Imaginaries of Oceanic Histories in Oral and Written Texts from the Kenyan Coast

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Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

December 2020

Dedication

For Chirchir, my son,
My forever first, second and third.

Abstract

This dissertation presents an analysis of selected oral and written texts from the Kenyan coast, with the view of interrogating how differently local oral sources, which have been ignored, suppressed, and omitted for centuries, imagine the Indian Ocean, its histories, and its experience at the Kenyan coast, in comparison to texts written from foreign perspectives. The main objective of this study is to explore the potential of local sources in introducing new facts and alternative perspectives that challenge the narrow view of dominant narratives and instigate us to rethink our understanding of the subject matter. To achieve this, this study pursues two issues. First, it probes the writing of history by interrogating the choices historians and writers of historical fiction make when selecting which sources to use and which ones to eliminate; which perspectives to include and which ones to exclude; which histories to tell and which ones to silence; and consequently, which people to focus on and which ones to marginalise. Following the premise that local oral sources were intentionally left out in the writing of the history of the Kenyan coast, this dissertation attempts to rewrite certain histories of the Kenyan coast using oral history. The outcome is a version of history that fills gaps in written history, provides diverging perspectives, reveals new facts, and narrates history from the perspective of the local people at the Kenyan coast. The second issue this dissertation pursues is a study of the Indian Ocean using indigenous knowledges of the sea that Kenyan coastal people possess. This places the shore folk and seafarers at the centre of oceanic studies. Through exploring embodied, experiential, and intuitive knowledges carried in local sources, this study shifts oceanic studies from surface to depth; produces multiple dimensions of the sea; and imagines a map of the sea that is local, intimate, and personal, one that dominant cartographic techniques would otherwise not capture.

Opsomming

Hierdie tesis dra 'n analiese van uitgesoekte mondelinge en geskrewe tekste uit die kus van Kenya voor, met die doel om te interrogeer hoe plaaslikke mondelinge bronne, wat vir eeue verwerp, onderdruk, of uitgelate was, die Indiese Oseaan, sy geskiedenise, en ervarings by die Kenya Kus, voorstel in vergelyking met tekste geskrewe uit 'n vreemde. perspektief. Die hoof doel van hierdie studie is om die potensiaal van plaaslikke bronne wat die beknopte seining van heersende verhaale uit daag, te verken en ons aanstood om ons verstaan van die vak te herdink. Om dit te bereik,volg hierdie studie twee sake. Eerstens, bevraagteken dit die skryf van gekiedenis deur die keuses van geskiedkundige en fiksie skrywers te ondersoek in terme hul keuse van bronne wat hulle gebruik of uit laat.; watter perspektiewe om in te sluit of uit te laat, watter geskiedenis om te vertel of stil te hou., en as gevolg, wie (watter mense) op gefokus word en wie vervreem word. Volgens die vermoede dat plaaslike mondelinge bronne doelbewus uit die skryf van die kus van Kenya geskiedenis uitgelaat is, prober hierdie studie om sekere geskiedenis van dìe kus van Kenya herskryf deur gebruik te maak van mondelinge geskiedenis. Die uitkoms is 'n geskiedkungige weergawe wat gapings vul in geskrewe geskiedis, uiteenlopende perspektiewe voorsien, nuwe feite onthul, en geskiedenis vertel uit die perspektief van plaaslike mense uit die kus van Kenya. Die tweede vraag wat hierdie studie na streef is 'n studie van die Indise Oseaan deur gebruik te maak van inheemse kennise van die see wat die Kenya kus inwoners besit. Dit plaas die kus volk en seevaarders in die middle van oseaan studies. Deur die ondersoek van beliggaamde, ervaringsleer, en aanvoellende kennise teenwoordig in plaaslike bronne, skuif hierdie studie, oseaan studies van oppervlakkig na diep; vervaardig veelvoudige dimensies van die see; en stel 'n kaart van die see voor wat plaaslik, intiem, en persoonlik is, een wat andersins nie deur oorheersende kartografiese tegnieke opgeneem kan word nie.

Ikisiri

Tasnifu hii inatoa uchambuzi wa maandishi yaliyochaguliwa katika fasihi simulizi na fasihi andishi kutoka pwani ya Kenya, kwa nia ya kuhoji jinsi vyanzo tofauti vya fasihi simulizi, ambavyo vimepuuzwa, kukandamizwa, na kuachwa kwa karne nyingi, vinafikiria Bahari ya Hindi, historia zake, na uzoefu wake katika pwani ya Kenya, ikilinganishwa na maandishi yaliyoandikwa kutoka kwa mtazamo wa wajinabi. Lengo kuu la utafiti huu ni kuchunguza uwezekano wa machimbuko ya asili katika kuingiza ukweli mpya na mtazamo mbadala inayopinga mtazamo finyu wa masimulizi makuu na kutusukumiza kufikiri tena kuhusu mada. Ili kufanikisha ili, utafiti huu unafuatilia maswala mawili. Kwanza, inachunguza maandishi ya historia kwa kuhoji chaguo wanayofanya wanahistoria na waandishi wa historia ya kubuni katika kuchagua ni chimbuko lipi litakalotumika au kutolewa; mitazamo ipi itajumuishwa na ipi haitajumuishwa; historia zipi za kusemwa na zipi za kutosema; na hivyo, ni kina nani watazingatiwa au kutengwa. Kufuatia dhana kuwa machimbuko asilia ya fasihi simulizi viliachwa kimakusudi katika uandishi wa historia ya pwani ya Kenya, tasnifu hii inakusudi kuandika tena historia fulani ya pwani ya Kenya kutumia fasihi simulizi ya historia. Matokeo ni aina ya historia inayojaza pengo katika historia andishi, kutoa mitazamo mbalimbali, kufichua ukweli mpya, na kukariri historia kutoka mtazamo wa wenyeji wa pwani ya Kenya. Suala la pili linalofuatiliwa na tasnifu hii ni uchunguzi wa Bahari ya Hindi kutumia maarifa asilia inayomilikiwa na wenyeji wa Pwani ya Kenya. Hii inaweka hadithi ya pwani na wasafiri wa bahari kipaumbele katika masomo ya bahari. Kupitia uchunguzi wa yaliyomo, uzoefu, na maarifa angavu iliyofanywa katika machimbuko asilia, utafiti huu unabadilisha masomo ya bahari kutoka kwa msingi hadi kina, hutoa mielekezo nyingi ya bahari; na kutoa ramani ya bahari ambayo ni asili, wa ndani, ya kibinafsi, na moja ambayo mbinu za uchoraji wa ramani haingeweza kuijumuisha.

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I have two forthcoming publications from sections of this dissertation, one in *English Studies in Africa*, derived from the first section of chapter two; and the other in a special issue by *Wasafiri*, derived from the second section of chapter four.

Contents

CHAPTER I

Introduction: Locating the Indian Ocean World at the Kenyan Coast

1.1. Introduction

As part of my MA studies at the University of Nairobi (UoN) in 2016, I studied Oral Literature in Africa, one of the core units on our programme then. Part of this course entailed exposing students to the world of research through fieldwork. Consequently, we spent two weeks of October in an intensive, supervised oral literature fieldwork, among the Digo in Kwale County at the Kenyan coast. The Digo is one of the nine Mijikenda tribes, the other eight being the Duruma, Giriama, Jibana, Chonyi, Ribe, Rabai, Kauma, and Kambe[1]. Our lecturer Professor Peter Wasamba was our lead researcher. During this time, we collected Digo oral narratives, oral poetry, proverbs, tongue twisters and riddles. We got the experience of handling recorded texts in audio/visual forms, transcribing them in Kidigo or Kiswahili, translating them into English, and later compiling our data as part of a fieldwork report.

Two weeks after this fieldwork, the Ministry of Sports, Culture and the Arts (MOSCA) invited a team from UoN, including myself, to a workshop on developing a tool for documenting oral traditions of Kenyan communities. Other stakeholders present were oral literature scholars from other universities in Kenya, experts of culture from MOSCA and National Museums of Kenya (NMK), and officials from the Kenya National Archives. The ministry felt the need to document Kenyan communities' intangible cultural heritage in faithfulness to the Constitution of Kenya 2010 Chapter 2 Article 11 which "recognises culture as the foundation of the nation" and further commits to promote forms of cultural expression including oral genres[2], and in line with UNESCO 2003[3] Convention's aim to safeguard, ensure respect for and raise awareness of Intangible Cultural Heritage, a convention that Kenya ratified in 2007. The workshop emphasised that oral traditions are important as they carry people's identity and are reservoirs of their knowledge, history, beliefs and values. With local languages facing extinction and considering the many calls for and actual efforts to document endangered languages[4], there appears to be an urgent need to archive oral genres of Kenyan communities in digital forms, which will preserve both the local languages and the indigenous knowledges they carry. Born

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[1] *Mijikenda* is derived from Kiswahili for 'nine houses' – *miji* is 'tribes' or 'houses', and *kenda* is 'nine'.

[2] http://www.klrc.go.ke/index.php/constitution-of-kenya/108-chapter-two-the-republic/177-11-culture

[3] http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=17716&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

[4] See, for example, Batibo (2009), Kube (2006), and Wamalwa & Oluoch (2013).

out of that workshop is the Digitisation of Kenya Oral Genres (DKOGs), a project between UoN and MOSCA that aims to collect oral genres including oral literature from Kenyan communities and to archive them in a digital website. After a successful pilot project in December 2017, the first phase of the project is forthcoming.

The two incidents described above form the foundation of my doctoral research. In this study, I analyse oral and written texts from the Kenyan coast with the view of examining the role of local sources in challenging the narrow view of dominant narratives, especially those created from outsider perspectives. In interrogating how local sources can expand existing knowledge about the Kenyan coast, I pursue two issues, first, that in the writing of the history of the Kenyan coast, local oral sources were intentionally left out; and second, that in conceptualising the Indian Ocean and its experience at the Kenyan coast, the local knowledges of the sea that coastal people possess have not been taken into account. As a result, indigenous knowledges replete with local communities' histories and experiences that are transmitted orally are lost. My main agenda, therefore, is to explore the potential of local sources in introducing new facts and alternative perspectives that challenge us to rethink our understanding of the Indian Ocean, its histories, and its experience at the Kenyan coast.

My impetus for this study derives from the idea that narratives that get told, documented or published are just one of many; there cannot be a narrative that captures all perspectives that there are. As Ann Rigney (2004) observes, "at any given moment, there is only a limited number of forms of expression available for use and every preference entails the neglect of something else" (375). When it comes to the Kenyan coast, widely disseminated knowledges about this region lack the perspective of the coastal people themselves, which, if explored as I do in this study, complicate, enlarge, and enrich the archive of existing knowledge resources. Therefore, I pursue forms of knowledge that have been ignored, suppressed, and targeted for erasure, and use them to, on the one hand, reshape the history of the Kenyan coast, and on the other, imagine alternative maps of the sea. In so doing, I foreground some of the competing truths that exist about this region, and call attention to the need to incorporate indigenous knowledges into mainstream discourse.

Even as I pursue local oral texts that have been omitted in the study of the Indian Ocean world, I do not set aside written texts. I give similar focus to both written and oral texts, because my intention is to propose a tradition of blending these sources. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Homi Bhabha argues that we do not have to polarise in order to polemicize. He asks, "Can the

aim of freedom of knowledge be the simple inversion of the relation of the oppressor and oppressed, centre and periphery, negative image and positive image?" (19). By putting oral and written texts from different genres in conversation with each other, this study strives toward a multifocal view of the Kenyan coast and the Indian Ocean. The written texts I analyse are three novels, the first two being historical fiction: *The Great Siege of Fort Jesus* (1970) by Valerie Cuthbert, *Rebmann: A Novel* (2014) by Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, and *The Dragonfly Sea* (2019) by Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor. The oral texts that I study alongside these novels, which I collected during fieldwork in Mombasa and Kwale, are three oral histories, two oral testimonies, and three oral poems. One of the oral histories is on Shimoni Slave Caves near the border of Kenya and Tanzania (narrated by Bwana Jabari, a tour guide), while the remaining two are on Fort Jesus in Mombasa (one by Bwana Baraka, a tour guide, and the other by Mzee Nyembwe, an orator). The oral testimonies were given by two Digo seafarers, a former sailor (Mzee Juma) and a fisherman (Mvuvi Charo). The oral poems, on the other hand, were performed by Bahati Ngazi, a poet and Radio presenter.

My contribution to the study of the Indian Ocean is twofold. On one hand, my analysis of literary and popular texts across a variety of languages (Kiswahili, English) and genres (oral testimony, oral poetry, and an Indian Ocean novel) allows me to produce a map of the Indian Ocean that is based on oral traditions, embodied knowledges, and local experiences that coastal people possess. I study the sea from the perspective of those who engage with it on a daily basis, because they are the ones who know more about their surroundings, and therefore have experiential knowledge about it. I also do this because the perspective of these people who are local to the sea has received very little attention (as I shall show shortly), and yet it promises to provide information that can fill existing gaps in Indian Ocean studies. In exploring these oral sources and embodied knowledges of the sea, and in presenting a map that is derived from people's experiences and emotions, I am inspired by Margaret Pearce's "Framing the Days: Place and narrative in cartography" (2008). Pearce proposes that we can turn to art and narratives as cartographic tools, since they allow us to capture people's feelings, emotions, and experiences, something that dominant cartographic tools are unable to do (18).

The other contribution this study makes to oceanic studies is that it shifts the analysis of the sea from surface to depth. For a long time, oceanic studies have paid attention to the actions, events, and exchanges across the sea, with little else on what takes place underwater. In other words, oceanic studies have been one-sided, focusing on the surface and ignoring the depth of

the sea. Philip Steinberg (2013) warns against this reduction of the sea to "a surface, a space of connection that merely unifies the societies on its borders" (157). Further, Philip Steinberg and Kimberley Peters (2015) argue that the sea is multi-dimensional, it is "both planar – horizontal, 'shifting' laterally – but likewise, it is vertical: moving upwards and downwards, rising and subsiding with height and depth" (250). Thus, oceanic studies should reflect the nature of the sea itself, it should provide both horizontal and vertical analyses. Emphasising the need for this shift, Isabel Hofmeyr (2019) argues that it is time to "engage with both human and non-human aspects of the ocean, with both the depth and the surface, with the materiality and seaness of the sea" ("Ecologies" 2). The oral testimonies that I analyse in chapter four, especially, do this by giving texture to the world beneath the surface of the ocean.

Two things sparked my interest to study the Indian Ocean at the Kenyan coast using local knowledges of the sea. Firstly, the Digo, among who I undertook my research, have lived at the Kenyan coast for centuries. They are mostly fisherfolk and largely rely on the sea for survival. The question is, who better tell us about the sea, if not these people who have lived at its shore for centuries? There is no doubt that the wealth of knowledge and experience that they possess, as shall be seen in chapter four, provides researchers with information that can fill some of the longstanding gaps in oceanic studies. Secondly, being that the Digo, like all littoral communities, largely rely on the ocean for survival, within it is to be found the largest concentration of seafarers, including sailors, divers, and fishermen. This is the group of people that Hester Blum (2010) proposes that they be placed at the centre of oceanic studies. Blum advocates for a framework of maritime studies that is "attentive to the lives, labor and writings [and testimonies] of seamen" (675), her main argument being that such a framework "allows us to perceive, analyse, and deploy aspects of the history, literature, and culture of the oceanic world that might otherwise be rendered obscure or abstract" (671). In other words, seafarers have immense knowledge of the ocean, and without them we cannot approach a full understanding of the sea. These two reasons motivate me to present a map of the sea that is derived from embodied knowledges and experiences possessed by communities at the coast, as opposed to dominant representations that are usually drawn from a removed perspective, away from the experience of those who inhabit the space in question. In *Ecocriticism and Geocriticism* (2016), Robert Tally and Christine Battista point out this inherent disconnect between topographical representations and human feelings and emotions, that:

in its production of geographic and other forms of knowledge, cartographic practices have resulted in the perceived alienation of the human subject from, and within, nature, as the

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mapmaker is positioned outside of the geography surveyed, which then becomes an abstract space onto which are plotted abstract, geometric, or topographic figures. The abstract space is thus cut off from the lived spaces of human interactions, as well as from the natural ecosystems that are their conditions for possibility. (3)

Contrary to dominant images of the sea, therefore, the foundation of my approach is the feelings and emotions that local people at the Kenyan coast attach to the space they occupy. This means that the map that I come up with is local, personal, and intimate.

1.2. The Struggle to be Heard at the Kenyan Coast

I chose to base this study on the Kenyan coast for three main reasons. Firstly, this region, having been the gateway to east Africa, has a long history of contact with the outside world, a summary of which I provide below, because it forms the foundation of the history that I discuss in chapters two and three. Tied to this long history is the second reason I got interested in this region, namely that the Kenyan coast has historically accommodated a diverse group of people. Consequently, there has been a constant tussle for power between different groups, all of which have wanted to express or claim power over others. Therefore, more than any other region in Kenya, there have always been competing claims to space that different groups of people at the coast make, the focus of my study being to explore the perspective of those that have been oppressed over the centuries, who are the Mijikenda[5]. The third reason is a combination of the first two, and it is that the Kenyan coast is unique; it exemplifies the continuum of slavery on the African continent imposed upon it by the outside world, whereby it was delivered from slavery and immediately flung into colonialism[6]. Taken together, these three elements have created a society in which the local people are, until today, double marginalised (nationally and locally), a concern that I delve into in chapter five.

What follows is a brief account of the long history of the contact between the Kenyan coast and the outside world before the arrival of the Portuguese in the 15th century, and then a brief layout of the various levels of conflict between different groups of people at the Kenyan coast. My aim is to paint a picture of the different levels of inequality that historically defined

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[5] The Mijikenda are believed to have migrated to the Kenyan coast from Shungwaya, present day Somalia (Chittick 1969; Morton 1972; Prins 1952; Spear 1978; Werner, "Notes" 1913; Willis & Gona 2013).

[6] Christian missionary activity, to which ending slavery on the African continent was one of its aims, became the forerunner of colonialism. In East Africa, it established its first mission station in Rabai near Mombasa in 1844, and just fifty years later, the British declared Kenya its colony and the coast its protectorate. This history is discussed in chapter three of this dissertation.

relations between people of different races, class, and religion, and consequently to reveal the Mijikenda, who are local to the coast, as being the ones whose perspective has been suppressed, omitted, and targeted for erasure.

The earliest available record of the connection between East Africa at large and the outside world is found in the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* attributed to an anonymous Graeco-Roman merchant. There exist different copies and translations of this text, and I refer to that translated and edited by G.W.B. Huntingford (1980). Huntingford notes that the Erythraean Sea was the name given by the Greeks to the Indian Ocean and its two branches, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, and it must be of this great expanse that the author of *Periplus* wrote (1). He also notes that while there may have been other earlier navigations of the Indian Ocean, *Periplus* is the oldest available record by someone who had first-hand knowledge of this sea (4). From evidence in the text, Huntingford suggests that the *Periplus* must have been written between A.D. 95 and 130 (11). Yet, there is evidence in the *Periplus* that shows that the towns and peoples of the East African coast described in the text had had previous contact with outsiders. For instance, the 'Ausineitic coast' as detailed in its chapter 15 (in Huntingford 29), has been linked to the Arab state of Ausan. It is therefore not known exactly when East Africa had the first contact with the outside world, but it is believed that mercantile contacts might have existed by 500 B.C. (Al-Radi 270). What is clearly known, however, is that the first outsiders to invade East Africa were from the Asian continent and the Middle East region (Al-Radi 270; Coupland 15). The Arabs, in particular, established sultanates in major towns along the coast, a system of governance that lasted for centuries. They also succeeded in conducting trade not only with the coastal people, but also with the communities in the interior. The Arab domination of the Kenyan coast flourished until the end of the 15th century when the Portuguese, the first Europeans to arrive, took charge – an era that I discuss in great detail in chapters two and three.

As for the relations between different groups of people, historically, the coastal society was stratified along divisions of class, race, and religion, and in all these, the Mijikenda were placed at the bottom. Racially speaking, white people occupied the highest rank, followed by Arabs, Asians, and finally, Africans who occupied the lowest rank (Constantin 148; Prestholdt, "Politics" 257). This is despite Africans being the majority – in 1962, for example, there were 300, 000 Africans, 48, 000 Asians, 37, 000 Arabs, and only 7, 000 Europeans at the Kenyan coast (Wright 2). When it comes to religion, Islam was perceived to be superior, as Muslims, who were mostly Arabs or of Arab descent, sought to distance themselves from the Africans.

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Islam was always associated with *ustaarabu* or *uungwana*, civility, and its followers were seen as *wastaarabu* or *waungwana*, civilised, in opposition to non-Muslims who were referred to as *washenzi,* barbaric (Constantin 148; Mathews 37). For centuries, therefore, African people local to the Kenyan coast have been dominated by those from the outside world. Due to the little power they held, their perspective was suppressed and even omitted, so that most of the knowledge produced and disseminated about the Kenyan coast, including the history of the Mijikenda themselves, was written from foreign perspectives.

1.3. Enlarging the Archive: The contribution of oral history to the study of the Kenyan coast

As intimated earlier, a single narrative cannot capture all the viewpoints that there are. Similarly, narrated or documented history does not contain the perspectives of all the groups of people involved, but rather, it carries the voice of the dominant group. Therefore, for every history that is told, there are many other versions of it that have been suppressed or omitted. By unearthing histories that have been buried in people's memories for centuries, I draw attention to local versions of the history of the Kenyan coast, through which I challenge dominant history, reshape the history of the Kenyan coast, and enlarge the archive of the history of this region. In order to fully appreciate the role oral history plays in this study, I find it important to define oral history and to delineate its origin and development as a discipline and research methodology elsewhere in the world and on the African continent.

By definition, oral history is "a narrative that is constructed, edited and interpreted through multiple processes of decision-making determined by the epistemological choices of the professional and interviewee – who both, arguably, take on the role of author-historian" (Beard 533). Here, the role of the narrator (interviewee) as the originator of the text is clearly brought out. Sifting through countless memories, the narrator decides which memories to express and which ones to suppress. Therefore, what is recorded by the researcher is not all there is to know about a given past, neither is it all the narrator knows about that particular past, but rather what the narrator decides to reveal at that specific moment. At the same time, this definition captures the role of the researcher in the creation of the resultant text. During the performance of an oral history, the researcher does not simply record what the narrator says or does (otherwise one would simply place recording equipment before a narrator and then collect them later), but actually influences which direction the performance takes. In short, the researcher is an active participant in the production of the oral histories they are recording. For example, the questions

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a researcher poses could potentially take the performance onto a different path. During fieldwork, I remember going through my transcripts at the end of the day and thinking about how in some cases I would have collected richer narratives if I had asked some questions and not others.

The role of the researcher in the creation of oral history continues beyond the recording stage, to the 'post-field work phase'. When a researcher analyses recorded oral histories, the views and commentaries that emerge are not the narrator's (or researched community's) per se but mostly consist of the researcher's interpretation of what was recorded. For example, in "That's Not What I Said", Katherine Borland (1991) points out how her grandmother (interviewee) completely disagreed with how Borland interpreted an interview they had done together (69). Thus, the position taken in the discussion of oral histories and oral testimonies in this dissertation should not be taken as being the views of the narrators who were so generous and open enough to consent to their words being published, but should be attributed to my understanding of what these narrators willingly shared with me.

As to the emergence of oral history as a discipline, Paul Thompson (2000) argues that oral history "is as old as history itself. It was the *first* kind of history" (25, emphasis in original). It was already in use thousands of years ago. For example, Donald Ritchie (2003) mentions a case in which "[t]hree thousand years ago, scribes of the Zhou dynasty in China collected the sayings of the people for the use of court historians" (19–20). This preference for oral records over written ones for use in court probably arose from the fear that "it was easy to forge a written charter" (Thompson 32). Actually, at the onset of literacy and writing, "[d]ocuments did not immediately inspire trust" (Clanchy 295), that is, oral testimonies were deemed more believable. After that, oral sources were used alongside written ones for many centuries, "until the nineteenth century, when the German school of scientific history promoted documentary research to the exclusion of other, less 'objective' sources" (Ritchie 20). Led by Leopold von Ranke, emerging historians strove to turn history into a purely evidence-based subject[7]. As a result, "they trained historians to scrutinise documents in their search for truth and dismissed oral sources as folklore and myth, prized only by well-meaning but naïve amateurs and antiquarians" (Ritchie 1). Fortunately, it so happened that at the precise moment when historians were turning away from oral sources, interviewing was gaining popularity among

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[7] The motive behind this was the desire to detach history from the arts and to align it with the natural sciences, a conflict that I describe in detail in the introduction to chapter two.

other disciplines, especially journalism. Owing to this, in the 1940s (re)appeared a connection between interviewing and oral history, and in 1948, Allan Nevins, a journalist turned historian, "created the first modern oral history archives at Columbia University", and later he founded the Columbia Oral History Research Office (Ritchie 22). From then on, oral history projects and centres grew around the world.

In Africa, pioneering African scholars, in particular Bethwell Allan Ogot from Kenya and Kenneth Onwuka Dike from Nigeria, faced a backlash in 1950s when they first introduced oral history as a research methodology in African historiography (Ngugi, *Globalectics* 70). Their persistence, however, saw them succeed in qualifying oral material as sources of history. Blending oral and written historical sources, Ogot wrote his *History of the Southern Luo* (1967) while Dike produced his *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta* (1956). In the 1970s, there was a major breakthrough as UNESCO commissioned its International Scientific Committee – founded in 1971, and for which Ogot became President (1978–1983) – to undertake a drafting of the General History of Africa project. Today, there are eight volumes of *General History of Africa,* which, Ogot notes, "is based on a wide variety of sources, including oral tradition and arts forms" ("Description" xxix). Soon after came Jan Vansina who, through his *Oral Tradition as History* (1985), solidified the importance of oral tradition as historical evidence from which history can be constructed and/or reconstructed.

Oral history remains a critical means of recovering suppressed pasts. A look at the accounts I recorded is proof that there is a wealth of knowledge that has been left out of written discourses, and the best way to tap into this knowledge is through recording and hopefully preserving and sharing it on digital platforms. Vansina (1985) emphasises the importance of recording oral sources in whichever capacity by noting that "[w]hen a performance has been recorded, the information acquired becomes permanent and becomes testimony, whether the information is widely known or not" (63). Therefore, my recording oral testimonies of histories that have been left out of dominant knowledge platforms is also a way of breathing life into these long-ignored indigenous knowledges. My analysis of them attests to the ability of oral history to do more than just "'fill the gaps.' By bringing in new voices, they can bring us closer to history as it actually happened. They also have the power to challenge prevailing historiographical paradigms, thereby making history that much more accurate and more democratic" (Bowie 873). This dissertation, therefore, is a reminder that there are multiple narratives about every

single event that is historically known, and that we should gather as many versions as possible, to give a chance for many more voices to speak, and also to expand our knowledge of the past.

1.4. Seafarers, Shore Folk, and the Study of the Indian Ocean

A significant amount of scholarship has been dedicated to the sea in recent years – in her introduction of the 2006 American Historical Review (AHR), Karen Wigen says that "maritime scholarship seems to have burst its bounds" (717). However, a lot of it has engaged with the Mediterranean, the Pacific, and the Atlantic, leaving behind the Indian Ocean. In fact, Wigen, in a footnote, mentions that "[r]egrettably, the equally rich historiography of the Indian Ocean is not covered in this forum" (718), and offers no explanation for this omission of the Indian Ocean. As Markus Vink (2007) has noted, "despite the sophisticated quality of recent scholarship, the Indian Ocean remains much less known than its Atlantic and Pacific counterparts" (41–42). The little attention that the Indian Ocean has received is unexpected considering its outstanding features and strategic position when compared to other oceans. For instance, "the Indian Ocean is by far the oldest of the seas in history, in terms of its being used and traversed by humans. The first sea passage in human history was over its waters" (Pearson, *Indian Ocean* 3). To be specific, there have been human movement across the Indian Ocean for about 5, 000 years, compared to only 2, 000 years of Pacific crossings and 1, 000 years of movement across the Atlantic (Ibid.). For this reason, "urban civilisation began relatively early along the Indian Ocean littoral compared with other regions" (McPherson 6). In addition, the trading networks that have characterised the Indian Ocean world for millennia point to the Indian Ocean as the first global economy (Campbell 34), a position it still maintains, "as an interregional space in a time of intense global interconnections" (Bose 3). The central position occupied by the Indian Ocean in the 21st century is illustrated by the fact that of ninety percent of global commerce that is transported by sea, the Indian Ocean accounts for half (Kaplan 19). Therefore, my desire to engage with the Indian Ocean and the rich histories associated with it stems from the longstanding neglect of this sea in maritime studies.

In my study of the Indian Ocean, I argue that we should gather an infinite number of testimonies by shore folk and seafarers if we are to fully understand the sea. So far, there are very few studies that draw from the lives of shore folk and seafarers as a point of entry into theorising the ocean. There is, for instance, Jennifer Rogerson's (2015) ethnographic study on how fishermen in Lamberts Bay on the west coast of South Africa perceive marine conservation practices that have been put in place by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

(DAFF). From interviews that Rogerson has with some of the fishermen, she learns that the measures enforced by DAFF were counter-intuitive, "they did not always take fish behaviour or sea actions into account" (327). The fishermen had knowledge of what times certain fish species were available, and they organised their fishing expeditions around such, but the fishing times that DAFF proposed contradicted them, and therefore disadvantaged the fishermen. What DAFF did not know, but which the fishermen knew, is the behaviour of fish at different times of the year. The fishermen have an intuitive knowledge of the sea. One told Rogerson about how "His body is where he holds his knowledge, but he is also aware that it is through his boat that his knowledge is moulded. […] he would get a good feel for the presence of fish on a given day by looking at the water" (328). This intuitive knowledge of the sea is something I also explore in my study, especially in Owuor's novel *The Dragonfly Sea*, in which characters are presented as being able to relate with the sea through the senses of touch, sight, hearing, and intuition. What this reminds us is that shore folk from different coasts have similar experiences of the sea. As Michael Pearson (2006) argues, littoral communities share a culture and worldview, so that "we can go around the shores of an ocean, or a sea, or indeed the whole world, and identify societies that have more in common with other littoral societies than they do with their inland neighbours" ("Concept" 353). For this reason, the testimonies I recorded, though they are from one community at the Kenyan coast, can be used to conceptualise an Indian Ocean culture.

Coming closer to the East African coast is, notably, Pamila Gupta's "Aquatic Traditions" (2014). In this paper, Gupta documents a Christian infused fishing ritual among a community of Goan fishermen in Catembe, Mozambique. This ritual takes place on the Catholic feast day of Saint Peter (29 June), the patron saint of fishermen all over the world. On this day, these Goan fishermen use the occasion both to "pay homage to their ancestors who had travelled by ship three generations earlier" and to ask the saint "to bless the coming fishing season, upon which their economic survival so dearly depends" (855). As São Pedro feast originates from Portugal, Gupta analyses it as a diasporic practice that connects Goan fishermen with the idea of home[8]. The climax of this ritual is when the fishermen quietly slip a wreath dedicated to São Pedro into the ocean (873). This practice by Goan fishermen in Mozambique echoes the special

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[8] More on the history, migration and experiences of the Goan community in Mozambique is found in Gupta's "The Disquieting of History" (2009) and "Visuality and Diasporic Dynamism" (2016).

connection between fisherfolk all over and the ocean, and the rituals that they practise to sustain a healthy relationship with the sea, which they depend on for survival.

Fishermen from the Kenyan coast also have certain rituals that dictate their behaviour in and around the ocean. Hussein Alidina (2006) elaborates on a tradition that Kenyan coastal fishermen, particularly those from the Digo community, adhere to. In Digo tradition, he says, fisherfolk observe certain practices that ensure their peaceful coexistence with the spirits that inhabit the ocean. These include their refraining from fishing on days when traditional sacrifices are made, not fishing on grounds where the spirits are believed to stay, not harvesting young fish, and not using poison to fish as this would pollute the spirit world (14). Although these rituals are specific to certain fishing communities, they carry with them knowledges of the sea that are of universal relevance. From the way fishermen and other seafarers conduct themselves in and around the ocean, and more so from their relationship with the sea, we learn some aspects of the sea that we would otherwise not perceive. There is need, therefore, to further explore the ocean as experienced, known, and understood by seafarers, which I do in this dissertation by examining the lives and experiences of two Digo seafarers, the fisherman and the sailor.

This is not to say that the Kenyan littoral community has been left out of research. However, most of the research that has been carried out on Kenya's (south) coast is about the vibrant tourist economy in the region[9]. Relating to inhabitants of the sea and its surrounding, specifically, there has been huge focus on beach boys[10], who are the young men who spend their lives on the beach every day, and perform such duties as tour guides, boat operators, curio sellers, and beach massage parlours operators. In Diani Beach where I carried my research, and indeed in all of the south coast, these young men fall into three groups: there are the Digo, who are the majority; then there are those from other Mijikenda tribes; and finally there are immigrants from the hinterland, who have moved to the coast either temporarily or permanently. Of all the activities this group of people engage in, most research has focused on sex tourism, which is basically the sexual-economic exchanges that take place between male beach boys and white female tourists (Chege 2017, 2019; Meiu 2015). This sex economy is not

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[9] See, for instance Akama and Kieti (2007), De Sausmarez (2013), Mshenga et al (2010), Mutindi, Namusonge and Obwogi (2013), and Sindiga (1996).

[10] From my interaction with some of them, they told me that beach boys now identify themselves as beach operators, a decision they made after realising that many people associated being a beach boy with being a sexual service provider for female tourists and nothing else. They are right, because most research, including those I review here, place a lot of emphasis on this aspect of their lives.

unique to the south coast, it is also prevalent on the north coast (Kibicho 2004). In fact, research done by Wanjohi Kibicho (2005) found similar trends of this form of tourism across the Kenyan coast from Shimoni to Malindi. Of course, sex tourism on the Kenyan coast does not just take place between local men and visiting women, for there are local women who are involved with visiting men especially those from Europe (Berman 2017; Kibicho 2004; Kisia & Ryan 2017). Just as in the case of the beach boys, these women are motivated by the prospects of a better life – some are even lucky to form long lasting relationships with their clients, eventually getting married to them. Like the beach boys who compete for the available white female tourists (Chege, "If" 17), also, the local women are larger in number when compared to their prospective clients. As a result, there is a stiff competition, which has motivated the women to devise strategies for winning these men. In some extreme cases, these women, in a bid to increase their chances of success, even seek help from witchdoctors locally and abroad (Kisia & Ryan 222).

While these studies are important and expand our knowledge of the different types of exchanges that take place on the Kenyan littoral, my observation is that they look towards land and hardly towards the sea. They downplay the significance of the one entity that brings all the actors in these studies together, the sea itself. Yes, the beach generates a lot of information that can help us understand the role of the ocean in the lives of those who traverse the beach on a daily basis, but we can have an even deeper understanding of coastal communities by exploring the nature of the sea, especially from the local people's standpoint.

1.5. Selection of Texts

My selection of texts from different genres (historical novel, Indian Ocean novel, oral history, oral testimony, and oral poetry) is guided by the different functions each set of texts serves in this study. To begin, my preoccupation with alternative narratives makes the novel indispensable. The historical novel, especially, enables an interaction with alternative versions of history, as shall be seen in Macgoye's *Rebmann* (2014). As Rigney (2004) puts it, the novel, as opposed to historical books, "can be seen to offer an alternative forum for recording memories of the past which were left out of the institutionalized discourses of the time and which, given their generic conventions, could not easily be accommodated within them" (375). However, not all novels do this, explaining my choice of the other historical novel in this study, that is Cuthbert's *The Great Siege* (1970), which sticks to the script provided by history when retelling the history of the Kenyan coast. Placing these two together allows me to interrogate

how writers of historical fiction handle historical sources, and to examine the different choices they make about which sources to include and which ones to exclude in their writing, choices which lead to different shapes of history.

If the novel imagines an alternative past, then the oral histories that form part of this study produce staggering evidence, and completely recreate that past. The oral histories of Fort Jesus and Shimoni Caves narrate versions history that are replete with intriguing facts that challenge our understanding of the Kenyan coast and its local inhabitants. It is with these versions of history that I expand the limits of the archive by bringing in new archival material that was hitherto unknown in mainstream discourse. This material opens up the possibility of reassessing our knowledge of the past, since history is eternally subject to revisionism. The archive, Antoinette Burton (2005) claims, is incomplete, yet, it is structured in a way that what is not in it is presumed not to exist (3–4). Thus, as researchers, we are faced with the constant task of finding new evidence like "letters, diaries, [and] eyewitness testimony [which] may add to the record of events and may even discredit other materials" (Rosenberg 8). The oral histories in this study are thus useful as they reshape the past by revealing facts that were suppressed and omitted in the writing of history.

I selected the oral testimonies by the two Digo seafarers, Mzee Juma the sailor and Mvuvi Charo the fisherman, and the oral poems (*mashairi*) that Bahati performed, because these oral texts carry indigenous knowledges of the coastal people. They allow me to capture local perceptions of the Indian Ocean and its experiences at the Kenyan coast. Since these testimonies and poems are given by people who undoubtedly have an intimate relationship with the sea, and given that these tales communicate events in the ocean that these people have witnessed, I am able to derive an embodied and experiential map of the Indian Ocean from these texts. More importantly, they allow me to engage with Indian Ocean texts that are not part of mainstream discourse, something that Tina Steiner and Evan Mwangi (2019) advocate. They warn that despite the growing interest in Indian Ocean studies, there exists "a tendency to study a limited and predictable super-canon of Indian Ocean texts, ignoring emerging voices from the region and largely neglected earlier texts" (161). These texts, therefore, are bound to provide renewed perspectives in Indian Ocean studies.

To accompany these local experiences of the sea, I chose Owuor's latest novel *The Dragonfly Sea* (2019) which is largely set on Pate island in the Lamu Archipelago. This novel is suitable because in it, Owuor reaffirms indigenous knowledges and incorporates local understandings

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of the sea into the text. Having recognised the scarcity of narratives that present the sea from the standpoint of people who have an intimate relationship with it, which is the shore folk and the seafarers, Owuor conducts an extensive interview with a Swahili seafarer in Tumbatu island, Haji Gora Haji, from whose musings she forges her characters. In her Master thesis which provides an excerpt of the novel, Owuor explains that her project in *The Dragonfly* "arises because scholarly and official narratives of the Indian Ocean have only rarely considered the Swahili ocean imaginary, particularly as a local way of knowing and mapping the ocean rooted in those with the most intimate proximity to it" (*Dragonfly Monsoon* 93). To bring to the fore these local knowledges of the sea, Owuor attempts to capture, imagine, and represent the embodied and experienced knowledges of the Swahili Seas, which, she contends, are largely unvoiced (*Dragonfly Monsoon* 95). Thus, the focus of Owuor's novel makes it possible to study it alongside the oral testimonies and poems. It also goes a long way to show how written texts can embrace local oral sources, thereby giving communities under study the opportunity to speak for themselves.

1.6. Fieldwork Methodology

The oral texts in this study, I have mentioned, were recorded during fieldwork that I carried out on Kenya's south coast from 27 October to 21 November 2018, during which time I stayed in Diani Beach. The south coast is home to two of the nine Mijikenda tribes, the Digo and the Duruma. The rest occupy the north coast. Of the two, the Digo, who are fisherfolk, live along the shores of the Indian Ocean while the Duruma, who are largely agricultural, live in the hinterland. I drew most of my artists/narrators from the Digo because more than any other Mijikenda tribe, this is the group that looks towards the sea. Mzee Suleimann Ali Nyembwe (who narrated the history of Fort Jesus), Jabari (who gave the oral history of Shimoni Slave Caves), Mvuvi Charo the fisherman, Mzee Juma the sailor, and Bahati Ngazi the oral poet are all Digo, while Bwana Baraka, the tour guide in Fort Jesus, is non-Mijikenda. The biographical information of these orators is appended to this dissertation.

I had previously interacted with both Mzee Nyembwe and Bahati, as the two are part of the people we interviewed in 2016 during our MA oral literature fieldwork. Judging from the wealth of knowledge the two shared with us then, I was confident that I would gather interesting, quality material from these two, and I was sure that I wanted them to be part of this study. They were, therefore, the first people I contacted during my preparations for fieldwork. On 29 October 2018, I went to Mzee Nyembwe's home in Ziwani, and he narrated some oral

narratives that touch on the Indian Ocean, and I recorded them. A few days later, I called to ask him how much knowledge he has about the history of the Kenyan coast. He said he knew everything and could tell me about anything I wanted to know. When I asked him if we could talk about the history of Fort Jesus, he was excited, and we scheduled another interview, which we recorded on 6 November. Towards the end of our recording, Mzee Nyembwe recommended that I visit Fort Jesus in Mombasa, something that I had planned to do. He wanted me to witness for myself some of the things he had told me.

Early the next day, I left Diani Beach, boarded a matatu (a public transport minibus) to Likoni, and crossed the Kilindini harbour using the Likoni Ferry. On the island of Mombasa, I approached a tuk-tuk driver who took me to Fort Jesus, which is situated less than ten minutes' drive from Mombasa CBD. I had been told that there are many tour guides on Fort Jesus grounds, and so I was not surprised when a man with a badge hanging around his neck hurriedly walked towards me, intercepting me at the entrance of the fort. This man introduced himself as Bwana Baraka, one of the 28 official tour guides at Fort Jesus. While I could have turned him down and taken a personal tour first, before finding someone to talk to, I engaged him immediately. I thought that an impromptu but consented interview was the best way to record the history of Fort Jesus as is told to anyone who goes to this historical monument, which was proclaimed a World Heritage Site in 2001 by UNESCO. Bwana Baraka and I agreed on the normal routine, which is that a tour guide takes their guest around the fort for one hour and the guest pays them five hundred shillings (about ZAR 80). I figured that I would ask for additional time if I needed more information after the first hour, but this was not necessary because the 60 minutes were enough for the tour and a short interview.

Not long after my tour of Fort Jesus, on 9 November, I went to Shimoni Slave Caves in Msambweni Sub-County, near the Kenya-Tanzania border and just opposite Wasini island. The constant reference to Shimoni by people whom I met and talked to about the Kenyan coast's slave history prompted me to make this trip. I also just wanted to see Wasini island and the Kisite-Mpunguti Marine Park close to it. At Shimoni Slave Caves, I met Ali Hassan Jabari, one of the four tour guides there. Jabari gladly received me and consented to my recording our interview on the oral history of Shimoni. Unlike in Fort Jesus, there is no fixed payment for the tour guides in Shimoni – visitors are free to offer them whatever amount they are comfortable with, meaning that they are some sort of volunteers.

For this research, I met Bahati on two separate occasions, on 31 October and 2 November 2018. She performed eight poems, four on each occasion, all of which feature different aspects of the ocean. I selected three of the poems for analysis in this study. As for Mzee Juma the sailor, I was introduced to him by one of the local people in Diani Beach. This contact took me to Mzee Juma's house, and after we got introduced, we scheduled an interview, which we recorded on 3 November. Finally, I met Mvuvi Charo in the evening as he emerged from the sea, carrying shells that he had collected in the ocean. After a short conversation, he pointed to a *kibanda* (a stall) where he sells his shells during the day, and invited me to visit him for an interview the next day, which was on 4 November.

After obtaining written consent from the narrators, I took audio/visual recordings of their performances. I later transcribed the recordings, and where applicable, translated the transcriptions into English. Baraka, the tour guide in Fort Jesus, though fluent in Kiswahili, chose English, while the rest performed in Kiswahili, the dominant language at the Kenyan coast. In chapters three and four where these oral sources are analysed, quotations from the translated texts appear in italics. For the poems which are shorter and occupy less space, both the transcriptions and translations are provided in the chapters. For the oral histories and oral testimonies, however, only sections from the translated texts appear in the analysis, and transcriptions of the segments used are appended to this dissertation.

I am aware of the obstacles of the translation process, which suggests that something gets lost. In my case it is even more complex – there are aspects of performance (like body language and context) that I could not capture in the transcription, and which I consequently totally lost in translation. In summary, two things are lost in these texts – their orality as they are put into writing through transcription, and the depth of their original meaning when they are translated from Kiswahili to English (Mazrui, *Translation* 90; Steiner 7; Wasamba 199). However, I did my best to ensure that my transcriptions and translations are as close as possible to the recordings, especially with regards to the meaning they carry. I also acknowledge my role as the interviewer/translator in presenting my own interpretations of the oral performances.

I am also aware that oral performance is accompanied by certain elements like context (time and place), language, gestures, body movement, and props (Schechner 6–15). These elements are important in that they differentiate normal speech from performed art and therefore become "a measure of the authenticity of collected oral literary texts" (Bauman 8). Though in my

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analysis of these oral texts I do not place emphasis on these elements of performance, I am cognisant of the fact that they contribute to the meaning carried in these texts.

1.7. Chapter Breakdown

There are five more chapters in this dissertation. In chapter two, I analyse the two historical novels, Cuthbert's *The Great Siege* and Macoye's *Rebmann*. These novels engage with the history of the Kenyan coast in the 16th–17th and 19th centuries respectively. In analysing these texts, I focus on how differently the two novelists appropriate the historical sources they use, in a bid to deduce how differently the two novels represent the history of the Kenyan coast. I argue that the shape that history represented in historical fiction takes is determined by the choices historical novelists make. I examine the different choices that Cuthbert and Macgoye make: whereas Cuthbert unquestionably adopts her sources – which I establish as biased – Macgoye challenges hers; and while Cuthbert relies on a single source (the written history of Fort Jesus), Macgoye blends a variety of sources (historical records, Rebmann's field notes, CMS records, and her personal insight). This chapter reveals that historical fiction written from a single perspective (like the one Cuthbert writes) is biased, while that written using multiple sources (like Macgoye's) is richer and more nuanced.

In chapter three, I continue to problematise the representation of the history of the Kenyan coast by exploring oral history. I analyse two oral histories of Fort Jesus, one being the official account narrated in Fort Jesus museum, which I recorded with Baraka, a tour guide. The other one is a Digo perspective of the history of Fort Jesus, narrated by Mzee Nyembwe. I examine how these two versions represent Fort Jesus, and argue that the official history is just an imitation of written history. It bears the biases found in written history and continues to set aside the perspective of the local people. The Digo perspective, however, challenges both the official oral history and written history. The hitherto unknown knowledges this version of history provides, coupled with its success in placing local people at the centre of the history of this region, allow me to argue that oral history should be incorporated in the corpus of history. I end this chapter with an analysis of the oral history of Shimoni Slave Caves, narrated by Jabari. This oral history is a mixture of oral sources and indigenous knowledges (from Jabari's forefathers) and written history (from books Jabari read). I use this blended version of history to demonstrate the prospects of an integrated history, one that is derived from both oral and written sources, which, despite drawing from written perspectives, still places local people at the centre of their history.

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In chapter four, I imagine a map of the Indian Ocean that is derived from local knowledges of the sea possessed by Kenyan coastal people. I argue that dominant maps of the Indian Ocean were drawn minus the perspective of the shore folk and seafarers, and I illustrate the personal, intimate and local maps of the sea that emerge when the experiences, knowledges, and feelings that coastal people have about the sea are taken into account. The texts I use are the oral testimonies by Mzee Juma the sailor and Mvuvi Charo the fisherman, and the oral poems by Bahati. From my analysis of these oral texts I develop three interconnected dimensions of the sea, namely the economic dimension (from the sailor's testimony), the spiritual dimension (from the fisherman's tales), and the ecological dimension (from the oral poems). Apart from challenging dominant cartographic techniques, this chapter also shifts oceanic studies from surface to depth.

In chapter five, I analyse *The Dragonfly Sea*, in which Owuor reaffirms indigenous knowledges of the sea. I examine the intimate relationship between Pate islanders and the sea and use it to emphasise my point that shore folk have unique knowledges of the sea, that when explored can fill longstanding gaps in oceanic studies. I also analyse Owuor's attempt to re-centre the Kenyan coast and in particular Pate island, in Kenya's geopolitics. Also, from the 600-year-old history that the novel invokes, that of Chinese navigation of the Indian Ocean long before the arrival of the Portuguese, I debunk the importance attached to the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean world, as found in chapter two. This novel serves the same function as Jabari's oral history in chapter three – it testifies to the richness of narratives that draw from multiple sources, in particular, those that blend local oral sources and written forms of expression.

In chapter six I conclude by reflecting on some of the cross-cutting themes in this dissertation. I pay particular attention to the function oral sources have served in this study, and reiterate the contribution of this research to the study of the Indian Ocean, its histories, and its experience at the Kenyan coast.

