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## Some Problems on the Formation of the Swahili World and the Indian Ocean Maritime World

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## Some Problems on the Formation of the Swahili World and the Indian Ocean Maritime World<sup>1)</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

In the Arabic language, the original meaning of *sāḥil* (*sawāḥil*) is "a coast," "a shore of the sea or of a great river," or "a water edge." Hence, it means a geographical space alongside a boundary between sea/ river and land, a tract of cultivated land, with cities or villages, adjacent to a desert or forest area, and also the side of a valley between mountainous areas and a plain. An area having such a geographical position was usually referred to by the proper name al-Sāḥil, or al-Sawāḥil (plural form).

Historically speaking, the Palestinian coast along the Mediterranean, the Nile valley, the southern area of Tunisia adjacent to the Sahara, and the savanna belt (Sudan Sahel) expanding into the southern Sahara, in particular, have been called al-Sāḥil, or al-Sawāḥil.

As is well known, the original meaning of Swahili, which refers to the eastern part of Africa, and is also used for the Swahili language (*Kiswahili*), was derived from the Arabic *sawāḥil*, a plural form of *sāḥil*. Furthermore, the word Swahili for the people or their origin came from *sawāḥilī*, a relative adjective of *sawāḥil*.

The major peculiarity of the Swahili of East Africa is not simply that it is a proper name but that it refers rather to a socio-cultural unity that commonly represents the East African coast. In other words, the Swahili world has historically developed and functioned as a common cultural unity in the process of weaving the geographical and ecological conditions, the mixed Afro-Asian stock, the urban and mercantile society, muslim in religion, commercialization and other various Swahili factors related to the Swahili language for communication.

Why and when was the Swahili world formed on the East African coast? Moreover, as the unity of a common socio-cultural area, what kind of peculiarities does it have and how did they develop historically?

As regards the study of the historical evolution of the Swahili world, firstly, it goes without saying that it is necessary to clarify the basic cultures of the indigenous inhabitants of the mainland, mainly the Bantu-speaking tribes who had settled early

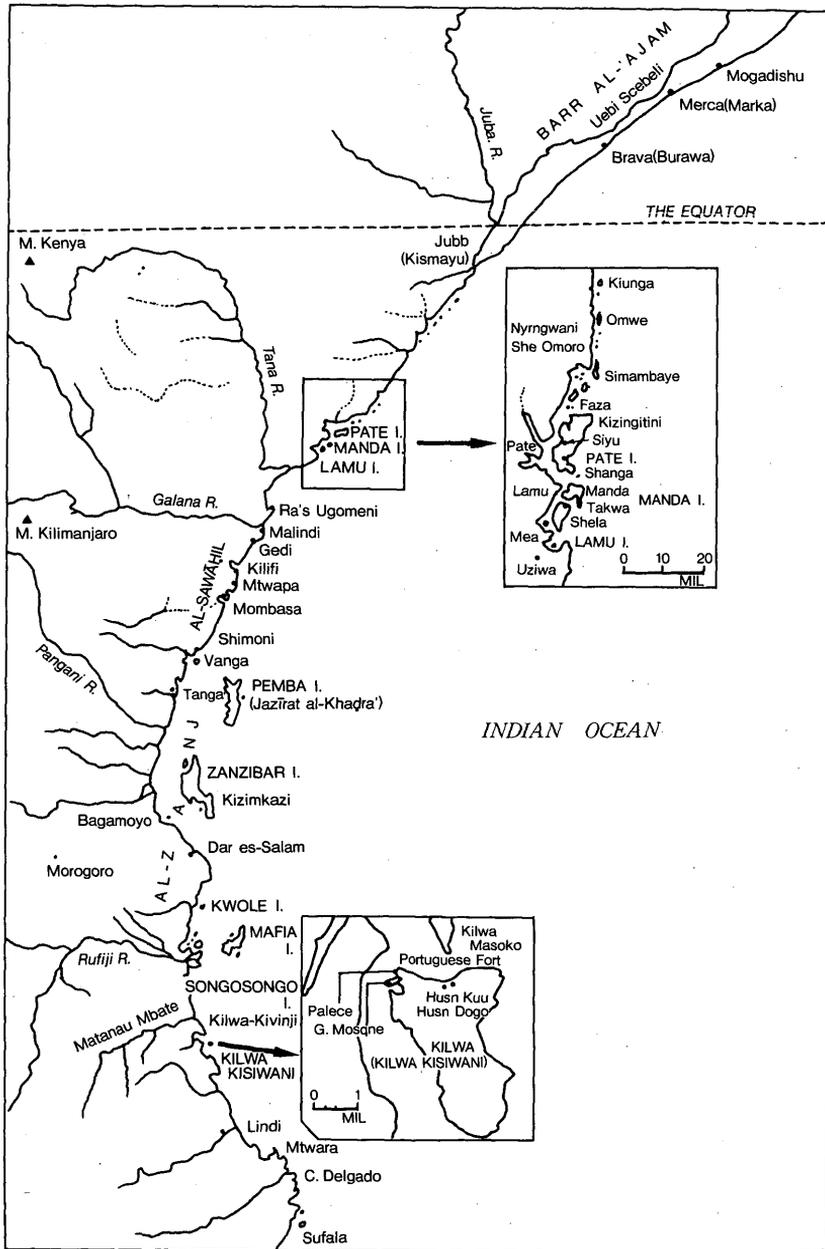


Figure 1. Map of East African coast

on the East African coast. As was first recorded by an Alexandrian geographer, Claudius Ptolemaeus, the Bantu-speaking tribes were probably referred to by the name *Zingis*, and they started to expand into some parts of East Africa at the beginning of the second century<sup>2)</sup>. This name *Zingis* is definitely the equivalent of

the Arabic *al-Zanj*, or *al-Zinj*. The same root occurs again in Cosmas Indicopleustes (mid-sixth century) (Freeman-Grenville 1962: 5–6). However, there are nowadays no reliable records concerning the historical process of their expansion or the fundamental characteristics of their culture and society.

Secondly, further research is necessary concerning the movement of human emigrants, economics and cultures that were brought across the Indian Ocean throughout history. It can be suggested that the Swahili world has deeply intermingled with the trade networks that expanded in and around the Indian Ocean. Therefore, the following points of view must be clarified: in what way the influence of politics, economics, and cultures that took place in the northern rim of the Indian Ocean, such as West Asia, India and China, affected the East African coast directly or indirectly, and also, what new changes arose in the historical evolution of interactions and inter-relations between maritime foreigners in the huge basin of the Indian Ocean and the Bantu speaking tribes who expanded from the inner part of the mainland.

Thirdly, the reason why the historical evolution of the Swahili world was mainly organized on the East African coast must be studied, and furthermore, a comparative study must be conducted of the geographical and ecological conditions, society, culture and history between the Swahili world and other areas also called historically *al-Sāhil* or *al-Sawāhil*. Among the islands and rims of the Indian Ocean basin, the Malabar coast of Southwest India and the Malay world adjacent to the Straits of Malacca exhibit factors similar to the East African coast. Therefore, comparative studies on mutual relations between East Africa and these areas as well as their individual characteristics as a world (unity) must be made.

The purpose of this paper is neither to trace the general history of the formation and the evolution of the Swahili world, nor to criticize former Swahili studies, but to point out some problems which focus on the history of cultural and trade relations across the Indian Ocean, and to show a new direction for Swahili studies hereafter. Though a great deal of study pertains to the history of Swahili society and culture, few studies deal with its history in the framework of the whole history of the Indian Ocean basin. Although Neville Chittick, G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville, and Pierre Vérin have already stressed that studies on the social and cultural characteristics of the Swahili must be traced not only within the framework of East Africa, but also must include historical relations across the Indian Ocean, there have been very few detailed studies from this standpoint (Robert and Chittick 1975; Chittick 1977: 183–231)<sup>3</sup>.

### **THE DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC URBAN SOCIETIES IN EAST AFRICA**

The only means of communication connecting the Persian Gulf area and the East African coast is the sea route across the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea and the western Indian Ocean. Moreover, the simplest route to follow would be a direct line of about 3,500 km from Musqat Oman to Mombasa. This geographical factor

differs from that of the caravan route across the Sahara that connected the Negro lands (Bilād al-Sūdān) with the Maghrib (Northern Africa) and the Mediterranean world. Thus, it seems that a large difference in the historical evolution of patterns in politics, society and culture arose between the East African coast and West Africa.

In fact, regardless of the geographical long-distance separation across the ocean and the dangerous conditions of navigation, the movement of human emigrations, the exchange of goods and the cultural relations connecting the Persian Gulf area with the East African coast have varied greatly in scale from periods dating back to the first century A.D. up to the present time. Therefore, the manner in which this South-North network axis across the western Indian Ocean and its diverging sub-networks essentially entwined the various evolutions of the Swahili world throughout history is an important research theme. Regarding the historical evolution of this South-North network axis, which is one of the main networks in the Indian Ocean maritime world, I would like to analyze the historical dynamics of the South-North network axis according to the following three factors: geographical and ecological conditions, the conditions of human movement and the relationships between the center and the periphery of the civilization (Yajima 1989: 118-135).

#### **Geographical and ecological conditions**

The historical evolution of the long-distance trade network is based on the following four factors: (1) the difference in the type, quality, quantity, and season of products (resources), (2) the condition of traffic and transportation, (3) human mobility, driven by various conditions such as natural, political, and economical changes and human pressures in society, (4) the variety of civilization and the difference in its level, especially the relationship between its center and its periphery.

Geographically speaking, the East African littoral runs almost straight down to the river mouth of the Juba situated at the southern border of Somalia, and the Somali coast is arid and lined with sand dunes. However, on going further south, the coastline becomes complicated, and a number of deep inlets, which in some cases enclose small islands, are distributed.

In the Lamu Archipelago, the many off-shore islands of Pate, Manda and Lamu provide good shelter from the open ocean, and are fringed by coral reefs. They are covered with thick mangrove forests. The mainland and off-shore islands are separated by a number of deep mangrove swamps extending about ten kilometers in length. Moreover, due to the changeable tides, winds and deep anchorage in the channel, these off-shore islands provide a safe protected position against invaders from the mainland. These favorable and protected conditions attracted many settlements of people who arrived there by sea. Moreover, the northern part of the islands is affected by the N-E monsoon in the winter season, which gives the inhabitants comfortable living conditions, because the monsoon wind excludes harmful mosquitoes and flies. Many historical remains of Islamic

cities, therefore, can be seen at Manda, Takwa, Faza and Shanga. As the archaeological investigation conducted by Neville Chittick showed, the Manda archaeological site situated in the northern part of Manda Island, in particular, dates back to the ninth and tenth centuries, making it the earliest Islamic city on the East African coast. The Islamic glass and pottery closely resemble remains excavated at Sīrāf, an old Iranian port on the northern side of the Persian Gulf (Chittick 1981: 11, 13, 218, 229).

The coastal line from the southern part of the Lamu Islands to Cape Delgado, which is in the boundary between Tanzania and Mozambique, has almost the same natural geographical conditions, with coastal low regions, dense mangrove forests, the great rivers of Tana, Galana, Ruaha and Rufiji, complicated creeks, and off-shore islands. The islands off the East African coast, of which there are a substantial number, have played an important role in the history of the Swahili. The spread of Swahili society from the islands to the mainland opposite and to the inland regions alongside the caravan routes was a comparatively new phenomenon, starting only after the nineteenth century. Before then the long history of the Swahili world was limited to the off-shore islands and the surrounding coastal areas. I would like to summarize the main roles played by the islands in the history of the Swahili world<sup>4</sup>.

