

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

DER - 14  
Zanzibar I

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c/o Barclays Bank  
Queensway  
Nairobi, Kenya  
(From Zanzibar)

Mr. Walter S. Rogers  
Institute of Current World Affairs  
522 Fifth Avenue  
New York 36, New York

Dear Mr. Rogers:

"Once," said the Arab landowner, "this was the center of East Africa." We were drinking coffee in his town house in Zanzibar. "All goods shipped in and out of East Africa passed through this island. We were rich. Our Sultans were powerful. We ruled the entire coast of East Africa."

He took a long sip of coffee to let this sink in. "And now," he added, "we are the backwash of East Africa." He sighed with the resignation of one who knows Allah's will when he sees it. And, after all, there is no sense getting too agitated about anything on this tropical island. One should only sigh and, if the sun is still high in the sky, take another little nap. When misfortune falls in the British-administered Sultanate of Zanzibar, it is shauri Mungu, "an affair of God." The mood of unenergetic Zanzibar is reflected by the Swahili proverb "Haraka haraka haina baraka," (Haste has no blessing).

I bade "As salaam alaikum," (May peace be upon you, and it was) to my Arab friend and went out into the bazaar, which was just coming back to life again after Zanzibar's mid-day nap. Though Zanzibar's star has been eclipsed, life goes on in much the same old way in the crowded bazaars.

The bazaar streets are narrow (some only eight or ten feet wide) and crooked. There is neither rhyme nor reason to most of them and the visitor, entering the bazaar at, say, just behind the Sultan's dazzling white palace and proceeding in what he thinks is a reasonably straight direction, often finds himself back at the palace an hour later. On either side of the streets rise three and four story buildings that shut out most of the harsh sunlight. Dukas or stores, most of them run by Indians but a few operated by Arabs, are spaced at every 10 feet or so along the streets.

Too narrow for cars, the bazaar streets are filled with people, bicycles, rickshaws, pushcarts and little wagons drawn by donkeys and oxen. Dukawallas (merchants) stand or sit in front of their shops with a sharp eye peeled for a stray European tourist (especially those rich Americans), ready to pounce on him with Zanzibar chests, copperware, curios and cloth goods.

There are no sidewalks. Arabs and Africans doze and gossip on stone benches in front of the houses and dukas. Most of the houses have magnificent Zanzibar doors---huge, heavy affairs covered with intricate carvings and richly adorned with large brass studs. In the old days the door was considered the most important part of a house. It was erected first and then the house was built around it.

The odor of Indian is in the air. Above the noise of the crowd comes harsh Indian music and a cacaphony of bells as cyclists and rickshaw boys jostle with pedestrians for passage through the streets. Arab coffee vendors, carrying tall brass pots, wend their way through the crowds, heralding their approach by clicking together two metal cups like castanets. Now and then they pause to dole out a tiny, unwashed cup of bitter black coffee to a customer.

Looking around in the bazaars, you conclude that the only thing that has changed is that one important commodity is no longer on the market---black slaves.

Throughout the town, Zanzibar is more oriental than occidental. European influence has had much less effect here than on the mainland. Indian culture has touched Zanzibar, but the Arab culture is the stronger. Kiswahili, with its Bantu grammar and partly Arabic vocabulary, is the common language and the Zanzibari boast that only here is the pure form spoken. In Kiswahili, or just Swahili as it is often referred to, the word for civilization is ustaarabu, or, literally, "Arabization."

One sees a colorful array of national dress on the streets of Zanzibar. Most Arabs are bearded. They wear the kanzu, a white smock reaching to the ankles, and the kofia, a skull cap. They often carry curved daggers at the waist. Arab dhow crews in from the Arabian coast are seldom without daggers and all wear desert-style turbans.

Indian women wear brightly-colored saris and those from the Punjab are often seen in a pajama-like garment. While almost all mainland Indians have adopted Western dress, many Zanzibar Indians wear the dhoti, a sort of loin cloth with long loose ends, and tight-fitting cotton coats.