CHAPTER II

Fictionalised Histories of the Kenyan Coast: A reading of Valerie Cuthbert's *The Great Siege of Fort Jesus* and Marjorie Macgoye's *Rebmann*

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I analyse two historical novels; *The Great Siege of Fort Jesus* (1970) by Valerie Cuthbert and *Rebmann: A novel* (2014) by Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye. My choice to study these two novelists alongside each other is motivated by the shared space they occupy in Kenya's readership. Both Cuthbert's and Macgoye's novels are stocked in secondary school libraries, with Macgoye's debut novel *Coming to Birth* (1986), which won the Sinclair Prize for fiction, once having been a set book in Kenyan secondary schools. Of the two, however, Macgoye is more popular and more available, seeing as some of Cuthbert's novels are out of print, her work has received very little scholarly attention, and information about her is not readily available. Cuthbert's *The Great Siege* engages with a Portuguese oriented history of the Kenyan coast during the 16th–17th centuries, while Macgoye's *Rebmann* focuses on the history of Christian missionary activity in this region in the 19th century. Using these two texts, my intention is to examine how writers of historical fiction utilise historical sources in their writing, and how the author's choices shape the narratives that emerge. Basically, these two novels differ in that the historical sources Cuthbert employs in writing *The Great Siege* are written from a single perspective, that is, they tell the history of one group of people, the Portuguese. On the other hand, the historical sources Macgoye draws from in writing *Rebmann* are diverse and represent the history of different groups of people present at the Kenyan coast at the time – the Mijikenda, the Swahili, the Arabs, and European missionaries and administrators. The disparate choices that Cuthbert and Macgoye make allow me to problematise historical representation as the two novels present contrasting views of two distinct histories at the Kenyan coast. My argument is that the novelist occupies a prime position in the representation of history because they get to decide how to make use of historical sources available to them. In this case, I see history and historical sources as providing different possibilities of representing the past, a view that guides my reading of Macgoye's *Rebmann*. At the same time, however, there is a likelihood that historical sources themselves, when allowed, determine the shape of historical fiction that is based on them. This means that the nature of historical sources

can also influence fiction, as I shall demonstrate in the analysis of Cuthbert's novel *The Great Siege*.

This chapter revolves around the connection between history and fiction, and by extension, history as narrative, a relationship that is complicated and has a long history. In the early 19th century, history, seeking to be superior and independent, sought to detach itself from art and to align itself with the natural sciences. This movement was initiated by the political historian Leopold von Ranke, who insisted on "entire objectivity to the treatment of the past" (Barnes 245), and emphasised the need to "hold strictly to the facts of history" (Adams 104–105). The cause of this division was the historians' formulation that truth was identifiable with fact and fiction was its opposite, a position that led to the belief that fiction is incapable of perceiving reality (White, *Tropics of Discourse* 123). As time passed, however, historians and critics alike had mixed reactions to this trajectory, and a dilemma ensued in that "it was difficult to secure the proposition that history, which presented itself in narrative form, could be a science" (Curthoys & Docker 71). It then became clear that history and fiction had the same formal elements, as narratives, and could thus not be so different after all.

By the end of the 19th century, another movement had arisen, which ended up reunifying the two. Among those who challenged Von Ranke's earlier proposition is his former student, the cultural historian Jacob Burckhardt. In his *Reflections on History* (1943), Burckhardt points out that "[e]ven in history, our desire for knowledge is often baulked by a thickset hedge of opinions which seek to pass themselves off as records. Nor can we ever rid ourselves entirely of the views of our own time and personality" (21). History itself, then, shares some features of fiction, which is basically that they are both 'authored' and possess a certain degree of subjectivity. Just like fiction, history is a narrative constructed by an author, the historian, who is faced with the requisite task of selecting, ordering, and plotting events in a readable form (Twidle 34). In other words, the historian is to history what the artist is to fiction. Without the historian to prefigure the historical events contained in historical sources, it would not be possible to achieve the ordered narrative that is history (Ricoeur 16, 18; White, *Metahistory* 143–44). History and fiction therefore come to be because of the mediation by the historian on one hand and the artist on the other. This interconnection is crucial because the discussion in this chapter brings together history, the historian, historical fiction, and the artist as all acting side by side in the (re)presentation of certain histories of the Kenyan coast.

The Great Siege is set in Fort Jesus in Mombasa and *Rebmann* in Rabai, which is about twelve miles northwest from Mombasa, Kenya's oldest city. In *The Great Siege*, Cuthbert narrates the historical siege of Fort Jesus in Mombasa, during which the Omani Arabs attacked the Portuguese soldiers in the Fort, in a siege that lasted from 13 March 1696 to 13 December 1698. This battle was motivated by the fact that Fort Jesus was critical to the control of the coast, and whichever group occupied the Fort ruled the region. The Portuguese themselves, who had controlled the coast from about 1505, had held the Fort since they constructed it in 1593. In writing this novel, Cuthbert relies on two historical books; *Fort Jesus and the Portuguese in Mombasa* (1960) by C. R. Boxer and Carlos de Azevedo and *Men and Monuments on the East African Coast* (1964) by James Kirkman. Notably, *Fort Jesus and the Portuguese in Mombasa* (1960), whose content Cuthbert 'dramatises' in her novel, was written using Portuguese records only, and is hence biased. I bring out some of the prejudices that exist in this text and proceed to illustrate how Cuthbert imports some of these biases to her novel.

In the novel, two nine-year old boys, Carlos Leao and Hussein of Faza, while fishing in the reef on the morning of 11 March 1696, sight ships approaching the Fort. They immediately deduce these to be Omani ships, and they hurriedly paddle back to the Fort where Carlos warns his father, Rodrigues Leao the Commandant of the Fort. As soon as Commandant Leao confirms that those indeed were ships from Muscat, he orders for the big gun of the Fort to be fired, announcing to all inhabitants of the island of Mombasa that danger is nigh, and that they must report to the Fort immediately. Fortunately for them, the Omani ships are becalmed, and it is not until the morning of 13 March that the wind favours the Omani ships, which then dock at the harbour. Over the next two years and nine months, the Omani execute several sorties, which are repelled by the Portuguese. While the Swahili men fight alongside the Portuguese soldiers, the women, led by Hadija da Costa and her daughter Maria da Costa, turn part of the Fort into a hospital, where they take care of the wounded soldiers. Hadija is the wife of Captain da Costa who is away in Goa. She is also an aunt to the three princes of Faza residing in the Fort – nine-year old Hussein of Faza, his brother Prince Mohammed of Faza, and their cousin Prince Daud of Faza. Hadija's daughter Maria marries Joseph de Britto who eventually became the Commandant, and they both adopt Carlos Leao who is orphaned after his father Commander Leao's death. At some point during the siege, a plague attacks the Fort and many men die, forcing the women to join the few remaining soldiers in defending the Fort. Even though the Portuguese get reinforcements from Mozambique and Goa, their numbers keep dwindling so much so that Joseph finally organises an escape plan for the handful of survivors.

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On the morning of 13 December 1698, he, Maria, Carlos, Hussein, Hadija, Prince Daud, Jacome, four Swahili men and two Swahili women steal away from Fort Jesus using a small boat. The Omani forces then occupy the Fort.

Rebmann, on the other hand, is Macgoye's recreation of the life of Johannes Rebmann (1820–1876), who, with Johann Ludwig Krapf (1810–1881), introduced Christianity to Kenya. The two were the earliest missionaries to be sent to East Africa by the Church Missionary Society (CMS), Krapf having arrived in Mombasa in 1844 and Rebmann in 1846. The two arrived not long after the Omani had re-established their rule on the Swahili coast in 1837, having ousted the house of the Governor of Mombasa which had ruled from 1741 until then. The Omani continued to rule the coast until 1895 when Britain declared Kenya her colony and protectorate (Kirkman, *Fort Jesus* 3–6). The two German missionaries established the first CMS station in Rabai Mpya, CMS being an evangelical body of the Church of England. The station at Rabai was the first CMS centre in East Africa – it was not until 1876 that CMS ventured into Uganda, and Tanzania in 1878. This CMS centre at Rabai also served as a sanctuary for slaves who were rescued from the Indian Ocean, because during this time illegal slave trade still took place on the Swahili coast despite its official abolition in 1807. Upon issuance of letters of freedom by the Sultan of Zanzibar in 1880s, former slaves were settled in farms surrounding the mission.

The novel opens in 1875 when Rebmann, having stayed at the Swahili coast since 1846, where he lived and preached among the Wanika in Rabai, is leaving for England. Rebmann had dedicated twenty-nine years of his life to evangelising at the coast, but not many have been baptised. The Home Committee in London is dissatisfied by this lack of progress. It blames Rebmann for this spiritual stagnation and orders him to leave the mission field. Unfortunately, Rebmann had lost his eyesight in his final years of service and cannot travel on his own. Therefore, he is accompanied by Isaac Nyondo, the son of Abe Gunga (baptised Abraham), Rebmann's best friend and most dedicated convert. When Rebmann finally appears before the Home Committee, he mounts a defense that the secretaries find reasonable. After that, he is sent to an ophthalmologist, who helps Rebmann regain part of his vision. Thereafter, he is sent to an early retirement and provided with a reasonable pension of a hundred pounds a year. However, Rebmann dies about a year after that, in Germany the country of his birth. In writing this novel, Macgoye used information from different sources: Rebmann's field notes, CMS archives, and her own experience as a member of staff at CMS.

Though my focus is on histories of the Indian Ocean at the Kenyan coast, I find that these histories are inextricably tied to those of land. This is because of the intimate connection between land and sea in littoral spaces, and also due to human movements across the ocean constituting journeys to and between lands. Therefore, it is not possible to discuss histories of the Indian Ocean in isolation, and in my analysis of the two novels I present them as interwoven with terrestrial ones.

This fluidity between coast and hinterland also applies to boundaries along the coastline. As much as the focus of this study is the Kenyan coast, the continuous thread of the shoreline itself enables the movement of texts from one coast to another. Therefore, narratives in *The Great Siege* and *Rebmann* are not limited to the Kenyan coast, but extend along the East African coast, which consists of the shoreline from Kenya to Mozambique and includes the Zanzibar Archipelago. While *The Great Siege* is narrated from Fort Jesus in Mombasa, *Rebmann* moves easily between Mombasa and Zanzibar, and is in this sense more diverse. Throughout this chapter, then, the Kenyan coast, Swahili coast, and East African coast will be used but without changing the focus of this study, though the Kenyan coast will be used frequently when discussing *The Great Siege* and the Swahili coast when analysing *Rebmann*. As to the people, the Wanika that Rebmann and Krapf live among and preach to in Kinika are the Nyika, who are presently known as the Mijikenda. In *The Great Siege,* the Swahili are the African people at the coast, who are historically believed to be of mixed-race ancestry[11], and who the novel differentiates from the Bantus[12] from the hinterland.

This chapter consists of two sections. The first one is my reading of *The Great Siege of Fort Jesus* by Cuthbert, where I interrogate the relationship between historical sources and historical fiction with reference to the 16th–17th centuries at the Kenyan coast. My primary focus is on how when writing history, the historian selects the material with which they shape the histories they produce, whereby they adopt some sources and eliminate others. My digging deep into the writing of this history at this point (as opposed to instantly analysing the novel) stems from

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[11] The question as to who the Swahili are is very old but is one that has not been conclusively answered. From the varied definitions proposed by different scholars over time, three broad categories emerge. First, and this is the most popular view, the Swahili are inhabitants of the East African coast who have a mixed ancestry (Steere vi; Stigand 116; Prins, *Swahili* 11–12; Eastman 232; Massamba 88). Second is the idea that Swahili people, broadly speaking, are East African coastal people who speak Kiswahili (Kresse, *Philosophisng* 38), especially as a first and for some the only language (Eastman 233). Third is assertion that the definition of who a Swahili is varies, it depends on context. A. H. J. Prins (1967), for example, notes that to hinterland people, anyone from the coast is a Swahili, but to coastal people themselves, different people identify differently (*Swahili* 11).

[12] The Bantus are one of the three main groups of people in Kenya, the other two being the Nilotic and the Cushitic.

my observation that the kind of history Cuthbert heavily borrows from is deeply reflected in her novel. Therefore, I see the probing of this history as crucial to understanding the novel. The second section provides an analysis of Macgoye's *Rebmann*. I contrast her style of writing to Cuthbert's in that Macgoye comes across as consciously attempting to move away from what has been presented historically, choosing instead to rewrite this past. Her success stems from her attempt to consult multiple sources, from which she is able to construct a more nuanced representation of Rebmann and his missionary activities at the Kenyan coast.

2.2. Historical Sources and the Writing of Fiction in Valerie Cuthbert's *The Great Siege of Fort Jesus*

In this section, I discuss the history of the Kenyan coast as presented in Cuthbert's novel *The Great Siege of Fort Jesus* (1970), which narrates the fight for domination of the Swahili coast by the Portuguese and the Omani Arabs from 1696–1698, whereby the Omani laboured to capture Fort Jesus while the Portuguese struggled to retain it. As has been mentioned earlier, this novel is based on the history of the Kenyan coast during the 16th–17th centuries as recorded in two historical works – *Fort Jesus and the Portuguese in Mombasa* (1960) by C. R. Boxer and Carlos de Azevedo and *Men and Monuments on the East African Coast* (1964) by James Kirkman. My reading of Cuthbert's novel is accompanied by close references to these historical sources on which she bases her novel because, as I mentioned earlier, these historical sources shape Cuthbert's representation of this history significantly. Kirkman's is an archaeologist's record of famous monuments on the East African coast from Mozambique to the Red Sea, Fort Jesus being one of them. Covering such a large expanse, therefore, it is no wonder that it does not have much detail of the Swahili coast when compared to that by Boxer and De Azevedo, which, by contrast, is wholly set in the Swahili coast, particularly Mombasa. Furthermore, being that Cuthbert's novel is centred on the great siege of Fort Jesus from 1696–1698, Boxer and De Azevedo's text, which attempts to record every moment of the struggle, is the premier source. In my present analysis of the novel, emphasis is put on how, compared to the historical books mentioned, the novel presents the history of different groups of people at the Kenyan coast during the 17th century, these people being the Portuguese, the Omani Arabs, the Swahili, and Bantus from the hinterland.

I observed that Cuthbert's novel is tremendously overshadowed by Boxer and De Azevedo's history in *Fort Jesus and the Portuguese in Mombasa* (1960). This created my interest in examining the overbearing influence historical records may have on fiction, or rather the

relationship between historical sources and historical fiction, as evident in Cuthbert's novel and in relation to the Kenyan coast. Since the history represented by Cuthbert is strikingly similar to that in the source she draws from, I decided to examine Cuthbert's source as a way of understanding what eventually emerges in her novel. This then means inspecting historical records and what went into their writing. Thus, beside the novelist, I look at the historian as occupying a vantage position in writing narratives that emerge from the past, fictionalised or not.

The basis of this analysis is the argument that history is complex and multi-layered, and there are several versions of it. Essentially, any particular form of history is incomplete, because there are always multiple truths, multiple realities (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz 94). As Hayden White argues, "there is no such thing as a *single* correct view of any object under study but there are *many* correct views, each requiring its own style of representation" ("Burden" 130–31, emphasis original). Unfortunately, what is oftentimes produced as history represents whichever narrative is dominant over others at given points in time (Adichie 4), as constructed by the historian, who is always subjective (Koerber 56). This means that there are always numerous histories that are repressed, several other truths that are not foregrounded. This is essentially because power underlies the creation of history, so that whoever holds power decides the shape of history.

In relation to the Kenyan coast, the Portuguese who ruled this region from the beginning of the 16th century have undoubtedly controlled what shape its history has taken. In fact, the history by Boxer and De Azevedo, the same one Cuthbert heavily relies on in writing her novel, is Portuguese oriented. In view of my assertion that the historian wields great power in the creation of history, in that they get to select which sources to include and which ones to exclude from history, the foremost questions as I read Cuthbert's novel and her sources are: How does the historian select their sources? What are the implications of the choices they make? And, what is the role of the creative writer in using or problematising those sources? I hope to show how the writing of history is, inevitably, a constant negotiation of what sources to include and which ones to exclude. As to Cuthbert's novel, I hope to present how historical fiction sometimes bears the nature of the sources on which it is based. In summary, my reading of Cuthbert's novel *The Great Siege* is guided by the assumption that even though historical fiction has the power to reconstruct history, there are moments when the artist (the novelist) is limited by the kind of history from which they draw.

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Going back to the question of power and the persistence of some forms of history over others, a brief history of the Kenyan coast right from when the Portuguese arrived lays the ground for what Boxer and De Azevedo do, and what Cuthbert does in her novel later. The arrival of the Portuguese at the Kenyan coast in 1498 was a result of Europe's "long designed and carefully prepared" plans to explore the Indian Ocean and its coasts (Coupland 42). By the 13th century, in fact, India's commercial potential had captured the interest of Europe, and many Europeans most prominent of whom were Italian, travelled to India. These travellers were not necessarily merchants, like Marco Polo, but also monks, like Friar Odoric and Monte Corvino. By then, however, India was only accessible through the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. Their entry points, Alexandria and Damascus-Aleppo respectively, were under the possession of Muslims, so Christian Europe did not have easy passage. From then on, many attempts were made to find a direct route to India, and Vasco da Gama's voyage to Calicut through the Atlantic two hundred years later was a breakthrough. Panikkar (1959) describes this connection as a "realisation of a 200-year-old dream and of seventy-five years of sustained effort" (21). Whereas a large part of Europe was interested in making direct contact with India, the Portuguese went further to establish links with the Indian Ocean world at large. Their success was no doubt aided by Fra Mauro's World Map, a map which to an astonishing extent gives a detailed and fairly accurate presentation of the Indian Ocean coasts unprecedented at the time. It is recorded that a copy of this map was sent to King Alphonso V of Portugal in 1459 (Doherty 30), during which time Portugal sponsored many travels to explore the sea, travels which would culminate in Da Gama's historic exploration years later. Among the sources Fra Mauro consulted in drawing this map are the expeditions of Marco Polo, the Italian merchant mentioned above.

This successful navigation of the seas by the Portuguese led by Da Gama at the end of the 15th century is dramatised in *Wings of the Wind* (2004) by Cuthbert. The novel traces Da Gama's voyage as it departs Lisbon in 1497, rounds the Cape in 1498, 'discovers' a direct route to India, and journeys back to Lisbon in 1499. Cuthbert narrates this crucial history through the eyes of Carlos Cabral, a young man who has been selected to join Da Gama's expedition based on his family connections – his uncle Luiz Cabral is a member of the King's Council and a friend of Vasco da Gama's (*Wings* 7). Joao Cabral, Carlos' father, is excited as he breaks the news of Carlos' appointment to him, "'a messenger arrived from your uncle Luiz in Lisbon. He tells me that King Manuel has at last made up his mind to carry on with his father's dream and continue the search for a new route to the Indies, where we can trade eventually if we find

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it'" (*Wings* 7). Joao reminds his son how important it is that he excels in this prestigious mission, telling him "'You are being given a wonderful opportunity of being one of the first men to sail from Portugal to the Indies and the East by this new route. This is your great chance to prove yourself a man Carlos, to help bring fame and fortune to your country and to be worthy of being a Cabral'" (*Wings* 11). Carlos immediately embarks on preparations for the mission. He travels from Belmonte where his father's estate is located to Lisbon where his uncle receives him. The next few weeks are spent preparing the chosen men for the expedition, and on the day of departure, right before Vasco da Gama and his brother Paulo da Gama lead the crew out of Lisbon and into the high seas, Vasco da Gama assures King Manuel that "We solemnly promise and swear that we will not return home empty-handed from this enterprise but, by God's grace, will return home safe and successful and bring you all the information you require about this new route to the Indies'" (*Wings* 74). This brief plot summary shows the determination with which the Portuguese wanted to conquer the Indian Ocean world.

The 'violent arrival' of the Portuguese in the world of the Indian Ocean revolutionised life as was previously known in this region; in a nutshell, the Portuguese "introduced an entirely new concept of armed trading, trade monopolies, a crusading spirit and territorial conquest" (Sheriff 31). Their militant involvement in Indian Ocean trade and the consequent crowding out of other players, for the first time, saw a claim laid upon the Indian Ocean. They held sovereignty over the seas, amid "a vagueness about how much of the sea [the Portuguese] claimed to rule but the concept could be expanded when needed to include the seas of half the world granted by the Tordesillas[13] (Newitt 1). Before this arrival of the Portuguese in 1500, the Indian Ocean was "genuinely a *mare liberum* where no state tried to control maritime matters" (Pearson "India and the Indian Ocean" 83). Even so, the restrictions that the Portuguese introduced at sea were not limited to maritime trade activities. A case in point is the requirement for Indian ships bearing hajj, the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, to acquire passes from the Portuguese granting them passage in the Indian Ocean (Pearson, "India and the Indian Ocean" 79). Besides changing trade patterns and introducing unfair competition in maritime trade, the Portuguese can also be said to have destabilised security in the Indian Ocean. They introduced patrol ships, which would seize ships trading with Portuguese enemies, and in time all other ships were

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[13] In the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494), Spain and Portugal divided the seas between themselves. Under Pope Alexander VI, a line was drawn 1, 185 miles (370 leagues) west of the Cape Verde islands, and all waters west of the line belonged to the Spanish Crown, while the territory east of the line belonged to the Portuguese Crown (Davenport 95 as quoted in Brotton 72).

installed with cannons should these 'sea lords' confront them[14]. To solidify their dominion over the Indian Ocean world and to control its trade, the Portuguese conquered major port cities, and on them they built forts (like Fort Jesus in Mombasa and Fort São Caetano in Mozambique). They organised these port cities in such a way that Lisbon controlled Goa, and Goa presided over all other conquered port cities (Pearson, *Indian Ocean* 118).

Thus, the history of the Indian Ocean is largely influenced by, even created by, and intertwined with that of the Portuguese, a position only exacerbated by the importance that has been attached to Portuguese historiography of the Indian Ocean world. Certainly, Portuguese records are significant to the history of the Indian Ocean, and to some extent, this history would be impossible to write without them. For example, Genevieve Bouchon and Denys Lombard rely on Portuguese records in their writing of "The Indian Ocean in the Fifteenth Century" (1987). However, and quite ironically, the authors state, "[w]e shall try to present in this discussion a picture of the Indian Ocean trade prior to the arrival of the first Portuguese fleets. In order to do this we shall make use of the records of these Portuguese pioneers. (46)

The challenge here is that what sense the Portuguese made of the coasts when they arrived is treated as authoritative history, so much so that they are allowed to speak for events *prior* to their own arrival. Nevertheless, as stated earlier and as Pearson notes, the arrival of the Portuguese was a turning point, not just to the world of the Indian Ocean, but also to the shape of its history:

> All the standard histories of the Indian Ocean, or of Indian maritime history, start a new chapter when the Portuguese arrive, and often their whole focus swings right around Indian trade to Portuguese activities. Some historians concentrate exclusively on the Portuguese, others at least try to describe the Indian response to their actions. In either case, the Portuguese are seen as important, as altering significantly, even fundamentally, Indian maritime history. ("India and the Indian Ocean" 71)

Though the authors cited here refer to the relationship between the Indian Ocean and India, this scenario is replicated on the Swahili coast where the Portuguese robustly arrived in 1505. I note, however, that Pearson switches his focus to challenging the assumptions stated above,

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[14] There was disruption even in port cities, whereby traders actively resisted the attempt by Europeans to monopolise trade in some products, or their imposition of taxes in some way or other (Pearson, *Indian Ocean* 115). The Portuguese succeeded in this first by conquering strategic port cities, and then by launching patrol ships to arrest 'illicit' traders. Those ships found either trespassing or without *cartaz,* a Portuguese pass, were confiscated or even sunk (Pearson, *Indian Ocean* 118).

arguing that "to see the Portuguese as having a powerful impact on the Indian Ocean in the sixteenth century is to distort the facts of the matter" ("India and the Indian Ocean"). Yet, just like Bouchon and Lombard, Pearson concedes, "[f]or the sixteenth century, we are distressingly dependent on Portuguese sources" ("India and the Indian Ocean" 72). On one hand, this qualifies the dominance of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean world, and on the other, it once again draws attention to the seeming lack of sources other than Portuguese records when historicising the Indian Ocean world.

This is the point at which I return to the role power plays in the writing of history, and I ask: Were there really no other such historical sources beside those by the Portuguese? How has the Portuguese historiography of the Indian Ocean world either defined or altered the 'history' of the Kenyan coast? In the pages that follow, I attempt possible answers to these questions, while at the same time challenge in retrospect how this history (re)written by the Portuguese has persisted in the conceptualisation of, in this case, the Indian Ocean at the Kenyan coast. This is where I examine the history written by Boxer and De Azevedo, and then connect it with Cuthbert's novel.

In my view, the history by Boxer and De Azevedo has two major shortcomings which I elaborate on – it absolutely relies on Portuguese records, and ironically treats Swahili sources on Swahili history with scepticism. On the question of the availability of sources other than the Portuguese, the two historians, in their foreword, present language as a (possible) hindrance to the historian's utilisation of historical sources:

> The present work has been limited to the Portuguese period, since the authors are not competent to deal with the Arab and Swahili sources which must be consulted before the history of Mombasa under Omani and Zanzibar rule can be satisfactorily written[15]. (9)

This quote is problematic in two ways. First, it bequeaths the Portuguese monopoly of truth over the history of the Kenyan coast during their rule. As a result, the history that emerges is incomplete, because no single account is likely to capture history in its richness. In the end,

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[15] On the surface, this quote seems to be an acknowledgement of the authors' own incompetence and ignorance of Arabic and Swahili sources, and thus an invitation to scholars with competence to fill the gaps in this unsatisfactory account. However, the evidence I present attests to the fact that some non-Portuguese sources, which would have certainly changed the shape of this history, were available in English, but the authors deliberately omitted them.

what is produced is not the history of the Kenyan coast under the Portuguese rule, but a part of it, which, ironically, is also unsatisfactory.

Second, an assumption is made that other groups of people either did not keep any records of this time, or if they did, concurred with the Portuguese perspective, which is not just improbable, but impossible. In fact, evidence from the same text shows that sources other than Portuguese records existed, and actually contradicted Portuguese sources. For instance, the Portuguese overpower Pate in August 1687 after years of punitive attacks following Pate's resistance to the Portuguese. Then, the Sultan of Pate[16] and twelve of his council members are captured and shipped to Goa as hostages. Imprisoned, they conspire to escape, but fail, for word reaches Da Costa the Governor-General, who then orders that they be chained or killed if they resist. After some resistance, all thirteen are slaughtered on 25 December 1688. In January 1689, Da Costa writes to the Crown in Lisbon, communicating this loss of leverage and the irretrievability of Pate as a result. Here Boxer puts a rejoinder:

> The Governor-General's pessimism was only partially justified, for, if the Swahili chronicles *are to be trusted* on this point, these men had originally been shipped off to Goa at the request of a jealous rival who hoped that something like this would happen to them. (52, emphasis added)

Challenges immediately arise here. Like, the possibility of blocking out historical knowledge by selecting some sources while leaving out others. This echoes the nature of historical representation as recalled by White, who asserts that history is "a possession of dominant groups who claim the authority to decide who or what is to be admitted to history and thereby determine who or what will be considered to be fully human" (*Practical Past* 41). Incorporating different even if conflicting sources would allow for the history that is passed down to be enriched, as opposed to being one-sided narratives, which Chimamanda Adichie warns against. In "The Danger of a Single Story" (2009), Adichie examines how power underlies the construction of narratives that are one-sided. Of the single story and power she argues, "[h]ow they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power" (4). If such single stories are repeated over time, the truth might become distorted, resulting in the limiting of historical knowledge.

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[16] According to Portuguese records, the name of this Sultan of Pate was Banna Famau Becar Vua Banna Famau Vmary (Boxer & De Azevedo 52), very different from what the Swahili sources state, namely Bwana Mkuu.

Another challenge raised by Boxer's insistence on the superiority of Portuguese records is that ironically, we have historians taking Swahili records of the Swahili coast with a pinch of salt. This overt scepticism at once points to the suspect treatment 'other' sources are given, while Portuguese sources are treated authoritatively. In the end, Boxer and De Azevedo's earlier claim that language was their barrier to utilising non-Portuguese sources is debunked, because the two Swahili chronicles that Boxer points to in the footnote to this quotation are available in English translation.

One of the Swahili chronicles is *The Land of Zinj* by C. H. Stigand (1913). *Zinj*[17] is unique to other European sources used in this chapter; the author, Stigand, makes a conscious effort to, as much as possible, imagine the country and its inhabitants "from the native point of view rather than from that of the white man" (iii). Apart from the first chapter in which Stigand gives a history of the coast as found in Portuguese, Arab or other foreign sources, the rest of the book is devoted to Swahili sources, which Stigand feels have been unjustly left out. He records what is dictated to him by Bwana Kitini, a direct descendant of the Pate sultans, who appears to be well-versed in the history of the Swahili coast. This is another feature that sets *Zinj* apart; it is the record of an oral account, much like what Vansina (1985) calls a 'group account.' A group account refers to oral memories of a group of people with a shared identity defined by the memories they share (19). When they deal with royal history, Vansina adds, it is the duty of state officials to remember and then later relay these accounts (Ibid.). Thus, Bwana Kitini, who is royalty himself, acts as a state official in his narrative. One of the stories Bwana Kitini narrates to Stigand is that about the Portuguese arrest of the Sultan of Pate, the same one discredited by Boxer above. In this version, it is not the reigning Sultan Abubakr (son of Bwana Mkuu) who is arrested, but rather his son-in-law, who is also called Bwana Mkuu (Stigand 48–52). Being that the informant in this source was a direct descendant of the Pate sultanate, it is a wonder that this source could not be regarded as authoritative.

The other Swahili chronicle Boxer singles out is "A Swahili History of Pate" by A. Werner (1915). What Werner does is reproduce original parts of a Kiswahili manuscript on the history of Pate, adding to it an English translation. Yet, there is something peculiar between this account and Stigand's *Zinj*. The manuscript from which Werner writes his paper, was, he says,

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[17] 'Zinj', or 'Zanj', is an Arabic word for 'black.' It was commonly used to refer to the Africans of the East African coast. It is from this that Zanzibar got its name from 'Zangibar' or 'Zanjabar', meaning 'land of the black people'.

"written by Muhammad bin Fumo Omar en-Nabhani, commonly called Bwana Kitini. […] Bwana Kitini is said to have received the account from his grandfather, Muhammad bin Bwana Mkuu" (Werner, "History of Pate" 148). After the earlier confusion over the name Bwana Mkuu, I will not even attempt to relativise Bwana Kitini, except to note that the name Bwana Mkuu lays credence to his descending from the Pate sultanate. Stigand says he took notes of Bwana Kitini's dictation until the beginning of 1909 (Stigand iii). In Werner, however, we learn that Bwana Kitini's manuscript was ready by 1903 ("History of Pate" 148). Why would Bwana Kitini give Stigand an oral account of Swahili history when he [Kitini] had a manuscript ready? This question is complicated by the fact that Bwana Kitini's manuscript differs from the oral history he narrates. My speculations lead me to believe that perhaps Bwana Kitini directly recorded, in writing, those accounts as given to him by his grandfather, and then his memory failed him when he recalled those details to Stigand a few years later, orally. Also, though unlikely, it could be that the translation of Bwana Kitini's manuscript from Kiswahili to English was not done with accuracy. Lastly, it is probable that the manuscript in Werner's possession did not belong to Bwana Kitini, as Werner rightfully questions. This is not to say that these Swahili sources are less biased than the Portuguese records, neither is it to imply that on their own they would provide a complete and more accurate account of the history of the Kenyan coast. My view is that had they been taken into account, they would have provided room for alternative perspectives outside that of the Portuguese, and they would have made it possible to create a richer, more nuanced history of the Kenyan coast.

In any case, the fact that these two Swahili sources are based on oral accounts should not make them any less credible. It looks like Boxer and De Azevedo ignored them because they were entrapped in the common perception of the inferiority, and therefore the untrustworthy nature, of oral sources. In *Globalectics* (2012), Ngugi wa Thiong'o draws attention to the lower esteem with which oral sources are usually held with in comparison to written texts, a matter that is responsible for the expulsion of some cultures from history, simply because they were oral[18] (63). Contrary to this view, however, great histories have been written from oral accounts, Ibn Battuta's thirty years of travel across the Muslim world being a case in point. Upon Battuta's return to Morocco in 1356, the Sultan of Morocco had a scribe appointed for Battuta, to whom Battuta narrated all he had seen, heard and read about in his wide travels. When critics later faulted Battuta's accounts for 'textual errors', David Waines (2010) comes to his defense,

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[18] Chapter three offers an extensive discussion of the perceived superiority of literacy over orality, and how this continues to impact on the representation of the history of the Kenyan coast.

arguing, "Ibn Battuta had to rely primarily on his memory when dictating his travels, and confusions and slips were bound to occur" (8). Over time, Battuta's odyssey has come to be one of the most significant travel records, especially in reference to the Middle Ages.

Going back to the Swahili sources, another account of the arrest of the 'Sultan of Pate' by the Portuguese is given by Werner, and it states that it was not the Sultan of Pate that was arrested, but rather his cousin:

> [T]he Portuguese used guile and came to Pate in a ship and desired the King to come aboard the ship, but he did not go; he sent his cousin, Bwana Mkuu, and with him (some of the) men of Pate. The Europeans carried them off in the ship and took them to their own country, and not one man ever returned. (Werner, "History of Pate {Continued}" 283)

In the end, there exist three different accounts of a single event, and each has its unique truthfulness. Though their discrepancy makes it hard to reconcile them, each occupies a given space and competes to represent a certain part of history left out by other sources. Each of these, therefore, has the capability to enrich history, and any history that intentionally disregards some sources is incomplete.

In the same history written by Boxer and De Azevedo, there is another example that demonstrates the importance the Portuguese attached to their own records and the scepticism they had about others'. On 21 November 1698, the viceroy in Goa dispatched a relief force to sustain the fight for Fort Jesus in Mombasa. By the time these 1, 200 men approached Mombasa after twenty-four days at sea, however, the sight of the red Omani flag over Fort Jesus announced to them that they had lost Mombasa. Without attempting to find out when and how the Fort was lost, the captain turns around and sails back to Goa, where he arrives in May 1699 (Boxer & De Azevedo 68–69). Without any Portuguese survivor to record what happened in Mombasa, it would become hard for the Portuguese to come by information on the final stages of the siege: "[o]ver two years elapsed before the Portuguese received any first-hand information about the fall of Fort Jesus, apart from the various conflicting rumours which circulated along the Swahili coast" (Boxer & De Azevedo 69). This blanket of bewilderment does not lift until October 1701 when Braz Fialho, an Indian ex-servant of one of the Portuguese ships, arrives in Goa.

Fialho narrates that the Arabs scaled the walls of Fort Jesus on the night of 12 December 1698. By then, all that was left of the Portuguese army was the governor, eight Portuguese, two

Africans[19], and three Indians (one of who must have been Fialho himself). By sunrise the following day, Leonardo Barbosa the governor had given up and tried to escape. However, the Arabs shot him. The remaining force then obeyed a call to surrender, and their lives were spared. After two Portuguese blew up the storehouse where they had taken the Arabs in the promise of showing them hidden treasure, the remaining survivors (six Portuguese, two Africans, and three Indians) were sent to Muscat as prisoners. Fialho reports that he was not closely guarded and therefore managed to escape Oman to Goa through Bombay (Boxer & De Azevedo 69–71).

Fialho's tale which is given more than two years after the Fort fell becomes the closest knowledge the Portuguese have as to how they lost Mombasa. This points to a gap in Portuguese records, and the crucial role 'rumours' play in weaving the narrative together[20]. Fialho's narrative carries the same weight as, perhaps, Bwana Kitini's chronicles discussed earlier. Yet, Bwana Kitini's account was only hinted at in a footnote, while Fialho's tale is elevated. Despite being the only source, the Portuguese do not trust Fialho's account as they would their own source because, as Boxer and De Azevedo are quick to state:

> Although certain details of his history are *obviously incorrect*, there is no reason to doubt its basic truth. […] The date given by Braz Fialho, 13 December 1698, is in all likelihood correct, *particularly since it is confirmed* by at least one independent Portuguese source and an old Arab ballad. (71, emphases added)

The foregoing discussion has demonstrated the inability of Portuguese records to solely historicise the Kenyan coast. Compared to the earlier argument of how Portuguese records are superior, authoritative and self-justifying, here they are simply lacking. The irony is that at the height of an historical event that is the siege of Fort Jesus, sources that would otherwise not make it to the annals of history, 'rumours', are given credence, and in Portuguese history. Also, the kind of history Cuthbert relies on in writing her novel *The Great Siege* has been established as being flawed in its one sidedness, whereby it not only focuses on one group of people in a cosmopolitan region, but also gives credence to only this group's point of view and ignores the rest.

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[19] The two Africans are identified as having been women (Huxley 350).

[20] There exist anthropological and sociological studies on gossip and rumour as forms of narrativization, like Paine (1967); Stewart and Strathern (2004); White (2000); and Wilson (1974).

Cuthbert's novel was produced in 1970, less than a decade after Kenya's independence, and in which time the first generation of Kenyan writers was preoccupied with writing against colonialism and neocolonialism. Yet, *The Great Siege*, as the analysis to follow will show, perpetuates a narrative of the domination of the local people by foreign powers. Cuthbert, therefore, wrote against her counterparts[21], and this, I believe, is the result of her choice to reproduce the colonial archive instead of dismantling it. In probing how Cuthbert uses her historical sources, or how the history she relies on shapes her novel, I highlight two features that exemplify how the novel represents different groups of people at the coast. It is striking how these features resemble the picture created in the history discussed in detail above. On one hand, the novel constructs the Portuguese as powerful and dominant, and on the other, it marginalises Africans while the Arabs occupy a space in between.

The dominance of the Portuguese is announced right from the start of the novel, where Cuthbert employs a Portuguese perspective. "The two boys" the reader meets when the novel opens are Hussein of Faza and Carlos Leao the son of Commandant Rodrigues Leao who live in Fort Jesus, and who are used to announce the arrival of the Omani Arabs and the start of the siege. Although Hussein is Swahili, his perspective is subsumed by that of the Portuguese because in historical records, Faza had sworn its loyalty and devotion to the Portuguese at the time, to avoid the wrath that befell Swahili cities that swore allegiance to the Omani Arabs[22] (Boxer and De Azevedo 17, 39, 59). Therefore, Hussein's perspective is not very different from that of Carlos. This is in fact an early indication that the only Africans given agency in the novel are those who stand on the side of the Portuguese, like Hadija da Costa, her daughter Maria da Costa, and Maria's cousins who are the three princes of Faza – Hussein himself, Mohammed, and Daud. Notably, these are the only non-Portuguese who Cuthbert assigns important roles in her novel. For instance, Hadija and her daughter Maria are responsible for setting up a hospital in the Fort, which the women use to nurse soldiers wounded during the siege (26, 34, 41, 129); and Prince Mohammed and Prince Daud are given the rank of captain (40), and are also offered a place at the frontline during battle, right beside Portuguese soldiers (70).

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[21] Some of the historical fiction produced around the time Cuthbert published *The Great Siege,* which show that Cuthbert wrote against her counterparts, are Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), John Karoki's *The Land is Ours* (1970), and Meja Mwangi's *Carcase for Hounds* (1974) and *Taste of Death* (1975).

[22] Rival Swahili cities supported the Portuguese or the Arabs, depending on who they felt was stronger at the time, and as a reward for this support, the Portuguese or the Arabs helped them to combat their local enemies. For example, Malindi supported the Portuguese just to get back at Mombasa, her rival.

Prince Mohammed appears to be the unnamed Prince of Faza, also seventeen-years old, who was "a loyal pensioner of the Portuguese" (Boxer and De Azevedo 49). He had a cousin named Prince Dau, who must be Prince Daud in Cuthbert's novel. It is recorded that this Prince of Faza ('Mohammed') had been exiled from his homeland and had found refuge in Goa (Boxer and De Azevedo 49). He was to become a Portuguese asset as he helped the them reassert their dominion in the Bajun islands as recorded below:

> In 1678, the Viceroy Dom Pedro de Almeida, who had come out from Lisbon with positive orders to proceed in person to the Swahili coast, left Goa to restore the Portuguese position in the Bajun islands. He had with him an exiled prince of Faza [...] who, it was hoped, would rally some local support [...] Dom Pedro de Almeida landed at Pate on 12 August, and with the help of about a thousand Bajun warriors from Faza succeeded in reducing the city on 16 December 1678 after a long and difficult siege. (Boxer and De Azevedo 49-50)

During the siege of Fort Jesus nearly two decades later, this Prince of Faza (Mohammed) "insisted on stationing himself wherever danger threatened most, 'the best to serve the king of Portugal as he himself said', until he was killed in action. He was succeeded by his cousin, Prince Dau [Daud], who proved himself equally loyal and resolute" (Boxer and De Azevedo 61). Historical records also state that at one point, due to scarcity of Portuguese officers, Prince Dau became acting governor of Mombasa (Boxer and De Azevedo 64). In Cuthbert's novel, too, Prince Mohammed succumbs to injuries sustained during one of the sorties by the Omani (72), allowing Prince Daud to rise to power as the new Prince of Faza (73). Further, upon the death of Commandant Antonio Mogo de Mello, Prince Daud "[assumes] command of the Fort and its defences" (104). In both the novel and historical records, therefore, the princes of Faza are Portuguese allies and an important part of the Portuguese garrison.

For the novel to best resonate with young adults for whom Cuthbert writes, the author imagines Carlos and Hussein, who are not in historical records, and narrates important stages of the siege through their eyes. The two are both nine-years-old at the beginning of the novel, Carlos "short and sturdy with tow-coloured curly hair and blue eyes", Hussein "also short and sturdy [with] a mop of dark curls and soft brown eyes" (4). Of the two, however, Carlos is usually the spokesperson (4). He is also more vigilant than Hussein, probably because he is the son of a commandant and has therefore inherited an aura of authority and vigilance from his father. At the beginning of the novel, he is the first to sight the Omani armada, alerting Hussein, "'Look to the North, Hussein!'" (1). At the end of the novel, when the Portuguese survivors escape from Mombasa, Carlos who had been appointed lookout is also the first to see the Portuguese

ships which hoped to reinforce the army in Fort Jesus, but arrived late, "'Sails to the South!'" (142). These differences notwithstanding, "[i]t was rare to see one of the boys without the other. This was a friendship which was to endure, and throughout their lives they were closer than brothers" (126).

Cuthbert designs this relationship as a contrast to the tensions that evidently exist between the Swahili and the Portuguese in the Fort. In the novel, this tension is exemplified by the antagonistic relationship between Leandro Barbosa on one hand and Prince Daud and Sheikh Abdulla on the other. One day, Sheikh Abdulla was "quietly kneeling on his praying mat facing Mecca" when Barbosa, one of the Portuguese soldiers, kicked him in the ribs and stomach while hurling curses at the old Sheikh (130). Prince Daud, to whom Sheikh Abdulla was like a father (130), tries to rescue him, and gets into a fight with Barbosa. Unfortunately, Sheikh Abdulla succumbs to the injuries (131). Like other key historical details in the novel, both Barbosa's aversion to the Swahili and the close relationship between Prince Daud and Sheikh Abdulla are not entirely fictitious. In Cuthbert's main historical source, it is recorded that when Prince Dau at some point took charge of the Fort's defences, he had a principal adviser, who was "an old sheikh from Kilifi, 'very shrewd and intelligent, and above all most loyal to the Portuguese nation'" (Boxer and De Azevedo 64). It is therefore very likely that Cuthbert based the character of Sheikh Abdulla on this old sheikh. Moreover, Cuthbert describes Sheikh Abdulla in a similar manner, as "the old man who had been [Prince Mohammed's] teacher and adviser since the death of [Mohammed's] father, [and] loved him like a son" (24). Regarding Barbosa's attitude towards the Swahili, Cuthbert's historical source indicates that Governor Leandro Barbosa, "though a brave soldier [...] was a brutal and tactless man who alienated the loyal Swahili. Disgusted with his behaviour [...] the Prince of Faza and the majority of the Afro-Asian defenders [...] resolved to leave while there was yet time" (Boxer and De Azevedo 68).

The perspective of the two boys lightens the atmosphere in Fort Jesus which, for both the Omani and the Portuguese, was characterized by fleeting moments of loss, defeat and fear, as well as moments of replenishment, victory and heroism. Carlos and Hussein's joy and excitement at the flurry of activities accompanying hurried preparations for the siege neutralise the panic and fear among inhabitants of the Fort, making the novel appealing to young readers. They watched everything "with great excitement as it was the first time they had seen the Fort being made ready for war" (8). Later, the two boys watch action unfold "with wild excitement!

Although they had been told to keep safely out of the way, they had found a vantage point from which they could see the whole battle" (28). They cheered as the Portuguese soldiers repelled attacks by the Omani, "'They're beaten!' yelled Carlos to Hussein, and the two boys jumped up and down with excitement" (106). As the siege progresses, however, the two boys become actively involved in the war. They take lessons in swordsmanship and wrestling from Jacome de Morais, one of the finest swordsmen (113). The character of Jacome is based on the Portuguese soldier by the same name, who was known for "[showing] his contempt for the Arab sharpshooters by always wearing a red coat by day and a white one by night" (Boxer and De Azevedo 67). By the end of the siege, both Carlos and Hussein "carried their swords in their hands and although so young, were prepared to fight to the death if necessary" (136). Notably, the two boys are among the survivors of the siege; and of the seven named characters that survive, five are young people: Carlos, Hussein, Prince Daud, Maria da Costa and Joseph de Britto. Cuthbert's choice to foreground young survivors of the siege is another technique through which the novel becomes more appealing to the author's target audience.

Carlos and Hussein aid Cuthbert's resolve to narrate the siege from the perspective of the Portuguese. Underlying the standpoint of the two boys is a third person narrator, who resides in Fort Jesus. In the novel, the Omani Arabs are only described when their ships approach the harbour (7–8, 13, 26, 105), when they lie in the bushes around the Fort (29, 47–48, 83), or when they scale the walls of the Fort during an attack (70, 135). The Portuguese, on the other hand, are under constant scrutiny by this narrator, who recounts events around the Fort anytime of the day, even when there are no active attacks. For example, the breastplates of the Portuguese garrison manning the ramparts at night "[gleam] in the moonlight" (13), and in the morning, "[t]he soft light of the dawn [streaks] the sky" above Fort Jesus (15). Throughout the novel, the events of the siege are told from the Fort itself.

When survivors of the Portuguese army flee the Fort at the end of the novel, the narrator follows them to their getaway dhow, where "[t]he moon rose and shone peacefully down upon them" (136). The departure of the narrator from the Fort precludes any description of the Omani occupancy of Fort Jesus. Narration of events shifts to what happens at sea as the Portuguese survivors leave Mombasa island. For the first time in the novel, the Fort is described from a distance, "the people on board the ships could see the massive shape of the Fort looming up against the land" (143). The novel ends when the Portuguese lose sight of Fort Jesus: "The little group stood together on the deck, straining their eyes until the great shape of the Fort

finally blended with the darkness behind them. Then, with a sigh, they turned away" (144). The point of view from which the siege of Fort Jesus is narrated in the novel corresponds with the position from which the history of the Kenyan coast is written, as discussed earlier.

In addition to the privileged point of view the Portuguese are given in the novel, they are also presented as being in control of both the Fort itself and the island of Mombasa at large. For instance, when the Omani first arrive in Mombasa, the Portuguese exclaim, "They are the Omani come to attack *Mombasa*!" (Cuthbert 2, emphasis added). Here, Mombasa is no longer a town or an island, but a Portuguese abode, which they believe is theirs to keep. This sense of entitlement is further illustrated by Commander Joseph de Britto's fears that the Portuguese will lose the island if the viceroy does not swiftly respond by sending more troops to garrison the Fort: "'One day it'll be too late, and Portugal will lose Mombasa simply because they're more interested in the affairs of Europe!'" (110). Throughout the novel, in fact, the Portuguese are presented as only defending themselves from attacks launched against them, meaning that other groups of people are constructed as the ones igniting the war.

Most importantly, the novel reproduces major historical figures in Portuguese history at the Kenyan coast. Characters like Commandants Rodrigues Leao and Joseph de Britto, who organize major defences against the Omani Arabs, perform roles similar to those they played in historical records. The two were historically dispatched to Mombasa from Goa in 1694 and 1697 respectively (Boxer and De Azevedo 58, 64). Other historical characters, discussed earlier, are the two princes of Faza, Leandro Barbosa and Antonio Mogo de Mello who replaced Rodrigues Leao upon the latter's death (Boxer and De Azevedo 61). While this in itself is not problematic, all 17 named characters live in Fort Jesus and are either Portuguese or, like the princes of Faza, support them.

Furthermore, Cuthbert adopts Portuguese sentiments that refer to the Arabs as 'the enemy'. This illustrates the strong aversion with which the Portuguese view the Arabs, and this is probably rooted in the Portuguese idea that the Omani have come to dispossess them of what is theirs. The novel uses nine-year olds Carlos and Hussein to exemplify what the arrival of the Arabs in their 'cruel-looking ships' means to the Portuguese; they witness a surge of feelings of fear, shock, wonder, and terror (2). In addition, the daily lives of the Portuguese take a new turn upon the arrival of the Arabs – to Carlos, 10 March 1696 becomes "the last day of absolute freedom he was to know" (5). Moreover, animal imagery is employed in the representation of the Arabs, who are likened to "disturbed ants swarming all over the island" (137). They are

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also referred to as "Sea Hawks" and their ships likened to "birds of prey" (27). They are generally constructed as a ravenous multitude which has sown great terror in the world of the Indian Ocean at large, through its unstoppable acts of cruelty.