Firstly, the islands provided a safe settlement for living; secondly, a deep anchorage for ships leading to the open sea could be obtained; thirdly, an important market where the transaction between goods gathered from the mainland and overseas goods loaded on the ships took place; fourthly, foreign trade and traffic were facilitated by the monsoons, which blow in the N-E direction from the end of October until March and in the S-W direction from the beginning of April to May and June onward. The dhows of the Arabian, Persian and Indian merchants sailed from the northern rim of the Indian Ocean using the N-E monsoon, and they stayed on the East African islands for two weeks (the shortest period) or more than seven months between the end of January and the beginning of September (the longest period)<sup>5</sup>. On the islands, there were lodging, warehouses, transporters and commercial agents.

The transporters and commercial agents were probably the first contributors to the formation of the Swahili socio-cultural unity. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, who visited Mogadishu (Maqdashaw) in the first half of the fourteenth century, recorded the customs of the people of this city. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa reported that when a foreign ship reached the anchorage, the *sumbūqs*, which are small boats, came out to it. The merchant, on disembarking, went only to the house of his host (*ṣāhib*). When he took up residence with his host, the latter sold his goods for him and bought for him. In other words, the overseas merchant did not participate in any direct transaction with the local market (Ibn Baṭṭūṭa 1877: vol. 2, 180–182). This type of frontier trade occurred not only on the outskirts of the Indian Ocean maritime world, but also widely in the frontier areas of the medieval Islamic world. There can be no real doubt that trading caravan networks developed from the coastlands

to the inner parts of the mainland such as the Masai region, Lake Tanganyika and Zimbabwe<sup>6</sup>).

On the Eastern African coast, before the coming of Islam, certain species of yams and cocoyams, coconuts, bananas, sugar cane and rice had already been cultivated. These cultivated plants indisputably originated in South Asia and India, and may have been mainly carried by the Austronesian settlers in the fifth or sixth centuries and later<sup>7</sup>). These useful crops and fish probably provided very important food resources, and promoted the development of Islamic urban societies after the ninth and tenth centuries<sup>8</sup>). The mangrove poles, tortoise shells and ambergris which are peculiar indigenous products of East Africa, and moreover gold, iron, ivory, rhinoceros horn, leopard skin, honey-wax and slaves from the mainland, were gathered in the frontier markets of the off-shore islands and the coast of the mainland<sup>9</sup>). These peculiar African products were transported by dhows to the transit ports along South Arabia and the Persian Gulf area via the South-North network axis of the Indian Ocean maritime world, and were further transported to the international markets of West Asia, the Mediterranean world and China. On the other hand, manufactured commodities, which were mediated by and transmitted through entrepôts of the northern rim of the Indian Ocean, were imported to the markets of the East African coast. As mentioned above, in the relationships between the center and the periphery of the South-North network axis of the Indian Ocean world, the historical development of co-existence relations was provided basically by differences in natural geographical and ecological conditions.

The long-distance sea communication across the Indian Ocean was especially facilitated by the monsoon, which blows annually in fixed directions and durations. In particular, in the western Indian Ocean as well as the South China Sea, due to their geographical location on the eastern part of the great continent, the wind of the monsoon typically appears to blow in the south-north direction and furthermore, as the wind of the monsoon hits the sea surface, a monsoon-current gradually develops.

The monsoon-current in summer (April-September) joins with the tip of the South Equatorial Current, and from northern Kenya, it flows along the Somali coast (where it is called the Somali Current) and goes up north. After passing along the Zufār coast in South Arabia, it turns around in the Arabian Sea in a clockwise direction and flows from the Southwest coast of India towards the Maldive Islands and Sri Lanka. Again in winter (October-March), although its current is fairly weak, the monsoon-current in the counter-clockwise direction flows southwards alongside the Arabian Sea, the Socotra Islands and the East African coast, and is absorbed by the Anti-South Equatorial Current (Yajima 1990: 112-116).

By using the above-mentioned monsoon, navigational activities across the western Indian Ocean were very rapid, safe and periodical. In other words, if sailing ships from the entrepôts along the Persian Gulf caught the North-East monsoon (called *Ṣabā* or *Azyab*) in the winter navigational season (October-

March), they could arrive at the East African coast between November and the middle of the next March. Then, between the end of March and the beginning of April, when the summer season's South-West monsoon (called *Dāmanī*) started to blow, ships heading for the Persian Gulf could return. Even small boats could sail comparatively safely on this trip, particularly since this S-N navigation was done by the easy sailing technique of observing landmarks<sup>10</sup>.

In the southern Indian Ocean near 15 degrees south latitude and further southward, the Mozambique Current and the South Equatorial Current flow up north and the trade winds provide strong regulation, so there are no longer any navigational effects caused by the domination of the N-E monsoon system.

After the seventh and eighth centuries, the southern limit of the East African coast was Sofala (Sufāla), a famous market for ivory and gold. It is now difficult to identify its location, but it can probably be regarded as being at the limit of the N-E monsoon from the Zambezia coast to the mouth of the Zambezi River<sup>11</sup>). In about the mid-tenth century, seafarers embarked from entrepôts along the Persian Gulf such as Sīrāf and Şuhār, sailed down to Qanbalū (probably the modern Pemba Island), and then sailed on using small local boats (*sumbūq/sanbūq*) along the coast, and arrived at Sofala (Sufāla) via the Zanzibar islands<sup>12</sup>.

From about the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the commercial demand for the ivory and gold of Sofala increased more and more in the international markets of West Asia and China. According to a Chinese record, notably the *Ling-wai Tai-ta* (*Information from Beyond the Mountains*), the products of Kuen-luen Tseng-ji (Qumr-Zanj) consisted of large size ivory, rhinoceros horns and slaves (Zanji slaves). In particular, as large amounts of ivory were imported by Chinese markets, there was a shortage in the supply of ivory to be transported to the markets of West Asia (*Ling-wai Tai-ta*, vol. 3, chapter of Kuen-Luen Tseng-ji). Thereafter, as a result of the increase in the pressure of human movement and trade activities, and also the spread of Islam, the regions to which immigrants eventually came, and the markets that were made with what they brought, expanded further south beyond the limit of the monsoon navigation along the coast of Mozambique and the mouth of the Zambezi River.

These above-mentioned situations were possibly important factors in bringing about dynamic changes, such as the development of settlements, the formation of the Swahili urban cultures, the monopoly of the gold trade by the ruling house of the Kilwa kingdom and their control over the major port-cities (Mombasa, Zanzibar and Sufāla) from the mid-thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries<sup>13</sup>.

The Red Sea and the Persian Gulf may also be called two arms of the Indian Ocean, because, from olden times, they were organized as two important bridges of international communication connecting the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. However, the Red Sea has the character of an isolated sea, because it is not directly governed by the monsoon circulation of the Indian Ocean. On the other hand, the Persian Gulf receives the N-E wind forces of the winter season, and the S-W wind of summer flows softly toward the Gulf area, so it may be said that the navigation

seasons of the Persian Gulf are connected with those of the Indian Ocean. Moreover, from olden times, the Persian Gulf was known worldwide as a bed of pearl-fishing, and the Gulf people became familiar with sea activities in order to fish for pearl-shells, and had excellent experience in ship building and navigation techniques. Under such conditions, people from the Gulf area traveled actively toward Southwest India and the East African coast for their trade activities (Yajima 1983: 4-21).

According to the records of the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* (*the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*), there was a trading port called Omana (Omma) under the control of the Parthian dynasty. Omana took in frankincense from Kanē and sent out to Arabia its locally sewn boats, called *madarate*, dates, pearls, gold and slaves (Casson 1989: 73). The Arab-Iranians in these sewn boats, *madarates*, went southward to Rhapta, the last port of trade on the Azania coast. There are various arguments concerning the locations of Rhapta and Azania. I propose that Azania is definitely the equivalent of the Arabic '*ajam* (which means *Persia* or *non-Arab*).

According to some Arabic records, Barr al-'Ajam (land as opposed to sea, mainland or open country of al-'Ajam) was not the Persian coast but the non-Arab coast opposed to the Gulf of Aden. Therefore, the coast of Azania was formerly located inward from the Berbera region of Somalia to the al-Zanj region<sup>14</sup>). The location of Rhapta, which was the last anchorage place on the coast of Azania, cannot be specified. However, judging from the records of the *Periplus*, it is probably the island stretching from Manda Island down to Pemba Island or somewhere on its coast. There, the Arab seafarers and trade agents who, through continual intercourse and intermarriage with the indigenous people of Rhapta, were familiar with the lands and its languages<sup>15</sup>). The sewn boats, *madarates*, constructed in the Persian Gulf area were widely used as a trading tool for connecting the ports of South Arabia, the Persian Gulf area and the East African coast. Moreover, the intermarriage between the overseas foreigners and the indigenous people played an important role in the formation of the basic characteristics of the Swahili socio-cultures which had already started in the middle of the first century<sup>16</sup>). However, it is not clear which tribes or groups of this period contacted positively with the seafarers.

### Conditions of human movements

Historically speaking, the dynamics of socio-cultural mobility and the movement of human emigrants obviously occurred, which is also valid for the world of West Asia as a whole. Due to the various reasons for and aspects of the human movements which constantly occurred in the world of West Asia, the wave of human pressures continued to expand over the frontier parts. It is significant that one of the main directions of this wave usually crossed the Indian Ocean into the South-North network axis via the Persian Gulf to the East African coast, where it was served by the limitless *oecumene* and diverse ecological world. It is a natural phenomenon that the wave of human movement flowed from the areas of dense population in the

world of West Asia to the sparse areas of the tropical and subtropical zones, which were mainly situated in the southern rim of the Indian Ocean.

The waves of human movement pushed out from the inland areas of the Iranian plateau and the Arabian Peninsula, gathered in the Persian Gulf area, and then flowed southerly along South Arabia to the East African coast using sailing ships. In addition, there is no doubt that there was a counter movement of waves from the East African coast, that consisted mostly of various people of black complexion, especially the Bantu speaking peoples, to the northern rim of the Indian Ocean. This mutual human communication binding the two rims of the Indian Ocean into a single network began to flourish after the fifth and sixth centuries. This was because it was in the period of the later Sasan-Persian empire when a large number of Negro workers were used for the agricultural work of canal digging and the reclamation of lower Mesopotamia, al-Baḡā'ih (marsh land) close to the Tigris-Euphrates rivers at the head of the Persian Gulf (Popovic 1976: 49-66).

As indicated above, the name of Zingis or Zingium appeared in documents written in the second to the sixth centuries, and this name is certainly the equivalent of al-Zanj, or al-Zinj (plural form *al-Zunūj*) given by the Arab historians (Freeman-Grenville 1962: 3, 5-6).

Through anthropological characters, it is clear that people of darker complexion called the Zingis, Zingium or al-Zanj, who were located beyond Ethiopia (al-Habasha) and Somalia (al-Barbara) were mainly Bantu speaking peoples who had inhabited the East African coast. They were shipped out to the Gulf area by the slave trading system of the Arabian and Persian merchants<sup>17</sup>). From the eighth or ninth centuries, following the spread of Islam, through the middle of the nineteenth century, they were gathered in the entrepôts of the Gulf coast by Omani Arabs and Iranian merchants using their dhows, and then were sold as slaves to the urban centers of West Asia (Toledano 1982: 27-28, 33-35, 75-78).

Table 1 shows the records concerning the first emigrants of East Africa or the first builders of the Islamic cities, which were written about in various chronicles and local legends. Although there is no basis for confirming whether all of these records belong to historical truth or not, we can at least claim strong socio-cultural communications and human movements between the East African coast and the Persian Gulf area, such as Eastern Arabia (al-Aḡsā' or al-Baḡrayn) and southern Iran. These Gulf foreigners contributed to the development of the maritime trade and settlements of the East African coast. This is also an important factor in directing our attention to the fact that the legendary image of Arabo-Iranian origin based on "*the Shirazi traditions*" played an important role in the formation of the Swahili world in the course of binding its multi-racial societies and cultures<sup>18</sup>).

