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MEETINGPLACE ZANZIBAR
Aḥmad ibn Sumayṭ and Harold Ingrams

The activities of Harold Ingrams in the 1930s Ḥaḍramaut are well-known; as is the so-called "Ṣulḥ Ingrams" which constituted a major change in the history of that region. It is also well-known that Ingrams first came into contact with the Ḥaḍramī network while serving in the British Protectorate of Zanzibar in the 1920s. At that time, Zanzibar had been receiving Ḥaḍramī immigrants for centuries, most of whom found their positions as small-time shop-keepers, coffee-sellers etc. However, Ingrams mentions one specific Ḥaḍramī in the introduction to his *Arabia and the Isles*:

"The key figure was a beloved and most respected friend, Seiyid Ahmed bin Sumeit (...). Seiyid Ahmed had made me appreciate the true Arab reactions to foreign rule and though he knew how keen I was to go to his homeland, he did nothing to encourage me to do so until a few days before his death in 1925. Then he sent for me. I found him on his simple narrow bed, his thin old arms stretched over the sheet which covered him. He took my hand and told me that he thought I might be able to help the Arabs of Hadramaut. He explained how the British descent on Zanzibar had in the end resulted in it coming under British rule and although that might have done good in Zanzibar, he did not want it to happen in Hadramaut. He now hoped I would go there. Then, feeling under his pillow, he brought out the letters of introduction to his friends and gave them to me."¹

¹ W. Harold Ingrams, *Arabia and the Isles*, introduction to the third edition, London, 1966,13.

Even if these letters of introduction later fell victim to a white ant invasion in Mauritius,² it seems that the name of Aḥmad b. Sumayṭ must have carried some weight in the Ḥaḍramaut of the 1930s. Who, then, was this "beloved and most respected friend" and what was the nature of his involvement with the British administration in Zanzibar and with Harold Ingrams in particular? This paper will attempt to answer some of these questions, in the setting of Zanzibar and its Indian Ocean links as well as the biographical accounts of the individuals involved.

ZANZIBAR AND THE INDIAN OCEAN CA. 1900-1925

British influence over the Bū Saʿīdī (Omani) state of Zanzibar had been mounting through the latter part of the 19th century, and culminated in the signing of a Protectorate Treaty in 1890.³ In the following decades, the main objective for the British was to establish some sort of functioning administrative apparatus. Gradually, political institutions came into existence, and the result was a massive expansion of the bureaucracy which was manned by British and Arab personnel. In 1914, there was established a Protectorate Council, consisting of the Bū Saʿīdī Sultan, the British Resident as well as four representatives of the Arab and Asian communities. This body had no legislative powers, and Zanzibar was in reality run by British officials in cooperation with the Sultan.

It has often been stated that the arrival of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean, and the subsequent British, French and Dutch dominance of both sea and shore, meant the end of the traditional dhow trade and of the Indian Ocean as a unified economic system. However, as new research demonstrates, this may be only partly true. The small dhows were certainly no match for large steamships with much larger

² *Ibid.*, 72.

³ On the British period in Zanzibar and East Africa, and the preceding period of Bū Saʿīdī rule, see for example L.W. Hollingsworth, *Zanzibar under the Foreign Office 1890-1913*, London, 1953, N.R.Bennet, *A History of the Arab State of Zanzibar*, London, 1978, M.L.Lofchie, *Zanzibar. Background to Revolution*, Princeton Univ. Press, 1965. See also the accounts given by R.N.Lyne, *Zanzibar in Contemporary Times*, Hurst&Blackett, London, 1905, and W.H. Ingrams, *Zanzibar. Its History and its Peoples*, London, 1927.

capacities for passengers and cargo. To the same effect, the implementation of British rule in India, Aden and East Africa may have meant more elaborate customs procedures and passenger registration for the dhow captains, but this did not necessarily mean that dhows, following the monsoon winds of the Indian Ocean, were no longer transporting cargo and people from al-Shiḥr or Musqaṭ to Lamu, Zanzibar or the Comoro Islands.⁴ Rather, we may envision a network of large, ocean-going dhows covering the longer distances and a fleet of smaller vessels continuously shuttling between the ports of the East African coast. This meant that the large number of trans-regional families, which in both the Ḥaḍramaut and in Zanzibar was rather the rule than the exception, could remain in contact. It also meant that scholars like Ibn Sumayṭ could visit his family and fellow ‘ulamā’ in the Ḥaḍramaut, the Comoros and further afield, thus maintaining existing ties and creating new ones.