When it comes to how the novel presents Africans, who include the Swahili living on the coast and the Bantus from the hinterland, Cuthbert seems to perpetuate an imperialist hegemonic discourse. The Africans are marginalized, and they are mainly described in beastly terms. In the novel, the Musungulos, who represent the Africans, are "war-like" and a threat to the garrison on the island (3); they are "hostile Africans" who can "[make] very short work of anyone unfortunate enough to fall into their clutches" (9); and they are wily", "lying in wait on the mainland for an unwary traveller, be he Portuguese or Omani" (42). What is surprising, however, is that the Portuguese do not mind the Musungulos if they are willing to trade with them and when they support them, but as soon as they turn away to support the Omani they become "treacherous" (42). Thus, in the novel, people are only good when they are in support of the Portuguese.

The novel also describes the Musungulos as nothing short of 'savage': they are in a "state of drunken, drugged frenzy – mad with the lust for killing" (115); are likened to "a pack of hunting dogs" (116); and are "smallish men and women" with a strong, awful smell and have blackened teeth with sharpened points (117). The Musungulos are also rapists and murderers. For example, they rape and murder Fatima, the wife of the Portuguese gunner Leonardo Nunes, and behead their son: "Seizing the child, one of the men drew his panga and with one blow, severed his head from his body" (115). Nunes had deserted the Portuguese to start a new life with his Swahili wife Fatima, but towards the end of the novel, he returns to the Fort after the death of Fatima and their son. The character of Leonardo Nunes is based on the Portuguese deserter by the same name who, after fearing that the Portuguese might lose the Fort to the Omani Arabs, "took charge of the nearest Arab battery and greatly improved its efficiency" (Boxer and De Azevedo 64). Soon after, "thinking that the Arabs might lose after all, [he] deserted back to his compatriots" (Boxer 67–68). In historical records, it is not clear whether Leonardo Nunes was one of the eight Portuguese to survive the siege, but he dies in the novel.

In her presentation of the Musungulos, Cuthbert draws on the Zimba, a 'cannibal' tribe that is believed to have raided Mombasa in 1589, depopulating the island (Al-Radi 275; Boxer & De Azevedo 22–3; Pradines 54–55). This 1589 attack by the Zimba had coincided with the second

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raid of Mombasa by the Turks led by Mir Ali Bey[23], who had been too optimistic after the success of his first attack in 1585. This second time, however, the Zimba had descended on the island, attacking both the locals and the Turks, while the Portuguese reinforcement, which had just arrived, lay in the harbour. This is how the Zimba aided the Portuguese to retain Mombasa. However, the term Musungulos (also Muzungulos or Mozungullos) is not just imagined – the Mijikenda were, until 1944[24], referred to as the Nyika or Wanyika, and before that, they (Wanyika) were known as the Musungulos (Willis & Gona "Tradition" 452). Actually, both Nyika (Wanyika) and Musungulos are problematic terms. 'Nyika' or 'Wanyika' is a Kiswahili word which loosely translates to 'those who belong to the wilderness'. This term is pejorative because, in reference to the Mijikenda, it inferred that they simply did not belong to the coast. It sought to alienate them from the space they occupied. 'Musungulos', on the other hand, is a term that is historically associated with a people who thrive on chaos, are hostile, and savage, going by descriptions found in historical records. For instance, a Portuguese historian by the name Bocarro described the present-day Mijikenda in the following manner: "The people who live in the interior on the mainland in the vicinity of Mombasa are Caffres called Mozungullos, who have neither law nor king nor any other interest in life except theft, robbery and murder[25]" (Kirkman, "Muzungulos" 76; quoting Freeman-Grenville 179). In other words, therefore, Cuthbert describes the Mijikenda as savages, beasts, thieves, rapists and murderers. This savage and beastly description of the Mijikenda is also found in Cuthbert's source, in which Boxer and De Azevedo describe the Nyika as "the savages [who] cut off a few Omani stragglers on the island and brought their heads into the fortress" (60) Further, the two historians record that the Portuguese at the coast referred to the Bantus and Africans in general as *Cafres* (14), their adaptation of 'Kaffir', an insulting term that Arabs and Islamised Swahilis used to refer to non-Islamised Africans at the coast.

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[23] Elsewhere, as in Coupland (58), this Turkish commander is known as Mirale Bey.

[24] In 1944, representatives of the nine Mijikenda tribes submitted an application to the Provincial Commissioner, Coast Province, expressing their desire to form a Mijikenda Union. Their request was granted, and the Mijikenda Union, which functioned as a political organisation, was officially formed. Although the Union collapsed by the end of that decade due to mismanagement and embezzlement (Willis & Gona 452), the nine tribes had earned themselves a new, decent name (the Mijikenda) which officially replaced the Nyika or Wanyika.

[25] It is rather ironical that the Portuguese who invaded the Kenyan coast, and who pillaged Mombasa at least twice leaving almost everyone dead, should describe the Muzungulos or anyone for that matter as thieves, robbers, and murderers.

Yet, what the Musungulos do in the novel and what the Zimba did in the 1580s is equally savage in comparison to how the Portuguese pillage Mombasa twice, in 1505 and 1529[26] (Boxer and De Azevedo 17; Coupland 45, 57). In 1505, the Portuguese, after defeating the Arab and Swahili townsmen, razed Mombasa to the ground. A first-hand account of this attack is given in a letter sent by the Sultan of Mombasa to the Sultan of Malindi, in which the Sultan of Mombasa warned his compatriot to whom he had earlier proposed an alliance against the Portuguese, but which the Sultan of Malindi had declined:

> May God protect you Sayyid Ali. I have to inform you that we have been visited by a mighty ruler who has brought fire and destruction amongst us. He raged in our town with such might and terror that no one, neither man nor woman, neither the old nor the young, nor even the children, however small, was spared to live. His wrath was to be escaped only by flight. Not only people, but even the birds in the heavens were killed and burnt. The stench from the corpses is so overpowering that I dare not enter the town, and I cannot begin to give you an idea of the immense amount of booty which they took from the town. Pray harken to the news of these sad events, that you may yourself be preserved. (Strandes 64)

In 1528/1529, the Portuguese attacked Mombasa with the help of Zanzibar, Malindi, and Pemba. After emerging victorious, the Portuguese wished to install an ally to rule Mombasa. Finding no one suitable, however, they decided to raze the town before they left in March 1529:

> For this purpose the town was divided up amongst the various native-born auxiliary troops. The mud huts were torn down and their poles and thatched roofs piled together in the larger stone houses. Then, while the Portuguese and their allies embarked, it was all set on fire. The success was complete, 'the roaring of the flames, the pillars of smoke and the crashing of stone walls were reminiscent of a scene from Hell,' and all that remained of what, four months previously, had been a proud city, was ruin and ashes. (Strandes 109)

Nor were these cruel acts limited to Mombasa; a history of the Portuguese expansion and conquest shows that they used force wherever they went, excepting towns that were cordial with them, like Malindi. For example, after the Turks raided Mombasa in 1589, the Portuguese made their way to the Bajun islands, where they beheaded Bwana Bashira the Sultan of Lamu,

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[26] There however seems to be a variation as to when Mombasa was attacked the second time. Coupland says it was in 1528, and others like Berg (1968) mention 1526. A detailed narration of this Portuguese "storming and plundering of Mombasa" given by Strandes (1899) indicates that it ran from November 1528 to March 1529 (103–13).

in vengeance of the support given to the Turks. After the execution, the Portuguese coerced the rulers of the Bajun islands to swear on the Koran that they would "resist further Turkish raids at whatever cost to themselves" (Boxer and De Azevedo 24), a rather cruel order.

The same level of cruelty and savagery can be argued about how the Omani Arabs maraud the village near Bagamoyo along the Swahili coast:

> All the old people had been rounded up together with the very tiny babies, and were being butchered to the accompaniment of screams of anguish from their people. […] Tiny babies were torn from their weeping mothers' arms and decapitated before being flung into the flames. […] *It was like a scene in Hell*. […] The captives were now herded into rows, where the slavers put wooden yokes around their necks and chained them together. […] The village was razed to the ground, and the dead and dying lay ready for the vultures, which were already gathering in the trees above. (Cuthbert 56–7, emphasis added)

Read alongside each other, these records show that the three groups of people (Africans, Arabs and Portuguese) acted in the same way, and their actions were violent and unjust in relative terms. Unfortunately, due to the domination of the Portuguese over the Africans and to some extent the Arabs, history has recorded the brutal actions by the Portuguese as tales of conquest.

In addition, Cuthbert continues to present Africans as occupying a disadvantaged position by choosing to treat them collectively and not as individuals. In the novel, there are no developed African characters, even though in history – and in the novel too – there were not more than 100 Portuguese against 2 500 Swahilis, not to mention the Bantus from the mainland. Despite these facts, however, Africans have been cast out of the history they helped create, which is also their own history. Yenjela (2014), who analyses the uses of memory in *The Great Siege*, captures this when he says of the novel, "there's no free African indigenous person actively involved in the histories of Fort Jesus" (118). Yenjela observes that *The Great Siege* is a colonial novel because it consciously glorifies the Portuguese while denigrating the local people (119). The closest Cuthbert comes to developing a character outside the fort is through Fatima, a Swahili woman, but who Cuthbert then unites with Leonardo Nunes, the Portuguese gunner. Before the novel ends, Fatima is raped and killed by the Musungulos, while Leonardo Nunes escapes with his life (117). Based on historical texts that rely exclusively on Portuguese records, the said erasure of Africans and other actors beside the Portuguese is ingrained not just in the re-creation lacking in the novel, but also in the historical sources themselves.

Thus, Cuthbert unimaginatively adapts Eurocentric conceptualisations of Africa and Africans, as she closely echoes the position taken by the historical sources she draws from. These historical sources are biased in nature – the historians selected some sources and discarded others that may have shaped the histories presented differently, as demonstrated in some of the examples given in this discussion. By choosing to largely reproduce and thus failing to challenge those historical sources, Cuthbert imports biases and crude imperial stereotypes into her novel. While these biases could point to Cuthbert herself as an unimaginative, unskilled, and prejudiced author, in this case it is more likely that she was overdependent on the source material. This is evinced by the extent to which the historical materials are translated into plot and narrative perspective, as I have shown in the above discussion.

A writer for children and young adults, Cuthbert's intention in *The Great Siege* may have been to present history in a simplified manner, in a way to which young readers can relate. In this she succeeds, as she presents a crucial part of the history of the Kenyan coast in the form of a novel at the centre of which are two nine-year-olds. However, Cuthbert's choice to narrowly adopt some historical sources at the expense of others results in the imitation of incomplete, one-sided historical perspectives. Had she considered multiple historical sources, she would have been able to produce a rich and nuanced version of the history of the Kenyan coast. While Cuthbert may have wanted to 'stay true to history' and therefore adapted her narrative to the historical sources as closely as possible, what she produces is limited as it suppresses many other versions and many other truths, just as her sources do.

By allowing the Portuguese to dominate the novel, Cuthbert sustains a singular narrative of the siege of Fort Jesus, created by the Portuguese. Her choice to reproduce Portuguese historical figures and to assign them the same roles they played in history denies other groups of people the chance to be re/inscribed into history. Like the sources the author draws from, *The Great Siege* upholds the dominance of the Europeans over other groups of people at the Kenyan coast. Where the Portuguese had the power to determine the shape of the history of the Kenyan coast, Cuthbert, through the choices she makes, has the power to determine what kind of history young readers consume. Having been produced within a decade of Kenya's independence, this novel demonstrates the impact of written pasts on what knowledges are consumed in contemporary societies. This is because there is an extent to which artists, represented here by Cuthbert, and historical fiction like Cuthbert's novel *The Great Siege*, can be influenced by historical sources.

2.3. **Re-imagining the Swahili Coast: A Reading of Marjorie Macgoye's** *Rebmann*

Moving away from how Valerie Cuthbert utilises historical sources in representing the 17th century at the Kenyan coast in *The Great Siege of Fort Jesus*, in this section I look at how another novelist, Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, uses historical records to recreate the 19th century at the Swahili coast in her novel *Rebman*. Unlike in the previous section where the historical sources employed in writing the novel were pronounced, in this case they are nearly imperceptible. This is because, as the discussion in this section reveals, Macgoye subtly weaves her sources into this narrative in which she presents a history that visibly challenges what was passed as the official account. In relation to the historical sources employed in writing *Rebmann*, the novel stands out, and its general perception is that it tries to tell a history that competes with that which has been presented in the past. Consequently, where in the previous section the historical sources used formed a significant part of the discussion, this time I focus primarily on the novel.

In this novel, Macgoye reconstructs the life of Johannes Rebmann, one of the leading missionaries of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in East Africa. Together with Johann Ludwig Krapf, Rebmann founded a CMS station in Rabai, Kenya, which was the first in East Africa, and wherefrom the Church of England spread. Despite Rebmann's efforts, however, missionary work seemed to bear no fruits at the coast. The Home Committee in England then laid blame on Rebmann, accusing him of spiritual stagnation in the region. Eventually, the Home Committee recalled Rebmann after 29 years of service, sending him to an early retirement. Rebmann left East Africa in 1875, and because he had lost his sight in the final years, he is accompanied by Isaac Nyondo, the son of one of his first converts and best friend, Abe Gunga (baptised Abraham). The novel is narrated in the form of an oral story; Macgoye presents Rebmann as recounting the history of the coast over the last three decades to passengers he is voyaging with from Zanzibar in East Africa to Tilbury in England. Macgoye wrote this novel to defend Rebmann over those charges laid on him by the Home Committee, of which there are historical records.

Macgoye herself, having been offered a job as an attendant at a CMS bookshop in Nairobi, moved to Kenya from England in 1954. She lived in Kenya until 2015 when she passed on. She was involved in compiling *Rabai to Mumias* (1994), which records 150 years of Anglican activity in Kenya, that is from 1844 when Krapf established it until 1994 when the book was published. Being a CMS agent, therefore, she had a lot of information on missionary activity

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in Kenya and had access to CMS records which she employed in writing *Rebmann.* Thus, this novel is also written from the perspective of a CMS staff member in addition to that of a key missionary which is Johannes Rebmann himself. Besides CMS archives and Macgoye's own experience, Rebmann's personal notes were a key source in the writing of this novel. The author even reproduces Rebmann's field notes in the novel, whereby she selects those entries that shape the narrative and presents them in italicised print.

In *Rebmann,* Macgoye recreates historical sources in her attempt to tell a form of history that has not been privileged in the past. The novel, she says, "is based on real events in real lives [and it] tries to tell a kind of truth about the situation which the history books – even the church histories – do not tell" (ix). As to faithfulness to people recorded in the historical sources she draws from, she states that she has "had to give names to the women and children, who are mostly anonymous" (ix). This declaration by the author herself announces what should be expected of the novel from the onset – something that its reading confirms – that it tells a history which has not been told, or a different version of what has been told in/of the past. By naming the unnamed, and thereby giving a voice to those who have previously been silenced, Macgoye consciously reinstalls those who have been left out of history. She also tries to revive certain histories that barely get mentioned at present and are almost forgotten. For instance, the town of Mombasa is in the novel referred to as Mombas, which Macgoye says to have been in usage until 1870 when it became Mombasa. The usage of 'Mombas' is very limited now and is only visible in publications belonging to the 19ᵗʰ century. Essentially, *Rebmann* is a re-imagination of historical figures, historical events, and historical places.

Macgoye's form of writing is motivated by the poetic license that artists enjoy, which is their freedom to toy with the material they use in their writing. This is something historians are denied, because whereas artists can and do "[speak] of what could or might happen and so [can] deal more with universals", historians can "speak only of what has happened, of the particulars of the past" (Hutcheon 106). Macgoye makes use of this power of fiction and uses Rebmann's experiences on the Swahili coast to foreground narratives that have been glossed over in the past. Having in the previous section seen how biased and hence flawed historical sources themselves might be, this current form of writing is arguably more suitable for representing history. Whereas in the previous section I demonstrated what historians (Boxer & De Azevedo) make of history and then how the writer (Cuthbert) appropriates what the historians have written, the text discussed here is different in that the artist writes in a way that

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makes her seem as though she handled the historical sources first-hand, and determined how to present them, thus deciding which and whose story to tell. Compared to Cuthbert, Macgoye shapes the history she presents more forcefully; her novel has a significant impact on the history of the people and places that she writes about (Rebmann, CMS, and the Kenyan coast). To illustrate how Macgoye transforms her sources to come up with an alternative form of history, I elaborate on two aspects of the novel. One is reference to particular histories but in a manner which I see as challenging how those histories have been presented previously. Second is an analysis of how Macgoye chooses to deliver the novel – as a story orally narrated by a European – and how this influences the history the narrator recounts.

To begin with, a crucial history that *Rebmann* rewrites is that which presents the discovery of Africa by Europe so to speak, whereby the novel questions the way Africa has been historicised by the west. For example, history has it that Johannes Rebmann and Johann Ludwig Krapf discovered Mounts Kilimanjaro (1848) and Kenya (1849). In the novel, however, Macgoye uses Rebmann to challenge this idea of 'discovery', hinting that it was not an extraordinary event because it does not really involve breathing something into existence. Rebmann himself is presented as less enthusiastic about his own achievement when he says, "I got a medal from Paris after that. Extraordinary, isn't it? The mountain had been there long before I saw it and was still there the day after" (98). By making the 'discovery' a matter of chance and through presenting Rebmann as nonchalant to praises, Macgoye counters the conception that the history of Africa started with the arrival of the Europeans. For the average Englishman, Elspeth Huxley (1939) says, the history of East Africa begins with the occupation of its coast by the Germans and the British at the end of the 19th century (347). This is much of what Bouchon and Lombard criticise about the Indian Ocean world, which the Portuguese are deemed to have discovered, that "[t]his idea of 'discovery', essentially one-sided, but nevertheless embedded in our minds, often prevents us from grasping the importance of earlier movements" (46). In addition, the novel presents this discovery of Mount Kilimanjaro as collective – both Rebmann and his company consisting of local porters, while on their way to the home of the Jaga[27] where they sought the possibility of new mission establishment, happen to recognise the presence of the mountain simultaneously:

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[27] The Jaga people found in the novel refer to the Chaga (also Chagga), a Bantu-speaking community in Tanzania residing on the southern slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro.

> This time we slept under thorn bushes, but the Lord gave me peace in the night and joy in the morning, for there in the sunlight loomed what appeared to be a white cloud but suddenly leapt into my vision as indeed a snow mountain. I come from the edge of Switzerland. The sight was too familiar to admit of any mistake, even in its extreme improbability. The men were shouting to one another *baridi, baridi*, 'cold, cold.' The sight was as sublime as it was shocking to all my expectations of equatorial lands, and I started shouting myself in the words of the Psalmist [….]" (104–105)

Macgoye's insistence of the pre-existence of the mountain before Rebmann approached it invokes Paul Carter's ideas on the staging of history. Carter's argument is that history as we know it has been written in a manner that assumes that nothing existed previously. In *The Road to Botany Bay* (2013), which is "a prehistory of places" (xxi), he argues that "[staged] history, which reduces space to a stage, that pays attention to events unfolding in time alone, might be called imperial history" (xvi). Such (imperial) history, he says, aims to establish dominion over certain events or places through ignoring previous occurrences, marking territories around those places, and thereby laying claim on them (xvi–xvii). By dehistoricising the discovery of Mount Kilimanjaro, Macgoye strives to reclaim this and many other African geographical sites whose existence was only recognised upon their being sighted by Europeans.

Macgoye continues to challenge the vantage position Europeans have occupied in Africa's history by rewriting the history of Portuguese occupation of the coast. Where the Portuguese are thought to have held great power, Macgoye chooses to present a grim picture. The novel echoes the image of Fort Jesus as a symbol of authority, but which elicits memories of slavery among the Wanika. In fact, the Wanika continue to associate Europeans who appear in the region with memories of violence attached to the fort, so that when the missionaries arrive, the Wanika at first fear that they may have come to repossess the fort or are planning a raid[28] (61). At some point, the Wanika ask Rebmann if he has come to build a fortress (101), that is if he has come to re-establish the system of domination that the coast has not yet forgotten. The reason memories of slavery were still fresh at the coast during Rebmann's time was because the system of slavery was still in place; despite slave trade having been officially abolished in 1807, this trade continued at the East African coast until the 1880s. In the 19th century, slaves were needed to sustain the swelling economy of the Swahili coast mainly caused by the growth of plantation farming (Ewald 77). Part of the reason Christian missionaries came to East Africa,

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[28] A study by Nunn and Wantchekon (2011) shows that people from communities that were affected by slavery and slave trade are less trusting, implying that slavery bred mistrust to a great extent.

beside the perceived need to spread Christianity, was to campaign for an end to slavery. In fact, the mission station that Rebmann founded in Rabai was a haven for rescued slaves, who British agents saved by intercepting slave boats and ships that plied the Indian Ocean. The other slave settlement also mentioned in the novel is Freretown, which was named after Bartle Frere, the man who is credited with bringing an end to slavery on the Swahili coast – he conveyed a treaty from the Queen of England beseeching the Sultan of Zanzibar to end slavery.

Apart from Rabai and Freretown in East Africa, rescued slaves were sent to Bombay in India, and such were referred to as Bombay Africans. There they were placed in Christian homes where they were taught English and technical skills, and some were later brought to East Africa where they helped to push the missionary agenda of Christianity and literacy[29]. An interesting fact is that they retained their label as Bombay Africans even after they came to the Swahili coast. Some of the Bombay Africans mentioned in *Rebmann* are Jones and Polly. Jones must be the person Joe Khamisi (2014) describes in his autobiography as "Reverend William Jones, a Bombay African [who] was perhaps the first Kenyan human rights crusader […] he aggressively and successfully fought for the release of hundreds of African slaves detained by Zanzibar authorities" (247). On the other hand, Polly is married to Isaac, Abe Gunga's son, a union that Rebmann is very proud of not only because it was one of the first Christian weddings in Rabai, but also because Isaac is like a son to him, and Isaac's father Abe Gunga his best friend and earliest convert. By bringing in Bombay Africans, Macgoye does not only highlight the network of people that make up the Swahili coast, but also sheds light on the complex system of slavery and slave communities. This provides an opportunity for the novel to humanise freed slaves at the coast, something that Macgoye does by presenting the difficulties they go through in their efforts to reintegrate into society. In the novel, the following description is given of a rescued slave as he comes out of a ship: "He is usually diseased from the hardships he has suffered, practically naked, in most cases *incommunicado*, not because he is foolish but because he has no language in common with you and his experience on board has not encouraged him to trust strangers" (252). Even after rescued slaves are part of society once again "there remains that void in them where they were snatched from their own community"

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[29] Joe Khamisi, a famous Kenyan politician, has a chapter on Bombay Africans in his autobiography *Dash before Dusk* (2014). Khamisi himself is a slave descendant, and his maternal grandparents (originally from Tanganyika) and paternal grandparents (originally from Nyasaland) were part of those slaves rescued in the sea and settled in Rabai. He also mentions Isaac Nyondo School in present-day Rabai (250), which must have been established by Isaac, Abe Gunga's son in *Rebmann*.

and "however close you wish to get to [them] there is that alarming self-reliance that is afraid to trust anything less than the Lord" (6).

Another example of how Cuthbert subverts the power the Portuguese held is that despite the Portuguese having ruled the Swahili coast for two centuries and in spite of their attempts to proselytise the coast in the 1560s and 1590s, the only trace of their efforts when the CMS arrives is "an old Catholic church built by the Portuguese, very much broken down and being used as a cowshed" (55). To lay further emphasis on this view, the novel uses an unnamed character who headed the Swahili in Mombas and had to be consulted by the Methodists (represented by Mr. and Mrs. Wakefield) who in 1865 wanted to establish a station in Malindi. This person, the novel mentions, "conversed in broken Portuguese" (217). This points out a faint Portuguese legacy at the coast, a region where they are historically believed to have exerted a lot of influence as discussed in the previous section.

In minimising the perceived influence of the Portuguese at the coast, however, Macgoye runs into the risk of privileging British historiography of the Kenyan coast and of exaggerating the success of the CMS in Christianising the coast at the time. It is important to remember that the British were the fifth European nation to arrive in Kenya through the coast, the Portuguese, Dutch, Danish and French having preceded them. Further, the Europeans were the last to arrive at the Kenyan coast, after the Arabs, Malays, Chinese, Indians and even Persians had set foot on the East African coast. Following the illustrations given above, it is apparent that *Rebmann* downplays the fact that nearly three centuries before the first British missionaries arrived in East Africa, the Jesuits had made desperate attempts to proselytise this region, as recorded by Coupland below:

> The first Christian mission to the people of East Africa was undertaken by the Jesuits in 1560. They made their way to the court of the paramount chief of the Makalanga inland beyond Manika, but in 1561 their leader, Gonzalo da Silveira, was murdered, and in 1562 the mission was abandoned. The Dominicans followed, planting stations up the Zambesi valley. But with all their patience and courage […] the missionaries made scarcely more impression on East Africa than the soldiers and the merchants. (51–52)

Towards the end of the 16th century, the Portuguese made fresh attempts to spread Christianity at the Kenyan coast. In 1597, they established a monastery of Augustinian friars in Mombasa but, perhaps injudiciously or too optimistically, stationed only six monks in it (Boxer and De Azevedo 29). Other coastal towns like Faza, Lamu, Malindi, and Zanzibar, each had only one

monk commissioned to it. Even though the Augustinians were specialised in "the singularly difficult and unrewarding Muslim mission-field", they still failed (Boxer and De Azevedo 30). The main converts they managed to attract were slaves, some Bantus, and the women who cohabited with Portuguese soldiers. Boxer and De Azevedo conclude that "Christian proselytism here as elsewhere in the Muslim world achieved no success whatever, and the friars were chiefly employed in ministering to their own countrymen and the latter's half-caste offspring" (30).

The truth is that at first, the British were no more successful than the Portuguese had been in spreading Christianity at the coast, both camps having faced similar obstacles, chief of which was insufficient personnel. Whereas one would expect that the CMS would have taken some lessons from the Portuguese, there were only fifteen Europeans (non-missionaries) in Zanzibar when Rebmann arrived in 1846, seven of whom died during that hot season, as represented in the novel (159). The shortage of personnel was more pronounced in auxiliary posts like Rabai, where for long there were only Krapf and Rebmann. The other concern that hampered the success of CMS was the unpreparedness of the commissioners, in that Krapf and Rebmann spent a lot of time preparing the inaugural sermon, affecting the speed at which the gospel could be spread and received. This was made harder by linguistic challenges, in that the sermon had to be translated to Kiswahili and Kinika, which the missionaries also had to learn first – outside Luke, John and Genesis of which Krapf was completing a Kiswahili translation, Rebmann had to write down and translate any other scripture he wanted to use (64, 68). Their inability to communicate easily also meant that they could not explain certain scriptures clearly and satisfactorily. They dreaded questions in the early days, and Krapf often asked the congregation to preserve whatever questions they may have until they got outside after the sermon (64). Rebmann, on the other hand, falters when Mringe, his first convert, approaches him with the question of Jesus' virgin birth: "Brother Mringe, I am sorry. Let us talk about it tomorrow. I do not yet know enough words to…" (65). With such challenges, it is no wonder that it took fourteen years to get three converts, as Rebmann recalls, "[i]t took Krapf and me four years at Rabai before Mringe was baptised and, ten years after Mringe, you [Isaac] and your father and a handful after you" (34). Actually, Rebmann's partial blindness towards the end of his missionary assignment can perhaps be understood as an analogy for CMS's dwindling progress at the time. Worse, his departure in 1875, coupled with the fact that Krapf had officially left the mission field in 1854, left missionary work in the region in a precarious state. To complicate it further, most of those who came after this duo, like Graf and Elliker

brought in by Krapf in 1862, were not as resilient and hardworking as Rebmann had been. "They were in a state of physical and moral collapse […] a terrible waste of sponsor's money and frustrated prayer" (205), and Krapf had to dismiss them.

To further challenge the marginal position Africa has been relegated to in dominant history, *Rebmann* foregrounds African epistemologies and highlights the question of literacy on the African continent. While literacy on the continent has commonly been credited to the Europeans, with mid-twentieth century commonly appearing as the age of enlightenment for the African continent, there has been evidence that literacy on the East African coast, particularly, predates the arrival of the Europeans by centuries. Specifically, written Swahili literature that is said to have been in existence for over four centuries only proves that literacy in the region is much older. In *Rebmann*, Rebmann tells Sir Bartle Frere about how Emma did not have to teach the women about what Rebmann calls "intimate matters", because the women had learned all that from "Mwana Kupona", a Swahili poem (18). "Mwana Kupona" is believed to have been authored by Mwana Kupona binti Mshamu in 1858, who composed it for her daughter Mwana Hashima binti Sheikh. In it, the poet advises her daughter who is about to enter matrimony on how to relate with God (Allah), his prophet Mohammed, and with her own husband. In an analysis of this poem, Rayya Timammy and Amir Swaleh (2013) observe that the issues addressed in it are imbued with aspects of Swahili culture and society, and are entrenched in the teachings of Islam (62). Though the Wanika women had not read the poem, they had heard about it. This points to the coexistence of literacy and orality at the Swahili coast, and how the two forms worked side by side in informing the society about cultural issues and religious practises. At the same time, it highlights the strong presence of Islam at the coast, and how Swahili culture is shaped by it. Most importantly, however, it demonstrates the existence of strong and reliable traditional structures that educate members of society on cultural and social issues. Yet, Macgoye may have used this particular poem to call attention to the long tradition of literacy on the Swahili coast, especially because "Mwana Kupona" is among the oldest surviving Swahili verses, the oldest being "Hamziya" written in 1652 (Amidu 115).

Apart from promoting African literacy, the novel evokes African spirituality. Macgoye presents an African traditional prayer, which does not seem to contradict Christianity. In the novel, Rebmann encounters a prayerful man, Chief Maina, while Rebmann and his porters were on their way to the land of the Jaga, where Rebmann sought the possibility of establishing a new mission. A few days before the party 'discovered' Mount Kilimanjaro, they passed by the Teita

(who must be the Taita located near the Kenya-Tanzania border), and there they rested as one of the porters recovered from an illness. The Chief of the Teita, Maina, impressed Rebmann with his prayer, which Rebmann says is "the first example [he] had met of real spiritual fellowship on the march" (105). The prayer went thus:

> This stranger has left his home to come to me and say, Maina, let us talk, let us make friends. I told him, Let us speak in joy, let us pray God together for the peace of the land. Let sickness leave my villages. Let this stranger see nothing evil in his way, let him not be kept back by thorns or long grass, let him not meet with elephants or rhinoceros or enemies. When he reaches Jaga, let the Jaga people receive him with joy. I invoke the spirits of my father and my mother to let him arrive, and to come back to see me again in joy. (104)

Except that this prayer is directed to Maina's ancestors, it is similar to Rebmann's own prayers. In this instance, it can be argued that even though Macgoye is writing about Christian missionary work at the coast, she acknowledges that those whom missionaries laboured to deliver from darkness were not really pagan but had a belief system of their own.

Macgoye's attempt to draw attention to African culture and spirituality can better be appreciated when placed against the sentiments of the Home Committee. One of the questions that the Home Committee poses to Rebmann is: "How much social impact – people sending their children to school, clothing themselves, abandoning witchcraft and polygamy?" (251). The attitude upheld by the Home Committee calls to mind the imperialist tendency to measure the success of Christianity against the prevalence of traditional belief system and customs. This, Thomas Beidelman notes, is a common feature of CMS evangelicals especially in the Victorian era. In his study of CMS activities in Ukaguru in Tanzania, he notes that the CMS "expressed a form of Protestantism that rejected ritual [….] For the CMS, proper conversion involved a dramatic transformation, often by a radical rejection of the habits and customs of one's past life" (75). In his defence, Rebmann remarks that progress has been made since he arrived because rituals have dwindled among the Nika, demonstrated by, for instance, the presence of more twins under the age of twenty than those over twenty. Before, the birth of twins was a curse among the Nika, and twins had to be killed. Likewise, those born with deformities were killed, although people who acquired disability later in life were spared, like Rebmann's first convert Mringe (14, 113). Of course, Rebmann's claim is hard to substantiate because there is no instance in the novel where he or his colleagues intervene in a ritual death of this kind, and it may simply be that fewer twins were born in later years. In fact, Rebmann betrays his

argument when he mentions that one would often hear cries of such babies being strangled in the bush at night, but helplessly so, because there were no women missionaries to take care of whoever would be saved, and the local women could not be depended on (78).

Having discussed some of the histories written about (East) Africa that Macgoye challenges, my second objective is to analyse how Macgoye chooses to narrate the story, and what this narrative style accomplishes in the text. *Rebmann* is delivered in the form of an oral narrative. "I shall never see it again!" the novel opens. These are the words of Rebmann as he leaves East Africa for Europe where the Home Committee in London has recalled him after twenty-nine years of service (1846–1875). By this statement, Rebmann is not just saying that he is leaving East Africa but is also referring to the fact that he has lost his sight and literally cannot see the coast again. The first boat takes Rebmann from Kisulutini to Mombasa, from where he will board another one to Zanzibar, from which port he will depart East Africa for Europe. Macgoye introduces the Swahili coast and Rebmann's plight through the conversation Rebmann has with Isaac early during the journey, that is from Rabai to Zanzibar. Once their ship leaves Zanzibar, passengers gather around Rebmann, who then narrates the story of his life and that of the CMS to them. In his narrative, Rebmann goes as far back as when he left Germany to go for missionary training in England, after which he was posted to East Africa, up to the present moment when the Home Committee has sent for him, asking him to leave the mission field. Thus, in a flashback, this story covers almost four decades.

Macgoye's choice to present the novel in this form makes it possible to recreate the narrative in several ways. In her defence of Rebmann, the author puts him in a position where he can speak for himself. As a narrator, Rebmann is equipped with facts that he uses to distance himself from the charges laid against him, which boil down to spiritual stagnation and the inability of CMS to make substantial progress at the coast. For every accusation, Rebmann presents an explanation or a counter argument, and he seems very convincing. By the time he faces the Home Committee in London, the narrative has laid grounds to exonerate him, and the secretaries find his defense sensible. To the Committee, "[t]he subject [Rebmann] was more reasonable than they had anticipated", and his response satisfactory (256). After that, Rebmann is released to an early retirement with a hundred pounds a year for sustenance.

Also, this narrative form allows the author to use Rebmann, a European, to positively construct an African perspective from within the community. Rebmann lives and works among the Wanika, a fact that grants him some authority to speak about them. Of key importance is the

fact that the present voyage is the first trip Rebmann is making outside Africa since 1846 when he was posted to the continent. Indeed, Rebmann has mostly been confined to East Africa in the last twenty-nine years, only making short trips to Egypt a couple of times, like the one when he went to marry Emma (135–140). Yet, this is not an entirely fictional representation, because Rebmann's notes which Macgoye reproduces in the novel attest to his admiration of the Wanika. Rebmann comes across as a European who feels at home in East Africa and would be lost in Europe. Right from his arrival in 1846, he is presented as being at home at the coast, "I reached Mombas on Wednesday, and of all the excitements of landfall this was the greatest, since now *I had come home*" (52, emphasis added). Additionally, he fully embraced the Wanika to an extent that he thinks himself one of them and shares in their worldview: "I wonder if they have a proverb in Ethiopia like ours, *akili nyingi huondoa maaarifa,* much expertise takes away wisdom!" (5), he says, implying that he counts himself a Nika. Besides, Rebmann has come to prefer Kinika over English or German over the years. For example, on the voyage from East Africa to Europe, Isaac his companion reads the scripture to him, in Kinika (211). After Rebmann had settled in Germany and it was time for Isaac to go back (to England for some training, then back to the Swahili coast), the two "had their last prayer-time in Kinika […] Rebmann wiping away a tear which might otherwise freeze" (269).

As to how he feels about going back to Europe where he came from, he says, "[i]t is a foreign continent I am heading for" (98). Rebmann's fondness of the Swahili coast and its people is contrasted with the attitude of such a character as Sparshott, who despises the Nika and Bombay Africans too. The Home Committee had commissioned Sparshott to the islands of the Indian Ocean where he was expected to establish a settlement for freed slaves, headquartered in Mauritius. However, Rebmann criticises Sparshott's capability for mission work, because of the latter's "imperial pretensions", calling other people niggers and believing that the best of Bombay Africans is the only one fit to be his cook (26, 233). Sparshott, who describes Nika houses including that in which Rebmann and Krapf live in as "native huts full of smoke and foul odour" (153), is very rebellious, at some point desiring to rename his boat *The Serpent* in contradiction to the existing name *Dove* (26).

The illustrations above present *Rebmann* as a novel that accommodates different perspectives. It tells different histories, speaks for multiple groups of people, and gives primacy to multiple voices as opposed to a single narrative. This image of the novel as one that re-writes history had been pronounced right from the start, when Macgoye's intention to vindicate Johannes

Rebmann was stated. In the process of presenting a solid defense on Rebmann's behalf, Macgoye does not only tell Rebmann's story differently, but as has been discussed here, she also presents alternative narratives of certain histories of the Kenyan coast. The prominent histories that the novel transforms are those that have previously centred around Europeans. Of the historical sources used in writing the novel, only Rebmann's field notes appear in the novel. The others, which include CMS archives, inform the history Macgoye writes in a very subtle way – they do not impose themselves on the novel.

2.4. Conclusion

The subject of discussion in this chapter has been the relationship between history and fiction, and by extension, history as narrative. I read two novels in this chapter: Cuthbert's *The Great Siege of Fort Jesus* and Macgoye's *Rebmann.* The two represent histories of the Kenyan coast in the 16th–17th and 19th centuries respectively. I had two questions in mind: the extent to which historical sources either limit or extend narrative possibilities when it comes to fiction, and the different choices authors of historical fiction make when handling their sources. In both cases, distinct histories of the Kenyan coast as presented differently by the two authors were discussed. I read the two novels against each other, and so I placed them in different sections in the chapter.

In the first section, I read Cuthbert's *The Great Siege of Fort Jesus*. I established that Cuthbert closely echoes the position taken by the historical sources she draws from. I also examined the histories Cuthbert relies on and found that they are biased – the historians selected some sources and discarded others that may have shaped the histories presented differently. Relating the novel to those historical records, I concluded that there is a way in which historical sources limit historical fiction that comes out of them.

In the second section, I read Macgoye's *Rebmann.* Unlike in the earlier novel, here I found that the author invented history that is different from what the historical sources would have. I discussed how the author subtly incorporates historical sources in her novel, but in a way that she is able to tell that which those sources have left out. This novel demonstrates the possibilities historical sources offer artists, which is that artists have the choice and the ability to represent histories that have been ignored or marginalised.

CHAPTER III

Rewriting the History of the Kenyan Coast: Oral Histories of Fort Jesus and Shimoni Slave Caves

3.1.   Introduction

Much of the previous chapter offered a discussion of the history of the Kenyan coast during the 16th–17th centuries. In it, the history of Fort Jesus as documented by historians and as represented by Cuthbert, a historical novelist, was discussed, with a particular focus on how authors employ historical sources in their creation of historical fiction. The chapter presented an examination of the choices historians make when it comes to deciding which sources to include in the histories they write and which ones to leave out, or in the case of the artist, how they choose to manipulate historical texts when writing historical fiction. Concerning the historian, reference was made to the intentional exclusion of local sources of knowledge in the writing of the history of the Kenyan coast. While Portuguese sources were taken seriously in the writing of this history, Swahili sources were treated with scepticism. In summary, I established that the Portuguese held power in the writing of the history of the Kenyan coast, and consequently blamed biased, Eurocentric historical books for the prejudices that exist in histories on the Kenyan coast.

In this chapter, I turn to oral history, with the interest of examining how differently a history told by the local people presents the history of the Kenyan coast. Following the biases highlighted in the written history discussed in the previous chapter, and having pointed out that local oral sources were intentionally left out in the writing of that history, my aim in this chapter is to reveal how facts provided by local versions of history enrich, expand, and complicate dominant history. I use three oral histories from the Kenyan coast, texts which I recorded during fieldwork in Mombasa and Kwale. Two are on Fort Jesus in the 16th–17th centuries, and one is on Shimoni Slave Caves over the 18th–19th centuries. Of the two on Fort Jesus, one is by Bwana Baraka, a middle-aged official tour guide at Fort Jesus, and the other by Mzee Suleimann Ali Nyembwe, an eighty-year-old man from the Digo community. On the other hand, the oral history of Shimoni Slave Caves found in Msambweni near the Kenya-Tanzania border was narrated by Jabari, a tour guide. What is striking about these oral histories is that they all have different sources, something that is very crucial and from which I derive conclusions at the end of this chapter.

I use these oral histories to continue to problematise the representation of the history of the Kenyan coast. Recorded in the present moment, they allow me to interrogate the shape of this history three centuries after the influence of the Portuguese waned. I ask, what is the shape of the history of the Kenyan coast now that the Portuguese and other foreign powers have officially left? In view of Kenya's post-independence state, what kind of histories currently circulate particularly about this region? Having criticised the Portuguese for presenting a biased account of history, how different are the histories presently made available and consumed about the Kenyan coast? It is worth noting that all the historical accounts I analyse here are narrated by people local to the coast. Thus, how do these histories relate to the way the larger nation of Kenya constructs its nationhood? I use oral history to map this trajectory, and to find answers to the contemporary historiography of the Kenyan coast.

It is important to note that unlike in the previous chapter where dates were given, the oral histories in question here offer hardly any as they refer to events some of which are more than four centuries old and the memories have only survived through being orally passed down from one generation to another. Therefore, what we have here are recollections of the past as remembered by narrators who mostly received the same history from their fathers and grandfathers, and the chain goes as far back to those who witnessed the narrated events first-hand[30]. As a result, issues of memory – both collective and individual – are bound to arise in the analysis of these oral histories. For instance, Baraka and Jabari who recount these histories on a daily basis, and therefore have nearly instantaneous recall of the events they are retelling, differ from Mzee Nyembwe, who does not have a frequent audience. In addition, as the oral histories were collected during fieldwork, during which narrators performed certain histories as I recorded them, issues relating to performance cannot be avoided, and some aspects, like the language and context of performance, will form part of the analysis of these texts.

Concerning the different sources of these histories, I gathered that Baraka's, which is the official history narrated in Fort Jesus, is based on written historical accounts, which he seems to have memorised; Mzee Nyembwe's, which represents an indigenous perspective on Fort Jesus, is steeped in oral tradition; and that of Shimoni by Jabari is, he says, a blend of what he received from his forefathers and what he read in historical books. The implication of these different sources is discussed in detail in the respective sections. Therefore, at the heart of this

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[30] Chapter one provided a description of oral history methodology and a brief discussion on how these narratives are created and disseminated.

chapter lies the contention between versions of history based on two contrasting though related forms of knowledge, the oral and the written. In most cases, modern society deems the written form to be superior to the spoken word, with the written text often described as modern, urban, and elite and the oral form traditional, rural, and popular (Hofmeyr, "Talisman" 89). Also, written texts are "relatively well known" while the oral forms are not only "far less known" but also "less appreciated" (Finnegan 3). In addition, western forms of education in Africa misrepresented oral materials resulting in the idea that "only written matter was respectable, official and binding" (Wasamba 4). Furthermore, scholars have often directed their focus to written texts, presenting the impression that "oral art forms were essentially unskilful and not worth serious study" (Ong 10). Even though research in oral forms of knowledge is on the rise (Saussy 314; Wasamba 4), it is still true that oral sources continue to be taken as less serious, remain to be less known and appreciated, and tend to be easily overlooked (Finnegan 3; Ong 10). This fully applies to history, in that written history has dominated the understanding of the past, often remains the official account, and is also the one that is taught and disseminated widely. Contrastingly, oral history is ignored, suppressed, and left out of official discourse.

When it comes to the Kenyan coast in particular, the writing of (the official) history relied on documentary evidence by people who James de Vere Allen (1981) says were "mostly non-African travellers and traders, few of whom spent more than six months in the region" (307). In any case, these people spent most of their time in coastal towns and hardly ventured inland (Ibid.). However, tracing indigenous sources as I do in this chapter is not by any means an attempt to radically subvert other versions of history, but to provide "excellent grounds for taking a fresh look" at this history (Allen 319). I am particularly interested in the ability of oral history to produce new knowledge of the past, which will expand on what is available in written history.

There are two sections in this chapter. In the first one, I analyse the two oral histories on Fort Jesus. One is official and based on written history, and the other one is indigenous and stems from oral tradition. This distinction also applies to the socioeconomic position of the narrators; Baraka has made a career out of the official history of Fort Jesus, which is on high demand as tourists flock the museum every day, while Mzee Nyembwe exists outside the institution, but he is important and powerful as a custodian of Digo oral tradition. I problematise the sources of these two versions of the history of Fort Jesus, as they cause a distinction that proves to set the narratives completely apart, to a point where they seem irreconcilable. They refer to the

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same place over the same time, but from completely different perspectives. At best, this conflict highlights the fact that oral history, like written history, is also multifaceted, and more versions help to enrich each other. At the same time, however, this conflict mirrors the failure of official history of postcolonial nations to adopt indigenous sources, a move that would perhaps blunt the biases in dominant, official history, often written from a singular perspective. The model I propose, therefore, is one which foregrounds multiple histories as opposed to singular, verifiable accounts.

The second section of this chapter examines the oral history of Shimoni Caves, the focus being to illustrate the possibility of an integrated history derived from a combination of oral and written sources of history. Comparing it to the oral history of Fort Jesus, I show how this narrative accounts for both official and indigenous perspectives. From this, I advance the idea that where possible, we should perhaps incorporate oral sources to the narratives we construct, which become the histories we (will) tell. This section demonstrates that though written history has been dominant for long, it is possible to marry it with oral history, and hence to synthesise an integrated, multifocal history.

3.2. 'Indigenous' and 'Institutionalised' Histories of Fort Jesus: A Digo view of Fort Jesus and the tour guide version

In this section I examine the two oral histories of Fort Jesus in Mombasa, by Mzee Nyembwe and Bwana Baraka. Using the two accounts, my overriding aim is to examine the shape of the histories that circulate locally, about Fort Jesus in particular, and the Kenyan coast in general. As the Portuguese officially left the Kenyan coast about three centuries ago, I am keen on establishing how this history has been reshaped and restructured over time, and to what extent it now carries the voice of the local people themselves. My analysis of the official history alongside an indigenous one leads me to believe that the two forms of historical knowledge – the written and the oral – treat the local people differently. It becomes clear that the official account, which heavily relies on written records, continues to advance imperialist perspectives in which the Portuguese and the Arabs take centre stage while the Mijikenda (the nine tribes, one of which is the Digo) are pushed to the margin. This leads me to explore the shortcomings of the continued reliance on only written sources in representing the past or when retelling our history. From the indigenous history recounted by Mzee Nyembwe, the Mijikenda are at the centre of this history. I use this version of history to argue for the inclusion of local oral sources in the corpus of history.

As I demonstrate in the following pages, the two accounts sharply contrast. By offering diverging viewpoints, they show how different narratives can and are constructed from a single event. By and large, an analysis of these two seemingly parallel but evidently interconnected narratives demonstrates not the fallibility of one version of history and the accuracy of the other, but rather the plurality of truths that compete in describing a single phenomenon. Therefore, I am not keen on placing either narrative above the other, but rather on bringing to the fore hitherto unexplored knowledges that circulate in a single space, the Kenyan coast, and about the same place, Fort Jesus. In the end, it should be apparent that different sources narrate the past in unique ways, and the richness of history can only be achieved if (these) varied sources are given similar focus. This is despite the fact that I might give more attention to the account given by Mzee Nyembwe, which is representative of the Digo/Mijikenda perspective, but only because it represents that version of history that remains hidden. It contains some perspectives that are not contained in the written histories we have encountered, and therefore provides the basis for challenging the hegemonic nature of written history.

While my dissertation is anchored on oral versus written texts, it is also clear that neither tradition has a single approach to the knowledges it propagates. Just like in the previous chapter where I contrasted the writing style of two authors, here I contrast two narrators who take on different positions on a single event. Speaking from opposing grounds (literally and figuratively), the two represent conflicting factions that are entangled in the history of the Kenyan coast in general and Fort Jesus in particular – those of oppressor/oppressed, assailant/victim, and visitor/host. These divisions translate to the binary between the coloniser and the colonised discussed in the previous chapter, a chasm that calls to mind the correlation between the Occident and the Orient as conceptualised by Edward Said in *Orientalism* ([1977] 2003). Said posits that "[t]he relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (5). In this section, this discord speaks to the power struggles over whose history is told and by whom. As in the previous chapter also, the question of sources arises in this discussion too, where I prod the different wells from which these oral texts flow. As I demonstrate here, the source of each account determines whom the narrator speaks for, which explains how these narratives are framed differently.

When it comes to Fort Jesus, there are two interesting facts about this museum that influence how the official account I recorded with Baraka is understood – it is run by the National

Museums of Kenya (NMK) and was in 2011 declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. These features transform the status of Fort Jesus from being just a monument at the Kenyan coast and instead interweave local histories with national narratives (through NMK) and global goals (through UNESCO). As a result, the official history narrated in Fort Jesus, given here by Baraka, to a large extent echoes how the nation of Kenya narrates itself. Yet, it is an imitation of written history, which I have previously observed as being one-sided and incomplete.