Among the existing written historical sources on East Africa, the most detailed and reliable Arabic source is the *Chronicle of Kilwa*, called *Kitāb al-Salwat fī Akhbār al-Kilwa* (*Book on the Consolation of the Kilwa Reports*). The only version of this *Chronicle* was originally set down in about 1520 or 1530. This

Table 1. Emigrants to East Africa and their origins

Emigrants	Origins	Places of emigration (Constructed cities)	Periods of emigration	Sources
'Alī b. Ḥusayn and his six children	Shiraz	Kilwa	Mid-3th A.H. (the mid-9th century)	<i>The Chronicle of Kilwa</i>
Muḥammad b. 'Alī	Shiraz	Mafia		<i>The Chronicle of Kilwa</i>
Seven children of Sultan Hocēn (Ḥusayn)	Shiraz	Magadoxo, Brava, Kilwa	A.H. 400 (1009/ 10)	de Barros
Emozaydy (Umma Zaydiya of the Zaydi sect)	Yemen (?)	Zanguebar Coast	Before Shirazi's emigration	de Barros
Seven Arab brothers emigrated using 3 ships	Lacha (al-Ahsā', al-Bahrayn)	Magadoxo, Brava		de Barros
Persians	Siraf	Marka		Local Legend of Marka
Shirazi	Shiraz of Persia	Kau (Mafia)		Local Legend of Mafia
Arabs dispatched by the Umayyad Khalifa Abdul Malik b. Muriani	Syria	Pate, Malindi, Zanzibar, Mombasa	A.H. 77 (696/ 97)	<i>The Chronicle of Pate</i>
Persians dispatched by Ḥārūn al- Rashīd		Mombasa	A.H. 170 (786/ 87)	<i>The Chronicle of Pate</i>
Shirazi	Persia	Dar es Salaam		Legend of Dar es Salaam
Sultan Ali bin Selimani	Shiraz of Persia	Kilwa Kisiwani		Local Legend of Kilwa Kisiwani

*Chronicle* mentions that the first people to settle on the island of Kilwa and build its city were lords of the Shiraz region of Iran. They boarded seven ships and arrived at Mandakhah (Manda Island), Shawga (Shanga, Manda Island), Malindi (or Yanbū'), Manfasa (Mombasa), al-Jazīrat al-Khadrā' (Pemba Island), Kilwa and Hanzuwān (Anjouan, Comoro Islands) (Anonymous, *Salwat* f.5b; Freeman-Grenville 1962: 35).

Moreover, owing to the *Chronicle of Comoro Islands*, which is called *Juzur Islāmīya 'alā Shātī Ifrīqīyat al-Sharqīya* (*the Islamic Islands on the East African Coast*), the people of Shirazi origin emigrated to the following seven regions: Qumr, land of the Swahili (arḍ Sawāhīlī), Zanjibār, Kiluwā (Kilwa) and Tungh (Tanga) of Mrīm land (barr Mulīm), the Ghūj region (Nguji) of the Mrima land, Hinzuwān Island (Nzwani/Anjouan), and Bukini Island (Bukini, Komoro Islands) (Anonymous, *Jazīrat* f.2a).

The Shirazi traditions were related to the emigrants of the Gulf people, and their settlements were distributed widely over the Banadir coast and diverse parts of East Africa. Even now the same legend based on Shirazi traditions continues to spread<sup>19</sup>). So why were the Shirazi traditions widely distributed? Furthermore, by what socio-cultural background were these traditions strongly supported by the various peoples of the Swahili world throughout history? It should be emphasized that researching these problems is basically important for realizing the historical evolution of the Swahili world. I would, therefore, like to make the following two points. The first is that the Shirazi traditions were formed in the historical process of the cultural and economic relationships between the Bantu speaking peoples and merchants/seafarers originating from Sīrāf, a port on the southern Iranian coast. Sīrāf flourished as one of the most important international transit ports in the Indian Ocean from the eighth and tenth centuries.

The second point is that one of the main reasons why the Shirazi traditions spread widely across East Africa was connected with various historical events which occurred in West Asia after the latter half of the tenth century. Sīrāf suffered grave damage at the end of the tenth century, and the economic activities of other ports along the Gulf area also declined due to the influence of political and economic crises which occurred in the lands of the eastern Islamic Caliphates. These drastic changes in situation were accompanied by a large-scale human movement from the Gulf area towards the East African coast. The two points mentioned above had a large influence on the increasing number of emigrants and the development of Islamic urban society on the East African coast throughout history.

According to the Shirazi traditions recorded in the *Chronicle of Kilwa*, the *Chronicle of the Comoro Islands* and other historical sources, the origin of the seven emigrants was not always from Sīrāf, but from Shiraz, a famous city in the Iranian plateau. We may, however, note in this connection the presence of a clan calling itself Sīrāf at Merca (Marka), and of a family with the *nisba* (surname) al-Sīrāfī at Mogadishu in Somalia (Cerulli 1957: 26, 97-98; Chittick 1975: 36-37). Moreover, it is recorded in the *Chronicle of Kilwa* that the reason for leaving their

native land Shiraz was that their sultan one day had a dream. In his dream he saw a rat with an iron snout gnawing holes in the town wall. He interpreted the dream as a prophecy of the ruin of their country. After making certain that his interpretation of the dream was correct, he told his sons. He convinced them that their land would not escape destruction, and decided that they should leave it (*Salwat* f.5b; Freeman-Grenville 1962: 35). A very similar story in this connection can be seen in the *History of Waṣṣāf* (*Ta'riḫ-i Waṣṣāf*), a Persian chronicle written in the fourteenth century. This chronicle mentions that after the destruction of Sirāf, the indigenous inhabitants emigrated to Kīsh Island, off the coast of Huzū in southern Iran. They built a new settlement by exterminating the rats on the island. Afterward, the port of this island became one of the most important commercial centers following the decline of Sirāf (Yajima 1972: 132, note no. 61). What roles did these first emigrants from Iran play in the historical evolution of the Swahili world? Furthermore, to what degree was the mixing with the Bantu speaking people, and why did the Iranian kinship factor obtain a higher social position than the Arabian kinship factor? And how did these change with the process of time and in various areas? These basic problems must be clarified further.

#### **Relationships between the center and the periphery of the civilization**

After the eighth and ninth centuries, the wave of Islamization spread gradually on the East African coast, and this was accompanied by increasing human movement, trade activities and the influx of Islamic cultures from West Asia. In this way, the East African coast swiftly became a frontier part of the international network covering the whole Islamic world, and this convinces us that the East African coast took the first step toward the real evolution of the Swahili socio-cultural area by the strong absorption of the Islamic world network. In this period, Islam and its various cultural systems were directly or indirectly introduced to the East African coast by Muslim merchants and seafarers who enjoyed trade activities across the Indian Ocean, as well as by wandering 'ulamā', *ṣūfis* (members of *ṣūfi* communities, mystics) and other emigrants. On the other hand, the people who lived in the urban centers of the East African coast traveled to Mecca, Yemen, Iraq and Egypt for the purpose of the *ḥajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca), the *ziyāra* (visit to Muḥammad's mausoleum at Medina), the *tijāra* (transactions) and the *riḥlat li'l-'ilm* (journeys for knowledge). As a consequence of these mutual exchanges and communications, the relationships between the heartlands of the Islamic world and the East African coast, which was situated in the frontier part of the Islamic network, stayed close.

It is a natural phenomenon that in the process of the expansion of a powerful central civilization to its periphery, the various coexisting local civilizations cause an integration of the civilization, and then promote the formation and evolution of a new marginal socio-cultural area. For about two hundred years, between the middle of the eighth and the middle of the tenth century, Baghdad, the metropolis of the Abbasid Caliphate, prospered culturally and economically, then rose to be the heart and the network center of the whole Islamic world. In particular, there

were two main overseas networks that expanded from Baghdad into the Indian Ocean via the Gulf area: the first was a network connecting India, Southeast Asia and China. The second was a network connecting South Arabia and the East African coast.

al-Mas'ūdī is our best source of information on maritime traffic and trade activities between the ports of the Gulf area and the East African coast in the Abbasid period. In his book, called *Murūj al-Dhahab wa Ma'ādin al-Jawāhir* (*Golden Meadow and Mines of Jewels*), al-Mas'ūdī informs us that Omani seafarers were Arab people of Azd origin ('Arab min al-Azd), and that they passed by the channel of trade to reach the island of Qanbalū, which is in the Zanj Sea. It has a mixed population of Muslims and Zanj idolaters. The people of Sīrāf also made this voyage to the land of Sufāla and the Wāqwāq (or Wāq-Wāq, probably Madagascar Island) on the edge of the Zanj mainland and at the end of this beach of the sea (al-Mas'ūdī 1966: 124–125). Al-Mas'ūdī himself sailed on this sea on ships belonging to *nākhudhās* (shipmasters) of Sīrāf, and his last voyage from Qanbalū to Oman was in A.H. 304 (A.D. 916–17) (al-Mas'ūdī 1966: 125). There is no doubt that by the time of al-Mas'ūdī's visit in the early tenth century, the overseas network which expanded from Baghdad (the center) via the Gulf area to the East African coast (the periphery) functioned effectively, and due to the active maritime communication of the Azdī Omanis and the Iranian merchants/seafarers, especially from Sīrāf, it can be confirmed that the Arabo-Iranian factors were strongly added to the basic strata of the formation of Swahili society.

The various phases of political and economical changes which took place in the Islamic world between the middle of the tenth and the eleventh centuries even had a great influence on Swahili society. In this period, the center of the cultural and economic activities of the Islamic world shifted from Baghdad to Cairo and al-Fustāt in Egypt. Accompanying the change of the center of civilization, the main network axis connecting the whole Islamic world shifted to the East-West network axis, in which Egypt was the center of the network, and from there to the eastern direction, where the network of Hijāz—Yemen—India expanded, and also to the western direction, where the network of Ifrīqīya—al-Maghrib expanded<sup>20</sup>. In this same period, the network passing through the East African coast was connected by the crossroad axis of Yemen/Ḥaḍramawt to India in the eastern direction, and Hijāz or Egypt in the western direction. Therefore, the new Yemenite-Arab factors which were brought through this network collided with the old Arabo-Iranian factors from the Gulf area, and consequently the relations between old and new socio-cultural factors were strained. In addition, the decline of the Persian Gulf network axis, the massive emigration of people following the political and economic crisis which occurred mainly in Iraq, Iran and Eastern Arabia (al-Aḥsā' and al-Baḥrayn), and also the religio-cultural propagandas of the Shī'ite and the Khawārijīs had enormous influences on the formation of Swahili society.

When we refer to the Islamic geographical and travel books, and try to compare geographical information relating to East African cities between the

ninth/ tenth centuries and the twelfth/ thirteenth centuries, the difference can clearly be seen.

