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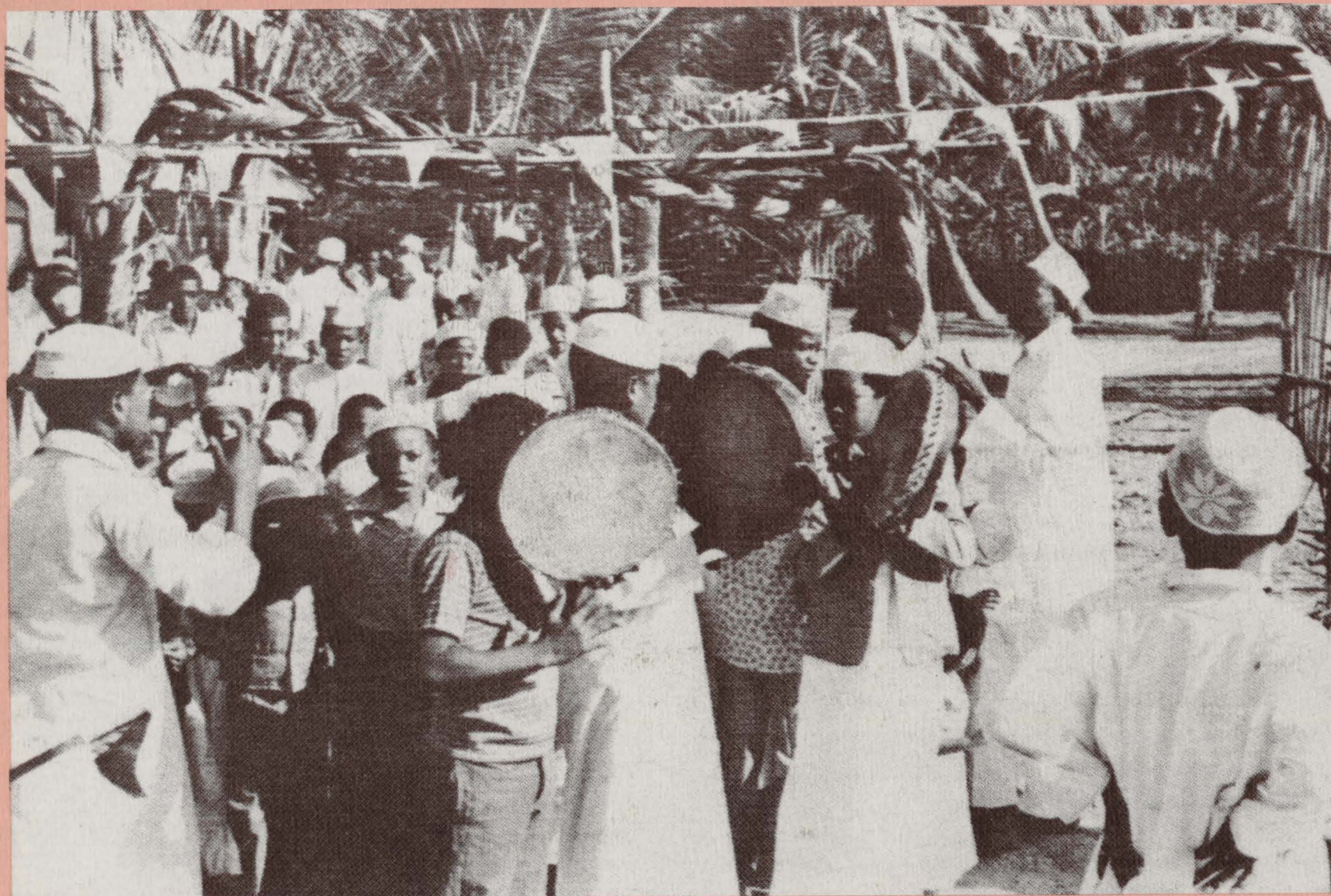


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# Music of the Waswahili of Lamu, Kenya

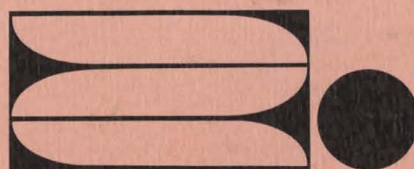
VOLUME 2

## Other Sacred Music



Zefe with boys playing matari

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE



Produced in cooperation with the Indiana University Archives of Traditional Music

