The Life History of Mishi wa Abdala, A Swahili *Kungwi* from Mombasa, Kenya

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Mishi wa Abdala, who was born between 1900 and 1905, is in many ways a typical member of the Swahili community of Mombasa. Her grandparents were slaves brought from Mozambique. As freed slaves the family became Christians at the Freretown Mission on the mainland near Mombasa Island. Nonetheless, Ma Mishi was raised as a Muslim and grew up to be a leader in one of the groups of *makungwi* (s., *kungwi),* women who conduct life cycle rituals, found in Mombasa and elsewhere in east Africa.

Ma Mishi's description of the *makungwi's* rituals and their origins reveals the eclecticism of Swahili culture. Brought by slaves to Mombasa from elsewhere in east and central Africa, these rites continue today as a subculture within Swahili society. Until recently, the slave origins of the *makungwi's* rituals made them unpopular with freeborn descendants in Mombasa. Another woman, the daughter of a slave concubine and freeborn man from Mombasa who was raised with the values of freeborn people, saw nothing of value in the *makungwi's* activities. Her comments reflect a typical freeborn view:

> Initially here, a daughter like us who is the child of a respectable family, who is known to be freeborn, didn't go to the *makungwi*..... Not at all, what shame to go and have a cloth wrapped around her hips to dance, to be scratched with thorns ... Who would want her child to go, except those (slaves) among themselves?[1]

In her view, only a few slaves retained the customs of their ancestors. Most, especially those living in Mombasa Town itself, adopted the freeborn way of initiating girls, that is by private instruction within the family. But to Ma Mishi, the rituals represent a source of pride, the instilling of proper values, not the meaningless cruelty assumed by outsiders. She notes that while some slaves and their descendants absorbed the values and customs of freeborn Swahili people, others chose to continue the practices of their ancestors.

These rites have changed, however, in being transported from the horticultural, often matrilineal societies in which they were practiced by slaves who were brought to Mombasa. The present rites include elements of Islamic ritual. Moreover, recently the magical aspects of their assumed efficacy--the transformation of the young girl into a woman--have receded, and the function of display seems to have taken precedence. Concommitantly, puberty rituals are a less important part of the *makungwi's* life cycle rituals these days than are wedding dances, with which they experiment and innovate, as Ma Mishi indicates.[2]

In addition to revealing the mixed social origins of Swahili culture, Ma Mishi's account reflects the patriachal emphasis as well. Her rendition of the

origins of the *makungwi's* knowledge, i.e. that the founder Nyakanga learned these secrets from a man Ngariba, assigns a place of primacy to a man in these female rituals. And, she is clear to state the hierarchy of relations; Ngariba, then Nyakanga, then the child who is initiated. (The three are identified as Makua, Ngindo, and Yao, reflecting the diverse groups from whom slaves were taken).

Despite the patriarchal bias in this account, women themselves form the core of the rituals and are the practioners, in a society in which women generally do not hold political or religious office, these roles are important sources of authority and power for women. Pat Caplan has noted [3] the difference between *mila* (custom) and *sheria* (Muslim law) in Swahili society. To the extent that *sheria* prevails women are excluded; in the realm of *mila* one finds more women active and in positions of real power. Thus it is not surprising to find women exhibiting leadership and participating in significant numbers in the *makungwi's* rituals.

In examining Ma Mishi's individual life, it is important to note how representative she is of Swahili women generally. In Mombasa and on the coast generally women marry more than once. Not uncommonly the first husband is selected by the parents; subsequent marriages are more likely to be initiated by the couple themselves. (Marriages are still arranged by the parental generation, although this is much less common than in Ma Mishi's childhood.) Similarly, low fertility is not uncommon along the coast, and fostering of children who are not biologically one's own is frequent.[4]

Though not the predominant mode, Ma Mishi's residence in a houshold of women is common in Mombasa. The 1969 census showed 10,703 female heads of household, out of a total of 66,815 (16 percent).[5] These 10,703 female heads of households compare with 29,265 wives of heads of households, thus there are over one-third as many female heads of household as, wives of male heads. (No husbands are recorded as living with female heads of household, since men by census definition head the household.) Eighty-five percent of the parents whose child is listed as head of household are mothers, reflecting the greater dependence of women on family members and the responsibility to care for one's mother. Fathers are more likely to be heads of household themselves, presumably, or perhaps the numbers reflect greater longevity on the part of women. These figures, though recent, include the whole of Mombasa, not the Swahili community alone.