The Arab geographers of the ninth and tenth centuries have only vague information about the coastal regions and cities of East Africa, such as Zayla', Barbara, Ra's Hāfūnī, al-Zanj, Qanbalū and Sufāla<sup>21</sup>). On the contrary, according to the descriptions of al-Idrīsī's geographical book, *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq fī Ikhtilāq al-Āfāq* (*The Consolation of Persons Wishing to Traverse Various Regions*), which was written in the first half of the twelfth century, along the southern coast of Ra's Hāfūnī, there were some newly built cities or villages, such as Marka, Barawa (Brava), Badhūna (Bajun), Malindah (Malindi), Manbasah (Mombasa), al-Bānis and Bathana (al-Idrīsī 1970: 58–66). Furthermore, Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (early thirteenth century), in his geographical dictionary, *Mu'jam al-Buldān* (*Lexicon of Countries*), recorded, in addition to the above-mentioned place names, the fact that Maqadashū (Mogadishu), Jazīrat al-Khaḍrā', Kilwa and others flourished as important port cities because of trade activities (Yāqūt vol. 2, 75; vol. 4, 302, 602). This evidence of change certainly indicates that many new Islamic cities were built, and that a new period in the formation of the Swahili world started during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

These events can certainly be supported by some archaeological remains and finds. We may remark that the earliest dated inscription from East Africa is at the Kizimkazi mosque on Zanzibar Island. This inscription, which is engraved in the *mīhrāb* (prayer niche) and is also unique for its fine floriated Kūfic style, is dated A.H. 500 (A.D. 1106/07) (Garlake 1966: 10–11).

The most ancient surviving mosque in Mogadishu, the Great mosque (Jāmi'), was built in Muḥarram in A.H. 636 (A.D. 1238), and two other old mosques, Arba' Rukn and Fakhr al-Dīn, both belong to the month of Sha'bān, in A.H. 667 (A.D. 1269) and A.H. 667 (A.D. 1268/69) (Yajima 1976: 52–55).

Kilwa, an important Islamic city, is located at the southernmost anchorage of the monsoon navigation. This city came to flourish due to the monopoly of Sofala gold in the middle of the twelfth century. In particular, a wealthy sultan of the Kilwa kingdom, Sulṭān Dā'ūd b. Sulaymān (who probably reigned A.D. 1131–70) became the master of the gold trade. He made himself lord of the commerce of Sofala and of the islands of Pemba, Munfia (Mafia), Zanzibar, and of a great part of the shore of the mainland, and beautified Kilwa city, building a stone fortress there, and walls, and towers. He established a strong supremacy<sup>22</sup>).

It should be noted that from the end of the ninth to the middle of the tenth centuries, a large amount of gold bullion of "the lands of the blacks (*Bilād al-Sūdān*)" in the southern limits of the Sahara was brought to the heartlands of the Islamic world. As a result, the golden dinar currency spread even to the lands of the eastern parts of the Islamic world (*al-Mashriq*). Before this time, the silver dirhams in the *Mashriq* had been widely used as a standard currency. However, at the end of the latter half of the tenth century, the amount of silver bullion that had till then been produced in the various mines of Khurāsān and Māwarannah, and

reduced drastically. Adding to the people's lack of confidence in the currency, the political center of the Fatimid dynasty moved from Ifrīqiya to Cairo, and antagonism strengthened between the Sunnī caliphates of the Abbasid dynasty and the Shī'ī Fatimid dynasty. Consequently, the flow of Sudanese gold bullion to the *Mashriq* reduced gradually, and also the famous old gold mines of Wādī al-'Allāqī, adjacent to Aswan in upper Egypt dried up before the eleventh century.

Under the impact of all of these monetary situations, the eastern parts of the Islamic world faced a currency crisis in the eleventh century (Ashtor 1976: 80–86, 195). In these circumstances, Sofala became rapidly recognized as a new frontier market for supplying African gold. The gold of Rhodesia was transported to the coastal market of Sofala by long-distance caravan networks via Zimbabwe. Therefore, the mutual relations among the changes in the monetary situation in the whole Islamic world, the rise of the Kilwa kingdom and the prosperity of the golden trade of Sofala, are problems that should be clarified further.

As mentioned in the *Chronicle of Kilwa*, Kilwa was originally built by Shirazi emigrants, but in the early thirteenth century, the political and economic influences of the Rasūlid dynasty in Yemen, and the *sharīfs* (*ashrāf*, members of the holy family related to the prophet Muḥammad) who emigrated from the Hījāz region in Arabia came increasingly to the Kilwa kingdom<sup>23</sup>). The following report of Ibn al-Mujāwir (at the beginning of the thirteenth century) shows the change in this situation.

From 'Adan (Aden) to Maqdishūh (Mogadishu) is the first *mawsim* (monsoon navigation); from Maqdishūh to Kilwa is the second *mawsim*; and from Kilwa to al-Qumr (Madagascar Island) is the third *mawsim*. However, the people (of Qumr?) used to combine the three *mawsims* into one *mawsim*. A ship from al-Qumr arrived in Aden [for the first time, directly] by this route in the year A.H. 626 (A.D. 1228/29) (Ibn al-Mujāwir 1951: 117).

This record indicates that monsoon navigation between Madagascar Island, Kilwa, Mogadishu and Aden was connected by a single monsoon, and mutual sailing relations then became closer than before.

Mogadishu is a port on the coast of Somalia which was probably founded somewhat later than Barāwa (Brava), Malindi and Mombasa<sup>24</sup>). Mogadishu was reported for the first time by Yāqūt in the early thirteenth century, and its importance increased as a mid-way port connecting Aden, Kilwa and Sofala at the time that the Sofala gold trade became the monopoly of the Kilwa kingdom (Yāqūt vol. 4, 602). Then, in the early fourteenth century Mogadishu was visited by Ibn Baṭṭūta, when it was playing an important function as an intermediate trading port. Among the inhabitants of this port were many wealthy merchants (Ibn Baṭṭūta vol. 2, 180–183). Furthermore, based on some historical records from the Yemenite side, it can be confirmed that some of these merchants emigrated from Abyan, a city near Aden<sup>25</sup>). In the *Da Asia* by João de Barros, the following legend was reported.

The first foreign nation that by means of navigation carried on commerce with the mine of Sofala was this town of Magadoxo (Mogadishu), not that they went to explore the coast, but because a ship of that town was driven there by a storm and the force of the currents. Although they later acquired knowledge of all the country close to where this trade is carried on, they never dared to proceed to the Cape das Correntes (the Cape of Currents) (Freeman-Grenville 1962: 84)<sup>26</sup>.

It is uncertain whether this legend is a historical fact or not, but this date was some time during the twelfth or thirteenth century, and also it refers to the important roles of Mogadishu merchants who participated in the Sofala gold trade.

The truly remarkable feature about the period of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was the extensive spread of Islamization to all of the frontier parts. The process of Islamization in India and West Africa was mainly accomplished by the military and religious services of *jihād* (holy war), and also by the introduction and the growth of *ṣūfī* brotherhoods (*tariqa*). Many convents (*zāwiya*) were positively introduced in all of the Islamic countries and their frontier parts. The wandering scholars ('*ulamā*'), *ṣūfīs* and their brotherhoods of order, the *hajj* to Mecca, the establishment of many religious and educational convents (*zāwiya*, *ribāt*, *khānqāh* and *madrassa*), and the foundation of, pious endowments (*waqfs*) played an important role in expanding the Islamic cultural value systems to the frontier parts and also in the deep-rooted penetration of Islam in the internal Islamic societies, and these intellectual activities were important factors which enhanced the unity and the universality of Islam<sup>27</sup>). Among such mobilized phenomena in the entire Islamic world at that time, what played the major role in the formation and evolution of the Swahili socio-cultural area?

The *Chronicle of Kilwa* records that some sultans of the Kilwa kingdom undertook the *hajj* to Mecca, and they endeavored to build a Swahili-muslim society by establishing a religious pious leadership, and at the same time inviting the wandering scholars (*Salwat* ff.8b-9a; Freeman-Grenville 1962: 42-44).

Until the thirteenth century in East Africa, intellectual activities such as the religion of Islam, the *fiqh* (the system of jurisprudence) and religious education had mainly been connected by the following three intellectual networks: the network of Arabo-Iranian Islamic factors flowing from the Gulf area, the network of Indian Islamic factors flowing from Gujarat and the Malabar coast in India, and the network of Arabo-Islamic factors flowing from Yemenit-Ḥaḍramawt and Ḥijāz. There were shifts and differences in the gravity of the effects of these networks on the East African coast in various times and areas. After the beginning of the fourteenth century, as Ibn Baṭṭūṭa mentioned, the official *fiqh* of the Kilwa kingdom reverted from the Khawārijī sect to the Shāfi'ī sect. This fact directly shows the intellectual and economic influx from the Rasūlid dynasty (which was mainly attached to the Sunnī-Shāfi'ī sect) by the network of the Arabo-Islamic factors which flowed from Yemenit-Ḥaḍramawt and Ḥijāz. But at least, until one hundred years before this period, the inhabitants of Kilwa remained attached to the

*fiqh* of the Khawārijī sect because of the influence of the network of Arabo-Iranian Islamic factors<sup>28</sup>).

### Development of Islamic urban societies after the fifteenth century

It is noteworthy that after the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the theological and intellectual activities of the wandering '*ulamā*' (scholars) and *shaykhs* (saints) who were originally introduced from Ḥaḍramawt developed in East Africa. They continued to expand the global network of intellectual communications connecting the major parts of the Indian Ocean world such as Ḥaḍramawt, Yemen, Ḥijāz, Ethiopia (al-Ḥabasha), Somalia (Barbara), the Swahili area of East Africa, Gujarat and Deccan in India, and Jawa in Southeast Asia. This network also functioned as the network of trade and emigration for the Ḥaḍramīs (the people of the Ḥaḍramawt region in South Arabia).

The Arabic source which contributes most toward our understanding of the intellectual and religious activities of the Yemenite-Ḥaḍramī '*ulamā*' in the Islamic cities of East Africa is *Khulāṣat al-Athar fī A'yān al-Qarn al-Ḥādī 'Ashara* (*Biographical Dictionary of Notables in the Eleventh Century, A.H.*) by al-Muḥibbī (Muḥammad Amīn b. Faḍl Allāh al-Muḥibbī). In the following section, I will introduce some Ḥaḍramī '*ulamā*' who visited the lands of the Sawāḥil. It must be pointed out that al-Muḥibbī already referred to the East African coast and its off-shore islands as arḍ al-Sawāḥil (the land of al-Sawāḥil) or iqlīm al-Sawāḥil (the world of al-Sawāḥil).

#### (1) al-Sayyid 'Abd Allāh b. 'Alī b. Ḥasan b. 'Alī

He was born in Tarīm, Ḥaḍramawt, and educated by al-Shaykh Zayn b. Ḥusayn Bā Faḍl, al-Sayyid 'Abd Allāh and others. Moreover, after his studies on the *fiqh* and Ṣūfism under the supervision of Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī Bā Yazīd in al-Shiḥr, he traveled to the iqlīm of al-Sawāḥil. There he associated with circles of '*ulamā*' in order to proceed with his intellectual experiences. Afterward, he sailed for India, and pursued knowledge under Shaykh b. 'Abd Allāh al-'Aydārūs at Aḥmadābād in the Gujarat region. Obeying the recommendation of Shaykh al-'Aydārūs, he returned to Aden where 'Umar, one of the brothers of Shaykh al-'Aydārūs lived. He then based his intellectual activities on the village of al-Wa'd, and gathered many famous ṣūfīs for the purpose for religious discussions. He spent his last years in this village and died in A.H.1037 (A.D.1627/28). His grave is venerated and visited by pilgrims (*ziyāra*) (al-Muḥibbī vol. 3, 61–62).

