

**SWAHILI MANUSCRIPTS:
Looking in East African Collections for Swahili Manuscripts in Arabic Script¹**

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Introduction

In his article "The Paper Memory of East Africa: Ethnographies and Biographies written in Swahili"² Thomas Geider (1953 - 2010)³ has called for the reading of primary texts to be "enlarged by further data external to the texts themselves" in order to get more information on the context in which transfer of knowledge took place.⁴

Not only paratexts and visual organisation, the manuscript itself, its design, production, material substances like ink, paper binding and leather of the cover, carry information about this context of the transfer of knowledge, and, possibly, also about the knowledge itself. As does a collection in which a manuscript may be found. How did a collection come into being, who is, or was the collector, who the custodian? Did it remain unchanged or did it grow bigger or become smaller? With which purpose was it set up, who uses it and what for? Which other manuscripts does it contain, are there other items apart from manuscripts, was it part of a larger collection?

The purpose of this paper is to take a first glance at a few East African collections that contain Swahili manuscripts written in Arabic script.⁵ This research project is one among 19 sub-projects being carried out by the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC)⁶ of the University of Hamburg and supported by the national German Research Foundation (DFG).⁷ On 1st July 2011 the University of Hamburg gave birth to the CSMC under which umbrella 19 subprojects started dealing with the material aspects of the manuscripts cultures in the languages of Japan, China, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Turkey, Greece, Germany, Ethiopia, Nigeria and East Africa. Three subprojects function as service projects to the other 16, making it possible to do analyses on the material substances of the manuscripts involved, their cover, binding, paper and ink, but also comparison of various hands or the techniques of illustration. What unites the different subprojects is the question what, apart from the content of a manuscript, the materiality can tell us about the transfer of knowledge.

¹ This article is an extended English version of my earlier paper (forthcoming) 'Khata za Kiswahili Zilizandikwa kwa Mkono kwa Herufi za Kiarabu Zilizomo katika Hifadhi za Maandishi Afrika ya Mashariki', presented at the International Conference "50 Years of Kiswahili as a Language of African Liberation, Unification and Renaissance", 4-6 October 2012, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. I have also used parts of the content of "A Case Study of Transfer of Islamic Knowledge in Swahili Manuscripts in Arabic Script: a *tafsir* by Ali Hemed Abdallah Said Abdallah Masudi al-Buhry (1889-1957 CE)", a paper that I presented at the International Symposium on the History of Islamic Civilization in East Africa, Zanzibar, 2 - 4 September 2013. I thank Dr. Joe McIntyre for saving my Dutch English from the most serious mistakes. All errors left and aberrations in form and style are fully my own responsibility.

² Geider 2002:255-288

³ May God rest his soul, Amen.

⁴ Geider 2002:258

⁵ The formal title of this research project (subproject C07) is: "The Place of Swahili Manuscripts in East African Collections: the role of manuscripts in the organization of Swahili knowledge: their material design & relation to performance." Cf. footnote 6.

⁶ For CSMC cf. <http://www.manuscript-cultures.uni-hamburg.de/>

⁷ DFG: *Deutsche Forschungs Gemeinschaft*

Firstly I present an overview of the research project on Swahili manuscript collections in East Africa that started in September 2011. Secondly I look at the research history of Swahili manuscripts. Thirdly the history of Swahili handwriting and thereafter Swahili writing in Arabic script (called "*Ajami*" by some specialists) are discussed. Descriptions of various collections form the main focus of this paper, with most attention directed to three, so far undescribed private collections in East Africa (Zanzibar, Mombasa and Tanga) that contain Swahili manuscripts in Arabic script. After some short summarizing remarks, the article ends with references to relevant literature and websites and shows eight images of some of the manuscripts that have been discussed.

"The Place of Swahili Manuscripts in East African Collections: the role of manuscripts in the organization of Swahili knowledge: their material design & relation to performance"

Description of the project

This sub-project is devoted to the study of Swahili manuscripts written in Swahili-Arabic script which belong in East African collections compiled by Swahili scholars, poets or their heirs, or by libraries, archives and mosques. The implementation of this sub-project involves the identification, description and analysis of a number of East African collections containing Swahili manuscripts. Information about the organization, usage and historical development of these collections will be gathered in interviews with their owners and custodians in order to offer further insights into their internal structure, their overall function in the transmission of knowledge and into specific function of Swahili manuscripts alongside the Arabic manuscripts included in these collections.

Objectives

This sub-project seeks to clarify the roles Swahili manuscripts play or have played in the organization and transmission of Swahili knowledge in the domains of history, religion, law, philosophy, sciences like medicine and astronomy, language and literature. Inventories of the contents of these collections will be made and their genesis and history reconstructed and interpreted following interviews with their owners. The manuscripts will be digitized and subjected to material analysis. The results of this reconstruction will provide a basis for comparison with collections in other sub-projects.

In a society such as the Swahili society, where literacy is restricted and orality emphasized, the manuscripts expected to be found will have to be considered in relation to the oral performance of the composition; thus a further objective of this sub-project is to study the relation between manuscripts and oral practices. The popular poem *Utendi wa Mwana Kupona* (±1858) will serve as a case study to explain the existence of a large number of copies of this classical poem, which, to this day, is recited at various Swahili ceremonies (cf. Image 1).

Swahili Manuscript Culture

With the arrival of Islam in the 8th century, literacy in Arabic and the Arabic script reached the East African coast. By the end of the 17th century writing Swahili in the Arabic script was well-established and had given rise to a deep-rooted literary tradition, producing a considerable number of manuscripts. Despite the sizeable corpus and critical text editions of various literary achievements such as Hamziyya, Al-Inkishafi, Fumo Liyongo, Muyaka and Mwana Kupona, there are, as yet, no established conventions of codicological research. In most cases the contexts of manuscript production and of manuscript usage remain unclear. Swahili manuscript studies are still in their initial stages: most of the scientific tools and data that are standard in other disciplines still have to be developed.

Manuscript collections in Africa

The discovery in Timbuktu, Mali, of a great treasure of manuscripts and the collections they are part of, raised the awareness, that Africa's cultural heritage is not limited to its oral traditions. On an academic level the development of the so-called "orality/literacy debate" opened the possibility for taking up research in the literacy of Africa's past.⁸ This insight led to a general acceptance of the fact that analysis of handwritings offers considerable information about the societies and cultures in which they were used. Relatively recently, in 1990, this awareness was recognized by UNESCO, giving Timbuktu's written heritage the status of World Heritage Site.⁹ In 2002, following president Thabo Mbeki's visit to his Malian colleague, the Republic of South Africa, with the support of the Ford Foundation, encouraged the University of Cape Town (UCT) to establish the Tombouctou [sic] Manuscripts Project which took up the challenge of analysis, conservation and preservation of these manuscripts.¹⁰

Background to the project – aims and methods

In 2009, when I still was a lecturer in Swahili at the University of Hamburg, I was asked by the leader of the DFG-Research Group 963 "Manuscript Cultures in Asia and Afrika" (2008-2011), and the head of the Department of African and Ethiopian Studies, to prepare a research proposal concerning Swahili manuscripts. In spite of the fact that for many years I was more involved in teaching Swahili as a foreign language, in the analysis of the expansion, use and standardization of Swahili terminology, and entering the wide field of Swahili poetry and its translation, I had been interested in the need for research on Swahili manuscripts since 1984, when Sheikh Ahmed Sheikh Nabhany sent me one of his handwritten poems in Arabic script to be translated for the yearly poetry festival "Poetry International Rotterdam", 1985. A few years later I read Ann Biersteker and Marc Plane's article "Swahili Manuscripts and the Study of Swahili Literature" that called urgently for further serious study in the field.¹¹ In the very same year Jan Knappert's article "Swahili literature in Arabic script" appeared, giving a short historical overview of the various conventions of writing Swahili as it developed over the centuries.¹² Again a few years later I was asked to help Professor Ernst Dammann, who was assisted by Professor Ahmed Sheikh Nabhany, with the typing and editing of his 25-years voluminous work of cataloguing all African manuscripts present in German libraries, half of them being Swahili. This made me aware of the existence of real treasures that still call for much more study in the history of Swahili language and culture. His catalogue, containing longer descriptions of form and content of the manuscripts, appeared in 1993 as Volume 24 *Afrikanische Handschriften* in the prestigious series *Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland*. Around the same time Professor Andrey Zhukov from the Leningrad / Saint Petersburg State University, who had a special interest in Swahili literary studies, was invited to the University of Hamburg. Together we looked at the manuscript of *Chuo cha Herkal / Tambuka*, at that time still present in the collection of the Hamburger Seminar für Afrikanische Sprachen. This manuscript is famous because of having been identified as one of the oldest existing Swahili manuscripts, which, according to Harries, was written in 1728.¹³ Later Professor Zhukov drew international attention to weaknesses in the dating of this manuscript, and of Swahili manuscripts in general so far.¹⁴ Finally my interest in the development of Swahili manuscriptology was raised during my lectureship at the

⁸ Cf. Pouwels 1992:263

⁹ UNESCO World Heritage Site 1990

¹⁰ <http://tombouctoumanuscripts.org/>

¹¹ Biersteker/Plane 1989: 449–472.

¹² Knappert 1989:74-84

¹³ Harries 1962:5 in Mulokozi/Sengo 2005 (1995):25

¹⁴ Zhukov 1992; 2001; 2004

School of Oriental and African Studies (1995 - 1999) leading to my becoming one of the initiators of the SOAS Swahili Manuscripts Database (available online).¹⁵ Sheikh Yahya Ali Omar, who worked three years for this Swahili Manuscripts Project that was sponsored by the Leverhulme Trust, contributed his encyclopedic knowledge of Swahili language and culture to the description of more than 250 manuscripts found in eight collections at SOAS.¹⁶

After the DFG-Research Group "Manuscript Cultures in Asia and Afrika" had asked me to prepare a Swahili Manuscript proposal to be submitted to the German Research Foundation, as a subproject of a major collaborative research project (SFB) on manuscripts from many manuscript cultures, I spent one-and-a-half years working on it (alongside my 16 hours per week teaching job), supported by my head of Department, and Emeritus Professor Ludwig Gerhard.