The text of Ma Mishi's life conveys something of her warmth and kindness. She has *imani,* the compassion that she finds has disappeared in interactions and relationships between people. As just one example, she raised a boy who was the son of a prostitute by some European customer. The woman asked Ma Mishi to care for him, leaving a few shillings for the first few months. She then disappeared, and Ma Mishi raised him as her own. Being both a mixed European-African child and illegitimate, the boy would have been socially stigmatized.

In the mid 1970s when these interviews were done, Ma Mishi was a vital leader in the *makungwi's* group. By 1983 when Sarah Mirza visited her to reaffirm her consent for publishing the texts as presently edited, she had aged

considerably and spent her days and nights in an unlighted room. Unfortunately, she had lost some of her mental agility, hence we were unable to enlarge her descriptions of the initiation rites. (When the interviews were first done, Margaret Strobel wished to preserve the secrecy of the rituals and did not record the rituals or Ma Mishi's discussion of their meaning. By 1983 Ma Mishi said that none of this was secret any more, and she wished to have the songs preserved.)

MISHI WA ABDALA

Chapter One: My Family

My Parents

I was born here in Mombasa in Kisauni. My mother was called Fatuma. Here name was Metatu, Tatu's mother. Her eldest child, who was sickly, was named Tatu. Her special name was Nancy. She was a Christian before we were born. One sibling was named Liza, one Grace, one Edith, but all her siblings died. Only my mother remained of the four girls and of three boys named Iliki, John, and Willy. Other people don't understand the name Nancy, they called her Nemsi[7]. She too was born in Kisauni. Her mother came here as a young girl, then Nancy's father married her. When they came here they were Muslims. They were captives in war, they were stolen by the Arabs. When they arrived here the leader of the church said, "They are mine," and he took Nancy[8] That's when they became Christians--the church they built there in Freretown. They came from Mozambique; they are Makua. Nancy's grandfather came from there too, he and her father and mother-- all three of them were Makua. Their home was Mozambique, where the people just gained independence. They were married there, then Nancy's mother was brought here. My maternal grandfather was named Sudi, a name from Mozambique. Nancy's paternal grandmother was Fatuma; and her maternal grandmother was named Saada. Then they came here and were baptized; they studied and were baptized by Bwana Shepherd. Nancy was the oldest.

Our father was a Zanzibari. A Christian like the others, he was named Albert. Then he and my mother converted, they were married, and we were born. He was then called Abdala, and mama, Fatuma. She sinned by having a baby by our father without being married, so she was kicked out of the church. They thought it was better to come here to live.

They lived there and found work with some Swahilis, Arabs from here who converted them. They found work with the Arabs, built big houses, and started farming. So they stayed there at Kongowea, not far from here[9]. Then they had children. Aisha was born, and Tatu. (Tatu's real name was Salma but she was called Tatu--Three--because she was born on Monday--the third day). Another, Thula, was born, and Mbaya, then we were born, our brothers Sudi, Buki, Omari. My mother had many children. Others married and had children. Sudi and Tatu and Aisha were older than me; Aisha was the first born. Then Abdala divorced her. She had no trouble giving birth, she had many children. We did not have children like she did. She had children both by our father and by the other man Ramadhani--those children are much younger than us.