#### (2) Abū Ṭālib b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. 'Alawī

He was famed as one of the al-'Alawī al-Ḥaḍramī. He was born in Marīmāh in Ḥaḍramawt, and after he was educated in the *fiqh* and the arts (*'ilm al-funūn*), he went to the land of al-Sawāḥil (arḍ al-Sawāḥil) and some regions of India for his intellectual interests. Afterward, he was favourably received by some Indian sultans and was taught the law of inheritance and mathematics. Then he abstained

from all worldly matters, and devoted himself to the *ṣūfī* life. On his way back to his home in Ḥaḍramawt, his ship was swept away by a storm and landed in Oman. He stayed there, and died in A.H. 1055 (A.D. 1645/46) (al-Muḥibbī vol. 1, 131).

(3) Aḥmad b. Abū Bakr b. Sālim b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Yamanī

He was born in a village called ‘Inān in Yemen. Following his father’s advice, he left Ḥaḍramawt for his study. He was educated by Aḥmad b. ‘Alawī and his colleges. After that, he undertook a pilgrimage to Mecca, and developed intellectual relations with circles of famous scholars. After two visits to Mecca, he came back to Aden, and was educated by Aḥmad b. ‘Umar, a member of the ‘Aydarūs family. Back in al-Shiḥr, he won great fame and had numerous disciples from not only al-Shiḥr and al-Da‘ūn in Ḥaḍramawt, but also from al-Sawāḥil and Mogadishu. He died in A.H. 1020 (A.D. 1611/12) in al-Shiḥr (al-Muḥibbī vol. 1, 161–162).

(4) Shaykh b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Alawī al-Jafri

He was famed as one of the al-‘Alawī al-Ḥaḍramī. He was born in Tarīm. After studies in his native city, he visited India and the land of al-Sawāḥil for his scholarly interests and contacted numerous ‘*ulamā*’, and then visited al-Ḥaramāni (Mecca and Medina) for his study. He taught the *sharī‘a* (Islamic law) and other theoretical sciences, and won great fame. He had numerous disciples from remote places. He died in Ṣafar, A.H. 1063 (A.D. 1653) in al-Shiḥr (al-Muḥibbī vol. 2, 236–237).

(5) al-Sayyid ‘Alawī b. Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Alawī b. Abū Bakr al-Jafri

He was born in Qism (Qishm), Ḥaḍramawt. He traveled around the various districts of Yemen, and sailed to al-Sawāḥil, India and Egypt for trade. He concentrated his mind upon study and was initiated into *Ṣūfism* by some saints (*shaykhs*) to whom he gave economical support. After that, he returned to Tarīm where he abstained from worldly matters and devoted himself to the *ṣūfī* life. After undertaking the farewell *hajj* of Mecca, he returned to Tarīm and died in A.H. 1061 (A.D. 1651) (al-Muḥibbī vol. 3, 121–122).

(6) Muḥammad b. Barakāt b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Saqqāf al-Ḥaḍramī

He was born in Tarīm, Ḥaḍramawt, and was famous as the most extensive traveler. He traveled to various places in Yemen, India, Ethiopia, al-Sawāḥil and Ḥijāz. He visited Mecca several times, and entered the service of the *qāḍī* (judge) of Mecca. At that time, he had a reputation for piety, and experienced many *karāmāt* (miracles) as a *ṣūfī* saint. In A.H. 1048 (A.D. 1638/39), he died in Mukhā, Yemen (al-Muḥibbī vol. 3, 403–404).

There are still many unsolved problems about the historical evolution of the Swahili world at the time of the Portuguese domination of the Indian Ocean. All former studies on the history of East Africa have failed to give adequate information on this point, and therefore, it should be studied in detail hereafter. There is evidence that the influence of Portuguese fleets in the Indian Ocean imposed large restrictions on the functions of the South-North network connecting the Persian Gulf area with the East African coast. However, it is difficult to draw the conclusion that all of the functions of the South-North network stopped and therefore, that the Swahili world became isolated from, and neglected by, the outer world.

It is generally known that, in particular, after the middle of the sixteenth century, the main objects of the Portuguese occupation in East Africa were to obtain main routes, transit ports, water and food for the purpose of maintaining a regular navigational system connecting West Europe and East Asia via the Cape of Good Hope, and at the same time to participate in the traditional Asian maritime trade in the Indian Ocean. It is certainly true that Portuguese influence extended over the entire Indian Ocean world, from the East China Sea to the western part of the Indian Ocean. The world of the Indian Ocean, however, was by no means conquered, for Portuguese territory was actually limited to a small number of widely scattered possessions. In the latter half of the sixteenth century, when Portuguese maritime power was reduced, the economical and cultural activities of the Yemenit-Ḥaḍramīs as well as the Omani peoples began to recover rapidly in the western part of the Indian Ocean. As will be discussed later, the geographical limit of al-Sawāḥil given by the Arab historians was previously restricted to Mombasa island and part of the mainland adjacent to the island. However, in the process of developing many coastal settlements between the beginning of the period of Portuguese occupation and the period of resistance against the European impact in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the limit of al-Sawāḥil gradually extended, and at the same time the meaning of al-Sawāḥil began to change to encompass not only a proper name but also the world of a common socio-cultural unity that was mixed with the various Swahili factors. Over the entire period of this evolution, what affected the regional extension and the unity of the Swahili cultures? This period evidently coincided with a crucial time for the development of many human movements originating from Yemen, Ḥaḍramawt, Ḥijāz, Oman, the Gulf area, southern Iran, Gujarat and Malabar in India, and with frequent commercial relations and strong cultural currents of Islam across the Indian Ocean.

Moreover, as Portuguese historians also say in the late sixteenth century, the Cushitic Galla, who were called *Kaffirs* (the Arabic *kāfir* means "a pagan") in various sources, perhaps as a result of their defeat by the Portuguese and the Amhara, migrated southward along the Somali coast<sup>29</sup>). By the middle of the seventeenth century, they had forced the evacuation of all the towns of East Africa down to Mtwapa. The gradual withdrawal of the Galla coincides with the advance of the Somali. In some Arabic sources written in the late fifteenth century, the

word *Sū Māl* (*Sūmāl*), or *barr al-Sūmāl* (*mainland of Sūmāl*), which apparently indicates the modern Somali land, appeared for the first time<sup>30</sup>. The Zimba are also mentioned first on the north bank of the Zambezi in the middle of the sixteenth century. The strong northern raid of the Zimba which occurred in 1588-89 reached the coastal area, and consequently they invaded the Swahili cities. It should be noted that one of the causes of such human movements, which widely occurred in East Africa, was the effect of climatic changes and the dryness of the inland Savanna belt area in Africa from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. Hereafter, the various effects of the human movements and raids of such nomadic peoples towards the East African coast on the evolution of the Swahili world should be clarified.

### THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME 'SWAHILI'

#### The first appearance of the name 'Sawāhil'

As mentioned in my introduction, Swahili was derived from the Arabic *sawāhil*, a plural form of *sāhil*. When was *al-Sawāhil* used in the geographical sense in various historical sources? Where was *al-Sawāhil* located<sup>31</sup>? This problem no doubt holds an important key to revealing the historical evolution of the Swahili world. In his book, *The Portuguese Period in East Africa*, Justus Strandes states that Swahili (*al-Sawāhil*) was first mentioned in parentheses by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa but by no other Arab authors or by the Portuguese (Strandes 1961: 313).

Therefore, at this point let us cite the description relating to *al-Sawāhil* by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa and analyze the meaning of the term. When he traveled from the port of Aden by crossing the sea of Bāb al-Mandab (Bab el Mandeb) for four days, he arrived at the city of Zayla', the city of Barbara on the Somali coast. He sailed from there along the coast via the cape of Guardafui southward and came to Maqdashaw (Mogadishu).

I then sailed from the city of Maqdashaw (Mogadishu), making for the countries of *al-Sawāhil* (*Bilād al-Sawāhil*), with the object of visiting the city of Kulwā (Kilwa) in the lands of the Zinj people (*Bilād al-Zunūj*). We came to the island of Manbasa (Mombasa), a large island two days' journey by sea from the land of *al-Sawāhil* (*arḍ al-Sawāhil*). It has no mainland territory (*barr*), and its trees are the banana, the lemon, and the citron. Its people have a fruit which they call *jammūn*, resembling an olive and with a stone like the olive stone. The inhabitants of this island sow no grain, and it has to be transported to them from *al-Sawāhil*. Their food consists mostly of bananas and fish. They are Shāfi'ites by rite, pious, honourable, and upright, and their mosques are made of wood, admirably constructed. We stayed one night on this island, and sailed on to the city of Kulwā, a large city on the seacoast, most of whose inhabitants are al-Zinj (al-Zanj), jet-black in colour. They have tattoo marks on their faces, just as [there are] on the faces of the Līmīs of Janāwa<sup>32</sup>.

It is not clear from this description where the land of al-Sawāḥil (arḍ al-Sawāḥil) or countries of al-Sawāḥil (bilād al-Sawāḥil) were located; they are presumably somewhere between Mogadishu and Kilwa, or a part of the mainland, adjacent to Mombasa island, or even the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba. Wilfred Whitely, in his book *Swahili: The Rise of a National Language*, pointed out that indeed, in view of Pemba's later reputation as a granary, it would not be unreasonable to locate it on the island of Pemba (Whitely 1969: ch.2, note 10). The land of Pemba was also called Jazīrat al-Khaḍrā' (The Green Island) by Arab geographers. In Yāqūt's *Mu'jam al-Buldān (Lexicon of Countries)*, which was compiled in 1224, Jazīrat al-Khaḍrā' was the name of an important island belonging to the Zanj region in the Indian Ocean, and on it were two cities, one named *mTannaby (Mutanabbī)* and the other named *mKanbalwā (Mukanbalū)*. In each of these there was a chief, each independent of the other (Yāqūt: vol. 2, 75). If this *mKanbalwā (Mukanbalū)* coincides with Qanblū (Jazīrat Qanblū) described by the early Arab geographers, then the island of Pemba had already played a very important role as an intermediary center of East African trade for the seafarers or merchants of Oman and Sīrāf.

In reference to this I would like to introduce some important accounts concerning al-Sawāḥil or the land of al-Sawāḥil given by the navigational guide books of Ibn Mājid and Sulaymān al-Mahrī in the later fifteenth century. In his navigational guide book, *Minhāj al-Fākhir fī 'Ilm al-Baḥr al-Zākhir (Splendid Methods of the Maritime Science)*, Sulaymān al-Mahrī (Sulaymān b. Aḥmad b. Sulaymān al-Mahrī) explained the main points for navigational direction in the Indian Ocean as follows:

al-Farqadān, 2.5 *iṣbā'*: Cape of Jāwah (Ra's Jāwah) from the north, and that is [called] Bandar Sundah, and then Milandī in Barr al-'Ajām. al-Farqadān, 2 *iṣbā'*: Bandar Lāshim in Jāwah from the direction of the sunrise (*maṭla'*), and Shuwand on its west (*mughīb*), the islands of Zariyn, and then Munbasah of *al-Sawāḥil*, which belongs to Barr al-'Ajām. al-Farqadān, 1 *iṣbā'*: Tuwban (Toban) in the middle Jāwah, then Bālī island on the west, and then Jazīrat al-Khaḍrā' (Pemba) of the land of al-Zanj (al-Mahrī 1970b: 53–54).

Furthermore, Sulaymān al-Mahrī enumerated the main cities which were situated from al-Sūmāl (Somalia) to al-Zanj and Sufāla (Sofala), and he also indicated the names of the stars for navigation to every city. Using his descriptions, I made Table 2 (al-Mahrī 1970b: 52–57, 98–100, 112–113). In his other navigational guide book, titled *al-'Umdat al-Mahrīya fī Ḍabṭ al-'Ulūm al-Baḥrīya (Corrections of the Maritime Sciences)*, Sulaymān al-Mahrī explained the seasons of monsoon navigation connecting main ports. In this explanation, the land of al-Sawāḥil is situated in the basal axis for navigation.

