibar for two weeks.

(2) A Zanzibar-born Comorian woman living in Mombasa entertained her husband's mother from Zanzibar for a month; her own mother from Zanzibar for two months; her sister from Zanzibar for a week; her brother from Dar-es-Salaam for two weeks; and her husband's friend from Nairobi for a week.

(3) A Mombasa-born Comorian woman in Nairobi entertained her husband's mother from Dar-es-Salaam for five weeks; and her mother from Mombasa for two months.

(4) A Nairobi-born Comorian woman with a Comorian/African mother entertained her mother from Nairobi on three occasions totalling over three months; a father's brother's son from Majunga in north-west Madagascar for three weeks; two Comorian friends of her father from Ngazija, each for a week.

When women started entertaining non-kin, they certainly did so because they enjoyed the social contact it brought, enjoyed being well-known, and enjoyed the complex knowledge of links among Comorians in East Africa which it brought them. Such visiting to other households enabled the visitor, too, to renew her kin and affinal acquaintanceships, and to

catch up on news of Comorian non-relatives in the town visited - the marriages planned, the scandals afoot, the deaths and the changes of employment.

Two women, though, went far beyond this. Both lived in Mombasa, which as a boat, rail, and airline interchange point saw much coming and going of travellers. The first tended to entertain Comorian wazalia from Zanzibar among whom she had kin. She estimated that she had had fifty visitors over the previous year, 'jamaa na marafiki' (ego-focussed kin and friends) and a few Comorian visitors from Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam, and Ngazija. A middle-aged widow with no children, she had time to spend in this way and enjoyed her prestige among Comorians living in Zanzibar.

The other woman was one of the few Comoro-born women in Mombasa. She and her mgeni husband were middle-aged, and were unlikely to return to the Comoros: she was only her husband's mna daho wife and her husband had insufficient wealth to return and make an ada marriage. They had lived in Kenya for many years. The French Embassy regarded him as one of the spokesmen for Comorian wageni in Kenya and he was also a powerful - and some said malign - Muslim astrologer. Comoro Islanders coming to Mombasa with no kin contacts there would be told in Ngazija to ask to be taken to her husband. Reputedly, even the immigration officials at Mombasa Airport would tell arriving Comorians how to find him: in any case he usually met the weekly plane. His wife, when I asked her how many people she had entertained over the last year, said that she thought it was about sixty, excluding kin from Zanzibar and Nairobi. But she said that there had been years in which she had entertained up to three times this number. I asked her whether she charged these stranger-guests. She said she did not, though men usually brought additional food from the market each day, and women helped her to cook. She said she enjoyed entertaining these large numbers because it helped

her maintain some links with her home island and because she enjoyed the importance it had brought her and her husband. The only period in which she had felt worn out by the work were in the days when most people from Ngazija making the Haj to Mecca made the journey by boat, stopping in Mombasa on the way. In those days she sometimes looked after thirty people at a time and was exhausted with cooking. Since the establishment of the Mombasa-Moroni plane service, people only arrived in twos and threes. As a result of her entertaining she was well informed about the fates of migrants who had returned home; about some of the marriages being made by the kin of those still in East Africa; and she had a more accurate picture of political life in Ngazija than many male Comorian wageni living in Kenya.

Women then were interested in personal relations, predominantly but not always those of kinship, and had time to spend on them in ways which men did not. Even small things which men could have done, such as writing letters and sending messages or gifts, were more frequently done by women, and I have several examples of women who maintained regular contact with Ngazija through such means, even though they had never been there in their lives. In these ways middle-aged women became kinship experts - elders who were specialists and repositories of important information - a role which, in the days before wage-labouring, men had usually taken upon themselves.

6.0 Fictive kinship

6.1 Neighbours

Among the Comorians resident in East Africa, as among Swahilis and the residents of Ngazija, residence is a vital component of kinship. Because of the preference for marriage within settlement or town quarter

of birth (mtaa), those who live near one another are regarded as potential kinsmen, and those who are reared within a particular cultural milieu are treated as if they were born there. KiSwahili proverbs current in East Africa stress the importance of neighbours: Kwanza jirani, halafu jamaa ('neighbours first, ego-focussed kin afterwards') for instance, expresses a duty towards neighbours which exceeds that towards those with whom kinship has already been established. (Cf. Bloch, 1971a: 79-87). Hala, hala jirani ('Hurry, hurry, to help your neighbour') expresses the same duty.

Among the Zanzibar wazalia neighbours were in most cases other Comorians, and the ethnic stratification of colonial Zanzibar society caused them to stress additionally the kin-like nature of these neighbours. In Mombasa, several of the Comorian wazalia from Zanzibar whom I came to know would describe their relationship to one another in kin-terms when talking to me, and the women, as kinswomen do, make a point of passing by one another's houses daily. When I came to establish the precise nature of the kin-relationship, it would turn out that they had been close neighbours, but not kin, in Zanzibar town. For instance, an elderly mosque teacher lived, as if he were a kinsman of the parental generation, with the Mombasa-based son of a friend and neighbour from Zanzibar days. And an unmarried man in his early twenties stayed in the house of a married woman fifteen years older than he was (a situation potentially lacking in propriety) on the basis of having known her as a neighbour in Zanzibar since babyhood, having been to school with her younger brother and knowing that his older sisters had been close friends with her.

6.2 Sultanate groups

The Comorian sultanate groups also blended the notion of kinship with that of residence, by reference, of course, not to local residence but to residence as it had been in Ngazija. The groups were called miji (sing. mji), which, as we saw for Mombasa's miji, means something between 'home area' and 'clan'. The sultanates themselves in Ngazija had been called ufaume, and the territory of each had been its ntsi (country). The Comorian miji in Zanzibar, then, were treating members of one sultanate as if, to use Ngazija's concepts, they were an inya (which of course they never could have been). Sultanate group endogamy was enjoined in the way inya endogamy was in Ngazija, and in every way the miji behaved as if they were kin-groups.

Sultanate membership in Ngazija was invariably matrilaterally calculated. Mji membership in Zanzibar was less fixed. Wazalia said that you could join whichever mji you preferred, mother's or father's, and that you would affiliate with the more powerful and active of the two.¹ In practice, though, affiliation with the mother's group seemed to be much more common, and this must have been partly because women were much more involved in mji matters. Each mji had its chama (club) composed of women who danced distinctive dances at sultanate weddings, and which had the special responsibility of collecting money from members for specific kinship purposes. Pooling of money to help at a marriage or funeral was the duty of close kin in Ngazija, but was taken on by the chama in Zanzibar: a familiar example of the replacement of a kin-group by a voluntary association in a migration context.

1 This statement shows how far Comorian kinship in Zanzibar had been modified by contrast with Ngazija. Comorian wazalia were not in doubt about which sultanates their mother and father had come from, but saw the mji in Zanzibar rather as a Swahili ukoo.

Men often exchanged gossip and discussed problems with others of the same mji, where they might well have done so with closer 'real' kinsmen in Ngazija, but generally, their commitment to the miji was more nominal than that of the women.

I discuss relationships between those of the same mji as the relationships of fictive kin, because that is how they begin. But it should be remembered that the ideal of endogamy would, if continuously followed, gradually turn the members of one mji into kin. As we have seen, in fact criteria other than mji endogamy gradually became more important among Zanzibar's Comorian wazalia as class and educational differences among them arose.

The sultanate group vis-a-vis other such groups and non-Comorians in Zanzibar protected the identity of ex-slave members to some extent. Slaves from a given sultanate in Ngazija would be socially completely incorporated in Zanzibar. Slave males could not marry the sultanate's free-born women but sultanate in-marriage between two ex-slaves would be celebrated as fully by the freeborn as by the slave members of the sultanate group. Such individuals would be referred to as watu wetu ('our own people') and though they could never be kinsmen of free-men, they were regarded in all contexts except marriage, as if they were. Wazalia remember growing up and being taught to call certain individuals 'babu' ('grandfather'), or 'bibi' ('grandmother'), and only learning on adulthood that these were courtesy titles to ex-slaves rather than kinship terms in the genealogical sense.

6.3 Fostering

The rearing of children by those who are not their biological parents is common among the Swahilis and became common among Comorians living in East Africa, as it was in Ngazija. Lienhardt (1968: 32)

points out that the Swahili practice of fostering and adoption strengthens the generation bond over lineality, and Jack and Esther Goody come to very much the same conclusions cross-culturally (J. and E. Goody, 1967; J. Goody, 1969).

It should be stressed that there is a very hazy line between fostering and adoption amongst Swahilis and Comorians in East Africa. There is only one term kulea 'to rear' for both English words, and even in the case of adopted illegitimate children (normally given away to strangers), I know of a situation where the natural mother takes a continued interest in the child, presenting herself to her as a distant matrilateral relative. The biological parents in the case of a legitimate child generally retain complete rights in their children, while at the same time making no formal payments for the child's upkeep beyond periodic gifts.¹ The term kulea thus stresses the action of rearing a child, not changed status for the child.

The commonest situation in which a child is reared outside its natal home sees it placed with a very close matrilateral kinswoman of its mother: the mother's mother, or the mother's sister. The child retains its proper genealogical place in its generation - the child's matrilateral ngugu (siblings broadly defined) consisting of all the children born to its mother and to its mother's siblings by its mother's mother. Although such children may have no idea until they are past puberty of their true kin relationship to the 'parents' they have lived with, they are taught, when they are old enough, their correct relationships to all concerned. In any case, as a Zanzibar mzalia explained to me, the children's children of one mother belong to all the children of

1 Bloch (1971b: 193-194) describes a rather similar situation among the bilateral Merina.

that mother; all have a duty to make sure that their common children are brought up as well as possible. The transfer of children is effected to help spread the burden of child-rearing, and children learn to accept affection and correction from a wider range of adults than their parents alone. Children are not expected to be upset when they are abruptly transferred to another kinswoman's household. A newly-married wife is often regarded as too young to rear her own children, and she is given a year or two of freedom to be no more than a devoted wife by having her first child or two taken and reared by her mother. Older women who have proved very fertile often give out some of their children for rearing by less fertile sisters.¹

Sometimes women who are more neighbours and friends than kin may lend or borrow children - either because their own households have a lack or superfluity of children at a useful age for errand-running, cooking and helping with younger children, or 'for the sake of friendliness'. Children are taught, in these situations, to use the kinship terms of address which would imply that such women were siblings. Wealthy men or women may find themselves being offered children by kin and neighbours, particularly if they are known for their generosity and kindness, and such people are thought of as earning particular favour with God and reward after death. The fostering period may range from a few crucial years to a period which extends from extreme youth to adulthood.²

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- 1 The problem of low fertility and its demographic implications among East African coast dwellers is discussed by Tanner and Roberts (1959-60).
 - 2 A slightly different situation is that in which a mother repeatedly miscarries, or repeatedly gives birth to children who die soon after birth. Eventually, it is supposed that she may have a shaitan (possessing spirit) and subsequent children are hastily given away so that they may have a chance to escape its malignancy. Individual children who fall ill and take a long time to recover, or who are born with a defect, are sometimes thought to stand a better chance with a relative other than their own mother, even if she has reared other children successfully. Djamour's material on adoption among the Malays of Singapore parallels this to a striking extent (1965: 92ff.)

Comorians in Zanzibar were frequently offered or asked to rear the children of kin in Ngazija so that these might have access to the Comorian school and ultimately to employment opportunities unavailable to them at home.

Moreover, because the Zanzibar Comorian wazalia were a prestigious group, certain non-Comorians tried to persuade Comorian households to foster children for them, knowing that it was likely that they would effectively grow up as Comorians. Several rural Zanzibar Swahili families managed to do this. Such children, reared among Comorians and fully acculturated by them, grew up virtually as full members of the host group in both their own and Comorian eyes.¹ The Comorian wazalia would speak of WaNgazija kwa damu na WaNgazija kwa wali ('Comorians by blood and Comorians by rice'), meaning those born and those reared into the Comorian category. Only when it came to marriage arrangements might problems arise.

Bi Fauzia (1930 onwards)

Bi Fauzia was born in a Hadimu family in Makunduchi in the south of Zanzibar, and reared by Comorians in Zanzibar town. She went to the Comorian school, was an enthusiastic participant in Comorian cultural life, and on reaching puberty was possessed by a mbuki spirit like her foster mother's, and joined the Comorian wabuki cult. She became a primary school teacher, and finally a headmistress. She hoped to marry a Comorian mzalia but, despite her high educational achievements, it was clear that she would only find a mgeni husband. She married a highly-educated Zanzibari Swahili like herself when she first married, and in later life contented herself with a marriage to a Comorian mgeni.

1 Wijeyewardene (1961) writing of Aleni and Tongoni on the Swahili coast, commented that among them, rearing was more important than birth. I would say it is almost as important, but the case of Bi Fauzia which follows shows that birth-status at time of marriage, for a woman, is more important than rearing.

7.0 Conclusion

This chapter has tried to throw some light on the workings of Comorian kinship and marriage in East Africa as it had evolved over the period up to 1970.

Although the end of the period of equilibrium was, formally speaking, 1963/64, the marriages being made and the kinship norms being adhered to did not of course abruptly change after that date. There was rather a gradual slide towards uncertainty about the future during the 1960s, especially for the Comorians living in Kenya rather than Zanzibar. My choice of the date 1970 is therefore a slightly arbitrary attempt to find a completion moment for a period which had run on beyond Independence in Kenya, but which had come to an end before I arrived in the field in June 1973.

Comorians living in East Africa had already made a series of modifications to the way they would have been living in Ngazija, as this chapter has shown. The way their cultural and social identity evolved in East Africa was, moreover, only partly in response to the socio-political framework of the colonial period. It was partly an adaptation to the norms of the Swahilis they found themselves living among - Comorian numbers in East Africa were, after all, always very small - and partly the logical outcome (in kinship terms) of a move away from land-based subsistence and into urban employment, association and education.

The distinctiveness which Comorians retained, vis-a-vis Swahilis, was slight perhaps to outside eyes, but clear-cut to both those categories. Particularly in the realm of the marriage hierarchy, it was established that the Comorian wazalia elite in Zanzibar topped all other coastal Swahili groups. Though they preferred endogamy, they could take women from the Swahili elite in Mombasa if they wished (The Twelve Clans)

for instance, The few Comorian women in the Zanzibar elite who did not marry endogamously to their category went to Arabs - Hadrami sharifs or Umanis. Comorian wageni could not take wives from the Swahili elite of such large towns as Mombasa, but, a little lower down the hierarchy, they were regarded as desirable marriage partners by Bajuni women and by islamised and urbanised African women. In such a situation, they were regarded as the elite group in the muslim locations of Nairobi, and in some of the immigrant mitaa of Mombasa. Their place in the marriage hierarchy summed up the individual and communal achievements of the Comorian category by the end of the period under discussion.

Section III: Employment, kinship and the potential for change

The decade between Independence for the East African countries and 1973, when fieldwork began, was one of increasing uncertainty about the future, and a gradual erosion of the benefits which had legally or informally been attached to Comorians' public identity.

This section examines the opportunities Comorians had for making a successful adaptation to new circumstances, and the courses of action they in fact took.

Chapter 5, Patterns of residence, household composition and employment among Comorians in Kenya, 1973/1974, looks, with the help of a statistical analysis, at the extent to which Comorians were 'becoming Swahili' - or had the option of so doing - as far as their lifestyles were concerned.

Chapter 6, Adaptation and change, investigates the conscious responses of Comorians to their circumstances, and demonstrates the adaptive quality of bilateral kinship patterns as they emerge from these responses.

CHAPTER 5PATTERNS OF RESIDENCE, HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION AND EMPLOYMENT AMONG
COMORIANS IN KENYA, 1973/19741.0 Limitations of the data

In this chapter, residence, household composition and employment are examined as they were at the time of fieldwork, as a means of investigating the extent to which Comorians remained a distinctive category, and the extent to which these important aspects of their daily lives already suggested a process of assimilation to the Swahili category.

In order to examine these topics, I use quantitative data about sixty-five households with Comorian household heads. The households were selected for inclusion because I had a sound knowledge of them, and although the sample was in no way randomly selected, the figures which emerge here strongly confirm the superficial impressions I had before I began to quantify the material. For comparison, data on twenty Swahili households have at times been used.¹

The sample of 'Comorian' households contains forty households based in Mombasa, and twenty-five based in Nairobi.² Contacts based

1 For simplicity, in this chapter, I sometimes talk about Comorian households and Swahili households, meaning that a household has a Comorian or Swahili household head. It is already very evident that inter-ethnic marriage has been a feature of Comorian residence in Kenya, and that the spouse of a household head may well assign herself or himself a different identity from that of the household head; however, I contend that quantitative data based on the identity of the household head only, yields important insights for the understanding of processes of Comorian adaptation and assimilation. I have identified these household heads as Swahilis or Comorians on the basis of their self-identification to me.

2 I spent about five and a half months of my eighteen-month fieldwork period in Nairobi.

on kinship, friendship and long knowledge exist among many Comorians in the two towns, and interaction between those based in the two towns is often as important as that between Comorians within one town. Many have worked in both places at different stages of their lives, and are equally at home in either. I decided to use information from two towns because it was the only way to present a good range of households including those with Zanzibar-born Comorian heads (mostly clustered in Nairobi), those with Swahili-Comorian heads (mostly in Mombasa) and those with Comoro-born heads (to be found in both towns).

No emphasis should be placed on the relative numbers of Zanzibar-born, Kenya-born and Comoro-born household heads. The data cannot be compared in that way because Zanzibar-born Comorian household heads are over-represented in the sample, and Comoro-born heads under-represented. Zanzibar-born Comorians were usually living legitimately in Kenya and had secure occupations, while Comoro-born Comorians were often living without work permits, in a state of indecision about the future and in some poverty. Pride and suspicion on their part made it hard for me to establish visiting relationships with as many Comorian households of this type as I would have liked.

The small 'control' Swahili sample is selected entirely from among the Swahili 'Twelve Clans', because I wanted to provide a clear-cut contrast between long-established residents of Mombasa and immigrant Comorians. However, a consequence of having made this selection is that those in the category selected tend to be in a better economic position than the average Swahili family as more vaguely defined.

Lastly, I have used percentages in tables, even where some of the actual numbers are too small to do so meaningfully, so that it is possible to compare categories. The gross details which emerge are of interest, but not too much emphasis should be placed on very small numbers.

2.0 Residence patterns

When calculating the composition of households during the fieldwork period, I have counted as visitors those whose stay in a particular household was less than six months, and as household members those whose stay was of longer duration. In the case of husbands who worked elsewhere, usually at sea, the total period of residence during an eighteen-month period did not always amount to six months. Here, if the husband's financial contributions continued in his absence, I have counted him as a household member. Those who owned, or paid the entire rent of, the accommodation in which their wives and children lived were counted as household heads, despite absence, too.

2.1 The place of birth and town of residence of household heads in the sample

Table 14 shows how, while the Swahili household heads come predominantly from Mombasa and other coastal towns within a hundred-mile radius, the Comorian household heads present a far more diverse picture. Nearly 70% were born outside the Comoros, in places as far apart as Uganda and Madagascar. In all, 90% of the Swahili sample and 23% of the Comorian sample of household heads were born in Kenya.

Table 14: Places of birth of Swahili and Comorian household heads

	<i>Swahilis</i>		<i>Comorians</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
born Mombasa	16	80	10	15.5
born Lamu	2	10	1	1.5
born Zanzibar	2	10	28	43.0
born Comoros	-	-	20	31.0
born upcountry Kenya	-	-	4	6.0
born Uganda	-	-	1	1.5
born Madagascar	-	-	1	1.5
	20	100%	65	100%

Table 15 enables us to look more closely at the birthplaces of Comorian household heads in Nairobi and Mombasa. It is evident that 32.5% - almost a third - of the Comorian sample in Mombasa were born in Kenya, the same being true of only 8% in Nairobi. Immigrants born in the Comoro Islands form a far bigger proportion of household heads in the Nairobi sample, also. The table closely reflects intuitive impressions of the composition of the Comorian categories in the two towns.

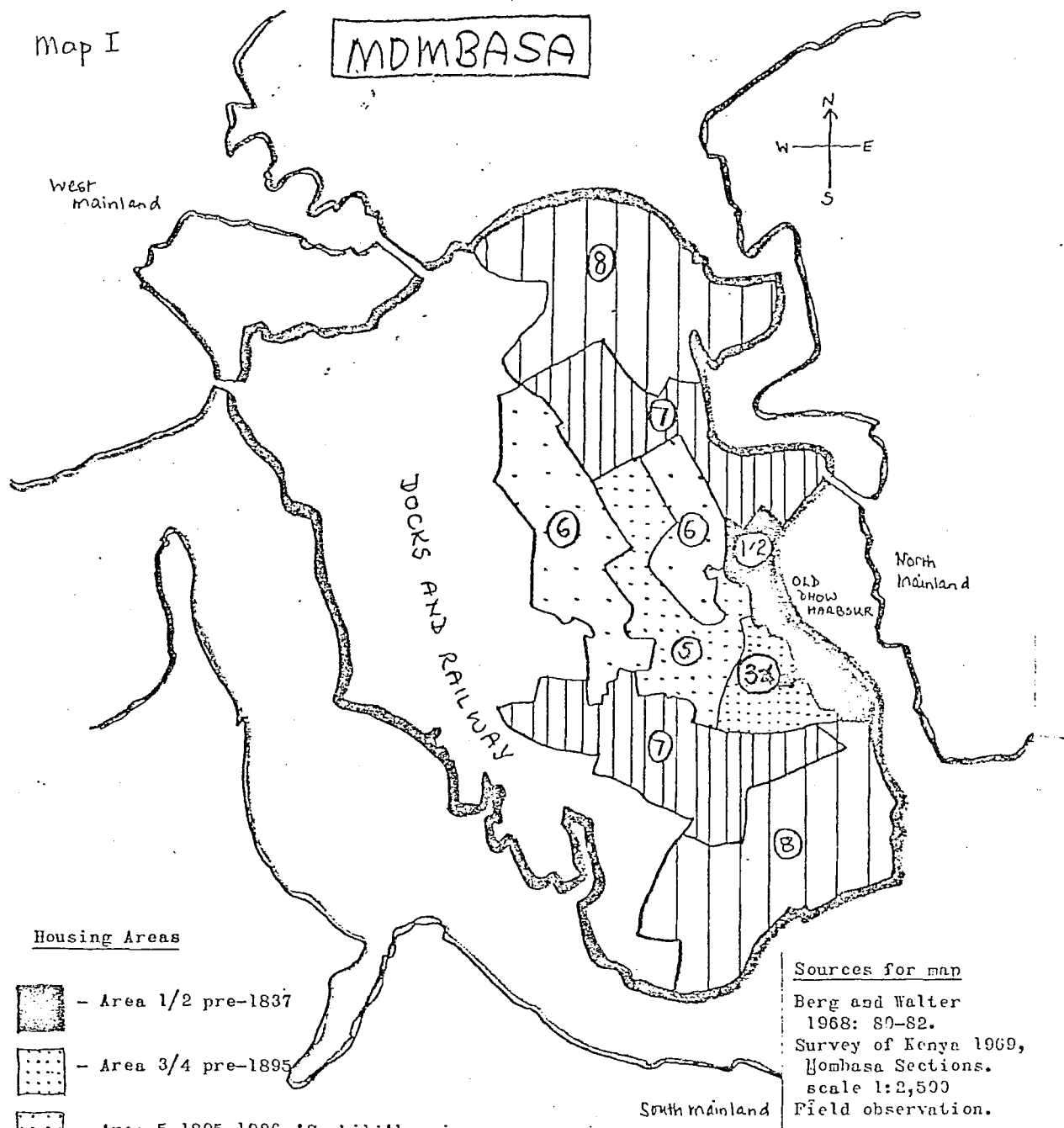
Table 15: Place of birth of Comorian household heads by residence in Nairobi or Mombasa

	<i>Nairobi</i>		<i>Mombasa</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
born in Mombasa	-	-	10	25
Lamu	-	-	1	2.5
Zanzibar	12	48	16	40
Comoros	10	40	10	25
upcountry Kenya	2	8	2	5
Uganda	-	-	1	2.5
Madagascar	1	4	-	-
	25	100%	40	100%







2.2 Residential areas

The following section deals with the location of Comorian households in Mombasa and Nairobi. There have never been exclusively or even predominantly Comorian quarters in either town (unlike those in Zanzibar town before 1963), but Comorian households have shown a tendency to cluster, the result partly of the colonial policy of racial segregation (especially marked in Nairobi) and partly of price and preference. Mombasa is dealt with first, using the Swahili sample as contrast to the Comorian, and Nairobi, in rather less detail, second.

Map I



Housing Areas

-  - Area 1/2 pre-1837
-  - Area 3/4 pre-1895
-  - Area 5 1895-1926 'Swahili' housing
-  - Area 6 post-1926 'Swahili' housing
-  - Area 7 post 1926 'Asian'-type concrete flats and villas
-  - Area 8 'European'-type housing built on large plots.

Sources for map

Berg and Walter
1968: 80-82.
Survey of Kenya 1969,
Mombasa Sections.
scale 1:2,500
Field observation.

Note: The map has been simplified so that predominant housing types and areas can be shown. There is actually some 'Asian'-type housing in areas 5 and 8.

2.2.1 Mombasa (Map 1)

In Map 1, areas in Mombasa have been classified by age and house type. The innermost part of Mombasa town, known as Old Town, is almost exclusively lived in by Mombasa's permanent, long-term residents, Arabs, Swahilis of the type found in the sample in this chapter, and Indians (both Muslim and Hindu). The oldest mosques (Berg and Walter, 1968: 47ff), the dhow-harbour, and the fine old two- and three-storey turkish-style houses are all found here. The close proximity of kin and neighbours who have known each other all their lives gives the area the village-like quality which can only be achieved by the gossip, intrigue and vigilance over communal morality of a face-to-face community.

The oldest part of the Old Town is area 1/2 on the map, built before 1837, and the rest, area 3/4, was all built up before 1895. Households in these areas living in old stone houses have been classified as 1 or 3; households living in mud-and-wattle 'Swahili'¹ houses, as 2 or 4.

Area 5 is made up of 'Swahili' housing added on to the Old Town, on what were then its outskirts, between 1895 and 1926. Some Old Town people moved out into the area, and it was where most of the migrants to Mombasa lived early in the colonial period. It was, at the time, looked on as a lawless area: the haunt of thieves and prostitutes, freed slaves and penniless immigrants. But, as time went by, Mombasa continued to expand westwards and southwards, and it acquired some of

1 'Swahili' housing has become the commonly-used term in Kenya for rectangular mud-and-wattle houses roofed with palm-thatch or corrugated iron. Such houses are extremely simple to construct and maintain and vary greatly in value since they are capable of much subsequent improvement by the addition of concrete floors, concreted and plastered walls etc. They are defined as 'temporary structures' by the Kenya Government, but many, through constant renewal, have stood for well over a hundred years in Mombasa.

the dignity of age. Area 5 dwellers are still mostly muslims, many have lived for most of their lives in Mombasa and know each other as well as Old Town folk do. It is still, however, an area with a fair proportion of very poor inhabitants.

Area 6 housing is newer Swahili housing, built after 1926, when Municipal rules first came into force requiring that houses be laid out systematically on a grid, and setting maximum densities. Area 6 is lived in by later arrivals in Mombasa, and thus contains a much higher proportion of upcountry Africans and non-muslims than areas 1-5. There is also a higher proportion of lone male migrants.

Area 7 dates from after 1926 too and is made up of what was regarded as 'Asian' housing before Kenya's Independence. There are blocks of small flats and medium-sized villas, built out of concrete and occupying larger plots of land than any of the housing in areas 1-6. Area 7 is found on what were salubrious outskirts of Mombasa in the 1930s and 1940s. Some old area-5 housing built on privately owned plots was pulled down in the 1950s and replaced by area 7-type housing, to which it was adjacent.

Finally, area 8 housing, pre-Independence 'European' housing, still remains the remotest on Mombasa Island, built in fine spacious gardens beyond area 7.

There seem to be two factors at work when the areas in which households are located are examined. Firstly, the cost, in rent or outright purchase, of housing in a given area. Second, the length of residence of the household in the town; newcomers may find the idea of living in the Old Town attractive but are unlikely to be able to rent or buy there. Rooms and houses do change hands from time to time, but usually advertisement of their availability is by word of mouth, so that they are more likely to go to kin or acquaintances already living in some

other part of Mombasa. Old Town prices for rent or purchase are widely variable, with 1 and 3 more expensive than 2 and 4. Areas 5 and 6 can be fairly cheap; areas 7 and 8 naturally become progressively more expensive.

Table 16: Swahili and Comorian areas of residence in Mombasa

	Areas	Swahilis		Comorians	
		No.	%	No.	%
Old town	(1	5	25	2	5
	(2	5	25	5	12.5
	(3	1	5	3	7.5
	(4	4	20	4	10
	5	1	5	15	37.5
	6	1	5	3	7.5
	7	3	15	5	12.5
	8	-	-	3	7.5
		20	100%	40	100%

This table shows that, in the sample, 75% of Swahili households and 35% of Comorian households are to be found in the Old Town. While this demonstrates that the kind of Swahili households selected are much more likely to be found in the Old Town than anywhere else, while Comorians are more likely to be found in the suburbs, it also shows what long-established and locally integrated immigrants the Comorians are. In fact the Old Town and area 5 together account for 72.5% of the Comorian households in the sample. This means that the typical dwelling areas of Swahili and Comorian households are directly contiguous and overlap to some extent.

Perhaps the most interesting fact in Table 16 is the spread of Comorian households it shows. There is a higher proportion of Comorian than Swahili households in both the poorest areas, 7 and 8. Table 17 investigates this further by establishing which Comorian household heads live where:

Table 17: Areas of residence of Comorian household heads in Mombasa,
by birthplace

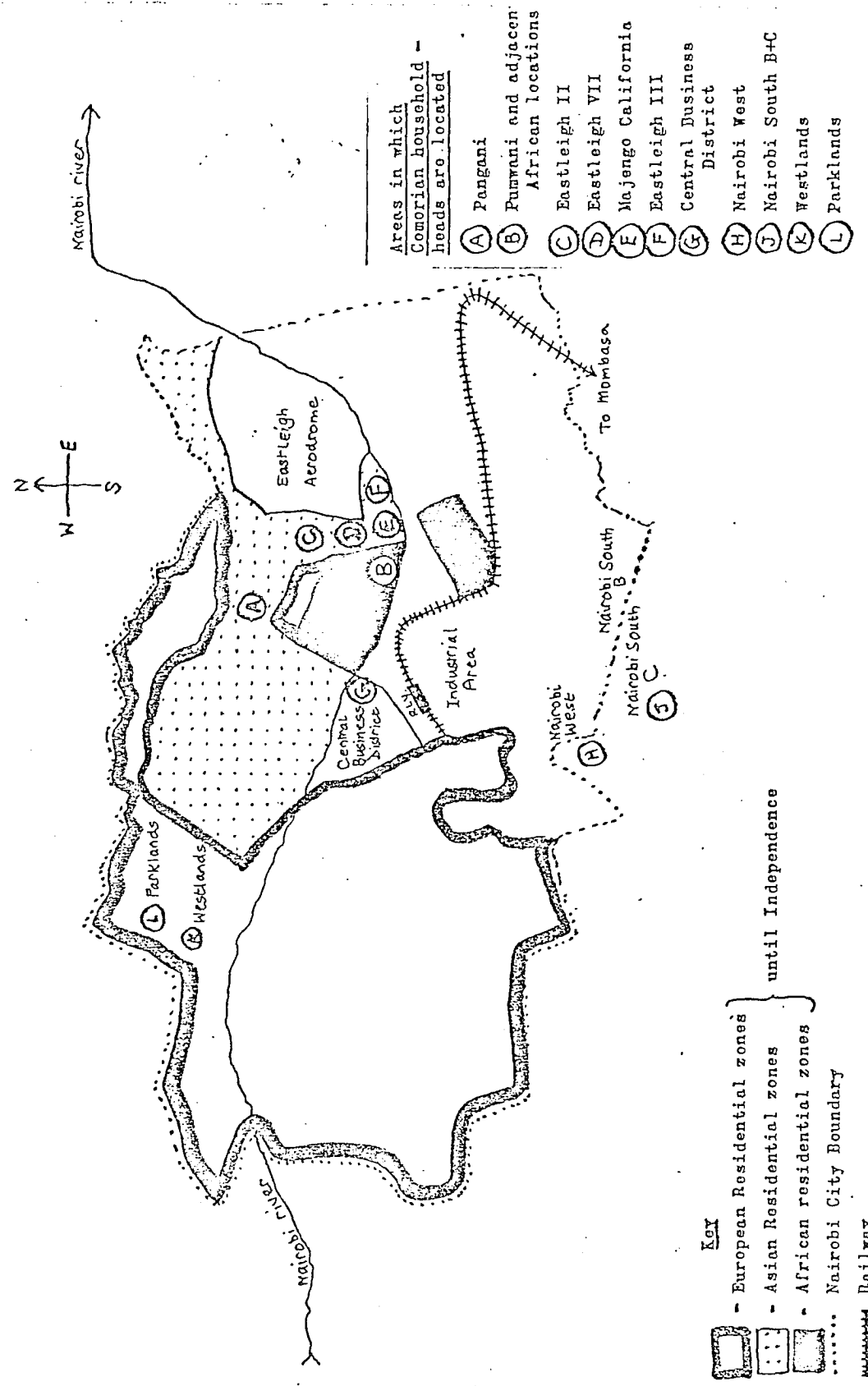
Area	Born in					Totals by area
	Mombasa	Lamu	Zanzibar	Comoros	Other	
	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	
(1)	-)	1	1)	-)	-	2
(2)	3)	-	2)	-)	-	5
(3)	2) 60	-	1) 37.5	-)	10	3
(4)	1)	-	2)	1)	-	4
5	2)	-	5)	8)	-	15
6	-) 20	-	1) 37.5	-)	80	2*
7	1)	-	2)	1)	1**	5
8	1) 20	-	2)	-)	10	3
Totals by birthplace:	10 100%	1	16 100%	10 100%	3	40

* Up-country Kenya

** Uganda

While such an approach fragments numbers to the point where little reliance can be placed upon them, one or two overall trends can be noted. Zanzibar-born household heads are found in all areas. They and the Mombasa-born heads provide practically all the representation in the Old Town, while Comoro-born household heads and Others are almost entirely outside it. A higher proportion of Zanzibar-born heads are to be found in the more expensive areas 7 and 8 than are those of any other category, while a much higher proportion of Comoro-born heads are to be found in the poorest areas, 5 and 6, than any other category. The mitaa (quarters) of Mombasa thus received Comorians into a group of neighbours closely matched to them in wealth. The older, inner mitaa of Mombasa are still predominantly in-marrying groups of present and future kin. But out in areas 7 and 8 the mtaa is one in name only, and neighbourly association (and the intermarriage which goes with it) at a minimum. Thus the Comorian category with least contact with Swahilis (or other

NAIROBI - Map 2



Map based on those of Kimani (1972:395) and Hake (1977:88-89)

Comorians) was that of the Zanzibar-born who had opted for residence in expensive but remote parts of the town.

