Tanganyikans viewed the events of January 1964 will have to look elsewhere. Nevertheless, this book makes a useful contribution to historical debates about the causes of the mutinies. The authors demonstrate conclusively that the mutinies caught British diplomatic and military personnel by surprise, and their detailed behind-the-scenes account of the operations to disarm the rebellious askaris effectively rebuts accusations that the British government had opportunistically provoked the revolts. Moreover, they do a good job of disproving the *Daily Telegraph*'s libelous accusation that Oscar Kambona, the Tanganyikan Defense Minister, had instigated the mutiny as an agent of communist China. They also provide useful firsthand perspectives from the men who were on the spot at the end of empire, and they have been able to get many key British participants in the operations to speak candidly. Most of this material is not currently available in published form. Finally, *The Dar Mutiny of 1964* provides an interesting inside look into the planning and execution of the often unnoticed small-scale, highly improvisational, military operations that accompanied African independence.

Washington University in St. Louis TIMOTHY PARSONS

DICHOTOMIES AMONG THE SWAHILI

doi:10.1017/S0021853707003234

The Global Worlds of the Swahili: Interfaces of Islam, Identity and Space in 19th- and 20th-Century East Africa. Edited by ROMAN LOIMEIER and RÜDIGER SEESEMANN. Münster: LIT, 2006. Pp. x+409. €34.90, paperback (ISBN 3-8258-9769-9).

KEY WORDS: East Africa, culture/cultural, local history, identity, Islam.

The volume under review marks one fruitful result of a nearly five-year-long *Forschungskolleg* formed at the University of Bayreuth to examine Islamic education in East Africa. Between 2000 and 2005, this research collective supported workshops on Islam and popular culture, the East African coast and globalization, innovation and contextualization in Islamic Africa, and finally the eponymous 'Global Worlds of the Swahili'. Each essay in this volume originated as either a paper from one of these workshops, an invited lecture at Bayreuth, or an invited submission; consequently the thematic and geographic diversity among them is considerable. In their introduction, the editors frame the seventeen following chapters as a pluralist and geographically expansive vision of multiple Swahili worlds that collectively revises John Middleton's synthetic study, *The World of the Swahili*. The editors criticize Middleton for pursuing an 'essentialist' dichotomy between a universal Islamic *dini* (religion) and a local African *mila* (custom) that together structure Swahili culture. They counter that the Swahili are better understood within a pluralistic framework of constant enlargement and fragmentation, where *dini* and *mila* merely describe a continuum of local debates that constantly redefine the meaning of each concept. Their 'anti-essentialist' critique calls for a more polycentric approach that limits the interpretive significance of *dini*/*mila* and other binary oppositions to, at most, 'emic' features of ever-changing local contexts. This has an undoubted corrective value, put on full display in Seesemann's devastating chapter on the sloppy binary categorization of an austere, Arab-centred 'Islam in Africa' and a more tolerant 'African Islam' that collapses upon closer scrutiny of the Kenyan coast. But the editors overreach when they

anonymously indict others for remaining 'glued to dichotomous representations of Swahili culture' (pp. 10–11), a rather hollow charge in light of the editors' reluctance to introduce any compensating or alternative analytical categories.

The best chapters demonstrate the value of working with, rather than against, heuristic dichotomies to gain some analytical purchase over the complexities of coastal life. David Parkin's superlative essay on commercial art in Zanzibar since the 1990s tentatively divides the island's artistic scene into two camps – the island-born 'realists' who largely observe Islamic prohibitions against human portrayal; and the non-Muslim, mainlander 'humourists' who happily portray humans within artistic traditions that celebrate fertility. Through biographies of notable artists, Parkin demonstrates that consequent market niches reflect each groups' social aspirations and political anxieties. The three-dimensional work of 'realists' fills the high-end market and gives voice to islanders' discomfort with the perceived moral decay that accompanies mass tourism and mainlander immigration, while the two-dimensional 'humourist' art fills the mass tourist market but shows greater creativity, given the artists' blithe disregard for local mores. Parkin is also careful to show how these 'camps' are not predetermined by geography, status or politics, but are contingent categories that can shift at any time, for 'art has its own logical patterns of difference and contrast' that can express social or political interests (p. 109). The same global forces that commodify African crafts and impose a homogenized Western sense of aesthetics also paradoxically promote expressions of separateness, which motivate Zanzibar's 'realists' to observe Islamic conventions regulating the relationship between artist and object, despite economic enticements to do otherwise.

As space constraints prevent a review of each chapter, most can be grouped as either studies of coastal Islamic ritual or genealogies of coastal *ulama*. Kai Kresse traces contemporary debates over *maulid*, the main public Islamic ritual in Swahili society, through a history of Islamic reform along the Kenyan coast. The form of modern *maulid*, traceable to the late nineteenth-century reforms of Habib Salih in Lamu, which widened local participation beyond the *ashraf* town elite, met criticism from local sheikhs influenced by Salafi teachings who sought to cleanse such local practices of their un-Islamic innovations or *bidaa*, such as the beating of drums, or, more radically, to eliminate the festival entirely. With such a critique made ascendant by the spoils of Gulf oil money, the impulse for reform has now turned to heterogeneous intellectuals such as Shia convert Abdilahi Nassir, who defends *maulid* on both local and universal principles. Kresse demonstrates here what he terms the 'internal dialectic of reform' (p. 217), where reformers begin in a critical and liberating spirit only to become dogmatic as social power is gained. Hanni Nuotio's study of *maulid* in the northern villages of Zanzibar shows that unmarried women perform a tambourine dance while married women participate less intensely – thus standing in the middle of a coastal spectrum bounded by a more liberal south, where all women participate fully in the Comoros, and a more conservative north of Lamu, where women dance only in segregated areas. These and other chapters on this topic show both that public ritual constitutes an enduring part of Swahili culture, and that one can map the historical contours of Islamic power on the coast by tracing contestations over the reform of public ritual.

Nearly half of the volume's chapters concern the history of the *ulama* on the East African coast and in the Comoros. Roman Loimeier shows how the colonial and postcolonial state harnessed the censorious opinions of *ulama* to control popular culture in Zanzibar. Whereas the British cooperated closely with local *ulama*, the revolution purged this group and forced Karume to import a new *ulama*, many of whom were trained in Salafi traditions and would later forge a radical critique of

the Zanzibar government. The remaining chapters on *ulama* employ a method of elite biography, characterized by the tracing of far-flung *silsilas*, the awarding of *ijazas* and the winning of bureaucratic appointments that collectively portray a genealogy of local Islamic authority. They show *ulama* gaining influence either through mastery of *sharia* and subsequent political appointment, or through the pioneering of Sufi brotherhoods, with several managing to do both. This unremitting genealogical focus – while making several fresh contributions about the transmission of Islamic knowledge and practice along the coast – marks a retreat from thorny questions of social structure set out by anthropologists such as John Middleton and subsequent social historians, and runs the risk of simply reproducing the *ulama*'s vision of coastal history.

Inevitably such a large collection of essays sprawls unevenly in quality as well as in topic and theme. But, on the whole, *The Global Worlds of the Swahili* demonstrates the vitality of current academic interest in the role of Islam in colonial and postcolonial Swahili societies, a subject about which we know relatively little given the prioritizing demands of colony and nation-state frameworks in East Africa. It also reflects the resilient nature of contemporary coastal Islam, which has an underestimated regional significance and will continue to be the prime factor in debates over the meaning of Swahili culture.

School of Oriental and African Studies JAMES R. BRENNAN