The Africans, many of whom dress like the Arabs, are a varied lot. There are (1) Swahilis (coastal people more African than Arab), (2) mainlanders from Tanganyika, Kenya and Nyasaland who come to work in Zanzibar for a few years, (3) descendants of Zanzibar slaves and (4) the Shirazis.

The Shirazis are members of Zanzibar's three indigenous tribes, the Watumbatu, the Wahadimu and the Wapemba---the last being from nearby Pemba Island, which also is included in Zanzibar Protectorate. The Shirazis claim to be descended from early Persians who came to Zanzibar, but it is apparent that there is a strong Bantu admixture. Like the coastal Africans, they were never enslaved by the Arabs but were converted to Islam. Some of the Shirazis and coastal people were slave-owners themselves.

On Zanzibar's streets one also sees: Goans, from the Portuguese pocket of Goa on the coast of India, and mostly Roman Catholics; Cingalese, from Ceylon and mostly Bhuddists; Comorians, from the French-held Comoran Islands off the coast of Madagascar and mostly Muslims, and a few Chinese and Europeans. Practically all of the Europeans on Zanzibar and Pemba are British officials.\* There is only one European planter, a retired government official.

Race relations are generally harmonious and one finds little or no color bar. "Westernized" Arabs, Indians and Africans appear nightly in the bar of the Zanzibar Hotel, the only European hotel in the Protectorate. No great amount of social mixing goes on, though. The British keep pretty much to themselves in the English Club and the Arabs and other races do the same at their own social centers. With different cultures, there are different ideas as to what constitutes an evening out. The Englishman would spend it dining, dancing and drinking with his wife or girl friend, whereas the bulk of the Arabs would prefer to gather in one of the all-male coffee houses.

Zanzibar is a Muslim state. Although the easy-going Arabs generally remain unconcerned at the presence of Christian missionaries, the stamp of Islam is firmly fixed to this Sultanate. Verses from the Koran precede the news of the world over the government radio each afternoon. A siren sounds at sundown to mark the time for evening prayers. There are mosques everywhere on the island, and Ibadhi Mohammedanism is the state religion.

Many of the Arab and African women live in purdah. Some Arab women seldom if ever venture out of their houses after their marriage. African women observe purdah less closely. They are seen on the streets, but they cover themselves, face included, with the bui-bui or black cotton cloak. At the cinema they wait until the lights have been turned off before uncovering their faces. Discussing purdah, an African said: "Our religion tells us that it is evil to think certain thoughts about another man's wife. Therefore we cover up our women's faces so as to remove the opportunity for such temptation." Only the old African Muslim women expose their faces in public.

In this atmosphere the European woman tourist poses a bit of a problem and a guide book urges European women "to respect the susceptibilities of the Muslim community in choosing their dress for wear in the streets and other public places." The guide book advised that "the townspeople are conservative in matters of dress and do not think it seemly for ladies to wander through the bazaars dressed for the beach."

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\* The 1948 census listed a total population of 264,162 on Zanzibar and Pemba, broken down as follows: 199,860 Africans, 44,560 Arabs, 15,211 Indians, 3,267 Comorians, 681 Goans, 296 Europeans and 287 others.

The sale of liquor to Muslims is supposed to be illegal in Zanzibar as Islam frowns on drinking. But a few local Muslims do sample the infidel brew in the Zanzibar Hotel or in the Goan-operated bars (supposedly run only for the benefit of the Christian Goans).

The northeast monsoon is blowing now in Zanzibar. The harbor is filled with dhows, large wooden sailing vessels with lateen rigs and high sterns. The monsoon has brought them in from the the Arabian coasts, 2,000 miles away, as it has been doing for centuries. In June the monsoon will reverse its direction and take the dhows home again.

It was the early Arab dhow visitors who gave Zanzibar its name. It derives from Zinj Bar or "Black Coast" in Arabic. Arabs and other races, it is believed, have been visiting these waters for 3,000 years. The first record of Zanzibar appears in the Periplus of the Erythraen Sea ("Directory of the Indian Ocean"), written in about 60 A. D. Persian and Arab settlements along the coast are thought to date from the eighth century and the conversion of the coastal Africans to Islam is believed to have been started in the 10th century.