Abdala was a chief house servant,[10] a cook. He got a transfer and went somewhere, perhaps Durban. He lived in Europe with Europeans. Nancy's work was to braid hair for money. Muhamad bin Isaa Timami's people were very rich, all the farms here around Kongowea belonged to them. Abdala bought a farm. He told Nancy, "Stay here, and the man who wants to marry you should stay he-

re too. He should raise my children for me because I can't do it, I'm travelling all the time to work for the Europeans. Take care of things for me: it's fine. You and I have spent out time together, better you listen to him and stay here". He didn't leave her with bad will. They continued on this way with no trouble. Other people had problems when a husband divorced his wife with a big fuss. My father bought the farm there that belonged to an Arab for 12 rupees, with coconut trees, and mango trees and orange trees, every kind of tree. When he divorced my mother he left everything for her. Then he got angry and came and sold everything, took the money, and went away.

She was married by another man named Ramadhani. He lived right there. He built his house there and lived with his children. When he wasn't there, he was travelling.

We were raised right here in Kisauni. My *somo* was named Thula.[11] My mother took me to Thula and told her, "Initiate her when she reaches puberty". I was initiated there. I was taken across the way by my mother. And my sister, Dogo, was taken similarly to her *somo,* Fatma Mwaita, who was the leader of Banu Saada.[12] We were twins. Dogo (Little) was named Saada, great-grandmother's name. I was called 'Big'. Thula was a good friend of my mother, not related. Each one came from her own tribe. Thula was a person from Old Town in Mombasa, you know, the Digo, Chonyi, Giriama, those people from here.[13] My mother was an important *kungwi* here. Among the *makungwi,* once she is initiated, others give her girls to initiate. Children she initiated are now old women. Her *kungwi* was named Bahati, a person from Freretown just like herself. They didn't object at the mission. There are people who danced this very dance.[14] Everyone who had a child brought her to my mama, and others joined the group as well. They danced, and this too wasn't questioned by the Europeans at the mission. They said, "It's their business, why should we prevent them?" They continued and the whole thing grew. They slaughtered goats. There was one man, Mr. Binns. He asked, "What do you want? A goat? OK, take a goat". He, a person from the mission, took them to the Arabs and gave them a bag of rice. "Are you dancing, Nancy?" "Yes". "OK, if you're dancing, what do you want?" "I haven't gotten rice". He gave it to her. The missionaries gave her a lot.[15]

For three or four years I was raised by a rich Arab woman from here, Bi Aziza Jeneby. They raised me right here in Kongowea. We came to visit in town because of the dances, but Kongowea is our home. My mother who raised me said, "Ah, I will give her the name of my own mother, Mishi". Bi Aziza's mother was named Mishi. There was good will back then. People felt compassion for one another. It didn't have to be your own child. Bi Aziza begged my father when he returned from the Transvaal. She said, "It's best that you give Mishi to me because there are two of them. She can't handle it, she has her own work braiding hair. Give the child to me". My father agreed.

My Husbands and Child

My twin and I reached puberty during the First World War. After we were

initiated, we were married. We were told airplanes would come from the sky — when we were told this we were still girls. But it came true; we saw the airplanes. At that time we married. My younger sister married first. She had all boys. Other men were here; Halima's[16] father (Mbarak Msalim) was a soldier here at their camp, a cook for the Europeans, but a soldier nonetheless.

Mbaruk Msalim was a Muslim. He asked my mother and father, and paid the bridewealth; it wasn't free. But at that time, it wasn't that much money, about 200 shillings, that's all. Now it's 1,300 shillings. He was born in Malindi. He came here to work and then looked for women right here. He's from the Gunya, Tikuu tribe. He was senior boy[17], they key holder. When visitors came to the house the lady and gentleman of the house didn't to any work. He did everything as holder of the keys. When he came here to work, he traveled with the Europeans. When he wanted to travel, he left me here at our place and then went to Europe for two or three years. But he sent me food.

We lived here in Mombasa at Mjua Kale.[18] There we are not strangers. That's our place near Mwana Kutani's. Even my *somo* was in the same area. She had a husband right in that same neighborhood.

I gave birth to our only child. She grew up, Halima. I only had that one, she was the first and last. We lived together until she was grown, and we married her off.