BIOGRAPHIES

Biographical background, Ibn Sumayṭ

Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr b. Sumayṭ was born in Itsandaa on the Island of Ngazija (Grand Comoros, also spelled Injizija in Arabic transliteration) on 16 January 1861.⁵ Being one of the well-known ‘Alawī families of

⁴ The correspondence of the Bū Sa‘īdī Sultans in the Zanzibar Archives contain numerous references to people and cargo, especially dates, being transported by dhow from Muscat in the early 20th century. Another indication of the persistence of this ancient system is given by Alan Villiers, *Son of Sinbad*, New York, 1969. Villiers made his journey from Aden via al-Mukallā, al-Shiḥr and Mogadishu to Zanzibar in 1939, and his account contains numerous references to fellow dhows making the same journey. Preliminary research by Prof. Abdul Sharif indicates that the dhow trade did indeed decline, but that it continued well into the 20th century. (Personal communication, Prof. Abdul Sharif, Bergen and Zanzibar, July-August 1997).

⁵ The primary biographical source on the life of Ibn Sumayṭ is the biography given by his son ‘Umar included in the work by Aḥmad ibn Sumayṭ, *Al-Ibtihāj fi bayān iṣṭilāḥ al-Minhāj*, Cairo, 1935, 26-44. For other sources on Ibn Sumayṭ and his contemporaries, see Abū Bakr al-Mashhūr, *Lawāmi‘ al-nūr. Nukhba min a‘lām Ḥaḍramaut*, San‘ā’, 1412/1991-92, 325-328, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mashhūr, *al-Shams al-Zahira*, Jiddah, 1404/1984, and ‘Abd Allāh Bā Kathīr al-Kindī, *Riḥlat al-ashwāq al-qāwiyya ilā mawāṭin al-sādat al-‘Alawiyya*, Cairo, 1358/1939/40. See Sumayṭ family tree attacheded at the end of this paper.

Ḥaḍramaut, the Sumayṭ clan had a history of piety and religious learning and could number several renowned scholars among its members.⁶ Aḥmad's father, Abū Bakr b. ʿAbd Allāh, seems to have left the Ḥaḍramaut relatively early in his life, and settled in the Comoros as a ship-owner and merchant. Aḥmad was his youngest son, and he provided him with his first education. However, his father died while Aḥmad was still young (in 1873), and he continued his education under Sayyid ʿAbd al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh Jamal al-Layl.

Ibn Sumayṭ then moved to Zanzibar, although it is unknown exactly when he made it his permanent home. Once there, he became immersed in the scholarly community of that place, a community which is often said to have flourished during this period. It also included several *ulamāʾ*⁷ of Ḥaḍramī descent, to an extent that has caused B.G. Martin to describe Zanzibar as an "an annex of Hadramaut, culturally and intellectually".⁷ The intellectual *milieu* of this period has been described by Abdallah Saleh Farsy and others, and need not be repeated here.⁸ In sum, it is sufficient to state that the reign of Sayyid Barghash (r. 1870-1888) and his successors was characterized by an exceptional influx of scholars - many of whom were appointed as *qāḍīs* or to other official positions by the Sultan. There also seems to have been a close

⁶ One of the most influential members of the Sumayṭ family in the 18th and 19th century was Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Sumayṭ (1183-1257/1769-1842) who acquired a reputation as a *quṭb* and *mujaddid*. According to ʿUmar's biography, the birthdate of Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr b. Sumayṭ was foretold by Aḥmad b. ʿUmar to be a good omen, as it coincided with his own. Reportedly, the younger Aḥmad was named after the *quṭb* for this reason.

⁷ B. G. Martin, "Notes on some members of the learned classes of Zanzibar and East Africa in the nineteenth century", *African Historical Studies*, 4:3, 1971, 530.