The Portugese were the first Europeans to establish themselves on the East African coast. Vasco da Gama visited Zanzibar in 1499 and Portugese conquest followed. The Portugese also dominated Oman on the Arabian coast. The Omani Arabs expelled the Portugese from their own country in the mid 1600s and then drove them from most of the East African coast. By 1729 the Sultans of Oman ruled East Africa and the Portugese were left with only their present possession, Mozambique.

Memos of Portugese occupation in Zanzibar include the practice of bullfighting in Pemba and some Swahili words of Portugese origin. The devotee of the classic bullfight would be shocked at its illegitimate offspring in Pemba. There is none of the pomp and circumstance of the Spanish-Portugese version and the bull is never harmed. In Swahili it is called "mchezo wa ngombe"---the game of the bull---and this indicates how much seriousness is attached to it. Swahili words of Portugese origin include pesa (money), meza (table) and bendera (flag).

Modern Zanzibar dates from 1832 when Seyyid Said, ruler of Oman, transferred his court from the harsh Arabian deserts to the fertile paradise of Zanzibar. He encouraged trade and commerce and his most lasting work was the introduction of the clove tree, on which the islands' economy largely depends today. During his rule, the first foreign consulate was opened in Zanzibar---by the United States, in 1837. The British consulate opened four years later. There is no U. S. Consulate here now.

Seyyid Said's death in 1856 brought about a separation of the Sultanates of Zanzibar and Oman. He had arranged that his eldest son would succeed to the throne of Oman and his second son to that of Zanzibar. The eldest son, wanting both, was preparing an expedition against Zanzibar when the British stepped in and enforced the separation. It continues to this day.

Zanzibar was in its heyday during the 19th century. Trade flourished and the Sultans had extensive "possessions" deep into the interior. The boundaries were never marked, though, and, except for the coast, no attempt was ever made to administer them. The Sultans were only interested in the commercial possibilities--- chiefly ivory and slaves.

During those years, Zanzibar was the entre-pot for East Africa. All goods entering and leaving East Africa passed through its port. Zanzibar was also the jumping-off place for the interior. Missionaries, traders, adventurers, hunters and slavers all gathered here to raise porters and outfit for the trek inland. Clove and coconut plantations, worked by slave labor, flourished on these islands and the powers of the Sultans were absolute.

But then the eclipse came.

With the opening up of the mainland and the rise of the ports of Mombasa and Dar es Salaam, trans-shipments of goods through Zanzibar---situated 22 1/2 miles off the Tanganyikan coast at the nearest point---declined rapidly. Today, while the mainland boasts of deep-water wharves, only a shallow-draft wharf exists in Zanzibar. Large ships must anchor offshore and unload into bobbing lighters.

The Sultans lost their mainland dominions at the end of the last century. With the Great Powers scrambling to carve up Africa, what became Tanganyika went to the Germans and what became Kenya and Uganda to the British, who, incidentally, were never too eager to take over the area.

The Sultans retained nominal title to a 10-mile-deep coastal belt of Kenya. This was leased in 1895 to the Kenya government for £11,000 (\$30,800) a year. The strip includes the port of Mombasa and thriving coastal plantations. The rent has never been revised.

Next Zanzibar lost its independence. In face of increasing German designs on the islands, the Sultan accepted British protection in 1890. Energetic British "advisers" moved into the backward Sultanate and forced through a series of sweeping reforms.

The "public" treasury had been the Sultan's private purse--- stored in sacks in the basement of the palace. The British quickly corrected that and reduced the ruler to annual allowances. A system of justice was established which did away with the old set-up under which men could be executed, imprisoned, exiled or flogged at their ruler's whim. Public improvements came to Zanzibar. Previously, for instance, only two roads of any sort led out of town. Strangely enough they ended at the gates of country palaces.