2.2.2 Nairobi (Map 2)

For comparison and contrast, a similar breakdown for Comorian household heads in Nairobi is presented.

Nairobi is, of course, a very different town from Mombasa. It was built by Europeans for European purposes, and is barely eighty years old. Although a surprisingly large number of its inhabitants have lived there for much of their lives, it lacks Mombasa's core population whose forebears have lived in the same place for generations.

None of Nairobi is strictly comparable to Mombasa's Old Town, therefore. During the colonial period residential segregation of the races in the city created the situation shown on the map. Europeans occupied the best and most expensive land area, Asians were given a strictly finite area in which to live, where the population density was high, since they far outnumbered Europeans, and Africans lived in the smallest, most densely crowded, least desirable areas of all. The situation was not legally enforced after 1923 (Kimani, 1972: 394), but local Europeans maintained the de facto separation by writing conditions governing transfer into leases on property. As late as 1970, over 60% of the land in Nairobi was still owned by Europeans, Asians and private, mostly Asian, businesses. Africans owned only 9% of individually-owned land in the city, despite the fact that they form over 70% of the city's population of 509,000 (Kimani, 1972: 382-83). People from the old African locations have expanded eastwards into unoccupied land near the railway south of the Nairobi river, and north of it into the eastern, poorer end of the Asian zone which began to empty of Asians as Independence approached. By 1970 this area had

become almost completely African (Hake, 1977: 100). So as to make some analogy with Mombasa possible, household heads in Nairobi have been classified as living in area-type 5/6 if they live in what was an African location, or if they live in 'Swahili' mud-and-wattle housing in adjacent areas. Those in 'Asian' housing in one-time Asian areas have been categorised as living in area-type 7. Those living in one-time European areas have been categorised as living in area-type 8. There the comparison ends. Nairobi has also seen a great deal of pre- and post-Independence building of housing for municipal workers, housing for the sub-elite to rent, and housing for tenant-purchase which gives its housing stock a different character from that of Mombasa.

Table 18 shows where the Zanzibar-born, Comoro-born and other Comoro household heads in Nairobi are living. (There are no Mombasa-born or Lamu-born household heads in the sample.)

Table 18: Area of residence of Comorian household heads in Nairobi, by birthplace

<i>Area</i>	<i>Born in:</i>				<i>Total</i>
	<i>Zanzibar</i>	<i>Comoros</i>	<i>upcountry Kenya</i>	<i>Madagascar</i>	
5/6 type	-	7	1	-	8
7 type	3	3	1	1	8
8 type	5	-	-	-	5
modern municipal	4	-	-	-	4
	12	10	2	1	25

Once again a tendency is revealed for Comoro-born household heads to be in older, cheaper accommodation, while Zanzibar-born household heads are predominantly in more costly and/or more modern housing. While there are obvious similarities between this overall pattern and that of Mombasa, two points of difference need highlighting. Firstly, Mombasa offers two alternatives to a household head with a reasonable income. He can

either seek good quality Old Town accommodation, in the heart of a muslim milieu attractive to many, or can live in the town's less-densely occupied, one-time European outskirts. In Nairobi, only the latter alternative is available. Secondly, Muslims were until recently in the majority in most parts of Mombasa, while they form a small minority of the population of Nairobi. Such muslims as there are from the coast, and the up-country converts they have made, have tended to cluster over the decades in two or three adjacent areas, notably Pumwani, Pangani and Eastleigh. Here, some reflection of what life would be like on the coast is to be found with regular meetings among men at the prayer-times in the Pumwani mosque, Kur'an school for children and the exchange, along coastal lines, of help and support at weddings and - more importantly - funerals. Coast muslims, Comorians among them, who can afford to live in better accommodation than can be found in these locations usually do so, but complain that they then find themselves in a far more alien environment, culturally, than is possible in Mombasa.

2.3 Owning and renting property

Since house ownership usually gives some indication of long-term residence (or the intention of being a long-term resident) and of access to enough capital to buy or build, patterns of house-owning were investigated in the households sample.

Table 19: Owning and renting among Comorian and Swahili household heads

	<i>Comorians in Nairobi</i>		<i>Comorians in Mombasa</i>		<i>Comorians Total</i>		<i>Swahilis in Mombasa</i>	
Owning	7	28%	19	47.5%	26	40%	15	75%
Renting	18	72%	21	52.5%	39	60%	5	25%
Totals	25	100%	40	100%	65	100%	20	100%

Of the 65 Comorian households in the sample, 26 live in owned housing and 39 in rented housing: 40% this owning their own homes, as against 75% of the Swahili sample. However, the Comorian households in Mombasa are almost equally divided between those who own and those who rent their homes, and it is in Nairobi where renting predominates among them. Since Kimani indicates how difficult it was, until fairly recently, for Africans to own land in Nairobi, this difference is in part merely a reflection of the different land-tenure situations in the two towns (Kimani, 1972: 385, 397), though in fact many African houses in Nairobi were built on land belonging to others (Hake, 1977: 159, 167).

Important factors in accounting for the difference in the owning and renting patterns between Mombasa and Nairobi are more likely to be these. Firstly, there is a larger proportion of Comorian household heads in Mombasa with an already established locally-born parent; the town is unequivocally the permanent home of such household heads, and they may have inherited some property there too. Secondly, Mombasa was and is a cheaper place to live than Nairobi. Rents and house-prices, quality for quality, are lower. Thirdly, a higher percentage of Comorian migrants straight from the Comoro Islands live in Nairobi (40% as against 25%). This is the most likely category to envisage eventual departure from Kenya and we find that only four out of the twenty household heads born in the Comoros are house-owners.

Table 20 shows how the birthplace of the household head correlates with the likelihood of owning a house.

Table 20: Owning, renting and birthplace among Comorian household heads

<i>Where born</i>	<i>Owners</i>	<i>Renters</i>
Mombasa	9 90%	1 10%
Zanzibar	10 36%	18 64%
Comoros	4 20%	16 80%
	23	35

Household heads from other places than those shown in the table have been omitted because of small numbers.

That Zanzibar-born Comorian household heads are more likely than Comorian-born heads to own a house is the more striking when it is remembered that most of those from Zanzibar came to Kenya after 1964 (the year of the Zanzibar Revolution), while almost all those from the Comoro Islands would have been in Kenya up to twice as long.

This section has aimed to draw out certain regularities which are observable when analysing Comorian residence patterns. Broad differences in house siting, town of residence and ownership patterns are shown to correlate to some degree with the birthplace of the household head - a factor which becomes a shorthand way of suggesting three typical profiles for those Comorians born in Zanzibar, the Comoros and Mombasa respectively. In addition the data suggest that there are probably more permanently settled Comorian household heads in Mombasa, where 25% of them were born and where 47.5% of them are house owners, than there are in Nairobi where few were born and where 28% are house owners.

Overall in the two towns the households with a Zanzibar-born head are striking. The best Comorian housing in both Nairobi and Mombasa is lived in by such households, and a higher proportion of them live in such housing in thriving expensive Nairobi than in Mombasa: 66% as against 37.5%. At the same time nearly two-thirds of these household heads are renting rather than buying their homes, an aspect perhaps of their relatively recent immigration into the country, or of their hopes for political change in Zanzibar enabling them to return home.

The households with a Comoro-born head tend to cluster in the poorer, older parts of Nairobi and Mombasa; in Nairobi 70% of the sample live in old mud-and-wattle housing, while in Mombasa 90% do. A higher proportion of the Nairobi sample than of the Mombasa sample - 48% as

opposed to 25% - are household heads born in the Comoro Islands. Despite long residence in the country, 80% of Comoro-born household heads rent rather than owning property. This is probably partly explicable by their low incomes, but it is also true that many have invested money in the Comoro Islands rather than in Kenya (by making expensive marriages, buying land or building houses), and many plan to return there, even after twenty or more years in Kenya.

The Mombasa-born Comorian household heads, to make a generalisation, appear to come somewhere between the other two categories in wealth, to judge by the areas of housing they live in. They resemble the Mombasa Swahilis more than they do either of the other Comorian categories if they are judged by the criteria explored here. 30% of them live in good stone housing in Mombasa, as do 45% of the Swahili sample; 60% live in mud-and-wattle housing in the long-established parts of the town, as do 55% of the Swahili sample. In terms purely of residential area (disregarding house-type), 80% of the Mombasa-born Comorian household heads and 80-85% of the Swahili sample live in the Old Town or immediately adjacent to it. As far as house ownership goes, 75% of the Swahili sample and 90% of the (small) Mombasa-born Comorian sample live in their own houses.

Further evidence for the distinctiveness of the three types of Comorian household indicated here emerges when we turn to examine the internal structure of the household in terms of size and composition.

3.0 The household: size and composition

3.1 Introduction

Swahili and Comorian households in East Africa need to be defined with care for several reasons. Firstly, the high rate of divorce among both categories, and other factors investigated below, mean that the

simple conjugal family - a married couple and their joint offspring (if any) - is by no means the dominant pattern, though it is the ideal one. Only 34 out of the 85 households investigated here fit that pattern. It sometimes follows that individuals spend different parts of the year, or week, or day, in different houses. Some meals may be taken in one house, sleeping accommodation be found in another, and so on. Another factor is the way in which 'Swahili' houses (and, in Mombasa, some of the old stone 'Arab' style houses) are built. The standard pattern is for the rectangular house to have a corridor running from the front door to the back through the centre of the house and for there to be between four and eight rooms opening off it. House and household may be co-terminous (both are known as nyumba in KiSwahili) or rooms may be let, so that nyumba refers to a single room and use of the communally-shared kitchen and bathroom facilities. In such multiple-occupancy houses women may cook together and help each other with children almost as if they were kin in the same household.

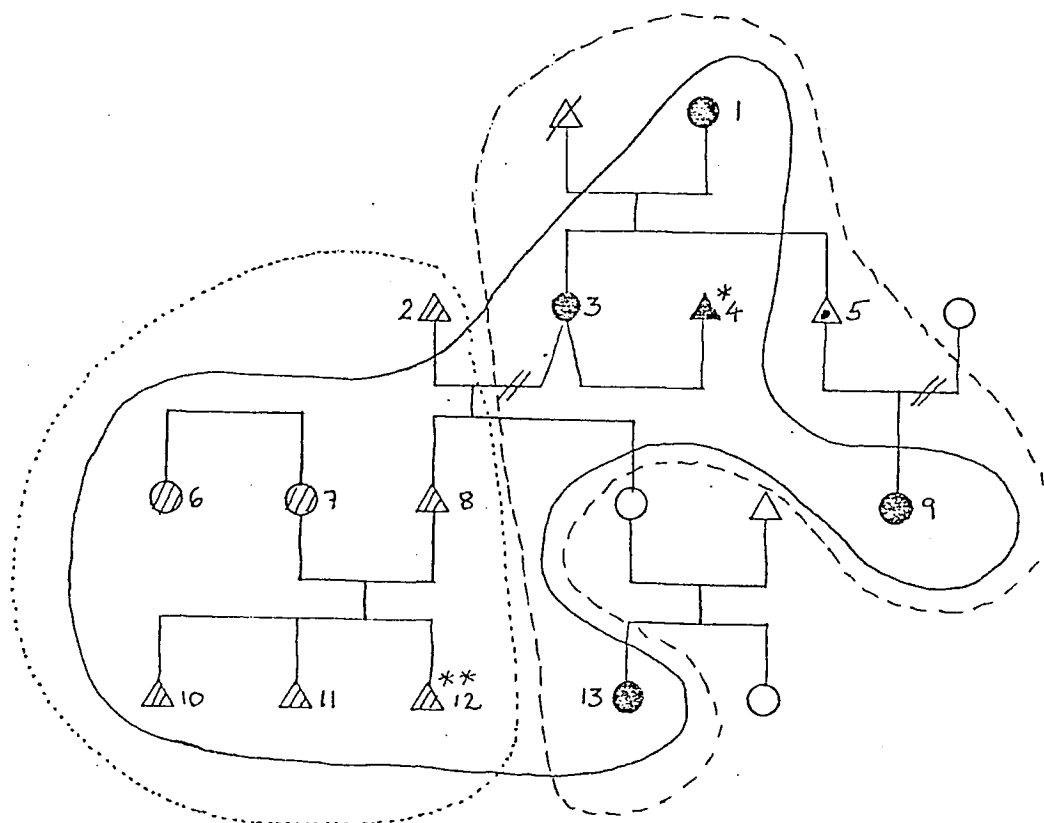
What in fact decides where one household ends and the next begins in my sample are financial arrangements, commensality at certain times of day, and sleeping arrangements. Commensality (the key criterion selected by Wijeyewardene [1961: 280] in his study of three small Swahili centres) is a useful guide only if it is linked to the evening meal and breakfast. These meals are eaten generally in the house where one sleeps, and which one rents or owns. The mid-day meal is often eaten in a larger group of kin, possibly in another house. The following example, analysed as it was in 1974, illustrates the potential complexity of the situation.

The mkanyageni household cluster (Figure 4)

In the diagram, individuals 1, 3, 4 (when present), 9 and 13 sleep in house A and eat all their meals together.

Individuals 2, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12 (when present) sleep in house B and eat breakfast and the evening meal there.

Figure 4: The overlapping of three households



- △ - those who sleep in house A
- ▴ - those who sleep in house B
- ◡ - the man who sleeps in house C
- (dashed) - those who eat breakfast and the evening meal in house A
- (dotted) - those who eat breakfast and the evening meal in house B
- (solid) - those who eat lunch in house A
- △ (with slash) - dead
- // - divorced
- △* - absent 8-9 months a year at sea
- △** - spends over 50% of his time living with his mother's mother

Individual 5 sleeps in house C but temporarily¹ eats all his meals in house A or at work, where cooked food is sent to him from house A. All those who sleep in house B, except for 2 (who is bedridden) eat lunch at house A, where 7 and her sister 6 have spent the entire morning cooking along with house A's women. Food is taken to 2 from house A by a servant.

House A is owned by 3 and the finances for its running come from her husband's salary (a proportion of which she receives in his absence). A daily contribution towards food, usually in kind, is made by 5.

House B is owned by 2. The finances for its running come from his pension (he is very elderly) and the salary of 8. Occasional contributions from dress-making are made by 7.

House C is owned and financed by 5.

In this complex situation the most important financial contributions are made and consumed within the units composed of those who sleep together in one house at night. Those who eat the main meal of the day together at midday do not form a household otherwise, though this daily commensality seems to hint at an earlier household now broken up, containing the married couple 2 and 3, and their dependants. 3's son 8 and his dependants and father make no financial contribution to lunch at house A, except that 8's wife and her sister put in several hours' hard work cooking there each day. The food is ultimately paid for by 4, with some contribution from 5.

The household head is almost invariably the owner or renter of the house; this is the case with 3 in house A (regarded by all as such, even though she has a living husband who is resident at times) and with 5 in house C. However, in the case of house B, 8 has become the effective household head even though his father is still alive and indeed still making financial contributions to the household in this

1. He is between marriages.

house he owns. The reason for this is 2's extreme age and the fact that he has been incapacitated by a stroke. For the same reason, it is not regarded as odd that he is fed at mid-day from his ex-wife's household.

Generally, I would say that the Swahili-Comorian definition of a household in a big town like Mombasa (as opposed, perhaps, to its definition in smaller rural settlements engaged primarily in agriculture) is closely linked to sleeping accommodation. The pressure on urban accommodation seems to produce this effect. I did not hear people referring to 'households' whose members lived in more than one house (cf. Caplan, 1975: 48), and did not encounter any.

3.2 Household size

The number of adults and children per household for the whole sample, together with the number of rooms they inhabit (excluding bathrooms and kitchens), are tabulated, household by household, at the end of this chapter. Here the results are summarized and commented upon, with the help of some illustrative examples.

Table 21: Total and average number of rooms, adults and children, in Swahili and Comorian households, omitting seven households¹

	<i>Rooms</i>		<i>Adults</i>		<i>Children</i>		<i>Both</i>		<i>People per room</i>
Swahilis in Mombasa (16 households)	64	4	48	3	40	2.5	88	5.5	1.38
Comorians in Mombasa (37 households)	98	2.65	73	2	60	1.6	133	3.6	1.36
Comorians in Nairobi (25 households)	73	3	58	2.3	38	1.5	96	3.8	1.30

1 In the sample there are in fact four Swahili households and three Comorian households, all in Mombasa, which are abnormally large by coastal standards (Prinx, 1967: 78-80), having more than ten household members each. Since they weight the small numbers of households I am dealing with disproportionately, a more accurate picture is probably obtained by omitting them for the purpose of calculating averages.

Using these figures, Comorian households in Mombasa and Nairobi emerge as very similar in terms of density of occupation of their accommodation (number of people per room), with those in Nairobi averaging slightly larger accommodation and a slightly larger household than those in Mombasa. The additional people are more likely to be adults than children. An overall comparison of the average Comorian household with the average Swahili household (omitting the seven extra-large households) indicates that density of occupation is very similar: it is 1.38 for the Swahilis and 1.36 and 1.30 for Comorians in Mombasa and Nairobi respectively. However, a Swahili household averages one more adult and one more child than its Comorian counterpart and at least one more room.

Analysis of household and accommodation size by birthplace of household head creates a more striking picture, however.

Table 22: Total and average number of rooms, adults and children among Comorian households, by birthplace of household head

<i>HHs</i>	<i>Birthplace and present residence of HHH</i>	<i>Rooms</i>		<i>Adults</i>		<i>Children</i>		<i>Both</i>		<i>People per room</i>
12	born Zanzibar living Nairobi	45	3.75	29	2.4	22	1.8	51	4.2	1.1
16	born Zanzibar living Mombasa	51	3.2	33	2.1	29	1.8	62	3.9	1.2
8	born Mombasa living Mombasa (exc. large HHs)	25	3.1	14	1.75	18	2.25	32	4.0	1.3
10	born Comoros living Nairobi	20	2.0	22	2.2	11	1.1	33	3.3	1.7
10	born Comoros living Mombasa	15	1.5	18	1.8	11	1.1	29	2.9	1.9

Ranged in this way it becomes evident that on average the largest households, both in terms of rooms and personnel, are those of the Zanzibar-born Comorians living in Nairobi, closely followed by the

Zanzibar-born and Mombasa-born household heads in Mombasa. These three categories average four household members living in 3/4 rooms, making for a relatively uncramped ratio of rooms to people. It is striking that, although these categories have the larger households, they still live in relatively less crowded conditions than the Comoro-born household heads and their dependants, who average less than two rooms for just over three people.

For Comorians and Swahilis alike, the maintenance of a large household brings prestige to the household head. Additional members may be adopted or fostered children (strangers or kin), unmarried, divorced or widowed siblings, elderly kinsmen or elderly unrelated individuals treated as kin.

In Table 23, there are 411 people living in 85 households: an average of 4.8 persons per household. Assuming, then, that we decide to call all households with six or more members 'large', we find that 25 out of 85 households can be so classified.

The table shows that those born in Kenya are more likely to have accumulated large households than those who have come to Kenya as adults: 65% of Swahili households and 30% of the households of Comorian wazalia in Mombasa are large, while only 21% of Zanzibar-born household heads and 5% of Comoro-born household heads run such households.¹

This is to be expected. With the household heads from Zanzibar and the Comoros, however, simple length of residence does not explain the figures, for most Zanzibar-born household heads have been in Kenya a shorter time than those from the Comoros. In this case poverty is likely to be part of the explanation for the rarity of large households among Comoro-born household heads, coupled with the fact that many of the

1 I do not consider the tiny residual category.

Table 23: Household size of all households in sample

Number in household	Ethnicity						Number of households	Number of persons
	Swahili	Mombasa-born Comorian	Zanzibar-born Comorian	Comoro-born Comorian	Other Comorian			
19		1					1	19
17	1						1	17
13					1		1	13
12	1	1					2	24
11	1						1	11
10	1						1	10
8	1		1				2	16
7	4		2				6	42
6	4	1	3		1	1	10	60
	13	3	6	1	2	30%		
5	4	3	6	3			16	80
4		1	4	3	2		10	40
3	2	1	4	5	2		14	42
2	1	2	7	6	1		17	34
1			1	2			3	3
	7	7	22	19	5	70%		
	35%	70%	79%	95%	100%			
Totals	20	10	28	20	7	100%	85	All

personnel commonly incorporated into larger households - parents, siblings, the children of kin - are in the Comoro Islands. The result is that prestige in this sphere is rarely accorded to Comorian household heads. On the other hand, the maintenance of a large household in Kenya would be a poor use of any money available for conspicuous consumption if ada marriage in the Comoros is aimed at and not yet completed. Significantly, the only household headed by someone from the Comoro Islands which enters the list of the twenty-five households just isolated is that of a Comorian who successfully completed his ada marriage some years ago and opted to continue working in Nairobi in one of the securest and best-paid jobs held in Kenya by Comoro-born Comorians. At least two other Comorian men have in their time followed the same course of action and maintained large households, but they are both now elderly and their households have dwindled.

3.3 Household composition

In this section an analysis is first made of the composition of the 65 Comorian households under scrutiny. The patterns which emerge are subsequently compared with those found in the Swahili sample.

Table 24: Comorian households by type of household composition

<i>Household type</i>	<i>number</i>	<i>%</i>
1 Married couples alone	10	15
2 Married couples with own offspring	22	34
3 Married couples with own offspring and/or other household members	14	22
4 Based upon a sibling relationship	8	12
5 Female household head with other household members	8	12
6 One-person households	3	5
	Totals	65 100

3.3.1 An analysis of types of Comorian household composition

Comorians living in household type 1 were not, on the whole, young newly marrieds, but were composed of middle-aged individuals whose children had grown up, or who had never had children together, but had married in middle age, leaving children by previous marriages elsewhere.

Those of type 2 formed the commonest type in the sample. The households in the category were at various stages of the developmental cycle in 1973/74, with some long past their peak membership and some still growing. Several had children fostered elsewhere, moreover, as in the following case:

Rajab Harith (1974)

The husband and wife in this household were Comorian wazalia from Zanzibar, and had come to settle in Mombasa after the Zanzibar Revolution. The husband worked for the East African Shipping Line and was usually absent. Three of their younger children lived with their mother, but the two elder ones lived with matrilineal kin in the Comoros and Paris respectively. This was to enable them to receive a French Lycée education, originally. The arrangement was and is clearly on the basis of fostering rather than adoption.

An apparently heterogeneous range of individuals had been added to the nuclear household in type 3. There are 24 extra people recorded in these households (see Table 29 below) - 15 extra children, 5 siblings or children of parents' siblings (both are ndugu in KiSwahili); two 'parents' (one is a fictive MB); and two extra wives.¹

1 It is unusual to find co-wives under the same roof, and in both cases at least one of the wives had an alternative home. In the first case both wives have their own houses in the small town of Bangwa-Kuni in Ngazija. When the household head married the younger of these, he encouraged his older wife to leave their joint accommodation in Nairobi and return to the Comoros. She did so, but was on a protracted return visit when I was doing fieldwork.

In the second household, the earlier-married wife is a Bajuni from the coast, and the more recent one a Kikuyu. The Bajuni woman prefers (footnote continues on p.290)

Apart from extra wives, we find that 8 additional individuals have joined the 14 type 3 households because of a link with the husband, and that 11 have done so because of their link with the wife.

Of the 15 additional children in these households, 11 have been brought in through wives: 3 are own children by other marriages, 7 are daughters' children¹ and one is fostered for a wife's friend. Husbands have incorporated only one own child and three sisters' children. Since these last three have actually gone to a matrilateral relative, there is only one case in the whole 15 of a child staying with a patrilateral kinsman after what was probably the break-up of the nuclear household into which he was born. The other interesting point here is that there are almost as many fostered children as own children: 15 of the former, and 18 of the latter.

Adult siblings of husband and wife found in a household are usually unmarried. Younger sisters are incorporated by the wife to help her with young children, and unmarried brothers may be incorporated while they are still studying, or have just begun to work.

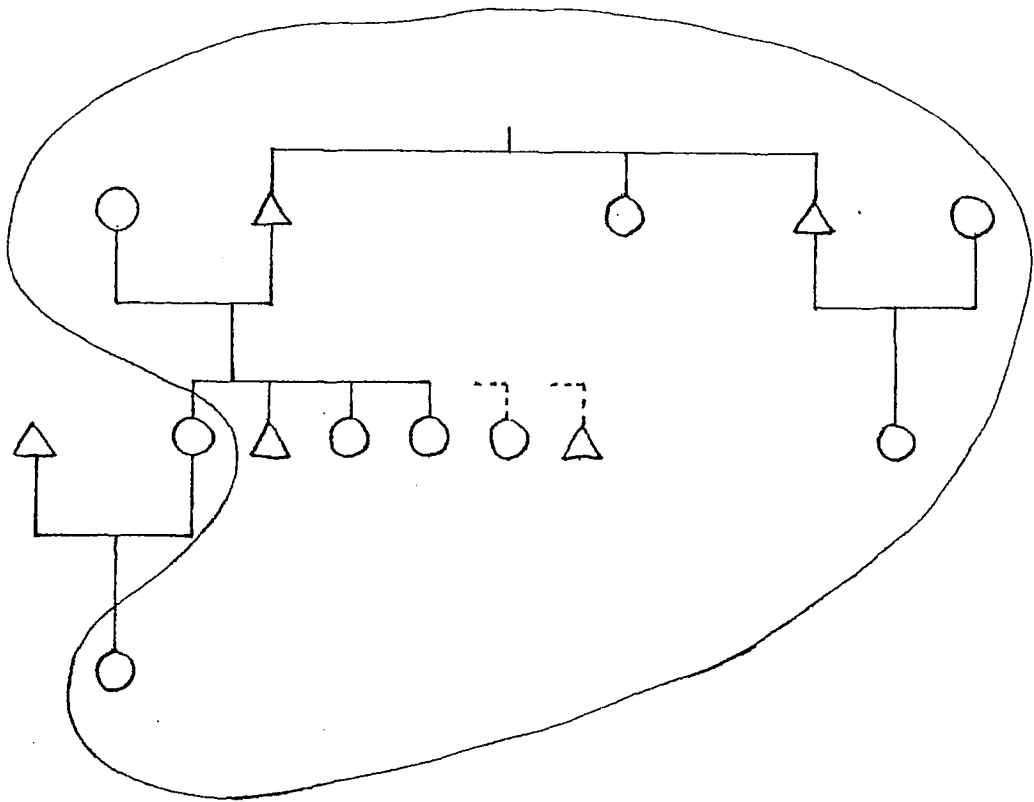
The other households in the sample are based, not upon a married couple, but on some other relationship.


Nairobi to the small village from which she comes and, apparently infertile, she behaves somewhat like a mother and grandmother to her younger co-wife and the children. I suspect, too, that staying on the spot is the only way she can guarantee regular support from her husband, who is a successful but somewhat erratic man.

I encountered no cases, among Comorians or Swahilis, of two wives living under one roof in Mombasa, and I suspect that it is the shortage and expense of accommodation in Nairobi which explains these highly anomalous cases.

1 Four are the children of wives' (but not husbands') daughters. The remaining three are joint grandchildren, but I attribute their addition to the household to wives because each child was given - following common Swahili-Comorian practice - by its mother to her mother.

Figure 5: The household of Shaikh Salim



 - Foster child

Type 4 is based on a sibling relationship. This frequently comes about because siblings have jointly inherited a large house (usually in Mombasa) and share it by living in it.

In the following case, for instance, three siblings share the house their father built. The household is illustrated in Figure 5.

Shaikh Salim (1973)

The core relationship is that of two married brothers who have inherited their father's house along with their sister. She has never married (because her oldest brother refused all offers made, it is rumoured) and is economically dependant upon them. The two in-marrying wives cook together and the children have been reared together. The older brother has three remaining children at home, two unrelated foster-children taken for charity¹ and a grandchild, his DD. His brother has one remaining child at home.

Divorced or widowed sisters, especially once they become elderly, may begin to live with one another again. And it is rarer, but not unknown, for two single or divorced brothers to rent accommodation together. A brother and a sister are very unlikely to be found living together, however, in the absence of a spouse of one or other party. Informants did not cite any incest rule to explain the situation, but said that women, in particular, preferred living with a sister.

In household type 5, a woman heads the household. Of the eight households listed here, four are headed by married women with husbands who never reside there, 3 are divorced, and one, though unmarried (and therefore still a 'child' in coastal thinking) has been accorded the

1 Charity (sadaka) is a concept familiar to muslims. The Kur'an enjoins generous behaviour towards such categories as the poor, widows and orphans, and promises reward in heaven for those who help them. The wealthy and pious are often offered children to rear.

status of a married woman heading her own household by other Comorians, because she has a very good job which gives her economic independence of a kind not normally associated with unmarried women.

Non-resident husbands are a not-uncommon feature of coastal life. Women prefer a very nominal marriage - because it confers respectability-- to remaining divorcees, and wealthy men enjoy the status of having a second wife.

Bi Shaikha (1973)

The household head is married to an Ithnasheri Indian who lives with an Indian wife about five minutes away. She has made money in the past from trade with Zanzibar, working in partnership with her husband and investing in constant enlargements and improvements to the house she owns, in gold and in the generous financing of an enormous household of fostered and adopted children. Her relationship with her husband is friendly and each respects the other, but her household is not financed by him.

Household type 6 consists of those who live alone. These are more commonly found among women than men because women may not be able to remarry or live with a child, but men are supposed to take a wife to look after them in their old age. The old man to be found in the category here is almost penniless and cannot support a wife.

Mzee Ahmad (1974)

Mzee Ahmad is an old male migrant who failed to make his ada marriage and has been in Kenya for over 20 years. He has a room rent-free in a house which used to belong to a Comorian (his right to do so was apparently transferred with the house). He makes a little money as an Islamic astrologer, and he eats frequently with his classificatory sister's daughter, who is married to a Swahili.