⁸ For what follows on the scholarly community in late 19th century Zanzibar, see Abdallah Saleh Farsy, *Tarehe ya imam Shafi na Wanyavuoni wakubwa wa Mashariki ya Afrika*, published by the Zanzibar Education Dept, 1944. Farsy later wrote an expanded version of this with the title, *Baadhi ya Wanyavuoni wa Kishafii wa Mashariki ya Afrika*. This latter he gave to R. L. Pouwels who published the text and translation as, *The Shafiʿi Ulama of East Africa, ca. 1830-1970. A Hagiographic Account*, published by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, African Primary Texts, 2, 1989. See also B. G. Martin, "Notes on some members", and José Kagabo, "Reseaux d'ulama "swahili" et liens de parenté" in: Le Guennec-Coppens&Caplan, *Les Swahilis entre Afrique et Arabie*, Paris/Nairobi, 1991. I am also grateful to to Mwalimu Muhammad Idris Muhammad of Zanzibar for providing valuable information.

relationship between Sunni-Shāfiʿī and Ibāḍī scholars, a reflection of the tolerance shown by the Bū Saʿīdī (Ibāḍī) rulers.⁹

Ibn Sumayṭ made his first journey to the Ḥaḍramaut in 1298/1881. There he visited Sayʿūn, Tarīm and Shibām, where, according to his son, he also married. His many shaykhs in the Ḥaḍramaut constitute a who's who list of the contemporary scholarly community. Among those listed in his biographies we find ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Ḥibshī,¹⁰ ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Mashhūr¹¹ and Aḥmad b. Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭās¹² who became his foremost Sufi teacher.

Upon his return to Zanzibar, Aḥmad b. Sumayṭ was appointed *qāḍī* by Sayyid Barghash in 1300/1882-83. However, he left this position only two years later, to travel to Istanbul. It was here that he associated with the person he himself named as his most important teacher, Faḍl b. ʿAlawī b. Sahl, also known as Faḍl Pasha (1824-1900).¹³ Much remains to

⁹ So close was the association between the two schools of law, that Sunni and Ibāḍī *qāḍīs* sometimes would give their legal opinions together, as is shown by a preliminary survey of legal documents from Zanzibar (*Sijill* of Zanzibar preserved in the Zanzibar Archives). However, tolerance did not endorse actual conversion from one school to another, as is shown by the example of Shaykh ʿAlī b. Khamīs al-Barwānī who was imprisoned by Sayyid Barghash after converting from Ibāḍism to Sunnism.

¹⁰ ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Ḥibshī (1843-1915) founded the al-Riyād mosque in Sayʿūn, and was considered the *quṭb* by the sharīfs on Lamu, centred around the Riyād mosque there. See f.ex al-Mashhūr, *Lawāmiʿ al-Nūr*, and Abdul Hamid El-Zayn, *The Sacred Meadows. A Structural Analysis of Religious Symbolism in an East African Town*, Northwestern University Press, 1974.

¹¹ ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Mashhūr (1835-1902), often referred to as the "mufti of Ḥaḍramaut" and author of the *Shams al-Zahīra*. On him, see al-Mashhūr, *Lawāmiʿ al-Nūr*, 173-177, and also Bā Kathīr al-Kindī, *Riḥlat al-ashwāq*, 52-54.

¹² On Aḥmad b. Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭās (1841-1916), see al-Mashhūr, *Lawāmiʿ al-Nūr*, 220-238, R.L. Pouwels, *The Shafīʿī Ulama*, 92, and Bā Kathīr al-Kindī, *Riḥlat al-ashwāq*, 112-121.

¹³ See Tufan Buzpinar, "Abdulhamid II and Sayyid Fadl Pasha of Hadramawt. An Arab dignitary's ambitions (1876-1900)", *Journal of Ottoman Studies/ Osmanli Arastirmalari*, 13, 1993, 227-39. Buzpinars research in Ottoman and British archives reveals that Faḍl Pasha instigated anti-British activities in his native Malibar in the early 1850. He then fled to Mecca and Istanbul. During the 1860s and 70s, he repeatedly petitioned the Ottoman Sultan to grant him hereditary governorship of Zofar on behalf of the Ottoman Empire, but his wishes were never granted. Instead, he became an honoured guest and "vezir" in the Sultanic court in Istanbul, where he remained from 1880 until his death in 1900. He was also the author of several works