We went to Nairobi by ourselves, the two of us. After I had Halima we went to Nairobi and lived. We returned and put her in school. The white woman for whom my husband worked had odd jobs here and there---to wash underwear, and to iron--and if the wanted she said, "I'm going out at a certain time, Mishi". Then I would take out certain clothes of certain colours for her to wear. I used to make 60 shillings per month. This was out of her own kindness. The lady liked me very much. She taught me to sew, to crochet, to make socks, and many other kinds of work. Even up to now when I hold a piece of yarn, I have to knit. After three years the European returned home. We came home for three months. When the European came back we returned to him. We stayed for six years in Nairobi. We were strangers there. When the European went home for good, my husband left me. We lived in Spaki, then we built our house in Mjua Kale. He left me in his house, then later on he married again after he divorced me.

He divorced me and I married another man, another husband who was good natured. He was an Arab, a Mazrui, Lamini. He came from Takaungu. He was kind and he raised ally my children.[19] I didn't have any by him. Even up to now the children cry when they remember him. He was a very good man. Mbaruk Msalim divorced me and married another wife, but Lamini remained my husband until he died. He died a while back.

My Work

After my husband died, I said, "Bwana Lamini is dead, who will look after me?" So then I worked at the Muhashamy's;[20] I cooked there for many days until the war for independence. My employer told me, "You must go to Kisauni". I told him, "I can't. My child is not well.[21] If I go to Kisauni or Bamburi, how close

is that? If something happens, who will I go with?" He was going to Europe and didn't want the job of Liwali. He refused. So I felt him and went to cook for Moses Mohamed. It is hard to find someone to feed you and your children. I worked but with people who didn't have class. I didn't work for classy people anymore, just poor people like myself, for twenty shilling, fifty shillings. And I thought it wasn't worth it. My eyes had gone bad from the smoke.

Living in Kaloleni[22]

We lived there, and when Lamini died, his siblings made trouble. I said, "I don't want to be killed over a house. If you're selling it, sell it and give me what is mine". They sold it and gave me my share. So then my child Jabu bought this house in Kaloleni. She said, "I bought this house, but it isn't completely finished". We built it slowly and moved in nine years ago. Jabu is the daughter of my younger sibling, and when she was born I took her day and night.

CHAPTER TWO: PUBERTY RITES, WEDDINGS, AND LELEMAMA

Puberty Rites (ukungwi)

When a girl reaches puberty she is taken to a *somo*. You go to the *somo,* she washes you, and puts clothes on you to stop the blood from reaching your other clothes. She does her best to promote modesty, and you must wash that cloth until it is white. You wear another cloth and then your *leso*. By yourself, could you know about this? You have to be taught. But you just come to know the dances. The person who dances doesn't have good manners; the dance is the way to teach manners. "That girl has bad manners, we'll make her dance". We are there when she dances, but you do that work yourself. The dance is for manners and respect.

And if you marry, the *somo* who initiated you teaches you. If you and your husband quarrel, she will come and ask what's going on: "Why are you being mean to her? So why can't you be patient? She's young; can't you see you're older? We want to seen you help her and raise the way you would your child. A person cares for his wife like a child you gave birth to". So, you help a lot and she stays with her husband.[23]

Nyakanga and Ngariba

Kungwi herself originated these things: She knew these things, and she knew some things about men. She went into the forest and stayed there. She left her husband in the house and went into the middle of the forest. She got another husband, one who knew these things, like a circumciser. And that husband was Ngariba (Circumciser). He cut people and circumcised them with that woman. He taught her, he told her, "Circumcise those women, do women's rites" Do you know that tree we decorated with beads and everything? They climbed into the base of a big tree of that kind. That tree is used in the dance, for the tray, the pestle and the mortar. It was Nyakanga who got all these things from that man. She left her husband there, went into the forest and stayed. He said to her, "Do you want to initiate children"? She told him, "Yes." He made her a wooden tray, like a copper tray, but of wood. He made a tray, a pestle and mortar to pulverize the medicine. That man was clever, he taught her a lot. She didn't know much to begin with. She ran away to the forest in another country, there they enjoyed themselves.[24] It was the man who knew things. But her own husband didn't know anything, and she wanted to initiate girls. The man told her, "I will do it to you and teach you".