3.3.2 Household composition in the Comorian and Swahili samples, compared

At this point we can fruitfully make comparison with the Swahili household sample. If we categorise them so that they fall into one of the six types above, we find the following:

Table 25: Swahili households by type of household composition

<i>Household type</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
1 Married couples alone	1	5
2 Married couples with own offspring	1	5
3 Married couples with own offspring and/or other household members	12	60
4 Based upon a sibling relationship	2	10
5 Female household head with other household members	4	20
6 One-person households	0	0
Totals	20	100

While households focussed upon a married couple make up similar percentages in both the Swahili and the Comorian samples (70% of the Swahili households and 70.5% of the Comorian households), the way in which these percentages are made up distinguishes the two categories sharply. The simple conjugal household (the married couple with its own children) is the commonest type of Comorian household, while by far the most frequently met-with pattern among the Swahilis is that in which this simple household has had other members added to it.

Households based upon a sibling relationship are about as common in both samples, while households clustered about a female household are more common in the Swahili sample. Probably one-person households are rarer among the Swahilis than among the Comorians but, this sample notwithstanding, they are to be met with.

The differences between the overall distribution of household types in the two samples can be partly explained by differences likely

to exist between those of long standing in Mombasa, and more recent immigrants. The Swahilis, unlike the Comorians, have all or most kin locally present and the houses they live in tend to be owner-occupied and on average slightly more spacious and able to accommodate extra people, as we have seen.

The developmental cycle needs to be taken into account too. If the two samples are broken down into broad age categories, certain patterns become immediately apparent.

Table 26: Swahili and Comorian household heads by age category

<i>Age</i>	<i>Swahili</i>		<i>Zanzibar-born Comorian</i>		<i>Mombasa-born Comorian</i>		<i>Comoro-born Comorian</i>	
20-29	1	5%	5	18%	-	-	-	-
30-39	4	20%	9	32%	2	20%	-	-
40-49	7	35%	6	21.5%	3	30%	2	10%
50-59	7	35%	6	21.5%	4	40%	11	55%
60+	1	5%	2	7%	1	10%	7	35%
Totals	20	100%	28	100%	10	100%	20	100%

Swahili and Mombasa-born Comorian household heads are fairly similarly represented in the age categories, but the Zanzibar-born household heads are younger, with half under forty years old and nearly three-quarters under fifty. Of the Comoro-born heads, by contrast, the youngest is at least forty years old and one-third are over sixty. There seem to have been no new recruits either to this category or to the Mombasa-born category in recent years.

In the case of Comoro-born household heads, it has been explained that no new migrants came to Kenya after Independence. In the case of the Mombasa-born category, the figures suggest that young Swahili/Comorian wazalia have ceased to identify themselves as Comorians.

Table 27: Comorian household types by household head's birthplace

Household type	Zanzibar-born Comorian		Mombasa-born Comorian		Comoro-born Comorian		Other Comorian		Number
1 Married couples alone	4	14%	1	10%	5	25%	-	-	10
2 Married couples with own offspring	11	39%	3	30%	6	30%	2	-	22
3 Married couples with own offspring and/or other household members	7	25%	1	10%	4	20%	2	-	14
4 Based upon a sibling relationship	2	7%	2	20%	1	5%	3	-	8
5 Female household head with other household members	3	11%	3	30%	2	10%	-	-	8
6 One-person households	1	4%	-	-	2	10%	-	-	3
Totals	28	100%	10	100%	20	100%	7	*	65

* Numbers too small to be of value

It is clear from this, if it is compared with Table 25, that it is Comoro-born household heads who differ most, as a category, from the Swahili pattern: 35% live alone or with only a spouse, where only 5% of Swahili household heads live in such circumstances. Such a pattern fits their advanced years and migrant status. All categories are much less well-represented than the Swahilis in type 3 households, though the greater youth of the Zanzibar-born heads is perhaps indicated by the fact that they are better represented in household types 2 and 3 than other Comorian categories. Mombasa-born Comorians are the most likely Comorian category to be found in households which, like those of 30% of the Swahili sample, are focussed not on a marital relationship but on a female household head or a sibling relationship. This is presumably a function not of age but of being locally born.

Certain more general similarities and differences between Comorian and Swahili households are now focussed upon.

3.3.3 Additional members of the household

Firstly, an analysis is given of individuals found in households apart from the household head, spouse (if any) and joint children (if any). A full analysis of all the Swahili and Comorian households in the sample can be found at the end of the chapter in Tables 28 and 29. However, in order to derive generalisations from these tables, a summary table (Table 30) is used here.

Children

In the Swahili sample above, women are more likely than men to add children to the household, 18 women adding 69 children while 15 men add only 46 (an average of 3.9 per woman and 3.0 per man).

In the Comorian sample, women are also more likely to add children to the household: 28 women add 74 children while 22 men add 45 (2.7 per woman and 2.1 per man).

Table 30: The incorporation of individuals into Swahili and Comorian households by household heads (HHHs) and spouses (summarizing Tables 28 and 29)

	SWAHILI HOUSEHOLDS				COMORIAN HOUSEHOLDS					
	added by		added by		added by		added by			
Individuals added	18 female or spouses	15 male HHHs or spouses	18 female HHHs or spouses	22 male HHHs or spouses	M	F	All	M	F	All
Children:										
own children	17	22	39	15	20	35		21	21	42
own grandchildren	11	7	18	7	4	11		10	14	24
other children	3	9	12	0	0	0		3	5	8
(total)	31	38	69	22	24	46		34	40	74
Adults:										
siblings	0	4-5	4-5	3	0	3		1	7	8
parents	0-1	4	4-5	1	2	3		0	0	0
others	1	4	5	2	0	2		2	2	4
(total)	1-2	12-13	13-15	6	2	8		3	9	12
Grand total	32-34	50-51	82-84	28	26	54		37	49	86

* 'Joint children' and 'joint grandchildren' in Tables 28 and 29 are attributed to both their fathers and their mothers in the categories 'own children' and 'own grandchildren' above.

Adults

In the Swahili sample women are somewhat more likely to add adults to the households in which they live than are men. Here women have added 0.7 - 0.8 each, while men have added 0.5 (18 women have added 13-16 adults, while 15 men have added 8 adults). Siblings, parents and 'others' are about equally likely to be added in both cases.

In the Comorian sample, however, we find that men have added an average of 0.6 adults each while women have added 0.4 each (22 men have added 14 adults, while 28 women have added 12). Siblings appear to be the most likely additional adults and parents the least, a pattern perhaps best explained by the fact that many Comorians were born outside Kenya and are likely to have parents living in Zanzibar or in the Comoros rather than locally.

To summarise, women seem to be more important agents for the incorporation of both children and adults in the Swahili sample than they are in the Comorian one. Comorian men show slightly greater importance in the selection of additional household personnel (especially adults) than do Swahili men, on these samples. Here, in the Swahili households, women have added about 57% of the additional personnel and men about 43%, while in the Comorian households women have added about 53% and men about 47%.

The significance of the sex of those incorporated into the household

An investigation was made to check for possible correlations between the sex of those incorporated into the household and the sex of the individual responsible for their presence.

Children

The category 'own children' has been ignored since I assume no choice of sex has operated here. Some choosing of the sex of grandchildren incorporated is possible, but there is no evidence for it here. Swahili women and men have incorporated more male than female grandchildren, while Comorian men and women have incorporated more female grandchildren, results which seem unlikely to have any particular significance.

Where a pattern apparently does emerge is in the sex of 'other' children. Here there emerges a strong preference for - or likelihood of - girls being taken in. There are 18 cases of 'other' girls here, and only 8 cases of 'other' boys. At least three-quarters of girls and boys have been added by women. The higher frequency of girls could indicate a preference for boys in their families of origin. Probably, though, the predominance of girls is because girls are more useful than boys to the women in the households they move into, in most situations. The exception occurs when a female household head who lacks a suitable resident male in the household deliberately incorporates a boy of from twelve to fifteen or so to help her with such 'male' tasks as shopping, the paying of bills at offices, and to deter thieves.

Adults

In the case of adults we find that Swahili women have added 12-13 women and only 1-2 men, while Comorian women have added 0 women and only 3 men. Swahili men have added 6 men and only 2 women. In these cases there appears to be a strong link between the sex of those incorporated and that of the incorporator, a correlation which would appear to have some basis in considerations of decorum.

In the Swahili sample, for instance, the only men added by women are a poor elderly unrelated Comorian taken in for charity by a female

household head, and a Comorian who stays one night a week with his brother's daughter and her Swahili husband in Mombasa on his day off from the beach hotel where he works and normally lives. (His wife lives in Zanzibar.)

Neither of the Comorian women who have incorporated adult men into their household has a resident spouse. One, living in Nairobi, has her brother and a teenage friend of his from Zanzibar living with her; the other has a married daughter and daughter's husband living with her.

None of these cases creates a situation in which there could be conflict between a male household head and a man introduced to the household by his wife, nor do any create sexual ambiguity about the possible relationship between the incorporated man and the women responsible for his presence.

The implicit rules seem to be the same when we look at women added by man. Swahili men in the sample have added only two females, a mother and a mother's sister. Although Comorian men have added 6 men and 8 women, the rules still hold: the 8 women comprise two full sisters, one mother, two co-resident second wives, and three brothers' wives present only because of co-resident brothers.

Correlation between the sex of the individuals incorporated and the sex of those who incorporated them is at its strongest in the case of siblings. Among the Swahilis all the adult siblings incorporated joined the households of same-sex siblings, while among Comorians 12 out of 15 did so.

Mothers, real or classificatory, are more likely to be found in the households of their children than are fathers. They seem slightly to prefer to live with their daughters, while those few fathers who live with their children appear to be slightly more likely to live in the households of sons. Normally, men aim to be married throughout their lifetime, however.

3.4 The role of women in the formation of the household

Women are unequivocally more significant than men as the core in the formation of households. Table 30 shows how, in the case of Swahili households, 18 women have been responsible for the presence of 82-84 individuals, while 15 men have been responsible for that of 54 (a rate respectively of 4.6 - 4.7 and 3.6 each). In Comorian households 28 women have been responsible for the addition of 86 individuals while 22 men have been responsible for 59 (a rate respectively of 3.1 and 2.7 each).

Secondly, households consisting all or most of the time only of women and children are common, while households composed of men only are rare. (Households of men and children are never found.) There are only two (Comorian) households in the entire sample of 85 here analysed consisting of men only. By contrast there are 22 households - 26% of the total - in which women live alone or with children but without men. It is difficult for men alone to manage without women since cooking, washing and cleaning are time-consuming as well as being strongly gender-linked. A servant may take care of washing and cleaning, but rarely does more than assist women with cooking. Lone men must make an arrangement at the home of kin or neighbours.

Women, by contrast, can manage without resident adult men by substituting teenage boys and male servants. A few very elderly women give up cooking in their own homes and cook, pooling food and labour, in the house of a younger kinswoman each day.

The reasons why women may come to be household heads and perhaps, as a result, live in households without any adult males in them, are set out in Table 31. There are 27 households in the full sample of 85 with an actual or effective female household head - nearly a third. Both the Swahili and Comorian samples show a very similar proportion of households headed all or most of the time by women.

Table 31: Households where women are actual or effective household heads

	SWAHILI		COMORIAN	
	renters	owners	renters	owners
1 Women who are HHHs because single	-	-	1 [1]	-
2 Women who are HHHs because widowed	-	-	2	-
3 Women who are HHHs because divorced	1	2	3 [1]	3
4 Women who are effective HHHs because married to polygynous, non-resident H	-	-	1	3
5 Women usually alone because married to husband working elsewhere	2* [1]	2	4 [3]	-
6 Married women in their own houses with co-resident H	-	-	-	3
	3 [1]	4	11 [5]	9
Totals	7/22	31.8% [1]	20/63	31.7% [5]

* In these two households the formal household heads are Comorian men but their wives, who are Swahilis, are the effective heads in their absence. Consequently they have been counted as Swahili in this table, making the number of Swahili households 22 instead of 20, and the number of Comorian households 63 instead of 65.

[1] Square brackets indicate the number of young household heads - under 30 years old - found in some categories.

Implicit in Table 31 is a female developmental cycle which needs spelling out. It holds true both for Swahili and for Comorian women living in East Africa; the pattern is somewhat different among Comorian women living in the Comoro Islands.

Among the former category, a young woman's first marriage is almost invariably virilocal or neolocal, while it is uxori-local, almost invariably, in the Comoro Islands.¹ In either case the husband is regarded as

1 The developmental cycle of the household in the Comoro Islands is not pursued here. It is merely to be noted that uxori-locality is a right for such Comorian women, while it is achieved gradually, and only by a proportion of women, among the Swahilis and East Africans living in East Africa.

the household head. In the case of divorce, which is very likely in the case of marriages of as yet short duration and few if any children, Swahili and Comorian women in East Africa return to their mother's homes (which may also be their fathers'), though to a life of greater freedom than was possible before marriage.

The second stage is one where a woman is divorced or even widowed after one or more marriages, already has several children and is perhaps just about 30. She is, in other words, no longer a young, instantly remarriageable girl. It is at this stage among Swahili and Comorian women in East Africa that the opportunity to become a household head may first present itself. She may be given a house, or the use of a house, by her brothers, out of commonly-owned family property, or she may be given her mother's house. (In this case her mother may move elsewhere or remain but become a member of her daughter's household.) A widow might inherit her husband's house, holding it in trust for his children, also. The pattern tends to apply more to women from wealthy kingroups of long-established residence, than to poorer women.

By middle life a Swahili or Comorian woman in East Africa is likely to be in one of three situations. She may be a partner to a long-established and successful marriage which is virilocally, or more likely neolocally sited; she may head her own household in a house she owns or has long-term use of (this is regarded as a highly desirable state of affairs); or she may, if she is poor or unlucky, find herself living neither as a household head nor as the wife of one, but as the dependent of kin or even pseudo-kin.

The final stage for women is that in which no further marriages, however nominal, are possible for them, and in which dependent children are almost adult and ready to leave home, or have already done so. This is the moment for a woman who owns her own house, or who has had the use

of one owned by a whole sibling group, to hand it over to a daughter. A woman who is not a home-owner may find a home for the last part of her life with a younger female sibling, a daughter or a sister's daughter. This last stage may begin for poor women at a much earlier stage than it does for wealthier ones.

Households do in fact seem more and more woman-focussed the older the core female in them is and the more commonly, in consequence, uxori-locality is to be met with. The adding of dependents, which we have seen is such a feature of women's activities, grows more frequent as such core women grow older, and indeed in certain cases even a latter-day husband is virtually added as a dependent too. Women are far more likely than men to have succeeded in grouping their children by different marriages under one roof, and in this respect their focality for the following generation becomes more and more marked as they get older. As we have seen, women not only incorporate others more frequently than men, but are also more frequently incorporated into existing households than men. Men, we must assume, are more likely to be the creators of simple conjugal households. From the point of view of the succeeding generations, even if a woman is herself living virilocally or neolocally with a husband, other dependents she has incorporated such as children and grandchildren, who are the products of previous marriages she has made, are living matrilocally if they live with her.

This developmental cycle can be observed in Table 31. Only 6 of the 27 household heads in the table are under 30 and none of them are house-owners. In fact four of the six are only household heads in the absence of their husbands (who are working elsewhere for a considerable proportion of the year), and both the other cases are somewhat anomalous. One would never be living away from home while still single were it not for her status as a highly qualified refugee from Zanzibar. In another

case the head and her sister are young divorced prostitutes whose ethnic marginality as the daughters of an Indian-African father and Comorian-Swahili mother has given them a freedom without respectability which they exploit.¹

Among older Swahili female household heads the commonest reasons for being in charge are divorce or the husband's working elsewhere. Such women own their own houses in four out of six cases (67%). Among older Comorian female household heads, the commonest reasons are divorce and marriage to a polygynist who lives elsewhere. These women own their own houses in six out of nine cases (67%). The centrality of women, both in the formation of a complex household and in its maintenance, is clear. Older women in particular stand some chance of having acquired their own homes, and of having grouped within them their own children by more than one marriage, and other personnel of their choosing. For a Comorian man married to a non-Comorian woman in Kenya, the chances of having more influence than his wife over the identity choices made by their children are obviously slight. The matrifocal pull, and the presence of a wider range of matrilineal than patrilineal kin, mean that, unless a child has a special reason for preferring self-identification as a Comorian, he or she is almost certain to grow up thinking of him/herself as a coastal Swahili or Islamized African Swahili. During the colonial period, the claiming of Comorian identity had a social meaning; now, for most such individuals, the public advantages of being a Comorian have gone.

1 These girls have chosen to describe themselves as Comorians, rather than any one of their other options, because their mother so categorises herself. Their mother, a sharifa, was the leader of the women's section of MOLINACO for some years, and they are proud of her position.

4.0 Employment

The differences between Comorians born in Zanzibar, Kenya or Ngazija, which have been so characteristic of other topics investigated in this chapter, are reproduced yet again in an analysis of the occupations they were all to be found in at the time of fieldwork. The main change in the overall pattern of Comorian employment, by comparison with the late 1950s/early 1960s, was that many wageni who had worked as servants had returned home to the Comoro Islands, leaving behind those who had already moved on from work in a private expatriate household to work in a club or restaurant or hotel, and those who felt unable to return. Many in the latter category had become self-employed, perhaps for the first time in their working lives. At the same time, there had been an influx of young, very highly qualified Zanzibar-born Comorian refugees.

I have used Batson's classification of occupation levels, because the system he evolved specifically for Zanzibar also fits Mombasa well whereas, as he points out, none of the standard occupational classifications precisely fit the range of occupations to be found among coastal Swahilis, and by extension Comorians (Batson, Survey 1948: Vol.5 Occupations and Vol.13 Industrial Field).

In tabulated form, Comorian and Swahili occupation levels are as follows

Table 32: Occupation levels among Swahili and Comorian household heads 1973/4

<i>Occupation level</i>	<i>Zanzibar-born Comorians</i>		<i>Kenya-born Comorians</i>		<i>Comoro-born Comorians</i>		<i>Swahilis</i>	
Upper	9	34.5%	1	7.7%	-	-	1	6%
Upper-middle	9	34.5%	6	46.1%	1	6%	6	33%
Middle non-manual	6	23.0%	2	15.4%	7	41%	8	44%
Middle manual	1	4.0%	2	15.4%	1	6%	1	6%
Lower-middle	1	4.0%	2	15.4%	8	47%	2	11%
Lower	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	26	100%	13	100%	17	100%	18	100%

There are only 56 (not 65) Comorian HHHs and 18 (not 20) Swahili HHHs tabulated here. This is because 4 Comorian and 2 Swahili HHHs are unemployed women supported by absent husbands, 3 Comorian HHHs are unemployed, and 2 were not born in any of the categories used here.

As we have seen in several other contexts, those born in Zanzibar are the most successful occupationally, those from the Comoros least successful, and Swahilis and Kenya-born Comorians resemble one another to a great degree in between the two extremes.

The actual jobs done by the household heads in this sample are of interest too.

In the Upper category,

Zanzibar-born Comorians may be found working as: Ship's Captain, Chief Kadi, lecturer, chartered accountant, vet, doctor, and civil aviation instructor

Kenya-born Comorians: Twabib (Arab doctor)

Comoro-born Comorians: none

Swahilis: Islamic expert and broadcaster.

In the Upper-Middle category,

Zanzibar-born Comorians: Imam, senior clerk, ship's officer, trainee diplomat, BBC programme monitor, publisher, librarian, nurse.

Kenya-born Comorians: Imam, motorbike salesman, fish wholesaler, education officer, businessman, entrepreneur

Comoro-born Comorians: bank clerk

Swahilis: food wholesaler, fish wholesaler, trader, schoolteacher.

In the Middle non-manual category,

Zanzibar-born Comorians: clerk, landlord

Kenya-born Comorians: Kur'an teacher, landlord

Comoro-born Comorians: Mwallim/mganga (Islamic astrologer), petty trader, landlord.

Swahilis: clerk, safari organiser, landlord.

In the Middle Manual category,

Zanzibar-born Comorians: tourist driver

Kenya-born Comorians: tourist driver, seamstress

Comoro-born Comorians: sailor

Swahilis: seamstress

In the Lower Middle category,

Zanzibar-born Comorians: female cook

Kenya-born Comorians: shop assistant, messenger

Comoro-born Comorians: barman, shop assistant

Swahilis: market-stall holder, halwa seller (confectioner)

Not only, as this sample suggests, were Comorians and Swahilis very unlikely to be found doing heavy manual labour, but they were also unlikely to be working as skilled artisans. There is a considerable contrast here between the existence of Comorian artisans in Kenya before and straight after the Second World War (and their existence in Zanzibar in the nineteenth century), and their disappearance by the 1970s.

Comorian wageni had followed their predecessors into service work for Europeans more and more exclusively it seems, while those who might originally have learned a skilled trade in Zanzibar by apprenticing themselves to a master, were more likely, after the Second World War, to have apprenticed themselves to higher education, as it became available. The enormous range of skills they acquired is very evident from the foregoing list.

4.1 The self-employed

I encountered no Zanzibar-born Comorian men who were self-employed in Kenya. All were employees and most were in posts where their particular skills made it unlikely that they would suddenly lose them. Swahilis, and Kenya-born Comorians using their matrilineal networks, were especially likely in Mombasa to work as self-employed wholesalers, sending fish to Nairobi, or exporting coffee or charcoal. Some individuals in both these categories were also able to make a living as Islamic experts of one sort or another. Such individuals were engaged in a very long-standing tradition of urban self-employment on the coast, and could not be said to have made specific adaptations to meet changed circumstances in an

Independent Kenya. Indeed, they have been slowly losing, rather than improving upon this particular employment speciality, as Mombasa is slowly settled by up-country Africans with capital, fluent English, and a more sophisticated understanding of international commerce than coastal Swahilis now possess.

A particularly interesting category is that of the self-employed Comorian wageni. Those wageni who have lost the paid employment they had had before and immediately after Independence have sought ways of staying on in Kenya, if they had not made ada marriages and were reluctant to return to Ngazija. Some, quite unemployed, have relied on a younger, energetic wife's ability to make small sums of money to survive, or have been taken in by kin or pseudo-kin, but a surprising number (4/17 in this sample, and I knew of many others) turned to Islamic astrology for a living, telling fortunes, curing childlessness and blessing houses and babies. Their elderly appearance, and the fact that they were Comorians (who are known as devout muslims), were their chief qualifications for this work, and it seems to have been possible to survive on the sums obtained from it.

4.2 Self-employed women

Comorian female household heads in this sample are landlords in 7/20 cases, and there are also a female petty-trader, importing and exporting small quantities of goods to and from Ngazija from Mombasa, and two seamstresses. The women who derived an income from renting out accommodation in the house they themselves owned or rented were much sought-after as wives by unemployed Comorian men.

Generally, there seemed to be far more ways for a woman to make a small income through her own endeavours than for a man - or more socially acceptable ways, perhaps. Many women, Comorian and Swahili, would use

their leisure house in their homes to make special cooked foods for sale at the back door, to finish shirts or make clothes for women and children if they had sewing machines, or to embroider muslim caps. Some traded within their own homes, buying bales of cloth and retailing it in dress-lengths, selling leso (kangas) imported illegally from Tanzania or the Comoro Islands, selling water (if their home had a tap and those of many neighbours did not) or occasionally jewellery. A few, reputedly, handled stolen goods or made small sums from fixing illicit sexual liaisons between third parties. Elderly women with some Islamic knowledge ran small Kur'an schools in their homes for children - especially girls, teaching them to read the Arabic script and hearing them recite. One or two Comorian women during the period of fieldwork, when the Comoros were still a French possession and the currency in use there the French franc, met planes to Mombasa from Ngazija weekly and made small profits by engaging in black-market money-changing.

4.3 Status dissonance

A minor problem about Table 32 is that, while it accurately reflects relative skill and income, it cannot give any insight into the personal status of many of the Comorian household heads there analysed. Several of the barmen categorised as of lower-middle level occupations were leaders of the Nairobi Comorian Association, and had to be treated courteously by all other Comorians, whatever their type of employment. Certain semi-unemployed elders were much respected and feared as astrologers. Similarly, it was always a surprise to me when I discovered that a Comorian who worked serving in a shop was an important shaikh as well. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that Table 32 is, as it were, a 'secular' or 'outsider' view of Comorians. It has analytic value, but the status of Comorian individuals as it was among the Comorians in Kenya,

and among Swahilis who lived among Comorians or were affinally linked to them, presented a very different picture, though not necessarily one which was likely to provide security in the unislamic world of post-Independence Kenya. Predictably, there was tension between those Comorians upon whom age, long residence in Kenya and Islamic expertise had conferred a high status by the criteria of the pre-colonial world, and the young highly-educated Comorians from Zanzibar whose conventional status is recorded on Table 32. These younger men and women were extremely aware of the need to behave deferentially and politely to the Comorians who had gone to Kenya before them, but they expected to be disliked, and at times fancied slights when, to an outsider's eye, none was intended.

5.0 Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to demonstrate the extent to which Comorians and Swahilis were likely to become indistinguishable once the special status of Comorians during the colonial period was annulled.

In all three areas examined, residence, household composition and employment, a highly consistent pattern has in fact emerged; Kenya-born Comorians are already well on the way to 'becoming Swahili' if they want to - this regardless of whether they are African or Swahili matrilaterally. Legally, of course, they are the only category who can claim Kenya citizenship by right rather than by application and request. But the similarity of their lifestyle to that of indigenous Swahilis is remarkable. Comoro-born men tend to live in more straitened circumstances than the Swahili control group presented here, and their range of opportunities is limited by truncated kin networks in East Africa. This group was most unlikely to begin to think of themselves as Swahilis - their pride in their Comorian identity was too great; but since their offspring in East Africa were tending to move out of the Comorian category by exercising

their right of bilateral choice of affiliation, Comoro-born men were forced to face the fact that they would probably be unable to reproduce an active Kenya Comorian category in the next generation.

Zanzibar-born Comorians were, by the time fieldwork was embarked upon, the most prominently Comorian group in Kenya. Because of their skills, they did not need to fear expulsion from the country, and had no need to hide their identity. Indeed, because they were so much more successful than coastal Kenyans, it would have been impossible for them to slide into that category, even if they had wanted to. It is very obvious in the statistical evidence presented here that the Zanzibar-born Comorians lived quite differently from other Comorians in Kenya as far as residence and employment were concerned, and although the same kinship beliefs helped to structure their households in ways very like other Comorians, their ability to spend a good deal on the household tended to produce prestigiously large domestic groups living in spacious accommodation.

In the following chapter, we examine the use made of the options implicit in the data presented here.

Table 28: Additional persons found in 18 households with a Swahili head comprising those in household-type categories 3, 4 and 5 in Table 25

Household type	3			4			5											
Household numbers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Marital status of HHH*	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
Household head (Male or Female)	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
HH's spouse (Male or Female or non-resident Male)	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
Joint children of HH and spouse	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Joint grandchildren of HH and spouse	SS	SS	SS	SS	SS	SS	SS	SS	SS	SS	SS	SS	SS	SS	SS	SS	SS	SS
W's children by previous marriages	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
W's grandchildren by previous marriages, or classificatory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other children added by W	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
W's siblings - real/classificatory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
W's parents - real/classificatory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other adults added by W	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
H's children by previous marriages	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
H's grandchildren by previous marriages, or classificatory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other children added by H	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
H's siblings - real/classificatory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
H's parents - real/classificatory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other adults added by H	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Husband (abbreviation: H)																		
Wife (abbreviation: W)																		
Individuals added by male (HH) or	6	17	7	3	5	10	5	6	7	12	7	6	7	8	5	3	6	5

Abbreviations

- * m = married
- w = widow/er
- d = divorced
- s = single
- fs = foster son
- fd = foster daughter
- n-r = never resident
- r-r = rarely resident
- L = lover
- fr. = friend
- u-r = unrelated
- ad. ill. = adopted illegitimate
- Sl. = slave
- Cl. = classificatory

Table 29: Additional persons found in 30 households with a Comorian head comprising those in household-type categories 3, 4 and 5 in Table 24

Household type	3			4			5					
	MC	NC	NC	MC	NC	NC	MC	NC	NC	MC	NC	NC
Household numbers	9 21 28 31 35 39	1 3 6 8 9 13 17	1 3 20 23 34 36 5	23	2 17 29 37	2 4 7 24						
Marital status of HHH*	m m m m m m m m m m m m	m m m m m m m m m m m m	m m m m m m m m m m m m	m m m m m m m m m m m m	m m m m m m m m m m m m	m m m m m m m m m m m m	m m m m m m m m m m m m	m m m m m m m m m m m m	m m m m m m m m m m m m	m m m m m m m m m m m m	m m m m m m m m m m m m	m m m m m m m m m m m m
Household head (Male or Female)	F F F F F F F F F F F F	M M M M M M M M M M M M	F F F F F F F F F F F F	M M M M M M M M M M M M	F F F F F F F F F F F F	M M M M M M M M M M M M	F F F F F F F F F F F F	M M M M M M M M M M M M	F F F F F F F F F F F F	M M M M M M M M M M M M	F F F F F F F F F F F F	M M M M M M M M M M M M
HHH's spouse (Male or Female or non-resident Male)	M M F F F F F F F F F F	F F F F F F F F F F F F	M M M M M M M M M M M M	F F F F F F F F F F F F	M M M M M M M M M M M M	F F F F F F F F F F F F	M M M M M M M M M M M M	F F F F F F F F F F F F	M M M M M M M M M M M M	F F F F F F F F F F F F	M M M M M M M M M M M M	F F F F F F F F F F F F
Joint children of HHH and spouse	S S 2D	S 2S 3D S D S 2S 2D	S 5S 2D 4D	S 2D 4D	S 5S 2D 4D	S 2D 4D	S 5S 2D 4D	S 2D 4D	S 5S 2D 4D	S 2D 4D	S 5S 2D 4D	S 2D 4D
Joint grandchildren of HHH and spouse	- - DS	- - - - - - - - - - - -	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD
W's children by previous marriages	NS	2WD										
H's grandchildren by previous marriages, or classificatory	WDS WDD WDD											
Other children added by W		Sof W's friend										
W's siblings - real/ classificatory		WZ WZ WZ										
W's parents - real/ classificatory												
Other adults added by W												
H's children by previous marriages												
H's grandchildren by previous marriages, or classificatory												
Other children added by H												
H's siblings - real/ classificatory		HZ										
H's parents - real/ classificatory												
Other adults added by H												
Household totals	5 4 7 3 4 5 5 8 4 6 5 6 4 4 4	12 13 2 2 2 2 2 3 3	19 5 2 5 3 5 3 5 3 2	3	19 5 2 5 3 5 3 5 3 2	3 15						

Table 33: Comorian households in Nairobi

H. hold number	People per rm	Male or Female H-hold	Birthplace of H-hold	Owning/ Renting	Rooms	Adults	Children	Total	Resident Servants
1	1.3	M	Zanzibar	R	6	4	4	8	2
2	1.5	F	Zanzibar	R	2	3	-	3	-
3	1.3	M	Zanzibar	R	3	3	1	4	1
4	2.5	F	Comoros	R	2	3	2	5	-
5	1.5	M	Comoros	R	2	3	-	3	-
6	3.0	M	Comoros	R	2	3	3	6	1
7	1.0	F	Zanzibar	R	3	3	-	3	1
8	1.25	M	Zanzibar	R	4	3	2	5	1
9	1.2	M	Madagascar	R	5	3	3	6	1
10	1.0	M	Zanzibar	R	2	2	-	2	-
11	1.25	M	Zanzibar	R	4	2	3	5	1
12	1.2	M	Zanzibar	O	5	2	4	6	1
13	1.0	M	Zanzibar	O	4	2	2	4	1
14	1.0	M	Comoros	O	2	2	-	2	-
15	2.0	M	Comoros	R	1	2	-	2	-
16	2.5	M	Comoros	R	2	2	3	5	1
17	2.0	M	Comoros	R	2	2	2	4	-
18	0.6	M	Comoros	O	5	2	1	3	1
19	2.0	M	Comoros	R	1	2	-	2	-
20	1.2	M	Zanzibar	R	5	2	4	6	1
21	0.75	M	Zanzibar	R	4	2	1	3	2
22	3.0	M	Kenya	R	1	2	1	3	-
23	1.5	F	Kenya	R	2	2	1	3	1
24	0.6	F	Zanzibar	R	3	1	1	2	1
25	1.0	F	Comoros	R	1	1	-	1	-

Table 34: Comorian households in Mombasa

H.hold number	People per rm	Male or Female H-head	Birthplace of H-head	Owning/Renting	Rooms	Adults	Children	Total	Resident Servants
1	2.4	M	Msa	O	5	5	7	12*	1
2	2.4	F	Msa	O	8	5	14	19*	1
3	1.3	M	Lamu	O	10	4	9	13*	2
4	0.8	M	Msa	O	5	2	2	4	1
5	1.5	M	Msa	O	2	2	1	3	-
6	4.0	M	Coms	R	1	2	2	4	-
7	0.6	M	Msa	O	3	2	-	2	-
8	2.5	F	Msa	O	2	2	3	5	-
9	1.0	F	Zanz	O	4	2	2	4	-
10	1.0	F	Zanz	O	2	2	-	2	1
11	1.0	M	Zanz	R	2	2	-	2	-
12	1.3	M	Zanz	R	4	2	3	5	1
13	1.2	M	Zanz	O	6	2	5	7	1
14	1.6	M	Zanz	O	3	2	2	4	-
15	1.0	F	Zanz	R	1	1	-	1	-
16	1.0	M	Coms	R	1	1	-	1	-
17	1.6	F	Msa	O	3	1	4	5	1
18	3.0	M	Coms	R	1	2	1	3	-
19	2.0	M	Coms	R	1	2	-	2	-
20	1.0	F	Msa	R	2	2	-	2	1
21	1.2	M	Zanz	O	6	4	3	7	1
22	2.0	M	Zanz	R	1	2	-	2	-
23	2.0	F	Zanz	R	1	2	-	2	-
24	2.5	M	Zanz	R	2	2	3	5	-
25	3.0	M	Coms	R	1	2	1	3	-
26	4.0	M	Coms	R	1	2	2	4	-
27	2.0	M	Coms	R	1	2	-	2	-
28	3.0	M	Coms	R	1	2	1	3	1
29	1.0	F	Coms	O	2	1	1	2	1
30	1.3	M	Zanz	O	4	2	3	5	1
31	1.3	M	Kenya	R	3	4	-	4	-
32	2.0	M	Kenya	R	2	2	2	4	1
33	2.0	M	Zanz	R	3	2	4	6	1
34	1.0	F	Uganda	R	2	2	-	2	1
35	1.0	M	Coms	R	5	2	3	5	1
36	1.0	M	Zanz	R	2	2	-	2	-
37	1.6	F	Msa	O	3	1	4	5	1
38	1.2	M	Msa	O	5	2	4	6	1
39	1.0	M	Zanz	O	5	2	3	5	1
40	0.6	M	Zanz	O	5	2	1	3	2

* Households of 10 or more people

Table 35: Swahili households in Mombasa

H.hold number	People per rm	Male or Female H-hold	Birthplace of H-head	Owning/Renting	Rooms	Adults	Children	Total	Resident Servants
1	1.2	M	Mombasa	O	5	4	2	6	2
2	1.7	M	Mombasa	O	10	4	13	17 *	1
3	1.2	M	Mombasa	O	6	3	4	7	1
4	1.5	M	Lamu	R	2	3	-	3	-
5	2.5	M	Mombasa	R	2	2	3	5	-
6	1.8	M	Mombasa	O	6	2	9	11 *	1
7	2.0	M	Mombasa	O	5	5	5	10 *	1
8	1.75	F	Mombasa	R	4	3	4	7	1
9	1.0	F	Mombasa	O	5	3	2	5	-
10	0.71	M	Mombasa	O	7	4	1	5	1
11	1.2	M	Mombasa	O	5	3	3	6	1
12	1.0	M	Mombasa	O	2	2	-	2	-
13	0.6	F	Mombasa	O	5	3	-	3	1
14	2.3	M	Zanzibar	R	3	3	4	7	-
15	2.6	M	Zanzibar	R	3	5	3	8	-
16	2.0	F	Lamu	O	3	2	4	6	-
17	2.0	M	Mombasa	O	6	4	8	12 *	-
18	1.4	M	Mombasa	O	5	3	4	7	1
19	1.0	F	Mombasa	O	5	2	3	5	1
20	2.0	M	Mombasa	O	3	3	3	6	1

*Households of 10 or more people

CHAPTER 6

ADAPTATION AND CHANGE

1.0 Public and private Comorian identities

Throughout the colonial period, whether they lived in Zanzibar or Kenya and whether they were born in the Comoros or East Africa, Comorians were known as WaNgazija when KiSwahili was being spoken and as 'Comorians' when English was being spoken. The relatively small number of Comorians who came from islands other than Ngazija were still known as WaNgazija. Thus, although Comorians were never a large category in East Africa, their name nevertheless included several sub-categories of people just as the classifications 'Asian' or 'African' did (Cf. La Fontaine, 1969).