Due to the complicity of the official version in sustaining hegemonic history, I analyse Baraka's account using Frantz Fanon's ideas on the postcolonial nation, in which Fanon highlights the plight of previously colonised nations. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), he paints a gloomy picture in which previously colonised nations undergo very little or no transformation after independence. To Fanon, independence carries very little promise because national elites soon step into the place previously occupied by the coloniser, and still do the former master's bidding. As he puts it, "[i]n its narcissism, the national middle class is easily convinced that it can advantageously replace the middle class of the mother country" (148). Thus, in previously colonised nations like Kenya in this case, the national frame continues to act as an agent of the colonial master, since "the national middle class will have nothing better to do than to take on the role of manager for Western enterprise" (154). By failing to dismantle the power structures, national elites give up the chance to reconstruct narratives about the nation. Looking at the history narrated in Fort Jesus, for example, one cannot help noticing that half a century after independence, Kenya's construction of its nationhood is still the one inherited from imperialists, and that histories written by the Portuguese four centuries ago have largely been adopted unchallenged. Essentially, nothing has been done to correct the biases that exist in written history, which bears a western perspective. Instead, institutions like Fort Jesus continue to reproduce and distribute such limited knowledges. This explains why the history given by Baraka is housed in Fort Jesus while that by Mzee Nyembwe, indigenous in nature, continues to exist on the fringes of society.

Thus, considering the nature of Fort Jesus Museum currently – what is displayed and by who, what is told and who tells it – my argument is that the official narrative of Fort Jesus continues to distance the local people from this magnificent space, while trivialising their participation in the making of (the history of) Fort Jesus. Local sources remain unofficial and continue to exist outside the fort. I presume that this exclusion of indigenous perspectives on the history of Fort Jesus arises from the reliance on written history, the extent of which is demonstrated by

memory aids that tour guides in Fort Jesus use – maps, drawings, pictures, inscriptions, and posters that are on display around the fort[31]. They form part of the content that tour guides like Baraka have memorised alongside histories they read in books. In fact, a look at the oral history I recorded with Baraka shows that it is a rendition of written history. Apart from linking oral accounts given by the tour guides to written history, however, these aids are also important in demonstrating the different kind of performance the tour guides in Fort Jesus engage in. Even as I study the account recorded in Fort Jesus as a performed text, it is different from the one given by Mzee Nyembwe. For instance, Baraka does not have to dig deep into his memory to recount the history of Fort Jesus – he is aided by posters and pictures. Also, this is something he does every day, a couple of times daily, and so he is reciting this history more than he is remembering it. Basically, what is until now known *officially* about Fort Jesus is its being constructed by the Portuguese, and how for centuries after that it was the centre of conflict between foreign powers (Portuguese, Omani Arabs, British) who saw the fort as being vital to the control of not just the Kenyan coast, but much of the Swahili coast too. The weakness of the oral history given at Fort Jesus, therefore, is that it upholds the written record as truth. It perpetuates the view that the Portuguese and the Omani Arabs had monumental control of the Kenyan coast, particularly Fort Jesus, but it fails to capture the role of the local people in the making of this history, or even acknowledge how they were adversely affected by the invasion of these outsiders. It is unfortunate that this is the perspective that the Kenyan government, through the NMK, has chosen to present.

On the other hand, Mzee Nyembwe's account, which is steeped in oral tradition, easily calls to mind the divide between oral and written sources and reminds us of the debate between literacy and orality above. When compared to the official history narrated in Fort Jesus, the treatment of Mzee Nyembwe's account evokes Ngugi's views that the oral is "treated as a bondsman to the writing master" (*Globalectics* 63). To illustrate this, Ngugi gives the example of Karen Blixen (also known as Isak Dinesen, 1885–1962), a Danish settler who lived in Kenya during the colonial period. Dinesen, in her autobiography *Out of Africa* (1992), boasts about how she gifted the magic of the written word to the local people among which she lived. She had helped Jogona (Njuguna), one of her workers, to write a testimony that he needed to present to the

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[31] In the first section of chapter two, where Cuthbert's novel is discussed, the Fort is used in reference to Fort Jesus, but elsewhere in the dissertation, like in this chapter, I refer to it simply as the fort. The difference is in how the history written by the Portuguese viewed the fort as a central figure, whereas the shifting focus that local perspectives afford me allows me to view it as just a part of the Kenyan coast.

District Commissioner. She had then read the testimony to him, and recorded his euphoric reaction, her interpretation of it being that she had just breathed life into Njuguna's previously wretched existence, "[s]uch a glance did Adam give the Lord when He formed him out of the dust, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. I had created him and shown him himself: Jogona Kanyagga of life everlasting[32]" (110).

By using this extreme analogy, Dinesen describes herself as the creator, and Njuguna the object of her creation. She implies that Njuguna's existence was only given meaning once his story was put down in writing, that before, while it was oral, it was worthless. To Dinesen, it is not Njuguna's ability to recall the testimony that matters, it is her writing of it. To her, Ngugi observes, "it was as if Jogona had suddenly jumped from the vagueness of the oral into the clarity of history" (*Globalectics* 69). Ngugi criticises such an attitude, arguing that the lower esteem with which oral material was treated became "the basis for expelling some cultures from history and complex thoughts, consigning them to a place in hell" (*Globalectics* 63). In relation to Mzee Nyembwe's account, it is largely true that its orality is responsible for its being, until today, outside the scope of mainstream history.

So, what happens when oral sources are disregarded, when they are consigned to a place in hell, as Ngugi says? In other words, how were histories like the one Mzee Nyembwe narrates set aside, and how have they been preserved or carried to the present moment? James Scott (1990) avers that when the colonised is confronted with the coloniser, the latter aiming to suppress the culture of the colonised as a means of domination, the colonised respond by keeping their culture hidden, as a form of passive resistance. Scott calls this a "hidden transcript", a "discourse that takes place 'offstage', beyond direct observation by powerholders" (4). This hidden transcript, which is unofficial and is only shared among the oppressed, "has its own history, its own literature and poetry, its own biting slang, its own music and poetry, its own humor, its own knowledge of shortages, corruption, and inequalities" (51). By staying hidden, it is able to survive as it is carried in people's memories, over generations.

It is perhaps Amilcar Cabral who captures the importance of culture as a tool of resistance and emphasises the ability of the oppressed to keep their culture alive in the face of confrontation

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[32] It is ironical that Dinesen believes she had written Njuguna into existence, when throughout the autobiography, she misspells his name, and hence misrepresents him. She refers to him as Jogona, but his name is actually Njuguna.

with the oppressor. In *The Return to the Source* (1973), Cabral notes that indigenous people struggle to keep their culture alive because they are aware that "culture acts as a bulwark in preserving their *identity*" (61, original emphasis). In the face of political and economic domination, therefore, oppressed people find ways to retain their culture, which is separate and distinct from that of the coloniser (*Source* 59–60). This is necessary because the oppressor knows "the value of culture as a factor of resistance to foreign domination", and from the onset aims "to destroy, or at least to neutralize, to paralyze, [the subject's] cultural life" (Cabral, "Culture" 1). The intentional disregard for and omission of local oral sources in the writing of history therefore meant to trivialise and eventually suppress the experiences of local people, but this did not succeed because the people preserved these knowledges in their memory and shared them amongst each other using the spoken word.

Mzee Nyembwe's account which exists at the periphery is a perfect example of sources that continue to be neglected in the writing and telling of the history of the Kenyan coast. Such sources were consigned to the margins by the institutions that control what will be passed as history. As Michel Foucault (1971) observes, "in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures" (Foucault 8). Institutions determine that which can be said, written, or expressed (Foucault 8–9). Going by this, Mzee Nyembwe's account represents a reclamation of power by local oral perspectives, an issue that will be clear in the analysis below. It provides a criticism of the intentional exclusion of other forms of knowledge. It offers what other truths there are concerning the Kenyan coast and reveals how differently the shape of the history of this region would be if such sources were considered. Even as it questions and contests, it complements and adds onto what is already known about the Kenyan coast, particularly Fort Jesus. This version is, therefore, indispensable to the history of the Kenyan coast. The irony is that Fort Jesus was in 2011 listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, the leading cultural champion in the world, yet nothing has been done to promote indigenous knowledges about the history of Fort Jesus. People like Mzee Nyembwe, together with the histories they tell, continue to exist at the margin of the institution.

Thus, while the history narrated by Baraka reads as one that upholds an imperial perspective, that by Mzee Nyembwe is remarkable in its ability to challenge this hegemonic history, by bringing in an indigenous perspective. It calls attention to indigenous knowledges as valid, alternative forms of knowledge. It is proof that there exist other sources/accounts beside those

by the Portuguese/Europeans. It supports Ngugi and Cabral's arguments described above; that oral cultures have long been set aside, but that they have managed to survive through generations. It invites us to celebrate the efforts of orators of historical knowledge, and to acknowledge the pivotal role they play in (African) historiography, which is necessary because the contribution of these informants has often been trivialised (Hamilton 215–16). It emphasises the need for research to include local perspectives when studying a people, since a "[k]nowledge or science, and its methods of investigation, cannot be divorced from a people's history, cultural context and worldview" (Owusu-Ansah & Mji 1). In summary, previously undocumented history, like this one by Mzee Nyembwe, does two things, it provides a basis to challenge hegemonic history, and is a means to preserve and celebrate heritage (Klopfer 101). In *Along the Archival Grain* (2009), Ann Stoler discusses the implications of the discovery of previously undocumented historical sources, asserting that they "disable colonial fictions" due to the fact that they often unsettle previous 'truths' (183). They challenge historical facts/fictions and question what is known and has been believed to be the case for centuries (183). By doing this, previously undocumented historical sources introduce new knowledges that expand the archive, hence availing many versions of history, and in the process providing many other truths about the past (184). Often, these new sources make claims and counterclaims when placed alongside official history, and the dichotomies that arise when they contrast each other often echo the inability of any version to sustain itself in the face of claims of the other(s) (184). This implies that different versions of history, like the two studied here, are interdependent since no single version can capture and present the past in its entirety.

I find it necessary to provide a summary of Mzee Nyembwe's account since it is previously undocumented: in a nutshell, the Digo, represented by Mzee Nyembwe, claim that Fort Jesus was initially their home. They have it that on the shore of the Indian Ocean on the island of Mombasa was once a big stone with a cave in it, and one of the Digo clans, the Achinakulo[33], had made a home out of it. The cave was a haven to the Achinakulo because it protected them from wild animals and rain. The Digo had named this cave 'Ngome', a Digo word that literally means "a building carved out of the rock[34]", and the place 'Ngomeni' which in this context

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[33] As is clear by now, the Digo is one of the nine Mijikenda tribes. Among the Digo are fifteen clans, one of which is the Achinakulo (also Chinakulo). The Achinakulo clan occupied Ngomeni until when they were kicked out by the Portuguese.

[34] The full definition of 'ngome', given in a Digo-English-Swahili dictionary commissioned by Bible Translation and Literacy (BTL) East Africa in partnership with Digo Language and Literacy Project (https://chidigo.com/en/welcome)is as follows: "**ngome** ledge high on a cliff face; carved building (lit. a building carved out of the rock); fortress; *ngome*" (136).

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means 'the place where there is a building carved out of the rock'. Besides being a home, a part of Ngomeni was also a Kaya, a shrine where the Mijikenda pray. When the Portuguese arrived, they saw Ngomeni and liked it, particularly because, as Mzee Nyembwe explains, "*that location was already so attractive. If you go there, you will like it, you will be pleased. That place is just so nice.*" The Portuguese had come with plans of constructing a fort at the Kenyan coast and had brought with them seven Nyaturu (Duruma) men from Tanzania[35], who had architectural skills. After seeing Ngomeni, the Portuguese decided that they were going to make a fort out of it, and they evicted the Achinakulo from it. With the skills of the Nyaturu men and the forced labour of local (Mijikenda) people, the Portuguese converted Ngomeni to a big fort, which they named Fort Jesus. After that, the Portuguese settled in Ngomeni.

The Portuguese were powerful and had weapons and could order people around. They were also very cruel. Their cruelty pushed people from the Kenyan coast to hold a large meeting in which they decided to invite the Arabs, who would help evict the Portuguese from Ngomeni. The Arabs came, and a great war ensued. In this war, the Mijikenda helped the Arabs by showing them places where they could safely hide (Mombasa island had a large forest then). Some Mijikenda hunters who had impeccable maiming skills also helped during the fight. Because of these united efforts, the Portuguese were easily defeated. The few who survived had nowhere to run to but the sea from which they came, and so they got into ships and sailed away.

When the Portuguese left, the Nyaturu men who had come with them were left behind. Having nowhere else to go, they went to villages around Ngomeni, where the Digo welcomed them. These seven Nyaturu men were given seven Digo women to marry[36], after which their name

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[35] These Nyaturu men may have been drawn from the Nyaturu, also known as the Rimi, a tribe that is native to Central Singida region in North-Central Tanzania (Gieringer 518; Liebenow 65). Just like the Mijikenda, the Nyaturu in Tanzania are also Bantu, and just like the Duruma, the Nyaturu in Tanzania are farmers.

[36] Mzee Nyembwe could not tell the point at which these Nyaturu men were offered Digo brides because, as he explained, "*that is a very long history and as people did not keep records in writing, the one who gave me this history did not tell me.*" A few days before I recorded this oral history with Mzee Nyembwe, I met Dida, a middle-aged Duruma man who works in one of the hotels in Diani Beach. According to Dida, the Duruma originated from Southern Africa, around Malawi. They ended up as Portuguese slaves, and some were brought to Fort Jesus where they were put to work. Eventually, two brothers planned an escape which turned out successfully. The two then ran to nearby villages which mostly belonged to the Digo, and the Digo welcomed them. After conducting themselves well among their hosts, the brothers were one day offered two Digo women for marriage. Since there was no way they could return to their original home, the two brothers and their new families were adopted by the Mijikenda. From then, the Duruma have lived on the south coast with their uncles, the Digo. Dida added that the two brothers are responsible for the division of the Duruma into two clans, the Mrima and the Mmwezi. Dida's version on the origin of the Duruma, a slight variation of that given by Mzee Nyembwe, demonstrates that there exist multiple oral histories within a single community, and all of them should be recorded.

was changed from the Nyaturu to the Duruma. Until today, the Duruma and the Digo are *wajomba* (uncle/nephew) and are the only two Mijikenda tribes occupying the whole of the south coast.

After defeating the Portuguese, the Arabs occupied Ngomeni. The Arabs were traders and worked closely with Indians who had also come. These Arabs introduced Islam, which was widely accepted, while Christianity was rejected. The Arabs continued to stay in Ngomeni until the British came. Another war took place, and the British won. The British then occupied Ngomeni until when they handed it over to the Kenyan government when Kenya got its independence.

Notably, the history I recorded with Mzee Nyembwe places the Kenyan coast at the centre and brings the experiences of the coastal people into view. By challenging the dominant history of Fort Jesus, this version of history provides new insights on not just the past, but also the present lives of communities of the Kenyan coast. The past and the present of the Mijikenda remain strongly connected. Therefore, interrogating this past is important because "to contest the past is also, of course, to pose questions about the present, and what the past means in the present" (Hodgkin & Radstone 1). This account allows for a renewed understanding of the history of the Kenyan coast in a bid to reposition the people of the Kenyan coast in their history, from which they have been left out. Unlike the history narrated by Baraka, the one by Mzee Nyembwe provides indigenous knowledges from and about the Kenyan coast, which is important because it offers alternative histories of the coast and its people. It serves to widen the understanding of the history of the Kenyan coast. This method of exploring indigenous knowledge guards against continued misrepresentation of a particular people and also allows us to acknowledge and appreciate their worldview (Sillitoe 223–24). It is hard to imagine that such a rich history as this has not been previously documented and is not publicly known, because it would provide the other side of the story, expanding and enriching the narrative of Fort Jesus.

After Mzee Nyembwe had finished recounting the history of Fort Jesus as told to him by his father and grandfather, I was fascinated. For instance, I found it to be remarkable how this version of history has survived half a millennium already. For five centuries, it has been passed down by word of mouth from father to son and grandfather to grandson[37]. Descriptions of

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[37] Evidently, there is a connection between patriarchy and history, in that oral history seems to be transmitted in a patrilineal fashion. As Cooper (2009) puts it, many tales of conquest "have most often been told as stories of

events that happened when the Portuguese arrived have been preserved in the memory of the Digo and they are retrieved during narration. This is an indication that indigenous knowledge is very much available in our societies, but for some reason it is not accessed. The danger is that people like Mzee Nyembwe, as did their fathers before them, will carry these knowledges with them, and little if anything will be left behind. Already, Mzee Nyembwe is eighty years old and lamenting failing memory, meaning that it will not be long before the knowledge he carries is lost[38]. In a separate interview, Mzee Nyembwe said:

> *I think I will start writing down some of these things, I will be asking my child to write them down, because I know them but later, I forget. Also, old age is catching up with me, I am seventy-nine years old now. My memory is slowly failing me now. I have written down [the titles of] the oral narratives, but these other histories…. So, I have to recall them as I narrate them. Whatever I cannot recall, I have to really try to remember it.*

The most important aspect of this history is perhaps that it introduces the Duruma – Mijikenda, Africans – and positions them centrally in the history of Fort Jesus. For centuries, the most upheld fact about the construction of Fort Jesus has been its being designed by the Italian architect Giovanni Battista Cairati (Joao Batista Cairato), with little else mentioned about other people, let alone Africans. For example, the most detailed history of Fort Jesus, *Fort Jesus and the Portuguese in Mombasa* (1960) by C.R. Boxer and Carlos de Azevedo, gives the following introduction to Fort Jesus in the second half of the book dedicated to the fort and its features: "[w]hen the Portuguese realised that it was necessary to build a fortress in Mombasa, the Chief-Architect of India, Joao Batista Cairato, was called upon to produce the plan" (Boxer & De Azevedo 89). After pages of describing Joao Batista's expertise and previous works, Boxer and de Azevedo continue thus: "[a]nd so, on 11 April 1593, work was begun on the future Fort Jesus, Cairato having a certain Gaspar Rodrigues as master-mason " (95). Beside these two, there is hardly any detailed mention of any other constructors.

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men" (1523). This ties in with history itself as a product and/or manifestation of power, after all, history was written by white men.

[38] Mzee Nyembwe dropped out of school in class two, so he cannot write, and relies on his sons and younger wife, who help him keep a record of the titles of oral narratives, which Mzee Nyembwe sometimes narrates to researchers, especially university students. However, he does not have a record of the narratives themselves, for that he relies on his memory. That Mzee Nyembwe who does not have formal learning could share such wealth of knowledge is a reminder of the dire need to tap into oral tradition which is a rich container of knowledge and culture.

Interestingly, the only closest reference to local people does not even talk of the Mijikenda native to Mombasa, but rather those from Malindi, probably because the Sultan of Malindi was a close ally to the Portuguese while that of Mombasa was a sworn enemy. Even so, the role of these Africans is quite trivialised, as this history records that "the Portuguese gave themselves with determination; officers and soldiers worked side by side as usual, and *the Sultan of Malindi came with his men to help in carrying stone*[39]" (97, emphasis added). In short, written history maintains that the only thing the Africans were good for in the construction of Fort Jesus was moving building materials from one point to another. Truly, "[s]ubalterns 'speak' throughout the European accounts only in muted voices, clipped words, distorted speech" (Stoler 186). Undeniably, then, the oral history given by Mzee Nyembwe is very crucial because to a very large extent, it humanises the local people (the Mijikenda) by bringing out their active participation in a part of history that is significant to their collective sense of identity. Through the Duruma (who were later taken in by the Mijikenda), the Mijikenda are not just bystanders, but active participants in a crucial history of the Kenyan coast. Following Mzee Nyembwe's narrative, the Nyaturu men are shown as having been in a position of power in the construction of the fort. There may have been a Joao Batista, but there needed to be experts who would understand and follow the design – and those experts were these Nyaturu men.

The other way in which this version disturbs hegemonic history is how it challenges the basic idea that the Portuguese built Fort Jesus. Going by Mzee Nyembwe's interview, it appears that the Portuguese only modified Ngomeni. Words like 'modified', 'decorated', 'renovated', and 'enlarged' constantly come up as one goes through the 'indigenous history' of Fort Jesus. In this narrative, Fort Jesus is constructed as a figure that did not appear with the arrival of the Portuguese, but rather as that which pre-existed, as Ngomeni. Ngomeni was a cave inhabited by the Achinakulo clan belonging to the Digo tribe, and when the Portuguese evicted the Achinakulo and converted Ngomeni to Fort Jesus, the Digo seem to have held onto what Ngomeni was and remains to be – a home, only a larger house this time. In addition to this is the new detail about the role of the Nyaturu (Duruma) in the 'construction' of Fort Jesus. Their role is emphasised from the start, as Mzee Nyembwe, daring to place the Portuguese in a secondary position, says *"But the Portuguese was not alone, he was with a Mnyaturu (Mduruma) from the sides of Tanzania. Those are the ones who renovated Ngomeni."* From

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[39] From this statement, it sounds as if even the Sultan himself came to help carry stone, which is not probable.

this, it emerges that the Duruma and not the Portuguese actively constructed Fort Jesus. This is opposed to written history which foregrounds the role of Joao Batista, the architect, and elides the participation of other groups of people, particularly the Africans.

Also, this oral history diminishes the credit that has always been given to the Portuguese for their selection of the perfect location for Fort Jesus. In this version of history, the Portuguese come across as having had little to do with the selection of the place where Fort Jesus stands now. Whereas they have historically been presented as having expertly selected a most suitable place, the Digo perspective presents them as having seized a Digo home. They evicted the Achinakulo clan from Ngomeni and then refurbished it into a large house which they renamed Fort Jesus. On why the Portuguese chose to evict the Achinakulo from their home instead of finding another spot on which to construct Fort Jesus, Mzee Nyembwe said something I found out to be true when I visited Fort Jesus, that "*that location was already so attractive. If you go there, you will like it, you will be pleased. That place is just so nice.*" Fort Jesus is located on the shore of the Indian Ocean, so close to it that there are plans to construct a wall to protect the fort from flash floods. The fort overlooks the north coast, and the view is captivating. Of course, the Portuguese also eyed the control of the Old Port when 'selecting' the location of Fort Jesus, but the locals did not see that because that did not affect their lives directly. Their sentimental and spiritual attachment to Ngomeni outweighed the strategic locality for which the Portuguese would identify it.

Therefore, this history uses the Digo and the Duruma (Nyaturu) to reposition the Mijikenda at the centre of the history of the Kenyan coast. The Mijikenda are presented as having pre-selected the location of Fort Jesus (Achinakulo clan), constructed the fort (Duruma), and even helped to evict the Portuguese from it and consequently from the coast (Mijikenda hunters). This is a much-needed perspective because written history as we know it has put the Portuguese at the centre of this history and pushed the Mijikenda to the margin. Sadly, this written history is the same one that has been unimaginatively adopted by the official account given at Fort Jesus.

Most importantly, this oral history presents a 'landed' history of Fort Jesus, which is new because the popular history of Fort Jesus has been predominantly seaward. In the previous chapter, for example, Fort Jesus is seen in relation to the sea more than it appears to be part of the Kenyan soil. Much of the action in the great siege as has been presented in writing and in the official account narrated in Fort Jesus, for example, has dwelt a lot on describing the arrival

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of ships (Portuguese or Omani) bearing soldiers and reinforcement, with little mention of what happens on land. There has always been a picture of a fort that stands on the Kenyan coast, but which has always appeared as being more connected to Lisbon, Goa, and Muscat than to Mombasa itself. In the official history, Fort Jesus looks like a part of the outside world that is wandering away from home, so that foreigners have always been described as coming to visit it, occupy it, protect it, fight for it and so on. In the oral history given here, however, Fort Jesus is certainly reclaimed by people belonging to the Kenyan coast. The relationship the Mijikenda had with Ngomeni creates a different picture, which is that Ngomeni was and continues to be part of their history, even though they lost it. For once, Fort Jesus is presented as a house one can walk into, and not as a fort to be conquered.

In the final part of this section, I juxtapose the two accounts. The guiding question is, how exactly did histories like the one Mzee Nyembwe tells get expelled from the annals of history? What was involved in negotiating what gets told and what is silenced? In other words, how were dominant histories created, and how were other perspectives erased? Using the official and the indigenous oral histories of Fort Jesus, I speculate about what happened during this exchange. In doing so, I come up with two overlapping processes, that of erasure on one hand, and installation on the other. What the Portuguese did was suppress or completely erase some aspects of Mijikenda ways of life, and in their place planted their own narratives, which, because of the power the Portuguese held, found their way into official history, which is still the official account narrated in Fort Jesus today. In the end, the weaknesses of the account that has been commissioned by the NMK come out clearly, and the advantages of exploring alternative versions of history are emphasised.

The most conspicuous form of erasure relates to the conversion of Ngomeni to Fort Jesus. When the Portuguese arrived, they gave Ngomeni a new name. However, it was not a simple act of re-naming, but rather involved an unnaming – first Ngomeni was stripped of what it was before being transformed to what it would later become. This transformation was characterised by loss not just of a name, but of some essential features too. At the most superficial level, the Achinakulo clan who lived in Ngomeni lost a home. Ngomeni was a suitable home for them because it assured its inhabitants of safety. As Mzee Nyembwe said, in those days, "*People used to look for places that wild animals would not get in, and there they would hide. Houses were not common at the time. There were just shelters, which is why caves were more fashionable and more protective, and people preferred them.*" The conversion of Ngomeni to

Fort Jesus was therefore a very disruptive process not just to the Achinakulo clan, but also to the Digo tribe and even the Mijikenda community at large. This is because when places that people had a relationship with are altered, it is not only those places that change, rather, a bigger distortion takes place in the people's emotions and memories (Gagnon & Desbiens 40). Neither is this a phenomenon restricted to the Kenyan coast, for the Portuguese did the same on the West African coast. An example is the Cape Coast in Ghana where the Portuguese arrived in 1471. Until their arrival, the Cape Coast was a Fetu fishing village market. In fact, Cape Coast's original name, *Oguaa*, is from the Fante word *Gua* meaning 'market' (Hyland 164). The Portuguese renamed the place "Cabo Corso", or "short cape", which the British later corrupted to the current "Cape Coast" (Hyland, 164). What the Portuguese did was crowd out the Fante from their market, and then establish it as a Portuguese trading post. Eventually, the local people could not compete with the Portuguese who were flourishing in trade, and they either moved out or worked for them. This is similar to what happened to the Mijikenda.

The deepest loss the Mijikenda went through, however, relates to a feature of this cave that was tied to the spiritual identity of the Mijikenda at large, namely that a part of this cave was a Kaya, a shrine where Mijikenda elders pray. Whenever there were calamities, like floods or famine, Mijikenda elders would go into the Kaya, and there they would pray and make offerings, and calm would be restored. This is an aspect of Fort Jesus that Mzee Nyembwe laments. He feels that the eviction of the Achinakulo from Ngomeni, and thus from their Kaya, was sacrilegious. For the Digo, it meant that some rituals which were conducted in the Kaya were discontinued. As Linda Smith (2012) observes, renaming spaces is a form of violence as newly named spaces are "disconnected from the songs and chants used by indigenous people to trace their histories, to bring forth spiritual elements, or to carry out the simplest of ceremonies" (51). Some of the accidents that happen at the coast, Mzee Nyembwe says, can be attributed to this spiritual interference, as derived from our conversation below:

> J: Where did these Chinakulo go when the Portuguese arrived?

> Mzee: They were forced out. They were evicted. That is when Ngomeni's potency dwindled, because its owners who preserved it were gone, and now the Portuguese had taken over.

> […]

J: Talking about traditions, are there any Digo traditions that were associated with Ngomeni, before Fort Jesus? Are there any rituals that were carried out there that you now fear have been interrupted?

Mzee: To be honest, a lot has been lost. First of all, we no longer have the permission to even go to that place, yet there was a lot we used to do there. These days that place has been turned to a site where people come from far, like schools from all over, to visit. People just go there anyhow. Sometimes you hear that children have drowned in the ocean. What they don't know is the rituals that were done by people in the past to preserve that place. […] There were certain rituals men would conduct in these places, things they didn't want diluted or lost.

Thus, when the Portuguese evicted the Achinakulo from Ngomeni, they interfered with the communion between the Mijikenda and their gods and ancestors. Evicting the Mijikenda from their shrine not only weakened but also severed their link with the gods. Having nothing to unite them at Ngomeni anymore, the Mijikenda got dispersed as they moved in different directions. To make the current Fort Jesus, the cave was altered – disfigured, distorted – in such a way that only those who have an idea of its once being there might guess that it might be what was later fashioned to be the 'Passage of the Arches', an ammunition storeroom. It is rather interesting that where the Mijikenda kept their spiritual powers, the Portuguese kept their warfare equipment. It represents a literal displacement of one spiritual identity by another.

From this, it is apparent that the choice to re-name Ngomeni as Fort Jesus was rather deliberate. There are two peculiar things in support of this, one being the name Fort **Jesus**, and the other being its shape. Fort Jesus is shaped in the figure of a human body with outstretched arms – "the outwork *(couraça)* overlooking the beach corresponds to the head while it should not be difficult to realise that the two neighbouring bastions (São Matias and São Mateus) are like two outstretched arms and the others [São Filipe and Santo Alberto] like two stumpy legs[40]" (Boxer & De Azevedo 110). This, C.R. Boxer and Carlos de Azevedo (1960) note, is characteristic of 16th century Renaissance, in which architectural designs adopted the shape of the human body as a form of perfection (108–110). Being God's creation, the human body is perfect, and

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[40] The four bastions of Fort Jesus, whose names have been retained to date, are named in honour of prominent figures in Portuguese history. São Matias pays homage to Matias de Albuquerque, the Viceroy in Goa; São Mateus to Mateus Mendes de Vasconcelos, the first captain of Mombasa; São Filipe to Philip II of Spain, King of Portugal from 1580 to 1598, during which time Fort Jesus was built; and Santo Alberto was named in homage to Cardinal Albert, Viceroy of Portugal from 1594 to 1596. The fact that these names have been retained also emphasises independent Kenya's inability to (re)write its history, choosing instead to retain a history that remembers and even glorifies another.

Renaissance architects believed that geometrical perfection also resided in an anthropomorphic plan (109), and Fort Jesus is the best example of a fortress that captured this ideal (110). Coupled with the name, therefore, the shape of the fort easily calls to mind the figure of Jesus on the cross, a "symbolic interpretation of the cruciform plan" (Boxer & De Azevedo 110). One wonders, then, if the Portuguese were not trying to literally demonstrate to Mombasa how Jesus died for them. This falls in line with Europe's colonial mission, in which Europeans sought to bring light to the 'dark continent', Africa. I have in the previous chapter outlined how the Portuguese massively failed in their quest to proselytise the Kenyan coast, and also critiqued the link between Christian missionary activities and colonialism on the African continent. By un/re-naming Ngomeni, therefore, the Portuguese did not just destroy Mijikenda spiritual life, but they also sought to plant their religion, Christianity, as a replacement.

Interestingly, the Digo have retained the name 'Ngomeni' when referring to Fort Jesus. Mzee Nyembwe disputed the name 'Fort Jesus' from the start, saying that "*To begin with, Fort Jesus is an English name, but its original name is Ngomeni. Ngomeni is where the Chinakulo, one of the Digo clans, used to live. Those are the original inhabitants of Ngomeni….*" Throughout the narrative, he maintained the name Ngomeni, and I remember that by the end of our recording I was also referring to Fort Jesus as Ngomeni[41]. This is a means by which this history asserts its existence. We might say that if this narrative mentions the Mijikenda, the Digo, and the Chinakulo, entities which we are sure exist because we know about them, then it is likely that Ngomeni is what it is said to be. Otherwise, the name Ngomeni would not be there at all, because to name something is to call it into existence. For example, in a rather philosophical debate on what is and what is not, Willard Quine (1948) says that anything which does not exist cannot have a word attached to it, because then it would not be sensible to still say that whatever has been named is not there (22). Therefore, the insistence on the name Ngomeni allows the Digo to reclaim Fort Jesus as once belonging to them before anyone else. It is a way of ensuring that colonial erasures do not wash away this indigenous history (Frenkel 317). Holding on to this name is an expression of the resistance of the Mijikenda to their being

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[41] Ngomeni, derived from the root word 'ngome', is both a Kiswahili and a Digo word. In Kiswahili, 'ngome' simply means 'fortress' or 'castle'. It is for this reason that the official Kiswahili name for Fort Jesus is 'Ngome Yesu', a direct translation of the English name – 'ngome' being Kiswahili for 'fortress' while 'Yesu' is Kiswahili for 'Jesus'. From my interview with Mzee Nyembwe, I gathered that the Digo's insistence on the name Ngomeni to refer to Fort Jesus is based on the Digo meaning of the word, that is, aside from the Kiswahili meaning explained above. To the Digo, Ngomeni is primarily a cave that they once called home, that is, they derived the name Ngomeni from the Digo word 'ngome' which means a "carved building (lit. a building carved out of the rock)" (Mwalonya et al. 136).

excluded from history, and thus becomes an avenue through which the Mijikenda reinsert themselves into that history.

One question is bound to arise here – how exactly was the cave altered? What does official history say about the cave, which Mzee Nyembwe insisted exists in Ngomeni to date, which he said I could see if I was vigilant on my tour of Fort Jesus? For the sixty minutes Baraka took me round the fort, however, he did not once mention a cave. So, when he had finished his narration, I asked him to go with me to the only spot I thought I had seen something like a cave – the Passage of the Arches[42]. I did not tell him what I had in mind, so I just asked him what that place was. His response?

> Here they used to store the weapons. It is the Passage of the Arches. It was cut out of a stone, in the shape of a human being. It was an ammunition store used to keep guns, cannonballs, and bullets. So welcome to the ammunition store. Here is a store, but now that it is empty you can clearly see that it is made of dead stone – coral.

I was in the right place. We were most assuredly facing the very place that Mzee Nyembwe had said the Achinakulo lived. However, Baraka said that this passage had been carved out of stone following an order by the Portuguese, which is in opposition to Mzee Nyembwe's insistence that the cave the Achinakulo lived in was in existence before the arrival of the Portuguese, that, in fact, it was created by God – naturally occurring. I gave up on the idea of the cave and pursued the question of the dead coral that Fort Jesus stands on (2.5 acres), which Baraka says it took four thousand local people three years to cut and carve it – into Fort Jesus. I asked if the stone was useful to the Mijikenda before the Portuguese had Fort Jesus constructed on it, and the following is part of our conversation:

> J: Was this coral stone of any use before the Portuguese came, or was it abandoned in the open?

> Baraka: It was abandoned. There was nothing, just a stone. People only used it to wash and dry their clothes, and also to bask in the sun. So, when the Portuguese came, they had an idea to cut this stone and make it into a fort to protect the Old Port in the Old Town.

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[42] Linehan and Sarmento (2011) criticise the choice of the name 'Passage of the Arches', saying that it masked the real purpose for which the passage served: it was a passageway that guarded slaves as they moved from the fort to the sea where slave ships awaited them. For this reason, it ought to have been called "Passage of No Return" as many such passages in West African forts are named, and not really 'Passage of the Arches' (308–309).

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J: No one lived here, then?

Baraka: No one, nobody.

J: Is there no possibility that there was a cave that people actually lived in?

Baraka: No, no. It was just a big stone like a mountain. [The Portuguese] dug and cut inside to make the shape of a human being. Just to make space for more than a hundred soldiers to protect the Old Town. But long ago there was nothing, just a stone. People were relaxing outside, bathing and washing clothes.

This version denies two things: that there was a cave in which the Achinakulo lived, and that the stone that Fort Jesus stands on was a Mijikenda home, Ngomeni. The new insights by Mzee Nyembwe make it apparent that the official history of Fort Jesus has literally robbed the Mijikenda of their past. Where they once resided, their footprints have been completely erased and a new script written, one in which Ngomeni does not exist at all.

I also noticed that the official account trivialises or totally ignores whatever disturbance the arrival of the Portuguese caused the coastal people. The experiences of the Mijikenda seem to have been set aside. Since Fort Jesus is run by the NMK, it is a pity that the nation continues to imitate colonial history, which advances a Portuguese perspective at the expense of that of the local people. This exemplifies the disconnect that exists between the elite and the local folk. As Fanon puts it, the national bourgeoisie, represented here by NMK, has "adopted unreservedly and with enthusiasm the ways of thinking characteristic of the mother country, […] has become wonderfully detached from its own thought and has based its consciousness upon foundations which are typically foreign" (178). There is a huge contrast in how the official account remembers what happened to the Mijikenda when the Portuguese arrived, when compared to how the Mijikenda themselves remember it. Below are the sharply contrasting responses from Mzee Nyembwe and Baraka in reference to this:

Mzee: [The Achinakulo] were forced out. They were evicted. […]

Many came to a place called Makanyakulo, Ng'ombeni, places like Mvita, Makadara, Mnazi Mmoja, and Majengo Mapya. They got dispersed. They went separate ways. Everyone found a place for himself. Ngomeni was out of bounds. The locals did not have permission to go in there anymore [….]

> Baraka: They Portuguese gave them jobs, to cut the stone. They were given food as payment, and stuff like dates, fresh water from the well up there, and clothes. That is enough.

The difference between the two accounts is that Mzee Nyembwe's seems to capture the perplexity the Achinakulo had to have undergone upon their eviction from Ngomeni, something that the history given by Baraka appears to overlook. As seen in the excerpt given above, Baraka holds that their being evicted might as well have been beneficial to them, because they got jobs from the Portuguese, from which they earned dates, fresh water, and clothes as payment. On this issue, that is the 'employment' of coastal people during the construction of Fort Jesus, Mzee Nyembwe has a different perspective, which is that:

[…] they used local people to do this, people they would order to "Do this, do this."

[…]

[The Mijikenda] went there as casual labourers. But they had no knowledge of what was being constructed there. Their role was to be sent around, "Bring such a thing, such and such a thing." It is only the Portuguese and the men he had brought [the Nyaturu] that knew what it is they were constructing.

It is not difficult to realise that the official account of Fort Jesus is spoken from the perspective of the Portuguese. This comes about because this history relies on written sources (authored by the same Portuguese), and in all these years has not factored in a local perspective. Fortunately, Mzee Nyembwe's account speaks for the Mijikenda, though the problem is that this version of history is not openly available.

The erasure of indigenous history and the installation of foreign perspectives is perhaps most embodied in a skeleton that has been monumentalised in Fort Jesus grounds. According to the history Baraka shared with me, this skeleton belongs to a Portuguese soldier. During the great siege of Fort Jesus, many soldiers died, and a part of the fort was dedicated as a cemetery. In 1990, Baraka says, there were very heavy rains that lasted weeks, and this is when some workers discovered a skeleton in an area within the fort. From the way the skeleton appeared – hands clasped and head falling to the left – it was deduced that it was a Christian burial (for a Muslim burial, it is hands straight and head falling to the right). From this, a conclusion was then made that this was a Portuguese soldier – Baraka's view, at least. Since human anatomy is similar regardless of colour, and because bones cannot reflect whether the skin of the dead was black, white, or brown, it is striking that Baraka would not entertain the thought that it

might have been an African. I asked him why it could not have been an African converted to Christianity, because there were converts, but he would not give that thought a chance:

J: How sure are we that it is a Portuguese?

Baraka: Because it is a Christian. The hands are clasped, and the head is fallen to the left. Muslims bury with hands straight and the head fallen to the right.

J: What if it was an African converted to Christianity?

Baraka: No, this is one of the Christian burials.

J: But it could have been an African who was converted to Christianity.

Baraka: Mmmhh! But this is one of the Portuguese soldiers.

To emphasise the extent to which this skeleton enshrines a foreign history and displaces local identities is the presence of a roof that has been constructed over it. This skeleton is also placed at a position that makes it visible from nearly every corner of Fort Jesus; and has a detailed poster about it, which is a means of ensuring that it is not forgotten. I however found the poster on this skeleton encouraging, as it did not strictly state that the skeleton was that of a Portuguese soldier. All it mentioned was that it was a Christian burial, and that archaeological evidence points to the late 16th or early 17th century as the possible time of burial[43]. Yet, like I said earlier on, the historical knowledge that the public consumes will mostly be that told at Fort Jesus where hundreds of visitors flock every day, and this is worrying because we have seen some of the biases in it, but which only add to or are derived from those prejudices found in written history.

Baraka's reluctance to admit that the skeleton described above could have been that of an African and his insistence that it belongs to one of the Portuguese soldiers points to the fervour with which the official account he gives strives to align itself with imperial perspectives. Added to his denial that the coral stone on which Fort Jesus stands was of crucial importance to the Digo, it demonstrates the unpreparedness of national (official) history to mirror diverging local perspectives. One wonders, then, what can be done to ensure that indigenous histories, which have been and still are largely marginalised, get the legitimacy that comes with being widely

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[43] From this poster the heavy rains had to have happened towards the end of 1989, not 1990 as Baraka says. This is because the skeleton was excavated in the first week of January 1990, after a few weeks of heavy rains.

known and accepted. The local oral history of Fort Jesus provides valuable lessons and opens up possible avenues that could be explored to make sure that this and other local histories on the Kenyan coast are documented and disseminated, and in the process preserved.

The possibility of such an endeavour is supported by the fact that in recent years, groups of people who believe that they have been excluded from the archive have found it possible to tell their own (hi)stories and to create their own archive. This is especially so in this era of the cyberspace, in which there exist numerous avenues for previously disadvantaged people to tell their (hi)stories[44] (Burton 2). A good example from the Kenyan coast is the Hekaya[45] Arts Initiative: Writing the East African Coast, which is one of the upcoming literary and cultural communities in Mombasa. The aim of Hekaya Arts, as stated on their website[46], is: To publish and promote works of art from the East African littoral zone from Mogadishu to Mozambique, and including the archipelagos of the Comoros and Seychelles; to bring together writers and scholars from the region; to celebrate key Swahili literary and cultural thinkers; and to create an archive of Swahili literature and culture. Hekaya Arts is the organiser of the Swahili Literary Festival, an annual event which premiered in 2019. In its 2020 festival, which took place in March, one of the themes addressed was "Identity Politics on the Swahili Coast", a question that shed light on the complex history of the Kenyan (Swahili) coast and its people. Thus, the initiatives carried out by Hekaya Arts represent an attempt to re-figure the archive by inviting coastal inhabitants from varied backgrounds to share their thoughts and knowledges on the history and culture of the Kenyan coast, and their place in it. With the necessary support, therefore, Hekaya Arts and other similar projects have the ability to incorporate local oral histories like the one on Fort Jesus in the archive they envision.

In addition to alternative archives created by local people themselves, county governments can play a key role and create an even larger archive. Already, Kwale County, through its Department of Social Services and Talent Management and that of Tourism and Enterprise Development, is making efforts to nurture local talent and to promote local artistic forms of expression, the Kwale Cultural Centre which has uplifted the lives of many youth in the region being an example. There is also the annual Kwale Cultural Festival which brings together

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[44] Despite the increased presence of such avenues, it remains true that just like in the creation of history itself, the archive is formed and sustained by power, as "archives do not simply arrive or emerge fully formed; nor are they innocent of struggles for power in either their creation or their interpretive applications" (Burton 6).
[45] Hekaya is a Kiswahili word for story/narrative/tale.
[46] More information on Hekaya Initiative is found on their website, https://hekaya.co.ke/; https://hekaya.co.ke/2020/02/27/swahili-literary-festival-2020-identity-politics-on-the-swahili-coast/

scores of performers of oral genres of the Mijikenda, like song and dance, oral poetry, choral verse and certain Mijikenda rituals. The county government could focus on documenting these performances with the intention of making them available to the public and also preserving them for posterity. Oral historians could also be brought on board because as it is, the festival does not attract oral history as an item for presentation since there is a lot of emphasis on the entertainment value of performed items.

Therefore, there needs to be a creation of multiple archives to host these multiple (hi)stories. Decentralising the archive comes with a redistribution of power, meaning that the newly created archives will be more accessible and also better suited to the needs of the local people. In effect, local (hi)stories which were previously left out of the national archive can find a place in the local archives. The availability of these new spaces will certainly encourage researchers and other stakeholders to explore the full potential of indigenous knowledge carried in local oral sources.

In this section I have scrutinized two oral accounts with divergent viewpoints on the history of Fort Jesus, one representing the Mijikenda indigenous perspective and the other the official institutionalised account narrated to people who visit Fort Jesus every day. My analysis of these histories has largely been guided by the contrasting sources from which these histories are derived – the oral and the written. By analysing the two accounts side by side, I have shown that different narratives can and do emerge from a single event, that there is no single understanding of any subject, and therefore that a fuller understanding of history is arrived at by taking in multiple perspectives of the past. The indigenous oral history of Fort Jesus appeared to be very crucial in providing a renewed understanding of (the history of) the Kenyan coast – it provides a new perspective that has been left out of written history (which has been predominantly Eurocentric).

In summary, Fort Jesus did not emerge with the arrival of the Portuguese – it was always there, as Ngomeni; the Mijikenda owned Ngomeni before the Portuguese evicted them from it, after which the Portuguese (re)named it Fort Jesus; the Duruma played a crucial role in the construction of Fort Jesus – they were architects and master builders; and Fort Jesus is part of the Kenyan coast more than it is part of the outside world (Lisbon, Goa, and Muscat) as written history has mostly presented it. Though the two oral accounts analysed in this section are conflicting in some aspects, they are not meant to falsify each other, but to enrich the understanding of how the Kenyan coast is remembered and represented outside written

discourses. I have criticised the official history given at Fort Jesus for its continued reliance on written history, which is biased. I have also shown the need to incorporate indigenous knowledges to the corpus of history, not only as a way of curing biases or enriching what we know, but also as a way of acknowledging and appreciating history from the perspective of those who were previously underprivileged.

3.3. The Place of the Mijikenda in the Oral Histories of Fort Jesus and Shimoni Caves: Towards an integrated history

So far, we have come across two oral histories of one place, Fort Jesus, but which take completely different perspectives. In the official version by Baraka, which is based on written sources, the Mijikenda are on the margin, while the Portuguese, Arabs and other foreigners are at the centre. In the indigenous version, which is part of oral tradition, the Mijikenda reclaim centre stage while the Portuguese and the Arabs appear in the periphery. I repeatedly mentioned how fascinating it would be if the indigenous version was publicly known, that is, if the dominant history of Fort Jesus was not just a reflection of biased written sources.

In this section, I use the oral history of Shimoni to imagine an integrated history, one that blends written history and local oral sources. My informant, Jabari, stated that the history he was telling was a combination of history that he read in books and knowledge that he received from his forefathers by word of mouth. In the history Jabari narrated, the oral and written sources have coexisted to such an extent that the two forms are largely indistinct. By comparing it to the history of Fort Jesus, I use this oral history to argue histories that integrate indigenous knowledges alongside written sources are richer than those that rely on singular accounts. This is a call for postcolonial nations like Kenya to consider oral history and use it to enrich the history of its people, which is until now biased against the people because it has only drawn on written history.

Like Fort Jesus, Shimoni is a crucial national monument at the Kenyan coast. There, I met Jabari, one of the four tour guides at Shimoni. Same as in Fort Jesus, Jabari and his colleagues take visitors on a tour of Shimoni – which loosely translates to 'the hole' but is commonly referred to as 'the caves'. Shimoni is where slaves were hidden for some time after being captured by slave traders, during which time preparations were made for them to be transported to the outside world, across the Indian Ocean, or to Zanzibar where a larger slave market was in operation.

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In order to establish how differently the Mijikenda are represented in Shimoni, when compared to Fort Jesus monument, there are three noteworthy features of the history given by Jabari that I discuss in this section. One has to do with the question of sources yet again, and I will particularly highlight the oral history Jabari provided. By now, it is clear that the source determines the perspective from which the history is told. The second feature concerns the management of Shimoni – unlike Fort Jesus which is run by the National Museums of Kenya (NMK), Shimoni is a community project. This means that local people are afforded some agency in the history told there, as well as in the space itself. The last feature of Shimoni Caves is the presence of a Kaya, a Mijikenda shrine. This implies that the Mijikenda have found it possible to express their cultural and spiritual elements around this historic place, and to weave these aspects into the narrative that they tell about Shimoni. In light of these features, the history given at Shimoni seems to be more inclusive, especially when compared to that given at Fort Jesus.

Compared to Mzee Nyembwe who got the history he narrates from his forefathers, and Baraka who relies on written history, Jabari offers a mix of both. Thus, the oral history I recorded at Shimoni displays the coexistence of oral and written forms of knowledge, which, though different, complement each other. As Eileen Julien (1992) argues, oral and written forms are interdependent and we need to approach them "without yielding to the temptation of seeing one term of the comparison as the positive norm, implicit or explicit, against which the other is read" (155). This interconnection is echoed by Rusell Kaschula (1997), who, remarking on how Xhosa oral poetry continues to flourish beside or despite voluminous production of written poetry, notes that both the oral and the written forms are equally important (173). Mirroring this, therefore, oral and written knowledges coexist. From this, the history given by Jabari is rich in its combining both oral and written sources – it is a balance of indigenous and 'official' sources. This is very different from the official history narrated in Fort Jesus, which is completely based on written sources, and therefore lacks a local perspective, meaning that it is incomplete.