The season of monsoon navigation in *al-Sawāḥil (al-mawsim al-Sawāḥilī)* for the

**Table 2.** The positions of constellation based on the Navigational Guide Book by Sulaymān al-Mahrī (al-Mahrī 1970b: 52–57)

Name of constellation	Position	Name of East African city	Classification of region
al-Farqadān ( <i>Ursae Minoris</i> )	5.5 <i>işba'</i>	Bandar Maqadishu (Mogadishu)	Barr al-'Ajam
al-Farqadān	5 <i>işba'</i>	Barāwah (Brava)	
al-Farqadān	4 <i>işba'</i>	Malwān (Jubb)	
al-Farqadān	3 <i>işba'</i>	Kitāwah (Batta)	
al-Farqadān	2.5 <i>işba'</i>	Milandī (Malindi)	
al-Farqadān	2 <i>işba'</i>	Munbasah of al-Sawāḥil (Mombasa)	
al-Farqadān	1 <i>işba'</i>	Jazīrat al-Khaḍrā'	Barr al-Zanj
al-Na'sh ( <i>Ursae Majoris</i> )	12 <i>işba'</i>	Jazīrat Manfiya	
al-Na'sh	11 <i>işba'</i>	Kilwā (Kilwa)	
al-Na'sh	10 <i>işba'</i>	Jazīrat Ra's Samūk	
al-Na'sh	9 <i>işba'</i>	Jazīrat Shinjāji	
al-Na'sh	8 <i>işba'</i>	Mulbayūnī	
al-Na'sh	7 <i>işba'</i>	Khūr Kuwāmah	
al-Na'sh	6 <i>işba'</i>	Bandar Sufālah	
al-Na'sh	5 <i>işba'</i>	Bandar Hudūdah, Kilwānī	
al-Na'sh	4 <i>işba'</i>	Jazīrat Qunbāza	
al-Na'sh	3 <i>işba'</i>	The southern limit of the African Continent	

direction of Hurmuz starts on the 290th day of the year. The season of monsoon navigation in *al-Sawāḥil* for the direction of al-Dhīb (Maldiv islands) starts on the 310th day of the year. The season of monsoon navigation in *al-Sawāḥil* for the direction of Barr al-'Arab (Arabian Peninsula) such as Zufār, al-Mishqāş, Ḥayrīj, al-Shīhr and Aden starts on the 315th day. . . . . The season of monsoon navigation in al-Jūzarāt (Gujarat) for the direction of *al-Sawāḥil* starts on the beginning of the Azyab wind and lasts until the 80th day of the Nīrūz (new year of the Iranian calendar), and there is no effect after that. . . . . The season of monsoon navigation in al-Miland (Malindi) for the direction of al-Qumr islands starts on the 70th day of the Nīrūz and lasts until the 90th day of the Nīrūz. The season of monsoon navigation in al-Kulwā (Kilwa) for the direction of Sufālah starts on the beginning of the Nīrūz and lasts until the 50th day of the Nīrūz, and the best season of these two monsoon navigations starts on the 20th of the Nīrūz (al-Mahrī 1970a: 117–120).

It can be understood from the accounts of these two navigational guide books by Sulaymān al-Mahrī that al-Sawāḥil, or the land of al-Sawāḥil is located in a key point for monsoon navigation in the Indian Ocean, and al-Sawāḥil was clearly considered to be the city of Mombasa itself and its neighboring area.

Ibn Mājid, a contemporary of Sulaymān al-Mahrī, showed in his navigational

book, *Thalāth Azhār fī Ma'rifat al-Bihār (The Tree Blossoms about the Knowledge of Seas)*, information about *al-Sufāliya* (the navigational verse on Sufāla) using the poetical meter of Rajaz.

The first Urjūza (Rajaz verse) is called *al-Sufāliya*, and it is meant to provide the knowledge for sailing on a fixed bearing (*majārī*) and for taking latitude measurements using stellar attitudes (*qiyās*) when navigating the ocean from Malībār (Malabar), Kankan (Konkan), Jūzarāt (Gujarat), al-Sind and al-Aṭwāh to al-Sif al-Ṭawīl (the coast of South Somalia), and also from there to the *al-Sawāḥil* districts (*nawāḥī al-Sawāḥil*), al-Zanj, the land of al-Sufāla, and al-Qumr (Qomr) and its islands (Ibn Mājid 1969: 17).

Ibn Mājid also writes in another reference that Barr al-'Ajam (the non-Arab land) extends to the city of Barāwa (Brava), and states that from Barāwa southward begins the mainland of al-Zanj (barr al-Zanj), which was then also called al-Rīm (Mrīma). Therefore, it is not clear whether al-Sawāḥil actually belongs to the land of al-Zanj or the southern border of Barr al-'Ajam (Tibbetts 1971: 422).

On the other hand, Sulaymān al-Mahrī clearly regarded the area up to Mombasa as being Barr al-'Ajam, and stressed that Jazīrat al-Khaḍrā' (the island of Pemba) belonged to the land of al-Zanj<sup>33</sup>.

Judging from the points mentioned above, we can deduce the following two points about al-Sawāḥil. The first is that al-Sawāḥil or the land of al-Sawāḥil was located on the border between Barr al-'Ajam and al-Zanj. The second is that perhaps al-Sawāḥil was a special geographical name that navigators of the Indian Ocean used to refer to the city of Mombasa itself or its neighboring area.

### Early geographical knowledges concerning the East African coast

Then what did the Arab geographers or historians call Mombasa and its neighboring area prior to Ibn Baṭṭūṭa? Did they use a special proper name for the area which was located on the border between Barr al-'Ajam and al-Zanj?

Our earliest historical source on Mombasa is al-Idrīsī's geographical book called *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq* in the first half of the twelfth century. He wrote clearly about the coastal areas of al-Zanj.

From this city (Badhūna/ Bajun) along the coast ('*alā al-sāḥil*) to the city of Malinda, which belongs to the lands of al-Zanj, it takes three days by night journey on ship. The city of Malinda is situated on the bank of the creek of fresh water [adjacent to] the seashore. This is a big city, and its indigenous people are greatly skilled in hunting in the fields and fishing in the sea. .... The distance from this city to the city of Manbasah is two days along the coast. The latter is a small-scale city which belongs to al-Zanj, and its indigenous people are greatly skilled in iron mining and in hunting leopards. .... This city is on the coast, and along the big creek, ships can go upstream for two days. .... The king of al-Zanj inhabits this city and his troops travel on foot, because there are no riding animals among them and it is impossible

for such animals to live in their land. . . . and Bathana also belongs to al-Sufāla, adjacent to the land of al-Zanj. There are a lot of villages, and each village is on the creek. In all the countries of al-Zanj, special products consist of iron and the skins of the Zanjī leopards which are short with very soft, red fur. There are no riding animals among them, and therefore, they perform labor by themselves, and carry goods on their heads or on their back to the two cities, Manbasah and Malinda, and sell them there to buy other goods (al-Idrīsī: 59–60).

Until al-Idrīsī, the Arab geographers provide us with practically no names of coastal establishments, but with al-Idrīsī we begin to obtain a wealth of them. It is clear from the accounts of al-Idrīsī that Manbasah (Mombasa) was the capital of the king of al-Zanj, and that it was located two day's journey from Malinda (Malindi) by sea. It is also understood that Manbasah was an important trade center for collecting various African goods brought by the inland caravan routes. al-Idrīsī indicates that the geographical feature between Malinda and Manbasah is shoreline ('*alā al-sāhil*'). One difficulty which immediately arises is whether this Arabic *al-sāhil* came to be used as the proper name al-Sawāhil in later eras. From our limited observations it is not clear whether this hypothesis is correct or not. He also explains that the southern border of al-Zanj is called *al-Zanj al-sāhiliya* (the coastal al-Zanj) or *sāhil al-Zanj* (the coast of al-Zanj) (al-Idrīsī: 61–63, 91).

al-Ya'qūbī who died in 897 explains the ambergris found in al-Zanj. According to his report (this report was quoted from al-Nuwayrī's *Encyclopedia*), the ambergris of al-Zanj (al-Zanjī) is usually collected from *sawāhil al-Zanj* (the coasts of al-Zanj). In this reference *sawāhil*, a plural form of the Arabic *sāhil* is being used. However, it is impossible to decide whether this *sawāhil* indicates the proper name of a specific area (al-Ya'qūbī: 367).

Moreover, Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī (1213–86), in his geographical book, *Kitāb Jughrāfiyā (the Book of Geography)*, also contributes to our understanding of the coast. He quoted from Ibn Fāṭima's report:

He (Ibn Fāṭima) already said that the last (southern) border of the Indian Ocean is the place where all of the cities of al-Ḥabasha (Ethiopia) mentioned above, adjacent to *al-Sawāhil*, are located. The sea there is so continuously shallow that one can see the bottom extending to Bāb al-Mandab. Therefore, only small boats can sail there, and stormy winds frequently hit the ships during travel and destroyed them. The breadth of the *dhanab* (a part of the tail) of the Indian Ocean from Bāb al-Mandab to Barbara is 8 *majrās* (sailing distance on a fixed bearing)<sup>34</sup>.

Ibn Sa'īd's account shows that *al-Sawāhil* was vaguely located in the southern limit of al-Ḥabasha (Ethiopia). If the coastal area of al-Ḥabasha means today's coast of Somalia and some parts of East Africa, at most we can say that he acquired the word *al-Sawāhil* as a new terminology for the East African coast. However, it is clear from various accounts of Arab geographers that in the strict sense of the word, the first use of the geographical name *al-Sawāhil* was by Ibn Battūta in the

early fourteenth century.

As mentioned before, in addition to the report of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, Ibn Mājid and Sulaymān al-Mahrī in the later part of the fifteenth century frequently used the term *al-Sawāḥil*, or *arḍ al-Sawāḥil* (land of *al-Sawāḥil*), and its geographical location was clearly considered to be the city of Mombasa itself and its neighboring area.

### Development of the terminology 'Sawāḥil'

Moreover, the Arabic materials which really contribute to our understanding of *al-Sawāḥil* and its location are supplemented by valuable information contained in Ḥaḍramī chronicles and some hagiological books written in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In these materials, the term *al-Sawāḥil* was used generally to refer to the region formally called al-Zanj itself.

First of all, from the report of the *Chronicle of Kilwa* it is clear that the kings of Shiraz, embarking in seven ships, sailed under the guidance of Allāh not to the lands of al-Zanj but to the lands of *al-Sawāḥil* (*bilād al-Sawāḥil*). The *Chronicle of Kilwa* was originally written at the command of a sultan of the Kilwa kingdom who ruled in the first half of the sixteenth century (Salwat: f.6a; Freeman-Grenville 1962: 36)<sup>35</sup>.

In the following, I would like to introduce some records relating to *al-Sawāḥil*, principally extracted from *Ta'rīkh Bā Faqīh al-Shihrī* (*the Chronicle of Bā Faqīh al-Shihrī*) by Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Ṭayyib Bā Faqīh al-Shihrī. This *chronicle* was one of the Ḥaḍramī chronicles which were collected and translated by R.B. Serjeant.

(1) The first appearance of al-Firanj (the Portuguese) was at the island of Kilwah, a large island of the land of *al-Sawāḥil* (*arḍ al-Sawāḥil*) on the trade-route. Then they returned to their country, coming a second time with presents, strange documents and formal propositions to the Lord of Kilwah (Serjeant 1974: 42).

(2) In this year in the month of Sha'bān (1529, April/May), news arrived from *al-Sawāḥil* that a reinforcement of al-Firanj had arrived from al-Rūm (the application of al-Rūm refers either to Portugal or Europe) and taken Mombasa, destroying it greatly (Serjeant 1974: 55).