In fact 'WaNgazija or 'Comorians' had two distinct referents. When it referred to those born in the Comoro Islands, it was a relatively precise geographical term and implied personal knowledge of the Comoros, that one had close kin living there, and that one would probably return there. Those who were born in East Africa and who called themselves Comorian were using the term in a different way, but one well recognised among East African muslims. Arabs, especially traders, always use as their lakab (surname) the name of their town or region of origin, al-Baghdadi, for instance. This usage was picked up by upper class Swahilis in East Africa, and we know from the Kilwa Chronicle that as early as the sixteenth century East African town names were used in the same way. We hear of the al-Malindi at the Kilwa court, for example (Freeman-Grenville, 1962a: 49). Many of the Comorians who worked at the Zanzibar court in the nineteenth century used Comorian town names similarly. We hear of al-Ntsujini, and al-Itsandrawi. What seems to have happened is that since the British, from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards, thought of the islands as a unit, lakabs for individual towns were replaced by a larger

scale lakab. Some Comorians even began to use the lakab, al-Kumri, 'The Comorian'. The Zanzibar wazalia thereby became congeries of groups together comparable to the Mombasa Twelve Clans. Just as each of Mombasa's Swahili clans was named after a town of origin on the northern Swahili coast, so each of the sultanate groups which together went to make up Zanzibar's Comorian wazalia was so named. The Mombasa clans and the Comorian sultanate groups in Zanzibar were both known as miji (town, or area of origin) in KiSwahili, and it was in relation to each other as much as in relation to place of origin that they had their meaning. Miji, in both places, were in-marrying groups, and though their existence created a mechanism for the continued incorporation of suitable new immigrants from their place of origin, they quickly became local kinship groups in their own right. They were thus the equivalent of the maximal descent group in Swahili/Comorian settlements - the ukoo of the Swahili, the inya of the Comorians.

It is clear that the Comorians in East Africa did not distinguish in the way that I have done between these two usages, and they did not because of the strength that Comorian public identity had had.¹

However, upon the independence of the East African countries, the context for this public identity was lost. All categories of people found themselves at a disadvantage by comparison with Africans. Skilled Comorian wazalia in Zanzibar found themselves envied and their jobs coveted; Comorian wageni in Kenya watched the exodus of many of their British employers, and lost their legal protection as bartenders in clubs and hotels when, at Independence, it ceased to be a punishable offence for Africans to handle imported alcoholic drinks (Ross, 1927: 467)

1 My usage of public and private identities has something in common with Parkin's distinction between congregational and interpersonal ideologies of ethnic association (Parkin, 1974: 119ff.).

In the second half of the 1960s, conditions for Comorians further deteriorated. As recounted in a previous chapter, deliberate moves were made to oust well-qualified Comorian wazalia from Zanzibar in 1968, and in 1969 the Kenyan government began to require work permits for those who were not Kenya citizens or Africans from other East African countries. Skilled Comorians were able to get work permits without difficulty, but the unskilled Comorian wageni could no longer enter the country with their old ease from Ngazija or elsewhere in East Africa, since indigenous Kenyans could do the jobs they had done. Comorians remember that the requirement of work permits by the Kenya Government at immigration points was still somewhat arbitrary; those who could prove that they had one African parent or those who merely looked African were allowed into the country to work. But, so few years after the Zanzibar Revolution, it was a period of great hostility to those who looked 'Arab'. Comorian immigrants would say that they were Tanzanian.

There was a further restriction on Comorian room for manoeuvre in 1974, aimed at those who had not previously had work permits. The Kenyan government decided that by the end of 1974 all in Kenya who were not Kenyan citizens would have to register as Aliens. Many Comorians, particularly of course the wageni, had been able to live in Kenya without formally identifying themselves as citizens of any particular country. They had come from Ngazija to Zanzibar and from Zanzibar to East Africa without papers of any kind. The forthcoming Act caused particular anxiety to those who had allowed officialdom to suppose that they were Kenyan nationals. In order to obtain a Kenyan passport, papers such as birth certificates were required. On the other hand, those who did not register as Aliens (and thereby allowed it to be thought that they were Kenyan) wondered what would happen if at a later stage they wanted a French passport from the embassy in Nairobi; they wondered if the French

and Kenyan governments would compare notes and detect discrepancies. Several Comorian wageni felt particularly threatened because, through not having declared themselves voluntarily as non-Kenyans in the past, they were on the electoral roll, and received voting cards in September 1974 prior to the national elections to be held in November. They decided not to return their voting cards, but not to vote either. On the whole, when the time came, those Comorians who decided to register as Aliens were those who had already made an ada marriage, who were in good jobs and could return home if they lost them. The elderly, poverty-stricken and unemployed did not.¹

Before turning to an investigation of the use Comorians made of their personal Comorian identity, I write of a case which demonstrated to the Comorians involved the now illusory nature of Comorian public identity.

1.1 The crisis in the Nairobi Comorian Association, 1973

Comorian wageni in Nairobi were highly regarded by other Muslims living with them in the African location of Pumwani, partly for their religious expertise and partly because they alone had built themselves a fine stone club-house. The Comorian maulidi held annually at the club-house was one of the highlights of the Muslim year to those who lived nearby (Bujra, 1970). In 1971 the club-house was compulsorily purchased and pulled down by the Nairobi City Council as part of the safety precautions attending the extension of Eastleigh Military Airport. The City Council was prepared to offer financial compensation to a committee representing Comorians in Kenya.

1 It is important to point out that those Comorian wageni in Kenya who sought to conceal their identities were concerned to hide them only from African officials. They were known - and happy to be known - as Comorians among their muslim neighbours.

Prior to 1970 the Comorian Association had been split into two, one faction in favour of independence for the Comoro Islands, and one against. MOLINACO (Le Mouvement pour la Liberation Nationale des Comores) now had paid-up members in most of East Africa's big towns, including Nairobi. On the whole MOLINACO's founders and most enthusiastic members were young, had received some Western education, and had been born or reared outside Ngazija. They had been influenced by FRELIMO and by the anomaly - as they saw it - between the independence of the East African countries and the lack of proposals for eventual Comorian independence. The elders of the Nairobi Comorian Association, however, were very hostile to MOLINACO, its members and its aims. These wageni had been much frightened by the revolution which had followed so close on the heels of Zanzibar's independence, and their perceptions were that young Comorians hailing from Zanzibar were trouble-makers. (In fact, though some young Comorians had been involved in the Zanzibar revolution, they came from families whose total commitment was to Zanzibar. The founders and promoters of MOLINACO had much closer links with Ngazija, and a return to live there was a real option for them.) MOLINACO's members wanted Comorian independence on idealistic grounds; the Nairobi wageni had pragmatic reasons for preferring the status quo. The Association's leaders were successful in their own eyes, since they had made ada marriages and were therefore influential individuals in their home towns, and they valued their French nationality. They enjoyed being invited to the French Embassy for 14th of July celebrations, and were proud when consulted about the bona fides of Comorian individuals applying to the French Embassy for passports. Satisfied with their own achievements, they could see no reason to challenge French rule in the Comoros, and the French Embassy rewarded them for their loyalty by giving them considerable say in who should, and who should not receive French passports.

About 1968, these elders attempted to institute a new rule. No Comorian who was a member of MOLINACO could also be a member of the Comorian Association. In this way a split was forced that tended to line up younger, Western-educated, Zanzibar-born Comorians against older Kur'an school-educated Comorians from Ngazija.

Tensions between Ngazija wageni and Zanzibar wazalia (1968)

At a MOLINACO meeting held in 1968, a young Zanzibar-born mzalia recalls, an elderly mgeni came to him at the door and asked, 'Who is going to speak at this meeting?' He was told. 'And what language will be used at the meeting?' he went on. When he heard that it would be KiSwahili and not ShiNgazija, he snorted, turned on his heel and left. To him, the choice of language was an indicator that MOLINACO concerned wazalia interests, not those of wageni.

Some individuals who had been members of the Comorian Association, but who felt that they should support ultimate Independence for the Comoros, felt particularly angry that there was now a move to make membership of both organisations impossible. In 1969, following the election of a pro-Independence chairman whom the wazee (elders) would not recognise, feeling was so acrimonious that the Comorian Association Committee ceased to meet, because it was no longer felt to represent all Comorians. The club building was used informally as a baraza (relaxation spot) by a few elderly wageni, and that was all.

The offer of compensation from the Nairobi City Council could thus have hardly come at a worse time. For two years the money remained more or less intact¹ as unsuccessful attempts were made to form a committee from the two factions. In July 1973, however, a committee was at last elected containing wageni and wazalia but with no representatives from

1 The City Council apparently allowed several hundred pounds of the money to be withdrawn by committee members of the existing Comorian Association for expenses in searching for a new club-house and paying for a lawyer. This money tended to disappear unaccounted for.

the most conservative and elderly wageni. The new committee contained a few Zanzibar wazalia whose only experience of a Comorian association was the wealthy settlers' club in Zanzibar, but was mainly composed of younger Comorian wageni

One problem was that the compensation money - about £4,000 - was insufficient to buy or rebuild a club like the old one, because of the rapid rise in Nairobi property prices. Proposals for how the money should be spent were consequently varied. Most wageni favoured the acquisition of another Nairobi house - even a small one. Some suggested re-siting it in Mombasa, where prices were lower and where somewhere to stay was often needed by those departing and arriving on the weekly Air Comores flight. This was vetoed because 'Comorians in Mombasa are too passive to deserve the Club-House in their town'. Some MOLINACO members suggested giving all the money to the independence fight, and some wazalia from Zanzibar and Kenya said that accommodation in Moroni for those trying to find a foothold in Ngazija, but who lacked relatives, would be the most useful. This last suggestion provoked very angry reactions from the wageni who said that, since they were the only real Comorians (WaNgazija safi), and since it was a wageni who had financed the building of the first club-house, they should have chief say in what was done with the money. Eventually a Zanzibar mzalia suggested that the money be used as the deposit for a mortgage on a Nairobi property, the mortgage repayments to be met from rents charged to users of the club lodging rooms. This suggestion was accepted with relief.

In July 1973 the desire to break the deadlock of the last two years was great enough for a meeting to be arranged in which all Comorians (not just paid-up club members) in Nairobi and elsewhere were invited. Despite the scoffing of various elders, who had tried and failed to stage a similar meeting previously, about seventy individuals came - mainly

wageni, some Kenya-born African/Comorian wazalia, and about fifteen Zanzibar-born Comorians.¹ The four main previous office-holders of the Association Committee, and their supporters, were absent. The meeting was heated but friendly, and ended hopefully. Events over the next year or so, however, belied initial optimism.

Several highly qualified Zanzibar wazalia, it was arranged at the meeting, would offer their skills as required. Lawyers, a chartered accountant, and a town planner with contacts in Nairobi City Council were to be called on by the predominantly wageni committee. In the event they were not consulted at all, and were first hurt, and finally, resentful. The wageni preferred to search for a house by themselves,² partly because they had felt the Zanzibar wazalia attitude was patronising, and partly because they wanted a club-house for themselves and wished to exclude those whom they would have to regard as their social superiors. The wazalia in turn began to suspect the wageni of excluding them, so that some of the money could be pocketed by the committee, pretending that the house found cost more than it did. They complained of the committee's ignorance of correct procedure, and inadequate book-keeping.

The wazalia, in particular, but also some wageni I spoke to, were disappointed and a little surprised that the fact that 'all were Comorians' could not unite them on an important issue. One Zanzibar mzalia said

1 Comorian (mostly Comorian/African) women were also allowed to the meeting for the first time ever.

2 The house was found through peculiarly unofficial routes. It had belonged to an Asian family, and the fact that it was coming onto the market was made known to Nairobi's Comorians in the following way. Hafswa, a Kenya-born Comorian woman with a Comorian mother and a Goan father, was married to a Bajune mganga (medicine man) who practised in Pumwani. Among his clients was a Hindu estate agent who agreed to look out for a suitable house. Hafswa was leader of the women's section of the Comorian Association, and when the agent told her he had found a house, the Committee was able to move into action.

'We wanted to annul the old distinction between us and the others.' In fact, 'the others' prevented them from doing so. It was the first time that the Zanzibar wazalia had been made to feel that they were not proper Comorians, and the rebuff felt by the individuals who had tried to help was also felt by other Zanzibar wazalia in Kenya when they heard about it. At a later stage when an attempt was made to raise some more money among all the Comorians in Kenya for conveyancing costs (which would have been unnecessary if the Zanzibar mzalia who offered his services earlier had been used), Zanzibar wazalia refused to contribute. They had wanted their move away from the exclusiveness of their group in Zanzibar to be recognised, but the wageni would not meet them half way.

By wageni standards there had been little contact between them and the Zanzibar wazalia for many years. The wazalia had denied the importance of ada marriage, which came to the same thing as denying the importance of Ngazija elders, and intermarriage between the two categories was extremely rare. The only relatively recent case of it I discovered had many anomalous features.

A marriage between a Comorian wageni and a Zanzibar mzalia (c.1971)

The bride, the adopted daughter of Comorian wageni (husband and wife) in Mombasa was of Bajuni origin, though brought up very much as a Comorian, to the extent of speaking some ShiNgazija. In her favour were the facts that her parents were leaders of the Mombasa wageni, and that she was very light skinned and very pretty. The Zanzibar mzalia who married her worked as a clerk, employment lowly by the standards of his Comorian classmates. Reputedly, too, he had been unable to make a better marriage because he had been a homosexual previously.

In this marriage the woman was at the top of the wageni category, and the man near the bottom of the wazalia, which suggests that the latter looked down upon the former. They indeed compared themselves favourably with the wageni on the criterion of education. It was thus over-optimistic

of the wazalia to expect the wageni to unite readily with them on a political issue. In Swahili/Comorian kinship terms, one is unlikely to unite politically with those who refuse to exchange women; and the sudden interest of some wazalia in the Comoro islands themselves was not welcomed - to be welcome in Ngazija by wageni standards wazalia should have married there, and treated wageni leaders in East Africa with respect. When the controversy over membership of MOLINACO or the Comorian Association had been at its height, Comorian individuals living in Kenya had tended to see the issue very much in terms of loyalty to leaders rather than in terms of the realities of the future for the Comoro Islands. For instance, a Comorian/African woman, explaining why she had joined neither association, said, 'I didn't like to go into the matter because my sister on my father's side [FBD] was MOLINACO and my other father - who married my mother and reared me - was Association. So I was afraid to get involved ... on this side my sister would get angry, and on that side, my [step-]father would feel bitterness.'

So the case of the Comorian club-house in Nairobi was unable to unite Comorians of different backgrounds under the title Comorian, and in a way also marked the end of any kind of public identity for the Comorian category. As a Zanzibar mzalia said, in 1973, 'The [Nairobi] Comorian Club would have disappeared by now if it had not been for the money.' The Comorian Associations in Mombasa and Zanzibar were indeed long defunct by 1973. Although Comorians had been perceived as an ethnic category by outsiders, when they tried to unite over a specific issue among themselves, the gap between Ngazija wageni and Zanzibar wazalia could not be bridged.¹

¹ This thesis formally covers the period up to the beginning of 1975. But because I have been back to Kenya twice since then, I know that the Comorian Association ultimately became the property of the Comorian/African wazalia in Nairobi.

2.0 Choices

I now turn to an analysis of the decisions of Comorians (however defined) when their public identity had atrophied and they were left merely with the choice of privately identifying themselves as Comorians, or not. Many Comorians regardless of the criteria by which they defined themselves were unable to use Comorian kinship and marriage links as they made plans for their future. One pattern which emerged during the post-Independence period in consequence was that men began again to use the kinship networks which women had kept in working order for them.

2.1 The Zanzibar wazalia

Unlike the other categories which will be discussed, the Zanzibar wazalia had in many cases to make their decisions about the future bearing in mind that continuing to live where they had been born was not open to them. Those who stayed were those able, if necessary, to pass as Zanzibar Swahilis (the WaShirazi). This tended to mean Comorians unsuccessful by the standards of the wazalia élite. However, even the élite by accident or design left kin such as elderly parents or locally married sisters in Zanzibar, and if circumstances were ever to make it possible to return there, many would have homes to go to. The category of wazalia to whom the independent Zanzibar government felt most hostility was that of those with qualifications, whether they were male or female. Most such Comorians had taken Tanzanian nationality during the 1960s, and found work in Tanzania itself. Some, as Tanzanians, found employment in Kenya and for this category it was no longer necessary to be anything but Tanzanian, if one so chose. Tanzanian ideology, unlike that in Kenya, played down tribal identity. In addition, Tanzanian Muslims hailing from Zanzibar were regarded sympathetically by Nyerere, and hence by official policy, because of their persecution in Zanzibar. Since other well-qualified

Zanzibar wazalia found work as Tanzanians outside Africa completely, in Germany, Scandinavia, and Britain, Comorian self-identification was quite unnecessary except among themselves.

Zanzibar wazalia, though there has so far been a strong continuing tendency for in-marriage among them despite their geographical dispersal, have been forced to face the fact that they were for a time hated in Zanzibar by Africans. This has caused some of them to reject the appellation 'Comorian' even while marrying, and spending spare time with, other Comorian wazalia from Zanzibar. One said, bitterly, 'We thought we were so great', and another. 'I'm not a Comorian - I don't want to be.' (Me: 'Why?'). 'Because they were so proud of themselves. It has nothing to do with me - I think it's ridiculous. I am a Tanzanian.'

Some of the Zanzibar wazalia went as refugees to live in Ngazija after their expulsion from Zanzibar in 1968. Those who made this choice tended to have had a parent born in Ngazija, or, though having had several years of primary education, to be under-educated by the standards of the wazalia elite. For instance, several policemen and employees of Zanzibar's Public Works Department opted to go to Ngazija. Other wazalia, reluctant to live in Ngazija themselves, directed kin towards whom they had financial responsibilities to go and live in Ngazija. One such man left one of his married sisters in Zanzibar, but paid for his mother, sister and younger brother to return to their ancestral town, Itsandra. His brother obtained employment as a veterinary officer, the job he had held in Zanzibar.

The fact that this group of wazalia had settled into Ngazija encouraged some of the more highly qualified wazalia to day-dream about a future life in Ngazija for themselves as well. At this stage very few of them had ever seen Ngazija, but it is clear that what they knew of its conservative Islamic atmosphere made them hope to re-create something

of the Zanzibar they had lost. The idea that it was their own country, from which they could never be ousted again, suddenly became attractive. They knew that the islands were 'backward', but they thought that after independence, if they all settled there with their skills, these problems could be overcome. Those with more recent knowledge of Ngazija, however, and with some perception of local political forces, knew how unlikely it was that these wazalia would be welcome.

There was also the objective problem of language. Those highly qualified through studies in the English language would not only have to learn French but might still find their qualifications unrecognised within the French system.

In fact a few of these wazalia did attempt to settle in Ngazija after it obtained Independence in 1975 and after Ali Soilihi's Chinese Marxist revolution of 1976.

Awadh (1976)

Awadh, though born in Zanzibar, had a mother born in Ngazija and had visited his kin there once in 1970 before the Comoros' Independence. He had trained first as an aircraft mechanic, and then as an air traffic controller. He was full of idealism about the Comorian revolution, knew the President personally, and when he made clear his intention to commit himself to Ngazija, he was given a senior post in civil aviation. However, he had not bargained for the passionate intensity of small-scale island politics. He found that sentiment and kinship links were insufficient to make him accepted by the important islanders who were his social peers. He was laughed at for his poor French, and the fact that he had not been on the spot throughout the long period of campaigning for Independence meant that he remained an outsider. After a year he left in great disappointment.

A Zanzibar-born doctor who tried to settle in Ngazija, and who was full of enthusiasm for the revolution, similarly left disheartened after a few months.

Some of those who had returned to Ngazija earlier, in 1968, tried life in the islands for eight or ten years, but were never able fully to accept the poor material living standards they experienced. When an improvement took place in Zanzibar's political life in the later 1970s, a few returned.

Comorian women born in Zanzibar who returned to the Comoros to be received by close kin found it less difficult to be locally integrated than did men. Many found however that the gap between life for a woman in Zanzibar and life for a woman in Ngazija was very great. Things which they had taken for granted, like medical facilities for their children, or even foods like rice, sugar and tea, were much scarcer commodities in Ngazija. They also found that their increased rights, in Ngazija, were matched by increased social controls. Their actions and styles of dress were closely monitored by kin and neighbours.

Salma (1968 onwards)

Salma was about 16 when her father decided to take the family back to Ngazija, in 1968. She had been to primary and secondary school where she was doing well. They settled in her parents' home in Ntsujini, and because Salma was her father's oldest daughter, it quickly became clear that the townspeople expected her to be given in ada marriage. Particularly circumspect behaviour was in consequence required of her, and since the town knew that she would not have been brought up with such rigorousness in Zanzibar, she was watched very closely. Her mother's house was refurbished and rebuilt so as to be ready for her, and expensive carved doors were fitted.

Because she spoke good English, she found employment first as a tour guide and then as an air hostess with Air Comores. Her father was torn between the pride he would have felt in Zanzibar at a daughter's well-paid employment, and the shame he was forced to feel by local censure of her mobility and contact with strangers. When she ran away to marry an Arab schoolmate she had known in Zanzibar, the

elders of Ntsujini felt they had been personally slighted. Her father felt constrained to slaughter cattle and offer them a feast equal in scale to that which they would have enjoyed if Salma's ada marriage had taken place.

Those Zanzibar wazalia who found employment in Nairobi have been successful professionally but they regard their situation as temporary, even though many have permanent posts, because they find the atmosphere of Nairobi life alien and artificial by comparison with life in Zanzibar. The small numbers of coastal professionals in Nairobi, and the highly tribal lifestyle of African professionals, has meant that they feel isolated, and have tended to make new friends with other Tanzanians, or with Europeans. Most would have preferred to work in Mombasa, if they could find equivalent employment there. Lacking an Islamic, still less a Comorian, milieu in the Zanzibar sense, they seemed to put effort into maintaining telephone and letter contact with kin and friends in Tanzania, and other places where Zanzibar Comorian wazalia live. An example of the efficiency of this telephone-linked diaspora is as follows:

Kinship and the telephone (1974)

Zanzibar wazalia living in Nairobi heard, with amazing promptness, of the release from gaol of a kinswoman imprisoned in Dar-es-Salaam for her supposed connection with the assassination of Karume in 1972. Since it was feared that phone calls between Tanzania and Kenya were monitored, the good news had been phoned from Dar to Zanzibar, from Zanzibar to Dubai and from Dubai to Nairobi. All her important kin knew she was free long before the public announcement to the effect that she had been released.

The few members of the Comorian wazalia elite in Mombasa tended to be those involved in shipping and the docks. Because they rarely had kin among the Mombasa Twelve Clans, and because they were very well paid by Mombasa standards, they tended to live in one-time European or Asian parts of the town, and were thus also isolated from the lifestyle they

had known in Zanzibar. The wives in particular (some of whom were frequently alone because they were married to ships' officers) relied heavily for companionship on other Zanzibar Comorian wazalia, kin or friends, on visits to Mombasa.

Poorer Zanzibar wazalia integrated much more successfully into Mombasa life. They lived in cheaper but more congenial parts of Mombasa town, where a Swahili style of daily life hummed around them. The relationships their wives established with neighbours who had, in many cases, known and admired local Comorians for years, helped to make them feel at home.

Such Zanzibar wazalia encountered Swahili/Comorian wazalia, and were sometimes able to establish a kin link with them.

One Zanzibar-born Comorian woman who brought with her to Mombasa a Zanzibar Government pension upon which she could easily live (she had been a school teacher) was able to buy a substantial house in Mombasa Old Town. She was married to a Comorian mgeni who met most of the other Comorian wageni at the mosque, and she quickly became well-known. Indeed she tried, though unsuccessfully, to establish a Mombasa group of wabuki cult¹ members among women who were partly Comorian. She is financially secure, has a married daughter also living in Kenya, and appears to enjoy Mombasa life and to be unlikely to move again.

An example of someone still trying to keep more than one option open is as follows, however:

1 It is difficult to predict when a spirit cult will become popular. Cults have periods of quiescence alternating with bursts of new cases of possession. Sociologically it seems however that 1973/74, when so many Comorians were divesting themselves of overt Comorian identity, was a poor moment for hoping to revive such a Comorian activity. Her only proselyte was me!

Mwallim Abdel Rahman

Mwallim Abdel Rahman had worked as a schoolteacher in Kenya before Independence, but had returned to Zanzibar in 1962. After the Zanzibar Revolution, he at first decided to stay in the island, since he thought that, as a primary school teacher, he would always be needed. He was publicly outspoken, however, when Comorian children's rights to schooling were reduced, and was advised by friends to flee the country before he came to harm. He went back to Kenya and found employment, and decided after some time to take out Kenya citizenship. He was told that, if he had Tanzanian citizenship, he could change it to Kenyan, but that if his nationality was 'French' (he was a second generation Zanzibar-born Comorian), he could not. He returned secretly to Zanzibar (dhows smuggled individuals in and out of the island), obtained Tanzanian nationality from officials who did not know him and did not know he had been living out of the island; and returned to Kenya and obtained Kenyan citizenship in due course. At first it seemed that he had made a better decision than those of his siblings who had returned to settle in Ngazija, but by 1974 he had become less certain about the future for coastal people in that country. He talked of building his daughter a house in Ngazija 'in case it is ever needed', and of marrying her to his sister's son. He also acted as host to several island-born Comorians who had come to Mombasa on business or for medical treatment, and who had been sent to him by his brother in Moroni. Should he wish to retire to Ngazija with his wife and those of his children who want to come, he would be in a strong position to do so.

Not all Zanzibar wazalia were so fortunate in their options; some indeed, through their personal circumstances, were unable to make use of various theoretical options.

Sharif Omar (1973)

Sharif Omar grew up culturally as a Zanzibar mzalia, though he had in fact come to Zanzibar as a young child. Because he had come to Zanzibar long before the Second World War he

did not have such a successful education as younger wazalia were to have after the War, and he worked as a fireman and as a clerk at various stages in his career. He married a Comorian mzalia in Zanzibar and when later, around the time of Zanzibar's Independence, he went to look for work in Kenya, he made a second marriage to a partly Comorian, partly Swahili woman, whose Swahili connections placed her among the Twelve Clans upper class. When I met him he had been unemployed for many years and could not support either of his wives. His sole income appeared to be derived from small-scale smuggling in conjunction with regular travellers on Air Comores flights between Mombasa and Moroni.

He had a brother in Ngazija who had not been reared in Zanzibar, but since he had grown up thinking of himself as a Zanzibar mzalia, he had made no savings or plans for an ada marriage in Ngazija, and knew that if he went to live there his position would be unenviable. He was far too unsuccessful by Zanzibar wazalia standards for any of their options to be open to him, and since he had not spent his life obtaining religious qualifications, he could not make a living from the fact of being a sharif. He thus fell between all the available stools.

Increasing numbers of the most educated of the Zanzibar wazalia have for the time being abandoned decisions about where to work in East Africa, and have gone further afield, wherever their qualifications would find them work. While individuals are found various places in America and Europe, several have gone for preference to the Persian Gulf. In 1977, as it happened, there were four Zanzibar Comorian wazalia at the UN: the ambassadorial representatives of Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Tanzania, and the Comoros, respectively.

Some Zanzibar wazalia, like various other Zanzibaris, have managed to trace a kinship link to South Arabia or Uman.