The focus of the collaborative research was to be the materiality of the manuscripts to be studied. This condition did not make the job easy, as within Swahili Studies no research tradition in this field had been developed. Even the most basic principles of codicology have not been applied to the ca. 80 published text editions based on manuscripts.

On the other hand my personal interest in Swahili poetry, which is primarily oral and directed to the performance of the compositions at ceremonies and social functions, needed to be refocused on the written verbal arts. The reason for the twofold nature of the present research is that, on the one hand it focuses on identifying and analyzing material culture, while on the other, it relates to oral performance. The source of this dual focus is my strong opinion that, although the Swahili are "people of the book", very often the spoken word or the memorized text have pride of place when compared to written texts or texts which are read.

The old Swahili word for 'book' is *chuo* (Plural *vyuo*). It also means '(Quran)school' or 'class'. The book itself is equal to the place where it is supposed to be used and where its content is transmitted orally to the students, who, as in the case of the Quran itself, are supposed to memorize, and thereafter recite it. What came first: the spoken or the written word? Was the famous nineteenth century poem *Utendi wa Mwana Kupona*, still memorized by some Swahili women in the Mombasa and Lamu areas of the Swahili world, sung, recited from a prior written text (cf. Image 1)?

The key values of Swahili society are based on the Holy, written Book; nevertheless, knowledge was mainly transferred orally, since only a minority of Swahili people were able to read and write: the *mwanachuoni* (Plural: *wanavyuoni*; also *wanazuoni*) 'people of the school, the place of the book'. The literacy of the 'learned class' was primarily a literacy in Arabic, a 'foreign' language.¹⁷ It took a long time, probably about eight centuries, before the medium of that language, its script, was transferred to Swahili, the mother tongue. However, until today, for a large part of the society, the oral expressions of the verbal arts such as memory, eloquence and poetic skills are essential in self-identification, philosophizing and cultural memory.¹⁸

Swahili Studies have not yet developed the full instrumentarium for dealing with its old literacy on the one hand and its strength in orality on the other. The current project hopes to contribute to the development of codicological and manuscriptological methods of analyzing Swahili manuscripts and show them to be on a par with the arts of literary criticism, linguistics, history and other social sciences that are needed in answering the question of the role Swahili manuscripts in Arabic script played and play in the transfer of knowledge.

¹⁵ <http://www.swahilimanuscripts.soas.ac.uk/>

¹⁶ Yahya/Drury 2002. Cf. for the older SOAS Archive Catalogue:
<http://archives.soas.ac.uk/CalmView/Overview.aspx?s=swahili+&Submit=Search>

¹⁷ Martin 1971:525

¹⁸ Kresse 2007

The history of Swahili handwriting¹⁹

Except for Arabic and Amharic, Swahili was probably the first East African language to be written.

The oldest Arabic manuscript that has been identified is the *Kitab as-Sulwa fi Akhbar Kilwa*²⁰ known as the Kilwa Chronicle, written in Arabic in the middle of the 16th century. Old locally produced Qurans may still exist, the oldest one having been identified and described by Simon Digby.²¹

The oldest Swahili writings that have been preserved, known as "the letters from Goa" are dated some 150 years later.²² However, in personal communication with Pera Ridhwani, the authors Mulokozi and Sengo identified "*Swifa ya Mwana Manga / Kumsifu Yanga*", one of the Liyongo Songs, as the oldest existing manuscripts, at that time in the Allen Collection at the University of Dar es Salaam.²³

A number of scholars have come up with various reasons to explain the disappearance of older manuscripts in a culture that has been literate in Arabic from a much earlier date. Though no specific evidence of deliberately destroying written culture is given, 300 years of Portuguese occupation from the end of the 15th century onwards has been blamed for the destruction and disappearance of Swahili manuscripts.²⁴ Other scholars are of the opinion that "we have but sparse evidence of literacy even in Arabic before the eighteenth-century".²⁵ In former German East Africa during the late 19th century books and manuscripts were confiscated by the occupiers²⁶ and 100 years later, starting on 12th January 1964, political turmoil and violence, including the burning of books and documents written in Arabic script, also played a role on the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba.

A survey in 1991 by the Al-Furqan Foundation attributes the decay and loss of Islamic manuscripts to the private ownership by Swahili families and institutions, that are "unaware of the importance of manuscripts".²⁷ Without doubt the heat and high humidity in East Africa as well as the presence of many types of insects, together with the absence of a book conservation tradition that would protect the manuscripts, also play a major role in their relatively short life.

Among others Andrei Zhukov has observed that Swahili studies did not give much attention to the dating of earlier Swahili manuscripts and failed to develop methods for doing so.²⁸

Research history of Swahili Manuscripts

About 80 text editions based on Swahili manuscripts in Arabic script were published by around 30 academics and experts in the Swahili language.²⁹ In citing the names of these authors, the vast majority of them being Western trained scholars, one should not omit the names of those Swahili scholars from the East African coast without whose help these works could never have been written. The best known among them were the late Mwalimu Sikujua Abdallah al-Batawi, Muhamadi bin Abubakr bin Omar Kijuma, Sir Mbarak Hinawy,

¹⁹ Cf. Samsom 2011

²⁰ British Museum Or. 2666: 1-3

²¹ Digby 1975:49-55

²² Allen 1970:viii; Alpers 1975:98, note 11; Omar & Frankl 1994:263.

²³ Mulokozi/Sengo. 1995:25

²⁴ Knappert 1979; Zhukov 1992:60;

²⁵ Pouwels: 1992:269

²⁶ Becker 1932:83

²⁷ Roper 1993:153

²⁸ Zhukov 1992; 1994; 2004

²⁹ [Steere 1876, Taylor 1891; Stigand 1915, Büttner 1892, Neuhaus 1896, Velten 1901, Werner 1917, Meinhof 1925, Hichens 1939, Sacleux 1939, Dammann 1940, Allen 1945, Hinawy 1950, Harries 1950, Lambert 1952, Whiteley 1957, Knappert 1958, 1979, Harries 1962, Alpers 1967, Allen 1971, Abdulaziz 1979, Mulokozi & Sengo 1995, Liyongo Working Group 2004, Mutiso 2005, Saavedra 2007, Mieke & Vierke 2010, Vierke 2011]

Sh.Mohammed Burhan Mkelle, Mzee Hamisi Akida, Mzee Pera Ridhwani, Sheikh Yahya Ali Omar, and last but not least, Sheikh Ahmed Sheikh Nabhany and Bi Sauda Ali Issa Barwany who, till today, have been making substantial contributions to works published in this field of Swahili Studies.³⁰

These publications of Swahili manuscripts are mainly in the form of critical text editions which emphasize the content and analyze the text historically, linguistically or as literature. Few scholars have tried to ask questions about the manuscripts as such: who wrote it; when; what was its purpose; how and why it was written. W. Hichens, J. W. T. Allen and M. H. Abdulaziz are among the few who have attempted to describe the material characteristics of the manuscripts they have been dealing with.³¹ Apart from the short articles by Simon Digby and James de Vere Allen we hardly have any information at our disposal about the production of Swahili manuscripts before the printing era started in the 19th century.³²

In 1989 Biersteker and Plane conclude their article about Swahili manuscripts and the study of Swahili literature with the observation that "there is, then, a need for serious study of manuscript production and collection and the role of these activities in Swahili society".³³

Since then no further research has come to light apart from Professor Zhukov's pointing out the importance for Swahili language and culture of a scientifically correct dating of manuscripts; also significant in this respect is Clarissa Vierke's recent contribution on writing Swahili poetry in Arabic script which gives a historical overview of Swahili in Arabic script.³⁴ The expertise and skills necessary for dealing with old Swahili handwritings in Arabic script have virtually disappeared on the East African coast, leaving Professor Abdulaziz's work on the manuscripts with the poetry of Muyaka as one of the last landmarks of direct analysis of Swahili manuscripts - his book was published more than 30 years ago.³⁵

Arabo-Swahili: Swahili writing in Arabic script ("*Ajami*")

On the whole of the African continent 80 languages have been or are written making use of letters that have their origin in the Arabic alphabet, in some cases adapted to the sounds of the language in question or with additional signs for extra vowels.³⁶ Indeed, among the first written accounts of Afrikaans, a Germanic language spoken in the Republic of South Africa that has no genetic relationship with any African language, is a handwritten Arabic-Afrikaans bilingual Quran written in the 1880s.³⁷ Recently few research has been done on Swahili and Swahili related languages in Arabic script in Mozambique³⁸, the Congo³⁹ and Somalia⁴⁰. Some specialists in this field who are dealing with non-Arabic languages in Arabic script adopted the term *Ájami* for these writings. Sometimes the term refers to African languages written in Arabic script, but others apply the term to any non-Arabic language using the Arabic alphabet. This term has been borrowed from the Hausa language where it refers directly to Hausa in Arabic script. In Arabic the word عَجَم 'ajam' means 'Persian' as well as 'non-Arabic'.

³⁰ Mische 2010; Vierke 2011;

³¹ Hichens 1939; Allen 1971; Abdulaziz 1979

³² Digby 1975; Allen, de Vere 1981

³³ Biersteker/Plane 1989:465

³⁴ Zhukov 1992, 2001, 2004; Vierke 2013 *forthcoming*. I am grateful to Clarissa Vierke for sharing her article with me before publication

³⁵ Abdulaziz 1979

³⁶ Verde 2011:34-38; Mumin 2013 (forthcoming): Map, presented at TASIA 2, Bruxelles, 26-27 April 2013..