Meanwhile the powers of the Sultans were steadily trimmed by the British until today's nominal ruler of Zanzibar and Pemba, His Highness Seyyid Sir Khalifa bin Harub,\*the ninth Sultan since Seyyid Said, functions only as a kind of constitutional monarch.

The final blow to Zanzibar's fortunes was the abolition of the slave trade and slavery on the islands themselves.

Bit by bit throughout the 19th century, the British whittled away at these. The process started in 1822, during the pre-Protectorate days, when the British wrung from a reluctant Sultan an agreement not to permit slaves to be sold to any Christian nation. Each few years brought new restrictions. Zanzibar's slave markets were closed in 1873 and the process came to a final end in 1897 with a decree abolishing slavery on the islands.

Today, on the site of Zanzibar's last slave market, stands the Cathedral Church of Christ. Its altar is on the exact spot occupied by the slave market whipping post.

The time taken in wiping out all aspects of slavery provoked much criticism from abolitionists in England. To this, Zanzibar's British administrators replied that to have abolished it in an instant would have brought about social and economic chaos and perhaps even an Arab insurrection. As it was, no blood was shed, no war was fought.

The Arabs, in the opinion of some observers, have never adjusted fully to abolition. The old aristocracy of the islands, they are still the chief landowners. But many, preferring town life and the charms of the coffee house conversations, have left their plantations to overseers or, in cases, have just left them, period. As the Arabs themselves admit, many just take a dim view of hard work.

Family ties are strong among the Arabs and each man will, with pride, trace back his lineage for you to the days in Oman. Everyone seems to know everyone else and, equally important, who his grandfather was. There exists a stratification of families by importance and some have been influential and dominant in Zanzibar for generations.

In the old days there was no rigid rule of succession to the throne. The custom was that it went to the eldest male survivor of the direct line from the dynasty's founder, provided he had the approval of the leading Arabs. In practice, as one Sultan remarked, the throne went to the man with the longest sword. Intrigue was rife. As one historian remarked, with the advent of the British, the "longest sword" passed to them.\*\* The bitterness of the old feuds has died out now and the memories of them have taken honored places in the family trees.

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\* "Bin" indicates "son of."

\*\* L. W. Hollingsworth, from whose "Zanzibar Under The Foreign Office 1890 - 1913," (Macmillan & Co., London, 1953), some of this historical background is drawn.

The dominant Arabs in Zanzibar are these "old settlers." Another group, less important in Zanzibari life, is the Arabs who come to work here for a few years and then return to Arabia.

Relations between the Arabs and the Africans are amiable and a considerable amount of mixture of the two races has taken place. This stems partly from the practice, which continues to this day, of Arabs taking African women for wives. And in the old days, some Arabs kept African girls in their harems. Children born of these concubines were regarded as legitimate and no distinction was made between them and those born of Arab wives.

Some of Zanzibar's Sultans were of mixed blood and many of the leading Arabs today are part African. Unlike in the United States, no stigma is attached.

Arab and African children are educated together. Indians have their own grant-aided elementary schools, but mix with the others at the secondary level. There are few European children in Zanzibar and they are sent to the mainland or to England for their education.

In the coffee houses, the Arabs will bestir themselves to tell you at great length that if the African slave survived the horrors of the journey to Zanzibar from the interior, his life here was not particularly unpleasant. The Arabs were easy-going, many of the masters were part-African themselves and cruelty was not common, the Arabs say. They will tell you that the first Sultan used to leave two of his slaves as absolute governors of these islands while he was away visiting other parts of his dominion.

At any rate, Islam and the lack of a color bar have drawn today's Arab and African together. They worship side by side in the mosques and some Africans look to Arabic as their cultural language.

Relations between the Arabs and the mainland Africans, who recall stories of Arab slave raider cruelty told them by their grandfathers, are apt to be less cordial though by no means antagonistic. These mainlanders are usually Christians or Pagans and so the religious bond also is lacking.