Hakim (1976)

Hakim has been through several modifications of his social identity. He was born in Zanzibar to a Comorian mgeni mother

and an Umani father living in Zanzibar. He married a Zanzibar Comorian mzalia but divorced her after they had had three children. He found work in Kenya, and after some time made a second marriage to a Mombasa sharifa whose mosque teacher father he much admired. (Because it was his second marriage and he was not a sharif he had to pay a very large dower for her.) At this stage he regarded Kenya as his permanent home. He took his wife to Ngazija when the Comoros became independent, but they both found life so difficult there that they returned to Kenya after a year or so. He then set to work to collect proofs of his Umani patrilineal descent, took out Umani citizenship, and has been able to obtain very well-paid employment in Uman. Talking to me about his view of this action he said, 'I never thought about my father's people when I was in Zanzibar. I always expected to follow my mother and live with Comorians.' He does not yet feel at home with Umanis. Fortunately, there are lots of Zanzibaris in Uman and he has discovered that he has a sister in Uman by his father.

Of all the categories of Comorians investigated, the Zanzibar wazalia were on the whole those making least use of kinship for help in obtaining housing or employment. Their long-term economic security is entirely in their own hands and there is no broader kin group elsewhere obliged to take them in and provide for them. The investment of their parents in their education has been of the greatest possible value to them,

2.2 The Kenya wageni

All the Kenya wageni, when they had first come to Kenya, had been engaged in employment the goal of which was saving for an ada marriage. Those who had been successful in this were in consequence unaffected by the collapse of Comorian public identity in East Africa. Even though there were several who, having made an ada marriage, were back in Kenya living with earlier wives, the worst that could happen to them was that

they would lose their jobs somewhat earlier than their planned retirement date. All preferred to spend their old age in Ngazija because of the pleasures and benefits to be enjoyed from being senior elders in their home towns. This was particularly true since the effects of chain migration meant that they had all come from the same few adjacent settlements, in north-west and west Ngazija. When I visited these towns in 1974 and met several retired migrants, although they asked me eagerly about the fates of their younger co-townsmen in Kenya, it was plain that most found their own status a great source of contentment.¹

Those wageni whose situation was much more uncertain in 1973/74 were those who had yet to make an ada marriage. By the time my field-work started, some were already retired or unemployed, and they knew that they could never return to Ngazija. The shame which would have awaited them and which deterred them is explained in Chapter 3.

A generation of slightly younger wageni who were over forty-five in several cases, were still torn between hopes of making an ada marriage and hopes of doing well enough to settle in Kenya, in 1973/74. They were highly perturbed as opportunities for Comorian employment decreased, and they saw the likelihood of their achieving either of their goals receding. There were a few Comorian wageni of under forty-five, but not many because immigration had ceased in the late 1950s as it became clear that Kenya would soon be independent. They, like some of the Comorian/African wazalia,

1 I noted that, though these returned migrants felt that they had reached the pinnacle of local society, other WaNgazija from larger towns compared them unfavourably with returned migrants from Madagascar. The pattern of labour migration in Madagascar had been such that Comorian migrants became artisans and returned home not only with money but also with skills they could sell. The East African migrants were referred to collectively as the maboi, because they had earned their money working as 'boys' for Europeans. It was known locally that 'boy' really meant 'child', and it was felt to be comic that an old man had allowed himself to be called a 'boy' throughout his working life.

were fairly certain that they would be best off making a life for themselves where they were.

The successful wageni - those who were back in Kenya but had made an ada marriage in Ngazija - usually lived fairly simply in Kenya, and used their wealth in Ngazija. But, as leaders of the local wageni, they enjoyed prestige as elders in Kenya also. Because of their importance it often happened that their current wives in Kenya acquired a certain importance in their own right; and these most successful migrants were more determined than poorer men to act generously towards their African wives in matters financial. It was obviously from this category too that men came who were prepared to help their partially African children to a place in Ngazija society.

In the uncertain conditions of life for Comorians in Kenya in 1973/74, such men commanded a key resource: their ability to help. It was through their recommendations to the French Embassy that individuals were able to obtain French nationality. The main intention of the French government in using such intermediaries was to assist individuals born in the Comoros who had come to East Africa without papers in the days when this had been possible, and who now wished to be returned to Ngazija. However, after the Zanzibar Revolution, certain of the Zanzibar wazalia decided that they would like to take up French nationality, though in their case they had their eyes on access to higher education in Europe, rather than a permit to enter Ngazija. Hostility to France in the Comoros was mounting in this period, and demands for independence becoming more vociferous. The French Embassy in Nairobi, according to Zanzibar wazalia, was reluctant to make it easy for 'subversive elements' who had been involved in the Zanzibar Revolution to enter the Comoros. In particular, they were anxious to keep out active MOLINACO members (although MOLINACO's force was spent by 1973). The Comorian elders were in a position to

recommend an individual as reliable (or not), and they were courted carefully by those hoping for their recommendation. A few Comorian/African children of these elders, born in Nairobi, had French passports obtained for them, and were sent to Paris, often to train in hotel management: a grander version of their fathers' employment.

Much less certain was the future of wageni between 45 and 55 years old. Most had held jobs in hotels in Nairobi, or along the coast, for many years. It is not entirely clear to me why they had been less successful in completing ada marriages than the first group, for they must have earned as much money. They themselves did not have a simple answer, though they talked about the difficulty of life in Ngazija. Of course, it must also be borne in mind that many of their age-mates had made ada marriages and retired to Ngazija, and that I therefore only met those left behind. I think the answer chiefly lies in the fact that they started to work in East Africa slightly later, often after 1950, and that Kenya's Independence and the boom years which followed it came at a formative time in their working lives. In consequence, the drive to save, which impelled older wageni, was dissipated by thoughts that the material advantages of Kenya might outweigh any status that awaited them in Ngazija.

In 1973 the mood of insecurity which had begun to possess Comorians a year or two earlier had started to make some of these men wish that they had, after all, made ada marriages. Two were actually in the process of belatedly saving for an ada marriage; one already 55 years old. Several, though, who lived in Nairobi and were married to Muslim Kikuyu women, had little thought of returning to Ngazija, and were making unashamed use of any advantage which their affines could help them to. For instance, access to Nairobi City Council housing, or to Kenyan nationality, could often be obtained only if the applicant, particularly if he was a coastal person, was introduced to the relevant official by

someone of that official's tribe. Employment, too, might come from such contacts.

On the coast some Comorian wageni in this age category would obviously live uxori-locally in the houses of coastal wives indefinitely. One wageni, who had living-in accommodation at the hotel where he worked, was using his salary to build himself a house bit by bit as he could afford it on the outskirts of Mombasa. The relative cheapness of a Swahili house made home-ownership on the coast a much simpler matter than it was in Nairobi, where the building of 'temporary structures' was dealt with severely.

The wageni in this category, though they maintained a keen interest in news and gossip about other Comorians in East Africa, had reached a point where active links with Ngazija were slight. Though they had the right to return to Ngazija in an emergency, since they were born there and had living kin there, it seemed that none, except the two just mentioned, were taking steps to keep that option open. They were no longer responding to the occasional request for money which arrived from kin in Ngazija, for instance. Instead, to an outsider's eye, those who lived on the coast were becoming indistinguishable from the Swahilis and indeed many made local marriages which confirmed this interpretation.

Those wageni living in Nairobi had joined the heterogeneous ranks of urban Muslims which exist in several of East Africa's towns. They rented rooms in predominantly Muslim locations, and were married to women of very varied origins: Somalis, Muslim Ethiopians, Bajunis, Muslim Kamba, Kikuyu, Nandi, and Ganda (from Kampala). By the 1970s these old locations, like Pumwani (Bujra, 1975) had already been in existence almost as long as Nairobi itself, and had almost become settler rather than immigrant mitaa. Living there was not so very different from Mombasa - or Ngazija for that matter - as might be supposed. As Bujra points out, the original

settlers in these locations had been Muslim porters from the coast, at a time when Islam was the integrating factor which incorporated newcomers to the locations, and helped to give the texture of daily life its characteristic coastal style. To the best of my knowledge these wageni had given up their chance of return to Ngazija without regrets.

One elderly unemployed man I came to know well in Mombasa came to symbolise for me the chagrin felt by those of the older generation of wageni who had genuinely wanted to return as elders to Ngazija but who had failed to make sufficient savings to do so.

Mzee Mbaye (1974)

Mzee Mbaye had not seen Ngazija since 1935 when I met him, but would entertain me with a vivid picture of life in his home town there in those days. His older brother had also worked as a migrant in Kenya, and both had married Swahili women. His brother had had two children (he had had none); and when he had saved enough for an ada marriage he retired to Itsandra, leaving his Swahili wife and children behind. When I encountered Mzee Mbaye, he was living in a multiply-occupied Swahili house where a migrant, also from Itsandra, rented a room for himself, his wife and child. This younger wageni paid for the old man's board and lodging as an act of charity (sadaka). Mzee Mbaye's Swahili kin, the children of his brother, had refused to look after him, and his wife had long ago died.

The group of such elderly wageni in Mombasa seemed to be mourning the past when Comorians there had been a group admired by the Swahilis, as much as they were mourning their absence from their age-mates now in Nagzija. After all, the age-mates they would have joined in Ngazija had they succeeded in ada marriage were in many cases their friends and colleagues of many years' standing, in East Africa. Left alone now they continued to frequent old meeting spots in Mombasa, sitting on the outside step of a shop where the most respected of the Mombasa Comorian

Association's Presidents had worked before retiring and dying, or by the Khonzi mosque - which had been the mosque nearest to the oldest of the Mombasa Association premises in Mombasa. Several of these men were now widowers, and were too poor to take wives to look after them in old age. Their domestic arrangements were various, some having a Comorian kinswoman, or the wife of a Comorian co-townsmen, at whose home they ate daily, some making an arrangement with a neighbour or house-owner in the multiply-occupied Swahili house where they had a room.

Though I never went to look for any of them, I heard that there were other elderly migrants still living in the Kenya Highlands since the days when they had worked for Europeans as stewards. They had taken local (mainly Meru and Embu) wives, and when their opportunities for paid employment had come to an end, they went to live among their affines. They mostly became butchers, following a tradition of colonial Kenya in which butchers were generally muslims. Some simply turned to farming or animal-raising, and some became walimu.

Walimu are officially convertors to Islam, and Kur'an teachers, but in remote areas they tend to become astrologers and medicine men. For a fee, they tell the future, cure illness and make 'Arabic' medicines. Particularly popular was the style of medicine in which they wrote Kur'anic verses on a plate with saffron water, then washed the words off the plate and then put the washing water in a bottle to be taken as medicine. Such walimu were also consulted when an individual wished to harm his enemy. An enemy can be wished mad, or impotent, or can be forced to declare some misdeed openly. In order to effect this, a mwalimu would read the halal badri, a text including the 99 names of God, which takes about two hours to say aloud. The power generated by the reading can be made over to a virtuous or evil purpose. The lives of these rural wageni were described to me by a Zanzibar mzalia who

lived in Nakuru, a town in the Highlands which had had a small informal Comorian Association for many years through which he had encountered them socially. My other source was a young Zanzibar-born Comorian who had lived in Pumwani in the Comorian club-house, had had wageni as neighbours, and had been told by them of their kin and co-townsmen who lived outside Nairobi.

2.2.1 Wageni networks

All the Comorian wageni still in Kenya have been there a long time. One result of this is that, in addition to kin in Ngazija, they have an elaborate network in Kenya of local kin and affines and of other migrants, many of whom are also kin to each other. These composite East African networks have usually become much more important and elaborate than those in Ngazija. The kin networks began with a kinship link brought from Ngazija: many wageni first went to Kenya to work alongside a mother's brother or an older brother. Later, affinal links with other Comorians in East Africa were often created which would never have occurred in Ngazija. A man might, for instance, marry the half-African daughter of a migrant from a town where he would have been most unlikely to look for a wife at home. Gradually, networks were extended simply through friendship born of working in the same establishment or living for long periods in the Association's Nairobi club-house.

One of the important functions of these networks was the conveying of information or gossip. Such information-sharing had no immediate aim and was analogous to the gossip of barazas in a Swahili or Comorian settlement. However, just as the sunset baraza enabled elders to censure individuals in their town, so social control was to some extent exerted through these country-wide networks. I was always surprised how efficient communication was between the coastal and the up-country wageni.

Whenever I was in Nairobi I heard recent gossip about those in Mombasa, and vice-versa. Wageni did not use telephones, and information was carried by those who had some reason to travel between the two towns. Information was gathered in predominantly through the daily meeting of men at the mosque, for most men liked to sit and talk for the hour or so between magharibi (sunset) and esha (evening) prayers. It then usually passed between two households, one in each town: the households thereby taking on the function which the Comorian club-houses would have had in earlier days. The Mombasa household (referred to in Chapter 4) received large numbers of guests from Ngazija and thus Ngazija news as well as Mombasa news was gathered there. The Nairobi household was conveniently situated in the centre of Nairobi, and its head worked as a barman at one of the town's most famous hotels, along with the President and Vice-President of the Comorian Association who were co-townsmen. Since they lived in the suburb near Pumwani mosque, and met acquaintances there each evening, they were often able to pass him news acquired there at work. The link which bound the two households was simply that the two heads had been friends and migrants together in Kenya for thirty years, and that, as others retired to Ngazija, they continued in Kenya. The Mombasa mgeni had for a time been the head of the Mombasa branch of the Comorian Association, and both men were among the small band of pro-French migrants regularly entertained and consulted by the French Embassy in Nairobi.

The wageni networks at the stage when I was in Kenya included, and overlapped into, the networks of the wazalia with African mothers, but connected only very slightly with the networks of the wazalia with Swahili mothers. There seemed to be two reasons for this. Firstly, the migrants who had married coastal women did so at an earlier stage in the colonial period on the whole, and had retired or died: their

networks no longer existed to help link their children together. Secondly, the key Swahili wazalia in Mombasa (who will be examined in more detail in the following section) were wealthier and higher-ranking than the wageni in Mombasa, and so class differences tended to inhibit much linkage between the networks.

2.3 The Kenya wazalia

2.3.1 The Comorian/African wazalia

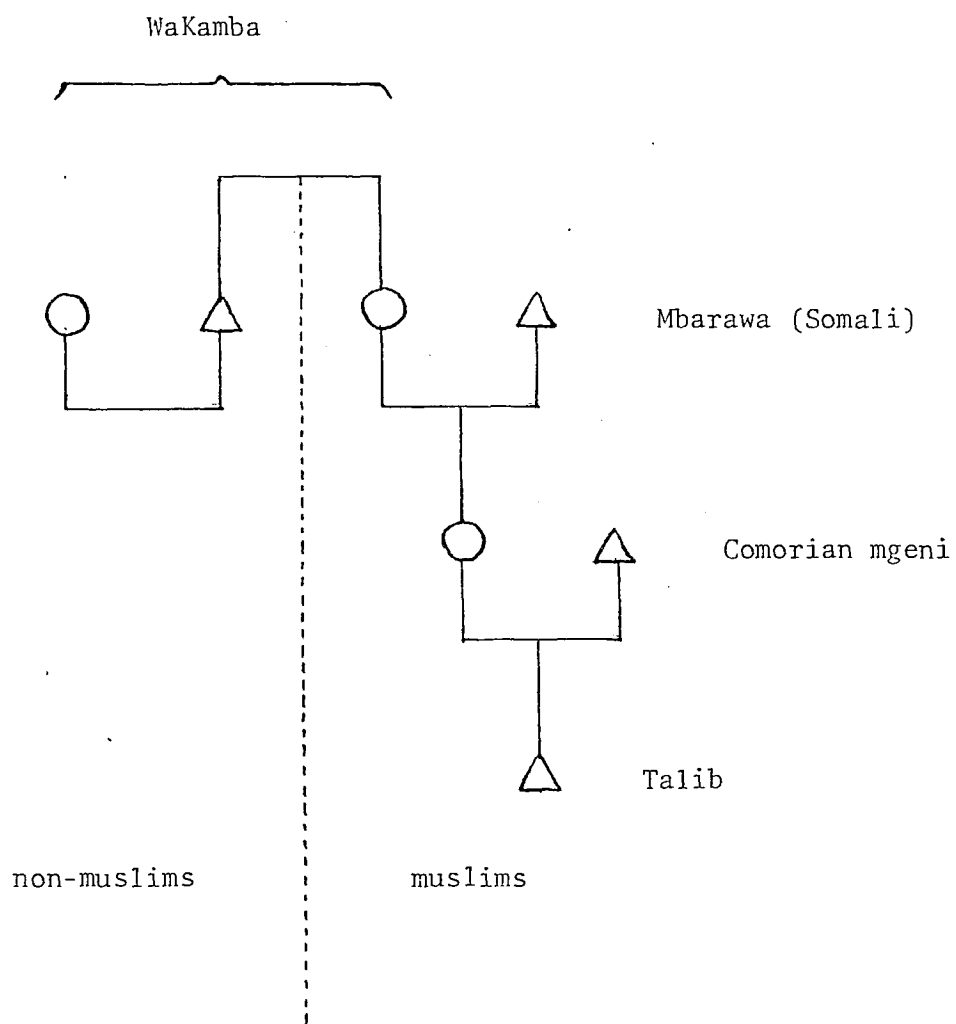
I shall deal first with the wazalia with African mothers. For this category, since access to full Comorian identity was in the gift of fathers, it was not a right. The wealth and status of an individual's father predicted to a high degree whether his primary contacts were with Comorians or not. Geographical location was of importance too: wazalia living among their mothers' people might only use the fact that they had had Comorian fathers on the rare occasions when they had to find a place to stay temporarily for some purpose in Nairobi or Mombasa. For the rest of the time, the potentiality of 'being Comorian' was irrelevant, to them and to their non-Comorian matrilineal kin.

Talib (1973)

By chance I observed a curious instance of this. In 1973 I went for a brief visit to the town of Kitui in Ukambani to visit a fellow anthropologist. Together we went to visit the prosperous local butcher and lodging-house keeper, a non-Muslim Mkamba whom my friend knew well. I told him in English that I was doing research on Comorians in Kenya and asked him if he had ever met any. He answered vaguely that he had met one or two and that he knew they came from New Zealand. The conversation turned to other matters.

A year later in Nairobi I met Talib, a Kitui Kamba/Comorian mzalia who turned out to be the grandchild (ZDS) of this man. Grandfather and grandson lived in the same small town, and my original informant's islamised sister and sister's daughter were on excellent terms with him.

Figure 6: Talib's link to his Kamba kin



It seemed to be extraordinary that he should have taken so little interest in his Comorian affine. The answer seems to be that, though the Comorian mgeni and his son shared a knowledge of Comorian activities in Kenya (and indeed the son was approached in 1974 to see whether he was prepared to become the new President of the Comorian Association) there were no contexts in which their Kamba affines had to take their Comorian identity into account.

Those Comorian African wazalia born to parents in Nairobi, however, had far more contact with other Comorian wageni and wazalia, and seemed to be much more likely to have active links with Ngazija. To show the characteristic diversity of options open to members of a single patrilineal sibling group, I shall consider a case in detail:

Bwana Aboudu. (1974)

This man had had twelve children, seven by a Comorian African wife in Nairobi, and five by his fully Comorian ada wife in northern Ngazija.

by his Nairobi wife:

- 1 Son, married to an Indian/Meru wife, working as a business man in Mombasa.
- 2 Son, made an ada marriage in his father's home town with his father's sister's daughter, worked as a tourist driver in Nairobi and brought his wife to live with him.
- 3 Son, married a Muslim Tanzanian woman in Arusha. Living in Arusha - job unknown
- 4 Son, unmarried, studying at the Lycée in Moroni.
- i Daughter, made an ada marriage in her father's home town to a close kinsman - precise relationship unknown. Living in Ngazija.
- ii Daughter, married to a Comorian mzalia from Tanzania. Living in Nairobi. Her husband is a businessman.
- iii Daughter, married to an Indian; living in Mombasa.

by his second wife:

- 1 Son, brought to Nairobi to live with his father. Unmarried. Trained for a while in hotel management at Hotel Inter-Continental, and was then sent to a Paris catering school.

2 Son, studying at the Lycée, Moroni, with his half-brother.
Sons 3 and 4, and 1 Daughter, all at school in Mitsamihuli,
Ngazija.

It can be seen that the set of siblings by the Nairobi wife follow a pattern which is the norm in Ngazija itself: that one son and one daughter at least make ada marriages. It is also interesting in this case that the father of all these children has achieved his promotion to the highest age grade of all in Ngazija (for those with a daughter and - ideally - a son who have made ada marriages) through his half-African children, rather than through fully Comorian children. Obviously, he would have had to wait a lot longer for his fully Comorian children to reach the age of marriage, and thus would have had to postpone his own promotion.

In order to assure the establishment of the two children whom he married back into his home town, he had to spend money buying land for his daughter and building her a house, since these are the essentials which an ada wife brings to a marriage but which are normally inherited matrilaterally. The mother of this set of siblings, who is now divorced from her husband, is still at present living in Nairobi, but because of her daughter in Ngazija, she toys with the idea of retiring there herself.

In a second set of siblings by a Comorian-Ugandan wife, a Comorian-Kenyan wife, and a fully Comorian wife, the siblings are spread in the following places: Kampala, Jinja, Tanzania, Moroni, France, Madagascar, Nairobi and Mombasa. The members of this sibling group have been able to make considerable use of one another; those living in Ngazija and Madagascar coming to those in East Africa for medical treatment and holidays, and those in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania having obtained advantages from a wide range of work options and nationalities.

Although close sibling cooperation is not unusual in most cultures, what is remarkable in these Comorian cases is that the sibling group born of a polygynous Comorian migrant is likely to offer such a range of alternatives. This range is not just the result of a father's employment and marital history, but also the result of the strong bilateral ethic in Swahili/Comorian kinship, which unites in kinship all the children by one parent, even though geographically and by the other parent they are divided.

I talked at one point with a brother and a sister of a Comorian father and a Comorian African mother to find out whether they felt that they were as important to their father as were their fully Comorian siblings. The daughter said that she thought her father took more pride in his fully Comorian children and that if there were a conflict over money or property, the fully Comorian children would get it. The African children, she said, hoped for help from their fathers but wangefuata mama zaidi ('they would follow their mother more'). The brother said he agreed but that it depended on whether one were thinking of Ngazija or East Africa. Though his father had told him there was land for him in Ngazija he knew that this was corporate, not individual property, and that if he actually tried to take up this theoretical option it might be difficult. 'Yes,' said his sister, 'the fact that you were not locally born would be brought up at some point and we would feel bitter. The children who are Comorian by mother and by father are safe with their father, but we are safest with our mother.' Her brother went on to explain that, though they could not take their father's assurances of a welcome in Ngazija seriously, they were pleased to be Comorian and to be his children in East Africa.

Since I have maintained that, despite the strong matrilateral bias in Ngazija, the principle of kinship was bilateral, it needs to be demon-

strated that in particular circumstances patrilateral kin must be taken in by those in Ngazija. There were two ways in fact in which this might happen. It seemed that an individually wealthy patrilateral kinsman would be, not surprisingly, welcomed; and also I have one case where, as the result of an emergency, a patrilateral kinswoman was incorporated into her father's kin-group.

Here is an example of the incorporation of a wealthy patrilateral kinsman.

Said Hilali (1975 onwards)

This man was the son of a Comorian mgeni and a Goan woman, in Nairobi. When he grew up, he became an entrepreneur, and eventually a well-paid employee of ITT, in which capacity he travelled regularly to the Comoro Islands. Although his father had come from a small northerly town in Ngazija, and he made the acquaintance of his patrilateral kin there, he spent most of his time in Moroni, the capital, where he became well known. Gradually he began to spend more of his time in Ngazija than in Kenya, and because of his Moroni contacts, his Ngazija kin came to rely on him for small services from or in Moroni. They were eager for him to marry in their town but, despite some opposition, he has been able to obtain a wife from among the descendants of Ngazija's last Sultan, because of his wealth.

Obviously, in his case, he was of more use to his kin than they were to him, even though I do not know if he ever sought to claim access to land among them. But his father was one of the most successful and most highly regarded members of the town, and had ample land there himself.

The Comorian African woman who eventually went to live in Ngazija had been born in the Kenya Highlands to an mgeni from a small upland village in Ngazija, and to a woman whose mother had been African and whose father had been a Comorian from a village adjacent to her husband's.

Bi Rukia (1974 onwards)

I had met this woman in Mombasa. She was married to a Comorian mgeni who came from the same village as her mother's father. When I asked her the name of her father's village early in 1974, she had no idea. However, late in 1974 her husband was robbed. In his room had been stored not only savings of his own, but also money and jewellery belonging to other Comorians in Kenya. He was one of the few Comorians known as a mwaminifu, a trustee, a man of unswerving integrity to whom one's valuables could be entrusted.¹ Normally the houses of such individuals were never empty, but on this occasion, as somebody must have known, the man's wife and children were on a visit upcountry to matrilineal relatives, and so his room was empty except for him. The property was stolen while he was out at dawn prayers and the inhabitants of the other rooms in the house still asleep. The man's horror and chagrin at the theft were so great that he could no longer face living in Kenya, for he could not afford to repay those whose money he had looked after.

He had an ada wife in Ngazija to return to, but he felt duty-bound to take his Comorian/African wife with him too. She was very young, very fond of him, and they had two young children, one of whom was the migrant's only son. When they got to Ngazija, the migrant took his Comorian/African wife to her father's village, introduced her to her patrilineal kin (her father was dead), and they took her in. She had learned the language and settled in by the time I met her, in 1976. Her kin had built her a small house, though a simple one, with a concrete floor and walls of plaited coconut leaves. She told me that her patrilineal kin had been very kind to her, sharing what little they had with her, and making over land rights for her and her children as if she had been the daughter of a daughter in her father's sibling group. It must be added that her

1 Comorian wageni did not use banks. They had no experience of them, and believed that the Kur'an forbade their use since money earned interest, and usury is forbidden to Muslims.

marriage to a man highly regarded in that group of villages must have been a component in her welcome.

Both these cases are unusual, for they are examples of well-connected Kenya-born wazalia. But they are supported by the much more large-scale re-incorporation of assorted kin which occurred in 1968, when many Comorians left Zanzibar as refugees and returned to Ngazija. Though they were helped in the first instance by France, they all went to live with such kin as they could discover, some of whom were not only patrilineal kin, but distant patrilineal kin at that. A further example of such across-the-board re-incorporation happened in 1977 when, as a result of inter-ethnic conflict in Madagascar, several thousand Comorians were brought back as refugees to Ngazija. In the first instance a refugee camp was set up to cope with the sudden influx, but I understand that all the refugees were reclaimed by kin over the next few months.

2.3.2 Kenyan wazalia by coastal mothers

The wazalia in this category seemed to have less vested interest in the continued making of claims to Comorian identity than their Comorian-African counterparts, with a few specific exceptions. Since they had a large rich network of locally resident Swahili kin, they seemed to regard being Comorian as something which had become irrelevant. The Comorian wageni who had been their fathers had in many cases been of higher status than those fathers of Comorian-African children, so I found this curious. Clearly, Comorian identity for them lost most of its content when the public component had gone. While the Comorian-African wazalia gained (if they were lucky) a useful urban network in East Africa, through their Comorian identities, for coastal dwellers their own Swahili networks were more useful. In addition, since Swahili/Comorian kinship gave membership in a variety of descent groups, Comorian-ness became no more than one

of several options. Since, in addition, residence is so important a deciding factor for Swahili descent groups, there was a strong tendency for membership of a local descent group to outweigh 'being Comorian' most of the time.

Nevertheless, though the legal distinction between 'natives' and 'non-natives', not to mention that between 'Africans' and 'Asians' had been formally annulled at Independence, their effects remained: the categories had been externally imposed, but they had been profoundly absorbed by the peoples to whom they had been originally applied. Up-country, Africans married to Comorians or born of Comorians did not cease overnight to feel pride and a sense of superiority to their un-Islamised co-tribesmen. On the coast, though self-announcement as a Comorian had become rarer, the residual high status which derived from some of the earlier excellent marriages made into the Swahili elite ensured that the offspring of those marriages profited from Comorian descent (even if they did not claim it) by their continuing to be eligible marriage partners. One such mzalia was married to the brother of the last Coast Liwali; another was married to a senior man in one of the top three aristocratic clans in Mombasa; a third was married to a sharif descended from the ruling house of Vumba (Hollis, 1900) for instance.

Where the lack of interest in Comorian identity was explicit was in marriage strategies, however. Swahili/Comorian marriage patterns stress in-marriage. But what constitutes in-marriage in a situation of multiple choice? Obviously cumulative in-marriage consolidates group advantage where such an advantage is perceived. In Mombasa, the corporate property which in-marriage might consolidate - houses, a little land, and prestige - was usually greater for someone who married back into the Swahili aristocracy than it was for the individual who married back into the category of Kenya-born Comorians.

By the time I arrived in Mombasa (1973), several individuals who had regarded themselves fifteen years previously as Comorian first and foremost had so thoroughly re-assumed Swahili identities that I only learned accidentally and bit by bit that they had once been leading Comorians in Mombasa, and on the Committee of the Comorian Association. For example, the household in which I lived for five months when I first came to the city was presented to me as a Three Clans household on account of the affiliation of its female household head. I knew that this woman's affiliation was taken from her mother, because her father had been an immigrant from Zanzibar without local clan affiliation. What I did not know was that this Zanzibari immigrant regarded himself as a Comorian because he had been reared by a Comorian stepmother in Zanzibar. The reader may recall that watoto wakulea ('reared children') were regarded as fully Comorian in Zanzibar, especially if, as in this case, they were reared by a Comorian woman. His stepmother's father, whom he called 'grandfather', had been an important functionary in the Sultan of Zanzibar's Palace. Of this man's three children born in Mombasa, his daughter had tended towards her mother's Three Clans Swahili identity, while his sons had taken up his (Comorian) identity. Several of their neighbours in the wealthy part of Mombasa Old Town where they lived had also regarded themselves as Comorians during the colonial period. Interestingly, the friendly association of this small group, which had taken place in the name of Comorian identity two decades previously, has now become intercourse on the basis of upper-class Swahili identity. Where the men of this group had been committee members of the Comorian Association in the past, they now belonged to a select daily baraza known as the Makadara Club, which met on the wide pavement running along one side of upper-middle-class Makadara mtaa. The women of the group saw each other as 'friends' and ndugu (strictly 'siblings');

here, 'those of the same generation who are somehow related'), and visited one another at home almost daily. It took me a long time to understand that these two groups, the men and the women, were associating largely on the basis of being ex-Comorians. It was the regularity with which important visiting Comorians from Zanzibar (or occasionally Ngazija) were invited to sit with the Makadara Club that finally made me understand.

As there had been among the Comorian wageni, there were certain nodal households, important for Comorian communications networks. Their heads had remained much more overtly Comorian because they were brokers and were not only in contact with other Mombasans but also with Comorians from elsewhere.

Household 1 (1974)

This household, mentioned in Chapter 4, was that of a Twelve Clans Swahili husband and his Comoro-born wife Ma Fatuma. Although, strictly speaking, she was a mgeni, she came from a far wealthier stratum of Ngazija society than did most male wageni, and her social milieu was the Swahili-Comorian wazalia. Those who came to her from Ngazija would have been reluctant to be forced to use the networks of Comorian wageni, because they themselves came from wealthier towns and more highly ranked kin-groups.

This household was not linked, to my knowledge, with other households in East Africa or Zanzibar, but those who came to it from Ngazija came not only to a house where ShiNgazija was understood, but also where excellent contacts with non-Comorians within Mombasa were available. To waNgazija coming to trade, to seek medical treatment or to arrange for the purchase and shipment to Ngazija of Kenya's abundance of such things as furniture, sanitary ware and household items, the existence of the household was an invaluable asset. The house was never without visitors, and when I revisited Mombasa in 1976 I discovered that Ma Fatuma had grown so tired of constant entertaining that she and her husband had begun to rent a nearby two-storey property, which they had fitted out

as a Comorian lodging house, with some dormitory rooms and some private rooms.

More elaborate, in its linkages with other parts of the world, was the household of Mwana Halima.