be found out about this interesting, but obscure, character, who seems to have held an influential position at the court of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, occupying a similar position as that held by Jamal al-Dīn al-Afghanī.¹⁴ The fact that Ibn Sumayṭ wrote a biography of the father of Faḍl Pasha bears witness to the close relationship that seems to have existed between the two men.¹⁵ B.G. Martin has speculated whether Ibn Sumayṭ's contacts with Faḍl Pasha and others in Istanbul can be directly linked to the growth of Pan-Islamist ideas in Zanzibar and East Africa in general.¹⁶ This aspect of Zanzibari history (and, indirectly, Ḥaḍramī history) has yet to be researched thoroughly. Here it is sufficient to state that the career of Ibn Sumayṭ was influenced by several strands of contemporary Islamic thought; the Ḥaḍrami scholarly tradition, closely linked to the *Ṭarīqa* *ʿAlawiyya*, the Shāfiʿī communities of Cairo, Mecca, India and Indonesia (where Ibn Sumayṭ went after his stay in Istanbul) as well as the *milieu* in Zanzibar and East Africa. What may also be said, is that Islamic modernist ideas certainly were known and discussed in Zanzibar in the late 19th and early 20th century. Among the correspondence of the Zanzibar Sultans can be found a body letter to and from the editors of publications like "Journal Abū Naddāra" of Paris, "Al-Hilāl" and "Al-ʿUrwat al-Wuthqā".¹⁷

The return of Ibn Sumayṭ to Zanzibar coincided with the end of the long reign of Sayyid Barghash. His successor, Sayyid Khalīfa b. Saʿīd reinstated Ibn Sumayṭ in the position as *qāḍī*, a position which he held until his death in 1925, interrupted only by two additional visits to the Ḥaḍramaut, in 1898-99 and 1907-08. He thus served under seven Bū Saʿīdī Sultans, and, increasingly, under the British administration of Zanzibar, following the signing of the protectorate treaty of 1890.

on the *ʿAlawiyya* in general and his own family in particular. See also al-Mashhūr, *Shams al-Zahīra*, 308-309, and the brief account given in Bertram Thomas, *Arabia Felix*, London, 1938, 11.

¹⁴ See Shakīb Aرسالān, *Hādīr al-ʿĀlim al-Islāmī*, Beirut, n.d., 294-295. Aرسالān mentions that Faḍl Pasha was one of the Sultans close companions, and that he was among those intrigued against by the religious dignitary Abū al-Hudā.

¹⁵ Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr b. Sumayṭ, *Manāqib ʿAlawi b. Muḥammad b. Sahl*, published Beirut, 1304/1913. The biography was written in Istanbul, as has an as yet unidentified commentary in Ottoman Turkish. Most likely, the Ottoman version is made by Faḍl Pasha himself.

¹⁶ B.G. Martin, *Note on some members*, 543.

¹⁷ Zanzibar Archives, AA5/7, AA5/8, AA5/9, AA5/11 and AA5/15.

The close association between Ibāḍī and Sunnī-Shafiʿī scholars seems to have persisted after the declaration of the British protectorate. As the British administrative apparatus grew during the reigns of Sultans Ḥammūd b. Muḥammad (r. 1896-1902), ʿAlī b. Ḥammūd (r. 1902-1911) and Khalīfa b. Ḥarūb (r. 1911-1960), so did the need to draw the religious scholars and *qāḍīs* into this system. It is in this connection that we encounter Ibn Sumayṭ again in the Zanzibar archives, as *qāḍī* in the combined Islamic-European court system, as member of the Waqf-commission and as appointed expert on the educational board. It is in this connection that Ibn Sumayṭ and Harold Ingrams came into contact.

Biographical background: Harold Ingrams

From his application for colonial employment,¹⁸ we learn that William Harold Ingrams was born in 1897, in Shrewsbury, England, son of William Smith Ingrams, Assistant Master of Shrewsbury School. Harold Ingrams received his first education at Bromsgrove School, and was enrolled at Shrewsbury School in 1910, at the age of 13. He left school four years later, in 1914, to join the army following the outbreak of WWI. At this time, he had passed Oxford and Cambridge School examinations, but further education was postponed due to the war. Ingrams entered the Officers Training Corps, and held various posts at the front. It is evident from Ingrams CV that he was wounded in May 1916, but the nature of the wounds are not specified. However, it seems to have been serious enough to preclude any further front-line service, as he continued his military career as Regional Recruiting Officer and in other non-combat posts.