³⁷ Haron 2001

³⁸ Rzewuski 1991; Bonate 2008, 2010

³⁹ Luffin 2007

⁴⁰ Mumin 2013 [forthcoming]

Sheikh Yahya Ali Omar in consultation with P. J. L. Frankl summed up very clearly the various reasons for abandoning the Arabic script in favour of the Roman script that were given by prominent early missionaries like Johann Ludwig Krapf (1810 - 1881), who had printed the first Swahili in Roman script, and Edward Steere (1828 - 1882), who, in spite of his publication "A Practical Guide to the Use of the Arabic Alphabet in Writing Swahili according to the Usage of the East Coast of Africa" (Zanzibar 1891), was a strong campaigner for a change to the latter.⁴¹ Though both missionaries also offered unacceptable linguistic reasons for favouring the Roman script for Swahili, it is clear, that their main arguments against the centuries-old use of the Arabic script were based on religious and colonial ideology. In his "Outline of the Elements of the Kiswahili Language", in 1850 the first Swahili grammar to be written in a European language, the missionary Ludwig Krapf explains his arguments against using Arabic script for writing Swahili. Having unwittingly admitted his ignorance in the preface ("As the Kiswahili Language has never been reduced to writing (for aught I know), ..."), he listed five arguments for adopting Roman characters in writing Swahili: the Arabic script is "too inconvenient in itself, and too unwieldy for the writing of African languages", it favours "Mohamedan proselytism among the inland tribes which may hereafter be christianised and civilised", it is an encumbrance on the Europeans, who already have introduced in South Africa the Roman alphabet for "Nilotic languages", and the Roman alphabet facilitates "the Natives" studying European languages.⁴²

More than fifty years later the German colonial authorities find it opportune and necessary to publish an official government decree stating that, after succeeding in the employment of "*farbige Schreiber*" ('coloured office clerks'), **all** (bold face emphasis in original, italics are mine - rhs) civil servants, employees of the government and members of the "*Schutztruppe*" (German colonial military force) are to use Latin letters in all government writing and correspondence.⁴³ This circular shows clearly how racism and bias was part and parcel of the policies of the German colonial government. Language policies of the British colonial government followed another strategy. With the creation of the Inter-territorial Language (Swahili) Committee that formed the instrument for implementing ideas and practices for a so-called "Standard Swahili" (known as "Kiswahili Sanifu" following independence in Tanzania) for unified use in education and the media in the so-called East African Territories, the colonial state took an active role in promoting a specific variety of the language. This "Standard Swahili" was based on bishop Edward Steere's *A Handbook of the Swahili Language as spoken at Zanzibar* (London, 1870), later to be revised and enlarged by A. C. Madan (London, 1885), and his *Swahili Exercises* (Zanzibar, 1878). Although Steere himself used Arabic script to write Swahili both in his first publications as well as above the two entrance doors of the Anglican church St John⁴⁴, built around 1880 in Mbweni, Zanzibar, he was of the opinion that using the Arabic alphabet is unsuitable for writing Swahili: "Anyone who tries to read a letter or poem written in Arabic characters, will at once see why it is impossible to adapt them as the standard Swahili alphabet."⁴⁵ However he pleaded for a gradual transition to the use of the Roman script.⁴⁶ In contrast to the former German colonial

⁴¹ Yahya 1997:56

⁴² Krapf 1850:16

⁴³ "Nachdem die Einstellung farbiger Schreiber erfolgt ist, bringe ich den Runderlass J.-No I 397 vom 25. Januar 1900 in Erinnerung. Hiernach haben sich fortan alle Beamten und Angestellten der Kolonie, sowie die Angehörigen der Schutztruppe der lateinischen Buchstaben beim Schreiben amtlicher Schriftstücke zu bedienen." *Amtlicher Anzeiger für Deutsch-Ostafrika* 1902

⁴⁴ Door 1: (a) hapana hapa ila nyumba ya mungu (b) na huu mulango wa mbingu

Door 2: (c) ingieni mulangoni kwake kushukuru (d) mushukuruni libarikini jina lake

⁴⁵ Steere 1906:5

⁴⁶ "... It seems highly undesirable in any way to perpetuate the Arabic character as the means of writing Swahili, the Roman alphabet being so much clearer and better, but meanwhile it is desirable to know what the custom of writing has been, so as to be able to read letters and whatever else one may meet with in the old character."

power, the British continued to use Swahili in Arabic script on a very limited scale, and especially on Zanzibar. Even on the eve of Zanzibar independence the Government weekly *Maarifa*, had a small supplement called *Kijumbe cha Maarifa* ('The News Messenger') with a summary of the main news in Swahili in Arabic script.⁴⁷

Even today literacy in Arabo-Swahili (Swahili in Arabic script) has survived in some religious *madrassa* like in Tanga, Makunduchi, Mamburi and Lamu, where students are given copies of texts in Swahili in Arabic script. Some individual students take their notes using the Arabic alphabet during lectures given in Swahili. At an international level the organization ISESCO (*Islamic Scientific, Educational and Cultural Organisation*) has been active in organizing meetings and seminars that have tried to contribute to the standardization of various Arabic scripts for Swahili.⁴⁸ Apart from the colonial interference in the use of the Arabic script for Swahili, the problem till now is and has been, the lack of uniformity in applying the Arabic alphabet to the sounds of the Swahili language. Likewise an agreed standard for the various dialects of Swahili has not been developed, except the one for *Kimvita*, the dialect of Mombasa.⁴⁹ Warren-Rothline observed a general lack of uniformity in the use of Arabic script for various languages: "Historically there has never been a standardized Ajami orthography. Different innovations were made and used in different places, and scholars were free to use or ignore the innovations of other scholars as they saw fit."⁵⁰ Consulted by two well-established linguists⁵¹, Yahya Ali Omar and P. J. L. Frankl have shown convincingly how the characters and diacritics of the Arabic alphabet might be adapted to create a fully satisfactory orthography for *Kimvita*, the regional Swahili variety of Mombasa. Commenting on the work of Yahya, Jan Knappert, mentioning how the alveolar and aspirated consonants are carefully represented, stated that "his method of orthography is in fact superior to the Roman alphabet without phonetic diacritics".⁵² Any problems with reading old Swahili writings in Arabic script are non-linguistic, the first being a lack of uniformity amongst the various authors and scribes. Each one of them decided to write Swahili in his own way. Some writers did not adapt the Arabic alphabet in any way to fit those Swahili sounds that Arabic does not have: the consonants /p/, /g/, /t/, /ch/, /v/, /ny/, /ng/, the contrastive prenasalized (/mb/, /nd/, /nj/, /ng/), the aspirated consonants (/p^h/, /t^h/, /k^h/, /ch^h/) as well as the extra vowels /e/ and /o/.

The second reason for having problems with reading Swahili in Arabic script, especially in case of old manuscripts, is the lack of knowledge and familiarity with all the deep levels of the language itself - its dialects that differ a lot from each other; its vast and partly disappeared vocabulary; its specialized language for healing as well as for religion, science and poetry; its literary forms; its many registers. It goes without saying, that people, including foreigners, who lack these deep roots in the Swahili language and culture, will have big problems reading and especially interpreting old written Swahili in Arabic script. The generation of informants who enjoyed a deep knowledge of a language and culture that, over the last 80 years, has undergone significant basic and structural changes, has passed on. Till today many people, including scholars and academics, are of the colonial opinion that the Arabic characters are unable to represent in a systematic way the sounds of the Swahili language, despite the fact that, more than 50 years ago, J. W. T. Allen wrote that "It is also

Steere 1891 ("Introduction"): [no page number].

⁴⁷ كَجُمْبِي جَا مَعْرِفَة

⁴⁸ ISESCO 2008

⁴⁹ Yahya 1997

⁵⁰ Warren-Rothline 2009:59

⁵¹ Dr K. M. Hayward & Prof. R. K. Hayward of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

⁵² Knappert 1989:74

generally held that Arabic script is a poor vehicle for writing the Swahili language. Without some adaptation it certainly is; but we must remember that the Roman alphabet needed some adaptation to make it suitable for Swahili, and that it requires considerably more to make it completely satisfactory. Certain modifications of the Arabic alphabet have been invented and are in fairly common use, and the alphabet can be as clear as the Roman."⁵³ In his outstanding work on Swahili epic poetry, 25 years later, he added that, in his opinion, the people who had been dealing with, and were responsible for, the adaptations of both the Arabic and the Roman alphabet, should be regarded as "*amateurs*" in the field.⁵⁴

Collections

For the purpose of our research a "*collection*" has been defined as a set of items containing a subset of at least one Swahili manuscript in Arabic script. Such a collection may contain all kinds of handwritings in other languages (e. g. Arabic, Hindi, English), including printed materials, books, pictures, amulets and sometimes even artifacts. This broad definition of a collection has been taken because of the established fact that in many, if not most instances, Swahili manuscripts are found together with Arabic manuscripts. In a number of cases these Arabic manuscripts have been annotated, in the margins or interlinear, with Swahili glosses or comments. Some of these bilingual (Arabic-Swahili) manuscripts have even been designed from their very beginning to be written and or annotated in both languages, leaving space for the Swahili text that, in some cases, has been written by the same scribe, but in other cases may have been added later by somebody else (Cf. Image 5).