Notably, the oral history narrated at Shimoni entails the expression of facts that have been selected for transmission at the expense of others. Over the years, the people who live there have been telling different parts of history at different points in time, so that there is some form of narrative 'seasonality' so to speak. As a matter of fact, Stephanie Wynne-Jones and Martin Walsh interviewed residents of Shimoni between 1985 and 2009 and reported that the

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interviewees admitted to being aware that different histories were made prominent at different periods (252). For instance, they note that the narrative of Shimoni as a slave cave was not pronounced until the late 1990s/early 2000s (268). This is rightfully attributed to the emergence of Shimoni as a tourist attraction site, which eventually caused people to remember and tell just what they thought outsiders, like tourists and researchers, would be interested in hearing – memories became priced and those that would sell were brought to the surface while those that would not were suppressed. This is also linked to the nature of Shimoni as a community project which aims to gather as much revenue as possible, and for them to do this they find it necessary to present particular narratives in a certain way. For example, I found my interviewee, Jabari, to be very cordial. How he opened the narrative, "*My name is Jabari, and I am pleased to meet you. Welcome to Shimoni",* and how he ended it, "*Thank you for visiting, travel back safely, and tell your friends to visit us too. Thank you, and welcome again"* is evocative of his and his colleagues' effort to attract more visitors to Shimoni, because the welfare of the community depends on it.

The main difference between the two monuments is that whereas Fort Jesus is controlled by the NMK, Shimoni has been left to the care of the community around it. Though this is actually of benefit to local people because they can control the revenue Shimoni Caves generates, it happens that Shimoni is not treated with the seriousness Fort Jesus is afforded. This could be why, for instance, some antiques were transferred from Shimoni to Fort Jesus. There are only two rusted iron shackles on the walls of the cave at Shimoni, which Jabari said were used to subdue slaves who showed any signs of resistance. If there were hundreds or even thousands of slaves in the cave, then there had to have been more such chains. I asked Jabari about this:

> *J: I only saw two chains. Where did others go?*

> *Jabari: If you have been to Fort Jesus, you might have seen some chains and rings – some were picked from here. They took them from here so that they could protect them better in Fort Jesus.*

If Shimoni is supposed to tell its history, why were items that would serve as testimony to this history be taken away, to Fort Jesus? How could it be agreed that some of the relics at Shimoni were safer in Fort Jesus? Who are these items being kept safe for? We are faced with a scenario in which Shimoni is being robbed of part of its past, while Fort Jesus is being enriched through the same. This is like the nation stealing from its people, when the opposite should be happening – that it should enrich them instead. Sadly, this is exactly how this history works,

that even when local perspectives find ways of expressing themselves, the official (national) narrative is always there to enforce some checks and balances.

The irony, however, is that even after these items have been taken to Fort Jesus, they are not prominently displayed there. In my tour of Fort Jesus, I saw more Arab, Portuguese, Chinese, and even Persian items than I did those associated with communities local to the Kenyan coast. A good example is the continued display of scores of Portuguese, Arab, and British cannons, all planted at strategic points in Fort Jesus. While taking me around the fort, Baraka took time to describe each cannon:

> […] that's a Portuguese cannon, the range is 300 metres, and the weight is 1 tonne which is 1000kg cast iron. […] The Portuguese cannons are shorter than the British cannons, but they are more powerful. 300 metres. The British one, though longer, is 200 metres. And there is also an Arab cannon, 100 metre range. […]
>
> And this is a British cannon, you can see there is the crown of Queen Elizabeth. […]
>
> […] And here there is an Omani Cannon, and its range is 100 metres.

The presence of these cannons and the attention they are given when retelling the history of Fort Jesus establishes a narrative of 'the powerful that were'. They serve as a reminder that Fort Jesus was a battlefield once and important wars were fought over and within its walls. These cannons were used to fight in a big war once, a war in which all groups were successful at different times. The irony is that this narrative of conquest has persisted and still occupies a central position in the history given at Fort Jesus, when the fact is that the parties at war were foreign. In other words, the Kenyan government, through the NMK, continues to celebrate other people's victory at the expense of the struggle of its own people. In contrast to this, items belonging to the Mijikenda are underplayed. Their presence in Fort Jesus Museum is only ceremonial. In all the time I was with Baraka, he pointed out only two Mijikenda items, a *mbuzi* and *kifumbo* which are traditional grater and sieve used to press coconut:

> Take a look at this one; it's for shelling coconut. It's called *mbuzi* and *kifumbo* in Swahili culture. The 17th century. […] This is just to keep part of the history. So, mama sits on here while coconut is inside, so they just put the coconut in the filter and then squeeze coconut juice. These are Swahili original cultures which are still in use today, even now. And they are brought here for people to see.

When I asked what connection there is between these items and Fort Jesus, his answer was straightforward, that "There is no connection. They keep them here for people to know how to shed a coconut." Therefore, while Portuguese, Arab, and British histories at the Kenyan coast are wrapped in the glorious image of Fort Jesus, the past and indeed the present reality of the Mijikenda continues to be set aside and outside museums too.

The most interesting thing about Shimoni, which reflects the privileged position the Mijikenda occupy in this space, is the existence of a Kaya in the caves. As mentioned earlier, a Kaya is a kind of a shrine where Mijikenda elders pray. Each of the nine Mijikenda tribes had their own Kaya. That is where they offered sacrifices and prayed to their god, and according to Mzee Nyembwe, anything hardly went wrong in earlier times when Kayas were popularly in use. There are still a few Kayas among the Mijikenda now, but the rituals associated with them are not strictly observed anymore. In the past, Kayas were used as a form of protection from enemies. They had spells cast around them, and anyone who went inside the Kaya would be invisible to enemies (who to the Mijikenda were mostly Maasai raiders and slave traders). All the Mijikenda would do is get into a Kaya, and a Nganasa (enclosing a Kaya), and they would be invisible – the spells cast would make it impossible for anyone with ill intention to see the Kaya, all they would see is a bush. Therefore, Kayas were very important to the Mijikenda, not just because they connected them to their god, but also because they kept them safe.

The Kaya in Shimoni is located at the entrance of the caves. I did not notice it when I was going in, and Jabari made it the last thing he would point out about Shimoni Caves. "*We are going back to a Kaya where elders come to pray and make offerings, then we will be done",* he said. Then:

> *This is Kaya. This is where elders could come to pray and make offerings. As you know, every community has its traditions. For example, if there was no rain, or if there was an outbreak of a disease, they would come here. For instance, this bottle you see here contains rose water from sharbat rose flower. This is a kind of offering left here by the elders.*

The Kaya in Shimoni is just like the one that was in Ngomeni before the Digo were expelled by the Portuguese. Mzee Nyembwe said the following about Kaya Fort Jesus:

> *In those days, if something happened, like if there were very heavy rains, people would go there (Ngomeni) to pray, "O God, we beseech you. These rains have reached a*

destructive level to your people. O God, we beseech you." And God would surely listen; you'd find the rains ceasing.

By 2018, this Kaya at Shimoni had been in operation for about sixteen years, meaning it has been running since 2001 when Shimoni Caves was opened. Mijikenda elders frequent this Kaya, and here they give offerings and make their prayers. It is here that they commemorate the brunt of the humiliation and dehumanisation that slavery caused at the Kenyan coast, of which Shimoni is a reminder. It now seems common that former slave centres have incorporated shrines in their memorialisation of the past, perhaps to appease those who went through its doors never to return, to unite people through prayer, or to just reassert a local identity over these spaces. Kaya Shimoni is almost similar to one found at the Cape Coast Castle in Ghana, which was also a 'passage of no return' and where a traditional priest takes "offerings from the living to honour the dead" (Apter 23). Unlike a traditional Kaya, however, visitors can enter Kaya Shimoni. I even stepped inside of it. If this had been a traditional Kaya, I would not even have come close to it. Mzee Nyembwe had told me that women and non-Mijikenda men were not allowed into a Kaya (women and children were restricted to a Nganasa, enclosing a Kaya). In fact, Mzee Nyembwe had been hesitant to talk to me about a Kaya, opening our recording with, "*I will tell you more about Kaya. But first, I have to tell you that Kaya is no woman's concern. Traditionally, a woman is not even allowed to ask anything about Kaya, because it is a secret that must not be told."*

The presence of a Kaya at Shimoni therefore signals the authority the Mijikenda have over Shimoni Caves, and consequently over the narratives that come out of this site. It is important to note, however, that just like women were traditionally not allowed into a Kaya, they are also excluded from the prayers that the elders make in Shimoni Caves. Therefore, the commemoration of slavery in Shimoni is mostly done by the men. Still, the fact that Mijikenda elders frequent the Kaya at Shimoni carries with it the attachment that the local people have with Shimoni. This is not the case with Fort Jesus, which as earlier mentioned, continues to divorce local people from its vicinity. "W*e no longer have the permission to even go to that place, yet there was a lot we used to do there"*, Mzee Nyembwe lamented. As discussed in the previous section, Mzee Nyembwe had mentioned that when Fort Jesus was still Ngomeni, it was not just a place where the Achinakulo clan lived – it was also a shrine (a Kaya) where the Digo prayed. When the Achinakulo were evicted from Ngomeni, however, all this was lost, and sadly, it remains so until today. A blend of both written and oral sources, the history

provided at Shimoni allows the Mijikenda to take charge of what narratives come out of the past. This is much unlike the official history of Fort Jesus which unimaginatively adopts written history, and as a result marginalises the Mijikenda.

3.4. Conclusion

In the previous chapter, I faulted historical sources for how the history of the Kenyan coast was written. In this chapter, I have shown how government/official agencies are not doing enough to cure the biases that exist in those earlier sources. At this level, it is true that the Portuguese, or any foreign powers for that matter, are not to blame anymore. The nation needs to rewrite its history, and to narrate it in a way that captures the perspective of its people. This is the essence of freedom that should have come with independence, that postcolonial nations have a chance to shift themselves from the margin to the centre of their own narratives. That there are no reliable sources to start from and work with is no excuse, because some of the oral histories I recorded, like Mzee Nyembwe's – and there are many more, I believe – are unmatched in the content they possess. Mzee Nyembwe's narrative is proof that there exist indigenous forms of knowledge, and that no one has given them much thought. On the other hand, if one said that we have for long relied on written sources and it is all we know and that it is therefore hard to make changes, then the oral history I recorded in Shimoni is here to bear witness to the contrary. It narrates the history of Shimoni Slave Caves mostly from a Mijikenda point of view. While we cannot eliminate the histories written from a point of view that subdues us, we can draw on oral tradition and other indigenous sources to reconstruct our identity and shape the new narratives we tell about ourselves. In doing this, we will also expand the archive of historical knowledge.

CHAPTER IV

Embodied and Experiential Cartographies of the Indian Ocean: Digo Oral Testimonies and Oral Poetry

4.1. Introduction

At the mention of the word 'sea' or 'ocean', the image that immediately comes to mind is most likely that of an open space filled with water. If there is a texture to it, it will probably be ripples on the surface of the water, or, at best, waves crashing against the shore. If one were to imagine any form of movement in this sea, one would picture a lonely boat wandering into the horizon, or a group of fishermen emerging from the sea, or even a large cargo ship approaching a harbour. Yet, one thing remains certain – that the sea in all its expanse has often been constructed as *aqua nullius,* a large mass of water and little else. As opposed to land which has been associated with presence, water has been linked with absence (Bystrom & Hofmeyr 4; Steinberg & Peters 249–50).

It is this idea of the sea as an empty space that initially attracted or caused the Europeans, particularly the Portuguese, to colonise the Indian Ocean[47]. Fernand Braudel (1972) notes that in the 16th century, the sea was "an immensity of water: man's efforts had only conquered a few coastal margins, direct routes, and tiny ports of call. Great stretches of the sea were as empty as the Sahara" (103). The concern that this statement raises is that the sea seems to have been given meaning once it had been conquered, claimed, occupied, and utilised. It implies that the significance of the sea is measured according to human presence and activity, that as humans mapped and traversed the sea, they rid it of its emptiness. More so, equating unconquered sea with the Sahara implies that until the sea is occupied by humans, it is unproductive, valueless, and undesirable[48]. Were the seas really empty? Now, as I shall argue in this chapter, littoral communities, like the Digo of the Kenyan coast, are of a different view, that the sea is not and never has been empty. I shall draw on lived experiences narrated in oral testimonies and oral poetry of the Digo as a kind of cartography which maps different dimensions of the seascape to imagine it as "placeful" as opposed to as "placeless" (Clarke 155). Thus, while dominant mapping practices have presented the sea as being empty, the Digo,

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[47] A brief history of the Indian Ocean world before the arrival of the Portuguese is given in chapter one.

[48] The same can be said of the Sahara, which has no value placed on it for as long as it does not benefit humans directly.

as I shall show, perceive it as being a live and interactive world; and whereas boundaries have been erected in the ocean, the Digo point to a unique and complex form of relationship to the seas.

In this chapter, therefore, I incorporate embodied and experiential ways of knowing in an attempt to map the world of the Indian Ocean at the Kenyan coast. I use narratives that I recorded among the Digo, one of the nine Mijikenda tribes. These narratives consist of oral testimonies by a sailor, Mzee Juma, and a fisherman, Mvuvi[49] Charo, and oral poems by Bahati Ngazi, a young poet. I draw on these oral texts to examine how the Digo express their experience of and relationship with the Indian Ocean, in order to deduce what the seascape looks like through the lens of (Kenyan) coastal people. The Digo are spread along the whole of the south coast and spend most of their time in the ocean or on the beach. Those that go to the ocean on a daily basis are fishermen, shell collectors, divers, and sailors, while those that stay on the beach (beach operators) include tour guides, curio shop dealers, hotel and restaurant operators, and hawkers (including fishermen and shell collectors who put up their wares for sale on the beach). In mapping their experience of the sea, I highlight the multiple dimensions of the seascape – the economic, the spiritual, and the ecological – that emerge from the testimonies and poems I recorded with them. I am curious as to the uniqueness of their conception of the ocean, and how it challenges how the outside world, especially Western cartographers, have conceptualised this sea.

Basically, these oral texts address two issues, the ownership of the sea and the emptiness that has been ascribed to it. The foundation of these problems is the Portuguese occupation of the Indian Ocean, described in detail in chapter two, in which the Portuguese enforced restrictions that denied other nations the freedom to move or to trade in and across the Indian Ocean. The Dutch are an example, and in their defence, Hugo Grotius wrote *Mare Liberum, The Freedom of the Seas* (1916)*.* In it, Grotius states that like the air, the sea is a gift of nature, and should be open to all (12–13). He asserts that the Portuguese have no right to deny other nations the freedom to navigate the Indian Ocean or to trade with whomever they choose, because "no one is sovereign of a thing which he himself has never possessed, and which no one else has ever held in his name" (14). Of course, this came out rather ambiguously, because the Portuguese, through the Tordesillas Treaty, had in a way held the Indian Ocean by name. This puts into

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[49] Mvuvi is Kiswahili for fisherman

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perspective what has come to be theorised as hydro-colonialism. Proposed by Kerry Bystrom and Isabel Hofmeyr (2017), hydro-colonial(ism) refers to:

> colonization by means of water (various forms of maritime imperialism); colonization of water (occupation of land with water resources, the declaration of territorial waters, the militarization and geopoliticization of oceans); and a colony on water (the ship as a miniature colony or a penal island). (3)

It appears that the Portuguese to a certain degree fulfilled all three forms of hydro-colonisation of the Indian Ocean world. They initiated the rush to claim, occupy, divide, and navigate the oceans, and soon the rest of Europe followed suit. Sea travels took Europeans to lands they would later claim to be their discoveries, lands which they viewed as *terra nullius*, nobody's land, and which they consequently conquered and later colonised. While this form of colonisation has been immensely talked about, its counterpart *mare liberum*, the sea belongs to no one, has been largely set aside. Therefore, hydro-colonialism is timely because, as Bystrom and Hofmeyr (2017) emphasise, it inspires debates about the global south and its waters, which is a much needed shift from land-based postcolonial discourses (3).

Much of this chapter contests the imperial construction of the ocean as an empty space through the conception of the littoral and ocean by the Digo community of the Kenyan coast. The argument is that in describing the emptiness of the sea, or rather in ascribing to the sea a state of emptiness, Western cartographers did not pay attention to the worldview of littoral communities. Essentially, Western cartographies, which are usually "messy, indeterminate, incomplete, fundamentally social and negotiated" (Turnbull 767), map places using an objective lens, that which lacks emotion. As such, the resultant maps capture places as they are, as opposed to places as experienced by the occupants of that place. This is to say that Western cartographies are unable to capture emotions associated with lived experiences of a certain place. How do we map experienced places, then? Pearce (2008) proposes that:

> For those mapmakers who do seek to portray geographies shaped by experience, one strategy is to reject Western geospatial technologies and [to] remake the map through other expressive forms that more directly capture the emotional qualities of attachment to place. (18)

She suggests several forms of alternative mapping, which include art (drawings, paintings, photographs) on one hand and narratives on the other. These alternative mappings, she says, "reject Western cartographic conventions and replace them entirely with mapping that is

personal and centred on the exploration of emotional meanings in the [sea]scape" (18). Multiple forms of mapping are necessary because "[all] maps essentially offer fictional representations of true places" (Tally 182). As such, "[t]here can be no true maps. But through the patient, meticulous writing and rewriting, there can be infinite mappings" (Tally 194). I am particularly inspired by the role of the narrative as an experiential cartographic device, especially because of its ability to factor in a people's worldview in the process, not to mention that it allows us to have multiple maps of a single place – there are as many maps as there are narratives.

As hinted above, the testimonies and poems I speak of challenge hydro-colonialism and Western cartography at two levels. On one hand, they resist the construction of the sea as an empty space by presenting the ocean world as a live, interactive space. On the other hand, these oral texts contest the ownership of the sea – where *mare liberum* asserts that no one owns the sea, and where Western cartography, in opposition, has erected boundaries in the ocean, these oral texts intervene by alluding to a special (and complex) form of ownership of the ocean. They introduce spiritual beings as the main inhabitants and guardians of the sea and emphasise how human actions determine whether or not littoral communities coexist with these beings, and therefore, whether or not people are welcome in the sea. In other words, the sea is at once open and navigable, and at the same time it is dangerous and unwelcoming, depending on how humans act in and around it.

I begin this chapter by mapping the Kenyan coast, particularly Mombasa, as a critical part of the global economic network in the Indian Ocean world. Using the testimony given by the sailor, I trace the voyages Mzee Juma and his crew made in the late 1970s/early 1980s, through which I construct the image of the Indian Ocean as an open, navigable space, that belongs to no one in particular. I then shift the focus of analysis from the surface of the ocean to the world beneath the sea, the ocean world. Here, I draw on the testimony shared by the fisherman to animate the sea, and hence to challenge the idea that the sea is an empty space. I introduce sea spirits – djinns and demons – as the owners and guardians of the ocean, and explore how the beach is that zone where the ocean world confronts the human world, where these spirits interact with humans. The ease with which these beings move, and the fluidity of the space they move in and occupy, allow me to critique the erection of boundaries in the seas. The sailor's and fisherman's testimonies are analysed in the first section of this chapter. Towards the end of this chapter, and this is in the second section, I discuss the oral poems I recorded

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with Bahati. From them, I reflect on the awareness the Digo have of the ecological threats facing the ocean, and their call to unite in protecting the sea. I also revisit the question of the djinns and demons guarding the ocean, and argue that the Digo protect the ocean not only because they harvest from it, but also because this is where the djinns and demons that they revere live. Therefore, they protect the ocean to keep the spirits happy, which in turn guarantees that they are welcome in the sea.

4.2. Digo Oral Testimonies as Mapmakers of the Indian Ocean World at the Kenyan Coast

In this section, I use the oral testimonies given by the sailor and the fisherman to describe the duality of the ocean, whereby on one level, the ocean is open and navigable, and on the other, the sea is welcoming only insofar as people create and maintain a good relationship with it. This duality also translates, on a literal level, to what lies on the surface of the ocean and that below the water. The sailor's testimony serves the first purpose, as I use it to position the Kenyan coast as a central nodal point in the expansive world of the Indian Ocean. Through this narrative, in which Mzee Juma remembers the journeys he made four decades ago, the Indian Ocean ports he and his crew docked, and the goods they transported not only along the African coast but also across to Asia, underscore the economic dimension of the Indian Ocean. On the other hand, the fisherman's testimony, in which Mvuvi Charo mostly recounts his engagement with the sea on a daily basis, takes us on a journey to the world beneath the surface of the sea. This world, which I discuss after the sailor's testimony, is certainly not empty as post-expansionist Western cartography would have us imagine. These two sets are personal experiences of lived places, but they are also communal in the sense that the sailor and the fisherman are members of a community of people who have more or less similar experiences.

In 1979, twenty-year-old Mzee Juma the sailor was selected to join the Kenya Seamen's Union. He immediately got assigned to work with Mercury, a Dutch company that dealt in transporting general cargo along the Indian Ocean from Cape Town to Mombasa and across from Africa to Arabia. The ship Mzee Juma sailed in was *Mercury Lake*, where he worked in the engine room as a cleaner before he was promoted to a greaser. Some of the goods they carried from one port to another included foodstuff like refrigerated chicken and steak, eggs, and grapes, as well as other goods like cars, clothes, and oil. Arabia was the main destination, but they would always pick more goods at different ports they made deliveries. Mzee Juma prematurely retired from his job as a sailor when Mercury closed its offices in Kenya in 1984.

The narrative given by the sailor does two things. Firstly, it constructs the ocean as an open, navigable space. As such, Digo seafarers, like Mzee Juma himself, are able to navigate the expansive world of the Indian Ocean with a great level of familiarity. Secondly, it presents the Kenyan coast as an important part of the Indian Ocean world. Using the sailor's testimony, I map the community formed by the numerous ports scattered on the coasts of the Indian Ocean, and the waterways that connect them. I demonstrate the patterned links that form the Indian Ocean world made possible by ports along the coasts, of which Mombasa is a part. From the sailor's personal experience, I foreground this interconnectedness, showing how the Kenyan coast is at once local and global. In summary, the sailor's narrative takes us through an Indian Ocean world where boundaries are collapsed, and seafarers move freely from port to port, coast to coast, and even continent to continent.

I provide here a part of my conversation with the sailor that details the different routes he voyaged and the various ports where *Mercury Lake* docked:

J: You told me that from 1979, you worked with Mercury Company from Holland, as a sailor. For four years. Tell me more about it. I would like to know what your voyages were like, where you went, what you did….

Mzee Juma: That year…I said 1979, eeeh…towards the end of that year, I was like…I was about twenty years of age. Yes, I was young, but I was a father of one by then. I remember that it was in 1979. It was…wait…it was either in November or December, thereabouts. That is when I got that job. There was the Kenya Seamen's Union. Our chairman was Salim Abdalla Mwaruwa, who doubled as the Member of Parliament for Kisauni Constituency. He is the one who selected me into joining the Seamen's Union.

We departed the coast for Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) in Nairobi. We left [Mombasa] around half past eight or nine p.m. and we arrived at JKIA the following morning. We then boarded a plane at seven that morning. We flew to Johannesburg. [With] Lufthansa.

J: I expected that you would sail south through the Indian Ocean.

Mzee Juma: We were going to meet the ship there. The ship was at Cape Town Port. We flew to Johannesburg with that Lufthansa, Boeing 707. We were at Johannesburg at one p.m. At about four (4 p.m.), we took another flight, Air South Africa, all the way to Cape Town. After we got to Cape Town, we proceeded to boarding the ship at around nine p.m. That is where we

started our voyage. Our journey started there in the ocean. However, we first stayed in Cape Town for two weeks. During this time, our ship was being loaded. On leaving Cape Town, we travelled, by ship, on sea, to Durban. We loaded more cargo there. Our ship was for general cargo, as in different goods, like foods…. After we left Durban – we had stayed there for another two weeks – when we left Durban we headed to Mozambique. Maputo. Port Nacala, that's the name, Port Nacala. We stayed there for three days. We then left Port Nacala for Zanzibar, a journey that took us six days. Six days and six nights. We got to Zanzibar. We stayed in Zanzibar for four days. After Zanzibar, we headed to Dar es Salaam. At Dar es Salaam, we stayed for five days. Then, we came to Mombasa. We stayed here in Mombasa for seven days. We then left Mombasa for Dubai. That was eight days in the ocean, day and night. On leaving Dubai, we went to Abu Dhabi. After Abu Dhabi, we headed to Doha, Qatar. We stayed in Qatar for eight days. All these stops/ports, we would be supplying cargo. On leaving Qatar, we went to Bahrain. After Bahrain, we went to Jeddah. Wait…we went to Dammam. Port Dammam, that is in Saudi Arabia. We then left Dammam for Kuwait, Port Kuwait. On leaving Kuwait, we headed to Oman. Muscat. We would be offloading cargo all this while. After Oman, we took another seven days to Pakistan. After Pakistan, we came back to Africa. We went all the way to Comoros. From Comoros, we started over again, at Cape Town. We took that route over and over again.

J: So, from Comoros you went to Cape Town.

Mzee Juma: Where we would collect cargo, which we took to Durban…supplying them. We carried goods only, there were no passengers. We handled general cargo only. We carried goods: foods, metals, cars…things like that. Clothes, oil, slaughtered refrigerated chicken, we took those from South Africa to Arabia. We would take meat, steak from fattened cows, which had been refrigerated, and take it to Arabia. Grapes too….

What interested me in Mzee Juma's experience as a sailor is how four decades later, he effortlessly recalls much detail of his seafaring. His mastery of his life at sea is shown in the spontaneous recall of the ports where *Mercury Lake* docked from Cape Town to Arabia and back. The route the sailor and his crew took between 1979 and 1984 was as follows:

> Cape Town (South Africa) – Durban (South Africa) – Port Nacala (Mozambique) – Zanzibar – Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) – Mombasa (Kenya) – Dubai – Abu Dhabi – Doha (Qatar) – Bahrain – Port Dammam (Saudi Arabia) – Port Kuwait – Muscat (Oman) – Pakistan – Comoro – Cape Town.

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The sailor had kept no records of his travels and entirely relied on his memory in mapping the route he and his crew travelled decades ago. Here is shown the relationship between the body, geography (space), and memory. As he says, they took the same route "over and over again." In itself, this creates a kind of body memory, which is a form of recall that is intrinsic to the body, and is created from events that were habitual (Casey 147). Essentially, the sailor is able to recall his travels by reinserting himself in a "historical context of journeys previously made" (Gagnon & Desbiens 47). Yet, memory, embodied as it may be, is also place-specific (Casey 182; Donohoe 1). Geography (place) aids memory because it provides the context in which remembered events take place, it is the container for (his) memories (Casey 186). This connection between the body, place, and memory implies that the sailor is able to remember his seafaring experience according to how he made sense of those travels, that is according to how he felt about the places he travelled as well as how those places made him feel. It means that what he shares is a personal experience that is shaped by his emotions and world view, something that maps drawn from a removed perspective cannot capture.

From his testimony, each of the above ports can be seen as a dot on a canvas that is the Indian Ocean. There are two levels of connections made possible by these dots – the one along the African Indian Ocean coast from Cape Town to Mombasa, and that across Africa to Arabia. Following the life of Mzee Juma and his experience at sea then shows the power of the Indian Ocean to forge the connectivity ascribed to it, and how it is possible for travellers to voyage through. Thus, from the lived experience of one seafarer, the Digo, a single community on Kenya's south coast, is positioned as a meaningful component of the Indian Ocean world. By extension, Mombasa is shown to be that rim without which the Indian Ocean world is incomplete. At the same time, emphasis is laid on the fact that Mombasa port is made more prominent because of its link to many other ports, and not because of its singularity. Together, these "nodal points" build a chain of places that make up the vastness of the Indian Ocean (Frost 939). From this, the Indian Ocean comes across as one massive, continuous world.

Also, the journeys between ports, which are characterised by departure from land and a return to it, demonstrate how littoral societies and port cities are attached to both land and sea. For the Digo, and for the Swahili in general, the ocean is as much a part of them as land is. As John Middleton (1992) puts it:

> Part of the coast is the sea: the two cannot be separated. The Swahili are a maritime people and the stretches of lagoon, creek, and open sea beyond the reefs are as much part of their

environment as are the coastlands. […] The Swahili use the sea as though it were a network of roads. (9)

Of course, the same applies to all the other ports, in that they are each connected to their hinterland. As Pearson (2007) resounds, it is not possible to divorce the sea from land ("Studying the IOW" 18). Therefore, the voyages *Mercury Lake* made, beside emphasising the role of the Indian Ocean as a transport system, shows a unified world founded on the link between different ports along and across the continent. From Mzee Juma's experience, and following the route he lays out, *Mercury Lake* makes a full circle trip on the Indian Ocean (Cape Town – Cape Town), connecting people, littoral communities, ports, and enhancing trade.

In the introduction to this chapter, I pointed out that the ocean has often been associated with emptiness, that its dominant image is one that presents it as an open mass of water. Against this, Bystrom and Hofmeyr (2017) suggest that it is time to shift oceanic studies from surface to depth, to what lies beneath the water (5). This is because while the ocean has commonly been held as a space for crossings, and ships and the goods and/or people they transport have been a centre of focus, everything below the surface has been largely ignored (Clarke 156). In transcending the global economic networks formed on the surface, such as those made visible by the sailor's testimony above, and in an attempt to explore what lies beneath the surface of the ocean, I turn to Mvuvi Charo's tales.

Charo is a middle-aged fisherman in Diani Beach. He goes fishing in the ocean mostly at night, but most of the fish he catches is for his family to consume – he rarely has surplus for sale. He earns most of his income through shells that he collects from the ocean and sells to tourists along the beach where he spends most of his daytime. With Charo, I realised that he had more to share about different experiences of the ocean world when compared, for instance, to the sailor. There are several reasons this, the obvious one being that Charo goes to the ocean every day, and in the present moment, as opposed to the sailor who is recollecting memories from four decades ago. Therefore, Charo has fresh memories and that is why he effortlessly shares a wealth of experience as I illustrate below. Also, while the sailor cruises the sea by ship, Charo dives into the water when he goes fishing. The other reason is that whenever Charo is not in the ocean, he is on the beach. The beach is a very good space for him and his friends to share different encounters amongst themselves. Through this, the beach becomes a place for (re)generation and circulation of stories by different groups of people. Some of these people

will be tired from long fishing hours and are just resting on the beach before they can go home, while others will be spreading their wares for sale to tourists along the beach. In fact, some of the experiences Charo relates are not those he witnessed in person, but those experiences that his friends shared with him, as they exchanged stories. The beach, therefore, not only unites different people, but also brings together many experiences of the ocean and the ocean world.

As a Digo fisherman who spends most of his time at the beach, I find Charo's experiences to be largely representative of how the Digo perceive the ocean world. At best, Charo's tales challenge the supposed emptiness of the ocean by revealing a live, interactive world beneath the surface of the sea. Drawing on Charo's and other beach operators' lived experiences, we are also introduced to the spiritual world of the Indian Ocean, in which djinns and demons are shown to be the guardians of the sea. However, while the ocean retains its openness and anyone is welcome, a cordial relationship between the human and the spirit world is paramount and determines how inviting and habitable the sea is. In other words, we arrive at a relationship between humankind and nature, and how humans are responsible for maintaining a balance between the two. From the fisherman's testimony, which I shall share below, these two worlds both collide and interact at the beach. It is here that the djinns and demons make themselves manifest, where they transform themselves. It is also here that they interact with the larger community of people occupying the beach, that is outside the ocean itself within which divers and fishermen have a special encounter with them. For this reason, I read Charo's testimony as I would the beach as a fluid space and a contact point between land and sea. I use this fluidity to then reflect on the erection of boundaries in the sea, which, as I discussed in the introduction, is something that Western cartography has done. In summary, the following issues emerge from Charo's tales: the emptiness (fullness) of the ocean, the ownership of the seas, a spiritual dimension of the ocean, and the relationship between humankind and nature.

At this point, I reproduce Charo's tales, after which I shall interpret them further:

J: Could you tell me any history of/around this ocean? Anything you know, whatever you were told, the way you see it….

Mvuvi: This is an ever-present ocean, and a very large ocean at that. Like I said before, the ocean is in some ways similar to dry land. It carries different things. It harbours good things, but also wondrous things. There are wonders you can see in there.

J: Like what?

Mvuvi: Mmmmmhh…there are different things. There is…like land, this dry land…it has humans, people who are djinns – the people there are either djinns or demons – of course there are such people on dry land, but it is hard to find them.

J: But in there….

Mvuvi: There in the ocean, we fishermen sometimes see something wondrous and immediately know it is not a good thing. If it stands before you, you just know that that is a strong sign that you should not press forward. That means you have to turn, and drop whatever business took you there, because you have seen something unusual.

J: What is the appearance of that creature which when it stands before you then you have to turn back?

Mvuvi: You might see something full of wonder that you cannot even explain. You cannot explain it because you don't even know if it is a demon or a djinn. So, you just see something wondrous that you cannot even comprehend. Mostly, we believe that such things are djinns. And because humans and djinns cannot be together, you have to get out of the ocean at such a sight.

J: Do you have an example of something full of wonder that you have seen in the ocean?

Mvuvi: To be honest, there are many wondrous things that can be seen in there in the ocean. Those of us who live in the ocean and its surrounding always see some things around the month of June, sometimes May, July. There are things, like there is this one called Nondo, a certain snake with seven heads. That one is always farther, deeper in that ocean. During the rainy season, this animal is always lifted by God. God's miracles. It is removed from the ocean, with a wire tied around its waist. When it is lifted up, it tries to resist and falls back into the water…and then it is lifted again, it resists…until when it is overpowered. God will have sent his angels to take this animal.

J: Why is this?

Mvuvi: They will be relocating it to another part of the world, some dry land.

J: But it doesn't want to go.

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Mvuvi: When it is removed from the water, those of us on land can see it from a distance. Because it is far off, we cannot see the whole body clearly, but it is easier to see the lower part of its body, and the tail. But if you have something like binoculars, you can see even the wire that is tied around its waist. But with our plain eyes, we cannot easily see which part of its body is tied, yet, God's miraculous wire will always be visible. It is clearly raised, and later you will see it has been raised. Once it goes up you cannot see the heads, because those are marvels of the ocean and should be left there.

J: Once up, does it disappear in the sky?

Mvuvi: It becomes a heavenly being, and all its signs you will see in the clouds. If it is its tail you will see a tail, if it is its body you will see a body. But the secrets of the skies will be hidden, you will not see them. Clouds will be brought to cover and hide it, to prevent people from seeing it. Therefore, these are marvels that are visible under water until some distance up in the sky. But soon enough, clouds will gather to hide it and to transport it [Nondo the snake] to another part of the world on dry land.

J: So, if I come here around May, June and July, I can see this with my eyes?

Mvuvi: Eeeh. May, June….

J: How often does this happen?

Mvuvi: Many times. Whenever it rains and because we are here on the beach, in the ocean, we see these things when they happen. And those sceptics who are hesitant to understand or believe, we call them when these things appear. We show them. They see it. And they are also filled with awe. They always doubt it, but not after they see for themselves.

J: I will leave my mobile number, and if this happens when I am around, please tell me and I will come to see for myself.

Mvuvi: Okay. I will tell you.

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Mvuvi: The other wonder is that no one can protect this ocean[50]. The fact is that God himself has installed protectors of the ocean, which happens to be these wonders that are in the ocean. Be it djinns or demons, those are the ones who protect the ocean. You will encounter them when, for instance, you are swimming and your friend tells you, "Get out", but you don't listen. You say, "No I won't. Not yet. Not yet." Yet, it is the spirit of that creature that is waylaying you, until you find that you are on some dry land in the ocean. You die like that.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Mvuvi: The other wonder is that even here at the beach, you can sit here at the beach and see marvellous things that no one else will. You might be taking a stroll along the beach. Even this beach is littered with the presence of the owners of the ocean, who are the djinns and demons. So, you might be walking along the beach. Around here, if you are an upright person, then you won't have a problem because there are good djinns and good demons just as there are bad ones. And there is a djinn that can push you to fall and die. There is a good djinn who can push you gently, this force being its spirit. Not that it hits you directly, no, because if it hits you directly you die without doubt. Because its spirit moves with it, it is its spirit that will brush against you, with the result that you might be walking along the beach, but it is its spirit that is moving you. It might be coming towards you, but you won't see it even if it is right in front of you. But it sees you. Because you might be walking on the straight path it has also chosen to walk along, you might find yourself being forced to walk haphazardly, in a zigzag. You might walk in a zigzag and think you are falling into a trance. Now, this zigzag is its way of shifting you off its path, saving you. In its attempts to avoid an active collision with you, its spirit takes you on a zigzag. And you will not fall because this djinn is not an evil one. And because you are not seeing it, yet it sees you, all you will know is the zigzag you took. After walking for about a hundred metres ahead is when you will be startled, "Why was I walking in a zigzag earlier, what was it?" You might even look back and wonder, "What was that?" And if there was someone close to you that time, they might have wondered, "Why was that person going in a zigzag, what was all that?" You will have encountered that creature but without seeing it.

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[50] In this context, this statement means more like 'no one (except God himself) owns this ocean.' At the same time, the spirits (djinns and demons) that God then gives the responsibility to protect the ocean have more power over the sea than humans would have, which is why, as the narrative continues, Charo alludes to these spirits as the owners of the ocean.

It saw you, but because it is not a bad spirit, it took a path different from yours, taking you in a zigzag. And that zigzag was its way of protecting you from the force of its spirit.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

J: In your trips to the ocean, what marvellous thing have you seen?

Mvuvi: The most marvellous thing I have seen, which to me is a wonder, is Nondo, the snake I told you about earlier – that seven-headed snake in the water. I have seen that with my eyes.

The second one is that I have met that djinn myself. I am not sure if it is a djinn or a demon though. That one took me in a zigzag. So that is something I have encountered; I am not lying. It is not false; I am someone who believes in the existence of God – I cannot claim something that did not happen to me, I will be crazy. I am sound minded, and that is something I have seen. I really saw it, but I was not affected because I did not fall yet we bypassed each other. And it avoided me by sending me to a zigzag. That is something that ever happened to me. It has happened to me.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

J: What have you heard from your friends about the ocean?

Mvuvi: From like two of my friends, I have met a watchman who works around the beach. From him, he talked of how he was keeping watch, but as usually happens, was taken by deep sleep. He found that he was being slapped. It happened that the reason for his being slapped was because he had been smoking. It looks like whoever came out of the ocean to slap him had been displeased by the smell of cigarette smoke. He says he got startled by slaps raining on him. But he could not see whoever was slapping him. He/she was invisible. He was forced to move to another place where his friend was working, so that there were two of them working together.

A second scenario is one involving a woman I once met. This woman used to come to the beach at night, to get herself white men. She says that there is this one time when she was around Beach[51] *Restaurant here in Diani Beach. Before she got to the restaurant, she met an African man. He was tall and handsome. He was dressed in shorts. After meeting him, it looked to her that the man was also headed to the same hotel. When he saw her, the man stood, and then*

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[51] Not the real name.

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walked towards her. They exchanged greetings. He asked her, "Where are you going?" She answered, "I am looking for white men." He turned to her, "White men? I have also come as a tourist. If you are looking for white men, then I am a black white man. If it is money you want, money is not a problem." And because all this woman needed was a man and money, she agreed. They reached an agreement. They started to hold hands. And then they had to embrace, holding each other around the waist. If you hold someone around the waist, your hand will go as far as their stomach. So, when she brought her hand around his waist and as far as his stomach, so that they can walk while talking, she found out that this man had no stomach. He did not have a stomach. Shocked, she withdrew her hand quickly, upon which she saw the man ascend the stairs to the same hotel she was initially headed for. And right there, he vanished. Since that day, this woman never went back to the beach at night, because of the wonders she saw. These are two examples I have gotten from my friends.

Another one is about a night watchman. He slept, and was found to be bleeding from his nose, mouth…. No one could understand, he just died. He used to work here in Diani Beach.

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The first thing that this testimony addresses is the nature of the ocean as seen through the eyes of a Digo fisherman. Charo describes it as "*an ever-present ocean, and a very large ocean at that*", alluding to the magnificence and the expanse of the sea. With a surface area of approximately 70 million square kilometres and an average depth of about 3, 960 metres, Charo's description most certainly refers to the vastness of the Indian Ocean in physical terms. At the same time, this description could be symbolic of how deeply enigmatic the sea is and, as a result, how difficult it is for humans to fully understand it. The mysterious nature of the sea is reflected in Charo's hesitant tone at the beginning of the narrative, which shows evidence of the complexity of the subject he is confronted with. For example, when I asked about some of the wonders one can encounter in the ocean, he seemed undecided on what to say and, buried in deep thought, said, "*Mmmmmhh…there are different things. There is…like land, this dry land….*" It was a while before his thoughts took shape, and even so, there were things he could not fully explain because, perhaps, he did not fully understand them either. For instance, describing and distinguishing different kinds of sea spirits is such a hard task that not even those who like Charo encounter them on a regular basis can confidently detail them. Attempting to describe a sea spirit that he and his colleagues have encountered multiple times, Charo says, "*You might see something full of wonder that you cannot even explain. You cannot explain it*

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because you don't even know if it is a demon or a djinn. So, you just see something wondrous that you cannot even comprehend." From this, it is apparent that even those who engage with the sea on a regular basis have yet to fully understand it.

Apart from djinns and demons who dominate Charo's narrative, one sea spirit is named and described vividly – *Nondo* the seven-headed snake. This figure of a water spirit in the form of a snake[52] is present in narratives from other regions of the continent, especially those from Southern Africa. There is, for example, the 'snake monster' that is said to inhabit Kashiba, Chilengwa, and Ishiku, three interconnected lakes in Copperbelt, Zambia (Siegel 7–8). There is also *Ichanti*, a giant underwater snake that "Nguni-speaking [Xhosa, Zulu] diviner-healers in South Africa" claim to have regularly encountered in water bodies, be it in rivers, pools or lakes (Bernard 139–140). Another example is *Mamlambo*, a southern African water spirit who takes the form of a snake, a mermaid, or a beautiful woman, whose isiXhosa name *u-Ma-Mlambo* loosely translates to 'the mother of the river'[53] (Wood, "Occult" 339). The closest image to that of *Nondo* the seven-headed snake at the Kenyan coast is perhaps the figure of *Inkanyamba,* the snake in the sky, found in narratives from the Eastern Cape in South Africa. Following research on tornadoes that frequently occurred in Hogsback in the Eastern Cape in the 1990s, Felicity Wood (2000) notes that "*Inkanyamba*, the Xhosa word for tornado, does not refer simply to a climactic phenomenon, the way the English word 'tornado' does, but embodies the tornado spirit itself, often envisaged as a snake" ("Snake" 82). One of the respondents that Wood interviews regarding one of the tornadoes says, "'*We call it a snake, a snake with a number of heads'"* ("Snake" 83). Among the Zulu, this *Inkanyamba* is said to be "a two-headed snake" (Wood, "Snake" 85). The emphasis on multiple heads calls attention to the paranormal features that set water spirits like *Inkanyamba* and *Nondo* apart from regular water snakes. Coincidentally, both *Inkanyamba* and *Nondo* manifest themselves more clearly when they are in the process of migrating. *Inkanyamba* "flies through the air, looking for its partner, who lives in a deep pool or a dam. When it disappears over a large body of water, it means it has found its partner" (Wood, "Snake" 83). *Nondo*, on the other hand, is visible in the process of its being relocated, by God through his angels, from the sea to a terrestrial environment, as Charo says. It is not clear where exactly this *Nondo* is headed or why it is needed there – as Charo says, this is part of the marvels of the ocean that should remain hidden.

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[52] Other aquatic animals that embody African sea spirits include fish and crocodiles.

[53] The representation of *u-Ma-Mlambo* in Southern African literature paints a picture similar to that of Mami Wata in West and Central Africa, as will be seen in the analysis of one of Bahati's poems in the next section.

This idea of movement of water spirits from one water body to another or from sea to land points to the fluid identities they possess and also reflects the elastic nature of the spaces they occupy as I shall soon make clear.

The sea spirits found in Charo's testimony demonstrate that the sea is not an empty space at all. From the experiences that Charo shared, the fullness and multiplicity of the ocean is demonstrated by the immense presence of water spirits, who continually interact with humans not just inside the water but as far out as the beach. This calls to mind animist thought which assigns spiritual meanings to natural and ordinary objects, like the sea in this case, "giving the spirit a local habitation" (Garuba, "Explorations" 267). This is a dimension of the sea that is not commonly known, hence the importance of drawing on people's lived experiences in mapping the nature of the sea. These spirits seem to determine the extent to which humans are welcome in the sea. There is, for instance, the example of the watchman who was slapped by either a djinn or a demon because he was smoking a cigarette. This calls to mind a popular narrative that circulates at the Kenyan coast – it is said that different djinns have affinities with certain fragrance, but they equally detest others. For example, there are certain body lotions or perfumes that when a woman wears when going for a swim, the woman almost always drowns, not by accident, but because a certain djinn either liked the fragrance and fell in love with the woman or disliked it and drowned her as a punishment. For humans to peacefully coexist with the sea, therefore, they have to ensure that they do not offend the spirits, for if they do, they are unwelcome, and because they depend on the ocean for survival, they are in trouble. In other words, there exists a symbiotic relationship between coastal people and the sea; they have to "tend shores while harvesting from the ocean" (Rogerson 329). Therefore, coastal people must nurture the sea if they desire to move and work freely in and around it.

What the above testimonies also reflect, particularly in how the beach comes across as a contact zone not just between land and sea but also between humans and these spirits from the ocean, is the geographical and cultural space occupied by the Digo themselves, and the coastal community at the Kenyan coast at large. For instance, David Parkin (1989) ascribes to the Digo a quality of 'facing both ways.' The Digo, he argues, claim a dual identity – as a people who acknowledge their non-Muslim African origin, but who also aspire to transcend this connection through Islam (164). Kai Kresse (2007) borrows Parkin's term, that of the Digo as 'facing both ways', and widens it to generally describe communities of the Kenyan coast as facing both seawards and landwards (*Philosophising* 36). Further, in "Muslim Politics" (2009), Kresse

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describes the 'double-periphery' as the basic aspect that shapes the experiences of Muslims at the Kenyan coast (78), the two peripheries that this group of people occupy being that of the postcolonial state and the *umma* (78). It is interesting to note, therefore, that the narratives that circulate among the Digo carry a form of their identity – they are, like the guardians of the sea, perched on the brink of land and at the edge of the ocean.

This zone, the 'double-periphery', has commonly been theorised as being quite fluid. As a result of the constant movement of water onto land and back to the sea, boundaries in this region are unstable (Alpers 1). The beach is that porous border that moves back and forth with the waves of the ocean, and for that it remains a fluid, unstable zone whose boundaries cannot be clearly demarcated (Bonner, McKay & McKee 270; Pearson *Indian Ocean* 5, "Littoral Case" 1, "Littoral Concept" 356; Preston-Whyte 349; Shields 84). The unstable and transitional nature of this zone is captured quite vividly in the fisherman's testimony, as a region where the human and the ocean worlds interact. This zone, Meg Samuelson (2017) argues, is not just transitional, but is also dynamic (17). Being that the land and the sea are not detached from each other, Samuelson proposes 'amphibianism', which highlights a shifting engagement between land and sea (20). She borrows the term from Pearson who proposed that a study of the Indian Ocean should be "amphibious, moving easily between land and sea" (*Indian Ocean* 5). Therefore, as the continuous movement of the waves makes land expandable and contractible, so too do the djinns and demons appear and recede back to the ocean. These spirits roll out with the waves and present themselves at the beach either as the spirits they are or by transforming themselves into familiar, corporeal forms. Through this, the beach becomes a zone of formation and transformation. That is, a formless being (djinn spirit) occupies solid space, transforms into a (hu)man, and performs familiar roles attached to the landed side of the beach. This is perhaps a fitting representation of Samuelson's 'amphibianism' described above. In addition to these amphibian beings are those presented as being something in between. Whereas there are distinct humans and spirits, there also exist those beings that are not quite clear-cut, those that are something of the two, like the black white man in one of the examples given above.

At this point, I would like to use this multiplicity, instability, fluidity, amphibianism, and porosity to briefly reflect on the question of the erection of boundaries in the Indian Ocean world. As I have stated, the Indian Ocean was colonised, and boundaries were erected in it. It is true, of course, that boundaries in the ocean serve a useful function in that nation-states can

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delineate and defend their coastal waters and the marine resources in it. By the same principle, however, they can also misuse and overexploit the marine resources within their territories. Bearing in mind the characteristics of the sea discussed in detail above, which is mainly that the sea is one fluid, unstable, and porous world, and having seen how sea spirits move freely, it seems that the nature of the ocean does not seem to support territorialisation. These oral testimonies, especially the fisherman's tales, have questioned this erection of boundaries in the sea by alluding to a unique form of ownership of the ocean. We learn that sea spirits are in charge of the ocean, and that a good relationship between people and these sea spirits is paramount if people are to be allowed to harvest from the sea. What appears to be more important, as these Digo oral testimonies have shown, therefore, is the need for people to establish a peaceful relationship with the sea. No matter how big a nation's sea territory might be, if the sea is not put to good uses, it cannot accommodate humans and their needs. I pursue this ecological dimension of the sea in detail in the next section, using the oral poems.