Following demobilization in 1919, Ingrams made the same career-move as so many of his generation; he applied for colonial employment. He was then 22 years old, and without formal higher education. However, his interests in history and cultural work seems to have been already established; in his CV he lists being Secretary to the Darwin (Natural History) Society and curator of (an unspecified) museum.

In May 1919, Harold Ingrams was given employment in the Zanzibar Protectorate with a salary starting at the rate of 250 pounds per annum. Formally, he held the position of Assistant District Commissioner from August 1919 to January 1925, serving in Pemba and Zanzibar. He was

¹⁸ Personal File, Harold Ingrams, Zanzibar Archives (ZA) AB86/293. This file includes Ingrams' career record while serving in Zanzibar.

then appointed 2nd assistant Secretary, a post which he held until his transfer to Mauritius in 1927. For our purposes, however, the most interesting aspect of his activities are the semi-official posts he held during this period, as well as his appointment to various committees and work in the museums. It was in these capacities that he cooperated with Aḥmad b. Sumayṭ and established the relationship which, according to himself, was to extend beyond the death of Ibn Sumayṭ and to Ingrams' more famous exploits in the Ḥaḍramaut in the 1930s. What follows is an account of the nature of this cooperation.

The Educational Department of Zanzibar in the 1920s

The British concern for more widespread public education started during the rule of Sayyid ʿAlī b. Ḥammūd. A number of primary schools were started in Zanzibar and Pemba, providing a basic 3-4 years education. The new schools were never very popular, and their development was further interrupted by the war.¹⁹ Attendance fell, and many of the employees disappeared into military service. From the reports of the educational department, it transpires that attendance picked up again after the war, and several new schools were opened.²⁰ For example, there were only four district schools in 1915, while there were seven in 1924. Average attendance of the Zanzibar Town Elementary School was 213 in 1915, while on an average, 315 pupils attended the same school in 1924. However, there was still considerable resistance to the government schools, and a majority of the population preferred to send their sons to the traditional Quranic schools.

To counter this development, an "Advisory Council of Education" was established in 1924, led by Harold Ingrams and L.W Hollingsworth. It was decided that Quran should be taught in the Government Schools,

¹⁹ For an overview of the development of education in Zanzibar, see N.R.Bennet, *A History of the Arab State of Zanzibar*, 195 and 225-235. For some contemporary accounts of the British efforts to reform the education system, see R.N.Lyne, *Zanzibar in Contemporary Time* and also W.H. Ingrams, *Zanzibar. Its History and its Peoples*. Note that the Government School system was separate from the schools run by the missionary societies present in Zanzibar. The UMCA (Universities Mission to Central Africa) and The Society of the Holy Ghost both ran schools in Zanzibar, and in addition the Society of Friends ran one school in Pemba.

²⁰ The reports of the Educational Department are to be found in ZA-BA5/1-3 and BA6/2-4. What follows on the Ingrams-Sumayṭ co-operation is taken from these files.

but contrary to the practice in the Quranic schools, it should be taught in Swahili alongside an Arabic translation. There was appointed a sub-committee of four *qāḍīs*, which in addition to Ibn Sumayṭ included ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Mundhirī,²¹ Ṭāhir b. Abī Bakr al-Amawī²² and Burhān b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Amawī.²³ Among them, the *qāḍīs* were to select passages of the Quran to be taught in the Government Schools. The 1924 report states that "complete agreement was reached with the result that small books which will contain all that is necessary are in preparation. To avoid the pernicious habit of memorizing passages without understanding their meaning, explanations in Swahili will be printed alongside with the Arabic passages which are committed to memory."²⁴ The British dislike of the traditional education is further expressed in the same report, as is the apparent agreement of the *qāḍīs* in this matter:

"The Kathis recognize the baneful effects of the long-established local custom whereby the education of young boys is confined to the necessary portions of the Koran in a language which they do not understand. They fully realise, and promised to point out to parents, the great advantages of sending their boys to school at an early age so that they may study other subjects concurrently with religion, and at the same time be saved from falling into the state of intellectual atrophy produced by the native custom of keeping boys at Koran schools until they reach the age of 10."²⁵

It may be discussed what is actually expressed here; ʿulamāʾ compliance with British insistence, or actual will to reform the system. Considering

²¹ ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Mundhirī (d. 1925) was the leading *Ibāḍī qāḍī* in Zanzibar, and he cooperated with Ibn Sumayṭ on, amongst others, the Waqf Commission. On his life and works, see R.S. O'Fahey, *The Islamic Writings of Eastern Africa*, forthcoming. See also R.S. O'Fahey and Knut Vikør, "A Zanzibari waqf of books. The library of the Mundhirī family", *Sudanic Africa. A Journal of Historical Sources*, 7, 1996.

²² Ṭāhir b. Abī Bakr al-Amawī was known to Harold Ingrams from the High Court where Ingrams served as registrar and al-Amawī served as *qāḍī*. See Ingrams, *Arabia and the Isles*, 47.

²³ Burhān b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Amawī (1861- 1935) replaced Ibn Sumayṭ as member of the Waqf Commission following the latter's death. On him, see Pouwels, *The Shāfiʿī Ulama*, 48, 76.

²⁴ ZA-BA5/3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

the wide experience of scholars like Ibn Sumayṭ with reformed systems in Istanbul and Egypt, it is most likely that the latter is the case.

The results of this endeavour were two small booklets, meant for use in the Government Schools. The first is a 20-page booklet entitled "Aya Zilizochaguliwa" ("Selected Verses")²⁶ which presents passages from the Quran and the Sunna together with explanations and fundamental principles of Islam, in Arabic with a Swahili translation. The original text was contributed by Ibn Sumayṭ, while the translation was prepared in collaboration with Shaykh Ṭāhir b. Abī Bakr al-Amawī and Harold Ingrams.

The latter booklet, entitled "Al Risalat Al Jamya" (al-Risālat al-Jam'īyya), presents the religious duties of Muslims and some aspects of Islamic theology through selected Quranic verses.²⁷ The text, given in Swahili and Arabic, is compiled and translated by Aḥmad b. Sumayṭ and covers such aspects as ablutions and prayer, fasting, *zakāt* and the pilgrimage.

The reports of the Education Department show that the "Risala" was considered suitable for use in the lower grades, "as the type is bold and easily read", while the "Aya" was deemed unsuitable for very small boys, "as the print is small." However, both books were pronounced by the *qāḍīs* as being sufficient for all the Quran teaching in elementary schools "where the pupils are African Muslims."²⁸

The books seem to have been intended for wide usage in the East African territories under British rule; the "Aya" was printed in 6,000 copies, and was distributed to Education Departments in Kenya and Uganda. However, despite the blessing of four prominent *qāḍīs*, popular resistance seems to have persisted against the Government Schools and modern educational methods, especially in the countryside. A report²⁹ produced in 1938 by a commission appointed to investigate rural education in the Zanzibar Protectorate, shows that the initiative met

²⁶ Full title: *Aya Zilizochaguliwa Katika Kuraani Takatifu Kwa Sababu ya Kutumiwa Katika Vyuvo Vya Unguja* (Selected Verses from the Quran for use in the schools of Zanzibar), printed by the Government Printer, Zanzibar, 1926.

²⁷ Full title: booklet is *Al Risalat al Jamya. Kitabu cha kufundisha ibada za kiislamu katika vyuvo vya Unguja*. It was printed by the Zanzibar Government press in 1927.

²⁸ ZA-BA5/3

²⁹ ZA-B6/2-4. The report covers 200 pages, and was produced by F.B.Wilson and W.H. Percival.

with considerable success in Zanzibar Town. In the district schools, however, reform-efforts were less successful. During the 1930s, many of the schools closed down due to low attendance. The 1938 report explains this by the widespread conviction that being educated meant knowing a large portion of the Quran by heart. In short, the rural population did not want books in Swahili, but "Arabic rote learning."