I. Catalogued collections

Apart from non-catalogued Swahili manuscripts that have been preserved in libraries of various universities and institutions all over the world (e. g. Goa, Maputo, Oman, St Petersburg, USA, Lisbon, Vatican Rome and South Africa), other collections are known because their contents have been catalogued and sometimes made accessible for research. Following are the main catalogued collections that contain Swahili manuscripts in Arabic script:

1. UNIVERSITY OF DAR ES SALAAM - EAST AFRICANA - ALLEN 1970

The biggest catalogued collection of Swahili manuscripts houses in the East Africana section of the Library of the University of Dar es Salaam. It is generally known by the name of "The Allen Collection" after its compiler J. W. T Allen (1904 - 1979), who, for decades, worked closely together with Sir Mbarak Hinawy (1896 – 1959), the former Liwali (Governor) of the Coast of Kenya. Mbarak Hinawy contributed substantially to the collection giving many of his own Swahili manuscripts on loan. Allen's 1970 catalogue⁵⁵ lists 814 Swahili and 250 Arabic manuscripts, as well as 325 sound recordings on tape. Taking interest in (old) Swahili manuscripts since 1930, collecting individual items, it took him till 1953 to realize that a major effort was needed to prevent the dissolution and disappearance of a cultural heritage that is crucial to understanding Swahili literature and culture.⁵⁶ Finally "the first systematic attempt to collect and preserve the written records was begun", after the History Subcommittee of the Swahili committee had been formed under the chairmanship of Mbarak Ali al-Hinawy, with Hyder Mohammed al-Kindy as secretary.⁵⁷ Two years before the publication

⁵³ Allen 1945:5

⁵⁴ Allen 1971:10

⁵⁵ Allen 1970

⁵⁶ Allen 1959:224

⁵⁷ Allen 1959:227; Allen 1970:xi

of the catalogue in 1970, Allen explained his aims and methods of collecting these manuscripts in an article for the *Swahili Journal*.⁵⁸ He listed the people involved in helping him with his work, stressing the importance of women as custodians of Swahili manuscripts. He stressed that the participation of his wife was crucial in making contacts to these women custodians since a big part of Swahili cultural heritage is in their hands. The family of Mbarak Hinawy was also very helpful and was instrumental in getting access to many Swahili manuscripts. Although his catalogue gives brief explanations of the form and content of every manuscript, hardly any information is given on the material constitution of the manuscripts, their origin, the way they have been fabricated and produced, their bindings, scripts or illuminations. Some years later the collection was extended by Hamisi Akida of which a short stencilled catalogue exists.

Some publications from 1989 onwards mention the dissolution of a major part of this most precious collection⁵⁹, and I myself visited the Africana several times to come to the conclusion that around 90% of the original Swahili manuscripts, including the microfilms that had been made of almost all manuscripts, and the audio tapes, have disappeared.⁶⁰ Also the 57 Swahili manuscripts that had been added to the collection by Hamisi Akida could not be located. Recently a grant by UNESCO made it possible to upgrade the premises at the EAST AFRICANA where the manuscripts are kept and plans are under way for a new inventarization.⁶¹ In the meantime (part of) the manuscripts left have been digitized.⁶² The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) is in the possession of copies of the microfilms of these manuscripts as well as 19 volumes with their print-outs. Under a special agreement between SOAS and Adam Mathew Publications in London copies of the microfilms can be procured against payment.⁶³ In 2013 a grant obtained from the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, University of Hamburg, made it possible to digitize these microfilms of which copies are now held at SOAS (London) and CSMC (Hamburg).

2. SOAS SWAHILI MANUSCRIPTS DATABASE

All collections held by the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) of the University of London have been listed and described in the SOAS Swahili Manuscripts Database.⁶⁴ Old typescripts have also been classified under the term "manuscripts". The descriptions have been made by the late Sheikh Yahya Ali Omar, who was assisted by Annmarie Drury, Rhiannon Stephens and Angelica Baschiera during the 31 months that the project was funded by the Leverhulme Trust.⁶⁵ The original aim of the project, to make digital images of all manuscripts available on the website, has not been fulfilled as the project came to a standstill after the research grant came to an end.

The collections have been given the names of the people who brought them together: Taylor, Hichens, Werner, Knappert, Whiteley, Allen, Yahya, and "others". Apart from this database SOAS has another catalogue that describes (part of) these collections.⁶⁶ Recently some images of Swahili manuscripts from certain collections have been made available on the

⁵⁸ Allen 1968

⁵⁹ Biersteker 1989:461, note 32; Roper 1993:153 ; Lodhi 2011:28.

⁶⁰ Personal visits in September 2010, December 2011 and October 2012.

⁶¹ Personal communication with Dr. P. D. Mwaimu and Mr. R. Mwenyimbegu, Head East Africana Section, September 2012.

⁶² Personal communication with dr. P. D. Mwaimu and Ms. Levina Mfupe, UDSM - East Africana, 05.06.2013.

⁶³ Under a special agreement between SOAS and Adam Mathew Publications in London copies of the microfilms can be procured against payment.

Cf. http://www.ampltd.co.uk/collections_az/swahili-mss-1/highlights.aspx

⁶⁴ SOAS Swahili Database. <http://www.swahilimanuscripts.soas.ac.uk/>

⁶⁵ Yahya Ali Omar, Annmarie Drury. 2002

⁶⁶ <http://archives.soas.ac.uk/CalmView/Overview.aspx?s=swahili+&Submit=Search>

website “*Digital Archives and Special Collections*”, e. g. 42 pictures from the Yahya Ali Omar Collection.⁶⁷

3. EACROTANAL - ZANZIBAR NATIONAL ARCHIVES 1981-1989

Many Arabic manuscripts were in the collection of the East African Centre for Research on Oral Traditions and African Languages (EACROTANAL) in Zanzibar. They had been collected, catalogued and described by Mohammed Burhan Mkelle between 1981-1989.⁶⁸ EACROTANAL no longer exists and almost the whole collection was removed to the Zanzibar National Archives, though some papers seem to have stayed behind or gone elsewhere.

Together with these Arabic manuscripts one Swahili manuscript only had been identified and catalogued: an interesting multi-text manuscript written by one, according to the catalogue, unidentified scribe, that contains "a presentation of Swahili poetry in Swahili language but in Arabic script" (cf. Image 2).⁶⁹ In the catalogue the manuscript has been described by Mohammed B. Mkelle as "very old and crumbling" and was located by the present author in the Zanzibar National Archives.⁷⁰ The illumination on the first of the 77 pages (which have an unusual layout), together with the style of the small inverted hearts or flowers as caesurae (*zitu* or *zikomo*) for marking the measures of lines (*zipande/vipande*) of a stanza (*ubeiti / ubeti*), as well as the script itself, indicate that the manuscript may have been written by Muhamadi Kijuma bin Abu-Bakari bin Omari al-Bakariy from Lamu (±1855 - 1945).⁷¹ He may well have written the manuscript during his stay in Zanzibar from ±1901-1908, at the invitation of Sultan Sayyid Hamoud (1896 - 1902) and, after his death, his son Ali (1902 - 1911).⁷²

4. BAGAMOYO / CHEVILLY (PARIS)

The Swahili manuscripts that had been collected in and around Bagamoyo by the Holy Ghost Fathers have been moved from Bagamoyo to the congregation's headquarters in Chevilly, Paris.⁷³ According to the Fr. Florentine Mallya and Fr. Johannes Hinschl, all these old documents and manuscripts, among them the famous manuscript *Utenzi wa Ras 'IGHuli*, with 4584 stanzas, one of the longest known classical poems in Swahili, are now in Chevilly.⁷⁴

5. MOMBASA - FORT JESUS MUSEUM

In the library of the Fort Jesus Museum in Mombasa a collection of about 20 Arabic manuscripts exists. The collection contains one old Quran, four *qasida*, prayers and other manuscripts that deal with jurisprudence, inheritance, grammar, *hadith* and *dhikr*.⁷⁵ Under a project of the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) supported by the British Library Endangered Archives Programme (EAP) the manuscripts have been restored and preserved for further conservation.⁷⁶

⁶⁷ SOAS Archive Catalogue. <http://digital.info.soas.ac.uk/>

⁶⁸ Mkelle, M. B. 1981-1989

⁶⁹ Mkelle 1981:36. "As the forms of Swahili transcribed here is different from the present standards, it would require full-time attention if the correct meaning is to be obtained. Occasionally names of persons appear, probably the names of the poets concerned."

⁷⁰ Zanzibar National Archives. ZB EAC 078. I am grateful to Dr. Hamadi H. Omar and Mr. Omar S. Khamis of the Zanzibar National Archives for their support and allowing me to photograph the manuscript (29.11.2011).

⁷¹ This view was confirmed by Ahmed and Aydaros M. Badawy (personal communication, Lamu / Hamburg Oct. 2012) and Dr. Clarissa Vierke (personal communication, Brussels 25.04.2013).

⁷² Abou Egl 1983:36.

⁷³ Holy Ghost Fathers, Paris: Chevilly. <http://www.spiritains.org/>

⁷⁴ Personal communication, Bagamoyo 12.07.2012.

⁷⁵ Roper 1993:159

⁷⁶ <http://eap.bl.uk/pages/about.html>

6. LAMU - LAMU MUSEUM (NMK)

Fort Lamu's museum of the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) collected 25 Arabic manuscripts among them 15 old Qurans. Others comprise various religious sciences like jurisprudence, grammar and prayers.⁷⁷

7. LAMU - RIYADHA MUSLIM COLLEGE

Of the 134 manuscripts in the Riyadhha Mosque at Lamu, 106 were fully digitized following EAP standards. The remaining 28 were in too poor a condition to be opened and photographed by tripod and were digitized using a smaller handheld camera. In total, 19,735 images were taken. Digital copies of the manuscripts have been deposited with the Riyadhha Mosque in Lamu, Kenya; the library of the Lamu branch of the Kenya National Museum; the Kenya National Museum, Nairobi; and the British Library. An inventory list, together with 134 short descriptions of each manuscript has been published on the website of the British Library Endangered Archives where digital images of the manuscripts can be seen.⁷⁸

8. NAIROBI - KENYA NATIONAL ARCHIVES

The Kenya National Archives in Nairobi preserved seven Swahili manuscripts, of which five have been written by Muhammad Abu Bakr al-Bakri Kijumwa (*sic*) of Lamu. They are part of the John Williamson Collection which has yet not be visited.⁷⁹

II. Catalogues mentioning collections and individual Swahili manuscripts

1. In Dammann 1993 almost all Swahili manuscripts which are present in German libraries and collections have been described and catalogued.⁸⁰

During the 25 years that Prof. Dammann had been working on this catalogue he was helped by Prof. Ahmed Sheikh Nabhany from Mombasa. The contents of a total of 468 complete manuscripts, or fragments, in Swahili in Arabic script, that are contained in 5 collections, are described, partly also codicologically and in terms of the history of the manuscripts themselves.