Household 2 (1974)

Mwana Halima had 18 people permanently under her roof in 1973/74, and could not offer overnight hospitality to any but her closest kin. Her FFF had been a dhow trader between Lamu and the Comoros, and he had married a Nzwani woman and settled there; his children were reared in Nzwani but maintained trading contacts with Lamu and Mombasa, and in the following generation, one child married a Mombasa-born Comorian/Swahili woman and settled in that town. Halima, the daughter of this marriage, maintained her kinship links in both Nzwani (where she lived for a time as a child) and in Lamu. Her Lamu kin were matrilaterally related to Habib Sualeh and the Riyadha sharifs. During the colonial period some of her Nzwani kin were in Zanzibar and she also, therefore, had had active links in that island. A woman of considerable intelligence, she had used her kin contacts in Zanzibar to arrange profitable imports and exports of goods such as coffee and kangas between there and Kenya, exploiting differences of availability and price in the two places. When, after the Zanzibar Revolution, it was feared that the Revolutionary Elders would seek out and take in marriage attractive young Arab girls, one of her kinsmen in Zanzibar hastily sent her his two daughters secretly, by fishing boat. She reared them with her own grandchildren. She established and maintained links with kin in Muscat, and Abu Dhabi, and was able to use these as her grandchildren became old enough for further education. Because she is well-known in Zanzibar-born and coastal Kenyan Comorian wazalia, her house has become a meeting point for those passing through Mombasa who wished to hear the news of other kin and friends, and it has at times been a house where political activity has centered. Politically, her interests have laid, however, with the future of Mombasans and coastal Kenyans. She avoided committing

herself on the issue of Comorian independence, because she felt that she wished to remain on good terms with all the Comorians she knew in Kenya, and because she realised that she knew nothing of the issues important to Comoro Islanders. Her identity as a Comorian is thus related largely to the pleasure she takes in her position at the hub of communication networks, though before the Independence of Kenya and Zanzibar, she had made use of her Comorian affiliations in her trading activities.

A small category of coastal Comorian wazalia who were religious experts appeared to commit themselves neither to Comorian identity nor to Swahili identity. Their marriages were with Swahili women, but because Comorians in East Africa were regarded as having special religious expertise, they seemed to want to retain that aspect of Comorian-ness as their own property. I found that non-Comorians contrived to view these men sometimes as Swahilis and sometimes as Comorians. In fact, because they were highly educated in the Islamic way, they were referred to loosely as 'Arabs', - 'Arab' being a term denoting class as much as race, on the East African coast. An 'Arab' doctor who spent most of his time bone-setting and prescribing herbal medicines and who lived very near Mombasa's dhow harbour, was contacted by the harbour master one day when a dhow containing Comorians who spoke no KiSwahili hit the reef and was brought into the harbour. The harbour master suddenly remembered that the 'Arab' doctor was also a Comorian, when faced with the problem of finding lodging and an interpreter for his charges. The 'Arab' doctor knew no ShiNgazija but was well able to get hold of someone who did, sending a message off to one of the nodal wageni households already discussed. Another shaikh, who had for a time been President of the Comorian Association in Mombasa (he is discussed in Chapter 4), promoted his 'Arab' identity at the expense of his Comorian identity after Kenya's Independence.

3.0 The use of Comorian networks in East Africa by Comorians in Ngazija

Comorians living in Ngazija had been welcomed by kin in East Africa during the colonial period, and some established as migrant labourers in their own right. During my period in Kenya, 1973/74, Comorians, wageni and wazalia, were at times visited and used by Ngazija kin for purposes other than finding work. To play host to Comorians when one scarcely thought of oneself as a Comorian any more seemed to be a curious but pleasurable experience. It was noteworthy that the Comorians from Ngazija often selected as hosts those with whom they conceived they had a close kinship connection: members of the same inya (matriclan). Among wageni, inya membership was conceptually clear-cut - they belonged to the inya of their mothers; but, since the children of wageni rarely had fully Comorian matrilineal kin, their allegiance to an inya had to be through their father. They were scarcely aware of the existence of inya, but to members of their fathers' inyas they were the children of inya members, and thus still relatively close kin.

In the genealogy (Figure 7) below, I observed the following interactions. All those discussed here belonged to an inya from Mitsamihuli, or were born to a man in that inya.

Zainabu (1973)

Zainabu (1) was born of an ada marriage between two members of this inya. In 1973 her younger brother reached the point where he would be financially ready to make his ada marriage in a few months' time. Zainabu, who spoke KiSwahili because she was married to a Comorian seaman and had sometimes been based with him in Zanzibar, was sent by her brother to Mombasa to make a series of purchases of cloth, shoes and jewellery, which would form part of the trousseau he would offer his bride. Zainabu went to stay with a kinsman (2) she referred to as her mother's brother (actually MMBS) who was the half Mkamba son of a member of her inya. She herself had never before met this man, but her husband, who was also a member

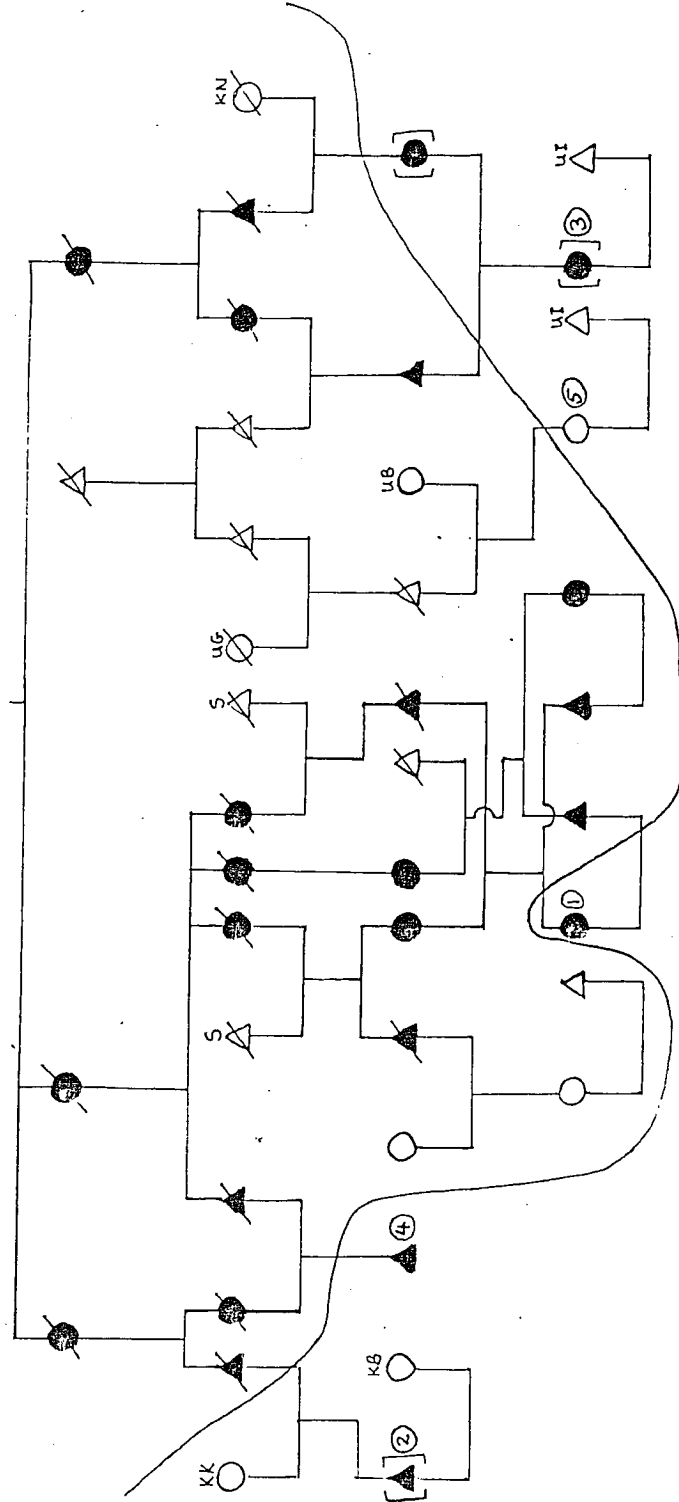
her inya, had stayed with him occasionally, when his ship was in port.

Her host was elderly and unsophisticated, and though she stayed with him for over three months she needed other contacts to help her with her purchases and with their shipment back to Ngazija. For help with tickets, freighting, and customs, she enlisted the assistance of (4), another classificatory mother's brother (MMBS), whose mother and father were Comorian and who, as a long-time resident of Zanzibar, understood a good deal more about these technicalities than did (2). She shopped, however, in the company of a kinswoman (3) whom she came to know while in Mombasa. The two were introduced to one another by a third woman (5) who, while bilaterally related to both, was not a member of the same inya as they. (5) was the FFBSD of (3) and their fathers had both worked in Uganda during the same period. (1) had come to know (4) through (2), and (4) took her to meet (5) whom he knew because he and she had campaigned for a while in MOLINACO together, and because they were distantly patrilaterally related. (5) introduced (1) and (3), knowing, I think, no more than that they both counted Mitsamihuli as their mji of origin, and they worked out the precise kin-relationship themselves (a process known as kupatana 'to reach one another').

When I first encountered (1) and (3) they had already spent much time in one another's company, and had become close friends. They told me that they were ndugu (sisters) and when I asked for amplification of the term, (3) said 'Bibi za baba zetu, ndugu halisi' 'The mother's mothers of our fathers were full sisters'. The relationship was fairly complex, as the genealogy shows. The way in which (3) had described it to me was a literal genealogical description. When I asked (1) on another occasion what the relationship was she said 'famili moja' 'same family'. It turned out that she did not expect me to have heard of inyas and was translating (for my benefit) the word 'inya' as 'famili'.

(2) had regarded himself more as a muslim Mkamba than a Comorian for many years. He lived in the suburbs of Mombasa

Figure 7: The extension of a Mitsamihuli *inya* to Kenya



Key:

~ - Those below the line were in Kenya in 1974

● - *inya* members

[▲] - those who lack a matrilineal link to a Comorian *inya*, and are therefore extended rights to their father's *inya*

∅ - dead

Non-Comorian spouses:

- KB - Kenya Bajuni
- KK - Kenya Kamba
- KN - Kenya Nandi
- S - Arab from Sur, Uman
- UB - Uganda Bajuni
- UG - Uganda Ganda
- UI - Uganda Indian

with his coastal wife and very elderly Mkamba mother and much enjoyed the activity in the house occasioned by the presence of Zainabu and her mounting pile of boxes. He knew very few of the Swahili/Comorian wazalia in Mombasa, and though he was aware of the main nodal wageni households, he never went to them because he had no occasion to. He prayed in a suburban, not a central, mosque, his friendships appeared to be with his neighbours, and most of his kin were in Kitui. With Zainabu's arrival, his house suddenly became a place to which (4) and (3) came almost daily, and in which Zainabu's husband (his FZDS) stayed when his ship came to Mombasa. He was delighted to have Zainabu to stay as a kinswoman, but was embarrassed by knowing so few local Comorians. He repeatedly told me that Comorians in Kenya were now mbali-mbali 'scattered', and that in the old days he could have taken us to meet many of them. From Zainabu's point of view, however, her little kin-network in Mombasa was adequate to her purposes, and she had no especial interest in extending it.

The case shows a number of things. It demonstrates how (2), (3) and (4), who were bilateral kin to each other, had not pursued their inter-relationship until Zainabu's arrival and needs forced them to: they had indeed become mbali-mbali from one another, and 'being Comorian' had become a 'special purpose' identity only, especially for (2). However, when I took the genealogy, from (1) and (3) jointly, I was impressed by (3)'s genealogical knowledge, considering she had never been to Ngazija and had no intention of going, and considering that she had no concept of an inya. Thirdly, it was striking that Zainabu, though her use of her East African kin links was highly instrumental in this case, nevertheless treated her newfound kin very much as kin. She assumed they were full-time Comorians and full-time WaMitsamihuli, regaling them with stories of kin they had in common in her home town, giving (3) news of her father, retired in Itsandra, and asking politely about other

common kin in East Africa. I think, though it is hard to prove, that she was unaware of the option many Comorians in East Africa had of slipping out of Comorian identity into an ill-defined Swahili identity.

Sometimes a Comorian migrant who had retired to Ngazija continued to be able to make use of the networks he had left behind in Kenya, even from a distance, revitalizing kin and affinal links in the process.

Saidi Kombo (1973)

Saidi Kombo had worked in Kenya as a migrant, marrying a Bajuni woman and living with her for many years. He had not long before retired to Mbeni in Ngazija when I met him in 1974. Although he had made his ada marriage, he had not divorced his Bajuni wife and remained on good terms with her. When one of his middle-aged acquaintances expressed his wish to establish a marriage in Mombasa so that he might have somewhere to stay when trading there, he arranged for his wife's divorced sister to become his acquaintance's wife. As I understand it, he wrote to his Bajuni wife suggesting the match. The daughter of the third of these sisters, a girl of about 17, was offered through the same Comorian and Swahili network to an Ngazija sailor working on a merchant vessel plying between Mombasa and Ngazija. The point about this case is that the two second marriages were planned in Ngazija and executed in Kenya.

What was striking to an outsider about so many of these Comorian contacts with kin and affines in East Africa was that they seemed so much to favour island-born Comorians. There were so many reasons for people from Ngazija to look for a chance to visit East Africa, and almost no reasons for those in East Africa to pay visits in the opposite direction. However, those in East Africa seemed pleased to be visited and married, and their pleasure must be understood in status terms: continued desire for contact spells status equality, while decreasing contact suggests that one group is disengaging (in kinship terms) from the other.

This topic is explored in the succeeding section.

4.0 The limits of kinship

So far this chapter has documented the kinds of actions and attitudes being taken by different categories of 'Comorians' as they began to come to terms with their changed circumstances. The framework within which 'being Comorian' had previously had a specific meaning had been partially dismantled and it was clear that the process could only continue. What, then, were the strengths and weaknesses of Swahili/Comorian kinship patterns in this changed environment? What was available through kinship, and what could be reproduced for the next generation through their kinship links?

It has been implicit, but not so far explicit in this thesis, that birth and marriage are important definers of identity. The birth of a given individual registers the combined status of his father and mother at that moment and registers his potential, as it were; his most important marriage - always the first for a woman, sometimes a later marriage for a man - indicates whether the individual is following through on his potential, bettering it or abandoning it. Such marriages indicate the identity the individual is choosing to reinforce and the assets he is trying to maximize. In the context we have been studying, marriage is one of the chief indicators of choices which are being made: the individual is presented at birth with what are a series of choices about identity. When a father marries off his daughter, or when a man makes a significant marriage in his life, the choice of spouse will be indicative of choices being made about identity, since in-marriage is such a preference. Marriage is thus a crucial institution since, at the moment of marriage, birth identity is reconfirmed or the potentiality for identity-change introduced. Thus, in assessing the final adult identity of an individual, both birth identity and marriage identity have to be taken into account. It is because birth does not settle the matter of identity once and for

all that it seems to be acceptable for children to be reared into Comorian-ness, and for fully grown adults to opt for Comorian-ness.

Firstly, the fact that Swahili/Comorian kinship in East Africa offers legitimate and equal membership of both mother's and father's groups has obviously been invaluable for Comorians living in East Africa.

Those who made marriages straddling ethnic categories - the Comorian wageni and wazalia in Kenya for the most part, together with a few of the Zanzibar wazalia - have been particularly fortunate. Of course, when most such marriages were made, there can have been little thought of long-term benefits other than those conceived of at the time: the advantage, for a Swahili or African woman, of marriage to an individual from a successful ethnic category, and that of a wife and affines in the place of work, for a Comorian man.

The other constant feature of Swahili/Comorian kinship - a tendency towards in-marriage, and the renewal of kinship ties by close kin endogamy - created a tightly bonded and inward-looking (self-regarding?) group in Zanzibar. It also generated smaller clusters of kin-and-affines in mainland East Africa which tended to cross ethnic boundaries, and which gave individuals within them, in some cases, the chance to change ethnic affiliation, without abandoning close kin, when external circumstances changed.

As Bloch has pointed out, in the context of a farming community in Madagascar, kin relationships do not have to be worked at so hard as those with non-kin (Bloch, 1971a). Swahilis and Comorians seem to be prepared to accept that all those with whom a kinship link can be traced must be treated in some sort of kin-like way. However, 'close' kin - genealogically and geographically - are in the strongest position to claim the support due from kin. 'Distant' kin cannot expect so much, since they fade off into non-kin. Generally speaking, distant kin who wish they were

closer must reinforce their kinship by arranging marriages between their children, or by exchanging sisters. The activities of elderly Comorian women, who travel between groups of kin situated in different parts of East Africa, seem to be concerned with maintaining the potentiality of distant kin becoming closer kin, by maintaining knowledge of possible marriage partners, their appearance, reputation, and educational achievements. As a corollary of this, where kinship is not renewed by marriage, it is assumed that there is no desire to maintain close contact. Lack of renewal certainly weakens once strong kinship links, and at times gives offence as well if a sibling group fails to offer a woman where one is expected.

4.1 The Comorian wazalia in Zanzibar

The Comorian immigrants to Zanzibar who settled and founded a new in-marrying group are comparable in many ways to the Malagasy pioneers who moved out into new land and abandoned their ancestral villages (Bloch, 1971b). Just as these Merina, at some point, had to cease making intra-deme marriages in their village of origin (and cease to bury their dead in the tomb which symbolised that deme) and had, instead, to make marriages endogamous to their new village, converting neighbours into affines and finally kinsmen, so too the Zanzibar wazalia gradually ceased to make marriages with those born in Ngazija, and established a rank and marriage order within Zanzibar itself. Their 'settlement' was focussed not on land, but on the prestige which was specific to their residence in Zanzibar, and their opportunities and success gave some of them an upper-middle-class standing which differed considerably from that their forebears had achieved in Ngazija. For many Zanzibar wazalia, the distance from kin in Ngazija was very great: kinship links had become attenuated because they had not been renewed by further marriages; there was little

visiting between the Comorian wazalia of Zanzibar and their Ngazija kin; and individual achievement further separated them.

For the Zanzibar wazalia, then, for whom dislocation of public Comorian identity after Independence was greatest, since most had to move elsewhere in addition to losing the group prestige from which all had benefitted, a return to Ngazija itself was a poor option and for some virtually an impossible one. Second generation wazalia, with kin of the parental generation in Ngazija, had the option of returning so long as they made a suitable marriage in the island, but the many Zanzibar wazalia who were third, fourth or even fifth generation Zanzibar- is rarely used their kinship links in Ngazija to settle there because these were distant, and kin were not over-friendly.

In 1973/74, several of the Zanzibar wazalia whom I encountered in Nairobi were still unaware of the virtual impossibility of settling in Ngazija. Since they had obtained skilled employment in Kenya without local kinship links, they assumed it would be the same in Ngazija, if they set their minds to learning French (several were attending French classes in Nairobi). It was not until they went for holidays to Ngazija after Independence in 1975, to see what the place was like, that they realised the still fundamental importance of kinship in Ngazija society. To be accepted, it would be necessary to marry in the Island and fully to enter local economic and political life. To perch in the capital, as in Nairobi, working and drawing a salary as a professional, was out of the question.

Ngazija was thus effectively closed to the Zanzibar wazalia, for kinship reasons.¹ Because they had been such a successful group in

1 A further disincentive to settling in Ngazija, limiting the desire to try to revive kinship links, was the stagnant Comorian economy. The Comoros did not become independent until July 1975, well over (footnote continues)

Zanzibar, the rate of group in-marriage had been high: in my sample of Comorians living in Kenya, 60% of male and 67% of female Zanzibar wazalia had married others from the same category. But when the Comorian wazalia were forced to leave Zanzibar, leaving their prestige-laden niche behind them and scattering all over East Africa, the kinship links which had previously been an entry to the benefits of being a Comorian suddenly looked deficient. Unlike the Comorian wageni, whose kin and affinal contacts were varied, the Zanzibar wazalia had had all their kinship eggs in one basket.

In addition, their educational achievements (which had been an aspect of their public 'Comorian' identity in Zanzibar) had taken them beyond the point where kinship could be of much use: the entry to the kinds of employment they could command came through qualifications, not kin-contacts. Nevertheless, there has still been a kinship aspect to the personal advancement of the Zanzibar wazalia. In Zanzibar, the generation who are now so successfully scattered were helped educationally both by parents prepared to make financial sacrifices and (as documented in Chapter 1) by the help young Comorians gave one another because of the corporate pride taken in the educational success of Comorian wazalia as a whole. Those ex-Zanzibar wazalia with secure employment and good salaries are now in their turn paying for the education of not only their own children but also of younger siblings and more distant kin. They are thus helped indirectly rather than directly to employability by their kin.

(footnote cont)

a decade later than the East African countries, and at that point external trade was in the hands of half a dozen monopoly importers and much land was in the hands of French plantation-owning companies. The service sector, in which Comorian wazalia in Zanzibar had tended to work, was small and undeveloped. If Ngazija had been more attractive economically, ways would have been found to re-create kinship links through new marriages.

At the point when the Zanzibar wazalia first left their birthplace and found employment and somewhere to live elsewhere, few could make use of kin even for temporary accommodation. One or two households in Kenya (and presumably several in Dar-es-Salaam, though I have no data on this point) where a spouse or parent was a Zanzibar mzalia originally, worked overtime for a year or so after the events of 1968 in Zanzibar, receiving and looking after refugee wazalia whom they scarcely knew while they found work. Grateful individuals recompensed them with handsome presents later when they could afford it, for such help would really have been the task of kin, if suitable kin had existed. Here, Comorian-ness as public identity prompted truly altruistic behaviour. It is already becoming clear, however, that the unplanned and arbitrary scatter of Zanzibar wazalia which took place from the mid-1960s onwards will have tremendous benefits for the next generation, as they grow up. With the siblings of their parents spread throughout East Africa's main towns, in the states of the Persian Gulf and in several European cities, both their education and their future employment chances will be good.

The Zanzibar wazalia in a weaker position have been those who, like the others, had allowed their links with Ngazija to lapse and had married other Zanzibar wazalia but who, for whatever reason, had not obtained qualifications enabling them to find employment easily in mainland East Africa without the assistance of kin or affines. In Zanzibar itself they had been employable on the basis of being Comorian. Elsewhere, they were in a weak position because they were latecomers, and the few I encountered in Kenya found themselves structurally in the position of the Kenya wazalia whose Comorian fathers had made no moves to establish them in Ngazija. Indeed their position was worse, since they lacked even locally-born matrilineal kin with land, property or employment.

4.2 The wageni and wazalia in Kenya

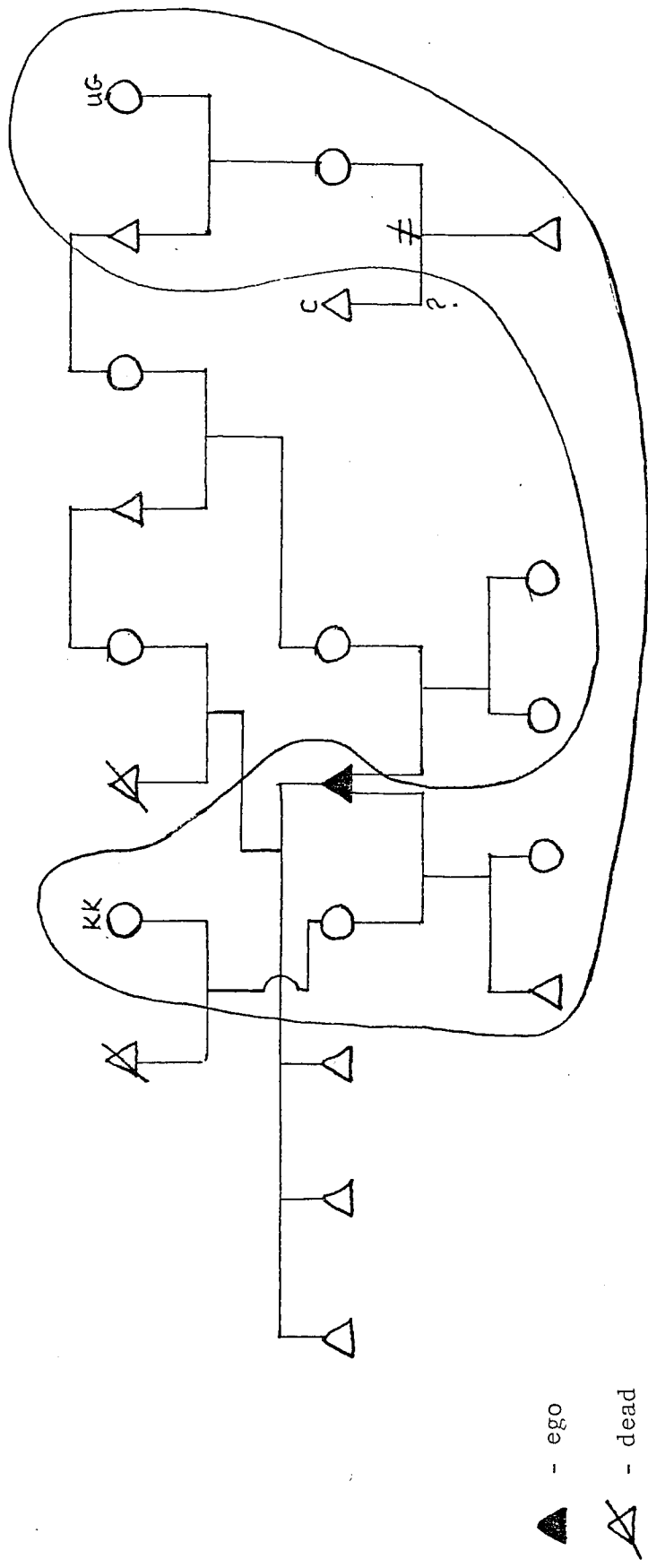
All wageni could return to Ngazija in principle if they had kin there. However, while the security provided by employment, or by the care of local kin or affines in Kenya continued, none would return but those who had made ada marriages. For the wageni, kin-links were the necessary but not sufficient prerequisite for a return to their island of birth: Ngazija's age-grades ensured that an old man who was not also a social elder would hesitate before returning, for he who had not paid for his seniority was not a mru mzima - a 'whole' or 'adult' man. Limits were here placed by the social orchestration of kinship, rather than by kinship itself.

Since many of the wageni I encountered in Kenya were middle-aged to elderly, they were reaching the stage of their lives where kinship was valued more for the care it might bring in old age than for employment contacts. Those who had made ada marriages had the greatest security, and respect at home with their ada wives,¹ while those who had not were better off with the children and affines they had acquired during their lifetime in Kenya, in most cases. However, the fact that they did not have their own full range of siblings (and siblings' children) in East Africa made them more vulnerable than the Comorian wazalia from Zanzibar, who had almost all their close kin in East Africa. Compare the following two examples (Figures 8 and 9).

In Figure 8, ego has no full siblings in Kenya, and his ada wife and his mother are both in Ngazija. His own part-African spouse and children are the most important individuals to him in Kenya, followed by his ada wife's MB and this man's African wife, child and grandchild - individuals who are occasional guests in his house, no more.

1 If their ada marriages endured, that is. One wageni spent his all on an ada marriage, enjoyed the fruits of his labours for about ten years, and was then abandoned by his (much younger) ada wife. He felt he had no option but to return to Kenya and seek work again.

Figure 8: Whereabouts of the *jamaa* of a Comorian mgeni in Kenya

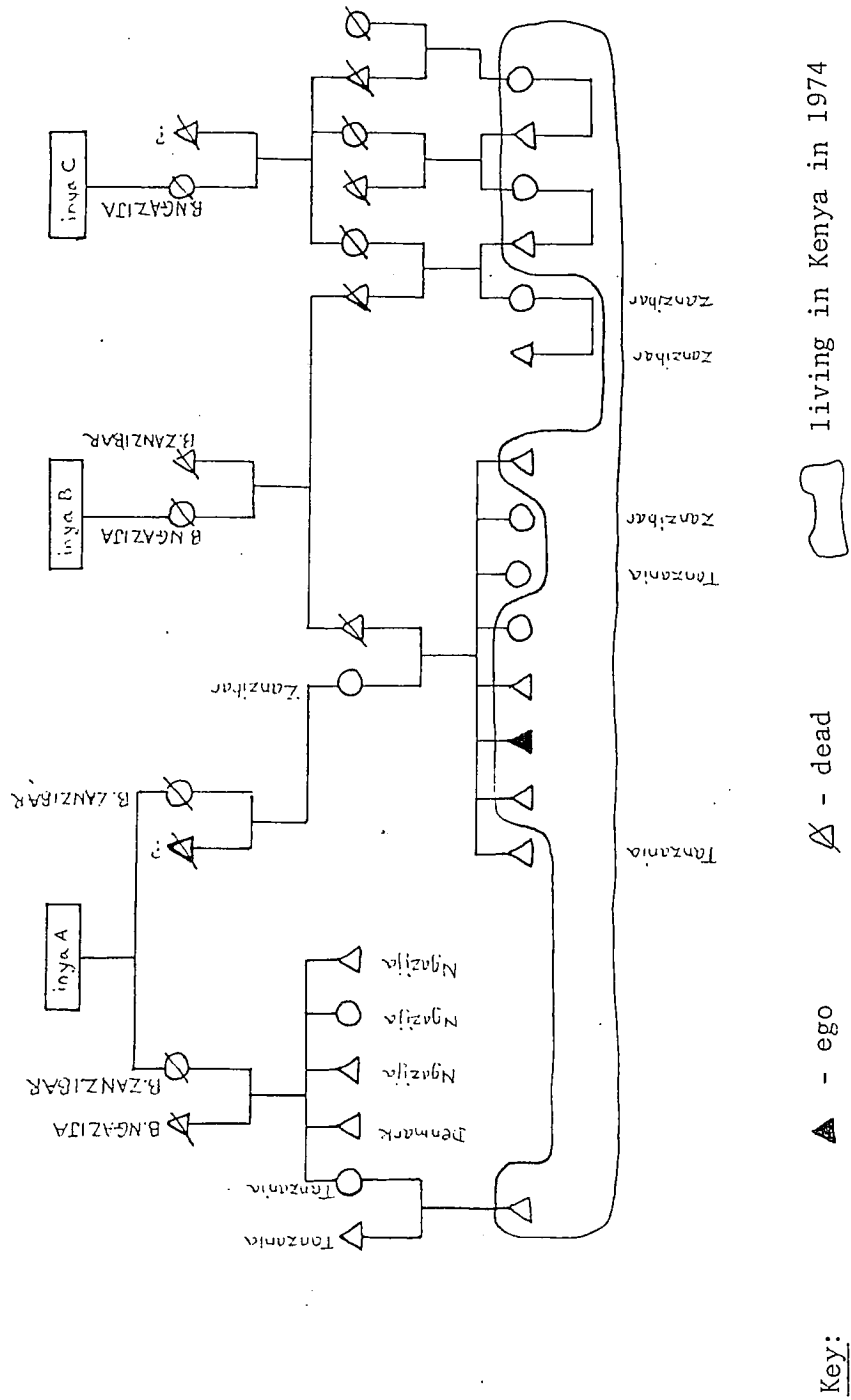


- ▲ - ego
- △ - dead
- ≠ - marriage terminated

Those inside the line were living in Kenya in 1974. The rest, unless otherwise indicated, lived in Ngaziija

Non-Comorian spouses:
 KK - Kenya Kikuyu
 UG - Uganda Ganda
 C - Chinese

Figure 9: Whereabouts of the *jamaa* of a Zanzibar-born Comorian in Kenya



Key:



- ego



- dead



living in Kenya in 1974

In Figure 9 ego has seven full siblings and eight classificatory siblings in East Africa, of whom eleven are actually in Kenya with him and four not far away in Zanzibar and Dar-es-Salaam. All but one of his married siblings (using the category broadly) are married to other Zanzibar wazalia and his mother lives in Zanzibar.

The contrast between these two examples is clearly enormous. The former kin-group consists in Kenya of no more than two affinally-related nuclear families, while the latter shows the consolidation which had already occurred among these Zanzibar wazalia through in-marriage, the great spread of locally resident kin and the speed with which kin were beginning to regroup in a new place: all the 'siblings' had originally been in Zanzibar.

From the point of view of wageni, then, such benefits as might come through kinship could be limited in Kenya, through the absence of key personnel, and limited in Ngazija because the right marriage had not been made. Such individuals were forced to go on working to support themselves, and if they could no longer obtain work as employees they and their wives had to make shift as best they could. Both their social status and their economic position would have been even worse in Ngazija.