Ngariba was born and in the same way he had a mentor who was circumciser. When he died, he bequeathed the work to his child because it had increased. Nyakanga and Ngariba came from the Kilwa area, that's where this activity came from.[25] Nyakanga ran away and found him, she wanted to know more. They went into the middle of the forest. Nyakanga was an Ngindo, the man was a Makua, and the third was a Yao, the child who wanted to be initiated.

She was given the child and she did the things to her. That man taught her with all his heart, out of his good will. He countinued as the head with Nyakanga. Nyakanga's origin is that man, Ngariba. Ngariba is above Nyakanga. Nyakanga is a wife, Ngariba a husband. He circumcises and she washes, makes her vomit, and takes the girl to the forest.

And we have these medicines that we give to children. The tree is very strong. It is used for sweeping for mortars, for everything except putting over a fire, because it's flammable. All her things were of this tree, cups too, when the head Nyakanga received her orders from her husband. This tree is what they were shown to make children vomit. It's the same tree as is used for the dance, we call it pombe Nyakanga herself called it *pombe* , because it is medicine for everyone to drink. It is medicine for spirit exorcisms; people who are possessed are given this. It wasn't bad.

Puberty rites in Mombasa

Their were shown by their elders before them who sent their child to *makungwi.* Each one paid money and was shown. She was give a girl and initiated her. She was told to carry her, "Listen, carry her".[26] When she carried her, everything was done for her, she would pay money. She would go there to the special place, she would go to every place where things were done and would do them. When she got her own initiate, she showed her, and so it continued. When her *kungwi* died, she took over. The one who had been started at it took over, and so things progressed.

Every place has its own rites. Mombasa has its own *makungwi.* Dar es Salaam has its own, Tanga too. It's the same dance, with only small variations. The rites are the same.

When Mashea died, she was the *somo* of all of us.[27] We got together for the funeral. She was our mother who loved us. "What do you say, will you all accept the customary gifts?" Mashea successor said, "Yes, we will". Every *kungwi* gave her *somo* one set of *leso,* four shillings, one bottle of rose water--to all the important *nyakanga,* like me, Tufaa, and many others. Still others, many whose *somo* had died, received it from their own initiates. And they in return each gave us thirty shillings. We collected about 820 shillings. Then we had a feast. We invited them; they came, ate, and left. At the time of the gift-giving we washed the drums because their owner had died. Now what remained was the mourning period which lasts until her eldest initiate takes the chair. There were others who were older. I'm not her initiate, I'm just her child. Mama Iko and I did not receive her gifts, she is only our mother.[28] Mbaya will take the gifts, or Mwana Imu, or Mishi wa Mademu--about five people. Their leader will be Mbaya. If she doesn't know enough, Maiko and I will teach her.

I have taken my mother's chair. It was taken by her eldest initiate Momo Kikoi. Then I took it myself. I gave money to everyone and took the chair. When the time came for someone to take the chair of my mother's initiate, my own *somo* was still young, so I took it instead. It was OK, because the teaching are the same. Now it is I who transmit the knowledge, it's I who know it. "I do this and

that"..... Until they understand.

For some people, if their *somo* dies without anything, they just "cry". They just give customary gifts for crying: fifty shillings, three sets of *leso,* one bottle of oil, and millet. They come and wash the drums for their *somo.* Her rank remains the same--*goma.* When she enters a room, the drums cease. Many do this because their *somo* hasn't reached the age to become a *nyakanga,* she's still young.

Wedding dances

It's that same *vugo* dance of taking the bride to the bath.[29] The *manyakanga* started it, and everyone copied it. In the past my elders were taken to the bath that same way. To perform *msondo* for her we danced that way. She put the bride on her shoulders, went to the bath-room, you returned with her celebrating and spent the day at the house. *Bendera*[30] is not very old. It wasn't done at my wedding; it wasn't done for us. It was worn at recent weddings. At my wedding *usufi*[31] was just beginning. At the start it wasn't as good as it is now. That was the beginning of it. My *somo* brought pillowacases and we stuffed them and people danced. They didn't know how to dance a thing. But now it's a real dance.