4.3.   Digo Oral Poetry and the Engagement with the Sea at the Kenyan Coast

In this section, I analyse three poems that were performed by Bahati Ngazi. Bahati is a young Digo woman who ekes out a living as a presenter at Radio Kaya which broadcasts at the Kenyan coast. She doubles as an artist – she is as a composer and performer of poetry and music. The three poems are "Bahari Hindi", "The Indian Ocean"; "Vituko Baharini", "Wonders in the Ocean"; and "Bahari Tuitunzeni", "Let's Conserve the Ocean". From these poems emerge three main things. First is the lack of a specific local name for the Indian Ocean among the Digo, which implies that the ocean is immense, belongs to no one in particular, and cannot be fully understood. Second is the mysterious nature of the sea, especially the world below the surface, whereby divers encounter deep mysteries of the ocean, like the djinns and demons who occupy the sea. These two aspects point to the sea as being at once strange and familiar. Third is the emphasis the Digo place on the conservation of the ocean, from which we discover that they safeguard the ocean not only because the sea provides for them, but also because this is where the spirits they revere live. Like the testimonies by the sailor and the fisherman in the previous section, these oral poems continue to map the Digo's engagement with the sea. Before analysing these poems, however, I provide a brief background to Swahili literature, in which Swahili verse is the dominant genre.

The oral poems discussed in this section reflect on a long and crucial history of Swahili literature. This is because Swahili verse is not only the oldest form (Amidu 114–15), but is also

the genre which for centuries has been the yardstick with which good Swahili literature has been measured (Amidu 114). In fact, while Swahili verse dates to about four centuries back, it was not until the 20th century that prose and drama became popular forms of that literature (Amidu 115). This is why most of the early written Swahili literature was in verse, the oldest surviving manuscript, Hamziya, being dated back to 1652 (Amidu 114–15). Unfortunately, another verse, "Utenzi wa Liyongo", "The Epic of Liyongo", which is older than Hamziya, cannot be traced (Ibid.). Of Swahili verses, the epic stands out – it is, as Jan Knappert (1970) points out, "the largest single corpus of Swahili literature" ("Oral Traditions" 27). The Swahili epic is distinguished from other forms of verse by its theme and length; it is "a narrative poem of 150 stanzas or more" (Ibid.). Its Swahili name is *Utenzi* (pl. *Tenzi*) and it has eight syllables in a line (Jones 105). Notably, Swahili verse also dominated the transition from oral to written literature. Lyndon Harries (1952) argues that the survival of Swahili verse through an age where preservation of manuscripts was challenging says a lot about their popularity and value among the Swahili (158). Yet, despite being the oldest genre, it has emerged that Swahili verse is also the most neglected one when it comes to Indian Ocean Studies (Mwangi & Steiner 161).

In Swahili literature, the Song, *Wimbo,* consists of five categories – *shairi* (poem); *tarabu* (Swahili love poetry); *gungu* (Swahili love song that women sing for the bride at a wedding); *wimbo* (verse consisting of stanzas of 36 [6*6] syllables); and, quite generally, love songs (Knappert, "Oral Traditions" 23). It is the *shairi* (pl. *mashairi*), poetry, that I am interested in. Owing to its metre, which is the degree by which Swahili verse is judged, the *shairi* is the most metred and consequently the most "classy classical" form of Swahili verse (Ibid.). In general, *mashairi* are "symmetrical verses which have an equal number of lines (usually not exceeding six) in each verse, and an equal number of syllables (usually not more than sixteen) in each line" (Topan 175). The prosodic features of *mashairi* are further clarified by J.H. Greenberg – a *shairi* line is divided into two parts of 8 syllables each (24). The poems Bahati performed conform to the rules and structure of *mashairi;* they are quatrains, and each line is divided into two parts of 8 syllables each.

Today, *Mashairi* are mostly published in Swahili weekly newspapers and broadcast on Swahili radio programmes. They also form a crucial part of social, religious, and political events on the coast. In a wedding, for example, artists will compose a *shairi* and perform it to entertain guests and to sing praises to the bride; in religious occasions like *Mawlid*, oral poems are sung in praise of the prophet; and in political campaigns, *mashairi* are very common, with some being

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composed instantaneously, to praise or criticise a certain figure or a political party, an example being the Kimondo poetry common to Lamu, which poets use to '[sensitise] people to reflect on the evils in their society and on how best to resolve them' (Njogu 5). The point is that *mashairi* form a central part of the everyday culture among Kenyan coastal communities. As has been commonly observed, the worldview of the Swahili is reflected in their traditional poetry, and their identity is implicated in their literature (Knappert, *Swahili Poetry* 27; Mazrui, *Swahili* 46; Rettová 34).

The Indian Ocean, which is central to the lives of coastal communities, is "a repertoire that poets re-explore in their works" (Vierke 237). It has inspired poetry that addresses a range of themes. For instance, Yvonne Owuor (2018) interviewed Haji Gora Haji, a seafarer, fisherman, and poet from Tumbatu Island (part of Zanzibar), and from him she recorded poems that express "the mystery of the sea [and] its unknowability, despite [...] closeness to it" (167); Stephen Muecke (2009) has composed poems that "express some continuities in Indian Ocean culture" between Australia and Mauritius (146); and Renee Pettitt-Schipp (2012) has written poems about life on an island on the Indian Ocean (1–6). The poems that Bahati performed, three of which I discuss below, address marine conservation, and explore the beauty of the ocean and the mysteries hidden in it.

Regarding the unknowability of the Indian Ocean as expressed in Swahili poetry, one perhaps wonders how people local to the Kenyan coast identify the Indian Ocean. The fisherman, in his testimony, constantly referred to it as "hili bahari", "this ocean", hinting at two things – its ever presence, and its immensity. Do they have a specific name for it? In *Port Cities and Intruders*, Pearson asks, "What of terminology relating to the coast of east Africa and its bordering sea?" (36). Pearson problematises the common names that the Indian Ocean is identified with, basing his argument on the inability of each to capture the expanse of this ocean. He argues that 'Indian' Ocean is ethnocentric, Asian Seas excludes East Africa, The Great Southern Seas is unsuitable, and Arabian Sea places the Arabs on a pedestal position (36). In the quest to find a term that unifies rather than divides the seas, Pearson suggests that it be called the Afrasian Sea, whose expanse would unmistakably comprise the length from Sofala around the coast to the southern tip of India, Kanya Kumari (36).

When it comes to coastal people themselves, Yvonne Owuor (2018), while analysing poems by Haji Gora Haji, observes that there is no known Swahili name for the Indian Ocean. This is unexpected, she says, since, "[g]iven [the Indian Ocean's] extensive history, it seems unlikely

that there is no extant older and ontologically accurate toponym for the Indian Ocean" (167). When Owuor asked her informants for the Swahili name for the Indian Ocean, she says that there was no immediate answer, and the respondents promised to find out (167). 'Bahari ya Hindi', by which the Indian Ocean is known in Kiswahili, is simply a translation of 'Indian Ocean' – '*bahari*' is Kiswahili for 'ocean', '*ya*' is Kiswahili for 'of', and '*Hindi*' is Kiswahili for 'India'. Therefore, 'Bahari ya Hindi' loosely translates to 'Ocean of India', hence 'Indian Ocean'. In my interviews with Bahati, she performed a poem, "Bahari Hindi", "The Indian Ocean", which reinforces Owuor's findings. In this poem, which is largely about the nature of this ocean, the 'namelessness' of the Indian Ocean among the Swahili comes up. In this regard, a stanza from the poem, which I provide below, addresses what the Indian Ocean is not, rather than what it is, in an attempt to describe its vastness:

Bahari Hindi	*The Indian Ocean*
Haijawa hoja jina, kuitwa Bahari **Hindi**,	*No contention in naming it, the **Indian** Ocean,*
Ni majina kupeana, siyo mali ya **Kihindi**,	*It is just a given name, it is not an **Indian** property,*
Meenea hadi China, haipandiki **mahindi**,	*Extends as far as China, and **maize** (**mahindi**) doesn't grow in it,*
Bahari **Hindi** bahari, Mungu libariki kote.	*The **Indian** Ocean o the ocean, God bless its expanse.*

Here, the poem employs word play to reflect on this 'namelessness' of the Indian Ocean. As explained above, Kiswahili for the Indian Ocean is 'Bahari Hindi', and it is this 'hindi' that the poem plays with: 'Hindi' is 'India', 'hindi' (pl. mahindi) is Kiswahili for 'maize', 'Mhindi' refers to an 'Indian' (person), and 'Kihindi' means 'Indian' (origin). From this word play, the poem seems to suggest that the Indian Ocean is neither this nor that – that it is not one particular thing. On the contrary, the ocean is anything and everything at the same time, a sentiment that is captured in the "expanse" alluded to in the last line of the stanza. In a way, the poem notes that though this ocean's toponym is tied to India, it goes as far wide as China, and so its vastness is not restricted to or defined by its name. The picture we have, therefore, is that in which the Indian Ocean does not belong to a specific group, nor is it limited to a particular place. Most importantly, its uses are not limited, as it serves many functions. Therefore, nobody can claim ownership of this sea, as it is an open, shared space to which all are welcome, a gift of nature.

More so, by this stanza dwelling on what the Indian Ocean is not rather than what it is, we are faced with what appears to be the 'unnaming' of the Indian Ocean in an attempt to name it. By avoiding to directly name this ocean, "The Indian Ocean" constructs the sea as an unknowable entity, or that which cannot be fully known. It emphasises that no matter how close and familiar it may be, it is not possible to fully understand this sea, it remains strange. For instance, despite

the engagements people surrounding the ocean have with it every day, they still fail to provide a name for it (Owuor 167). This is to mean that the ocean whose presence among coastal people is immense means so many things and is still shrouded in some mystery.

The enigmatic nature of the ocean is fully captured in another poem that Bahati performed, "Vituko Baharini", "Wonders in the Ocean". Much like the fisherman's testimony, this poem takes us on a trip to the ocean world. In this poem, provided below, Bahati paints a picture of the sea as we see it, the surface, and as divers have seen it, the world beneath. It exposes mysteries of the sea, and presents fishermen as the actors who traverse the threshold between the two worlds:

Vituko Baharini

Vituko ni tangu jadi, hutokea baharini,
Vya kushitua fuadi, na kupotosha imani,
Mwaka nenda mwaka rudi, haviishi asilani,
Maumbile ya bahari, vituko ni ada yake.

Japo sura i tulivu, bahari ukiiona,
Unayo mengi maovu, na mazuri mengi sana,
'kitaka 'angavu huo, uliza waloyaona,
Maumbile ya bahari, vituko ni ada yake.

Ina wema na mabaya, majini na mashetani,
Walopewa sura mbaya, wengine hulu laini,
Wapo wenye jicho moja, na mikono viunoni,
Maumbile ya bahari, vituko ni ada yake.

Kuna wavuvi wambizi, wazamiayo kwa kina,
Huona majinamizi, na kutwa husimulia,
Zikiisha simulizi, maisha hawana tena,
Maumbile ya bahari, vituko ni ada yake.

Majengo huonekana, huko chini ya bahari,
Yenye kuta ndefu sana, na vyombo vya kifahari,
Twabaki kuulizana, huko ni nani tajiri,
Maumbile ya bahari, vituko ni ada yake.

Hazishi zake hamaki, za bahari zinadumu,
Mengi hayasimuliki, nazichelea hukumu,
Kimama huku samaki, wa umbo la mwanadamu,

Wonders in the Ocean

For ages wonders, have been happening in the ocean,
Scary to the heart, and shaking to the faith,
Years go years come, they still go on,
The nature of the ocean, bound by wonders it is.

Though the ocean's appearance is calm, as you see it,
It harbours many evils, and many good things too,
If its enchantment you want, ask those who've witnessed it,
The nature of the ocean, bound by wonders it is.

It has the good and the evil, djinns and demons,
Some with terrifying faces, others so attractive,
Some one-eyed, with hands on their waists,
The nature of the ocean, bound by wonders it is

There are fishermen who dive, deep they dive,
They see apparitions, and tell about them all day,
And when the tales end, the fishermen's lives are no more,
The nature of the ocean, bound by wonders it is.

Buildings can be seen, at the floor of the ocean,
With high walls, and luxurious things,
We are left wondering, who is that so wealthy there,
The nature of the ocean, bound by wonders it is.

Never ending is its rage, the ocean's [rage] lasts long,
A lot about it can't be spoken out, I fear the repercussions,
A woman part fish, with a human figure,

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Maumbile ya bahari, vituko ni ada yake.	*The nature of the ocean, bound by wonders it is.*
Ina vituko bahari, mambo yake ni mazito,	*The ocean is mysterious, its happenings are strange,*
Mara wapata habari, yateketeza watoto,	*Sometimes you get news, of the ocean drowning children,*
Bahari haina shwari, majiye si kama mto,	*The ocean is never calm, its water is unlike a river's,*
Maumbile ya bahari, vituko ni ada yake.	*The nature of the ocean, bound by wonders it is.*
Yatosha masimulizi, nisiwatie uoga,	*Enough of the tales, let me not scare you,*
Ukayakata mapenzi, majiye kutoyaoga,	*Lest you stop loving the ocean, and its waters never bath in,*
Nishawapa vidokezi, kwaherini nawaaga,	*I have given you highlights, goodbye I bid you all,*
Maumbile ya bahari, vituko ni ada yake.	*The nature of the ocean, bound by wonders it is.*

This poem extends the arguments made about the ocean in the fisherman's testimony above. Specifically, the poem provides more evidence with which to challenge the perceived emptiness of the sea. It also adds texture to the depth of the ocean, once more pointing to how productive it can be to engage in a vertical analysis of the sea, a movement away from the predominant horizontal analysis, a shift that is advocated for by Bystrom and Hofmeyr (2017) and Clarke (2019). This duality of the ocean, that is its surface and its depth, is reflected in the structure of the poem, illustrated by antithesis which the poet employs in describing the nature of the sea. For instance, the first line of the second stanza, *"*Japo sura i tulivu, bahari ukiiona, *Though the appearance is calm, when you look at the ocean*"*, contrasts with the third line of the same stanza, *"*'kitaka 'angavu huo, uliza waloyaona, *If its enchantment you want, ask those who've witnessed it."* These two lines paint different pictures of what appears on the surface of the ocean (what is visible), and that which lies beneath (what is hidden). Further, in the second stanza, there is "Unayo mengi maovu, na mazuri mengi sana, *It harbours many evils, and many good things too.*" Beyond signifying the dual nature of the sea, this antithetical statement reveals the multiplicity of the ocean, reflected in the use of the word "mengi, *many*" which has been used to describe the varied nature of these good and bad things found in the sea. This positive/negative dichotomy of the ocean is further expressed in the third stanza, where it is mentioned that "Ina wema na mabaya, *It has the good and the evil*", a description that vividly captures the contradictory nature of the sea, in that it is welcoming and at the same time dangerous, an issue that I have dwelled on briefly using the fisherman's testimony, and which I discuss at length in the next chapter. In line with the dual nature of the ocean, the image of the sea that this poem presents is one that contains, on the one hand, the positive, quotidian/known, and visible and, on the other, the negative, mysterious/unknown, and invisible.

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Notably, the poem presents the mysterious nature of the sea as one that predates human existence, signifying the inability of humans to fully understand the ocean, as hinted earlier. In the opening stanza, "tangu jadi", which loosely translates to *"for ages"* but could also mean "since the beginning of time", points to the long history of the wondrous and animated nature of the sea. Further, "mwaka nenda mwaka rudi", which literally translates to *"years go years come",* a common Swahili saying that signals an endless cycle of events and thus reflects infinite time, has been used to express the ubiquitous and repetitive nature of the events that take place deep in the ocean.

The poem lists five different types of wonders found at sea, all of which have been happening since time immemorial. The first wonder, found in the third stanza, is the presence of sea spirits, particularly djinns and demons, in Swahili known as *majini* and *mashetani* respectively. As has been mentioned in relation to the fisherman's testimony above, and as will be discussed in detail using Owuor's novel *The Dragonfly Sea* in chapter five, these sea spirits generally fall into two categories – there are good ones and evil ones. The poetic form is more suitable in imagining these sea spirits compared to, for instance, Charo's testimony above. This is because, being a work of imagination, the poem is able to give form to unseen sea spirits, or to embellish the description of tales that have been recorded in testimonies such as the one above. In this stanza, for instance, the poet uses language that paints disparate pictures of good and bad sea spirits in terms of appearance. For example, the bad, unattractive ones are described using uncanny language; they are said to have "sura mbaya, *ugly faces*", and also have "jicho moja, na mikono viunoni" that is, they are *"one-eyed, with hands on their waists."* On the other hand, the good spirits, though just as unusual, stand out for being "hulu laini, *so attractive."* This dissimilarity in appearance evokes the distinction between well-meaning sea spirits and those with ill intentions, as discussed earlier.

The fourth stanza mentions the second wonder found in the ocean, namely "majinamizi, *apparitions."* Generally speaking, these are other spirits found in the sea beside the djinns and demons. Since the nature of these spirits is not clearly defined, they represent all other beings inhabiting the ocean that humans have not begun to comprehend just yet. Unlike the djinns and demons who sometimes make themselves manifest on the beach as I discussed earlier, these "apparitions" are to be found only in the deep sea, symbolising, as I have noted, uncharted territories in explorations of the nature of the sea. This stanza presents diving fishermen as the people with the ability to traverse the ocean world and to witness dimensions of the sea that

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are not openly known, once again emphasising the need for oceanic studies to explore fisherfolks' unique knowledge of the sea as I argue in this dissertation. Diving fishermen like Mvuvi Charo have more experience of the ocean world because in carrying out their fishing activity, they immerse themselves in the ocean, which means that for a time, they are a part of the sea. They are then able to transport experiences, in the form of stories, between the two places – one can argue that these diving fishermen exist amphibiously (Pearson, *Indian Ocean* 5; Samuelson 20). However, they do not freely share their experiences of these mysteries they witness in the ocean, for if they do, "Maisha hawana tena, [*their] lives are no more*". This is a mechanism by which the ocean safeguards its mystery, in that a certain fear is attached to the revelation of what one may encounter in the ocean.

The third wonder of the sea, mentioned in the poem's fifth stanza, is the mystery of fortified buildings that are said to exist at the bottom of the ocean. From the way these buildings are described – "Majengo huonekana, huko chini ya bahari/Yenye kuta ndefu sana, na vyombo vya kifahari, *Buildings can be seen, at the floor of the ocean/With high walls, and luxurious things"* – the ocean world is painted as a replica of the world we know, albeit an opulent one. This makes us wonder who is so wealthy to live there. This could also mean that though different, this world is habitable, however temporarily, to such people as fishermen and sailors, who make trips to the ocean on a daily basis. Traditionally, these would be a special group of people who, through partaking in certain rituals and complying with certain rules, are 'elected' to venture into the sea. In Digo tradition, fisherfolk observe certain practices that ensure their peaceful encounters with the spirits who inhabit the ocean. A closer look at these practices reveals that they are unique measures of conserving the ocean, a subject that I shall address in a poem that follows. These practices include refraining from fishing on days when traditional sacrifices are made, not fishing on grounds where the spirits are believed to stay, not harvesting young fish, and not using poison to fish as this would pollute the spirit world (Alidina 14). In "Wonders in the Ocean", therefore, is echoed the special connection between the fisherfolk, particularly those from the Digo community, and the ocean, and the things that they do to maintain a good relationship with the sea. In order that the fishermen can enter the ocean and return safely, they have to observe certain rules, or else the spirits will be upset and will mete out punishment.

The fourth wonder of the sea is a rather common figure, that of the mermaid, mentioned in the sixth stanza of the poem. The third line provides a widely known description of the mermaid,

as "Kimama huku samaki, wa umbo la mwanadamu, *A woman part fish, with a human figure."* This is the mystery that is described with the fewest words in the poem, perhaps due to widespread knowledge of the mermaid globally. Despite the popularity of the mermaid trope, research on the representation of this and other African sea spirits has seen the African Atlantic dominate the field, leaving out perspectives from the African Indian Ocean. In particular, there has been extensive work on Mami Wata, pidgin English for 'Mother of Water', a water spirit known through much of the African Atlantic worlds. Common in West and Central Africa, Mami Wata is depicted as a mermaid, a woman part-human-part-fish, although Sabine Jell-Bahlsen (1997) and Brian Siegel (2008) argue that African water spirits were not initially envisioned as mermaids, but took that form upon cultural borrowing and diffusion between (West) Africans and the west. This widespread knowledge of the mermaid notwithstanding, the poet, aware of cultural knowledges that dictate the relationship between Kenyan coastal communities and the sea, does not delve deeply into the nature of this and other water spirits. One reason, mentioned above in relation to diving fishermen (in the fourth stanza), is that the mysteries of the sea are guarded, as fear is attached to their revelation. It could also be that the poet chose to leave out much of this information because she wants to raise the curiosity of her audience, after which she expects them to find out more about the wonders of the sea from other sources.

The seventh stanza of the poem mentions the fifth mystery of the sea, namely mysterious accidents that sometimes occur in the ocean. Coincidentally, the description of these accidents matches with what Mzee Nyembwe mentioned while narrating the oral history of Fort Jesus in chapter three. Mzee Nyembwe's words, "Mara unasikia watoto wameanza kupotea kwa maji, *Sometimes you hear that children have drowned in the ocean*", and the second line of the stanza "Mara wapata habari, yateketeza watoto, *Sometimes you get news, of its drowning children"* are strikingly similar. Mzee Nyembwe was lamenting about the disruption of Digo spiritual life upon the forceful removal of the Digo from Ngomeni (Fort Jesus) by the Portuguese. The information provided by Mzee Nyembwe becomes important in understanding the poem, since the poem does not reveal the exact cause of these accidents. The mysterious accidents that happen at sea can therefore be deduced to be the result of practices that destroy the ambience of the sea, troubling the sea spirits. This similarity between Mzee Nyembwe's narrative and Bahati's poem reveals the extent to which Digo spiritual life is anchored both on land and at sea. More importantly, the correlation between these two, added to how closely Bahati's poem

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echoes Mvuvi Charo's testimony, attests to an intricate link between oral history, oral poetry, and oral testimony, and calls attention to how important it is to study them alongside each other.

This far, the Digo's relationship with the ocean is symbiotic, in that while the ocean earns them a living through employing them as sailors, or by providing them with fish to eat and to trade, the Digo have the responsibility of appeasing the sea. They do so by ensuring that the spirits are not offended, through keeping the spirits' habitat clean. Thus, the conservation of the ocean takes precedence among the shore folk, who are the Digo in this case. Consider the following poem, "Bahari Tuitunzeni", "Let's Conserve the Ocean", performed by Bahati, which is a plea to safeguard the ocean:

Bahari Tuitunzeni

Iliumbwa nchi kavu, vile vile na bahari,
Ya magari nchi kavu, na bahari pia feri,
Sote tuwe angalifu, tutunze yetu bahari,
Bahari ina faida, jamani tuitunzeni.

Kuna vyombo vya safari, vyapelekwa baharini,
Vyaenda ndefu safari, hadi kwao ufukweni,
Kimoja chao ni feri, chombo kilicho majini,
Bahari ina faida, jamani tuitunzeni.

Pia wavuvi jamani, wapata zao riziki,
Waendapo baharini, wavua wengi samaki,
Wafikapo majumbani, wauza wao samaki,
Bahari ina faida, jamani tuitunzeni.

Tunapokata mikoko, twauza twapata pesa,
Bahari 'singekuweko, wengi wetu 'ngetutesa,
Kungelikuwa kimako, wabara hadi Mombasa,
Bahari ina faida, jamani tuitunzeni.

Tushikaneni mikono, wabara hadi wapwani,
Tupange yetu maneno, bahari tuikuzeni,
Tena tukoleze wino, maneno tukipangani,
Bahari ina faida, jamani tuitunzeni.

Let's Conserve the Ocean

Dry land was created, so was the ocean,
Dry land for cars, and the ocean for ferries,
Let's all be careful, let's conserve our ocean,
The ocean is beneficial, let's please conserve it.

There are vessels for travel, that cruise ocean,
They travel long journeys, to distant shores,
Amongst them is the ferry, a vessel of the waters,
The ocean is beneficial, let's please conserve it.

Fishermen too, earn their living,
When they go to the ocean, they catch many fish,
When they get home, they sell their catch,
The ocean is beneficial, let's please conserve it.

When we harvest mangroves, we sell them and get money,
If the ocean was not there, many of us would be miserable,
Things would be tough, from the hinterland to Mombasa,
The ocean is beneficial, let's please conserve it.

Let's join hands, mainlanders to those from the coast,
Let's organise ourselves, to conserve the ocean,
Let's be determined, in keeping our words,
The ocean is beneficial, let's please conserve it.

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Kalamu naeka chini, muda wangu umefika,	*I now pen off, my time is up,*
Bahari tuilindeni, ujumbe kwenu 'mefika,	*Let's conserve the ocean, you've got the message,*
Nakoma hapa jamani, pole pole naondoka,	*I stop here, I take my leave now,*
Bahari ina faida, jamani tuitunzeni.	*The ocean is beneficial, let's please conserve it.*

The main theme of this poem is the usefulness of the sea, not just to the shore folk, but to humankind in general. The first two stanzas establish the similarity between land and sea, through which we learn that the sea is as useful to humankind as land is, and therefore, it should be taken care of. This comparison between land and sea is made using vessels of transport, particularly the ferry, which is likened to cars in dry land, emphasising the role of the Indian Ocean in transport. Of the world's oceans, the Indian Ocean handles the highest container traffic; it accounts for half of the ninety percent of global commerce that is transported by sea in the 21st century (Kaplan 19).

The poet's choice of the ferry as one of the vessels common at sea is strategic – the decision to use the word '*feri*', a naturalisation of 'ferry', instead of the Kiswahili word '*kivuko*' is a hint that the poet might be referring to Likoni Ferry, which is well-known to the audience. Whereas the Nyali Bridge connects Mombasa with the north coast, the Likoni Ferry is the only means of accessing the island from much of the south coast, across the Kilindini Harbour. Every day, thousands of people who work in Mombasa island rely on the services of the ferry to and from work, and visitors and tourists to the south coast also depend on the ferry. The foot and road traffic on the Likoni Ferry is so huge that queues sometimes last for hours, and I was caught up in this traffic several times. When the ferry breaks down as it sometimes does, many are stranded for hours, an image that expresses the form that life on the coast can take if the ocean is not well maintained.

The third and fourth stanzas of the poem construct the Digo as a community that heavily relies on fishing and harvesting of mangroves. Their shared cultural knowledge on the importance of the ocean inspires them to remind each other that among them are fishermen who *"Waendapo baharini, wavua wengi samaki,* When they go to the ocean, they catch many fish", and *"Wafikapo majumbani, wauza wao samaki,* When they get home, they sell their catch". For those who do not venture out into the sea, mangroves, which are mainly used to make fishing poles, are a common source of income, as *"twauza twapata pesa,* we sell them and get money". By situating these daily activities at the centre of the struggle to conserve the sea, the poem appeals to the primary senses of the fisherfolk and the shore folk. It reminds them that if the

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ocean is not taken care of, there is a foreseeable threat, and that is that the resources in it, particularly fish, are bound to be scarce, compromising the community's livelihood.

The poem suggests that the conservation of the ocean is not the responsibility of coastal people alone, those on the mainland are also implicated. Without the ocean, *"Kungelikuwa kimako, wabara hadi Mombasa*, Things would be tough, from the hinterland to Mombasa"*, and therefore, *"Tushikaneni mikono, wabara hadi wapwani,* Let's join hands, mainlanders to those from the coast". Extending beyond the coast, therefore, conserving the Indian Ocean means (re)evaluating new and existing uses of the sea, both by the coastal people themselves and by those from the hinterland. This sense of collective responsibility towards the preservation of the sea is announced right from the beginning of the poem, in the first stanza, *"Sote tuwe angalifu, tutunze yetu bahari,* Let's all be careful, let's conserve our ocean". It is further emphasised in the title of the poem "*Bahari Tuitunzeni,* Let's conserve the ocean", and in the refrain "*jamani tuitunzeni,* let's please conserve it".

This form of repetition not only emphasises the message carried in the poem, it also contributes to rhythm and musicality. Like "Wonders in the Ocean" discussed above, "Let's Conserve the Ocean" is lyrical. In fact, both poems have regular internal and external rhyme schemes – aaab cccb ddxb eeeb fffb gggb bbbb eeeb; aaab cccb aaab cxcb dddb eeeb fffb gggb for "Wonders in the Ocean", and aaxb cccb dddb eeeb fffb dddb; aaab bbbb cccb dddb bbbb eeeb for "Let's Conserve the Ocean", which make it easy to turn the poems into song. To create this rhyme scheme, and to conform to the rules and structure of *mashairi* by having sixteen syllables in a line, Bahati shortened several words and lengthened others. Words that are lengthened by an additional syllable are *kimama (mama)* in the sixth stanza of "Wonders in the Ocean" and *tukipangani* (*tukipanga*) in the fifth stanza of "Let's Conserve the Ocean". Those that are shortened by the omission of a syllable are, in "Wonders in the Ocean", *hutokea (vinatokea)* in the first stanza; *'kitaka* (*ukitaka*) and *waloyaona (waliyoyaona)* in the second stanza; *walopewa (waliyopewa)* in the third stanza; *wazamiayo (wanaozamia)* in the fourth stanza; *twabaki (tunabaki)* in the fifth stanza; *hazishi (haziishi)* in the sixth stanza; *majiye (maji yake)* in the seventh and eighth stanzas; and *yatosha (yanatosha)* and *nishawapa (nimeshawapea)* in the eighth stanza. In "Let's Conserve the Ocean", *angalifu (waangalifu)* in the first stanza; *vyaenda (vinaenda)* in the second stanza; *waendapo (wanapoenda)*, *wavua (wanavua)*, *wafikapo (wanapofika)* and *wauza (wanauza)* in the third stanza; *twauza (tunauza)*, *twapata (tunapata)*, *'singekuweko (isingekuweko)* and *'ngetutesa (ingetutesa)* in the fourth stanza; and *'mefika (umefika)* in the sixth stanza are also shortened by the omission of a syllable. The performative

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nature of these poems is also evinced by the last stanzas, which paint a picture of a stage performance: *"Yatosha masimulizi, nisiwatie uoga, Enough of the tales, let me not scare you"*, and "Kalamu naeka chini, muda wangu umefika, *I now pen off, my time is up*", announcing the end of a recital. After preparing the audience to anticipate the end of the session, the performance comes to a close, "Nishawapa vidokezi, kwaherini nawaaga, *I have given you highlights, goodbye I bid you all*", and *"Nakoma hapa jamani, pole pole naondoka,* I stop here, I take my leave now", reminiscent of an oral performer slowly exiting a stage.

Arguably, "Let's Conserve the Ocean" largely use simple language with clear, direct meaning. Complex imagery and hidden meanings, common to poetry, are absent in this poem. These features allow the poem to communicate with diverse audience be it young or old, coastal or mainland. This diction is also important as it enables the poem to confront the plight of marine pollution and climate change directly, by highlighting the effect that marine pollution has on day to day economic activities that a large proportion of people on the Kenyan coast undertake in an around the ocean (like fishing and harvesting of mangroves). The choice of direct language also captures the urgency of the need to conserve the ocean, which, evidently, is the purpose of this poem. This is extremely important in a region which has been identified as being depleted of its natural resources (Versleijen and Hoorweg 1), and where marine environmental degradation is on the rise (McClanahan and Obura 104). If the marine ecological environment is not urgently conserved, sea plants like mangroves could also disappear. This could turn catastrophic because they shield the coastline from destructive storms and waves. They are also a source of income, and are what fishermen use to make fishing poles.

This poem has also revealed that the conservation of the ocean is not the responsibility of the shore folk alone, those from the mainland should also re-evaluate their uses of the sea. For example, in one of my conversations with Bahati, she expressed the disappointment of many coastal people with regard to recent events in Kenya, in which tonnes of sea sand was harvested for use in the construction of the 472 kilometres Mombasa–Nairobi standard gauge railway. This was after the Kenya National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) licenced China Roads and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) to harvest 800, 000 tonnes of sand on the south coast around Likoni, and only between 400 metres to one kilometre offshore, an item captured in the Business Daily Newspaper dated 7 July 2015. Soon after this license had been given, residents on the coast were up in arms, fighting against how such an action would affect the marine environment around them. Through a tribunal, they requested that the sand harvesting be pushed to between five and ten kilometres offshore in compliance with international

standards. After the tribunal successfully proved in court that Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) had not been conducted, the sand harvesting was stopped, and CRBC turned to manufactured sand as an alternative, although this presents challenges to the terrestrial environments where the quarrying activities took place. Once again, as discussed in chapter three, we find evidence of Kenya's post-independence government failing to protect the interest of its people. As I will discuss in the next chapter, the people of the Kenyan coast feel the most neglected by the Kenyan government. Whereas the government should play its role in the conservation of the ocean, thereby protecting its citizens, it is licensing foreign agencies to destroy the environment. By calling on people from the hinterland to join the coastal people in protecting the sea, therefore, this poem reminds the government that it ought to discourage or desist from licensing development practices that are harmful to the natural environment (Huggan & Tiffin 1–2), in this case the marine ecological environment. Thus, this poem, understandably from a littoral community, shifts emphasis on ecological violence to the sea. Just like postcolonial studies and anti-colonial struggles have been mostly land based, leaving out the sea, so too has been scholarship on environmental conservation – it has largely been dedicated to land, while less attention is given to the coastlines (Clarke 154, 166). There has been more emphasis on land conservation than there has been about water conservation, which is rather ironical because the oceans cover 70 percent of the earth's surface.

Adding on to the neglect of water conservation is the Eurocentric nature of marine conservation. The challenge is that when it comes to the conservation of the ocean, scientists and governments impose policies and procedures, setting aside the knowledge and experience of the littoral people. For example, the United Nations Law of the Sea (1982) gives coastal states full authority over the control of marine living resources. As such, costal states can and do control, among other things, the issuance of fishing licenses, fishing seasons and fishing areas, and what species of fish to be caught at what times (Article 62, 46–47). These policies are to be applied indiscriminately, without taking into consideration the views of the fishers themselves. Nowhere does this law directly leave room for the shore folk to weigh in on any of these guidelines, when indeed they possess certain beliefs that would contribute to the success of these policies. In American Sāmoa, for example, from 1976, the National Marine Fisheries Service "has controlled the management of who gets permission to use most of the ocean spaces surrounding [this] unincorporated U.S. territory" (Poblete 24), when, indeed, American Sāmoans themselves believe that "[s]ea life holds an equal status, if not sacred status, in the hierarchy of life and is treated respectfully" (Poblete 45). Therefore, whereas multiple

knowledge systems exist in reference to the conservation of the marine ecosystem, the framework that is enforced is one-sided as it lacks the input of the local people. In a specific case of the South African coast:

> The ways that the Lamberts Bay fishers know the sea and their fishing areas differs from the way that scientific knowledge is created but it could not be said that either way of knowing is incorrect and that data produced is inaccurate – they were assembled differently through alternative practices. (Rogerson 329)

At the Kenyan coast, too, the fisherfolk themselves have knowledge and practices that have sustained their relationship with the sea for centuries. Digo fishermen, for example, have certain rituals that dictate their behaviour in and around the ocean: they refrain from fishing on days when traditional sacrifices are made, they do not fish on grounds where the spirits are believed to stay, they do not harvest young fish, and they do not use poison to fish as this will pollute the spirit world (Alidina 14).

By way of conclusion, I would like to emphasise that coastal states, like Kenya in this case, would do better to consult coastal communities on effective measures that can boost the preservation of the ocean. National governments which seem to ignore indigenous knowledges of the sea that the shore folk possess (Rogerson 327), choosing instead to impose imported frameworks that are undoubtedly less effective (Turnbull 767), should turn to the fisherfolk. This is because "[a]n indigenous marine management perspective could provide one path to move away from segmented, narrow-minded, and unsuccessful Western accounting methods" (Poblete 45). Using the example of the Digo who have occupied the south coast for centuries, it should be expected that littoral communities have more knowledge and experience in conserving the ocean. As a result, they should be the ones from whom governments and agencies take notes on practices to nurture and conserve the ocean. This indigenous knowledge, as has been shown, is carried in local forms of expression, like oral poetry in the case of most Kenyan coastal communities. We should explore this genre further in a bid to deepen our understanding of the nature of the sea, the intimate relationship that the shore folk have with it, and to appreciate and promote the conservation of the ocean.

4.4. Conclusion

In line with current scholarship trends, this chapter has moved postcolonial studies from land to sea and shifted oceanic studies from surface to depth. I have drawn on alternative knowledges of the ocean, particularly oral testimonies and oral poems from the Digo, a littoral community, to reflect on the different dimensions of the seascape. These testimonies and poems have revealed alternative maps of the Indian Ocean world, in particular, the economic, the spiritual, and the ecological aspects of the sea. In the analysis of these texts, it has been demonstrated how these aspects are tied to the identity and culture of the Digo as a community of people who have unique experiences of the sea. As these testimonies and poems are embodied and experiential, they carry the worldview of the Digo, and therefore provide an opportunity to challenge Western conceptualisation of space, in this case the sea. From the discussions in this chapter, it has emerged that the sea in not an empty space; is not owned by anyone in particular; is fluid, which is in opposition to the attempt by Western cartography to construct fixed boundaries in it; and also that the ocean is home to spirits who protect the ocean, an aspect that motivates littoral communities like the Digo to conserve the sea.

CHAPTER V

Working with Local Sources: Yvonne Owuor's Affirmation of Indigenous Knowledges in *The Dragonfly Sea*

5.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored indigenous knowledges, particularly oral testimonies and oral poetry, as experiential mapmakers of the Indian Ocean world among the Digo at the Kenyan coast. I found that local sources of knowledge provide alternative maps that exceed the limits of dominant cartographic tools, especially since I was able to derive multiple dimensions of the seascape from those oral texts – the economic, the spiritual, and the ecological. In this chapter, I analyse *The Dragonfly Sea* (2019) by Yvonne Owuor. Born in 1968, Owuor is one of Kenya's most prolific writers today. *The Dragonfly* (2019) is her second novel. Her debut novel, *Dust* (2014), was shortlisted for the Folio Prize, while her novella *Weight of Whispers* (2006) won the 2003 Caine Prize for African Literature. Owuor has also published short stories in several anthologies.

The Dragonfly Sea is largely set on Pate Island at the Kenyan coast[54], and in it Owuor reaffirms the indigenous knowledges of the sea discussed in the last chapter. In the course of writing this novel, Owuor spent time at the Swahili coast, especially in the Zanzibar Archipelago, where she interacted with different coastal people. In particular, she interviewed a seafarer, Haji Gora Haji from Tumbatu island, and from his experience of the sea she constructed some of her characters' worldview. In my analysis of this novel, I am interested in how Owuor, as opposed to Cuthbert in chapter two, incorporates local knowledges in representing her subject matter, which in this case is the sea and the experience thereof at the Kenyan coast. The multiple perspectives and varied knowledge systems that Owuor adopts in the novel build upon my argument that the best way we can learn about the sea is by engaging the shore folk, who have an intrinsic knowledge of it.

From her interviews with Haji Gora, Owuor wrote a critical paper, "In Search of Poem-Maps of the Swahili Seas: Three sea poems by Haji Gora Haji" (2018). In it she reveals how imaginative works have paid less attention to the the Swahili Seas when compared to other

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[54] Other settings include China where Ayaana, the novel's protagonist, goes to study; the Indian Ocean across which Ayaana voyages in MV Qingrui, captained by Lai Jin who later becomes Ayana's husband; and Turkey, where Koray Terzioglu, Ayaana's classmate and boyfriend, takes Ayaana for the holidays, for her to meet his family.

regions of the African Indian Ocean, "so that the wealth of life of those seas as experienced, imagined, expressed, heard, read and embodied by those whose lives it is most intimately connected with today is a story unvoiced" (164). Therefore, Owuor's aim is to present a view of the sea through the eyes of shore folk and seafarers. *The Dragonfly* is a work of imaginative fiction inspired by historical events, as I shall outline shortly, but in which Owuor makes an effort to write the lives of Pate islanders. Having closely interacted with people at the coast, she captures their lived experiences, particularly their ways of reading the seascape, and incorporates them into the novel. For instance, the character of Muhidin, the leading seafarer in the novel, is based on the life of Haji Gora, the Swahili seafarer mentioned above. Owuor acknowledges this in the novel, "*Shukraan* to the exquisite old man of the sea, seafarer, minstrel, poet, living library, and world treasure, Mzee Haji Gora Haji, who is the sonorous voice for the Swahili Seas, and from whom the character of Muhidin materialized" (*Dragonfly Sea* 485). Also, the character of Ayaana, the novel's protagonist, is partly informed by conversations that Owuor had with Haji Gora (*Dragonfly Monsoon* 93).

Owuor's novel is inspired by historical events that date back to 1418, when two Chinese ships got wrecked in Lamu – a brief history of which I provide here. Between 1405–1433, the Chinese Admiral Zheng He made historic expeditions to the Western (Indian) Ocean, a fairly well documented record of these expeditions being found in Louise Levathes' *When China Ruled the Seas* (1994). Under orders given by the Chinese emperor during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1622), Admiral Zheng He (1371–1433) made seven voyages to the Western Ocean (what is today the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean). The expedition was most likely focused on resurrecting Indian Ocean trade[55], and opening China to the rest of the world (Levathes 88–89). Going by historical records, the voyages were remarkably successful; by the time of the last voyage in 1433, over 30 maritime nations had been visited, some of which I mention here. The first voyage (1405–1407), with 62 ships, went to Calicut; the second (1407–1409), with 68 ships, went to India; the third, having 48 ships and 30, 000 men, went to Malacca and Ceylon; the fourth voyage (1414–1415) went to the Hormuz Strait and the Persian Gulf with 63 ships and 28 560 men; the fifth (1417–1419) went to Aden and the East African coast; the sixth (1521–1522) went to Aden and Africa; and the final voyage, the seventh (1431–1433),

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[55] Each fleet, consisting of about 100 supply ships, carried items like silk, porcelain, iron, salt, tea, candles, and fine art, which were to be traded for treasurers like rhinoceros horn, tortoise shells, pearls, and precious stones (Levathes 19–20).

with more than 100 ships and 27, 500 men, went to Calicut through Malacca, then to Hormuz and the East African coast.

Of interest are the fourth and the fifth voyages. While in the Persian Gulf during the fourth voyage (1414–1415), Zheng He encountered traders from the East African coasts of Mogadishu, Barawa, and Malindi. He then asked them to accompany him to China to pay tribute to the emperor, and they agreed (Levathes 140). During the fifth voyage, the treasure fleet, on arriving at Aden, sailed to the East African coast to return the emissaries from Mogadishu, Barawa, and Malindi back to their homes (Levathes 149). They were in Malindi in 1418. It is in this year, 1418, that two ships belonging to Zheng He's fleet sunk in Lamu, which is 137 km northeast of Malindi. While many of the crew died, it is believed that about 20 men succeeded in reaching the shore. It is said that they then converted to Islam, married local women, and lived among the Swahili. These assertions were confirmed in 2002, when experts from both Kenya and China visited Lamu and carried out DNA tests to determine whether indeed there were any Chinese descendants on the island, following claims by some of the islanders. The DNA results positively identified six people as having Chinese ancestors – an aging woman, Baraka Badi Shee, and her three daughters and two sons. One of Baraka's daughters, Mwamaka Sharifu, was subsequently awarded a scholarship by the Chinese Government, and in 2005 she went to study Chinese Traditional Medicine in China. The character of Owuor's protagonist, Ayaana the Descendant, is largely inspired by the life of Mwamaka Sharifu. Owuor's choice to base her main character on a historical event that goes back 600 years allows the sea, which is an entity central to the novel, to be constructed as a reservoir of history, as both a store and place of memory making.

In the first section of this chapter, I expound on this centrality of the sea in *The Dragonfly*. I analyse how the sea, which appears to be the centre of the cosmos, binds the characters in the novel. From the engagements characters have both with each other and with the sea around which their lives revolve, I explore the intimate relationship that exists between shore folk and the(ir) sea. This allows me to highlight the embodied and experiential knowledges of the sea that Owuor embraces and thereby incorporates into her novel. In so doing, I underscore Owuor's attempt to imagine a map of the sea that is intrinsic to coastal people, that is, a cartography of the seas as experienced by those who have an intimate relationship with it. This then reveals the sophisticated forms of knowledge of place that exist outside science. Consequently, my analysis evolves into a critique of the limits of western scientific knowledge,

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where I point out the epistemic violence against forms of knowledge that have been locked out of mainstream platforms. I also look at how the 600-year-old history that Owuor bases the novel on inspires a debate about the role of water as a memory carrier, and the sea as a tomb, and how this is expressed in the novel.

In the second section of this chapter, I analyse how the pivotal position occupied by the sea described in the first section can be extended to further reveal Owuor's attempt to centre the Kenyan coast, which is arguably Kenya's most marginalised region. By placing Pate at the centre of one of the most significant navigations in the history of the seas, Owuor elevates Pate's position both in national and global discourse. I also analyse how Owuor presents the indigenous knowledges of the sea discussed in the first section as being the threshold of admission, acceptance, and belonging to Pate island. I present evidence from the novel that shows how Pate is at once open and welcoming to visitors from across the world, but is at the same time firm on allowing only a specific kind of people to find a home in it – those who cultivate and maintain a harmonious relationship with both the islanders and the sea. The final part of this section reflects on how some of the relationships forged in the novel are reminiscent of the arrival of the Chinese sailors on the Kenyan coast 600 years ago, and how Owuor uses some of these connections to critique the (re)emergence of China as a dominating power in Kenya and Africa at large, in the present day.

5.2. A Biography of the Indian Ocean: Of Swahili seafarers' musings and sensuous seascapes in Pate

"The sea is not a metaphor", notes Blum (2010), who argues that oceanic studies has rendered the actual sea immaterial (670). What we need, she says, is "a practice of oceanic studies that is attentive to the material conditions and praxis of the maritime world, one that draws from the epistemological structures provided by the lives and writings of those for whom the sea was simultaneously workplace, home, passage, penitentiary, and promise" (670). Specifically, Blum calls our attention to seafarers like the fisherman and the sailor whose testimonies I discussed in the previous chapter; to people like Haji Gora – the sailor, fisherman, and poet of the Swahili Seas, the one whose voice permeates Owuor's novel. Blum argues that acknowledging seafarers and exploring their lives as a critical part of oceanic studies "allows us to perceive, analyse, and deploy aspects of the history, literature, and culture of the oceanic world that might otherwise be rendered obscure or abstract" (671). After all, a history of the sea is "the story of those who have traversed it, who have inhabited its shores, and who, through the power of the imagination, have conjured its many meanings" (Moorthy & Jamal 1). This

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was Owuor's goal – to write "a 'biography' of the ocean" derived from the lives of those who have an intimate relationship with it (*Dragonfly Monsoon* xi).

In this section, I examine this intimate relationship between characters in Owuor's novel and the sea. I explore the local knowledges they possess as an avenue towards a deeper appreciation and understanding of the sea. In other words, the nature of the sea is implicated in the experiences of Owuor's characters as much as the lives of the characters are influenced by their connection with the sea. This is true to the idea that "human identity […] is inextricably bound up with the places in which we find ourselves and through which we move" (Prieto 18). Therefore, the discussion in this section is two-fold; on one hand, I focus on characters in the novel and through them explore the experiential and embodied knowledges of the sea that Owuor incorporates into the text, information which she gains through interviews that she holds with Swahili seafarers, as well as from her own experience of the Swahili Seas. On the other hand, but in connection to this first issue, I highlight how Owuor places the sea at the centre of the novel, and the immense role that the ocean plays in the lives of the characters.

It is quite pronounced how the sea is important to Owuor's major characters, to an extent that all action in the novel is in one way or another tied to or dictated by the sea. Owuor's choice to grant the sea such dominance allows the novel to be read using a geocritical lens. Geocriticism refers to the relationship between place, space, mapping, and literature; that is, the interaction between the text and physical places as experienced by humans (Egeler 67–68; Tally Jr. & Battista 1). Mainly proposed by Bertrand Westphal (2011), geocriticism is a geocentred approach to texts, in which focus is shifted from the author (or authors) to the place/space that is represented in the text (112, 117). In *The Dragonfly*, this place is the sea. There are four elements of geocriticism put forward by Westphal, two of which I find useful in the analysis of Owuor's novel – multifocalisation and polysensoriality. Multifocalisation entails the entanglement of "a wide variety of viewpoints" in a given text (Westphal 127). In the creation of a multifocal text, different voices are allowed to speak about a single space, leading to "a more holistic perception of place" (Egeler 68). Therefore, a multifocal text is rich in perspective. This is in opposition to a unifocal text, which is created from a single perspective, and is hence subjective and biased (Westphal 126). I read *The Dragonfly* as a multifocal text as there is evidence that Owuor did not only consult local people from whom she acquired an indigenous knowledge of the sea, but that she also makes a conscious effort to let her characters speak for themselves in the novel.

