Erik Gilbert. *Dhows and the Colonial Economy of Zanzibar, 1860–1970.* Athens: Ohio University Press/ Oxford: James Currey/ Zanzibar: Gallery Publications, 2004. xiii + 176 pp. Photographs. Maps. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. $26.95. Paper.

In *Dhows and the Colonial Economy of Zanzibar, 1860–1970,* Erik Gilbert offers a thorough examination of the dhow trade and its relation to the colonial economy in Zanzibar. The work emphasizes the importance of the dhow—a wooden sailing vessel of Arabian origin—in shaping the history of various locales within its Indian Ocean trade domain, most notably Zanzibar. Basing his work on both archival research and interviews, Gilbert traces the survival of the dhow as a central element of the Zanzibari economy over a ninety-year period, from its peak in the islands' colonial heyday until the period following the Zanzibar Revolution of 1964, during which the long-established dhow trade was neglected in favor of rapid modernization. In contrast to prior historians who have regarded dhows as little more than relics of a bygone era, Gilbert presents evidence confirming that they have indeed remained the lifeblood of Zanzibar's economy from the colonial period until recent times.

Gilbert begins his study c.1860, by which time the dhow trade had long been a staple of Zanzibari life. He chronicles the dhow's prominence in the parallel development of the formal and informal economies under the colonial administration of Zanzibar, first as a sultanate of the Omani Arabs, followed by the establishment of the British Protectorate in 1890. Dhows destined for distant markets in Arabia and farther abroad carried slaves, cloves, ivory, and mangrove poles until 1897, when the British abolished the slave trade in Zanzibar. Thereafter, cloves and mangrove poles continued to be the dhow's primary exports, as they remain today. In exchange, dhows returning from foreign ports brought essential goods to Zanzibar, such as cloth and rice from India; coffee, dates, and dried fish from Arabia; and hides from Somalia.

Gilbert explains the surprising resilience and longevity of the dhow trade in the face of British attempts to encourage modernization. Around the turn of the century, a conflict emerged between the official colonial economy and the growing informal economy. Gilbert characterizes this conflict in terms of a struggle between the colonial administration's *dirigiste* policies and the free-market tendencies of the informal economy. Despite the colonial state's attempts to modernize the economy through the increased adoption of steamers for shipping purposes, the informal dhow economy survived, and its indigenous entrepreneurial elements prospered, in essence "subverting the colonial state in a way no other element of Zanzibari society could" (19). Portraying the dhow as the hero of this struggle, Gilbert convincingly demonstrates the triumph of the traditional ship over the steamer. Finally, Gilbert ties the shifting tides of economic prosperity in Zanzibar to the cyclical rise and fall of the dhow trade, putting forth as evidence the somewhat tenuous argument that the relative neglect of the

dhow trade in favor of still more attempts at modernization after the 1964 Revolution contributed significantly to the failure of the islands' economy in the 1970s.

An interesting side note: Perhaps Gilbert's most important point, though somewhat secondary to his subject matter, is his treatment of Zanzibar as part of a distinct region: the Indian Ocean rim, or the "dhow countries." He offers a very persuasive argument in favor of this classification, citing the multiple linkages and common bonds shared by the dhow countries, which are all linked by the region's historic monsoon-driven dhow trade. At the same time, Gilbert documents the dhow's far-reaching influence on Zanzibari culture, from its language and religion to its customs, food, and multi-ethnic population. Indeed, these influences abound even today, presenting themselves almost as obviously as the constant sight of dhows floating on the ocean around Zanzibar Town and the dhow-builders hard at work on the adjacent beaches.

Dhows and the Colonial Economy of Zanzibar offers a unique perspective on the dhow trade and its effects on the economy and culture of Zanzibar. It is written in a somewhat conversational or anecdotal style that makes for easy reading, although the tone may be too informal for some tastes. The chapters seem to skip around chronologically, which may be disorienting to readers; similarly, it is not entirely clear why Gilbert demarcated the time frame as he did (1860–1970), as important forces were in play beyond these temporal parameters. Otherwise, the book is well organized with convenient in-text subject headings. There are a number of rather inconsequential errors (e.g., misspelled words; incorrect place-names on maps), but overall Gilbert's documentation is good, and he has clearly made excellent use of the Zanzibar Archives among a host of other resources that are listed in his extensive bibliography. The book includes rare photos, explanatory maps, and a helpful glossary. While accessible to anyone interested in the subject, Gilbert's book is of special interest to historians dealing with Zanzibar in particular or the Indian Ocean rim, the monsoon trade routes, or maritime history in general.

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P. F. de Moraes Farias. *Arabic Medieval Inscriptions from the Republic of Mali: Epigraphy, Chronicles and Songhay-Tuareg History.* New York: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2003. 616 pp. Illustrations. Tables. Maps and site plans. Appendix. Index. $185.00. Cloth.

Paolo de Moraes Farias has provided an extraordinary resource for understanding "medieval" West African history. With a concentration on the epigraphy, or inscriptions, from a small area around Gao in eastern Mali

https://doi.org/10.1353/arw.2005.0050 Published online by Cambridge University Press