The present dance started a little while back, when the *makungwi* argued with each other. Don't you see the dance is different? This is different from Majengo's.[32] We quarreled over this *msondo* dance, the *makungwi's* dance. We were all together; everyone had her own rank. Then we came to quarrel; they made fools of us. We gave them customary gifts but they didn't reciprocate. We refused. We quarreled long ago--Jabu had been born, and so had Halima and Rukia. You know how it is. When people think they're smart they don't get anything. We didn't want to fight, but they were cheeky, they just wanted things for themselves. We didn't do anything, we just did *usufi* ourselves and then we started *bendera* just to inflame the situation. They don't wear sashes, or brassieres or dresses. We wore a complete with them, because all they know is what we know, so how can one group have more strenght? So we dance at our place and they dance at theirs. We took Mashea with us.[33]

Lelemama

I danced after I had been divorced. But Halima's father didn't want me to dance or to go outside. I was inside only, cooking. He sent the servant out to buy everything and bring it in the kitchen for me to cook.[34] Lamini did not forbid me to dance. I threw myself into it completely. If I wanted a dress, he would take the material and sew. He would sew it himself, his job was sewing. He could sew anything you want him to. My husband didn't stop me. For two or three days he came and saw me and came back home. He didn't ask questions. But Halima's father--you didn't dare show your face outside. He would beat until he tired. He was very strict.

I joined Banu Saada because of my sister's *kungwi.*[35] She was our mother, our mother's friend, as if they were sisters. We joined Banu Saada; I danced, my daughter danced too after I had been divorced and Halima had given birth to

Rukia. Banu Saada was a real dance group, and we also helped each other.[36] A person would buy cloth, if money was wanted, and would pay ten shillings. We slaughtered cows, we went to the country. We really spent money dancing. But we were number one, we knew the dance more than anybody. We competed a lot with Ibinaa;[37] we competed with cows. But everything comes to an end. *Guaride,* queens, all of that, but it is finished. We competed a lot with Ibinaa, but we didn't fight. We just want the dance. When we saw people wanting to fight, we took off before it started. They danced inside; but for competition they danced outside.

The people who started it--weren't they the old women who liked to do weddings? Their children brought *lelemama* from Zanzibar. They said, "We'll dance it at our place". They copied it here so that in Zanzibar it was nothing compared to here. Arabs danced it, slaves dance it--they danced together with their slaves. There was a lot of discrimination here. They realy discriminated. For the Arabs, the slaves were just to be used.[38] The Arabs had their own weddings, but the slaves were used in them. Some women were slaves but they married free-born men and had children by them. She has both slave and free in her. If she wishes she follows the slave way, if she doesn't, she follows freeborn ways.