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Though a geocritical stance usually requires that different texts or texts by different authors are used to analyse the representation of a single space, I see Owuor's novel as geocritical in that there are many voices that were incorporated into the writing of the novel. In fact, one might look at Owuor herself as a geocritic, and this is reflected in her choice to extensively engage people like Haji Gora in her project, people whose view of the sea she uses to illuminate her characters. "Haji Gora Haji is a biographical study for some of the characters that people the [novel]" (*Dragonfly Monsoon* 93), she says. In other words, Owuor does not just imagine the Swahili Seas, but rather, she explores the views of people who navigate the seas on a daily basis. She lets her informant's encounter and conversation with the sea inform her plot and characters. The novel thus becomes a blend of the artist's own imagination (authorial perception) and outlook, and the perspectives of Swahili Seas' sea farers, thereby producing a multifocal picture that emerges from different points of view put together.

The dominance of the sea in *The Dragonfly* is apparent. In the novel, the sea is constructed not as a passive body in and around which people act, but rather as an active entity in the ecosystem. In fact, the sea is given power to influence people's actions and movements, and even to determine or twist their fate. Throughout the novel, the sea is responsible for bringing people together as it is for tearing them apart, for bringing them waves of happiness just as it also washes grief to their shores. As such, the same winds that bring visitors like Kitwana, Lai Jin, and Nioreg, are the same ones that sweep away unwanted ones, like Suleiman the bully, and Fazul and Wa Mashriq, the Muslim terrorists who tried to sacrifice Ayaana, Munira's daughter, as a *mujahidat*[56]. Another example is that at different times, the sea takes away three of Munira's husbands – Ayaana's biological father whose name is not revealed (even Munira does not know it, because he gave her a false name [398]), Ziriyab, son of Muhidin, and Muhidin himself. Agitated, Munira at one point admonishes the sea, "My rival, my wicked co-wife, this sea; must it always seize my men? How did I ever offend this witch?" (431).

Being thus the centre of the cosmos, the sea is powerful, and the islanders revere it as they would God. In fact, the two deities stand side by side. This is why when Ayaana is searching for Muhidin's soul in the sea (after Muhidin had gone to sea in the company of Kitwana but they did not return), she "informed both God and the sea that Muhidin was her heart, her spirit, her breath. She told God and the sea that they owed her his life" (390). In another example, an

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[56] A *mujahidat* is a female Muslim suicide martyr, one who sacrifices her life to engage in *jihad,* the holy war, in pursuit of promises they believe will be delivered in the afterlife.

imam in Pate, while consoling Ayaana who has just arrived from China, tells her, "The ocean is a cipher […] We can only wait" (415). This means that the sea is to a large extent mysterious, and people have no power to influence its actions. They can only wait for when the sea is ready to communicate whatever fate it has chosen for them. Also, the sea must have what has been promised to it, so that people do not have the freedom to change the course of events. Mehdi tells Ayaana that, "[Muhidin] spoke of Ziriyab. […] Dreamed of his boy. In the dream, he said he had handed over his heart" (421). This, Mehdi finally understands, is "[a] prophecy of sacrifice. […] How could we know? Would have told Kitwana to wait" (421). This implies that even if Mehdi or anyone else had known that Muhidin had sacrificed his soul for Ziriyab's well-being, they would not have been able to stop Muhidin from going to the sea. They would have had no power over a contract that Muhidin himself had signed with the sea; the best they could have done is to stop Kitwana from accompanying him.

The materiality of the sea is perhaps brought out more clearly when one looks at the novel using the second element of geocriticism proposed by Westphal – polysensoriality. This element captures the interaction that Pate islanders have with the sea more vividly. It brings out experiential knowledge of the sea that Pate islanders possess more clearly, and provides an answer to the question as to how this experiential, embodied knowledge is expressed in the novel, and how readers can perceive it. In polysensoriality, Westphal (2011) proposes human senses as a critical means of perception (131–36). He emphasises that it is through the senses that people structure and define the spaces they inhabit (133), and it is not just certain senses, but rather all the senses, that are used to express the experience of an environment (132). I find this extremely useful because there are aspects of *The Dragonfly* that point to intuitive knowledges and practices relating to the sea that Pate islanders engage in. Yet, this is a form of knowledge that is rarely noticed because widely accepted epistemologies often confine logic to what can be seen or measured (Garuba, "Animism" 44), and anything that falls outside this epistemic territory "is made invisible, is excluded from the real and is actively disdained, even unnamed" (Vázquez 30). This has resulted in the exclusion of a great variety of knowledges since "[t]he real is not only what is observable or what makes cognitive sense; it is also the invisible, the emotional, the sentimental, the intuitive and the inexplicable" (Nyamnjoh 258). Therefore, Owuor uses the intimate relationship between Pate islanders and the sea to call attention to alternative epistemologies and thereby criticise the form of epistemicide caused by the stark binary between science and non-science.

In the novel, it appears as if the sea speaks to the islanders through different senses, in that people are able to, in a way, feel the sea. Engaging the senses in both the writing and the analysis of a text is suitable because the "senses offer important media through which space and time is experienced and understood" (Rodaway 36). In other words, experiential knowledge is also sensory, intuitive. As Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) puts it, "[e]xperience is a cover-all term for the various modes through which a person knows and constructs a reality. These modes range from the more direct and passive senses of smell, taste, and touch, to active visual perception and the indirect mode of symbolization" (8). Evidently, key characters in *The Dragonfly* possess a polysensory experience of the sea. In fact, the sea does not speak to them through one particular sense, but rather through a combination of two or more senses, especially those of sight, touch, and hearing. In addition to and working together with these, of course, is an intuitive sense, that which allows the characters to, for example, converse with the sea, to read the sea, and to make meaning out of events in the ocean.

A conversation between the sea and characters in the novel is possible because the sea is given the ability to send messages to the islanders, be it through the sound of the waves, the movement of the winds, the humming of djinns, or even through the appearance of the water, and the people are able to receive and decipher these messages. This speaks to intuitive and embodied knowledges of the sea common to shore folk in general. As Margaret Pearce and Renee Louis (2008) posit, "knowledge of place is not only limited to the senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell but also incorporates other more abstract 'senses' that are linked to intuition, place, time, and connection to the past, present, and future" (114). Among fishermen in Lamberts Bay on the South African coast, for example, exist knowledges of the ocean derived from "rhythms and nuances of the sea that [take] a lifetime of sensitivity and observation to learn" (Rogerson 329). These intuitive knowledges include fishermen using their boat's rocking sensation to detect storms, and reading and feeling the kind of water they are in to sense where fish might be (Rogerson 328).

This animated nature of the sea which makes it possible for characters in Owuor's novel to speak with the ocean reveals animist characteristics that the islanders attach to the sea. In this case, the sea is enlivened by djinns who live in it – they sigh (125), make murmuring cries at night (197, 362, 373), sob (203, 242), wail (241), murmur (293), roar (363), whisper (373), sing (373), chant (375), and howl (449). Beside the djinns, other mystical elements of the sea are also invoked. For example, the wind and the ocean are placed in conversation, in which the wind calls *"Hooooooo!"* and the ocean answers *"Whaaaaaa!"* (89), most likely announcing

the creation of a wave, which occurs when the wind brushes against the surface of water. In another example, the waves call, and the winds respond (217). The waters of the ocean, too, are presented as living entities, so that they can enquire from people who enter it, *"Ni shi shei?" "Who are you?"* (383, 386, 390, 392, 468). This lively nature of the ocean attends to animist thought which Harry Garuba (2003) defines as:

> [an] almost total refusal to countenance unlocalized, unembodied, unphysicalized gods and spirits. Animism is often simply seen as belief in objects such as stones or trees or rivers for the simple reason that animist gods and spirits are *located* and *embodied* in objects: the objects are the physical and material manifestations of the gods and spirits. ("Explorations" 267, original emphasis)

In animism, spiritual meanings are attached to natural and ordinary objects, which means that in this case, the sea is a spirit world, and the djinns and mystical elements the gods and spirits of the sea. It is these animated sounds and cries from these sea spirits that the islanders must ignore, lest they be lured like Muhidin was. At the same time, it is to these beings that the islanders go for help, like Munira was willing to negotiate with the grey-feathered djinn to protect her daughter Ayaana from being bullied. Of course, to gain a favour from the sea, one must offer a sacrifice, like Muhidin exchanges his soul for his son Ziriyab's.

From the ongoing discussion, it emerges that the sea is perhaps most materialised by the djinns who inhabit the ocean. It is with these beings that people engage the most. For instance, Ayaana and Munira are presented as imploring the djinns, and thereby the sea, to return Muhidin to them. When Ayaana hears that her father Muhidin has disappeared into the sea, she is at first in denial, saying, "Thank you. But my father is the ocean. Therefore, he does not drown. He is a wave. He is also the tide. He will return" (372). Ayaana's denial is akin to Munira's own when she first heard that her husband Ziriyab had disappeared. For two months, Munira insistently told everyone that Ziriyab would return; she "still dressed up and perfumed herself, her clothes, their bed" (120–21). When, finally, the Imam comes to say a prayer for the departed over Ziriyab's soul, Muhidin stops him midsentence, shouting at him, "'Swallow those words! Don't speak death! My son lives!'" (121)

As days pass, however, Ayaana gets impatient, and asks Munira if Muhidin has returned, to which Munira answers, "Not yet […] We have petitioned the sea and its deities for mercy" (372). At this point, Ayaana decides to speak with the water herself, and "the more she walked, the more she felt the sea come close to her, and if the sea was close to her, so was Muhidin"

(373). For her own safety, Xiamen University puts up measurers to prevent Ayaana from accessing the sea. However, Ayaana manages to sneak out of class and goes to the ocean, where she intends to locate Muhidin's soul (375–376). Unfortunately, her reading of the water shows no sign of Muhidin, for as she lifts her arms from the water, she does not hear the tingling sensation which would have assured her that Muhidin was alive and had heard her screaming for him (376). The irretrievability of Muhidin's soul is captured in Ayaana's realisation that the watch Muhidin gave her as a parting gift when she went to China is dead, "That watch. The *ping*…has gone from it" (386), symbolising loss.

Speaking with the water is a skill that requires one to carefully select the time and place for it. There are specific times that the sea, under the right conditions, is accessible, and can receive and send back messages. For instance, amid Ayaana's desperate attempts to speak with the water, "[o]nly later, after the sun dipped into the water, did Ayaana find the portal at the water's edge from which she could call out to Muhidin in a high cry that split winds and forced them into listening-waiting" (390). Also, even when the sea is open and receives messages from those eager to find answers from it, it is not always that the sea responds, it does so at its own time. For example, When Ayaana returns to Pate, she hires a search party for Muhidin, "souls reading the water for clues of life" (420). Making no headway, Ayaana finally recalls the search. It would be over nine months before the sea finally answers back, for one day, "[a] fisherman, not one of the best, had hauled in an exceptionally bountiful catch. Among his miscellaneous sea bounty […] was a ruby ring that had last been seen on Muhidin's right ring finger. And the fisherman understood that the sea might have been speaking" (452). Thus, while Munira, Ayaana, and all of Pate's seamen spend months persuading the sea to release or reveal the fate of Muhidin, it is not until the sea is ready that Pate gets to know what befell Kitwana and Muhidin.

This sensuous seascape also manifests in the subtle ways in which the islanders can read events in the ocean. From experience, they read signs on water but also those on land, to predict what is about to happen in the sea. Outside of science, they have developed reliable systems of knowledge, largely based on intuition. For example, while conversing with Munira, Muhidin says that he "noticed that the ants are carrying food into their nests", to which Munira responds, "Storm", and Muhidin agrees that it is "Likely" (78). Similarly, Nioreg and Delaksha, both passengers on the ship with Ayaana on the way to China, predict a storm. Nioreg says that there is going to be a "storm in a few days", and when Delaksha asks him how he can tell, he replies,

"Wind on waves" (215). It appears that it takes great experience for one to own and hone this expertise. For example, eighteen months after Ziriyab and Munira's marriage, Ziriyab goes to do some fishing at sea. Unfortunately, there suddenly appears the historic 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which claimed over 200 000 lives and is understood to have been caused by an earthquake of magnitude 9.0 which lifted the sea floor by several metres (Bose 1). Ziriyab regrets that he had not been a fisherman long enough to be able to read the signs, for "he would have known to read the action of fish that had abandoned their feeding grounds that day. […] He might have understood that he could not make it back to shore in time" (102). He ends up with his boat capsized, and it would be eight and half days before he could see land again. This indigenous knowledge of the sea is learned through socialisation, so that as islanders grow, their knowledge and experience of the sea expands.

Yet, characters do not exhibit this sensory experience of the sea in isolation, but rather, as the novel's main character illustrates, this intuitive knowledge is to some extent blended with pragmatic knowledge. For instance, the intuitive ways of reading the sea, including the experience of the song of the sea, is presented together with scientific knowledge, calling attention to the fact that there are multiple ways of knowing, and people utilise them concurrently, not to forget that they serve the same purposes. For instance, Nautical Science, which Ayaana has gone to study in China, is to the maritime world what reading the tides, listening to the wind, and reading the stars is to the people and fishermen of Pate (286–287).

When Ayaana goes to study in China, the novel at first presents her as being faced with a situation in which she has to shed all the primary senses in favour of science. She feels as though she would have to relinquish her feeling for water for the power of numbers, navigational compasses, Napier's rules, coordinates, and geopolitics (287). This is yet another reminder that knowledge is hinged on power, and that some forms of knowledge have dominated others, and have required that people who are deemed powerless should subscribe to the knowledge system that is regarded as superior (Nyamnjoh 255). In the face of this new epistemology Ayaana is confronted with, however, she seems to be in favour of her traditional knowledge of the sea, which she learned from a tender age (by seven, she was searching for dragonflies in the lagoon by herself, and soon after, Muhidin had taught her how to read the water). She refuses to renounce her secret knowledge of the sea, but she keeps this to herself, lest she be deported (288). Owuor uses Ayaana's initial resistance to science to demonstrate the sophisticated forms of knowledge that exist outside the frame of scientific paradigms as

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discussed above. For example, when a typhoon occurs in Xiamen, and catches people by surprise, Ayaana regrets that Mehdi was not there, for he would have read it (361). In other words, Owuor is saying that there are varied epistemologies for navigating the sea, and they are all valid and often complement each other. Interestingly, after Ayaana graduates with her degree in Nautical Science, and long after she has returned to Pate, she is still in possession of her primary senses of the sea. This could be Owuor's way of emphasising that the different knowledges of the sea need not displace each other, that they can coexist. In fact, the novel ends when Ayaana, a nautical scientist, is working with Mehdi, a Pate seafarer, in Mehdi's shipyard (422).

Owuor bases her novel on a history that is 600 years old – that of the Chinese shipwreck that took place in Lamu in 1418. She does this in a bid to explore the role of water as a memory carrier, as a reservoir of history. Despite how many centuries it has been since the event happened, it has not been forgotten. In fact, its memories were recently resurrected when the family of Mwamaka Sharifu was discovered in Lamu in 2002, as explained in the introduction to this chapter. It is the certainty that some sailors were lost at sea that drove both Chinese and Kenyan archaeologists to initiate a joint project that would trace the descendants of possible survivors of the tragedy, their main objective being to find evidence of the earliest links between China and East Africa. Therefore, the archaeologists traced the dead to find the living, these dead having been buried in the ocean. This at once calls to mind the notion of the sea as a tomb. In the novel, for example, after Ziriyab survives the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, he tells the fishermen who rescue him in Mogadishu, at the Somali coast, "an idiot current mistook this [ocean] for my grave" (103). The most common narratives of the sea as a graveyard are found in African American history, whereby water is believed to carry the memory of those captives who lost their lives at sea (Wardi 4). During the transoceanic slave trade, it is estimated that 20–25 percent of slaves died in the Indian Ocean, a figure close to that of the Atlantic, whereby there was 25–30 percent slave mortality rate (Allen 39). Shipwrecks, too, like the one under discussion, form a large part of matter buried in the sea. In fact, shipwrecks make up the largest share of Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH), this being traces of human existence that have been underwater for at least a hundred years (Abeywardana 2). There are believed to be around three million undiscovered shipwrecks in the world's oceans (Ibid.). There are countless dead who are buried in the ocean, and as illustrated by the Chinese sailors, the sea not only provides them with a burial ground, but it also stores their history.

It is perhaps this overwhelming presence of human matter in the seabed that has intensified the relationship that exists between water and the human body. Essentially, "[b]odies of water articulate a double registry of meaning, referring to oceans, rivers, lakes, and swamps and simultaneously to the human body, which is comprised primarily of water" (Wardi 4). In fact, the flows of water can be likened to the circulation of blood in the human body (Schama 247). Also, just as the oceans cover seventy percent of the earth's surface, so does the human body consist of seventy percent water. More so, water is known to create and sustain life, since the beginning of human life is in the amniotic fluid, a watery element (Schama 247). This divine relationship between water and the human body could explain why Owuor's main characters have an affinity for water and the sea. The most likeable characters in the novel become those who have a harmonious relationship with the sea.

For example, Muhidin, the leading seafarer and the novel's patriarch, has his life ended at sea. Despite this being an act of loss, the novel constructs it quite positively. It begins this by earlier on presenting Muhidin as being sought after by the djinns, who had fallen in love with him and had begged him to show them his face (89). Of course, Muhidin ignores them, because if he had listened, they would have taken him. Later in the novel, however, Muhidin, like Munira was once tempted to do, strikes a deal with the djinns. Muhidin's son Ziriyab had disappeared for years, and when djinns appear to Muhidin in a dream one night, but in the form of Ziriyab, Muhidin is tempted to listen (369–70). In this dream:

> Mehdi [while telling Ayaana about Muhidin's last days] would remember Muhidin saying, Ziriyab had been on a metal bed in a small room drenched in fierce light, so Muhidin could see that his entire body had become a wound. Muhidin had smelled the foul green pus of death within Ziriyab's slowing crashing heart. Tearing up, Ziriyab had said to him, 'My father, it is good you came. I am dying.' Muhidin said he had shaken his son, slapped him awake. 'No!' he had commanded. Ziriyab had then pointed. 'See my heart. It is rotting.' Muhidin had shouted, 'Is it a heart you need? Then take mine. It is large. It is enough for you.' And in the dream he had torn out his heart and shoved it into Ziriyab, and did not let go until that heart had started to beat inside Ziriyab's body. 'And you, Father, and you?' Ziriyab had apparently clung to him. Muhidin told Mehdi that he had informed Ziriyab that since he carried his heart now, he would have to live for him, too. (370)

Two days after this dream, Muhidin, in the company of Kitwana the shipbuilder, sets out to the sea, hoping to find and rescue Ziriyab. Unfortunately, Muhidin had answered the djinns in the dream, thinking he was talking to Ziriyab himself. As a result, the day that he and Kitwana go

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to the sea becomes the last time Pate would see either of them. On the other hand, Ziriyab who was about to die (440), gets to live again and reappears in Pate soon after (446–447). So, the djinns took Muhidin's soul in exchange for Ziriyab, but how is Muhidin's death received by Pate islanders? There is a consensus among them that "[w]hoever dies by drowning is a martyr" (453), which means that Muhidin's death was a form of reward – he gets to rescue his son and he himself attains a heroic, respectable status. Following the above discussion about the sea being a graveyard, Muhidin's death at sea can be seen as his being invited to join the world of sea spirits. Having previously expounded on the important role sea spirits play in the lives of the shore folk, Muhidin's being part of their world is perhaps Owuor's technique of rewarding this seafarer for his harmonious relationship with the sea. Also, having noted the divine relationship between water and the human body, and that water creates and sustains human life, Muhidin's death by drowning returns him to the source of life (Boelens 243).

This intimate relationship between water and the human body can be expanded to include the link between water and society at large. I mentioned in the previous chapter how symbiotic the relationship between the sea and littoral communities is; shore folk overly rely on the ocean for survival, and in return, they have a duty to preserve it. This is indicative of the overall relationship between humankind and nature, whereby people depend on nature whilst playing custodian to it (Boelens 241). When it comes to the sea, the term 'hydrosocial' has been used to describe this relationship between society and water, and how the two "make and remake each other" (Linton & Budds 170). The final part of this section looks at how Owuor's novel captures the complexity of this relationship. On one hand is a group of characters, especially the novel's major characters, who put the sea to good uses, who generally enjoy a harmonious relationship with the sea. On the other hand, however, is a totally different kind of people, present in every society, who put the sea to destructive uses. The nature of the uses of the sea affects the balance of nature either negatively or positively, as I discuss below.

At its most basic level, this relationship between water and society revolves around hydrology, which has to do with "the natural occurrence, distribution, and circulation of water on, in, and over the surface of the Earth" (Horton 190). Though hydrology happens independent of human involvement, humans have the ability to alter or disturb this flow (Linton & Budds 171). When human activity disturbs the hydrological cycle and thus upsets the balance of nature, the effects can sometimes be disastrous, in which case something must be done as an intervention.

Humans are therefore responsible for maintaining a balance in the hydrocosmological[57] cycle, for instance through protecting water bodies and using water in the right way and in reasonable quantities[58]. Failure to do so fractures the relationship between the human, natural, and spiritual worlds, and the result is catastrophes like floods and landslides from excessive rains, or drought and famine from lack thereof. There may also occur devastating storms in the sea (Boelens 243). To mend a fractured cycle requires propitiation equivalent to the degree of the damage.

Therefore, people need to put water and water bodies into good use, lest there be a rupture in the cosmological balance, demanding a sacrifice to fix it. In *The Dragonfly* is presented a case of both the use and misuse of the ocean, and to what each choice leads. On one hand, Owuor's key characters like Muhidin, Ayaana, Mehdi, and Lai Jin have a symbiotic relationship with the sea – despite using the ocean for trade, for example through activities like fishing and ship building, they still strive to protect and revere the sea. Their activities leave no carbon footprints in the ocean. The attention they pay to the sea originates from their knowledge of how much they rely on the sea for sustenance. Therefore, to such people, protecting the sea is one way of securing their future; if they destroy the sea, they will not be welcome in it anymore. It is this respectful use of the sea that allows a community like that of Pate islanders to coexist with the sea, to an extent that they are privy to mysteries of the sea, some of which I discussed in the previous chapter. It is this deeply mutual relationship that also allows Pate islanders to own the polysensory experience of the sea discussed earlier.

In opposition to this harmonious relationship with the sea is Owuor's criticism of economic uses of the sea that turn out to be exploitative in nature. More often than not, the sea is reduced to just a means of transport. However, this is not to undermine the role of the sea in transportation, especially considering the long history of sea transport, and the fact that today 90 percent of global trade is transported by sea (Kaplan 19). Yet, the vessels used at sea, especially big ships, remain a threat to a healthy marine environment. For example, there is unrelenting oil spillages from oil tankers onto the ocean, and there is also waste that the crew dumps into the sea, some of the wastes even being radioactive in nature. Both of these cause

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[57] When the relationship between water and society goes deeper as to include the spiritual world, the term 'hydrocosmology' is used. Hydrocosmology supposes that there are certain beliefs surrounding water, water bodies, and their sources.

[58] In the previous chapter, I discussed at length how communities at the Kenyan coast protect the sea as a way of appeasing sea spirits. Sea spirits are powerful and are either malevolent or benevolent depending on how humans treat the sea, which is where the spirits live. Therefore, for coastal people to enjoy the benefits of the ocean, and for them to continue being welcome in the sea, an entity which they depend on, they have to safeguard the ocean.

harm to marine life, and have turned the ocean into "a basin for waste" (DeLoughrey, "Heavy Waters" 707). Also, in port cities, ships remain a major cause of air pollution (Corbett & Fischbeck 823; Popovicheva et al. 2077). The damage is so huge that eight percent of deaths related to particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$), an air pollutant, occur in coastlines, and are caused by ships (Popovicheva et al. 2077).

An example of the misuse of the sea from the novel is the illegal transcontinental trade operated by Lai Jin's MV Qingrui, the ship on which Ayaana voyages to China. MV Qingrui is a cargo ship that operates between Asia (China) and Africa (Kenya). Since the sea moves travellers and their goods from one point to another, they seldom see the sea for anything more than as a vehicle. For example, Shangai Accent, captain Lai Jin's boss, only sees the ocean as a means to operate his illegal trade in African wildlife, whereby he transports wild animals like elephants, lions, leopards, zebras and gazelles from Africa to Asia, disguised as 'scrap metal' (250). It appears that the only interest traders like Shanghai Accent have in events in the sea is tied to their own safety, and that of their cargo, and not in any way related to caring for the sea itself. Using Shanghai's business, Owuor offers a critique of capitalism, whereby entrepreneurs pursue private interests without considering the irreversible destruction their economic activities may be causing the environment (Haraway 161).

It is such selfish and exploitative uses of the sea that upsets sea spirits, who are the guardians of the ocean. The unhappiness of these spirits then ruptures the hydrocosmological balance, and could result in, for example, a storm, which would endanger the ship, its cargo, and all life in it. To prevent this, an offering is made in an attempt to appease the spirits. For instance, just as MV Qingrui sets sail, two giraffes are tossed into the sea, "[a] compromise to water deities. No giraffes, and he would take on the human" (181). Besides praying for safe passage, it is likely that such offerings are also made in the hope for profit in the cargo being transported. Yet, Shanghai Accent's cargo is lost at sea despite the offering that had been made to the water deities. After Lai Jin discovers that Shanghai Accent had tricked him, and that what he was carrying was not scrap metal, but illicit cargo, wildlife, he tosses the containers into the sea in vengeance. He and his crew invent a storm which is supposed to have threatened to capsize the ship, "[forcing] the captain to select containers to dump overboard" (253). Unfortunately, Lai Jin's lie is eventually discovered and gets stiffly punished for it. The unexpected loss of this cargo after an offering had been presented as insurance emphasises the point that human actions determine the benevolence or malevolence of the sea, and that sea spirits cannot be

manipulated. Unlike humans, they are incorruptible and cannot be tricked into allowing misuse of the sea to take place.

Thus, the water deities found in Owuor's novel, and therefore the beings that uphold the hydrocosmological cycle, are djinns. When people appease them, they are blessed with fortune, and on the other hand when they offend them, the sea spirits punish them. Therefore, the sea spirits are a cause of either luck or calamity. When Munira realises that Ayaana has inherited her curse and is being called *Mwana kidonda* ('daughter of the wound') and has also been expelled from madrassa, she is heartbroken, and wishes she could lift her daughter's affliction. Munira feels "she would have surrendered her soul to the first gray-feathered djinn who could teach her how to spare her daughter the turmoil of inherited anguish" (33). Here, a distinction is made between different kinds of djinns – there are good ones, like this grey-feathered one, and there are bad ones, like the one the madrassa teacher feared Ayaana might be, hence his decision to expel her (31). However, seafarers have to be careful even around the good djinns, because when they like someone, they can drown them and take them to the ocean world. For example, as Muhidin recounts his encounters at sea to Ayaana and Munira, he tells them about his experience of "the pleading cry of djinns that had fallen in love with him, their longing to grant him anything, if only he would grant them a glimpse of his face" (89). Therefore, however good the people's relationship with the djinns is, it is best if they keep a safe distance. Of course, there has to be a distance between people and djinns because djinns, and indeed all sea spirits, occupy a higher rank in the hierarchy of beings. Their superiority to humans gives them control over people's fate, and so they must be feared and revered.

5.3. Centring the Marginalised: A map of Pate derived from local experiences of the sea

In the previous section, I highlighted how Owuor blends different forms of indigenous knowledges of the sea and incorporates them in *The Dragonfly*. The novel is able to present the deeply nuanced exchanges that take place between Pate islanders and the sea. The intimate relationship that exists between the two demonstrates the extent to which the sea is central to Pate islanders and to shore folk in general. In this section I look at how this centrality of the sea can further be explored as a tool for revealing Owuor's attempts to restructure Kenya's geopolitics with respect to the Kenyan coast. Whereas the Kenyan coast is arguably the most marginalised region in Kenya (Chome 2014; Lind 2015), Owuor, by placing Pate at the centre of a momentous event in the history of the navigation of the seas, manages to position Pate and

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indeed the Kenyan coast at the centre and not the margins of Kenya's politico-economic discourse. At the same time, I look at how those local knowledges of the sea constitute a threshold of admission, acceptability, and belonging to Pate island, as presented in the novel. Here, I analyse how would-be islanders are expected to embrace and express these indigenous knowledges, lest they be locked out of the island. Finally, I analyse how Owuor draws on some of the links between Kenya and China to criticise the emergence of China as a colonising force in Africa at large.

To begin, I highlight the prevailing geopolitical landscape which shows how the Kenyan coast is marginalised. In particular, I outline how Pate, an island at the Kenyan coast, is actually double marginalised, part of it being explained by its status as an island. As opposed to *main*lands, islands are commonly conceived of as isolated, distant, largely uninhabited, and remote (Crosby 102–103; DeLoughrey, *Routes* 8). Also, reference is made to them as always being 'small' (Baldacchino 39–40; Glissant 8). In terms of significance, therefore, mainlands seem to always take precedence over islands, despite both being landmasses. That islands can be conceived of as synecdoche for the world as they often are shows how islands have been cut off as worlds of their own in the first place.

In *The Dragonfly,* a powerful image of Pate's marginalisation as an island is rendered using two different maps that Muhidin uses to teach Ayaana, who stopped going to school and chose Muhidin, her adoptive father, to be her teacher. This started one morning when Ayana, wearing her school uniform and carrying her schoolbag, appears at Muhidin's door, and tells him, "You teach me school" (41). After a lot of resistance from Muhidin but even more persistence from Ayaana, Muhidin finally agrees to teach her (42), imparting her with knowledge on "basic classical mathematics, geography, history, poetry, astronomy, as mediated in Kiswahili, English, sailor Portuguese, Arabic, old Persian, and some Gujarati" (43). This is a secret that Ayaana keeps from her mother, who does not know that Ayaana spends the whole day at Muhidin's house, and it would be three months before Munira finds out about it and sends Ayaana back to school (51–52). It appears that the knowledge Muhidin imparts Ayaana with is richer than what Ayaana gets at school; when Ayaana returns to school, she tops her class and even emerges the best in the district (110). It is also from these lessons that Ayaana masters the art of reading the sea, her teacher being the most experienced seafarer.

It is during one of their lessons that Muhidin shows Ayaana, on his torn map, Pate's geographical location. In reaction, "Ayaana was transfixed by the spot to which his finger

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pointed. Her thoughts were in turmoil. There was such mystery in the idea that a whole island and all its people could be reduced to a spot on a page" (43). On a separate day, also during their lessons, Ayaana "picked up an atlas to, again, find out where she was in the world. On the map she looked at, there was no place marker for Pate Island. No color brown or color green to suggest her own existence within the sea" (43). Later in the novel, Ayaana is exasperated, "On most maps of the world, my island does not exist" (307). Here are two contrasting representations of place, the first one a large-scale map depicting a smaller portion of the earth, but with more details, and the second a small-scale map showing a fair size of the world, but excluding most details. One could also say that on one hand, a place is reduced to a nodal point, and on the other, a location, perhaps being considered geopolitically insignificant, is erased.

These diverging spatial representations that Owuor alludes to in relation to Pate invoke the role of power in cartographic conventions. Fundamentally, what is represented in a map and which of its features are either highlighted or omitted depend on when the map is being produced, who produces it, for what purpose, and what standpoint the author occupies. Essentially, maps and mapping "reflect different contexts, cultures, times and place" (Perkins 342), and replicate the "territorial imperatives of a particular political system" (Harley 54). This means that the powerful few can and do decide what (and how much of it) is represented. This is certainly illustrated by the historic use of maps as imperial tools – they were used to demarcate previously uncharted spaces, over which a claim was thereafter laid upon (Biggs 385; Dodds 176; Given 2). Maps usually "[serve] a repressive purpose in the subjugation of territory" (Tally Jr. & Battista 7). In other words, mapping was the first step towards colonialism. Thus, power underlies the creation of cartographic tools. It looks like Muhidin's own map, which shows Pate, was designed by or for seafarers, particularly those belonging to the Indian Ocean, or the Swahili Seas to be more specific. On the other hand, the atlas that Ayaana looks at seems to carry a world map, which is why Pate, a small island off the Kenyan coast, has not been captured.

To engineer a cartography of the seas that is based on local knowledges, Owuor sets aside both kinds of maps described above. She is aware that in the creation of maps, dominant cartographic practices often alienate human subjects and their experience, and instead focus on geometric and topographic figures (Tally Jr. & Battista 3). To foreground Pate and its islanders, she drops such maps in favour of musings from people who have an intimate relationship with the sea, as expounded in the previous section. As is clear by now, Haji Gora is at the centre of

Owuor's project, and he does not speak only for himself, but actually represents many other voices from the Swahili seas at large. His musings become useful as tools for charting a cartography that is personalised, intimate, and local-centred, especially since Owuor observes that "Haji Gora Haji's every word, phrase and line are anchored in geography, history, and personal story" (Owuor, "Poem-Maps" 165). Haji Gora's biography, as are the lives of the inhabitants of the coast, is "enfolded in the waves of the ocean" (Owuor, "Poem-Maps" 165), and for as long as people like Haji Gora exist, and for as long as we listen to them, "the places that [their] stories contain will not be lost" (Owuor, "Poem-Maps" 177). It is even more fitting that Haji Gora hails from an island, Tumbatu, which makes his musings more relevant for Pate island in particular. Through Haji Gora, therefore, Owuor allows inhabitants of the Swahili coast to create their own maps of the sea, based on how they experience the spaces they occupy in and around the ocean.

To fully appreciate Owuor's efforts to project the relevance of Pate, it is only fitting that I chart out the other way in which Pate is marginalised, beside its status as an island as described above. This has to do with its being part of the Kenyan coast, a region whose marginalisation is steeped in a long history which I shall summarise here. When Britain declared Kenya its Protectorate and Colony in 1895, the Sultanate which until then ruled the Swahili coast leased the Kenyan coastal strip to the British, through the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC), for about $50, 000 a year (Prestholdt, "Counterterrorism 6", "Politics" 249). However, the Sultan retained titular sovereignty over this coastal strip, and as a result, only the Sultan's subjects (comprising mainly Arabs and Swahili Muslims) were allowed land ownership rights by the colonial government (Kanyinga 52). This means that local people of African descent could not easily own land. Later, in preparation for Kenya's independence in 1963, this coastal strip had to be united with the Kenyan mainland, to form the Kenyan nation. Initially, there was a lot of resistance against this move, for the Arabs and Swahili at the Kenyan coast wanted the coastal strip to be reunited with Zanzibar as opposed to its incorporation into the Kenyan mainland. They preferred that the coast be autonomous so that they would not have to be grouped together with Africans on the coast (the Mijikenda) and immigrants from the hinterland, who they feared would dominate racial and religious minorities at the coast (Brennan 832; Prestholdt "Counterterrorism"6–7, "Politics" 249). This objection may have been premonitory, because soon after independence, beachfront land and properties were transferred from colonial masters to elites and politicians, and not to local people from whom that land was taken.

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Three issues arise from this; first, there was a pre-independence agreement between the British colonial government and both the incoming Kenyan government and the Sultanate, concerning the protection of the land ownership rights given to the Sultan's subjects during colonialism, as stated earlier (Kanyinga 56). The challenge is that nothing was said about coastal people who were 'not the Sultan's subjects'. Second is that resettlement efforts for landless people at the coast allowed for landless people from the hinterland to be allocated land before coastal people themselves were fully resettled (Kanyinga 56–57). Third, politicians and elites (both from upcountry and the coast) were placed second on the socio-economic ladder, that is after the Arabs and Swahili (former Sultan's subject), which meant that local people of African descent were neglected further, and were the last to be allocated land (Kanyinga 56–57). In many respects, therefore, local people of African descent suffered the most. Until today, the Kenyan coastal strip contains the largest concentration of landless local people in the country, who continue to squat in their own land (Berman 125–27). The land question is responsible for much of coastal people's disappointment with the government. This is manifested in voting trends, in which over the years, from 2002 to be precise, the coastal electorate has consistently reduced in size, and has turned to voting against the ruling party (Gona 242). The choice to vote against the government arose because ruling governments continuously failed to resolve the land issue (Gona 252).

As a result of this history, around 2005, *Pwani Si Kenya* (The Coast is Not Kenya), a political movement, arose at the Kenyan coast. Its main agenda was to raise awareness and at the same time to resist the political and economic marginalisation of the coast and its people by the Kenyan government (Chome 2014; Lind 2015; Willis & Chome 2014; Willis & Gona 2012). During the time leading up to the general elections in 2013, calls for secession reverberated at the coast, reminding us of the resistance in the 1960s, in which the coast did not want to form part of Kenya. Some of the organisations which supported these calls, but also those which simply expressed dissatisfaction with the Kenyan government, are the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC), the Coast People's Forum, and the Mijikenda Council of Elders Association (MICOSEA). More specifically, MICOSEA expressed frustration with coastal political leaders who continually failed to address the challenges facing indigenous people at the coast. Though the desire to secede was unsuccessful, *Pwani Si Kenya* sentiments come up from time to time.

Having described the extent to which Pate is marginalised both nationally and globally, I move on to an analysis of how Owuor inverts the history her novel is based on as a way to centre

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Pate not only in the national domain, but also and more importantly, in the Indian Ocean world. By alluding to Zheng He's expeditions, which were a landmark in navigation history (Hui & Xin 207), and by placing Pate at the centre, Owuor mirrors the relevance of Pate to global geopolitics. Through journeys made by some characters in the novel, Owuor invokes the grandiose encounters that the Kenyan coast (Pate) had with the outside world centuries ago. The following is a description of the treasure fleet led by Zheng He as it arrived in Malindi in 1418[59]:

> Alarm spread quickly through the East African town of Malindi. Across the sea, beyond the coral reef, strange storm clouds appeared on the horizon. Fishermen hastily dragged their outriggers to safety on dry land. As the clouds gathered, it suddenly became clear that they were not clouds at all but sails – sails piled upon sails, too numerous to count, on giant ships with large serpent's eyes painted on the bows. Each ship was the size of many houses, and there were dozens of these serpent ships, a city of ships, all moving rapidly across the blue expanse of ocean toward Malindi. When they came near, the colored flags on the masts blocked the sun, and the loud pounding and beating of drums on board shook heaven and earth[60]. A crowd gathered at the harbor, and the king was summoned. Work ceased altogether. What was this menacing power, and what did it want? (Levathes 19)

In *The Dragonfly*, Owuor imagines the stages that would-be islanders have to go through before they become part of Pate, and the procedure sounds much like what is believed to have happened with the 20 Chinese sailors in 1418:

> They were observed as they laughed at well-placed jokes; laughter was a test. […] At some point in his Pate life, this person, now linked to a family and treated as such, would make a public pronouncement of Shahada: *Ash hadu anlla ilaha ilallah*… Afterward, the new islander, giving his life over to the place, would, after taking a purifying bath to shed the skin of the past, adorn himself in a clean white garment and re-emerge, finally, at home. An island bride might be offered to him then. If the betrothal flowered, the visitor would take up a trade to sustain his home, and find himself written into the palimpsest that was Pate. (69)

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[59] Zheng He's expeditions and in connection Chinese success in the navigation of the seas in the early 15th century challenges the perceived dominance of Europeans in the Indian Ocean world. The largest of these ships was 400 feet long (and about 160 feet wide), and compared to Vasco da Gama's only 85–100 feet long ships, a conclusion is made that had the Portuguese collided with the Chinese, the dominance of Europe as we know it today was unlikely to have happened (Levathes 20–21). In fact, it is thought that the Chinese may have rounded the Cape a century before the Portuguese did (Pearson, *Indian Ocean* 114).

[60] Each ship was equipped with one large drum, gongs, one large flag, signal bells, five banners, and ten lanterns for communication with other ships belonging to the fleet (Levathes 83).

In the novel, there are only two people who make this transnational and transoceanic visit to Pate and find a home in it, Kitwana and Lai Jin. It is not a coincidence that both are Chinese, which is why I view this as a re-enactment of Zheng He's arrival at the Kenyan coast 600 years ago. As part of the initiation into belonging to Pate, both Kitwana and Lai Jin get new names – Kitwana was formerly Mchina Nihao[61], while Lai Jin is renamed Nahodha Jamal, a name given to him by Pate fishermen (466). 'Nahodha' is Kiswahili for 'Captain', a title that Lai Jin officially lost when his ship was seized and burned by Shanghai Accent, the Chinese merchant whose cargo Lai Jin dumped in the ocean. His renaming by Pate fishermen cements his belonging to the seas. After getting a new name, Jamal pronounces the Shahada and thus officially converts to Islam, after which he cuts his hair short, takes a purifying bath, and adorns himself in a white garment (475). Islamised, he now belongs to God and Pate, and can marry a Pate woman to complete his assimilation. The novel ends with Jamal and Ayaana's wedding (480–481).

What stands out from the transformation that Kitwana and Lai Jin undergo is how their success is determined by their ability to live up to expectations set by Pate islanders themselves. Therefore, the island does not just assimilate whoever approaches it. Rather, there are certain ways in which different people are evaluated to establish whether they deserve to form part of Pate, or if they should be turned away. Pate, as Owuor paints it, is a community of people who live in harmony with each other[62], and who possess unique local knowledges about the sea, with which they coexist. For outsiders to be admitted to Pate, and in order for them to be granted their desire to belong to the island, they ought to exhibit qualities similar to those of the islanders. What underlies this possibility for Pate to open itself to these visitors is, of course, the nature of islands themselves as open and porous spaces (Stratford 495). Essentially, islands embody openness (Glissant 139), are permeable to travellers (DeLoughrey, *Allegories* 6), and consist of "people that defy territoriality" (Baldacchino 39). As I have mentioned, however, as much as this openness exists, so that knowledges from elsewhere and people from anywhere are allowed in, the visitors have to learn the local code should they want to stay longer, or

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[61] Mchina Nihao was a nickname; Kitwana's own names are not given in the text.

[62] However, underlying this semblance of harmony and hospitality is gender conflict, as Pate imposes tougher conditions on women. Owuor uses Munira to reveal the challenges that female islanders have to endure. For instance, when Munira and her daughter Ayaana first appear on the island, after Munira's two-and-a-half years' disappearance, the islanders receive her coldly. Pate is not ready to accept an unwed mother, and when Munira declines an arranged marriage, her family disowns her and immediately relocates to Zanzibar, abandoning Munira and her daughter (22). Also, Ayaana inherits her mother's faults, for she is soon referred to as *Mwanaharamu*, the cursed child, and *Mwana kidonda,* child of the wound.

permanently. The island, then, exhibits both inclusion as well as exclusion. For this reason, the image of the island is akin to that of the globe, whereby "each isle might be read metonymically as the globe" (DeLoughrey, *Routes* 1). Concerning the figure of the island as world, which carries both the inside(r) and outside(r), and the accepted and the nonaccepted, Steinberg (2013) notes that:

> This representation serves modernity well, as it reproduces the idea that the world consists of, on the one hand, static terrestrial points on the 'inside' that may be settled, developed, and grouped into states and, on the other hand, aqueous points on the 'outside' that, due to the absence of properties that enable settlement and territorialization, may be written off as beyond society. (159–160)

Some of the people who approach Pate in the novel are welcomed, accepted, and assimilated, while others, those who lack the disposition associated with the island, are frowned at, rejected, and eventually sent away. Based on this, the novel presents three kinds of people on Pate island, visitors and locals alike. First, "[t]here were those who, unknown even to themselves, belonged to the island and were covenanted to stay" (68). A good example is Mehdi, Pate's shipbuilder and reader of the sea. Even Muhidin, his closest friend, fails to convince Mehdi to relocate to Pemba. Second, there were those "who left, only to show up again years later" (68). These include Ziriyab who leaves and returns to Pate twice in the novel; Munira who also reappears in the novel twice, the first time with Ayaana and the second time with Abeerah, her daughter with Muhidin; and Muhidin who travels in and out of Pate, until the sea in Pate finally converts him to a martyr. Finally, there are those who "scowled, sulked, scolded, and stipulated that the island transform itself for them. Invariably, the right winds swooped in to sweep these away" (68). These will either be visitors who take advantage of Pate's hospitality or Pate islanders themselves who disrupt the peace on the island.

In the first category (visitors who take advantage of Pate's generosity) are people like Fazul the Egyptian and Wa Mashriq. Both are Muslim terrorists who tried to recruit Pate islanders as Mujahideen, unfortunately, with some level of success. Fazul succeeds in converting seven of Pate's seamen, and also tries to convert Ayaana to a Mujahidat, but fails (69–77). He had taken advantage of Ayaana's loneliness, anguish, desperation, and lovelessness, and had made her believe that if she became God's little martyr, her mother Munira would be freed of her curse and shame (71–73). Muhidin rescues Ayaana by confronting and fighting with Fazul, an altercation that causes Fazul to leave Pate (77). However, it is Wa Mashriq that nearly

succeeded in completing the mission Fazul had started (139–142). He promises Munira 1.5 million shillings in exchange for Ayaana, and Munira even accepts a deposit of seventy-five thousand (133). It is only later, when Wa Mashriq tries to rape Ayaana, that Munira changes her mind, and scalds Wa Mashriq with hot water (141). Muhidin then hires a team of pirates to ensure that Wa Mashriq and Fazul's boats do not approach the East African coastline again (423). In contrast, an example of Pate islanders themselves who the sea sweeps away is Suleiman, Ayaana's constant bully. He does not return from the Emirates where he had gone to study. Rather, he gets lured into the Syrian Islamic Liberation Front (294), and the narrative hints at his death in action (456–457).

From these illustrations, Owuor makes it clear that while all are welcome to Pate island, who gets to stay is determined by the visitors' resolve to abide by the host's code of conduct. It requires for them to cultivate and maintain a good relationship with other islanders and also with the sea. The first two categories of people are welcome on the island because they are able to coexist with the sea. They respect and protect it. They are openhearted. This, however, does not mean that they are immune to wrongdoing, because humans are bound to err. Rather, like Ziriyab, it means that they are willing to make an effort to atone for their sins. The third category of people, by contrast, are unwelcome because they have proven to be selfish and dangerous. They have caused disturbance on the island, and their refusal to share in the norms and values cherished on the island demands that they be eliminated. Thus, the island, depending on how people behave within and around it, will either include or exclude them. At the same time, no matter how much of an islander one might be, they have to consistently uphold the local code, because Pate islanders themselves also risk being kicked out of the island, like Suleiman was, should they rebel, thus being unsuitable members of Pate.

Apart from rekindling ancient links between Kenya and China, *The Dragonfly* offers a critique of the rise of China as a dominating economic power in the 21st century. It laments how, like a swarm, the Chinese are invading Kenya. Ayaana tells Lai Jin that on her flight from Beijing to Nairobi, "there were more of you than there were of us on board" (463). More importantly, the novel hints at the controversy surrounding Chinese investment in Africa at large, whereby there has been fear that China is emerging as a new politico-economic colonising power. Sino-African relations initially held so much promise because they cemented south-south relations, thereby shielding the east from the domineering presence of the west. With time, however, it emerged that this relationship was no different from the one Africa had with the west – it was

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not symbiotic, as only one party, China, benefitted (Tull 471). For instance, by 2017, China was Kenya's largest trading partner, yet, profits go to China, while the Kenyan economy is left on its knees (Okumu & Fee 376). In addition, over time, Chinese small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have found their way into the Kenyan market, and are succeeding in stifling Kenyan SMEs, which are barely running (Gadzala 204). This is as a result of the relatively low prices of Chinese goods when compared to those by Kenyan manufacturers, which are being crowded out of the market (Okumu & Fee 376). Yet, this is not unique to Kenya, as the same is happening in other African countries like Ghana (Hess & Aidoo 140).

The skewed trading relationship between China and Kenya is vividly represented by Shanghai Accent's trade in globally condemned illegal cargo, described in the previous section. Delaksha, one of the passengers in MV Qingrui, is exasperated by this form of exploitation, "You horrible, horrible, greedy little fascists. Murdering everything. Beauty-eating barbarians. […] Original thieves! Is there anything you would not desecrate?" (250–51). On his part, Lai Jin is wounded that he and his crew "had been used. They had been played" (250). That Shanghai Accent had to trick Lai Jin shows the extent of manipulation and extortion with which trade between Kenya and China is carried out. By refusing to cooperate, Lai Jin comes across as one who is interested in fair trade, to the benefit of both parties. However, the capitalist world cannot allow that, which is why Lai Jin is eventually banished from trade, by being sent to prison and by having his ship burned to ashes. By the end of the novel, in fact, Lai Jin had been expelled from China, as he ends up in Pate, where he finds a home with his new wife, Ayaana. This ending could be a pointer that the possibility of a fair trade between China and its trading 'partners' cannot be conceived yet.

China's camouflaged intentions for Kenya and Africa at large are exemplified by the poor quality of infrastructure developed by the Chinese, and the low quality of their products. In the novel, Owuor alludes to China's infrastructural development projects in Kenya, particularly the 485-kilometre standard gauge railway (SGR) connecting Mombasa and Nairobi, a project marred with dishonesty and corruption from both Chinese and Kenyan authorities. This project is spearheaded by the China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) and is arguably the largest single infrastructural project Kenya has undertaken since independence. For this reason, the SGR, which cost Kenya USD 3.6 billion in Chinese loans, is at the centre of the country's external reckless borrowing. Kenya, together with Angola, Ethiopia, Sudan, and DRC, account for more than 50 percent of Chinese loans to Africa (Onjala 715). The problem is that these

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loans are not utilised properly, which is why the SGR and other Chinese-run projects in Kenya have plunged the nation into debt. There have been reported cases in which Kenyan and Chinese officials collude to embezzle part of the funds (Okumu & Fee 376). The role of China in Kenya's bilateral debt is perhaps illustrated by the fact that in 2015, Kenya's debt distress risk was low, in 2018, the IMF raised it to moderate, and in May 2020, it was raised further, and is now high. Over this duration, in 2016 to be specific, China alone was responsible for 57 percent of Kenya's bilateral debt (Onjala 723).