(3) During this period (1533/34), in which it lay at anchor in the port (al-Shihr), two vessels arrived from *al-Sawāḥil*. When they saw it (the Portuguese grab) they beached the two vessels (*jaḥab*) on the coast, and handed over the passengers and part of the cargo (Serjeant 1974: 68).

(4) During the first days of Rabī' II (1533, Septemer/October), a grab of al-Firanj arrived [at al-Shihr]. It had robbed a party *en route*, then it arrived at al-Shihr where it got to hear of the Mahrah and their murder of the afore-mentioned al-Firanjs. So, it slipped out of al-Shihr with a number of al-Firanjs, setting out to cut the sea-route to al-Mishqāṣ from *al-Sawāḥil* and elsewhere (Serjeant 1974: 70-71).

(5) In this year (1533), the total number of al-Firanjs arrested came to seventy men. A party from *al-Sawāḥil*, with goods, came to join them, so he seized these as well and threw them in irons along with their fellows (Serjeant 1974: 73).

Judging from the above mentioned records, it would appear that the coastal area of Somalia extending from Bāb al-Mandab to the southern limit of Mogadishu was called Barr al-‘Ajam (the non-Arab land), and also that the East African coast between the southern limit of Mogadishu and Kilwa was referred to as al-Sawāḥil or the land of al-Sawāḥil (*arḍ al-Sawāḥil*). This fact is supplemented by the records of al-Muḥibbī’s *Khulāṣat (Bibliographical Dictionary of Notables in the 11th century A.H.)* which have already been introduced before (al-Muḥibbī: vol. 1, 131, 161–162, vol. 2, 236–237, vol. 3, 61–62, 121–122, 403–404). al-Muḥibbī’s account shows that al-Sawāḥil, the land of al-Sawāḥil (*arḍ al-Sawāḥil*), the world of al-Sawāḥil (*iqlīm al-Sawāḥil*) or the countries of al-Sawāḥil (*Bilād al-Sawāḥil*) was definitely used as a general terminology for a series of major maritime city-states along the East African littoral, such as Lamu, Malindi, Mombasa and Kilwa, that flourished as important trading ports and intellectual centers of Islam at that time<sup>36</sup>.

So, among the Yemenite-Ḥaḍramī chronicles, especially those which were recorded between the mid-sixteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries, what is the main reason for the Arab writers referring to the East African littoral as al-Sawāḥil or the land of al-Sawāḥil? This problem should be clarified by further research and by the analysis of various records, such as the Yemenite-Ḥaḍramī chronicles, historical materials from Mecca and Egypt, and also Arabic and Persian sources concerning the Persian Gulf area.

In the period between the mid-fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the political and economic powers of Mamluk Egypt that had extended almost to Sawākin on the Red Sea and Aswan on the Nile were in reduced circumstances. The Rasūlid dynasty of Yemen and Mamluk Egypt had at various times contested the leadership of the Holy Cities (Mecca and Medina), and the Mamluks had become the dominant power during the fourteenth century. But the Mamluk’s extortion from foreign merchants seems to have led to certain decline in Cairo and Alexandria. On the other hand, the Ottomans’ new military and political powers extended gradually to the Middle East, the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea.

At the eastern end of the Indian Ocean, after the seventh maritime expedition by Cheng-Ho was accomplished in 1433, the commercial policy of Ming China abruptly changed. A maritime ban was enforced on private trade in the South China Sea, and the Indian Ocean and direct rule of overseas countries was stopped, despite the fact that the system of official tribute was kept going for ritual and commercial relationships.

The weakening of the attractive force for the center of civilization has a powerful effect on the periphery. Under the influences of the East-West politico-economical changes in the situation, therefore, the structure of networks connecting the Indian Ocean maritime world continued to change in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. A pattern of various complicated situations, such as conflicts between port-states, competition for markets and merchants, hostilities between the Persian Gulf network axis and the Red Sea network axis appears to

have begun around this period.

On the East African coast, too, as a result of the gradual withdrawal of the political and economic supremacy of the Kilwa kingdom, commercial rivalry increased between small island-states such as Mombasa, Malindi and Mogadishu, and at the same time a greater scale of people from the northern rim of the Indian Ocean (Yemen, Haḍramawt, Gujarat, Malabar, Oman and the Gulf area) settled on the East African coast during the same period<sup>37</sup>).

Even in the case of the mainland, this period coincides with the active movement of the herdsmen's emigration to the coast, and some of their groups raided the Swahili towns. There is no doubt that the Portuguese supremacy in the Indian Ocean was accomplished by taking advantage of this period of diversity and rivalry between the various port-states of the Indian Ocean.

So what is the main reason for the use during this period of the new term "*al-Sawāhil*," that is to say the Swahili world that vaguely connotes the mixed Afro-Asian elements of the East African coast? It is clear that problems concerning the historical process of the formation of the Swahili socio-cultures should be studied from a general point of view by focusing on this period.

Adding to this point, as J. Strandes has already pointed out, the term *al-Sawāhil* or *Swahili* is not mentioned in any of the historical records of Portuguese authors (Strandes 1961: 313). Portuguese records concerning the East African coast show that the local societies of East Africa consisted mainly of three groups of people: Arabs, Moors and Kaffirs/Cafes (pagans). The term *al-'Arab* (Arabs) indicated alien merchants and sailors who came from the Persian Gulf area and the Arabian Peninsula, mainly Omani Arabs. They used the Arabic language and occupied the ruling class. The Moors were also Muslims who mixed with the indigenous people by marriage, and used their own language (the Swahili language?) as well as Arabic. They usually lived in their own settlements built by using coral stones and mortar cement. Some Indian merchants who emigrated from Kanbāya (Cambay) lived in their settlements. The Kaffirs or Cafres consisted mainly of slaves or inland herdsmen who were fierce and restless people. On the mainland, there were some pagan kingdoms with independent political systems<sup>38</sup>).

Why did none of the Portuguese authors refer to these as the *Swahili*? Portuguese records tell us nothing about the socio-cultural characteristics of the mixed Afro-Asian stock of the East African coast. My hypothesis is that the Portuguese did not recognize the common Swahili world which was developing during that period. Our earliest historical source concerning the Swahili world is not from Portuguese sources but from some research missions of British people who visited the East African coast in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They usually referred to the people of the Swahili world by the name of *Soowiles*, the *Sowyhylese*, or the *Sowhylese*, and recorded some characteristics of the language, society and customs of this people in detail. In 1811, Lt. Smee, who explored along the East African coast, called the people who lived from Equatorial Africa to Cape Delgado the *Soowilees*, and collected some samples of their

language<sup>39</sup>).

Moreover, Captain W.F.W. Owen visited the East African coast between 1823 and 1824. He had the first correct information on the culture and society of the Swahili world. He reported that:

(1) The language of these people (Somauli, the people of Somalia) differs from that of the *Sowhylese* (*the people of the Swahili*), and very few understand Arabic, consequently their religion can be little more than form, as the Koran must be read in the original tongue. Their arms consist in a spear, with bows and arrows, while every Arab and *Sowhyly* carries a sword, one or two daggers and a target (Owen 1833: vol. 1, 358).

(2) To the southward of Juba, even to the island of Chuluwan, and perhaps to Delagoa, every part of the coast was inhabited by this race of people, now called *Sowhylese*; their language being still spoken from Patta (the island of Pate) to Mozambique, and strong evidences of it existing in the various dialects as far as the confines of our Cape Colony. The most wealthy of these *Sowhyly* states was the Sultany (sultan) of Patta; the line of islands, ports, and rivers, between Ovoombo and the bay still show the ruins of several towns that were once of considerable importance. The destruction of these is attributed to the fierce and restless Galla, whose desolating fury has swept off every town situated on the main-land, from Juba to Mombas (Mombasa); but as, like the Kaffers, these savages have an unconquerable aversion to the sea, the only places free from their attacks were those in insulated situations (Owen 1833: vol. 1, 360-361).

(3) The town of Lamoo (Lamu) is situated on the side and at the foot of a sandy ridge of hills, forming the southern boundary of the harbour, and contains a population of about five thousand souls, inclusive of Muskat Arabs (who are its present masters), *Sowhylese*, and slaves (Owen 1833: vol. 1, 385).

(4) A party of *Sowhylyse*, who were on a mercantile expedition to the interior, were attacked and plundered by the Galla, notwithstanding their stipulations to the contrary (Owen 1833: vol. 1, 397).

It is reported in Portuguese records that the society of East Africa consisted vaguely of Arabs, Moors, slaves, and pagans (Kaffirs) of the mainland. On the other hand, according to the report of Captain W.F.W. Owen, it is understood that the East African society consisted of Arabs, the *Sowhylyes* (the Swahili people), slaves and the Galla. Moreover, he also reported that some of the Swahili merchants advanced into the inner-mainland for trade journeys. This shows the gradual spread of the Swahili culture to the inland area of Africa.

### CONCLUSION

In this article, I first explained the reason why the South-North network axis connecting the Persian Gulf area with the East African coast functioned as a main network for the historical development of the Indian Ocean maritime world. As a result of this investigation, I indicated the importance of the movement of human

emigrants, trade relations, and the interconnection of cultural information between both worlds for the purpose of understanding the historical process of the formation and evolution of the Swahili world. Especially, it is possible to conclude that during the period starting with the rise of Islam until the latter part of the thirteenth century, the people of the Persian Gulf area played a very important part in emigrating and trading among the coastal people of East Africa.

Also, judging from a semantic analysis of the Arabic *sawāḥil* which appeared in various Arabic historical records, we concluded that the proper name *al-Sawāḥil* or *arḍ al-Sawāḥil* (the land of al-Sawāḥil) was already used frequently from the fourteenth through late-fifteenth centuries, and that its geographical meaning was certainly the equivalent of the city of Mombasa itself and its neighboring area. Moreover, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the geographical limit of *al-Sawāḥil* expanded gradually and was considered to be the area from the southern limit of Mogadishu (the limit of Barr al-‘Ajam) to Kilwa, like that of the formal *al-Zanj* in general.

Furthermore, our attention should be directed to the reasons why the terms *al-Sawāḥil*/Swahili were not mentioned by Omani Arabs or by Portuguese authors. The Arabs from Oman as well as the Portuguese conquered and dominated East Africa, and therefore, they did not recognize the growing cultural self-consciousness of Swahili world. On the other hand, it is reasonable to consider that the people of the Yemenite-Ḥaḍramīs played a greater part in civilizing the area by Islam and by trading with the indigenous people. Since they were strongly integrated into the Swahili society and culture, they understood the process of the changing cultural unity of the East African coast, which can be considered to be the Swahili world.

In the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, when the coastal people were subjected to intense Arabizing/Islamizing and Westernizing influences, the new era of Swahilization started. The people of the Swahili world went on asserting the validity of their own socio-cultural traditions while assimilating what they chose from both worlds, and increasing the Afro-Asian mixtures. This period also coincided with the time when the Swahili world further extended to the inner mainland.