Although a lazy tolerance toward others is the rule in Zanzibar, one does find a certain amount of ill-will directed at the Indians. The Arab has never distinguished himself in matters of finance and Zanzibar's Indians from early times have had the petty trade, money-lending and minor government posts firmly in their hands.

The Indians are no new-comers to Zanzibar. They have traded and settled along the East African coast for centuries. Seyyid Said, the first Sultan, recognized their business ability and made every effort to welcome them despite complaints even then by his Arab subjects.

These early Indians have been accused of financing the slave trade and Livingstone is quoted as saying: "But for the goods, arms and ammunition advanced by the banians, no Arab could go inland to slave. It is by their money that the slave trade is carried on."

Today the Africans and Arabs complain that they have lost much town and country property to the Indians. The Indians used to lend money and goods at usurious rates of interest and then foreclose, it is said. Now a law exists in Zanzibar whereby land or produce cannot be seized for non-payment of debt. Further, no more land can be alienated from Arabs and Africans without the consent of an official board.

"These Indians are just too smart for us," an Arab said as we sat under a tree. Other Arabs and Africans in the group muttered approval. "They are clever and we are not. Soon they will have everything and we will have nothing." The others muttered approval again. "It is so," one of them said, yawning.

Prices have gone up in Zanzibar, as elsewhere in East Africa, and the petty-trading Indians have been accused, rightly or wrongly, of exploiting the situation.

The other day I was walking through the bazaar with Uusuf bin Ali, a Comorian guide who is quite energetic by local standards and sometimes irascible---particularly so when confronted by the real or imagined shortcomings of his fellow Zanzibar citizens. He arranges appointments, acts as interpreter and helps me find my way around in Zanzibar's labyrinth of streets.

Uusuf pointed to some kangas---bright cloth prints---on sale in a duka. Native women throughout East Africa wear these as wrap-around dresses. They have elaborate designs on them and often an expression---sometimes nonsensical---in Swahili. Among the current favorites are those with "Mlango ya Mfalme" ("Door of the King") and "Usizunguke Mbuyu" ("Don't go around the baobab tree"---i.e., it'll bring you bad luck).

"Every Zanzibar woman," said Uusuf, "has to have a new one of these things every month. If you don't buy your wife one, you sleep somewhere else." Uusuf scowled at a dukawalla who, seeing us inspecting the merchandise, came hopping out to inform us that they were of the best quality to be found in Zanzibar.

"These Indians," said Uusuf, raising his voice for the Indian's benefit. "The Africans are beginning to hate them. They bring these damn things in here for three shillings (\$0.42) and now after everyone has to have one, they charge 12 or 14 shillings (\$1.68 and \$1.96). That's a lot of money to us."

Zanzibar is enjoying prosperity, though, and this is due to the blessed clove. Wherever you go, the scent of the cloves is in the air. Around the public treasury it is overpowering. Education is free for the first six years (whereas fees are charged on the mainland) and this is due in part to an export tax on cloves. Nearly one-fifth of the Protectorate's 1952 revenue came from this tax and the amount so realized was greater than that spent on education.\*

Eighty per cent of the world demand for cloves is supplied by these two small islands (Zanzibar is 640 square miles in extent and Pemba is 380). "At picking time, everyone thinks, breathes and lives cloves," said G. E. Tidbury, senior agricultural officer.

A shadow has fallen, though, across this beneficent industry. A disease called "sudden death" has killed, according to some estimates, more than half the mature trees on Zanzibar Island. Pemba, which supplies the bulk of the Protectorate's output, has been much less seriously affected. Opinion as to the seriousness of the outbreak as regards the future of the industry ranges from pessimism to cautious optimism.

Not too much is known about sudden death. Officials believe it has existed in the islands for a considerable period of time, but cannot confirm this as no studies were made in the early days.

A team of scientists has just wound up a five-year inquiry into the disease. They were unable to come up with any cure. As for the cause, they think---but are not certain---that it is due to a particular fungus. But they have not been able to produce sudden death in a healthy tree by inoculating it with that fungus. Field investigations, conducted by the Department of Agriculture, will continue.