Ethnomusicological Series

Series Editor: Louise S. Spear



# Music of the Waswahili of Lamu, Kenya VOL. 2

## Other Sacred Music

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### OTHER SACRED MUSIC

#### SIDE 1

Band 1 Samai

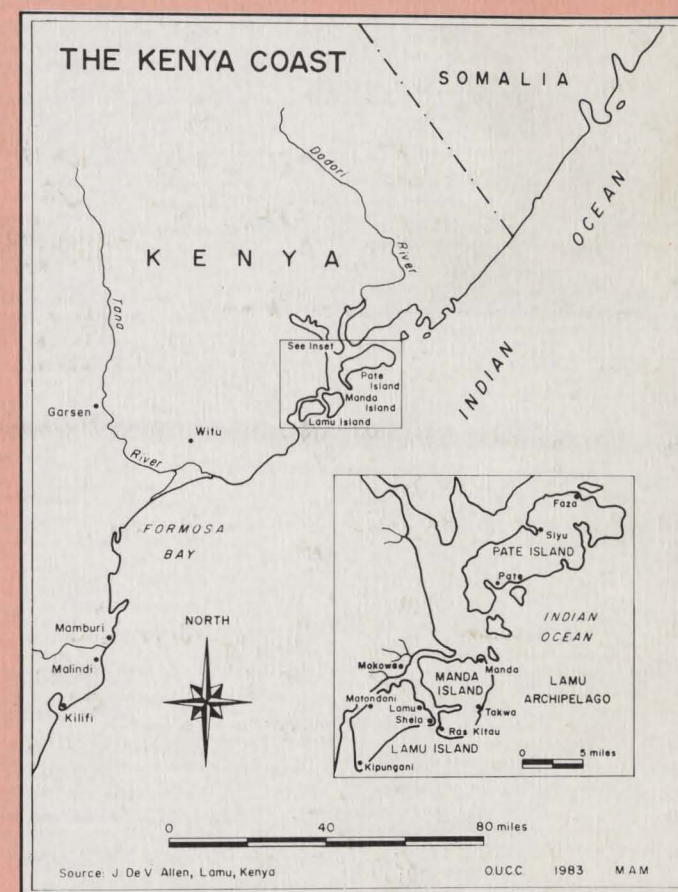
Band 2 Kasida

#### SIDE 2

Band 1 Dhikiri

Band 2 Zefe

Band 3 Funeral Procession



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# Music of the Waswahili of Lamu, Kenya VOL. 2

## Other Sacred Music

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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***Music of the Waswabili  
of Lamu, Kenya***

***collected by Alan W. Boyd***

***Volume I  
Maulidi***



***Zefe with boys playing matari***

***Volume II***

***Other Sacred Music***

***Volume III  
Secular Music***



***Kirumbizi***



# ***Music of the Waswabili of Lamu, Kenya***

***Collected and annotated by Alan W. Boyd***

*Swabili* is one of the most widely known ethnic names of Africa. It is associated with Kenya and Jomo Kenyatta, Tanzania and Julius Nyerere and such words as *simba*, safari and *ijumaa*. Yet very little is commonly known about who the *Waswabili* (the Swahili people) are, where they are located or what their culture is like.

*Swabili* is thought to be an Africanized version of the Arabic term for coast, *sabel*. The *Waswabili* are coastal people living in cities, towns and villages on the eastern littoral of Africa from Kilwa at the mouth of the Rufiji River in the south to Mogadischu in Somalia in the north. The common characteristics of people who can be called *Waswabili* are a more-or-less-known descent from Arabic families, especially from the southernmost portions of the Arabian peninsula; the Muslim religious faith; speaking a mutually understandable dialect of *Kiswabili*; and association with, if not actual occupation of, urban centers.

*Swabili* culture and language are thought to have originated long before the birth of the Prophet Muhammad with the contact between Arab traders, sailors and merchants, and Bantu groups along the East African coast. This process reached a high point during the internal struggles for preeminence in the enlarging Muslim world during the centuries following his death. By the thirteenth century, Arabic settlements were widespread along the whole of the East African coastline. From that time on, settlers arrived on the East African coast in successive waves. Descendants of earlier immigrants became more and more Africanized, so that today, although Arab influence

is readily perceived in much of *Swabili* culture, and many people still maintain considerable contact with the Saudi Arabian peninsula, the culture is clearly African.

The three volumes in this *Waswabili* series contain a musical portrait of *Swabili* culture as it exists in Lamu, Kenya, and its environs. They clearly illustrate the deeply rooted Arabic influence, and yet they also demonstrate the African foundations of *Swabili* culture.