2. In 1991/2 under the Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation a survey of "Islamic Manuscripts" in Kenya was carried by Ahmad Shaykh Nabhany (*sic*), Yahya Ali Omar and David Colton Sperling.⁸¹ 302 Arabic, 2 Arabic with Swahili translations and 20 Swahili manuscripts were identified at 36 locations, private and institutional collections. The published list is a mere inventory of the manuscripts, only describing their form or content very briefly and superficially. Twenty years later, in 2012, during his CSMC fieldwork trip, Ahmed Muhsin Badawy tried to make a follow up of this inventory published in 1993 by Al-Furqan. In many cases neither the possessors nor the custodians, or even the manuscripts mentioned in the catalogue could be traced. During his fieldwork in 2013 Mr Badawy hopes to finish his inventory of the manuscripts mentioned in the Al-Furqan catalogue.

3. Since 1996 Prof. R. S. O'Fahey from the University of Bergen, Norway, has been compiling and cataloguing Arabic writings in East Africa. After the appearance of volumes dealing with Eastern, Central and Western Sudanic and Northeastern Africa, the results of his work are to be published as Volume 3b in the series "Arabic Literature of Africa - The

⁷⁷ Roper 1993:156.

⁷⁸ <http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP466;r=41>

⁷⁹ Roper 1993:161 - I have not be able to check the presence of these manuscripts.

⁸⁰ Dammann 1993

⁸¹ Roper 1993:152-162.

Writings of the Muslim Peoples of East Africa".⁸² Swahili writings, including manuscripts, will form part of this compilation.

III. Private collections: three examples

Explaining the importance for our knowledge of Swahili book production as exemplified in Simon Digby's analysis of a Quran manuscript of the early or middle 18th century that was copied by the scribe Khatib bin Abdulrahman bin Khatib of Siyu, James de Vere Allen was, in 1981, of the opinion that "...there are still hundreds, and possibly thousands, of similar books in East Africa today."⁸³ In 1965 J. W. T. Allen, staying for a period of five months together with his wife on Lamu, was still able to refuse a substantial amount of material that was offered to him.⁸⁴ For the Journal of the Institute of Swahili Research of the University College of Dar es Salaam he made a description of experiences, successes and failures, strategies and methods, that he and his wife had faced while trying to collect Swahili manuscripts over a period of almost four years, made possible by a grant by the Rockefeller Foundation that was extended twice.⁸⁵

Comparing his experiences of almost 50 years ago with our own first experiences in 2012, it is interesting to note that, apart from the amount of available material, the nature of the problems has not changed. In the meantime it seems that many items of interest have been removed, perished, sold, hidden, decayed or consciously destroyed as a result of political turmoil. Allen's hope that, because of the presence of a lot of Arabic material in the libraries of the teaching mosques, "a suitable Arabist will one day continue this work on the Arabic side", has been partly fulfilled by Anne Bang's work in the "Maalim Idris Collection"⁸⁶ and by the British Library Endangered Archives Project "The manuscripts of the Riyadh Mosque of Lamu, Kenya."⁸⁷ In spite of the fact that less and less Swahili manuscripts are to be found for the reasons mentioned above, short fieldwork trips of Ahmed Muhsin Badawy in 2012 to Siyu, Pate, Faza and other locations in the Lamu Archipelago, proved that individual copies still exist, sometimes as part of small, unrecorded collections.

Following are examples of three collections that people helped me to identify during a short fieldwork trip to Mombasa in 2011, and, in the autumn of 2012, to Zanzibar and Tanga:

- A. The Collection of Sh. Burhan Muhammad Mkelle (1884-1949)
- B. The Collection of Sh. Ahmad Badawy al-Husseiny (1929-2012) and Bi Tuma Shee
- C. The Collection of Sh. Ali Hemed al-Buhry (1889-1957)

A. The Collection of Sheikh Burhan b. Muhammad Mkelle Mngazija Mwikoni / al-Qamri (1884-1949)

The reasons for this collection having fallen apart are so far unclear, but must be partly related to what happened in Zanzibar during the so-called revolution of 1964 and its violent aftermath: the possession of any Arabic writings (including Swahili in Arabic script) could get a person in big trouble with the authorities. However, parts of Burhan Mkelle's collection have surfaced at various locations.

Sheikh Burhan Muhammad Mkelle was among the first school teachers employed by the Government of Zanzibar. Born in Zanzibar from parents of Comorian descent, his skills in the Arabic language made him well known all over East Africa. He composed Arabic poetry and

⁸² O'Fahey (forthcoming)

⁸³ Allen, JdV 1981:19

⁸⁴ Allen 1968:114 "... I was rejecting as duplicates four out of five of the manuscripts offered to me."

⁸⁵ Allen 1968:109-117

⁸⁶ The Maalim Idris Collection: <http://gk1.how.no/Docu/>

⁸⁷ http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP466;r=41

wrote books about various subjects like *nahw*, but his best known work is his book "*tamrin al-atfal*", a textbook for learning Arabic used in Zanzibar's government schools.⁸⁸ He had been a student of the famous sheikh Ahmad bin Sumayt and a highly respected member of the Shadhuliyyah *tariqa*. In the late 1930s he acted as the vice-president of the Comorian Association.⁸⁹ Sheikh Abdallah Saleh Farsy, whose teacher he had been until they became colleagues, wrote about him: "[...] and people say also that there never came to Zanzibar a better poet and scholar of the Arabic language than him", and "Sh. Burhan published many books; the best one is his "*Alfiyya*" of *Nahw* which he finished in November 1917 and was printed in 1939. All his fellow scholars praised him for this book, and we keep on praising him till today; and also for *Nafhatul Warda Fy Manhajil Burda* which was printed in 1382 (1963), *Murshidil Fityan* and *Attamryn*".⁹⁰ (*my translations from Swahili*).⁹¹ Among the literature written about Sheikh Burhan Mkelle there are two articles by Aziza Aboubakar, Swahili lecturer of INALCO, Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, Paris, about his background and about one of his manuscripts.⁹²

At least a part of the Mkelle Collection was preserved by Maalim Mohammed Idris Saleh (1934 - 2012). Maalim Idris, as he was known in Zanzibar, had turned his house into a museum where he preserved many documents, pictures, paintings, manuscripts, and all kind of artifacts relating to Zanzibar's cosmopolitan history, including its rich religious history. He had started collecting explicitly with the aim of preserving for future generations this history, which the new government after 1964 had consciously tried to hide and deny.⁹³ He saw himself as a keeper of Islamic history as well. Since the beginning of the 1990s, when the tight grip of the 'Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar'⁹⁴ on the population started to loosen slowly, his 'museum' turned into an informal information centre about Zanzibar's history and culture, and was valued and used both by the Zanzibar population and local and foreign scholars. Because of his own Comorian background, Maalim Idris had also found a special interest in the preservation of the religious history of the influential *tariqa*'s, Sufi brotherhoods of several kinds, and their sheikhs. After his death in 2012 a short obituary, written by Anne Bang, was put on the website of the Tombouctou Manuscripts Project of the University of Cape Town.⁹⁵ Part of his collection of old Arabic manuscripts has been digitized and brought together by the Chr. Michelsen Institute in Bergen, Norway, under the name "The Maalim Idris Collection" which should be fully accessible soon.⁹⁶ It was probably Sheikh Burhan Mkelle's son, Mohammed Burhan Mkelle (1920 - 1999), who gave part of his father's collection to Maalim Idris. Mohammed Burhan Mkelle had been working for the Institute of Kiswahili Research at the University of Dar es Salaam and later (1981 - 1987) for the Zanzibar based institute EACROTANAL, for which he collected Arabic manuscripts that were described in four catalogues mentioned before. It was while working in the Zanzibar National Archives, that took responsibility for the EACROTANAL collections,

⁸⁸ Mkelle 1918

⁸⁹ http://www.swahiliweb.net/burhan_mkelle.html

⁹⁰ *Al-Tamrin. Book of Primary Lessons on Grammar, Part I. Containing Parts of Speech.* Zanzibar Government Print. 1918.

⁹¹ Farsy 1972:63 "[...] na wanasema vile vile hakupata kuja Unguja kukaa mshairi mzuri na mwanachuoni mkubwa wa lugha ya Kiarabu kuliko yeye"; "Vitabu vingi alipiga chapa Sh. Burhan; na kilicho bora zaidi kuliko vyote ni hii "*Alfiyya*" yake na *Nahw* [...]. Kapewa kichwa na wenzake wote kwa kitabu hiki. Na mpaka leo tunampa kichwa; na vile vile *Nafhatul Warda Fy Manhajil Burda* kilichochapishwa 1382 (1963) na *Murshidil Fityan* na *Attamryn*."

⁹² Aboubakar:1983a; 1983b

⁹³ Personal communication with Maalim Idris at Shangani, 3/4-12-2011

⁹⁴ My translation of 'Serikali ya Mapinduzi ya Zanzibar'.

⁹⁵ http://www.tombouctoumanuscripts.org/blog/category/east_africa/
May God rest his soul, Amen.

⁹⁶ <http://gk1.how.no/Docu/>

that I managed to identify an approximately one hundred-years old Swahili multi-text manuscript containing Swahili poetry from various authors in different dialects.⁹⁷ I made this discovery while going through the first catalogue that contains descriptions of exclusively Arabic manuscripts.⁹⁸

In Maalim Idris' collection we also found Arabic and Swahili manuscripts that were written by Sheikh 'Abd al-'Aziz b. Abdu'l-Ghany al-Amawy (±1838 - 1896), who, concluding from the various sources on his life time, may have been one of Burhan Mkelle's teachers when he was very young.