The Museums of Zanzibar

Harold Ingrams was also involved in the establishment and maintenance of the museums of Zanzibar.³⁰ Presently, we do not possess any direct evidence to show that Ingrams and Sumayṭ cooperated on a regular basis in this type of work. However, given the relatively limited number of people involved, it is very likely that their relationship was formed or reinforced through these activities.

The most well-documented case concerns the deciphering of an ancient Kufic inscription at the 12th-century mosque of Kizimkazi in 1921.³¹ The original Kizimkazi mosque was (and is) one of the most important remnants of early Islamic culture on the East African coast, and the interpretation of the inscriptions there was surrounded by great interest. Aḥmad b. Sumayṭ was among the leading *‘ulamā’* involved in this work. He was consulted for the investigation, and provided with photos of the inscription. Eventually, the photos were sent to Cairo for deciphering at the Comité de Conservation de Monuments d'Art Arabe. At this time, Ingrams was occupied as District Officer in Pemba, but from his CV we learn that he was already involved on various committees and groups concerned with preservation and registration of Zanzibari heritage and culture. He was also certainly involved in the publication of the final deciphered text in the Zanzibar Gazette, of which he was editor.

The Courts of the Zanzibari Legal System

The court system in Zanzibar in the 1920s was adapted to suit the variety of religious/ethnic groups who lived there. Following the

³⁰ Ingrams career record, ZA-AB86/293. Ingrams also wrote a small booklet on the items on items displayed in the museum, *Guide to the Historical and Ethnological Section of the Zanzibar Museum*, printed by the Government Printer, 1926 (ZA-BA106/8).

³¹ ZA-AB22/12. On the Kizimkazi mosque and inscription, see amongst others W.H. Ingrams, *Zanzibar. Its history and its People*, 133-135.

transfer of Zanzibar to the Colonial Office in 1913, the system was divided into two subsections. There was the so-called Sultan's Court which administered Islamic Law (Shāfi'ī and Ibāḍī) to the subjects of the Sultan. Christians and British protected subjects fell under the jurisdiction of the His Britannic Majesty's Courts. The system was further divided into District Courts and the *Qāḍī* Court/High Court in Zanzibar Town.

Ibn Sumayṭ served as a *qāḍī* in the Sultans Court for a period of 40 years, until his death in 1925. As mentioned above, Harold Ingrams served as registrar to the High Court, and at this time he was also a student of Law.³² Again, it is very likely that the two met and cooperated in their respective legal capacities. It must be said, however, that although the Zanzibar Archives³³ contain numerous cases presided over by Ibn Sumayṭ, and also several which carries the signature of Harold Ingrams, I have not yet seen one case which involves both men.

CONCLUSION

In the late 19th and early 20th century, leading Ḥaḍramī/Zanzibari *‘ulamā’* like Ibn Sumayṭ had the opportunity to travel widely in the Islamic world and be influenced by the wide range of impulses which prevailed in this period. For the scholars in Zanzibar, their reformist attitudes were also demonstrated by their later cooperation with the British rulers in matters such as education and preservation, as the example of Ibn Sumayṭ shows. Other scholars with similar careers show the same tendencies, most notably the Ibāḍī *qāḍī* ‘Alī b. Muhammad al-Mundhirī and the famous Ḥaḍramī teacher ‘Abd Allāh Bā Kathīr al-Kindī.

Martins' statement that East Africa was an "annex of Hadramaut, culturally and intellectually" may certainly be debated. The same is true for Ḥaḍramī historiographical tradition which emphasize the Ḥaḍramaut (and Tarīm in particular) as a a centre for religious learning for the western Indian Ocean. What we may find instead is that East Africa served as yet another bridgehead (in addition to South East Asia)

³² Ingrams was admitted to the bar at Lincolns Inn in 1921 with the plan to proceed to bar exams. ZA-AB86/293.

³³ The legal records of the Zanzibar Archives are contained in files AA7 and HC1-10. In addition, a massive body of court records still awaits re-organizing in the High Court.

for reformist ideas to penetrate Ḥaḍramaut itself. Interestingly, one person who seems to have been deeply impressed and influenced by the reform-mindedness of Ibn Sumayṭ and his contemporaries, was Harold Ingrams.