FOOTNOTES

1. Bi Kaje wa Mwenye Matano, interviewed in Mombasa, 1972—73 and 1975.
2. For further discussion of the puberty rites and wedding dances, see, Strobel M. 1979 *Muslim Women in Mombasa, 1890–1975* Yale University Press: Conn Chapters 1 and 8.
3. Caplan, P. 1982 "Gender, Ideology and Modes of Production on the Coast of East Africa" *Paideuma* 28 pp 29—43.
4. Statistics from the coast from 1915—1952 indicate one divorce for every two marriages consistently. See, Strobel 1979 *op cit.*
   For Fertility data for another area of the coast, see Tanner R.E.S. 1960 "A Demographic Study in an Area of Low Fertility in North-east Tanzania" *Population Studies* 13 pp 61—80; also Allen, J.W.T. (ed and trans) 1981 Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari *The Customs of the Swahili People: The Desturi za Waswahili of Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari and Other Swahili Persons* University of California Press: Berkeley p 18.
5. Kenya, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Statistical Division 1970 *Kenya Population Census 1969* Vol III Government Printer: Nairobi Table 2 p 50.
6. The interviews for Mishi wa Abdala's life history were conducted in 1972—73 and 1975 in Mombasa by Margaret Strobel. This research was assisted by a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Abroad Fellowship and a Woodrow Wilson Doctoral Fellowship in Women's Studies. Translations were done by Margaret Strobel and Sarah Mirza. A Mombasa resident who speaks the Mombasa dialect (Kimvita), Ms Mirza has her BA in Linguistics from the University of Nairobi.
7. *Nemsi* is an old Swahili word for honour.
8. The Freretown mission came into conflict with Mombasa's slaveowners. See, Bennet N.R. 1964 "The Church Missionary Society at Mombasa, 1873—1894" *Boston University Papers in African History* 1 pp 159—95.
9. For a description of Freretown, see, Mbotela J. 1956 *The Freeing of the Slaves* Evans Brothers: London. Kongowea was a freed-slave community on the mainland.
10. The Swahili text uses the word 'boi' from the colonial 'boy' rather than the non-derogatory term, 'mtumishi' or servant.
11. A *somo* tells a young girl about sexual matters, is responsible for her behaviour and manners, and has role at her marriage and the birth of her children. A *Kungwi* is a *somo,* but the former term is associated with the role and rituals brought by slaves to Mombasa. Hence, *Kungwi* is generally avoided by elites. See, Strobel 1979 *op cit* p 11.
12. Bnu Saada was one of several *lelemama* dance groups popular in Mombasa, particularly in the period from 1890s — 1950. For details on *lelemama,* see, Strobel 1979 *op cit* Chapters 6 and pp 13—17.
13. The association of Mijikenda with Old Town is an example of the *utani* relationship with the Twelve Tribes.
14. The *makungwi's* puberty rites and wedding rites include a series of dances brought from various areas in East Africa. See, Strobel 1979 *op cit* pp 196—206.
15. This tolerance for female rituals contrasts with the situation described by Ranger for Masasi in Tanganyika; see Ranger, T.O. 1972 "Missionary Adaptation of Africana Religious Institutions: The Masasi Case" in Ranger T.O. and I. Kimambo, *The Historical Study of African Religions* Heinemann: London pp 221—251. At Masasi, the missionaries assimilated male rituals into Christian circumcision rites but did not similarly accommodate female rituals, even though these did not include clitoridectomy.
16. Halima is Ma Mishi's daughter; Rukia is Halima's daughter.
17. See note 10.
18. A neighbourhood of Old Town on Mombasa Island.

19. Ma Mishi raised other children whom she did not herself bear; e.g. Jabu later on in the text.
20. Salim Muhamad Muhashamy was Liwali for the Coast.
21. Halima was stricken with polio.
22. A multi-ethnic neighbourhood of Swahili andup-country people on Mombasa Island that was settled in the 1920s or 1930s.
23. Ma Mishi's paternalistic assumptions about the husband's role are mirrored in the wifely obedience admonished to the upper-class wife of the nineteenth century in Werner A. and W. Hichens (eds.) 1934 *Utendi wa Mwana Kupona (Advice of Mwana Kupona Upon the Wifely Duty).* The Azanian Classics Vol 2 Azania Press: Medstead.
24. As part of her own initiation, Nyakanga is removed from daily life and goes into themiddle of the forest. Such transition into a liminal state is common to rituals. See various works of Victor Turner.
25. People indigenous to Mombasa did not celebrate female puberty collectively with such rituals before slaves came from East and Central Africa. The story here confirms the slave origins of these rituals - the Ngindo, Makua and Yao were groups from whom slaves were taken.
26. In part of the ritual, the initiate in carried on the *kungwi's* back.
27. Mashea, the most senior member of Ma Mishi's group of *makungwi,* died between 1973 and 1975. She had been active in *lelemama* also.
28. Maiko is Ma Mishi's sister; Mashea was their classificatory, not biological, mother.
29. *Vuga* is the name of wedding rituals of freeborn Swahili, described by the late Liwali Mbarak bin Ali Hinawiy, 1964 "Some Notes on Customs in Mombasa" *Swahili* 34 pt 1 pp 17—35. *Vugo* was denied anyone who was not freeborn. The *makungwi* developed dances out of their own tradition parallel to those of the freeborn. Nowadays, both kinds of dances are found at the same wedding. See, Strobel 1979 *op cit* Chapter 1.
30. In the *bendera* (flag) dance, the *makungwi* wear red sashes.
31. In the *usufi* (kapok, cotton) dance, the *makungwi* stuff pillows.
32. The Old Town *makungwi* are rivals with *makungwi* in Majengo, a newer area of Mombasa.
33. The *makungwi* are exhibiting the tendency of Swahili communities to divide into factions and rival groups. For examples, see, Lienhardt, P. (ed and trans) 1968 Hasani bin Ismail *The Medicine Man, Swifa ya Nguvumali* Oxford University Press: London. Bakari 1981 *op cit* pp 83—84, 94—97, and notes Abdul Hamid el-Zein 1974 *The Sacred Meadows: A Structural Analysis of Religious Symbolism in an East African Town* Northwestern University Press: Evanston *passim.* Ranger, T.O. 1975 *Dance and Society in Eastern Africa: The Beni Ngoma* University of California Press: Berkely *passim.*
34. In her first marriage she lived in more strict purdah.
35. Fatma Mwaita, Dogo's *somo,* was queen of Banu Saada.
36. *Lelemama* dance associations also functioned as mutual aid societies. For more on *lelemama,* see, Strobel 1979 *op cit* Chapter 6.
37. Ibinaal Watan was Banu Saada's special rival association.
38. Despite Ma Mishi's identification of Arabs with slavery and the slave trade, she expresses affection towards the Arab woman who in part raised her, Bi Aziza Jeneby.