## NOTES

- 1) This paper is a revised version of my earlier paper in Japanese, "Some Problems on the Evolution of the Swahili Socio-Cultural Area in East Africa" in *Journal of Asian and African Studies* No. 41, 1991, pp. 101–124, published by the Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. According to Yāqūt, *al-sāḥil* meant "the land of Arabs (*arḍ al-‘Arab*)." Further, citing al-Azdi, he stated that the meaning of *al-sāḥil* was "a place (*al-mawḍi‘*)" (Yāqūt vol. 3, 9; *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Ed., vol. 8, 836–838).
- 2) According to the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* (*Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*) written in

- the middle of the 1st century, the last port of trade on the coast of Azania was Rhapta, where very big-bodied men, tillers of the soil lived; Arab seafarers from Muza, Yemen understood the local language and had marital relationships with inhabitants there, who may have been pastoralists and agricultural people belonging to the Cushitic speakers (Freeman-Grenville 1962: 3–4; Casson 1989: 61, 136, 141–142).
- 3) For the meaning of the Indian Ocean maritime world, see (Yajima 1989, 1993).
  - 4) Studies on Swahili history have not given due consideration to the roles played by the islands. The Swahili culture can be defined as, so to speak, the island culture. See Yajima (1989: 77–80).
  - 5) Today, Mombasa Dhow Port located to the north of the island of Mombasa in Kenya is a terminal port of dhows sailing from the Persian Gulf, the west coast of India, and Yemen. Making use of the northeast winter monsoon, these dhows reach Mombasa from the end of December to the middle of next March. Most of these ships go north by the Southwest summer monsoon from the beginning of April to the middle of May whereas the rest of them anchor off the East African coast until the later part of August, then go north at the end of August or in September. See Kamioka and Yajima (1979: 17–24).
  - 6) Concerning studies on the development of the Pangani route, one of the long-distance routes in East Africa, from the viewpoint of socio-economic history, see Tominaga (1980: 377–393).
  - 7) There are various theories on the time of the Austronesian's immigration into Madagascar and the propagation of cultivation plants indigenous to Southeast Asia (Vérin 1975: 164–191).
  - 8) The development of Islamic urban societies in East Africa may not have been seen before the 12th or 13th century. As it is clearly shown by the archeological remains of Manda and Shanga (Shungwaya?) on the Island of Manda excavated by H. Neville Chittick, Islamic cities began to be built from the middle of the 9th century to the 10th century, almost coinciding with the time when Sirāf was most flourishing. And immigrants from the Persian Gulf region contributed greatly to the establishment of Islamic cities in East Africa especially when Baghdad was culturally and economically declining during the latter half of the 10th century (Kirkman 1975: 226–247; Chittick 1981: 217–220; Nurse and Spear 1985: 68–98).
  - 9) For the trading commodities of East Africa, the sources are records by Islamic geographers including al-Mas'ūdī, Buzurk b. Shahriyār, al-Idrisī, and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa.
  - 10) At the present day, the majority of Somali dhows plying between Ḥaḍramawt in South Arabia, the island of Socotra, the Somali coast and the East African coast are dhows of *jahazī* type of 60 tons or less. In Zanzibar and Tanzania a modification of the *sanbūq* (*sumb' uq*) occurs, known locally as *jehazi* (Kamioka and Yajima 1979: 35, 39, 42).
  - 11) After sailing around the Cape of Good Hope and coming across the Indian Ocean, Vasco da Gama and his crew headed north along the East African coast. They entered the Muslim trading area for the first time when they arrived at the mouth of the Zambezi River in South Mozambique, which faced the Mozambique Channel and was the limit of the area affected by the Northeast monsoon. See Vasco da Gama (1965: 361–365). Nova Sofal, a settlement which was established by the Portuguese, was a different place from the historical Sufāla, which appears in Arabic sources of the Medieval Ages. In the Arabic language, the original meaning of *sufāla* is “a lowest part,” or “a southmost place.” This name was used of the land south of Qanbalū, the extreme limit to which the Omanis and Sirafis went on the coasts of the Sea of al-Zanj, so the location of Sufāla is

not known.

- 12) According to al-Mas'ūdī, Omani seafarers sailed across the Sea of al-Zanj as far as Qanbalū, Sufāla and al-Wāqwāq (al-Mas'ūdī 1966: 124–125). There has long been speculation about the identification of Qanbalū. It is reasonable to consider one of the two towns in Jazīrat al-Khaḍrā' (the island of Pemba), namely Mukanbulū (Mukanbalwā/ Mukanbulu/ Mkumbuu), to be the same place as Qanbalū (Chittick 1977: 31, 190–192). Further, al-Wāqwāq has been considered to be the Madagascar of today.
- 13) According to the *Chronicle of Kilwa (Kitāb Salwat fī Akhbār Kilwa)*, the kingdom of Kilwa was built around the middle of the 10th century. But there can be no doubt that the kingdom had not laid a solid foundation until the middle of the 13th century, and enjoyed the heights of its prosperity at the beginning of the 14th century (Anonymous, *Salwat*.f.5b; Freeman-Grenville 1962: 32–36; Chittick 1977: 204–206).
- 14) Coastal areas between Opōnē (Ra's Hāfūnī) and Rhapta were called Azania. Many researchers relate Azania with al-Zanj, but do not clearly show the origin of the name. Islamic geographers make a distinction between Barr al-'Ajām and Barr al-Zanj (or Bilād al-Zanj). The former may have meant a place where the pastoral Kushites lived, and the meaning of the latter may have been a place inhabited by the Bantu speaking people (Casson 1989: 136).
- 15) It is difficult to identify the location of Rhapta, for the *Periplus* mentions that Rhapta lay two runs (1000 *stades*) beyond the island of Menuthias, so its location depends upon the identification of that island. For instance, one opinion asserts that it was around Dar es Salaam, and another says it must have been near the mouth of the River Rufiji (Datoo 1970: 66–75; Casson 1989: 141–142).
- 16) If the Bantu speaking people had not yet reached the East African coast by the middle of the 1st century, then it can be considered that trade activities had already been active, and racial mixture had already been seen between the pastoral Kushites and the Arab people before a Bantu-Arab racial mixture occurred.
- 17) Regarding the slave trade in East Africa at the beginning of the 10th century, see Buzurk (1883–1886: 52, 175–179).
- 18) For the Shirazi traditions, see Chittick (1969: 115–130).
- 19) At present, there is a village called Shiraz along a national highway between Mombasa and Vanga, and inhabitants there assert that their ancestors were from Shiraz, Iran. This information was acquired by my fieldwork conducted in February, 1979.
- 20) Regarding the shift of a flourishing centre of economy and culture, and the structural change of networks in the Islamic world, see Yajima (1986: 1–2; 1991: 39–58; 1993: 33–55).
- 21) For example, see al-Mas'ūdī and Buzurk b. Shahriyār.
- 22) Based on João de Barros, *Da Asia* (Freeman-Grenville 1962: 92).
- 23) According to Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, many *sharīfs (ashrāf)* of Hījāz gathered around the sultan of Kilwa, Abū al-Muzaffar Hasan (Ibn Baṭṭūṭa: vol. 2, 193–194). The Rasūlīd dynasty (A.D. 1229–1454) of Yemen tried to extend its military and economic influence to such regions as Ḥafār, Bāb al-Mandab and Hījāz especially under the reign of Sulṭān al-Malik al-Mazaffar Shams al-Dīn (A.D. 1250–1295) (al-Khazra'ī 1918: 88–284; Yajima 1994: 383–407).
- 24) Enrico Cerulli explained that Mogadishu was established as an Arabic colony in the 10th century, but there is no historic document positively supporting this (Cerulli 1957: 135).
- 25) According to Ibn al-Mujāwir, after two towns, namely Abyan and Harm in Yemen, fell

- into ruin, merchants there emigrated to and settled in Qalhāt and Maqdashūh (Mogadishu) (Ibn al-Mujāwir 130, 134).
- 26) Citing the *Chronicle of Kilwa*, João de Barros also stated that "the first people of the coast who came to the land of Sofala in quest of gold were the inhabitants of the city of Magadaxo (Mogadishu)" (Freeman-Grenville 1962: 91).
  - 27) During the 13th and 14th centuries, religious brotherhoods (*ṭarīqa*) such as al-Qādirīya, al-Shādhirīya, and al-Suhrawardīya were energetically engaged in their religious activities in Islam of the East and the West, which brought about a closer relationship in various areas concerning human migration and, cross-cultural relations (Yajima 1985: 390–391).
  - 28) Since Ibn Mujāwir stated that "Kilwa returned to (the old sect, namely) the Khawārijī from the Shāfi'ī sect, and remains so up until now" (al-Mujāwir: 278), then the Khawārijī Ibādīya sect may have been revived for some time at the beginning of the 13th century. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, who visited Kilwa around 1330, however, reported that the inhabitants there believed in the Shāfi'ī sect (Ibn Baṭṭūṭa vol. 2, 193).
  - 29) See the Portuguese historical documents collected in Freeman-Grenville's *The East African Coast* (1962): Don Francisco d'Almeida, (p. 98); Nuno Vaz Pereira (pp. 113–117); Father Monclaro (pp. 138–143); Father João dos Santos (pp. 146–151); Rezenda (pp. 175–182).
  - 30) The first person who reported the name of Sūmāl (Somalia) may have been Ibn Mājid. In his book, he stated that Barr Sūmāl (the land of Sūmāl) was an area between al-Barabīra (Berbera) and Barāwa (Brava), and that the land of al-Sawāḥil (Barr al-Sawāḥil) stretched to the south of Barr Sūmāl. Also, according to Sulaymān al-Mahrī, Barr al-Sūmāl corresponds to the so-called Horn of Africa extending from Berbera to Ra's Hāfūnī, Mogadishu, and Brava by way of Cape Guardafui. As the coasts belonging to Barr al-Sūmāl, Sulaymān al-Mahrī listed al-Dabbāghāt, al-Hajrāt, Ra's Hāfūnī, Ghubbat Hālūlah (to the south of Ra's Hāfūnī), Murr al-Kabīr, Ra's al-Kanā'ī, Ra's al-Kathbān, Ra's al-Harr, Fashat Kūsā, Khaṭṭat Damiyūn, Sif al-Ṭawīl, etc. Opinion is divided on the time and direction of the migration of the Sūmāl people and the Galla people (al-Mahrī 1970a: 48, 86–88; Ibn Mājid 1970a: 12, 112–113; Chittick 1975: 52–61).
  - 31) M. Tolmacheva has already dealt with the problem of the origin of the name, *Swahili*, but did not make a thorough examination of historical documents in Arabic, which resulted in an inadequate study (Tolmacheva 1976: 27–37).
  - 32) Underlinings and brackets were added by the author to the original text (Ibn Baṭṭūṭa: vol. 2, 191–192).
  - 33) Al-Mahrī also stated "Manbasah in al-Sawāḥil, namely Barr al-'Ajam" (al-Mahrī 1970b: 54).
  - 34) The following two revised editions of the geographical book by Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī have been published, but many differences are found between the two (Ibn Sa'īd 1958: 32; 1970: 99).
  - 35) João de Barros cited a different manuscript of the *Chronicle of Kilwa* from the present edition, which is *Kitāb Salwat*, British Museum Ms.Or.2666 (Freeman-Grenville 1962: 89–93).
  - 36) These historical documents do not specify what they mean by "various cities in al-Sawāḥil." Lamu, Malindi, and Mombasa, however, can be considered to have been representative Islamic cities on the East African coast during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

- 37) When Vasco da Gama reached the East African coast, a power centering around the Kingdom of Kilwa and the power of Malindi were obviously opposed to each other. What enabled Vasco da Gama and his party to enter into the port of Malindi may have been the fact that the people there were antagonistic to Mombasa and Kilwa (*Salwat*: ff.14a-b; Freeman-Grenville 1962: 48-49; Gama 1965).
- 38) See Portuguese historical documents collected by Freeman-Grenville (1962) and referred to in note 29.
- 39) *Marine Records Miscellaneous*, no. 586. The India Office Library, London. According to C. S. Nicholls, in 1802, Omani Arabs were calling the East African coast "Saw a hil." Soon the word was being commonly used to indicate the people of the region (Nicholls 1971: 19, note 1).

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