It is thus clear that the children of the wageni in Kenya were limited in the use they could make of Comorian kin by the extent to which their fathers had consolidated their own kinship potential. I know of no case where a child born to a Comorian father and a Swahili or African mother was able to go to Ngazija if its father had not made an ada marriage, for instance. Within Kenya, the father's success and reputation had implications for that of his children, and the usually limited range of his kin in East Africa narrowed their kin-networks in the parental and grandparental generation. On the other hand, as has

been shown, some Kenya-born wazalia had many, variously placed siblings such that their options within East Africa were far superior to those of their fathers at the same age. Their matrilineal kin, Kenya citizens, gave them a further security by comparison with their fathers: the right to work locally, access (perhaps) to land, and an acceptable indigenous public identity as well as an immigrant one. Comorian identity, for both those with an African and those with a Swahili mother, had been linked in the past to prestigious public identity, but now operated within the realms of personal identity: which, among Swahilis and Comorians, means in the realm of marriage. Those who called themselves 'Comorian' were not aiming to be culturally distinctive in any particular way, but were claiming kinship with Comorians and often, I think, signalling their enthusiasm for marriage with a Comorian - indicating a desire that their Comorian-ness be renewed. Such signalling was signalling within the Arab-Swahili-Comorian community at its broadest (beyond the confines of those fully or partially Comorian, that is), but was still what I call 'private' because it took place within one marriage system. I often found during my eighteen months in Kenya, for instance, that non-muslim Africans and non-muslim Indians, even in Mombasa, had never heard of 'Comorians' or 'waNgazija'.

The kinship-related assets which Comorian parents living in Kenya could pass on to their children thus varied from group to group. Successful Zanzibar wazalia would have a great deal to offer their young children when they grew up; successful wageni - the few who had made ada marriages and who were still living in Kenya, with well-paid posts and perhaps permanent accommodation - had something to offer. But for the vast majority of Kenya wazalia, particularly those with Swahili mothers, the best long-range option was abandonment of Comorian identity altogether.

5.0 Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to demonstrate, by the use of much case material, the range of options Comorians perceived for themselves, and the way in which a dramatic loss of public identity could often still be accommodated to within a familiar kinship framework. Swahili-Comorian kinship patterns force choices upon those reared according to their precepts, under any circumstances: the collapse of the particular public identity which had evolved during the colonial period did not imply the dislocation of the more intimate aspect of Comorian identity.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

1.0 Frameworks for identity

Throughout this thesis I have used the terms 'public identity' and 'private identity', chiefly because I wanted to avoid using the vocabulary of ethnicity, thereby begging various important questions. 'Ethnicity' as a topic within Social Anthropological discourse I examine in the succeeding section.

Here, I distinguish three specific frameworks within which Comorians in Kenya moved.

Firstly, Independence in Kenya had caused considerable psychological upheaval to all coastal muslims. Accustomed to playing down the very considerable Bantu content of their culture and casting it in an Islamic mould, they found it difficult to accept the legitimacy of African governmental supremacy. They referred to the ruling Kikuyu faction rather bitterly as 'the sharifs' and to Kenyatta and his family as 'The Royal Family'. Although much directly or indirectly racially discriminating legislation was changed after Independence (Rothchild, 1973: 76), its disappearance could not overnight alter the memory of pre-Independence ranking. There was a butcher's shop in European central Nairobi, for example, with a notice in the window which advertised three ranked kinds of meat within: Pets' Meat, Staff Meat and Meat. Many other small signs, such as the existence of jokes about the pre-Independence categories, Europeans, Asians, Arabs and Africans, made it clear that there could be no instant forgetting. Some coast dwellers having little contact with Africans seemed even to find them alien and somewhat frightening. An elderly Swahili with whom I was watching a display of tribal dancing on television said, 'All Africans have one disposition (tabia), like animals'.

'What do you mean?' I said. He explained, 'All chickens have one disposition, all cattle have one disposition. Sons of Adam like us vary in our personalities, but Africans do not.' His lack of direct experience of non-muslims was almost total.

Within this framework, Comorians existed merely as one more category of coastal muslim, indistinguishable from the Swahilis. They and the Swahilis together are steadily losing ground, as non-muslim Kenyans with capital and fluent English begin to take over the coast's shops, businesses, hotels and urban housing.

Secondly, there was the framework of the public identity which Comorians had - as far as Europeans, Swahilis and some Asians were concerned - during the colonial period. As we have seen, this formal identity had utterly gone by 1973/1974, and Comorians were in the process of adapting to the fact.

Thirdly there was Comorian 'private identity'. In the short run, at least, the collapse of their public identity had caused only one category of Comorian - the Swahili/Comorian wazalia - to defect from private self-identification as Comorians. Others found enough continued meaning to being Comorian to continue so to identify themselves. However, one cannot imagine that this choice of affiliation will continue for more than another generation. Unsustained either by direct contact with Ngazija, or by a framework such as that which evolved during the colonial period and which moulded Comorian public identity from the outside, all Comorians seem likely to become 'Kenya Swahilis', 'Zanzibaris', 'Tanzanians'. In the 1970s, there was a sense in which coastal Swahilis and Comorians living among them already shared a private identity.

2.0 Ethnicity

When I first returned from the field, I read widely within the literature on urban ethnicity, and tried to use its concepts to understand my data on Swahilis and Comorians. The topic endlessly threw up more problems than it solved, and in the end I abandoned the attempt. I do not, therefore, review that literature anywhere in this thesis.

Briefly, there seem to be two main problems with the use of the terminology of 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic groups'.

Firstly, the terminology has been very loosely used. It seems to me that, while pioneers such as Barth (1969: 9ff.) and Cohen (1974: xiff.), along with many of the contributors to the books they each edited, appeared sensitive in their theoretical pronouncements to the difference between observer's and actor's categories, they tended in their actual analyses to set this distinction aside. Much writing about 'ethnic groups' and the processes which shape them tends in fact to conflateemic and etic analysis. This fusion is particularly dangerous analytically since, as my work demonstrates, there are certainly moments when members of an ethnic group fuse them too. The Zanzibar wazalia in the 1940s and 1950s are a case in point, and it has been a painful experience for them to unpick their private sense of identity from the public 'Comorianness' in which they so revelled thirty years ago.¹ The language of ethnicity cannot describe or analyse such a process.

1 In 1974 I visited Ngazija at the same time as a Zanzibar Comorian mzalia. She went to give a talk to the women of her village of origin (only once before visited) and harangued them for their quarrelsomeness, which she felt used up energies they should be spending on progress. Telling them about the Comorian women among the Zanzibar wazalia, she explained, 'We were so united.' The external pressures in Zanzibar helping to produce that unity were unperceived by her.

The work of Bruner (1973; 1974) helped me to perceive the second problem with much of the ethnicity debate - and that is a problem of emphasis. The thrust of Cohen's work is that, within an ethnic group, there are cultural givens which are mobilised in various ways if a group becomes an interest group (1969; 1974). No-one could quarrel with this insight, but it does leave larger questions substantially unasked. Why does mobilisation take place along ethnic rather than class lines? Why is the pre-existing culture used in this way rather than a manufactured new one? Political protest, and attempts to monopolise advantage for particular groups have often thrown up novel 'cultural' phenomena.

Bruner wisely commented: 'We must raise our sights and deal with the larger system' (1974: 277). His fieldwork in two Indonesian cities had taught him that the same rural cultural group - the Batak - could arrive at two quite different urban refractions of their 'culture' if the groups they interacted with in each city were different. His work makes it quite clear how strongly what I call public identity develops in response to the opinions and the expectations of others. Too many writers on ethnicity have concentrated on its working within one group, or in relation to one other group, without taking a step back and looking at the whole system within which ethnicity emerges at all. In Africa, it is obviously naive to write about ethnic identity without being strongly aware that the colonial era in many countries stressed tribal and racial categories and that the individuals so classified responded to this emphasis. This is a point made by several writers in Gulliver (1969) and here I give it particular prominence.¹

1 The 'plural society' theorists also give this issue due weight, in spite of their other deficiencies.

My own work demonstrates that, in order to understand the way in which Comorian public identity developed in Zanzibar and Kenya, it is illuminating both to have the contrast of two different situations, and to trace the growth of public identity over a long period. Indeed, I do not think twentieth-century Comorian public identity is explicable sociologically without an understanding of the Comorian position in nineteenth-century pre-colonial Zanzibar.

I have, then, deliberately tried to avoid the kind of myopic, timeless analysis which writers on ethnicity - at their worst - fall into. By contrast, I follow Comorian public identity right through, from its first development to its collapse, as ideological and political givens came and went.

3.0 Kinship patterns through time

The second contribution this thesis makes is its analysis of Swahili-Comorian kinship through time. Other writers on Swahilis and Comorians (with the exception of the historian Strobel) have tended to do village studies, and to describe kinship as it was at one moment in time. There is much value in this, but the lack of a time-dimension makes it impossible for such studies to look at changes in personal affiliation over time - a fundamental feature of bilateral kinship systems. Furthermore, as is suggested by much Indian data (e.g. Ahmed, 1973: 157ff.), marriage systems which feature endogamy and hypergamy cannot really be seen at work unless they are followed over time.

The flexible nature of bilaterality has meant that Comorian adaptation to change has usually been uncomplicated. The continued use of the same kinship principles in a new context produced an orderly and spontaneous shift away from matrilinearity and towards patrilinearity, for instance, when Comorians left Ngazija and settled in Zanzibar.

As Yalman's material on Ceylon demonstrated earlier (1967), variations on a theme have a logic which can be understood.

Inextricably linked with the options presented by bilaterality, of course, are the options presented by marriage. Though we are familiar, from Indian material (e.g. Parry, 1979), with the movement of individuals across caste boundaries, there has been less awareness in Africa of the constant movement through marriage of individuals across tribal boundaries.¹ This is particularly the case wherever muslims have impinged upon non-muslim groups.

In Figure 10, for instance (a simplified genealogy), a complex hypergamous trans-cultural range of linked marriages is set out.

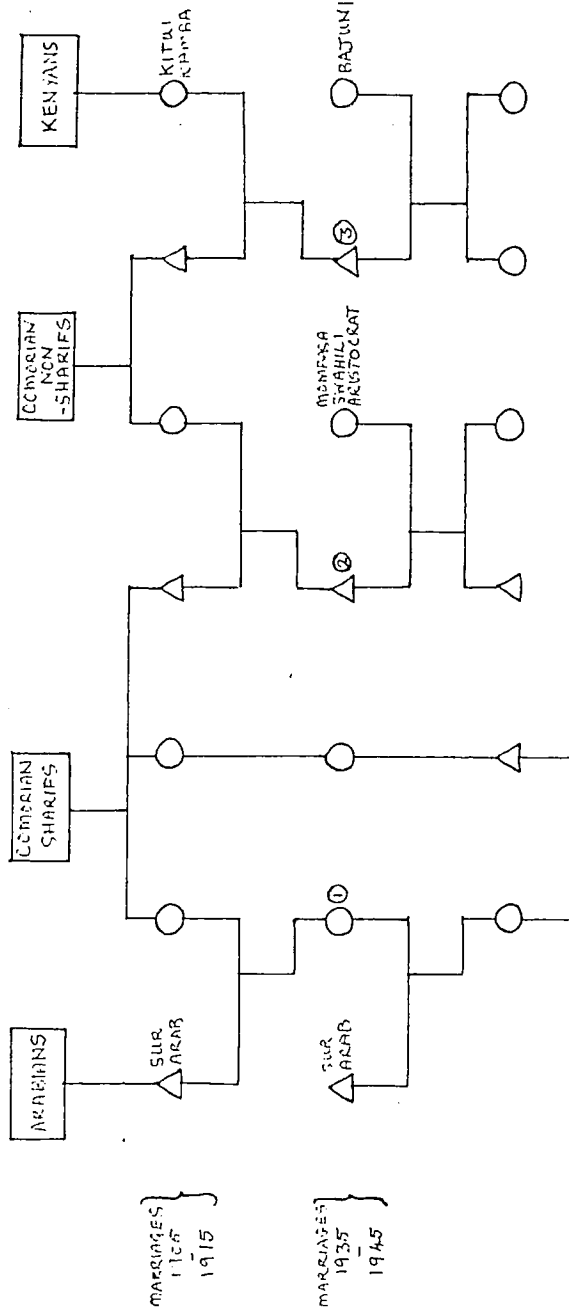
Marriages in Ngazija and Kenya over about 45 years

A wealthy Sur (Sunni Umani) Arab took a wife from a group of Ngazija sharifs; her brother took a wife from a non-sharif Ngazija sibling group; the Ngazija commoner's brother took a Kitui Kamba woman in Kenya. In the following generation, these Ngazija sharifs again gave a woman to a Sur Arab, and were able to take a woman from among Mombasa's Swahili (non-sharif) aristocrats. Note now (1) is able to contract a better marriage than (2), and (2) a better marriage than (3), because of the ranked marriages of their respective mothers, each of whom was able to make a better marriage than her brother. In the third generation (1)'s daughter married endogamously - her MMZDS; (2)'s children would have the option of being well-born Swahilis or Comorians; (3)'s children had the option of being Kamba, Bajuni or Comorian.

The hypergamous pattern developed here over forty years or so can only be understood diachronically and, as Lewis has written (1968: xviii), 'the enlargement of the time-depth through which social structure is studied gives the social anthropologist an added and invaluable

1 With a few notable exceptions, such as Haaland's excellent paper (1969: 58ff.), and Cohen and Middleton (1970).

Figure 10: Marriages in Ngazija and Kenya over about 45 years



perspective into the working both of particular institutions, and of particular societies'.

Indeed, given the decline into which Kenya's Swahilis have fallen, I think it likely that, just as the Comorians in Kenya will in time all abandon Comorian identity for some other coastal identity, Swahilis will begin to melt back into such 'tribal' coastal peoples as the Mijikenda, Bajuni and Shambaa. Perhaps in fifty years' time, there will be no Swahilis (as such) on the Kenya coast at all. Mombasa's Swahilis are certainly filled with a strong sense of their own demise as a category.

4.0 Conclusion

I have thus pursued two themes through time.

On the one hand is the story of the creation of a Comorian public identity in East Africa over a period of a hundred and thirty years. For this, it was necessary to check Comorian recollections of this public identity at various moments with such relevant external documentation as I could find, to demonstrate Comorian responses to the external framework within which they found employment.

Alongside runs the theme of private identity, which is constantly adapting through marriage choices made. Though it may take Comorian public identity into account, as a factor shaping perceptions and decisions, there were other important factors too. Comorians in East Africa were also taking note of changing circumstances in Ngazija, and in other parts of the Swahili world, and much further afield too, as they planned their children's marriages and careers. Private identity is maintained by Comorians' good opinions of and interest in one another. While those last, marriages will continue to be made which ensure the continuance of the domestic aspect of being a Comorian.

However, the process which we have seen played out before will continue. Comorians away from Zanzibar, for instance, have ceased to care about mji affiliation within it: Zanzibar itself has become the mji now, the category within which marriages are ideally made. Previously important aspects of personal identity become encapsulated in a broader identity in a new context, are weakened by irrelevance, and ultimately disappear. However, the processes of endogamy are such that old identities are more often incorporated into the new than abandoned.

My pursuit of the two strands of public and private identity as a way of understanding Comorian choices through time has led to the need for a broad range of material in this thesis. I have sought to elucidate the position of Comorians among Swahilis in Zanzibar and Kenya, indicating their fundamental cultural similarity; at the same time I have tried to trace out Comorian activities as labour migrants, and Comorian dealings with Europeans, as a way of explaining their great economic distinctness from Swahilis during the colonial period. Only with this material to hand could I assess the Comorian response to the loss of their economic niche in the years after Independence came to the East African countries.

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APPENDIX 1Swahili and Comorian kinship terms

AFFINITY

Comorian terms

MDRUME
 MUHA (MBABA for address)
 NYADZA (NDZADZE for address)
 SHEMEDZI
 MDRUMSHE MWENZAIANGU
 (i.e. 'co-wife' as if ego and
 HBW are wives of one man)

SHEMEDZI

SHEMEDZI

MDRUMSHE/MUHA
 MUHA (NBABA for address)
 NYADZA (NDZADZE for address)

SHEMEDZI

SHEMEDZI

SHEMEDZI

SHEMEDZI

SHEMEDZI

MUHA

NYADZA

SHEMEDZI

SHEMEDZI

SHEMEDZI

MUHA?

NYADZA? MUHA?

SHEMEDZI

SHEMEDZI

H

HF

HM

HB

HBW

HZ

HZH

W

WF

WM

WB

WBW

WZ

WZH

BY

BWF

BWM

BWB

BWZ

ZH

ZHF

ZHM

ZHB

ZHZ

Swahili terms

MUME

MKWE (BABA for address)

(MAVYAA for Fem) MKWE (MAMA for address)

SHEMEGI/SHEMEJI

(WIFI for F ego) SHEMEGI/SHEMEJI

(WIFI for F ego) SHEMEGI/SHEMEJI

SHEMEGI/SHEMEJI

MKE

MKWE (BABA for address)

MKWE (MAMA for address)

SHEMEGI/SHEMEJI

SHEMEGI/SHEMEJI

SHEMEGI/SHEMEJI

SHEMEGI/SHEMEJI

(WIFI for F ego) SHEMEGI/SHEMEJI

MKWE

(MAVYAA for F ego) MKWE

SHEMEGI/SHEMEJI

(WIFI for F ego) SHEMEGI/SHEMEJI

SHEMEGI/SHEMEJI

MKWE

(MAVYAA for F ego) MKWE

SHEMEGI/SHEMEJI

(WIFI for F ego) SHEMEGI/SHEMEJI

Comorian terms collected from

MaNgazija.

(Nzwani terms are somewhat different,
 though not, I think, structurally so.)

Swahili terms collected in Mombasa

<u>Comorian terms</u>	<u>KINSHIP</u>	<u>Swahili terms</u>
MBABA *	F	BABA *
MDZADZE *	M	MAMA *
MWANA MUME	S	MTOTO WA KIUME
MWANA MSHE	D	MTOTO WA KIKE
MWANAMA (MWANAMME) (MHUU)	older B	KAKA/NDUGU (WA KIUME)
MWANAMA (MTUTU)	younger B	NDUGU
MWANAMA (MSHE MHUU)	older Z	DADA
MWANAMA (MSHE MTUTU)	younger Z	NDUGU (WA KIKE)
	half B/Z	
MWANAMA MBABA MZIMA	by F	NDUGU BABA MOJA
MWANAMA MDZADZE MZIMA	by M	NDUGU MAMA MOJA
MBABA (MHUU/MTUTU)	<u>FB</u>	BABA (MKUBWA/MDOGO) /AMI (sometimes <u>wa pili</u> = 'the second')
MDZADZE	FWB	MAMA
MWANAMA	FBD/FBS	NDUGU
MWANA (WAHE MWANAMA)	BS/BD	MTOTO (WA NDUGU)
MWANA	HBS/HBD	MTOTO
(MDZADZE?) MWANAMA MSHE WA MBABA	<u>FZ</u>	SHANGAZI
MBABA	FZH	BABA
MWANAMA	FZD/FZS	NDUGU
MWANA	HBS/HBD	MTOTO
MJOMBA	<u>MB</u>	MJOMBA
MDZADZE?	MWB	MKAZA MJOMBA?
MWANAMA	MBS/HBD	NDUGU
MWANA (WAHE MWANAMA)	ZS/ZD	MTOTO (WA NDUGU) is also MJOMBA - nephew
MWANA	HZS/HZD	MTOTO
MDZADZE (MHUU/MTUTU)	<u>MZ</u>	MAMA (MKUBWA/MDOGO) (sometimes <u>wa pili</u> = 'the second')
MBABA	MZH	BABA
MWANAMA	MZD/MZS	NDUGU
MWANA	HZS/HZD	MTOTO
MBAYE (sometimes BAKOKO)	<u>FF</u>	BABU
KOKO	FM	NYANYA/BIBI
MBAYE (sometimes BAKOKO)	MF	BABU
KOKO	MM	NYANYA/BIBI
MJUHUU	SS/SD/DS/DD and all collaterals of second generation below	MJUHUU

* mbaba } hangu ya nizai - actual
mdzadze } genitor

* baba } halisi - for actual genitor
mama }

APPENDIX 2

Africa, 47(4), 1977TWO MARRIAGE FORMS IN THE COMORO ISLANDS:
AN INVESTIGATION

GILLIAN M. SHEPHERD

COMORIAN marriage must strike anyone with even the most passing knowledge of the Islands as surprising. All men strive for the lavish, expensive and lengthy marriage form known as *ndola nkuu* (great marriage) or *harusi ya ada* (customary marriage) even though a perfectly respectable simple form, *mna dabo* (little house), is all that moslem customary law requires. *Mna dabo* marriages cost almost nothing: *ada*¹ marriages may cost as much as £5000. Why invest such a large sum in this way? What, in plain anthropological language, are the functions of *ada* marriage?

THE SETTING

The Comoro Islands lie between northwest Madagascar and Mozambique and their inhabitants have a very ancient connection with the East African coast, Arabia and the Persian Gulf by virtue of the trading links and migration routes which depend upon the alternating southeast and northeast monsoons. Populated successively by the Indonesians who colonised Madagascar, by Arab traders and missionaries and by Bantu speakers—or rather by the mixed race descendants of these two categories—and lastly by slaves brought from East Africa during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Islands present a surprisingly homogeneous whole, united both by Islam and by much that is culturally reminiscent of the Swahili peoples inhabiting the coast of Africa from Mogadishu to Mozambique, of whom they are fundamentally a part (Gevrey 1870; Ottino 1974; Prins 1961).

The four islands were linked politically for the first time only in 1912, under French colonial rule, and to Comorians the differences between them are still more important than the similarities. Of these differences, the most clearcut to an outsider is that between Mayotte, the southernmost island, whose history is more intimately bound up with Madagascar's, and the larger more northerly islands of Ngazija and Anzwani² which are more actively linked with East Africa and Arabia and which have a higher proportion of inhabitants claiming Arab origin. The marriage system here examined is to be found primarily in these two islands, and unless I state otherwise I shall be using material from Ngazija only, where the system is more marked. It is from this island that most of the labour migrants to East Africa come.

DEMOGRAPHY AND ECONOMY

Comorians currently number about 300,000 excluding migrants, with a 3% growth rate. In an archipelago dependent upon agriculture whose total land area is only about a quarter the size of Corsica, this makes for a high population density—about 130 per sq. km—which is exacerbated by two further factors. Firstly not all land is cultivable. In Ngazija, for instance, nearly 50% of the land is unusable, covered by recent unweathered lavaflows or thick, high-altitude, tropical forest. Here population

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densities on arable land rise to 336 per sq. km (Commissariat au Plan 1973). Secondly, a proportion of the Islands' land is in the hands of predominantly French-owned *sociétés* whose vast plantations, covering about 35% of the archipelago's surface, are on the whole sited in the best watered and most fertile areas. While the days of the *sociétés* are probably numbered since the Comorians made a unilateral declaration of independence in July 1975, their effect for the last century or so has been very great. Probably only about 40% of land is available for Comorians themselves and this is far from evenly distributed among them (Isnard 1953). It tends to be concentrated in the hands of the traditional ruling families and the entrepreneurial middle classes, with less owned by the remainder of the population, some of whom live as squatters on the land of others or on that of the *sociétés*.

The Comorian staple foods, which provide 75% of the ordinary family diet, are coconuts, bananas, manioc and occasionally rice, most of which is imported and which is eaten daily only by the wealthy (Mennesson 1969). Other subsistence crops are taro, yams, potatoes, spinach, jackfruit and breadfruit. Most people eat a little fish from time to time but, except among the wealthy, meat is only eaten on special occasions such as moslem feast days and weddings. The shortage of land for subsistence needs is suggested by the fact that up to 50% of the Islands' annual import budget is spent on food (*Africa Contemporary Record* 1975).

A proportion of Comorians was for a very long time involved in overseas trade, traditionally selling copra, cowrie and other shells and dried fish, and acquiring cloth and luxury goods from Zanzibar, meat and rice from Madagascar; in the nineteenth century some Comorian dhow owners took part in the slave trade. Nowadays small scale dhow trading has declined and been replaced by the cash cropping of vanilla, perfume oils—especially ylangylang—and cloves. There is a shrinking market for copra, and sisal has virtually been abandoned. Most of the production of these crops is in the hands of the *sociétés* and a few individuals with ample land. Some vanilla and ylangylang is also grown by small farmers but they should sell to the *sociétés*, the monopoly exporters (Mennesson 1969). In the capital island of Ngazija, according to the most recent census (INSEE 1966), 70% of men were full time agriculturalists or fishermen. The remaining 30% were evenly divided between the self employed—craftsmen and small businessmen—and employees of the government or the *sociétés*. However these figures take no account of migrant labourers spending large periods of their lives overseas. As far as I could ascertain from informants working in Kenya, most would have been farmers had they been in the Comoros, but were short of land. A rough estimate of their numbers can be made: the census shows, in Ngazija, an excess of women over men in age groups from fifteen to fifty-nine; on the assumption that the numbers of men and women would otherwise have been roughly the same, it appears that in all some 20% of the men within these age categories are abroad. Opportunities for unskilled wage labour are limited almost exclusively to poorly paid work on the land of others, and those who need work leave the islands if they can.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Comorians in Ngazija and Anzwani fall into three ranks traditionally, similar to those found among the Swahili (Prins 1961; J. Bujra 1968), and to some extent to those found among the Arabs of South Arabia (A. S. Bujra 1971). These are the sherifs

(*masherifu*), descendants of the Prophet; the freeborn (*wanngwana*); and the slaves (*warumwa*), or rather descendants of slaves, since slavery was declared illegal in the Islands in 1904. These three ranks are maintained by a *de facto* endogamy springing from the Islamic *kufa'a* rule which states that a woman must marry her social equal or superior. Thus men of slave descent may not marry freeborn women, and the daughters of sherifs must marry sherifs. The existence of a few marriages which break the rule does not shake the immutability of the descent status of males, which must pass to their offspring.

Little has changed the pattern according to which members of the three ranks live in discrete quarters of the stone built coastal towns. While the sherifs, who were rulers of the Islands in the past within a system of petty sultanates, lost some authority and land to the French during a century of colonial rule, their prestige is still great. This is based partly on their wealth, partly on their possession of *baraka*, the holy power to bless and curse, which as descendants of the Prophet they are heir to, and partly on their membership of renowned named non-localised patrilineages, respected not only in the Comoros but also in East Africa and Arabia. Under colonial rule they held most of the positions of authority open to Comorians: on the one hand, religious posts as imams of mosques, teachers in Qur'an schools, leaders of sufi brotherhoods³ and qadhis (administrators of shari'a law); on the other, almost every important government post from *sous-préfet* to Representative in the French Senate.

The freeborn range downwards from those 'of good family' (*wa qabaila*), whose descent from notable South Arabian tribes (A. S. Bujra 1971: 14) and whose wealth ranks them only just below the sherifs. These have always been town dwellers, living a leisured life traditionally, owning land and the slaves to work it and often devoting themselves to religious study. Other town dwelling freemen were, and are, self employed craftsmen. Rural freemen rank lower than townsmen, in part because their present day economic position is so similar to that of slave descendants: they have little or no land of their own and may be forced to squat on the land of others. Lowest of all are fishermen who, because their trade is seen as unclean, are forced into endogamy by other freemen. Some urban freemen have continued to live well, turning over land to cash crops worked by wage labourers, or running shops. On the whole it is they and their children who have increasingly acquired a western education in Madagascar or France and manned the Comorian civil service and government alongside sherifs. Rural freemen have turned to migrant labouring in East Africa or Madagascar as their best way of making a living.

The slave descendants are a more distinct social category than their counterparts in coastal East Africa. Some, especially women, still live with, or on the lands of, their one time masters or their descendants, and are regarded as something between clients, poor relatives and servants paid in kind. Some Ngazija hill villages used to be slave villages, sited deliberately near lands owned by the freemen who themselves lived in the coastal stone towns below. Inhabitants of these villages have become the virtual owners of such land, for its formal owners can no longer exercise control over it. Some slave descendants have done well abroad as migrants and have bought land from freemen. Among slave descendants, those with long ancestry in the Islands (*wazalia*) feel themselves superior to those descended from plantation labourers brought here in large numbers in the second half of the nineteenth century. These, coming largely

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from among the Makua of Mozambique, are still occasionally referred to as the *wamakua*.

To sum up, this is a very rank-conscious society. Superiority to others is readily assumed on grounds drawn from descent, race, (those of mostly 'Arab' blood looking down on those of mostly 'African' blood), wealth, education and piety. Town dwellers despise villagers; agriculturalists despise fishermen (and vice versa). A man's rank (*daraja*), as calculated by himself and others on multiplex criteria, is a matter of overriding importance.

KINSHIP

In both Ngazija and Anzwani, an underlying matrilineal organisation struggles with the strong emphasis on patrification imported with Islam. At the time of greatest emigration from the Arabian peninsula in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (B. G. Martin 1971: 527), tradition has it that Arabs, on coming to the Comoros, found a society organised around village chiefs (*mabeja*), whose position was inherited matrilineally (J. Martin 1968). In Ngazija, power reputedly passed into the hands of the newcomers by their matrimonial alliances to the sisters and daughters of the *mabeja*, and while what evidence we have (Harries forthcoming) shows perennial competition for power between sons and sisters' sons, matrilineal succession remained the abiding rule. Today the *inya*⁴ (meaning both matriclan and shallow matrilineage) remains important in several contexts detailed below. At the same time descent status is strictly inherited from the father, as we have seen, and the more 'Arab' an individual Comorian claims to be, the more complex are the matrilineal and patrilineal aspects of his social universe which he must balance.

Residence is universally uxorilocal, in houses provided for brides by their parents. There is a clear distinction made between land passed on matrilineally, which is jointly owned by the matrilineage and may not be sold, and land bought by individuals, individually owned, and very often left by a man to his own children.

Crosscutting the *inya* (matrilineage) is the *qabila*, here translated as patrilineage.⁵ Neither is exogamous. Moreover, while everyone is a member of an *inya*, *qabila* membership is more variable; Comorian sheriffs and freemen *wa qabaila*, who trace descent from named Arabian ancestors, and who belong to active local descent groups, may properly be said to have patrilineages; but many other Comorians, while stressing patrification when asserting rank, do not belong to any clearly corporate descent group.

In Ngazija, land is strongly identified with women. Matrilineage land coming to a sibling group through its mother is administered by the firstborn sister, once she is married, and eventually divided between all the sisters. Men subsist from their own matrilineage land before they are married, and their wives' afterwards. While some land may reach men from their fathers; as has been explained, or may be bought, there is a tendency for it to join the matrilineal pool eventually, through the institution of *manyabuli*.⁶ Land held in common by a group of siblings, *manyabuli*, is usually a specially purchased gift from their father. Brothers' rights are limited to usufruct, and in the next generation, only sisters' children have access to it; indeed, brothers may, if they wish, sell their interest to the sibling group, though sisters may not. A *manyabuli* may be dissolved at any time, so long as all living parties to it agree (Ford n.d.).

The most important relationship in Ngazija is that between brother and sister, far outweighing that of spouses. Intergenerational relations, however, are less easy to characterise for a man finds his duties to his own and his sisters' children, especially daughters, in conflict. It is his duty to provide a house and husband for each of his own daughters and to ensure that his sisters' daughters are so provided for. In practice, it usually happens that he contributes materially only to the marriage of the first-born of his sisters' daughters, important as the administrator of matrilineage land in the new generation, and thereafter concerns himself only with his own daughters, the firstborn of whom will in turn receive help from her mother's brother. However, that at least in principle a mother's brother is responsible for all his sisters' daughters, is indicated by the fact that their husbands must bring the dowry (*mahari*) to him and not to the father.

MARRIAGE

We may now turn to an examination of the attitudes towards and prestations accompanying the two marriage forms under discussion. The following refers explicitly only to the island of Ngazija, though much of it holds good for Anzwani too (Robineau 1966: 65-70).

Mna dabo (little house) marriage is the Comorian term for a simple legal marriage—a declaration by the groom in front of a qadhi, the bride's guardian and witnesses. The dowry (*mahari*) given will be a nominal £10-20, or even less if the marriage is not the girl's first. A bullock may, but need not, be slaughtered to mark the event. A *maulidi* (a praise poem sung in commemoration of the Prophet) is usually performed six days after the wedding. The couple live in the bride's natal village in the house given her by her parents, which remains hers whether she is married or divorced. Women married by *mna dabo* are of low status⁷ and do not expect to be approached with an offer of *ada* marriage; they have little property, that is to say, or are of lowly descent or, very commonly, they are already divorced. Marriages made by migrants in East Africa to African women are thought of as *mna dabo*.