REVIEW ARTICLE

The Poor Women's Energy Crisis*

A. Armstrong & M. Garry **

Fuelwood scarcity is perhaps the most explosive budding natural disaster in Tanzania which will be hatched by the mid 1990's if immediate concerte efforts are not taken to curb and contain the pace of deforestation.

Nkonoki 1983 p 26

The late 20th century's second major, largely unheralded, energy crisis is only now generating widespread concern. This slow realisation and low priority so far accorded to serious forest depletion is almost certainly due to the fact that its wide ranging impact has as yet directly affected only women—mainly peasant women who remain almost exclusively responsible fot fuel gathering in the rural areas (Nkonoki p 72). Furthermore, the exclusion of women from village decision-making and the rural development process means what the immediate remedial action necessary is unlikely to receive the requisite priority. For, as Mascarenhas et al state: "The availability or otherwise of woodfuel infuences the time budget for women" so the issue "cannot be discussed in isolation but in the context of the whole question of rural development" (Mascarenhas et al p 1).

Three recent reports compiled by (male) members of staff at the University of Dar es Salaam provide a timely and detailed survey of the emergent crisis as well as some practical suggestions for policy makers. The report by Mwandosya and Luhango is essentially a nationwide, scientific assessment of Tanzania's energy budget which complements the detailed rural household energy surveys of Nkonoki and Mascarenhas et al.

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Both Nkonoki and Mascarenhas et all are social science studies, the former examining all forms of energy and types of ecological zones; the later concentrates on the semi-arid regions of Tanzania which are the worst affected areas of deforestation.

Compared with other African countries, Tanzania has a very high rate of fuelwood consumption, both in absolute volume (second only to Nigeria) and in per capita consumption (at 2.5m^3 per person, second only to Benin (Nkonoki p. 26). These high rates of consumption can be related to the very low proportion of total evergy needs for which commercial energy (coal, oil and hydro-power) accounts: only 15 compared with around 50 for Kenya and Mozambique.[1] Since commercial energy is monopolised by the modern-urban industrial sector, this effectively means that 90 percent of Tanzanians rely for their domestic fuel requirements on fuelwood and charcoal with a total of 97 percent of Tanzania's

*Nkonoki S.R. 1983 *The Poor Man's Energy Crisis.* Chr. Mechelson Inst. Bergen
Mascarenhas A., I Kikula and P. Nilson 1983 *Support to Village Afforestation in Tanzania IRA/UDSM*
Mwandosya M.J. and M.L.P. Luhango 1983 *Energy Resources Plans and End Uses in Tanzania* Faculty of Science UDSM.