Sudden death attacks the older trees, generally those planted after the 1872 hurricane blew down practically all the trees on Zanzibar Island. Pemba, where the disease is less severe, escaped with little damage in the hurricane and its trees vary more widely in age.

Both Tidbury and R. O. Williams, general manager of the Clove Growers Association---a statutory body that guarantees prices, makes loans and performs other services for growers---say that sudden death can be met successfully by keeping up the new plantings. Seedlings have been distributed either free or at cost for some time and Zanzibar now is approaching what is regarded as a better age-balance among its trees.

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\* Total 1952 revenue was £1,600,000 (\$4,480,000). The clove tax brought in £290,000 (\$812,000), whereas educational expenditure totaled £190,000 (\$532,000). The chief item of revenue, though, was import duties, which totaled £550,000 (\$1,540,000). There is no African poll tax here. Europeans and some Arabs and Indians do pay income taxes, but officials say there is some evasion among the latter groups. Agricultural income is not taxed because of the clove tax.

No one knows exactly when an old clove tree stops producing, but it is said that some of the post-hurricane trees on Zanzibar Island might have had to be replaced soon, anyhow.

The Protectorate also has been having troubles with a clove tree disease called "dieback." It is less serious, though, and can be controlled by pruning the affected limbs. In cases where the tree is completely infected, it must be destroyed. But here the conservatism and ignorance of Arab and African growers and the absentee-landlordism of other Arabs poses a problem.

The growers are reluctant to destroy completely infected trees---though told that they are a menace to healthy trees---because even a tree in that condition continues to produce a small amount of cloves. The absentee landlords often sell the entire on-the-tree crop to middlemen, who, in a hurry to make a profit, allow pickers to break branches. These exposed places provide entry to dieback.

Regardless of sudden death and dieback, though, the current crop is a record one. When the harvest is completed, it is estimated that the yield will total 18,000 long tons. This would be worth \$6 million (\$16,800,000), or nearly twice the value of the 1950 crop. Clove yields are erratic.

Zanzibar's other chief crop is coconuts, grown generally in areas that will not support cloves. Most growers in the islands plant little more than these two money-makers. Part of the coconut crop goes for local consumption, but still the Protectorate does not raise enough food to feed itself. Some people fear that a disastrous drop in clove and copra prices would leave Zanzibar high and dry.

Before World War II, Zanzibar ran on strictly cash crop lines, importing cheap rice from Burma for its food needs. The war halted the rice supply and compulsory food planting had to be carried out, with strict enforcement, to avert famine.

Since the war, the government has been making an effort to introduce alternative cash crops---such as cocoa---and food crops. But the idea of raising other cash crops has met with no great success in face of the tried-and-true coconuts and cloves. "The attitude here is one of great suspicion to any novelty," said Tidbury.

Compulsory food planting continues, but enforcement is not too vigorous. The government instead tries to encourage food crops. Rice is being produced locally now and the government is aiding growers by making tractors available at low cost. Imports however still continue. Tidbury believes that because of its peculiar circumstances, Zanzibar will never be self-supporting in food and that a reduction in imports is all that can be sought.

There is no "land hunger" on the islands, due partly to the cloves and coconuts. Landowners will allow anyone to grow food crops between their clove and coconut trees. No charge is made for the use of the land. This is not particularly an act of altruism but rather good business. It keeps the groves free of destructive weeds.

Agricultural laborers generally have their own shambas and work only for two months or so a year at picking cloves. They can earn as much as 600 shillings (\$84.00) in that time. With what they raise on their shambas, this is sufficient to maintain them for the rest of the year.

A big part of the local menu comes from the waters around the island. Fishing is a big industry among the Arabs and Africans. Sometimes alone, sometimes in pairs, they often are gone for a couple of days in their small outrigger canoes. One is reminded of The Old Man and The Sea.

Through Uusuf, I made arrangements with an Arab fisherman to go for a sail in his outrigger one afternoon. The Arab was to meet us at a certain beach at 3:30. He showed up at the stroke of 4. "These people," said Uusuf, "They have heads like fishes. If you tell a man to come to your house for lunch at 12, he comes at 2."