Sheikh Abdul-Aziz al-Amawy had been sent by Seyyid Said bin Sultan, Sultan of Zanzibar, as a *qadhi* to Kilwa at the young age of 17. He was born in Barawa (Somalia). One of his teachers was Sheikh Muhyiddin bin Sheikh bin Abd Sheikh bin Abdalla Al-Kahtany (±1790 - 1869) who was also Barawa-born and came through Mombasa and Lamu to Zanzibar where he was given *qadhi*-ship by Sultan Seyyid Said. Sheikh Abdul-Aziz served four sultans of Zanzibar in various positions: legal expert, *tariqa*-sheikh (active in the brotherhoods Qadiriyya, Shadhuliyya, Nuraniyya), diplomat, *qadhi* and historian, who, based in Zanzibar for many years, travelled widely to places like Kilwa, Somalia, Lamu, Grand Comoros, Mozambique and various places in former German East Africa.

Various historians have written about his life and works.⁹⁹ Mohamed Mkelle (1920 - 1999), Sheikh Burhan Mkelle's son, had a short article published in the Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs about a manuscript that he called *Qadi's Diary* written by Sheikh Abdul-Aziz Al-Amawy.¹⁰⁰ Till now this manuscript could not be located, but parts of it may be in the Maalim Idris Collection. The same holds true of his unfinished Arabic-Swahili dictionary, of which some photocopies exist, but only parts of the original manuscript, currently at Bergen, Norway, have been located in the Maalim Idris Collection.¹⁰¹

The well-known Zanzibari Sheikh Abdallah Saleh Farsy (1912-1982), former Chief *Qadhi* of Kenya and translator of the Quran,¹⁰² called Sheikh Abdulaziz Al-Amawy "the champion of the experts of East Africa [...]".¹⁰³

Bishop Edward Steere acknowledged him in the Preface of his *A Handbook of the Swahili Language as spoken at Zanzibar* with the following words: "[...] Sheikh 'Abd al 'Aziz kindly volunteered to translate for me the Arabic Psalter into the best and purest Swahili. I found, before long, that not only did his numerous avocations prevent any rapid progress, but that his language was too learned to suit exactly our purpose in making the version; it did not therefore proceed further than the Sixteenth Psalm."¹⁰⁴ According to Valerie Hoffman other manuscripts he wrote are located in the private library of Muhammad Ahmad al-Bu Saidi in Seeb, Oman.¹⁰⁵

The manuscript that we identified in Maalim Idris' collection had a small title piece connected to it, handwritten in Roman script, saying: "FOR SH. ABDULAZIZ'S SECOND ARTICLE: His great impression of the English theater (during his visit to London year [no date: left

⁹⁷ Cf. above: p.11, under 3.

⁹⁸ EACROTANAL 1981:36

⁹⁹ Bang 2003; al-Farsy 1972; Farsy 1989; Hoffman 2006; Loimeier 2010; Martin 1971; Mkelle 1992; Pouwels 1987, 2000.

¹⁰⁰ Mkelle 1992:116-122. Mohamed Burhan Mkelle's papers that are kept by his son Ali show a letter of the author to the editor of this Journal, protesting fiercely against a. o. the text of the 'Conclusions' (p.116) not having been written by himself.

¹⁰¹ I am grateful to Valerie Hoffman of the University of Illinois who sent me the scanned photocopies

¹⁰² Al-Farsy 1969

¹⁰³ My translation of al-Farsy 1972:14 "bingwa miongoni mwa mabingwa wa Mashariki ya Afrika [...]"

¹⁰⁴ Steere.1870 (Edition 1906:vii-viii)

¹⁰⁵ Hoffman 2006:x

blank])). Initially there were only two separate, double-sided written folio's. Later Maalim Idris found among his papers a larger envelope containing seven more loose pages of the same manuscript, and a second one of about 30 pages, held together by a small string in the top left-hand corner. The full scape sized envelope bears the title: "Sh. Abdul-Aziz's - Papers AL AMAWY".

Sometimes a single page of the manuscript shows two columns, each of them surrounded by two double red lines, one of the columns being in Arabic, the other in Swahili (cf. Image 3). Though it has to be established firmly, on first sight it seems that the Swahili is a translation of the Arabic and not the other way around. The Swahili bears strong traces of *Mwini* (*Chimwiini*; also: *Chimbalazi*), the Swahili variety (dialect) spoken at Barawa (Brava) on the southern coast of Somalia.¹⁰⁶ Sometimes the double lines around the two boxes are in black, like the text itself. On other pages the double lines are missing, but in the lay-out the columns can still be found. Other pages show a running text in Arabic, whereas the following page bears the same content, but in Swahili. Occasionally some single words have been written in red ink or red diacritics in the form of dots, underlinings or thin lines on top of a letter or a word has been added.

The content of this manuscript has yet to be analyzed, also within the context of other writings of Sheikh Abdulaziz Al-Amawy. It varies between moral advice based on Quranic exegesis, relating to specific, understood but not mentioned *Aya's*, and descriptions of concrete life experiences, for example his visit to a theater in Europe (UK?) that is compared to the opera in Paris.

In trying to reconstruct the Sheikh Burhan Mkelle Collection that has fallen apart, I visited one of his grandsons, Mr Ali Mohammed Burhan Mkelle in Dar es Salaam, who inherited some of the papers of his father, Sheikh Mohammed Burhan.

Some manuscripts of his grandfather can also be found in his small collection, together with several writings by his father, as well as an early (1930) Arabic manuscript of his grandfather, The History of Grand Comore, of which two other manuscripts are located in the Maalim Idris Collection. Another is the original manuscript of Sheikh Burhan's "Murshidil Fityan" (Guide for the Young) (Cf. Image 4). Further research has to prove if these manuscripts were written by Sheikh Burhan himself, or if they have been copied by his son, Sheikh Mohammed Burhan.¹⁰⁷

Another interesting manuscript in this small collection of Ali Mohammed Burhan is his father's unpublished translation of the theatre play "Abraham Lincoln" by John Drinkwater.¹⁰⁸ Finally off-prints of publications by his father, among them *Nabi Yunus*, a transliteration of manuscript 479 of the Allen Collection in Dar es Salaam, as well as newspaper cuttings relating to his life and work form part of this small collection.¹⁰⁹ His father's work for EACROTANAL and the discovery of the Swahili multitext manuscript, now in the Zanzibar National Archives, has already been mentioned (cf. page 10).¹¹⁰

Finally, the discovery of a small collection that I found at Sheikh Ahmad Burhan's in Dar es Salaam demonstrates the value of trying to trace the vestiges of a dissolved collection as well

¹⁰⁶ <http://web.clas.ufl.edu/users/bhendrsn/JWAL%20paper%20Chimwiini.pdf>

¹⁰⁷ Dr. Anne Bang of the Chr. Michelsen Institute in Bergen, Norway, is currently comparing and translating them prior to publication (pers. comm. 02/08/13).

Cf. http://www.swahiliweb.net/tarikh_compar.html

¹⁰⁸ Carrington, Norman. T. [no date]. (School Edition). *Abraham Lincoln - A Play by John Drinkwater*. London: James Brodie Ltd.

¹⁰⁹ Mkelle, M. 1978; Mkelle, M. 1992.

¹¹⁰ Zanzibar National Archives. ZB EAC 078.

as of attempts at reconstruction: such efforts may well lead to the identification of so far unknown manuscripts of great variety at unexpected locations.

A very small part of Sheikh Burhan's Collection had found its way into the hands of Sheikh Mohammed Burhan's brother, who had come from Zanzibar to Dar es Salaam at the beginning of the 1950s. Sheikh Ahmad himself has various manuscripts of his own writings in Arabic and gave Maalim Idris one of his father's manuscripts; however, he is also in the possession of a few pages of an old and crumbled Arabic manuscript of the 19th Century containing *Dhikr*. "Ustadh Mkelle" is also in the possession of "Answer Questions", written by himself – about 150 unpublished religious didactic Swahili texts in Roman script, each of them one-and-a-half pages, handwritten on full scape loose folio's, which he used in teaching a group of pupils in his personal *darsa* at Vingunguti in Dar es Salaam and which he distributed as photocopies.¹¹¹

B. The Collection of Sheikh Ahmad Badawy M. al-Husseiny and Bi Tuma Shee¹¹²

Sh. Ahmad Badawy Muhammad al-Hussainy (1929/1932? - 2012) and his wife Bi Tuma Shee have lived most of their lives in Mombasa but come both from Lamu. They are the parents of Bi Zainab Ahmad who assisted me during the conversation practice in teaching Swahili when I was a lecturer in Swahili at the Department of African Languages and Cultures of the University of Hamburg. Bi Zainab also assisted in reading and transliterating Swahili in Arabic script, which she had learned from her father. Sheikh Ahmad Badawy Muhammad al-Hussainy, who died suddenly during Ramadhan last year (2012 CE / 1433 AH), was well-known in Mombasa and Lamu.¹¹³ His book "Ahlul-Kisaa " (The People of the Cloak) was published in 1964 and reprinted in 1989 and 1998.¹¹⁴

Visiting her parents at their home in Mombasa they showed me a Swahili annotated Arabic manuscript of the famous Qasida *Hamziyyah* (cf. Image 5).¹¹⁵ The importance of the *qasida*-tradition for written and oral Swahili literature has been demonstrated by Professor Mohamed H. Abdulaziz.¹¹⁶ In relatively many collections, private as well as institutional, copies of the *Hamziyyah* can be identified - in Arabic, in Arabic with Swahili annotations or glosses, like in this case, or as Swahili translation only. One of the oldest Swahili handwritings preserved is a Swahili translation of this famous Arabic *qasida* by Seyyid Aidarus of Lamu, that was composed in the 13th Century by Muhammad bin Sa'idi al-Busiri (1212 - 1294 CE), who also composed *al-Burda* of which several Swahili translations exist as well. The manuscript in the Hichens collection at SOAS has been dated as 1652 CE by Jan Knappert, but 1792 by Mohamed Abdulaziz.¹¹⁷ These manuscripts will be the subject of comparison, including further research on their material aspects, of a DAAD awarded research grant for a PhD student from Kenya who will join the CSMC in April 2014.¹¹⁸

The *Hamziyyah*-manuscript in the collection of Sheikh Ahmad al-Husseiny and Bi Tuma Shee is, judging from the paper and the design of its leather cover, probably from the end of the 19th Century, but more research is still needed to get an exact dating. The colophon at the end of the text carries the date 1311, which converted into the Gregorian calendar would be

¹¹¹ Swahili manuscripts in Roman script by Ustadh Mkelle: "Mjibu Masuala", Vingunguti 15/09/2012.