Lamu was chosen as the focus for this collection and the research it represents because it has been a center of *Swabili* culture for many centuries and is still a relatively unadulterated location for *Swabili* life. This is not to say that all *Kiswabili*-speaking people are like the people of Lamu, or that this collection exhausts the variety of musical expression that can be found in *Swabili* towns, but it does represent *Swabili* musical life well and provides examples of many of the forms in common use. The notes for each band provide more detail on the styles of music as well as further elaboration on the history of Lamu, *Swabili* society and the culture relevant to it.

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## ***Music of the Waswabili of Lamu, Kenya***

Volume I	<i>Maulidi</i>
Volume II	<i>Other Sacred Music</i>
Volume III	<i>Secular Music</i>

## ***Lamu***

Lamu, Kenya, is at the same time, a district in the governmental segmentation of Kenya, an archipelago of islands off the northeast coast of Kenya, one of the islands in that group, and the major town on that island (see Map I). Lamu Island, which is about ten square miles in area, lies one hundred kilometers south latitude. Directly to the north of Lamu is Manda Island, which is approximately the same size as the island of Lamu, and north of Manda is Pate, the largest island of the group, on which are found the towns of Pate, Faza (or Rasini) and Siyu, as well as a few other smaller villages.

Although the exact dates of the first settlements on Lamu Island are not known, preliminary archeological explorations suggest that settlements occurred in the vicinity of the present town at least as early as 1200 A.D. Lamu Island is a sand bar in the shape of a bowl. The center holds fresh water, while the rim prevents the brackish sea water from penetrating the disc. Since wells can be dug near the edge of the island, towns came to be established on its coast. The present day city of Lamu lies on the northeastern edge of this bowl in a protected bay. The town of Matandoni lies on the





**The Lamu waterfront, a *zefe* procession underway**

opposite coast of the island and rests near the mouth of the Lamu bay.

Lamu has never been an isolated community. Although it is not easily reached by land even today, it has always been accessible by sea, either from the north or the south, depending on which way the monsoon winds are blowing. The town has a rich history of conflict and alliance with neighboring towns, especially Pate. The *Pate Chronicle*, an indigenous description of the traditions and events in the history of Pate, which was reduced to writing at the turn of the twentieth century, is full of references to political, economic and religious disputes with the inhabitants of Lamu (Werner: 1915).

Lamu's history, then, indicates a pattern in which the town sought both religious and commercial independence from its neighbors, but was never able to fully achieve either. Today it is still a mixture of a desire for independence and friendly relations with other political bodies, so long as the interaction results in advantage to the leading families of Lamu.

Most residents of Lamu today describe the town as divided into two halves—*Mkomani* to the north and *Langoni* to the south (see Map II). The northern portion is characterized as the place of stone houses, where old established families reside, while the southern is said to be the place where *wageni*, i.e., visitors, live in mud-walled, thatched-roof houses.

Persons from old, established families are prone to emphasize the names of the two locations, to point

out *wageni* on the streets and to call attention to where people live, whereas more recent settlers in the community pay less attention to the division. When they speak of it at all, it is with a resentful tone of voice and a suggestion of defiance of an obsolete distinction.

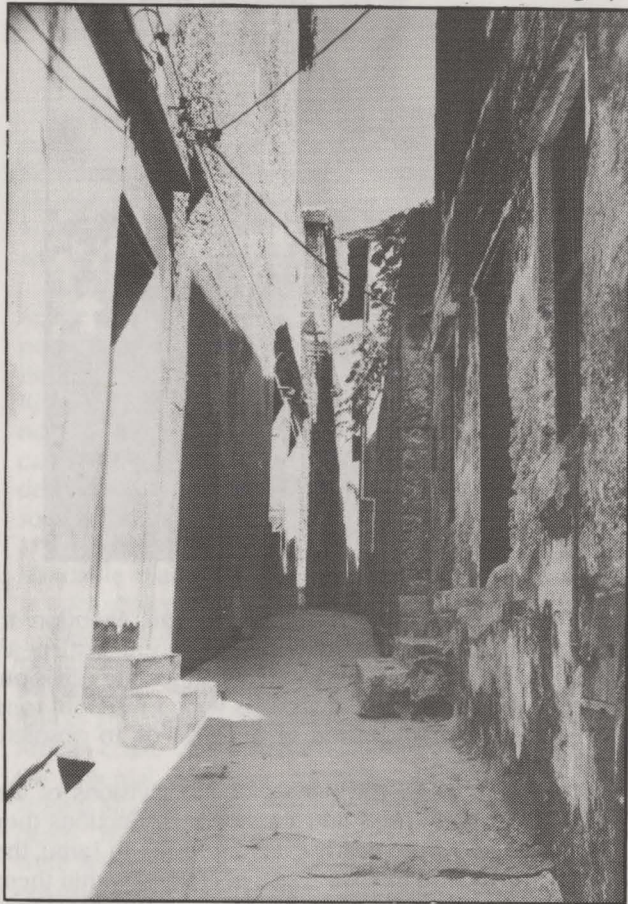
Today, although the names of the divisions of the town are widely used and the social distinctions they imply are known to nearly everyone living in Lamu, the political structure that was once contained within them has been elaborated and modified. The existence of a modern, independent Kenya has brought a new dimension to Lamu's political structure, which has been partially assimilated into the old didemic arrangement, and which has partially changed to meet the new order. A town council still exists, but instead of its membership consisting of leaders of the dominant families, the *wanguwana*, the positions are held by elected representatives, some of whom represent the interest of recent immigrants to the town or of recently enfranchised servant classes. Some of the prestigious *wazee*, the leaders of important families, still exercise influence upon the decision-making processes, but they do so through behind-the-scenes pressure upon relatives or allies from other families.