The fisherman, an Aden Arab named Ali, was amused at Uusuf's ire. After Ali had leisurely beaten off some naked urchins who swarmed onto one of the outriggers ("Mau Mau dogs," he exclaimed in Swahili), we got underway with me at the tiller.

The monsoon puffed out our lateen sail and soon the canoe, named the Cairo, was battling across the harbor, heading for an island four miles out. The Cairo was made of unpainted, rough hewn wood and was 20 feet long, four feet deep and only 15 inches wide at the widest part. The bow and stern curved high out of the water and the outriggers consisted of heavy wooden planks.

We zipped past a liner lying at anchor and unloading into lighters. Then we headed out to where the seas got rougher. Ali was kept busy scooping out water that poured in over the gunwales as spray. He had a toto (young helper) whose job it was to stand precariously on the windward outrigger hanging onto a guy rope--- to keep the craft from turning over, outriggers or no.

"Hii mzuri ngalawa ("This is a fine canoe")," Ali shouted from time to time above the wind as, skimming along, we chopped the tops off of oncoming waves. Even though the toto was on the high outrigger and even though his trousers were rolled up to his knees, the trousers still were frequently in the water.

Ali shouted that he would never return to Aden. Life was too good in Zanzibar and the fishing too excellent. He owns two outriggers and sometimes makes as much as 100 shillings (\$14.00) a day. He goes many miles out to sea in the Cairo and has often been to Dar es Salaam, 45 miles away.

On another day I climbed into a wobbly canoe and was paddled out to a dhow at anchor in the harbor. From the look of it, life hasn't changed much aboard the dhows in all these centuries.

The Omani crew of ten and what passengers they acquire all eat, sleep and cook their meals on the deck. The dhow was about 30 feet long and the captain allowed as how he could take 30 passengers without too much squeezing. In the old days, when slaves were carried to the East, there was no nonsense about squeezing.

The crew were quite friendly. Yes, they knew all about America. There were a lot of Americans in the Arabian oil fields these days. They had just brought a cargo of dried fish from Muscat and in a few months would return with a load of mangrove poles from the Tanganyikan coast. The journey would take 16 to 19 days, depending on the wind.

A grizzled old Arab brought out their compass for inspection. They handled it as if it were a gem. They unscrewed the glass cover and took out the compass itself. It consisted of a cardboard circle marked with the compass points and mounted on a dime-storish compass needle.

"Africa!" exclaimed the old man, indicating one of the compass points. "India!" he said, pointing to another. "Muscat!" he said triumphantly, pointing to a third.

For a diversion one evening, I decided to see one of the American movies that are shown practically every night in Zanzibar. After I had rickshawed to the theater, I found that the night's selection was "Son of Ali Baba."

The theater was packed with Africans and Arabs, with a scattering of Indians and one or two Europeans. First came the "coming attractions" of an American western. The theater was in an uproar as the Africans and Arabs, discarding their usual torpor, screamed and shouted with excitement while two American Bwanas slugged and shot it out for the hand of the American Memsahib.

Next came a "Mr. Magoo" cartoon. It drew not a laugh.

Then, with trumpeting and a blaze of technicolor glory, came the camel opera. Pandemonium broke out again as the Americans fought it out once more, this time with swords among the palaces and narrow streets of what purported to be Baghdad (or something). African ladies in purdah squeaked in horror and bearded Arab gentlemen shook their fists at the villain as the tale of old Arabia unreeled.

The dialogue was drowned out by the noise, but most of the people in the theater didn't speak English, so it didn't make much difference.

The movie over, I boarded a rickshaw and we trotted back to my hotel... past bearded and daggered Arabs on their way home from the show... along the front of the Sultan's palace... past the old fort... down the twisting, now-deserted bazaar streets... past the huge, carved doors of the darkened Arab houses.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "David E. Reed". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

David E. Reed

Received New York 1/29/54.