¹¹² Sheikh Ahmad and his wife received me with great hospitality at their home in Mombasa on 10th and 11th October 2011. I was invited for their evening *chai* in presence of their children Bi Khafsa, Bi Nafisa, Bi Twaiba and Bwana Hassan. I am very grateful to Bi Zainab binti Ahmad who introduced me to her family.

¹¹³ May God rest his soul, Amen.

¹¹⁴ al-Husseiny 1964 (reprinted 1989, 1998)

¹¹⁵ Mombasa, 10th and 11th October 2011.

¹¹⁶ Abdulaziz 1995:411-428

¹¹⁷ Knappert 1979; Abdulaziz 1979

¹¹⁸ DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) Ahmed Parkar, Award A/13/94012 d.d. 07.06.2013.

around 1894 CE. Neither Sheikh Ahmad al-Husseiny nor Bi Tuma Shee could remember how they came into possession of this old copy of the *Hamziyyah*. It is not clear if the Swahili glosses were added later, and by a different or the same hand, though the lay-out of the page suggests that, during its creation, enough space was left between the lines of the original Arabic text, to have it annotated with Swahili phrasal and lexical glosses, partially written vertically on top of the Arabic words, but sometimes also in the margin. One page, number 7, has not been annotated at all, but there is another annotated page 7; so it is possible that two manuscripts have been brought together. The highest page number is 65, the last page not having been numbered.

Other manuscripts that are part of Sheikh Ahmad and Bi Tuma Shee's small collection are copies of *Burdāt ulMadiy'i* (The Song of the Mantle) and *Kishamiya* (The Cloth).

A very interesting notebook-size manuscript is a copy of the *Utenzi wa Mwana Kupona*¹¹⁹ written by Sheikh Ahmad himself between 1950 and 1960 (cf. Image 6). Though from a manuscript or codicological point of view it cannot be considered as very important, nevertheless it may throw some light on the role of written literature in relation to orality, as well as on the process of memorizing poetry, performing it at specific social functions and transmitting it to future generations. In the introduction, Sheikh Ahmad explains how he himself is related to Mwana Kupona binti Mshamu the poetess of *Utendi wa Mwana Kupona* (± 1810 - 1860 CE): "I am Ahmad M. Badawy the grandson of the grandson of Mwana Kupona who composed this poem".¹²⁰

C. The Collection of Mr. Zuheri Ali Hemed al-Buhry¹²¹

When I consulted Sheikh Abdulahi Nassir of Mombasa about the current Swahili manuscripts project, he showed me some transcriptions in Roman script of a Swahili *tafsir* in Arabic script of Surat-al-Fatiha and Surat-al-Baqara, that had been written at the end of the 1940s or early 1950s by Sheikh Ali Hemed al-Buhry (1889-1957).

When I visited Sheikh Mahmoud Abdalla Ismael Sameja in Dar es Salaam, to whom I was referred by his friend and colleague, Sheikh Samir Zulfikar Ramzam from Zanzibar, he showed me photocopies of a *tafsir*-manuscript which he was using in preparing his *darsa's*, and he brought me into contact with Zuheri Ali in Tanga who is in possession of the original. Sheikh Sameja also showed me the original of another manuscript, written solely in Arabic by Sheikh Ali Hemed al-Buhry. The beautifully drawn and written manuscript, that seems to be from the same period as the *tafsir*-manuscript, deals with various Islamic sciences like mathematics and astronomy. Sheikh Sameja generously presented me with a copy of a book from Faridabad, India, photolithographically printed in Swahili in Arabic script and written as well by Sheikh Ali Hamid Abdal Saed Al-Bahry (sic). It is titled "Kitaab Hajatul-Insan fil-Islam wal-Iman" and carries a foreword from 1344 AH (±1925 CE) by Sheikh Ahmad Omar Binsmeit, showing the handwriting of the scribe who wrote it in 1325 AH (±1907 CE) and is mentioned as Juma Hamid Abdallah Said Al-Bahry Al-Hinawy (sic), a brother of Sheikh Ali Hemed, the author.¹²²

The manuscript containing Sheikh Ali Hemed's *tafsir* on the first two *Sura's* of the Quran comprises four hundred pages of a full scape linen-bound ledger normally used for book

¹¹⁹ See also p. 2 and Image 1 of this article.

¹²⁰ My translation of the introduction (p. 2) of the manuscript: "mimi ahmad badawy muhammad ni muyuku wa muyuku wa mwana kupona alotunga utendi hunu".

¹²¹ I am very grateful to Mr Mohammed Said from Dar es Salaam who accompanied me on my journeys to Bagamoyo and Tanga July 12-15, 2012. Many thanks go as well to Sheikh Samir from Zanzibar and Sheikh Sameja from Dar es Salaam (June/July 2013) and to Mr. Zuheri Ali who received me with great warmth at his home in Tanga from 26th - 29th August 2012, allowing me to take photographs of all items in his collection.

¹²² al-Bahry 1344 AH (±1925 CE)

keeping or keeping of records (cf. Image 7). On every page a black rectangular frame is drawn to create a large rectangular box as a block containing the running text, a text which is seldom interrupted by any interspacing, and which shows only few punctuations at the end of a sentence. The whole text has been written in Sheikh Ali's very tidy, tight, beautiful and very readable hand, with few if any corrections or aberrations in the writing. The original Arabic Quranic words have been written in red ink, immediately followed by explanations of the Arabic in Swahili in Arabic script which, according to a short introduction on the first page, is intended to be in *Kimrimu*, the variety of Swahili spoken on the coast of Tanganyika, contemporary Tanzania mainland, with Tanga as its centre. The pages are numbered with Arabic numerals at the top. At the left corner of the right pages (recto) the first word of the following left page (verso) has been placed outside the text blocks that have been centered to the spine of the ledger. Sometimes, though not regularly, some words have been added as references outside the frames.

A Roman transliteration of the Swahili in Arabic script is made by Zuheri Ali Hemed al-Buhry (1944) from Tanga who found part of the inherited collection of books and manuscripts of his father outside of a courtyard of a house in Dar es Salaam after the death of his elder brother Sheikh Muhammed Ali (1927 - 1995). A major part of the collection had been damaged by rain, but Mr. Zuheri managed to save part of the collection of his father. Another part is said to have been destroyed by floods in Dar es Salaam after it had been moved to the house of Salim "Kibao" Ali Hemed, one of his brothers. Salim Ali, was nicknamed "Kibao" after his grandfather who used a "Kibao"¹²³ in his healing and soothsaying practices.¹²⁴ He became widely known in Tanzania and Kenya as an active member of the Tanzanian National Swahili Council (BAKITA), a member of the Tanzanian Writers Association (UKUTA), a member of two weekly Swahili radio broadcasting panels, and as an author whose poetry and short novel were part of the Swahili curriculum in secondary schools.¹²⁵

Sheikh Ali Hemed, the author and scribe of the *tafsir*-manuscript, was the son of Hemed bin Abdallah bin Said bin Abdallah bin Masudi el Buhry (1820~1855 - 1928) who became famous as the composer of religious, epic and historical works in the form of prose and poetry,¹²⁶ but also as a *mganga*, a healer, and, as Jose Arturo Saavedra has put it, *mwalim wa falaki na nujumu*, "an astrologer able to foretell the future, to interpret omens and to warn about adverse situations for the community".¹²⁷ He served as an advisor to Abushiri bin Salim al Harthi, the leader of the resistance against German rule, who was executed by the Germans in 1889.¹²⁸ His *Utenzi wa Vita vya Wadachi Kutamalaki Mrima* ('Epic on the War of the Germans to take Possession of the Mrima Coast'),¹²⁹ in which he relates episodes of this resistance enhanced his renown.¹³⁰

Sheikh Ali Hemed was, until his retirement, the last *Qadhi* of Tanga from 1339 AH - 1354 AH (1921 - 1935 CE), after having been educated by Sheikh Khamis bin Salim, Sheikh

¹²³ Board used in foretelling the future.

¹²⁴ Mulokozi/Sengo 1995:28

¹²⁵ Kibao 1972; 1975; n.d.; n.d.

¹²⁶ For the six works, five *tenzi's* and one historical text of Sheikh Hemed that have been published between 1952 and 1968 cf. Saavedra Casco 2007:300

¹²⁷ Saavedra Casco 2007:154; cf. 145-181 for more information and bibliographical references on Sheikh Hemed bin Abdallah bin Said bin Abdallah bin Masudi el Buhry (1820/1855-1928) and the el-Buhry family.

¹²⁸ Glassman 1995:77, 201

¹²⁹ My translation - rhs

¹³⁰ Buhriy 1955.

Abdus Sadiq Bawazir and by his own father.¹³¹ He himself taught his son, Sheikh Muhammad Ali, who taught J. W. T. Allen Swahili from 1930 to 1932. Allen wrote the following about the el-Buhriy family: "The el-Buhriy family has for long been one of the leading literary and scholarly families of the coast and to many members of it I owe my appreciation of the scholarship of those learned people of the coast whose existence most of us overlook. In those years I made a large collection of manuscripts. [...] What this collection contained I do not know. The collection itself I lodged in a bank where it perished during the war."¹³² Part of this collection ended in Tanga, in the hands of Sheikh Ali's younger brother, Zuheri Ali.