While Kenyan elites, particularly politicians, make it seem like the financial investment China directs to Kenya is unconditional and mutually beneficial, the reality is different. Chinese loans are accompanied by strict terms, and often, recipient countries are mandated to acquire certain goods and services from China (Řehák 110). Also, compared to recipient countries, China emerges as a larger beneficiary of this relationship (Řehák 111). There are other shortcomings, including Chinese attitudes towards workers they employ in the host countries. Often, skilled labour is imported from China, and locals only benefit from casual labouring positions (Okumu & Fee 376). Even in cases where local people are lucky to be recruited to managerial positions, however, they are mostly locked out of decision making processes, and where they are involved, their decisions are sometimes overruled (Kamoche & Siebers 2733). This is not unique to Kenya, but rather applies to most African countries where the Chinese have launched investment projects. In Nigeria, for example, casual labourers working under Chinese firms get paid less than the minimum required wage (Adedeji, Peter & Michael 99).

In Owuor's novel, Ayaana travels from the coast to Nairobi, where she is going to meet Shu Ruolan, her Chinese language and culture teacher. On the way, Ayaana gets a glimpse of the ongoing construction of the SGR, "with moral messages emblazoned on massive signs: 'Today low skills, tomorrow chief engineer'" (423). Having noted that architects and engineers for such projects are sourced from China, and only unskilled labour is required from local people, messages like these are directed towards local people. They are only meant to pacify them by making them believe that if only they serve diligently now, they will be rewarded in future. Of course, there are very slim chances of that ever happening. The reality on the ground is that there is perennial conflict between these casual workers and the Chinese employers, a major cause being the low wages the Chinese pay (Stevens & Newenham-Kahindi 22, 29).

Owuor uses Mama Suleiman to criticise China for its role in the production of counterfeit goods, and Lai Jin for the poor quality of roads constructed by the Chinese in Kenya. After Lai

Jin arrives in Kenya, he uses the bus to traverse some parts of the country. On the road, fellow passengers lament about the quality of the roads constructed by the Chinese. Lai Jin "was embarrassed by the convoluted mess of tarmac, those unfinished edges, the slapdash signs that did not honor his people" (463). Ashamed, Lai Jin lies about his nationality, claiming that he is Japanese and that his country constructs quality roads. On the other hand, Mama Suleiman, on learning that Ayaana is a Chinese descendant, is filled with jealousy and sneers that after all, anything Chinese is cheap, low-grade and counterfeit (157). Mama Suleiman's utterance feeds into common perceptions that most Chinese products are fake. In reality, up to 20 percent of Chinese manufactured goods are counterfeit (Minagawa, Trott & Hoecht 455). Despite negative perceptions attached to these goods, however, they continue to be produced because there is a market for it – counterfeit products accounts for 8 percent of world trade (Yao 116). They are also useful in enhancing collaboration and increasing competitiveness (Minagawa, Trott & Hoecht 456), not to forget that in some cases, consumers are aware of counterfeit products, but still choose to purchase them (Norum & Cuno 28; Tang, Tian & Zaichkowsky 5; Wang & Song 174). Therefore, beside simply criticising China for sustaining counterfeit trade, Owuor also uses this to call attention to China's contribution to world trade.

The three issues I have discussed in this section, that is the centring of the Kenyan coast both in national and global geopolitics, the openness and hospitality of Pate island, and the (re)emergence of China as a dominating force, are all reflected in the style of Owuor's writing. Like her major character Muhidin who has mastered many languages of the seas including Kiswahili, English, Portuguese, Arabic, and Persian, Owuor incorporates phrases and sayings from different traditions into the novel. In particular, Kiswahili, Arabic, and Chinese words and phrases populate the text. Owuor's selection of these languages mirrors the different communities the novel brings together: there are the Swahili of the Lamu Archipelago; the Muslim population who are the majority at the Kenyan coast; and the two groups of Chinese found in the novel, Ayaana's ancestors from 1418 and the arrivals in the 21st century, like Lai Jin and Mzee Kitwana (Mchina Nihao). The coexistence of these languages and their ability to capture and translate the materiality of the sea attests to the openness and hospitality of Pate described above. It shows how different worlds converge in Pate at the Kenyan coast, a region that I have shown as being otherwise double marginalised, and puts Pate in conversation with wider worlds.

5.4. Conclusion

The nature of Owuor's novel, as the present analysis has made clear, places this chapter in contrast to Cuthbert's *The Great Siege* (1970) in chapter two, which is written using sources that brazenly ignore local perspectives. What makes *The Dragonfly* appealing is the effort Owuor makes to foreground the outlook of the shore folk in her construction of the seascape in Pate at the Kenyan coast. She did not only spend time at the coast during the writing of her novel, but she also took time to interview seafarers, and used the information she gathered to shape her characters' lives.

This multi-perspectival nature of *The Dragonfly* has made it possible for aspects of the sea that are only visible and known to people who have an intimate relationship with the ocean to emerge. The first section of this chapter has expounded on some of these aspects, like the central position occupied by the sea in the lives of shore folk, particularly Pate islanders. It was also possible to explore the sensory seascape created by Pate islander's ability to manoeuvre and relate with the sea through the senses. In addition, it was possible to explore hydrocosmological elements of the sea, like the ability of water to carry memory, and the unique relationship between water, the sea, and the human body.

Furthermore, Owuor's reliance on local knowledges of the sea allowed her to imagine an alternative map of Pate island, that which places Pate and the Kenyan coast at the centre. This proved important because, as shown in the second section of this chapter, Pate island is otherwise double marginalised. This section also assessed local knowledges of the sea possessed by Pate islanders as constituting a threshold of admission, acceptability, and belonging to Pate island, whereby would-be islanders are expected to embrace and express these indigenous knowledges, lest they be locked out of the island. The second section concluded with a brief discussion of how some of movements of characters in the novel rekindle Sino-African relations, and how Owuor uses them to critique the (re)emergence of China as a dominating power in Africa at large.

CHAPTER VI: Conclusion

My focus in this study has been to explore how differently local oral sources, which have been ignored, suppressed, and omitted for centuries, imagine the Indian Ocean, its histories, and its experience at the Kenyan coast, in comparison to texts written from foreign perspectives. Having established, in chapter two, that the history of the Kenyan coast was written from a singular Portuguese perspective, I set out to record alternative versions of history that have been suppressed for centuries, and have only survived by being preserved in people's memories and being transmitted orally from one generation to another.

In my analysis of these oral histories, found in chapter three, the foremost question I grappled with is the perceived superiority of literacy over orality, which led to the exclusion, suppression, and in some cases complete erasure of local oral sources and the knowledges they carry. I set the ground for this discussion in chapter two, where I interrogated the role power plays in the creation of history. I used the works of Burckhardt (1943), White (1973), Ricoeur (1994), and Twidle (2019) to illuminate on the role of the historian in emplotting historical events in narrative form. This helped me to establish the power held by historians as well as writers of historical fiction, as they get to select which sources to use and which ones to eliminate; which perspectives to include and which ones to exclude; which histories to tell and which ones to silence; and consequently, which people to focus on and which ones to marginalise. As I illustrated in chapter two using Cuthbert's *The Great Siege of Fort Jesus* and Macgoye's *Rebmann,* the range of sources that historians and writers of historical fiction choose to employ in representing the past also determines whether the history that is produced is unifocal, like Cuthbert's, or multifocal, like Macgoye's.

As Ngugi's *Globalectics* (2012) helped to bring out, the oral histories are drawn from a tradition that is deemed less powerful. Consequently, such versions of history have been silenced for centuries, and some have even been expelled from history altogether. I used these long-neglected and hitherto unrecorded versions of history to reflect on the competing truths that exist for every recorded historical event. By detailing how the oral histories challenged and subverted but also enriched and expanded on what is contained in written history, my aim was to call attention to the need for multiple histories as opposed to singular accounts. The gaps that the oral histories filled in written history, the diverging perspectives they provided, the new facts they revealed, and their ability to narrate history from the perspective of local people at the Kenyan coast, enabled me to argue that narrated histories should be a blend of

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local oral versions of history and written history. I demonstrated the possibility of such an integrated account using the oral history of Shimoni Slave Caves, which is based on a mixture of sources – written history that Jabari the narrator had read in books, and indigenous knowledge he received by word of mouth from his forefathers.

These oral histories also allowed me to criticise the high esteem with which postcolonial nations continue to hold written history, without making an effort to incorporate local perspectives. I did this using the official account narrated in Fort Jesus, which is run by the National Museums of Kenya. I demonstrated how this official account upholds written history as truth, and therefore becomes a tool with which Kenya's government plays custodian to a hegemonic colonial history, as Fanon describes in "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963). Even as I analysed this official version as one that embodies power and represents an attempt to render other versions of history powerless, I noted that this quest is not a complete success, because suppressed cultures always find a way to stay alive in the face of confrontation with powerholders, as illustrated by the local versions of history.

The local oral histories I explored reveal a desire to be expressed and represent a reclamation of power. Following Cabral (1973), these narratives demonstrate resilience; resistance against histories written from singular, foreign perspectives; and the refusal to be erased. For example, the oral history of Fort Jesus given by Mzee Nyembwe has challenged the written official history of Fort Jesus at multiple levels. It has revealed that the Mijikenda were actively involved in the construction of Fort Jesus, something that both written and official history elide. Written and official history assert that the Mijikenda were only casual labourers, but this oral history insists that some of the Mijikenda (the Duruma) were architects and played a central role in the construction of the fort. Most importantly, this oral history dismisses the Portuguese claim to Fort Jesus by uncovering details that point to the existence of Fort Jesus long before the Portuguese arrived. In written and official history, the Portuguese are credited with conquering the Kenyan coast, selecting a spot on which to construct a fortress (Fort Jesus), and with constructing this magnificent fort that has towered over Mombasa since 1593. In the oral history Mzee Nyembwe narrated, however, we find that Fort Jesus did not emerge with the arrival of the Portuguese, but that it was always there, and that its original name was Ngomeni. Ngomeni was a natural occurring cave that the Achinakulo, one of the Digo clans, lived in. This oral history asserts that the Portuguese evicted the Achinakulo from Ngomeni, after which they renovated and renamed it, to Fort Jesus.

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The indigenous knowledges I have explored in this dissertation have also allowed me to capture the epistemic violence towards ways of knowing that have not been accepted as part of dominant knowledge practices. As I have argued with the help of thinkers like Garuba (2013) and Vázquez (2011), the stark binary between science and non-science requires that only that which can be seen and measured can pass as logic, while everything else is suppressed, locked out, and even erased. This, I have shown, is problematic because knowledge is not just the scientific, it also includes the embodied, the intuitive, and the experiential (Nyamnjoh 258). In chapters four and five, I have explored these alternative epistemologies, which would ordinarily remain on the margins of epistemic territories or eventually get erased altogether, because, as Nyamnjoh (2017) avers:

> Endogenous epistemologies in Africa, despite their popularity with ordinary Africans and with elite Africans especially in settings away from the scrutinising prescriptive gaze of their western and westernised counterparts, are mainly dormant or invisible in scholarly circles because they are often ignored, caricatured or misrepresented in the western categories of 'magic', 'witchcraft', 'sorcery', 'superstition', 'primitivism', 'savagery' and 'animism'. (255)

In chapter five, I used Owuor's *The Dragonfly* to challenge this vantage position claimed by or ascribed to scientific knowledge. I used evidence from the novel to illustrate how characters in the novel perceive the sea through multiple senses, those of touch, sight, hearing, and intuition. I discussed how in the novel the sea is given the ability to exchange messages with Pate islanders be it through the sound of the waves, the movement of the winds, the humming of djinns, or even through the appearance of the water, in juxtaposition to nautical science. I was able to map these sensory and intuitive knowledges by using polysensoriality, one of the elements of geocriticism proposed by Westphal (2011), which suggests that the human senses are a critical means through which people perceive their environment. What came out strongly is that the shore folk have developed reliable systems of deciphering the sea independent of science, so that even in the absence of maritime scientific technologies, they are still able to navigate the sea with a great level of familiarity and success. The discussions in that chapter revealed that there are multiple approaches for navigating the sea, and however varied they may be, they are all valid and need not compete.

In my study of the sea in chapter four, I expanded the epistemic territories to include non-scientific forms of knowledge, particularly the embodied, experiential, and intuitive knowledges I have mentioned above. I arrived at these knowledges by placing the experiences and emotions that Kenyan coastal people have about the sea at the centre. This approach

allowed me to imagine a map of the sea that is local, intimate, and personal, one that dominant cartographic techniques would otherwise not capture. As I discussed using the work of Turnbull (2005), dominant mapping practices are usually abstract and incomplete – they do not take into account the worldviews, experiences and feelings that the occupants attach to those places. It is Pearce's (2008) proposition to exploit the potential of art and narrative (both being non-scientific epistemologies) as alternative mapping practices that enabled me to deduce this local and intimate map of the Indian Ocean.

More importantly, with these alternative epistemologies, I was able to move oceanic studies from surface to depth, a much-needed shift proposed by Bystrom and Hofmeyr (2017) and Steinberg and Peters (2015). In so doing, I formulated multiple interconnected dimensions of the sea – the economic, the spiritual, and the ecological. I deduced the economic dimension from the sailor's testimony, which presents the Kenyan coast, particularly Mombasa, as a critical part of the global economic networks in the Indian Ocean world. I then illustrated the spiritual dimension as manifested in the fisherman's testimony, which presents the sea as a live and interactive world animated by sea spirits (djinns and demons) who live in the sea. Finally, I demonstrated the ecological dimension using the oral poems, which show the Digo's (and indeed all shore folk's) deep concern for the conservation of marine ecological environments. I concluded that the Digo protect the ocean because they depend on it for survival, and also because that is where the sea spirits, who they revere, live.

Yet, these embodied, experiential and intuitive knowledges remain outside the epistemic territory. Terms like 'magic' and 'animism', which have been used to describe these suppressed forms of knowledge, raise the question of (un)believability, and immediately present science as believable and non-science as unbelievable. By painting non-scientific paradigms as a world of magic and superstition, such a rich worldview as the one possessed by the Digo, together with its epistemologies, is already 'othered'. Placing it in an alternate position means that the knowledges contained in it are deemed irrelevant to the understanding of phenomena in the 'real' world. Suppressing these alternative forms of knowledge does not just deny them the chance to contribute to the understanding of the environment we live in, but it also means that we neglect the opportunity to expand our knowledge of the universe. By moving away from such singular forms of knowledge, and by embracing multiple knowledge systems, we are invited to live in a more complex and mysterious world than our rational minds might want to countenance.

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ADDENDA

Addendum A: Transcriptions of Recorded Texts (Excerpts) Used in the Dissertation

Chapter III

Mzee Nyembwe

Kwa sababu ni mahali ambapo palikuwa panavutia. Ukienda hapo, wewe mwenyewe utapaheshimu, na utaona raha. Hapo mahali ni pazuri sana.

***

Hapo sasa, kwa sababu ni mambo ya zamani na watu walikuwa hawaandiki, ule mzee aliyenieleza hakuniambia.

***

Mimi mambo mengi nitaandika sasa, nitakuwa nikiambia mtoto wangu aniandikie. Kwa sababu nayajua lakini baadaye inapotea. Na akili nazo zimeenda kuzeeka, mimi niko na miaka sabini na tisa. Sasa unajua akili zinaenda kupungua hapo. Nimeandika hadithi tu lakini hii story story…. Kwa hivyo ni kukumbuka na kukueleza. Mahala ambapo nimesahau mpaka nikumbuke halafu nitajua.

***

Lakini Mreno alikuja na mtu anaitwa Mnyaturu, kutoka Lindi Tanzania huko. Ndio walikuwa ni mafundi walikuja kutengeneza hiyo Ngomeni.

***

Watu walikuwa wanatafuta mahala ambapo hapaingii mnyama wanajificha. Nyumba zilikuwa watu si sana kujenga nyumba. Ni vijibudubudu tu, vijichumba, ndio watu walikuwa wakitafuta mahala kama pango ama nini ndio watu wanaenda kujikinga hapo. Namna hiyo.

***

J: Wakati Mreno alikuja, hawa Wachinakulo walienda wapi?

Mzee: Wakawa wametolewa pale. Wametolewa. Sasa ndio hapo ile Ngomeni ikawa inaanza kufifia kwa sababu wenyewe, vile walikuwa wakiitunza, sasa ikawa inatunzwa na Wareno.

[…]

J: Tukiongelea mila, kuna vile mila za Wadigo zilikuwa zimehusishwa na Ngomeni kabla ya kuwa Fort Jesus? Kuna mila zenu zilikuwa zafanywa pale ambazo mwadhani sasa mmeyapoteza ama vipi?

Mzee: Kusema kweli, mambo mengi yamepotezwa. Sababu vile vitu ambavyo tulikuwa wenyewe tukifanya, sasa kwanza hatuna uwezo wa kwenda pale tena. Sasa imekuwa ni pahali pa watu kutoka mashule wapi wapi utasikia basi leo limekuja limeingia kule. Ndio mara mingi wanaenda pale kwa sababu ni mahala watu wanaenda kujiingiza. Mara unasikia watoto wameanza kupotea kwa maji. Lakini, hawajui kama pale mahala watu wa zamani walikuwa wakiweka paliwekwa na nini. [….] lakini hizi sehemu ambazo zilikuwa za wazee ambapo wenyewe walikuwa wakiishi hapo palikuwa kuna mila zao wenyewe hawataki kuzipoteza.

***

Katika Fort Jesus, hilo kwanza ni jina la kizungu, lakini yaitwa Ngomeni. Na Ngomeni, ni mahali ambapo kulikuwa kunaishi Mdigo ambaye ukoo wake ulikuwa unaitwa Mchinakulo. Hawa ndio watu walikuwa wanaishi hapo, Ngomeni….

***

Mzee: [Wachinakulo] wakawa wametolewa pale. Wametolewa. […]
Wengi walikuja mahali panaitwa Makanyakulo, Ng'ombeni, kuna pahali panaitwa Mvita, Makadara, Mnazi Mmoja, na Majengo Mapya. Wakatawanyika. Kila mmoja akaenda mahala mahala akaishi. Ile Ngomeni ikawa watu hawawezi tena kuitumia. Wenyeji sasa hawakuwa na uwezo wa kwenda pale ndani.

***

[…] walikuwa wanatumia wenyeji, ndio walikuwa wanataka kuwaambia, "Fanyeni hivi, fanyeni hivi."

[…]

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Wenyeji walikwenda pale kama vibarua. Lakini kule kuwa wanajua kutengeneza kitu fulani walikuwa hawajui. Wao kazi yao ilikuwa kutumwa, "Lete kitu fulani, kitu fulani." Lakini Mreno na wale watu wake ndio wanajua tunatengeneza nini.

<p align="center">***</p>

Lakini wakati huo, wakati kama mvua yaja kama hivi, ikionekana imenyesha yapita kiasi, watu wanaenda pale mahala, "Ewe Mwenyezi Mungu, tunakuomba. Hii mvua hapo ilipofika, imefika pahali pabaya ambapo paweza kuharibia watu wako. Ewe Mwenyezi Mungu, twakuomba." Na kweli Mungu alikuwa anasikia unakuta mvua inapungua.

<p align="center">***</p>

Nitakueleza kuhusu *Kaya.* Lakini *Kaya* kwanza haihusiki na mwanamke – hata kuiuliza, kwa sababu ilikuwa ni siri ambayo haitolewi nje.

<p align="center">***</p>

Sababu vile vitu ambavyo tulikuwa wenyewe tukifanya, sasa kwanza hatuna uwezo wa kwenda pale tena.

Jabari

Kwa majina naitwa Jabari, nafurahi kukutana nawe. Karibu Shimoni.

<p align="center">***</p>

Asante kwa kututembelea, uende salama, na ufikapo uelezee rafiki zako waje watutembelee. Asante na karibu sana.

<p align="center">***</p>

J: Na nimeona tu minyororo miwili pale. Mengine yalienda wapi?

Jabari: Kama uliwahi kutembelea Fort Jesus, ukaona zile nyororo na rings, some were picked from here. Walichukua hapa wakafanya kuhifadhi zaidi kule.

<p align="center">***</p>

Tunarudi kwa Kaya kule wazee walikuwa wakija kuomba na kuwacha sadaka kisha tunamaliza.

<p align="center">180</p>

So, hapa, ni pale Kaya. Hapa ni pale Kaya ambapo wazee walikuwa wanakuja kuomba na kuacha sadaka. Kama vile unajua, kila kabila iko na mila na desturi. Kwa mfano, ikiwa hakuna mvua, au kuna maradhi, basi walikuwa wakija. Kama vile unaona hii chupa ndani yake, this is rose water; it is from rose flower ambayo tunaita sharbat rose. Hii ni aina ya sadaka ya wazee pia waliacha.

Chapter IV

Mzee Juma the Sailor

J: Umeniambia kuwa kutoka mwaka wa sabini na tisa (1979), ulifanya kazi katika kampuni ya Mercury ambayo ilikuwa kampuni ya Holland, lakini ilikuwa inafanya kusafiri baharini. Ukawa sailor kwa miaka minne. Niambie zaidi kuhusu hiyo. Ningependa kujua safari zenu zilikuwa vipi, ukienda wapi, ukifanya nini….

Mzee Juma: Huo mwaka wa…nimesema 1979 eeeh…mwisho mwisho hapo, unaona nilikuwa…nilikuwa kama miaka ishirini hivi. Nilikuwa mdogo ndio, lakini nilikuwa na mtoto mmoja. Nilikuwa na bibi na mtoto mmoja. Ilikuwa seventy-nine (1979) nakumbuka hapo. Ilikuwa…ngoja…ilikuwa either November ama December hapo. Ndiyo nikapata hiyo kazi. Kulikuwa kuna *Kenya Seamen's Union*, *Chama cha Mabaharia cha Kenya*. Kiongozi wetu wa *Kenya Seamen's Union* alikuwa Salim Abdalla Mwaruwa, ambaye alikuwa mbunge wa Kisauni. Ndiye alinichagulia nikawa nami naenda kwa *Seamen*.

Tuliondoka hapa na Coast Bus mpaka Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) kule Nairobi. Tuliondoka hapa Mombasa kama saa mbili unusu saa tatu usiku, tukafika Jomo Kenyatta asubuhi. Tulikuwa pale saa kumi na mbili asubuhi. Tukaingia ndege ya saa moja. Tukaondoka na ndege mpaka Johannesburg. Lufthansa.

J: Mnaenda na ndege, na nilikuwa nafikiria mtapitia Bahari la Hindi mteremke.

Mzee Juma: Tunafuata meli kule. Meli iko Cape Town Port. Tukaenda mpaka Johannesburg na Lufthansa ile, Boeing 707. Saa saba tukaingia Johannesburg. Kitu saa kumi tukachukua ndege nyingine, Air South Africa, tukaenda mpaka Cape Town. Kule Cape Town, tulifika pale kitu saa tatu usiku ndio tunaingia kwa meli. Tukaanzia pale sasa. Safari ikaanzia pale, ya baharini. Tulikaa kama wiki mbili pale Cape Town. Ikipakiwa mizigo. Tulipotoka Cape Town, na meli sasa, kwa baharini sasa, tukaja mpaka Durban. Tukachukua mizigo pale. Ile meli yetu ilikuwa general cargo, yaani mizigo tofauti tofauti: vyakula…. Tulipotoka pale Durban – pale

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tulikaa wiki mbili napo – tulipotoka pale tukaja Mozambique. Maputo. Port Nacala, inaitwa Port Nacala pale. Napo pale tukakaa siku tatu. Tukaondoka Port Nacala mpaka Zanzibar, siku kama sita hivi. Six days, usiku na mchana. Tukaja Zanzibar. Tukakaa siku nne pale Zanzibar. Tulipotoka Zanzibar tukaja Dar es Salaam. Dar es Salaam tukakaa siku tano. Tukaja Mombasa. Mombasa tukakaa siku saba. Tukaondoka Mombasa mpaka Dubai. Siku nane kwa maji, usiku na mchana. Tukatoka Dubai tukaenda Abu Dhabi. Tukatoka Abu Dhabi tukaenda Doha, Qatar. Tukakaa Qatar siku nne. Tuna*supply* cargo humo mote. Tulipotoka Qatar tukaenda Bahrain. Tulipotoka Bahrain, tukaenda Jeddah. Ngoja…tukaenda Dammam. Port Dammam, ni Saudi Arabia hiyo. Tulipotoka Dammam tukaenda Kuwait, Port Kuwait. Tulipotoka Kuwait, tukaja Oman. Muscat. Tunashukisha mizigo humu mote. Tulipotoka Oman, tukachukua siku saba tena tukaenda Pakistan. Tulipotoka Pakistan, tukarudi tena Africa. Tukaenda mpaka Comoro. Tulipotoka Comoro, tukaanza tena route, Cape Town sasa. Sasa tukarudia rudia humo.

J: Sasa kutoka Comoros mkaenda Cape Town.

Mzee Juma: Tunachukua mizigo kule Cape Town, tunakuja Durban…sasa tuna*supply* sasa. Tulikuwa tunabeba mizigo tu, hakuna abiria. Yetu ilikuwa ni general cargo. Ya mizigo: vyakula, mavyuma, magari…vitu kama hivyo. Nguo, mafuta, kuku ambao wako kwa refrigerator ambao wamechinjwa, mayai, tunawatoa South Afrika hapo tunawapeleka Uarabuni. Tunachukua nyama, steak yale ya ng'ombe wakubwa wale, inatiwa kwenye refrigerator inapelekwa Uarabuni. Zabibu….

Mvuvi Charo the Fisherman

J: Ningependa uniambie chochote unachojua kuhusu historia ya bahari hili, vile unaielewa, vile uliambiwa, vile unavyoona….

Mvuvi: Bahari hii ni bahari iko, na bahari ni kubwa. Na kama nilivyotanguliza kusema, bahari ni kama nchi. Iko na vitu tofauti tofauti. Iko na vitu vizuri, iko na vitu vya maajabu. Viko vitu vya maajabu ambavyo unaviona.

J: Kama nini?

Mvuvi: Mmmmmhh…viko vitu tofauti tofauti. Kuna...sasa kuna kama hii dunia, hii nchi…iko na wanadamu, iko na watu ambao ni majini – wale si watu ni majini ama mashetani – nchi kavu inapatikana watu kama hao lakini kuwaona ni ngumu.

J: Lakini kule….

Mvuvi: Kule kwa bahari, sisi mafisherman sometimes unaweza kuona kitu cha maajabu lakini tukiona vile huwa tumejua ile kitu si nzuri. Ikikusimamia mbele hiyo ni ishara tele kuwa mbele huwezi enda tena. Kwa hivyo inabidi ugeuke, utoke katika hizo shughuli, kwa sababu umeona kitu si cha kawaida.

J: Kitu kama nini ikisimama mbele yako ndio utageuka?

Mvuvi: Kule unaweza hata ona kitu cha maajabu ambacho hakielezeki. Huwezi kueleza kwa sababu hakina saini ya kusema huyu ni shetani au ni jini. Kwa hivyo ni kitu cha maajabu umekiona lakini huwezi kukitabiri ni kitu aina gani. Kwa hivyo sasa sisi huwa tunaamini kwamba ukiona kitu kama hicho huwa tunasema ni jini. Kwa hivyo sasa, binadamu huwezi kutana na jini, kwa hivyo inabidi unatoka kabisa.

J: Kuna mfano mmoja wa maajabu mkubwa umeona baharini?

Mvuvi: Pale, kusema ukweli, kuna vitu vya maajabu katika bahari ambavyo huwa vinaonekana. Sisi watu wa huku tulio huku baharini huwa tunaviona kila wakati mwezi wa sita, mwezi wa tano saa ingine, mwezi wa saba. Ni vitu, kule kuna yule anaitwa Nondo, nyoka mwingine mkubwa sana ambaye ako na vichwa saba. Huyo huwa yuko mbali sana kule kwa ile bahari. Na wakati ule wa mvua mvua, yule mnyama huwa anainuliwa na Mwenyezi Mungu. Maajabu ya Mungu. Anatolewa kwa bahari, ikiwa amefungwa sigenge. Anavutwa mpaka juu, anakataa anarudi kwa maji…anarudi tena anapandishwa tena juu, anakataa…mpaka anashindwa. Kwa sababu Mungu huwa ametuma malaika wake wamwinue yule mnyama.

J: Wamwinue afanye nini?

Mvuvi: Wanampeleka sehemu nyingine nchi kavu. Huwa anatolewa kule akapelekwa nchi kavu.

J: Lakini anakataa kwenda.

Mvuvi: Wakati anatolewa kule kwa maji, sisi tulio huku nchi kavu tunamwona kwa mbali. Ni kitu unaona lakini hutaona huku juu kabisa; utaona sehemu ya mwili na mkia. Na ikiwa utakuwa basi na kitu kama darubini, utaona hata lile sigenge, alilofungwa nalo kwa mwili. Lakini pale alipofungiwa, kwa vile sisi tuko mbali na huwezi kumwona direct amefungwa

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mahali gani, lakini ile sigenge kwa maajabu ya Mungu utaona kule. Anainuliwa juu kweli, baadaye utaona amepandishwa juu. Sasa kule juu hutaonyeshwa vile vichwa, kwa sababu hayo sasa ni maajabu ambayo yako kule kwa maji.

J: Akishaenda juu anapotelea angani?

Mvuvi: Yule anapakiwa juu kwa mbingu; utaona sasa zile alama zake zote, utaziona kule kwa mawingu. Ikiwa ni mkia utaona mkia, ikiwa ni mwili utaona lakini ile siri ya kule juu huwezi kuiona. Anapakiwa anapelekwa halafu mawingu yanaletwa mengi ndio afichike kule ndani, afunikwe usimwone. Kwa hivyo ni maajabu ambayo inatoka pale kwa maji mpaka mita fulani huko juu. Mawingu nayo huwa yamekaribia ili yamfiche, ili yampeleke sehemu nyingine nchi kavu.

J: Maanake nikija hapa mwezi wa tano, sita, saba naweza nikaona na macho yangu?

Mvuvi: Eeeh. Hiyo mwezi wa tano, wa sita….

J: Huwa ni mara ngapi?

Mvuvi: Mara nyingi. Huwa kukiwa na mvua kwa sababu sisi tuko huku beach, baharini, kukiwa na hizo mambo huwa tunaona. Na wale ambao huwa ni washindani, wale hawataki kuelewa ama hawaamini, wakati kinatokwa hicho kitu huwa tunawaita. Tunawaonyesha. Wanaona. Sasa, huwa nao pia wanashangaa. Kwa sababu wakati ule huwa wanakataa, lakini baadaye ikitokea, tunawaonyesha, wakiona wanashangaa.

J: Nitaacha namba yangu ya simu, ikitokezea na niko karibu, tafadhali utaniambia nije nione.

Mvuvi: Sawa. Nitakuelezea.

<center>***</center>

Mvuvi: Maajabu mengine ni kwamba hii bahari, okay, hakuna mtu ambaye anaweza kulinda hii bahari. Isipokuwa sasa, mwenye kulinda hii bahari, ni yule mwenyewe ameletwa na Mungu ambaye sasa ni maajabu yako pale ndani ya maji. Kama ni majini ni majini, kama ni mashetani ni mashetani, hao ndio wenye kulinda bahari. Na wale sasa, ndio mara nyingi unaweza ogelea pale ndani ya maji, ukiambiwa na mwenzako, "Toka nje", hutaki. Unasema "Sitaki. Bado. Bado." Kumbe, upepo wa yule mtu umekushika na baadaye unaona kule kwa maji ni kama uko nchi kavu. Baadaye unapotea. Unakufa maji.

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Mvuvi: Na ajabu lingine, katika huu ufuo pekee yake, unaweza kukaa katika huu ufuo na ukaona maajabu pekee yako pia, mbali mwingine kuona. Wewe unaweza tembea katika huu ufuo wa bahari. Huu ufuo kuna wenye hii bahari, ambao sasa wenye hii bahari ni majini ama mashetani. Utembee katika huu ufuo. Sasa huu ufuo, ikiwa uko mwanadamu kamili vizuri, sawa utatembea vizuri kwa sababu jini, shetani, wako majini wazuri, wako majini wabaya. Na yuko jini aweza kupiga push ukaanguka ukakufa. Yuko jini mzuri anaweza kukupiga push ambapo push ya jini akikupiga push yake, huwa ni ule upepo wake. Sio yeye mwenyewe direct akugonge, hapana, akikugonga unakufa direct. Coz yeye yuko na upepo wake, ule upepo wake ndio unaweza kukusukuma wewe, ukawa unatembea katika ile ufuo wa bahari, ukisukumwa na ule upepo wake wakati yeye anakuja mbele yako. Wewe unaenda na yeye anakuja mbele yako; wewe humwoni. Lakini yeye anakuona. Kwa vile wewe unaenda straight na ile straight ndio yeye amelenga, wewe unaweza kujipata katika ile straight unaweza kuyumbishwa upelekwe zigzag. Unaweza kupelekwa zigzag, ile zigzag unaweza kufikiria labda wewe umeshikwa na kisunzi. Sasa ile zigzag huwa ni yeye anakuepusha, anakukwepa. Katika kule kukukwepa kwake, ule upepo wake ndio utakupeleka zigzag. Na hautaanguka kwa sababu yeye si mtu mbaya. Na kwa vile wewe humuoni yeye ndio anakuona, sasa utapelekwa zigzag, hali ambayo yeye anakukwepa. Lakini ukitoka hapa una hatua ya mita mia moja, ndio utajipata, "Mbona nilikuwa naenda zizag pale, ilikuwa ni kitu gani?" Pia unaweza kuangalia nyuma, ukaangalia, "Kwani ni kitu gani?" Na ikiwa kuna mtu kando atafikiria, "Kwani yule mtu alikuwa anaenda zigzag ilikuwa ni nini?" Sasa huwa umekutana na ule mtu lakini wewe humuoni. Yeye ndiye amekuona, na kwa vile yeye si mtu mbaya, ako na njia zake, ndio atakupeleka zigzag. Ambapo hiyo zigzag ni vile alikuwa anakukwepa ule upepo wake.

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J: Katika maisha yako ya kuingia baharini, ni nini ambacho umekiona cha maajabu?

Mvuvi: Mimi cha maajabu kabisa kukiona, ambayo kwangu ni maajabu, kitu cha kwanza, ni kama yule Nondo ambaye nimekuelezea – huyo nyoka vichwa saba, kwa maji. Hiyo nishaona na macho yangu.

Kitu ya pili, nishawahi kukutana na huyo jini huyo. Sijui kama ni jini ama shetani. Huyo aliyenipeleka zigzag. Kwa hivyo mimi katika maisha yangu nishawahi kukutana na hicho kitu; sisemi uwongo. Sidanganyi; mimi ni mtu naamini kwamba kuna Mungu – siwezi kusema kitu

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ambayo haijanitokezea, itakuwa mimi ni crazy. Lakini mimi ni mtu niko na akili yangu, na hiyo kitu nimeshaiona. Nimeshaiona kabisa, lakini sikudhurika kwa sababu sikuanguka na nilipishana naye hivi. Na akanipeka zigzag kweli. Hiyo ni kitu imeshanitokezea. Hiyo imenitokezea.

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J: Ni nini umesikia kutoka wenzako kutoka baharini?

Mvuvi: Kwa wenzangu kama wawili, nimeshapata mtu mmoja ambaye analinda huku baharini. Kutoka ule mtu ambaye alikuwa analinda huku baharini, alisema yeye alikuwa anafanya ile kazi yake ya kulinda, na baadaye ni kama alikuwa anataka kuibwa na usingizi, kwa sababu alikuwa analinda lakini baadaye akaibwa na usingizi. Huyo alipigwa makofi. Sababu ya kupigwa makofi ni yeye alikuwa anavuta sigara. Na ile sigara naye ule mtu sijui alikuwa ametoka baharini ama vipi. Sijui hakupendezewa na ile harufu ya sigara ama ni kitu gani. Yeye alisema alishtukia akipigwa makofi. Akiangalia yule mwenye kumpiga makofi hamwoni. Haonekani. Ikabidi atoke siku hiyo aende sehemu ingine kulikuwa kuna mwenzake alikuwa akifanya kazi hiyo ya kulinda, akaenda wakakaa watu wawili.

Halafu mara ya pili nilipatana na mwanamke mmoja. Mwanamke mmoja huyo, yeye alikuwa mara nyingi hukuja beach usiku kujitafutia wavulana wa Kizungu. Sasa anasema siku hiyo alikua sehemu ya pale Beach[63] Restaurant (Diani Beach). Sasa yeye, kabla hajafika ile restaurant, alikutana na mtu, mme Mwafrika. Mtu mwenye ana urefu wake na aya yake nzuri. Alikuwa amevaa suruali fupi. Sasa baada ya kukutana na ule mtu Mwafrika usiku, yule Mwafrika alikuwa akitaka kuingia katika hoteli. Alipomwona yule Mwanamke, yule Mwafrika alisimama, wakakaribiana. Akasalimiana na yule mwanamke. Yule mwanamke akaulizwa, "Unaenda wapi?" Akasema, "Mimi natafuta Wazungu." Akaambiwa, "Wazungu? Hata mimi nimekuja kutalii. Ikiwa unatafuta Mzungu, hata mimi ni Mzungu mweusi. Ikiwa ni pesa unataka, pesa iko." Sasa yule mwanamke, kwa vile haja yake ni mume na pesa, akasema sawa. Wakazungumza wakaelewana. Wakaanza kushikana mikono. Kisha ikabidi wakumbatiane, kuingizana mikono kwa kiuno. Ukiingiza mkono kwa kiuno, unaleta mpaka unashika tumbo. Sasa yeye baada ya kuleta mkono wake katika kuingiza mkono kwa kiuno ndio ashike tumbo vizuri ndio wawe wanatembea wakiongea, alipata yule mume hana tumbo. Hana tumbo.

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[63] Si jina la kweli.

Kushtuka kwake kumwachilia hivi, yule mtu alitoka naye akawa anaelekea stairs ya ile hoteli. Yule mtu akapotea hapo. Kutoka siku hiyo yule mwanamke hajarudi tena kwa beach usiku. Kwa sababu aliona hayo maajabu hayo. Hiyo ni mifano mbili ambayo nimepata kutoka kwa wenzangu.

Ingine ni watchman mwingine alikuwa analinda usiku. Alilala akaamka, akawa ametoka damu ya pua, mdomo…. Hiyo haijulikani, ikawa amekufa. Alikuwa anachunga hapa Diani Beach.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Addendum B: About the Artists/Narrators

Bwana Baraka

Baraka is one of the 28 official tour guides in Fort Jesus. The tour guides in Fort Jesus museum, who also lead official tours of the Old Town, are from different tribes and nationalities. Baraka, like his colleagues, is registered by the Tour Guides Association and is certified by the National Museums and the Society of Tourist Guides in Kenya.

Mzee Nyembwe

Mzee Nyembwe, a Digo, was born in 1939. One day when he was in class two, he sneaked out of school to go and play. He was found out and had to be disciplined. However, he could not stand the beating, and ran away from school, never to see a classroom again. He was a talented footballer, and even after he had dropped out of school, he was sought after to join his former school's football team, and he always led them to victory. Later in life, Mzee Nyembwe became a policeman and worked with the Kenya Forest Services. He has since retired and now lives with his family. Mzee Nyembwe inherited the art of storytelling from his father. Unfortunately, none of Mzee Nyembwe's seventeen children took after him, and he is afraid that everything he knows will be lost.

Ali Hassan Jabari

Born and raised in Shimoni, Jabari is a middle aged Digo man. He is one of the four tour guides at Shimoni Slave Caves. He has been working there for nearly a decade, and he loves his job. This occupation is his source of livelihood; part of the money received from visitors and well-wishers is used to remunerate the staff at Shimoni, which comprises one administrative officer and the four tour guides.

Mzee Juma (the sailor)

Juma is a Digo man in his sixties. In 1979, when he was about twenty years of age, he joined the Kenya Seamen's Union as a sailor. He prematurely retired from his job as a sailor when Mercury, the company the worked for, closed its offices in Kenya in 1984. Juma then formed a musical band, but his singing career did not last long, and he retired to focus on other preoccupations.

Mvuvi Kazungu Charo (the fisherman)

Mvuvi Charo is a middle-aged fisherman in Diani Beach. He is a Digo. He is a small-scale diving fisherman, and is also a shell collector. Most of the fish he catches goes to feeding his family, he rarely catches enough for trade. Most of his income comes from the shells he collects, which he sells to tourists on the beach, where he has set a stall.

Bahati Ngazi

Bahati is a young Digo woman, aged 29 at the time of performance. In 2009, Bahati joined a theatre group. Within two months, she had gotten a scholarship to study Film Production in Kakamega, Western Kenya. She undertook the training in 2010 and graduated a year later. Soon after this, the government, through the Ministry of Sports and the unit for Talent Management and Social Services, awarded Bahati another scholarship to study music, poetry and film at Nation Talent Academy in Nairobi (2011–2013). Bahati emerged as one of the best in the Academy – out of a thousand students who had enrolled for the course, Bahati was among the only eighteen to graduate. Many had dropped out along the way. The Permanent Presidential Music Commission (PPMC) then identified Bahati and recruited her together with a band she belonged to. They performed during presidential events. During one of her performances at PPMC, someone noticed her talent, and helped her to get a job with Radio Kaya, where she has been a presenter since 2015. Bahati is now a permanent staff at Radio Kaya, where she runs a poetry programme.

Addendum C: Consent Form

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CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH *(IDHINI YA KUJUMUISHWA KATIKA UTAFITI)*

Dear …………………………………………………….. (Name of artist/*Jina la msanii*)

My name is Jauquelyne Kosgei, a PhD student at Stellenbosch University. I would like to invite you to participate in a research project entitled **Imaginaries of Oceanic Histories in Oral and Written Texts from the Kenyan Coast.** *(Jina langu ni Jauquelyne Kosgei, mwanafunzi wa uzamifu katika Chuo Kikuu cha Stellenbosch. Nakuomba ujumuike nami katika utafiti unaoitwa **Mawazo ya Historia za Bahari ya Hindi katika Fasihi Simulizi na Andishi kutoka Pwani ya Kenya.**)*

Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project and contact me if you require further explanation or clarification on any aspect of the study. *(Tafadhali chukua wakati wako kupitia maelezo yafuatayo, yanayohusika na utafiti huu. Ukihitaji maelezo yoyote, tafadhali wasiliana nami tujadiliane zaidi.)*

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are an oral literature artist from the communities at the Kenyan coast. *(Umejumuishwa katika utafiti huu kwa kuwa wewe ni msanii kutoka jamii za hapa pwani ya Kenya.)*

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any stage or not answer a question posed but still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw your participation in this study should anything happen to warrant it so. *(Kujumuishwa kwa utafiti huu ni kwa hiari yako mwenyewe, na waweza kujitoa wakati wowote ama ukose kutoa jibu fulani na bado uwe na nafasi yako katika utafiti huu. Mtafiti anaweza kukuondoa kutoka utafiti huu iwapo lolote litatokezea litakaloidhinisha vile.)*

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You have the choice of using your real or stage names, or you can choose to be anonymous. *(Waweza kutumia majina yako kamili ama ya jukwaa, au waweza kosa kujitambulisha kwa jina lolote lile.)*

You will be required to narrate oral narratives from your community. The researcher will record the performance in audio/visual forms, and transcribed texts and photos will be published in a research report, while the recordings will be stored in a secured computer. Where you choose to be anonymous, no photos will be taken. *(Utahitajika kusimulia hadithi kutoka jamii yako. Mtafiti atazirekodi kwa kunasa sauti na kuchukua picha, kisha baadaye kuyachapisha katika matokeo ya mradi huu. Kanda zenyewe zitawekwa salama katika kompyuta. Endapo utataka kutojulikana, picha zozote hazitachukuliwa.)*

You agree that: *(Unakubali kuwa:)*

1. The transcripts, audios and the picture(s) given by you on the following dates _____ should be made available by *Stellenbosch University* to members and researchers. *(Nakala, rekodi na picha utakazotoa tarehe_____ yataidhinishwa kwa watafiti kupitia Chuo Kikuu cha Stellenbosch.)*

2. Stellenbosch University may publish or cause to be published all or part of the interview, pictures and audios. *(Chuo kikuu cha Stellenbosch chaweza kuchapisha pande au jumla ya hizi nakala, rekodi na picha.)*

3. The information should only be used to further the cause of scholarship in oral literature. *(Maelezo hayatatumika ila kwa kuendeleza utafiti katika fasihi simulizi.)*

Please indicate if you agree to the possibility of your performance being archived as part of your community's cultural heritage in the future. *(Tafadhali weka alama ikiwa ungependa utenzi wako kuwekwa katika kumbukumbu ya tamaduni ya jamii yako katika siku zijazo.)*

☐ Yes*/Ndio*　　　　☐ No*/La*

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact *(Ukiwa na maswali yoyote kuhusiana na utafiti huu, tafadhali wasiliana na):*

Prof. Tina Steiner or *(ama)* Dr. Uhuru Phalafala (Supervisors/*Waalimu*), Department of English Studies, University of Stellenbosch E-Mail: tsteiner@sun.ac.za, uphalafala@sun.ac.za; or myself *(ama mimi mwenyewe)* **22454020@sun.ac.za**

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT: *(HAKI YA MHUSIKA)*

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact: *(Waweza kukatiza idhini yako au kuamua kutojumuika katika utafiti huu wakati wowote bila adhabu yoyote ile. Kujumuika kwako katika utafiti huu haigeuki sheria katika njia yoyote. Ukiwa na maswali au wasiwasi wowote kuhusiana na utafiti huu, tafadhali wasiliana na):*

Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

You have the right to receive a copy of the Information and Consent form. *(Una haki ya kupewa nakala ya fomu hii ya idhini.)*

Please indicate if you would like to retain a copy of this consent form *(Tafadhali weka alama ikiwa ungependa kubaki na nakala ya hii fomu)* ☐   Yes*/Ndio* ☐ No*/La*

DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT

By signing below, I *(Kwa kuweka sahihi, mimi)* ………………………………….…………
agree to take part in a research study entitled *(nimekubali kujumuika katika utafiti unaoitwa)*
………..………………………………………………...
.... conducted by *(ambao unafanywa na)*
……………………………………………………… (Name of Researcher/ *jina la mtafiti*)

I declare that: *(Naapa kuwa):*

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- I have read the attached information leaflet and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable. *(Nimesoma maelezo yote, na kwa lugha ninayoelewa.)*

- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been adequately answered. *(Niwekuwa na nafasi ya kuuliza maswali yangu yote, na yamejibiwa kwa ufasaha)*

- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part in it. *(Najua kuwa kujumuika katika utafiti huu ni kwa hiari yangu na **sijalazimishwa**.)*

- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way. *(Ninaweza amua kujitoa kwenye utafiti huu bila hofu wala adhabu yoyote.)*

- I may be asked to leave the study before it is finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan as agreed to. *(Mtafiti anaweza kunitoa kwenye utafiti huu iwapo kufanya hivyo itakuwa kwa manufaa yangu, ama pale nitakapo kosa kufuata maagizo yaliyotolewa.)*

- All issues related to privacy and the confidentiality and use of the information I provide have been explained to my satisfaction. *(Nimeridhishwa na maelezo ya jinsi ujumbe wowote nitakaotoa utatumika.)*

_____   _____

Signature of participant *(Sahihi ya mhusika/msanii)*   **Date** *(Tarehe)*

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to *(Naapa kuwa nilipeana maelezo kamili kuhusiana na utafiti kwa)* _____
[name of the participant*/ jina la mhusika/msanii].* He/she was encouraged and given ample

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time to ask me any questions. *(Alihimizwa kuuliza maswali yake yote, ambayo niliyajibu.)* This conversation was conducted in *(Mjadala huu uliendelezwa kwa lugha ya)* _____ [English, Kiswahili] and no translator was used *(na hakukuwa na hitaji ya tafsiri]*

_____   _____

Signature of Investigator   **Date**

Addendum D: Interview Schedule

Biographical data:
Name_____
Age_____
Gender_____
Level of education_____
Place of performance (artist's home, public school, social hall e.t.c.) _____
Contact details (optional)_____

Some questions of the questions I used:
1. How long have you been an oral literature artist?
2. How did you learn the art of performance?
3. How did you acquire the narratives/oral poetry/oral history you perform?
4. What would you say is unique about Kenyan coastal communities when compared to the rest of Kenya?
5. What are some of the oral histories that form part of the oral tradition of the Mijikenda?
6. How does the Indian Ocean shape the worldview of the Digo? What is the relationship between the Digo and the sea?
7. What are the some of the experiences you have of the sea that you find interesting and would like to share?
8. How is the Indian Ocean expressed in the oral literature of communities of the Kenyan coast? How is the Indian Ocean imagined in Swahili oral poetry?