Virtually all men make an *mna dabo* marriage as their first, since in most cases for *ada* marriage it takes years to accumulate the required capital. Exceptions are young men with white collar jobs, or from wealthy landed families. The standard age for *ada* marriage, for a man, is from mid-thirties to early forties, and waiting until fifty or sixty is not unknown. Plainly polygyny and/or divorce must be important here, for few would wait until middle age for a first marriage. Indeed, the Comoro Islands census (INSEE 1966) shows that nearly 25% of men had more than one wife at the time of census taking, a very high rate among moslems.⁸ Men often make several *mna dabo* marriages before they are ready for *ada* marriage.

A man should not make more than one *ada* marriage, however, regardless of his wealth or status. And by no means all men manage to do so once. To some migrants, for instance, it may slowly become apparent that the wherewithal for *ada* marriage will never be saved. Such men remain overseas, shamed by their inability to return home, cash in hand, and marry.

Obstacles to *ada* marriage are not only financial. Out of respect, a man may not so marry before his father does, and unless his mother's oldest brother is living permanently abroad, he may not precede him either. Within his own sibling group he may not make an *ada* marriage before his oldest sister nor, properly, before his oldest brothers.

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For a woman, unlike a man, the conditions which make her eligible for an *ada* marriage are out of her hands. She is usually a firstborn daughter, *itswa dabo* (house head), the administrator of matrilineage land and as such forbidden to leave the Comoros except for a pilgrimage to Mecca. If not a firstborn, she will be the daughter of wealthy parents who expect to marry all their daughters by *ada*. Girls for whom *ada* marriages are destined must have been reared in more than normal seclusion (*zidakani*) and may have been verbally promised to their husbands from childhood.

Ideally, husband and wife in an *ada* marriage should be actual or classificatory cross-cousins.⁹ Sister exchange between already closely related sibling groups is often sought, or the exchange of woman for woman over more than one generation: patrilateral cross-cousin marriage. The social equality of partners in *ada* marriage is implicit, in contrast to the inequality of partners in *mna dabo* marriages: as a result, the *ada* wife always has supremacy over any *mna dabo* wives her husband may have, even though she will almost certainly be their junior in age.

Ada partners should not only be kinsmen, but also share the same town of birth and, nowadays, the same town moiety.¹⁰ If there is a choice of suitable partners final selection may be made with the aid of one of the town's curer-astrologers (*walimu*) who use the Qur'an and other Islamic texts for divination.

FINANCIAL PRECONDITIONS FOR *Ada* MARRIAGE

Clearly an *ada* marriage cannot go forward until the resources of those concerned are sufficient. For the groom, this may take from a year or two to decades. Saving is made not by laying aside money, but by buying specific items, particularly the pieces of gold jewellery which must be given, and storing them with kin for safekeeping.

The expenses of the bride's kin are far less onerous in cash terms and it is quite acceptable to spend money received from the groom during the course of the wedding at once—even the dowry. At this point their chief expense is the provision of food for large numbers of guests; but their most substantial contribution overall is the provision of house, furnishings and land given as a dowry to the girl herself. Matrilineage land is automatically available but the house may be relatively costly. Sometimes the *ada* daughter gets her own mother's considerably refurbished house.

It is the groom then who has the more arduous task in preparing for *ada* marriage. What is more, the money he spends is not recoverable, while the bride keeps her house and land whatever becomes of the marriage.

THE COURSE AND COSTS OF AN *Ada* MARRIAGE

Prestations from a man to his eventual bride are spread over a long period, beginning at the moment, perhaps years before, when formal agreement that the marriage will take place is sealed with a pact-gift (*mwafaka*) of perhaps £50 worth of gold jewellery. (Costs are quoted in their 1974 sterling equivalents.) Like all future prestations from groom to bride, it is taken to her by town elders who have already made *ada* marriages themselves.

There is now a timelag until the wedding date can be announced, unless the bride's father chooses to recall village attention to his daughter's destiny by slaughtering cattle and offering a feast (*karamu*) to his contemporaries and seniors.

Once the wedding date has been announced in the mosque, the dowry is sent to the bride's kin with maximum publicity. A full weekend of public entertainment is arranged, with a procession taking dowry and accompanying gifts (*zindru*) to the bride's house as its climax. The

dower is currently about £150, and several hundred pounds may be spent on other gifts. Bride's and groom's kin spend heavily on food.

The groom's own impending change of status is marked by the day's cultivation young men of the town put in for him on the fields of his fiancée, clearing and planting subsistence crops.

The wedding celebration itself is a two week event, beginning and ending with normal prayers in the Friday mosque. After Friday prayers, the groom sends his bride a European veil, and gifts of gold jewellery and money worth about £50. The bride's kin entertain their own guests and the groom arranges public entertainment—dances—in the evening.

On Saturday, the bride's kin begin sending food to the groom for his guests, particularly his own men friends and peers who take him for a picnic lunch in the countryside. In the evening there is a public concert of arabesque music (*tarab*).

On Sunday morning the groom is led in procession all around the town, ending up at the new house where his bride is waiting for him. His mother and oldest sister accompany him closely in the procession and a velvet-covered tray is also borne along with him, displaying the gold jewellery he brings. This, the most expensive of the prestations he makes to the bride, will be worth up to a thousand pounds. At the same time the groom himself first wears the turban and coat embroidered with gold thread which only those who have made *ada* marriages are entitled to wear.¹¹ It too is worth close on a thousand pounds, though it is often inherited from, or given by his father, not specially bought. Two older men announce the groom's arrival at the door of the bride's house: one by uttering the prayer call (*adhana*)¹² and the second by declaring the quantity and nature of the gifts brought. The groom enters, the marriage is consummated, and the third day's entertainment for the town at large goes on in the streets and square, while invited guests are fed at the expense of groom and bride's kin. Food offered throughout the wedding period consists basically of the two luxuries, rice and meat. Specially raised cattle are slaughtered.

For the next week the couple stay indoors, though guests are invited each day to eat with the groom, and the bride's women friends may come to dance and sing for her. On Friday in this week of seclusion, young men come to recite a *maulidi* at the new marital home. The last day on which further prestations are expected from the groom is the following Monday—the Ninth Day (*ntswa shenda*), counting the day the marriage was consummated as the first. The groom goes back to his mother's home on the eve of this day to supervise the preparation of the piles of gifts to be given on the morrow. They will be taken to the bride, her father, her mother and her mother's sisters (her classificatory mothers). Money and lengths of cloth are the main gifts, and are actually redistributed widely among the bride's other more distant kin. In addition, the bride herself and her mother receive some gold. Referred to as 'respect' (*hesbima*) it is described as a reward for the bride's virginity. The groom owes other gifts too on the Ninth Day, not directly connected with the bride. He must reward the elders who have acted as go-betweens throughout the wedding, must make donations to the mosque, and to the Qur'an school. The groom's oldest sister, an important background figure in the wedding, must be provided with gifts to send to her new sister-in-law: western dresses, make-up and perfume together with a gold ring or two perhaps.

The Ninth Day is the last on which any public events take place. Return to normal life begins from the following Friday when the groom is 'taken out' by his friends to attend Friday mosque with them, wearing the Arab clothing he is newly entitled to.

Without going into further detail, it is clear that the expenses of a wedding on this scale are considerable. While it is hard to cost all items separately, informants agreed in 1974 that the total outgoings for a man were between £2000 and £7000, the heaviest expense being gold. The bride's family spends about a third as much as the groom (discounting the value of the land the girl brings to the marriage). It should be stressed

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that all men in Ngazija¹³ feel it incumbent upon them to aim at *ada* marriage: the social ranks described earlier affect overall cost but without 'gold, cattle, dances,' as one Comorian woman summed it up, it is not an *ada* marriage. The descendants of slaves in the Ngazija hill villages have their own *ada* marriages but they are less expensive and more men fail to have them. The level of acceptable expense current in a particular town or village is set by those who have already made *ada* marriages and in particular the individual knows that he must equal or slightly improve upon marriages made recently by his peers (*hirimu*).¹⁴ Figures collected in Kenya among Comorian migrants suggest that the amount spent is the equivalent of at least five to six times their annual earned income: more expensive, by that standard, than house purchase by mortgage in Britain.

THE MEANING OF *Ada* MARRIAGE

With what, then, are these heavy costs concerned? Since evidence from elsewhere suggests that high marriage payments usually accompany stable unions (Gluckman 1950), such a correlation was first looked for in the Ngazija material. The 1966 Census gives a divorce rate of 41% for Ngazija, calculated by Barnes' ratio A (Barnes 1967: 61-2), and by Djamour's criteria applied in Singapore (Djamour 1959: 132-7) this is high. There is unfortunately no way of knowing from the Census what contribution to divorce figures terminated *ada* marriages make, but impressionistic data suggest that by no means all divorces occur among *mna dabo* marriages.

Firstly, wives in both kinds of union have their own houses and land rights and have little to fear, economically, from divorce. It is an anthropological commonplace that divorce is more frequent in such situations (Radcliffe-Brown 1950: 45; Fortes 1950: 283; Mair 1971: 183). Comorian men, indeed, joke ruefully that they never know when they will come home to find the front door shut and their possessions heaped on the doorstep. Secondly, in the small sample of *ada* marriages where one or other partner is personally known to me, three out of thirteen—26%—have ended in divorce. Informants' comments are telling too. A woman said, 'It is wrong to divorce after *ada* marriage but if you are at that stage you have to divorce,' and went on to explain that several of her female relatives had been married by *ada* twice. A young man, telling how he had chosen a close kinswoman as his wife said, 'I thought, if I have to waste all that money, it might as well stay in the family. After all, I might get divorced.' While such evidence is most tentative, it suggests that if all the expense of *ada* marriage is concerned with is guaranteeing indissoluble unions, it is a rather inefficient institution. We must plainly investigate further.

Marriage normally legitimizes offspring, expresses alliance between groups, and marks a status change for the partners, the importance of each varying from society to society. Alliance between groups is of some importance in Ngazija: *ada* marriage partners are ideally cross-cousins, and costly exchanges underline the new relationship being entered upon. Yet the manner in which prestations are made indicates preoccupations over and above alliance. The *mabari* is borne ostentatiously through the streets from groom to bride's kin and so are the tray of gold and the Ninth Day gifts; public declaration of what has been brought is made outside the bride's house before the groom enters. Since the recipients of these gifts are the last to see what they are getting, it is plain that the display is for the benefit of the rest of the townspeople,

who are given an opportunity to see for themselves exactly how splendid an *ada* marriage this is to be. Important too is the feeding of large numbers of townsmen with luxury food—meat and rice.

Comparisons can be made here with Yalman's Ceylonese material (Yalman 1967), where elaborate ceremonial marriages also take place alongside simple forms. He notes that the wealthy use the marriages of their children as opportunities to bargain, with property rights as counters, for superior alliances with other families of importance. The greater the social distance involved, the more the ceremonial. It is his contention that ceremony buttresses danger points in the desired social structure, for the ceremony becomes simpler, even among the rich, the greater the pre-existing closeness of the two marriage partners. Actual cross-cousins may simply start living together with no formality at all. Yalman comments, 'In kinship terms, why a marriage ceremony may be omitted is that structurally nothing happens' (Yalman 1967: 172). Leach's material in *Pul Eliya* (Leach 1961) anticipates Yalman. He sees ceremonial marriage as a public proclamation of achieved status and says much bitterness ensues if marriages break down.

On this evidence, the situation in Ngazija is one in which the prime aim of *ada* marriage cannot be alliance. Costly marriages take place among close kin between whom there already exists a close structural relationship on the one hand; on the other divorce, while not wished for, is always regarded as a possibility which cannot be ruled out. It seems then that the ceremony and expense of *ada* marriage constitute declaration rather than dialogue.

Ada MARRIAGE AS STATUS CHANGE

The third aspect of marriage listed was status change for the partners. Universal though this is, it is more striking in some situations than others. Legal marriage in the Caribbean, for instance, following on years of transient common law unions, brings prestige and public office to those who make it, and confers 'higher' class status automatically (Davenport 1961; Wilson 1969).

Status change for those who make *ada* marriages is so all-embracing, that this must be its most important aspect. In this respect it most closely resembles institutions completely unrelated to marriage, such as feasts of merit (Fürer-Haimendorf 1967: 101-2, 220). Quite simply, a man cannot be called an adult (*mru mxima*) until his marriage has given him social adulthood and a dramatically enhanced position in a hierarchical system important throughout his life. Six named grades (*tabaka*) stretch upwards before a young man and, unlike the three-tier ranking based on patrilineage, are open to achievement. The first is automatically entered on starting at Qur'an school in the local mosque at the age of five or so; the second, third and fourth are attained by financing a feast of meat and rice for members of the next grade up at the mosque, and thereby being admitted to their number; moves upward take place at roughly the ages of fifteen, twenty and twenty-five (Rouveyran 1967). The fifth grade may only be entered upon completion of *ada* marriage and the sixth on that of a man's firstborn daughter. As we have seen, the provision of food plays a part in entry to the highest two grades as well as to lower ones. The ideology is that one moves through these grades at the same pace as one's *birimu* (see note 14), albeit as an individual, but plainly these become spread across grades, particularly from the fourth upwards.

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Ada marriage is by far the most important point in this system. All those who have not yet attained it are 'unmarried' boys, all those who have are men, regardless of chronological age in either case. The former group are known as Sons of the Town (*wanamji*) and the latter as Princes of the Town (*wafaume wa mji*). On many a public occasion, from prayers in the Friday mosque and the informal groups who gather around it to sit and chat on its stone benches, to weddings and village councils, those who have made *ada* marriages are physically separated from those who have not. They enter the mosque by their own door and stand together in the front inside; they are at all times distinguishable by the silk shawls they wear, and they may demand respect and deference throughout the island on pain of payment of a fine.

The institution is too coercive to be easily ignored. A man who falls behind his *hirimu* mates as they begin to make their *ada* marriages soon finds himself forbidden their company at public events and shamed by being forced to sit with much younger men. His delay may hold up sons or sisters' sons, ready but unable to make *ada* marriages because of him. If he attempts to speak publicly at a village meeting he will be told, 'Who are you? We have eaten nothing from you,' by the *wafaume wa mji* even if he is their senior in chronological age.

A woman's status is also enhanced by the institution, though for her it is no part of a more elaborate system. As the most important wife of her husband, she too is known as *mfaume wa mji* (sing.). The quantity and type of gold jewellery she wears on festive occasions marks her out as an *ada* wife and at various events, such as the birth of her children, she commands more attention, both from her husband and from other women than an *mna dabo* wife.

However, although men claim to be less enthusiastic about *ada* marriage than women, it is they who reap more prestige, first as husbands and later as fathers. The political positions open to an ordinary Comorian with no western education, limited though they are to town/village and mosque level, may only be bid for by those who have made *ada* marriages. Indeed even nationally, until recently, it was a *sine qua non* and young would-be parliamentary candidates, attempting to canvass votes in outlying areas, would be shouted down because they were not yet social adults and as such had no right to speak in public. It is the declared aim¹⁵ of the current government in the newly independent Comoros to abolish *ada* marriage as a preserver of hierarchies based on age and wealth, a system for excluding others, a club for big men. But young men have been saying this in the Comoros since at least the 1930s.¹⁶ The institution seems resilient, and conflict between the young and the old mostly centres on acceptable levels of prestation rather than on whether or not it should be abolished (Rouveyrán 1967).

Ada marriage in fact keeps power squarely in the hands of the traditional elite, while appearing to open the doors to anyone. Wealthy matrilineages help their young men to become *wafaume wa mji* at a far younger age by contributing to the cost of their marriages, and reap the benefit from increased numerical strength in the two highest grades. Poorer men, raising the money they will need alone, reach *ada* marriage later, have greater difficulty in providing for the *ada* marriage of a daughter, and are members of the highest grades for a shorter time in consequence. There is also the question of gold. An oldest sister must marry before any brothers do so, and she is duty bound to contribute to their *ada* marriages by giving them some of the gold she

has received. (Mothers, if they have any left, must also contribute gold for their sons.) However, while all men must make an *ada* marriage, in all but wealthy families the oldest daughter only will do so. It is thus clear that in most sibling groups, the first daughter's gold will be spread thin among several brothers while among the wealthy, where all the daughters make *ada* marriages, more gold is available for their brothers. In this way *ada* marriage doubly favours the already wealthy and acts to keep their ascendancy constant.

CONCLUSION

The question originally asked was, why spend so much on getting married? We already have a part answer: the prestige which comes with *ada* marriage is much coveted and the shame at failure is great.

Competition for prestige through lavish expenditure is a traditional feature of Swahili society (Harries 1967; Ranger 1975; Strobel 1975) to which Comorians essentially belong. However, the days of large scale competition are all but over among the Swahili themselves. Ranger (1975: 152) suggests that competitive Beni dances dwindled and died in coastal Kenya in the 1950s as more and more young men, through the acquisition of a western secular education, reckoned that prestige was to be measured against the achievements of others in a wider arena, where different skills were rewarded. In the Comoro Islands the provision of state secular education was barely undertaken before 1962 and, even now, primary schools can only cater for about 23% of school age children (Mennesson 1969). Thus for most adults the passage rite of a western education was and is unavailable and the domain it leads to, inaccessible. The alternative has been Qur'an school education and, as we have seen, in the Comoros that recruits people directly into the *ada* marriage system. Significantly, the few who feel this system to be irrelevant are the small band of young well-educated white collar employees in Moroni, the capital.¹⁷ They have an elevated position in the social order in their own terms and can afford to ignore the traditional route to prestige. But for the vast majority, there is no alternative to the framework of *ada* marriage unless it be permanent emigration.

The corollary to the question, 'why spend so much on getting married?' is of course, 'why not invest the money in something else?'

As the summary of the stagnant Comorian economy given earlier in this article suggests, it is hard to see what, practically, to invest in. The islands are overpopulated, land is short, the cash crops currently being grown have an uncertain price on the world market and an uncertain future (*Africa Contemporary Record* 1975). Bourde (1965) recommended the redistribution of *société* land and more concentration on cattle raising and the improved cultivation of subsistence crops, but none of these things has yet happened; they need government implementation and cannot affect the economic decisions of individuals as yet.

Further, the normal way of acquiring land for a man in Ngazija is through marriage, rather than inheritance or purchase. Women with the best rights in land are only given by *ada*, and thus *ada* marriage for a man does indeed have a straightforward economic aspect. Moreover, it brings a form of social security which has caused one writer (Rouveyrant 1967) to liken it to a pension scheme. *Wafaume wa mji* are assured not only of respect but also of practical benefits for the rest of their lives. They are invited to a

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wider range of public events than their juniors, and are there given more meat and rice, the luxury foods, than others. (At the *ada* marriage of a co-townsmen, all members of the fifth grade receive half a back leg each, and all members of the sixth grade a whole front leg each, when cattle are slaughtered.) This is no small consideration in a place where meat is eaten so rarely by most people.

As far as overseas migrants are concerned, *ada* marriage acts as a most effective economic filter: of those who wish to return, only those who save enough to make an *ada* marriage can do so. The rest, knowing the humiliation in store for them, stay away. Competition for land and wealthy women in Ngazija is thereby regulated and those who do return are welcome because they enrich and feed their town of origin.

Ada marriage is, then, a multi-purpose institution. It yields prestige, offers access to the most valuable land rights through women who are costly to marry, provides security in old age and keeps out unsuccessful or unthrifty migrants. Contrariwise, the man who ignores it courts shame, poverty and perhaps banishment.

Why has an institution so burdensome financially, proved so tenacious? No single cause answer is proposed, but there are two types of explanation that need setting out. Firstly, *ada* marriage appears to support a gerontocratic tendency in Ngazija, though it is a gerontocracy where age is socially not chronologically defined. It is obviously in the interest of all 'older' men who have made *ada* marriages to persuade 'younger' men to follow suit. If the chain breaks down, then older men will have spent their all for nothing and the benefits they sought will evaporate. Older men are able successfully to demand respect, money and food from their juniors and force them in turn to buy prestige because they command a key resource: never-before-married firstborn daughters with control of some of the best matrilineage land available. And for migrants, older men in effect control their very rights to return to the Islands at all.

This explanation of the durability of the institution is that of an observer, and its stark economic aspects appear to be clouded for a Comorian participant by the moral and religious aspects of *ada* marriage. An explanation taking these into account needs to return to the events of the marriage. The mosque, we have seen, has central importance: the wedding date is announced there, the wedding period begins and ends there, and it is there that, week by week, the superiority and separateness of *wafaume wa mji* are most clearly seen; and it is the *birimu*, the mosque age-sets, which are the building blocks of the larger system in which *ada* marriage is a stage. At the same time arabness is emphasized, in the marriage, by high status arab clothing, now worn for the first time and dramatically altering the appearance of the individual. Among Comorians in the Islands, the making of an *ada* marriage is a virtuous act as important as submission to the five Pillars of Islam according to some informants.

In fact, after his marriage, a man is respected as if he has become a better moslem and a purer Arab—the two attributes being far from distinct in Comorian thinking. The *ada* marriage hierarchy has apparently become partially aligned with the important hierarchies of descent and race outlined earlier in the article. As a result, the individual's position in the birth ascribed hierarchies is to some extent modified by his position on that open to achievement. In *ada* marriage wealth creates a situation where respect for a man's arab origin, moslem piety and age is enhanced simply because he is promoted as an equal to the company of hitherto more senior men already in possession of these qualities. Thus the money spent in *ada* marriages is converted not

only to prestige but also to virtue as locally defined. While an outsider might see the pressure to make an *ada* marriage as an economic one, to a Comorian it is a binding moral duty.

Far from waning as an institution, *ada* marriage has grown constantly more expensive, lengthy and elaborate; a response perhaps to the increasingly scarce resources in the Islands. Without sweeping political and economic reform, *ada* marriage seemed in 1974 certain to continue alongside *mma dabo* for some time.

POSTSCRIPT

After this article was written, the independent Comorian government banned *ada* marriage (in August 1976). I have left the article in the present tense as it stands because it represented the status quo at the time when I collected the data for it.

However, I would like to note briefly how it comes about that the present government has banned the institution, when all other attempts have failed. Firstly, it recognised that *ada* marriage was part of a cluster of institutions during the colonial period. France had unwittingly selected its representatives, at village and national level, from among the ranks of those who had made *ada* marriages simply because it ruled through the existing elite, and that is how the elite was recruited. An unintended consequence was the continuance and elaboration of *ada* marriage. The present government then realised that it must suppress not only *ada* marriage, but also the honour given to sheriffs and the low status accorded fishermen, the descendants of slaves, country dwellers and to some extent women and the young. A deliberate and thorough going social upheaval is the result, and it is as yet difficult to see what future patterns will be. What is more, the abolition of *ada* marriage is already having effects on land transfer, since fathers seem to be reluctant to give large amounts of property to their daughters as dowry, when sons-in-law now contribute so little in return. Government plans for land distribution, not yet put into effect, will doubtless modify kin relations still further.

NOTES

The research on which this paper is based was carried out during eighteen months of fieldwork among Comorian migrants in Mombasa, Kenya, complemented by two brief fieldtrips, totalling six weeks, in the Comoro Islands themselves—the first before work in Mombasa began, the second as it was finishing. Information for this paper is taken from French written sources, from Comorian migrants in Kenya saving for *ada* marriages or who had already made them, and from direct observation and questioning of participants in Ngazija. I am grateful to the SSRC who supported me during this period and to participants in seminars at LSE, SOAS and the University of Kent at which earlier drafts of this paper were read. I would also like to thank many Comorians in Kenya and Ngazija for their time and patience.

¹ The word *ada* means 'custom' in Arabic, but more usually 'customary payment' in KiSwahili, of which KiNgazija (Comorian) is a dialect. The word does not have here the connotation 'cus-

tomary as opposed to Islamic' which it has in Indonesia, despite the fact that both local contexts use a word of common origin in Arabic. Little helpful light is shed on Comorian marriage by Indonesian material. However, see note 6.

² I use the Comorian names for these islands. They are often referred to by their French names: Grande Comore and Anjouan.

³ The *turuq* (sing. *tariqa*) represented in the Comoro Islands are the Shadhili, Qadiri, Rifa'i, Dandarawi and Alawi (Mennesson 1969).

⁴ The root *-nya* is extremely widespread in Bantu languages, with the connotation of evacuation. Both the verb *kunya*, 'to defaecate', and the noun *nyalinya*, meaning 'mother', in the parturient biological sense, as opposed to *mama*, the 'mother' who rears the child, appear to derive from it. *Inya* may also mean 'vagina' in some Bantu languages (Johnston 1919: 349).

⁵ The issue of whether *qabila* should strictly speaking be viewed as a patrilineage will not be

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pursued here. I follow Lewis (1965) in calling a non-exogamous patrilineal descent group a lineage.

⁶ Aspects of *manyabuli*, and of land inheritance in general in Ngazija are strongly reminiscent of *adat* rules in Menangkabau and Negri Sembilan. See for instance Anderson 1968: 182ff.

⁷ There is a single exception to this which has only recently been accepted in custom. A few men now marry by *mna dabo* the woman they have designated for *ada* marriage when they can afford it, and go through two marriage ceremonies with her. A firstborn daughter may not, however, be married in this way. The *mna dabo* wife in this situation is regarded as her husband's equal by all concerned.

⁸ Census data for certain Mediterranean Arab countries (Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Iraq, urban Jordan and five Palestinian villages) collated from Goode (1963) give an average rate of polygyny, in the 1950s, of 6%. Among Comorian polygynists, 83% are over forty years old.

⁹ Generally the most favoured marriage is that of FZD with MBS because, as an informant put it, 'the mother's brother benefits twice over' (*njomba atachuma mara mbili*). The contribution a mother's brother makes to his sister's daughter's marriage is normally at the expense of his own children; only if his son marries this girl can he help his own offspring at the same time.

¹⁰ As in many Swahili towns (Prins 1971) Comorian towns are divided into residential moieties (*mraa*) important on festive and ritual occasions. The recent insistence that *ada* marriage

should take place with a partner of one's moiety is an example of the continual elaboration of *ada* marriage.

¹¹ The costume is of South Arabian origin and was worn by Sultans and senior officials in pre-Revolutionary Zanzibar.

¹² Johnson (1939: 3) notes that the *adhaba* is made 'in a newly born child's presence to bear witness he is a Mohammedan'. Perhaps the symbolism is the same here.

¹³ *Ada* marriages only take place in the Comoro Islands, and are not made by Comorians living permanently abroad.

¹⁴ The peer group (*hirimu*) is very specifically defined in Ngazija. It is an informal group of men who are of the same town, similar age and descent status, and who attended the same Qur'an school class at the same mosque as children.

¹⁵ See postscript.

¹⁶ In the 1930s certain young men took an oath that they would not perform *ada* marriage and would dissuade others from doing so. They called themselves the *yamini* ('oath' or 'right hand' in Arabic). A counter-faction of older men sprang up in opposition to them, calling themselves the *shemali* ('left hand'). The *yamini* had a strong following among some Comorians in pre-Revolutionary Zanzibar, many of whom had left the Comoro Islands for good; but this faction has been ineffective in Ngazija.

¹⁷ They have come from families who could afford to educate them in Zanzibar, Madagascar or France.

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APPENDIX 3

Double endogamy: Marriage strategies among the Ngazija élite

For the Ngazija elite, a potential marriage problem existed which was absent for most Swahilis.

Since land rights, and inya membership, were acquired matrilaterally, while patrilineage membership (usually that of sharifs) came through the father, those who planned marriages of maximum endogamic value for themselves or their children had to try to find a spouse endogamous to both the matriclan and the patrilineage. This was particularly important in the past when the inya controlled succession to high office in Ngazija's sultanates, but when sultans and wazirs were also always from sharif patrilineages.

As Figure 11 shows, the pattern which WaNgazija regard as the ideal - marriage between the children of a sister and a brother - will produce this effect if a pattern of MBS//FZD is followed through. Two patrilineages see themselves as practising sister exchange while a woman can arrange for her daughter to marry her brother's son. From the point of view of the matriclan, the marriages are suitably endogamous.

Having had some trouble arriving at this conclusion from informants' statements, I was gratified to read Hafkin's work (1973) and to discover that close parallels with this complex marriage arrangement must also have existed among the Mozambique Swahilis in the nineteenth century. The Swahilis of Angoche, Sancul and Sangage had matriclans called inya, like the WaNgazija, traded with the Comoros, and were, at the elite level, intermarried with Comorians.

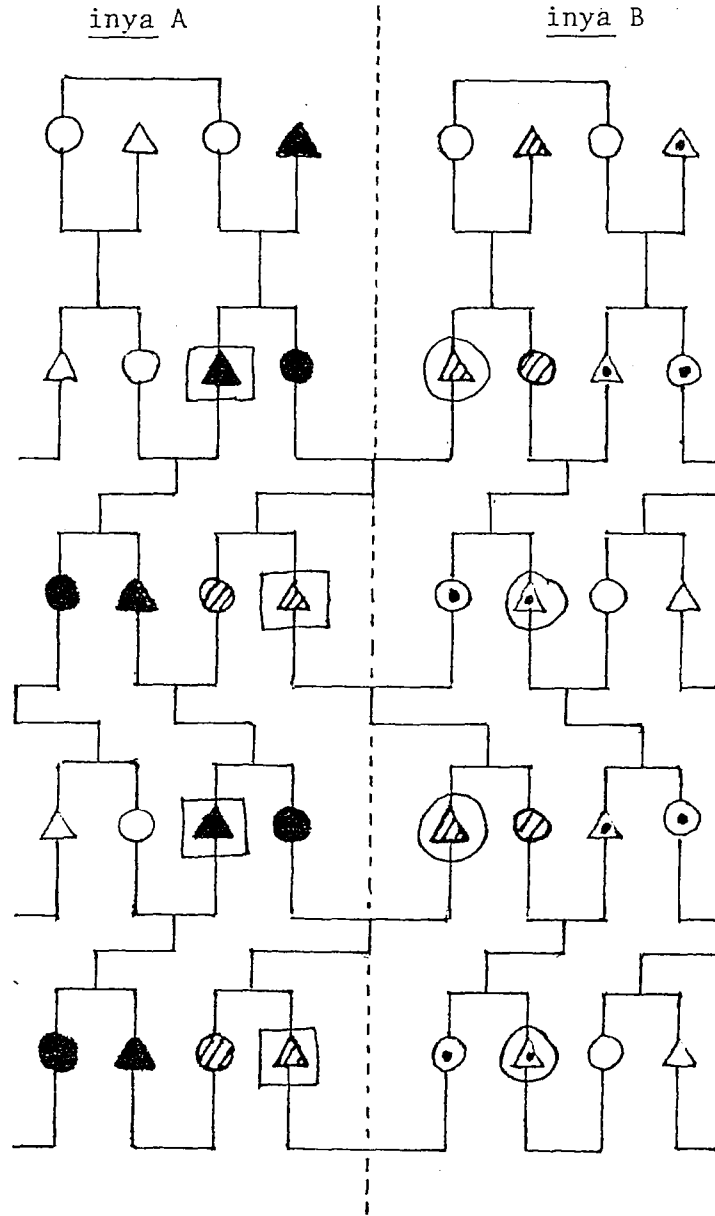
In the shaikhdom of Sancul (Hafkin, 1973: 192ff.), for instance, the office of shaikh passed alternately between two patrilineages

almost without a hitch for over a hundred years. Hafkin expresses surprise that such an apparently complex system could survive so long without conflict. In Angoche, 'both patrilineal and matrilineal descent were practised...' - the result of a synthesis of Arab and Makua kinship patterns (ibid: 204-207).

Though Hafkin's excellent setting out of the available data does not lead her all the way to my conclusion, a careful reading of the material she presents makes it impossible to come to any other. In the case of Sancul, the 'alternation' of ruling groups was actually more apparent than real, since, although they alternate, all those who ruled were members of the same matrilineage (or ~~or~~matriclan), or were husbands of women who bore the right to rule.

It is fascinating that this ingenious blending of dual kinship rights by judicious marriages over time should be no more than a highly precise application of what were in any case generally stated marriage preferences among Swahilis and Comorians.

Figure 11: Matriclan, patrilineage and sultanate



- ▲ - Patrilineage I
- ▴ - Patrilineage II
- ◡ - Patrilineage III
- ◻ (with triangle) - The Sultans of inya A
- ◉ (with triangle) - The Sultans of inya B

The sultanate of inya A alternates between patrilineage I and patrilineage II. The sultanate of inya B alternates between patrilineage II and patrilineage III.