Sheikh Ali published on Islamic law, on the Ahmaddiya's and on the Tanganyika Coast. His book about Islamic inheritance law appeared both in Swahili and in an English translation by P. E. Mitchell.¹³³ His historical observations were published as serials in the Swahili newspaper *Mambo Leo* ('Current Affairs').¹³⁴ His book about the *Wakadiani* ('Ahmaddiya's') is a criticism on the *tafsir* of this Muslim community.¹³⁵ In "The Writings of the Muslim Peoples of Eastern Africa", the last volume of "Arabic Literature of Africa", Sean O'Fahey quotes Joseph Schacht, who met him in 1953, and noted, "He was no doubt the most learned Shafii scholar I have ever met".¹³⁶

Although the *tafsir*-manuscript in Zuheri Ali's collection in Tanga is of relatively recent date, its importance lies not in its materiality, but in the information it implicitly carries concerning the transfer of Swahili knowledge, a role this manuscript plays to this day, i.e. the use of Swahili-Arabic script at a time when it had already been widely abandoned, the use of *Kimrimu*, the Swahili variety chosen to explain the original Arabic text and the use of this manuscript right up to today by Mahmoud Sameja, a modern sheikh in Dar es Salaam, in preparing his *darsa's* (alongside the published Quranic *tafsirs* by Sheikh Abdallah Saleh Farsy and Sheikh Ali Muhsin)¹³⁷.

Furthermore, Mr Zuheri Ali is transliterating the work in the Roman script with the intention of having it published in *juzuu's*, small volumes, with the cooperation of Sheikh Abdulahi Nassir, a former publisher and gifted editor from Mombasa. Recently the importance of the role played by *madrassa*-teaching in the transfer of religious knowledge and Swahili scholarship has been stressed by professor Mohamed Bakari in the article he wrote in memory of Sheikh Yahya Omar Ali on the occasion of his death.¹³⁸

Other manuscripts, incomplete manuscripts, fragments of manuscripts, books, magazines, photocopies and pictures form part of Zuheri Ali's collection. Among these are four folios of old unlined paper with almost illegible parts of a Swahili *Utenzi* in Arabic script by his grandfather Sheikh Hemed. There are also photocopies of what must have been a voluminous unidentified book, probably also in the handwriting of Sheikh Hamed, about astronomy, astrology and esoteric science. (I found photocopies of the same book in Sheikh Sameja's private library in Dar es Salaam.) The collections also contains 27 pages with a so far unidentified genealogical tree, four signed letters by Sheikh Ali with arguments against the Ahmadiyya's, and an old, crumbled bound book in Arabic with a *qasida* anotated also in Arabic. Magazines, printed books and pictures relating to Zuheri's brother Mohammed, the

¹³¹ Farsy 1972:13, 43; Cf. Bang 2003:203

¹³² Allen 1959:224. Cf. Saavedra Casco 2007:94

¹³³ el Buhuri 1923

¹³⁴ el-Buhuriy 1934-36; Cf. Geider 2003:88

¹³⁵ Ali 1954

¹³⁶ O'Fahey forthcoming

¹³⁷ al-Farsy 1969; al-Barwani 1995

¹³⁸ Bakari 2011

East African Welfare Society, publications of his father Ali and pictures of family members also form part of this collection.

Conclusion

Since October 2011 the Swahili manuscripts project has tried to identify, locate and, in case of their dissolution, reconstruct East African manuscript collections which contain Swahili manuscripts in Arabic script. In doing so it focuses on manuscripts that contain literary works on history, religion, science (including medicine, spiritual healing and astrology), genealogy and poetry. Letters, documents like title deeds and contracts (including contracts of marriage and divorce), agreements and financial records are also taken into account, but do not occupy a central place in the research.

Three collections, located and identified in 2011 and 2012, have been described here.

Though very different in age, content and volume, they show that, in spite of many unfavorable circumstances like climate and sociopolitical and historical conditions, so far unknown collections are still in existence; in the above cases, in private hands.

The working hypothesis, at the basis of what is regarded as "a collection", is largely confirmed by the three collections that have been presented here. Arabic manuscripts are regarded by the collectors, owners or custodians as being at the heart of their collection.

In the case of the Burhan Mkelle Collection, which is now part of the Maalim Idris Collection, only a very few Swahili writings in Arabic script are to be found, either as Swahili glosses and annotations to texts in Arabic, or as fully bilingual texts in Swahili and Arabic, as is the case with some manuscripts by Sheikh Abdulaziz Al-Amawy.

Central to the small collection of Ahmad Badawy M. al-Hussainy and Bi Tuma Shee was the annotated *Hamziyyah*. Sheikh Ahmed's notebook accompanying the text of *Utendi Mwana Kupona*, as well as his introduction to it, raises a question about the relationship between orality and literacy: Sheikh Ahmed put it in writing just for himself based on the memory of his wife who knows the poem by heart. During the first two years the project has not managed to get access to the collective memory of women, to their role in the performance of poetry that is primarily oral, and to the fact that women are the custodians of the manuscripts that contain this type of oral poetry. As J. W. T. Allen has noted: "a great part of the culture is in the hands of women and particularly elderly, even very old women (...)".¹³⁹ If the project is going to be successful, the importance of women must be addressed more decisively and a serious attempt made to try and build up a network.

Zuheri Ali Hemed's collection shows how the original manuscript with the *tafsir* is still used in the transfer of, in this case, religious knowledge. The way several users, including Sheikh Sameja from Dar es Salaam and Sheikh Abdulahi Nassir from Mombasa, started working on the manuscript itself in order to bridge the gap between generations of speakers of various variants of Swahili and their literacy in Swahili in Arabic script tells us a lot about what an existing manuscript may give rise to.

The project has not yet been able to work on the individual manuscripts found in these collections. They need to be analyzed – their content, the script, the material and their use. These features need to be described in a detailed way in order to extract all the information they carry. After having made an inventory of existing collections in East Africa, a choice will be made as to which Swahili manuscripts in Arabic script should undergo deeper and more detailed analysis. A good start will be the DAAD/CSMC PhD project on comparison of different manuscripts of the *Hamziyyah*. We call on our colleagues who specialize in Arabic

¹³⁹ Allen 1968:112/3

to do the same with respect to the Arabic manuscripts which often form the bulk of the collections.¹⁴⁰

Allen 1968, De Vere Allen 1981, Biersteker/Plane 1989 and our deceased colleague and friend Thomas Geider 2002 have issued a clear and strong appeal for the type of research project C07 the CSMC has been carrying out the last two years. The collections containing Swahili manuscripts in Arabic script which still exist must be urgently identified and preserved. The Endangered Archives Programme of the British Library¹⁴¹ and the Tombouctou Manuscripts Project at the University of Cape Town¹⁴² have set a remarkable example in the field of preservation and conservation. Indeed, the identification of the collections, which are endangered, cannot be done by two or three people alone, working on a specific project. It needs the full support, suggestions, active involvement and contacts of all possible people working in this area – academics and anyone who holds Swahili language, history and culture close to his heart.

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¹⁴⁰ Dr. Anne Bang shows how the Maalim Idris and Riyadh collections are dealt with.

¹⁴¹ <http://eap.bl.uk/index.a4d>

¹⁴² <http://tombouctoumanuscripts.org/>

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Images:

[Image 1: MS H58 of the Utendi wa "Mwana Kupona" written by the scribe Mohamadi Kijuma (±1855 - 1945). © photo by Asia Africa Institute / CSMC, University of Hamburg, Germany. Hamburg, November 2011]

[Image 2. Page 1 of Swahili multi-text MS EAC 078 of 66 pages with old poetry, probably written by the scribe Mohamadi Kijuma (±1855 - 1945). Zanzibar National Archives. © photo by Ridder H. Samsom, Zanzibar 29.11.2011]

[Image 3. Arabic-Swahili MS written by ‘Abd al-‘Aziz b. ‘Abd ul-Ghany al-Amawy (1838-1896) in the Maalim Idris Collection, Zanzibar - © photo by Ridder H. Samsom, Zanzibar 06.12.2011]

[Image 4. Arabic MS "Murshidil Fityan", probably written by Sheikh Burhan Mkelle (1884 - 1949) in possession of Ali Mohammed Burhan Mkelle, Dar es Salaam. © photo by Ridder H. Samsom, Dar es Salaam 03.10.10]

[Image 5. Pages 27/28 Arabic MS of 66 pages by unknown scribe with glosses in Swahili of the *Qasida* "Hamziyyah" in the private collection of Sheikh Ahmad Badawy M. al-Husseiny (1932-2012) and Bi Tuma Shee. © photo by Ridder H. Samsom, Mombasa 11.10.2011]

[Image 6. Pages 2/3 of Swahili MS of "Utendi wa Mwana Kupona" and Introduction, written by Sheikh Ahmad Badawy M. al-Husseiny (1932-2012) in the private collection of Sheikh Ahmad Badawy M. al-Husseiny (1932-2012) and Bi Tuma Shee. © photo by Ridder H. Samsom, Mombasa 11.10.2011]

[Image 7. Page 2 of MS of 400 pages with *tafsir* in Swahili composed and written by Sh Ali Hemed Abdallah al-Buhry (±1870-1957). Private collection of Zuheri Ali Hemed ©photo by Ridder H. Samsom, Tanga 27.08.2012]

[Image 8. Collection Zuheri Ali. Zuheri Ali Hemed al-Buhry reading a MS of an Utendi composed (and written?) by his grandfather Sheikh Hemed bin Abdallah bin Said bin Abdallah bin Masudi el Buhry (1820~1855 - 1928). ©photo by Ridder H. Samsom, Tanga 26.08.2012]