The political organization of Lamu is closely intertwined with the religious organization, which exercises great influence on every aspect of Lamu society. "Islam has an order of clergy but no priesthood" (Trimingham 1962:37). The role of leadership in each local mosque



in Lamu is taken by an Imam, who is customarily a teacher of young boys and who may command a modicum of respect as a religious leader beyond his own mosque.

In addition to the Imam, there are other more highly



**A typical Mkomani street**

trained teachers who operate schools (*madarasa* or *chuoni*) for older youths and young men. Some of these men are respected not only for their religious knowledge, but also for their influence with the families of their pupils, as well as with past generations of students who have gained positions of leadership in their own right. Some of these teachers come from the *wanguwana*, but many of them are personally independent of the leading families.

Within this latter group of religious teachers are the *sharifs*, who are believed to be descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, and some of whom are relatively recent immigrants to Lamu. Several of these extended families, because of widespread interconnections through marriages with other influential families in Lamu, as well as along the entire coast of East Africa, have considerable political influence. Their religious leadership is challenged only indirectly and

their ubiquitous aura of respect and reverence renders their opinions on all subjects beyond argument. As a result, they can and do play a significant role in contemporary elections, an arena that has increased their political effectiveness over what it must have been when their influence had to be applied by more covert means.

Lamu's musical life reflects the diversity of its inhabitants as well as the conflicts among religious, economic and political factions which are so much a part of its culture. Many of the musical instruments used in Lamu are Arabic in origin, while some have African roots. Most of the dances performed at weddings are associated with other *Swabili* towns and are often executed by visitors to Lamu rather than by residents. Even religious festivals and musical events often have their origins in other parts of the Muslim world. All of Lamu's rich musical diversity has been amalgamated into its own cultural and social network, a process which has involved nearly all the peoples and localities of the *Swabili* culture area.

In Lamu, secular music is predominantly related to wedding celebrations, most of which take the form of traditional dances, accompanied by various instruments. Two women's dances commonly seen at weddings are *vugo*, which usually occurs during processions in the streets, and *chakacha*, which is danced throughout one night during the celebration, behind closed doors or in a screened-in courtyard. Several other women's dances, including *lelemama*, *shangani* and *kisburi*, are declining in importance today, although they may still be seen in outlying areas.

The most popular traditional secular dance for men is called *kirumbizi*, a dance in which two men move within a large circle of onlookers, threatening each other using stylized motions with two large sticks. Other dances which occur on occasion in Lamu are associated with surrounding villages. These include *goma*, a slow, stylized line dance which is connected particularly with Siyu and Faza, and which consists of a ritualized sequence of movements with a cane held in the right hand, and *chama*, another line dance usually performed by men from Matandoni. It is distinguished by a characteristic skipping step and, like *goma*, involves stylized movements of a stick. *Ndurenge*, a vigorous dance similar to *kirumbizi*, is seen less often but is regaining popularity as a dance in street processions which accompany the groom.

Musical instruments in the secular sphere include a wide variety of drums, ranging from small, two-headed drums played with both hands, the most common of which is called a *chapuo* (pl. *vyapuo*), to large, single-headed drums, struck with a stick, which are given various names depending upon the location of the dance or the style of dance being accompanied. These drums show the greatest degree of mainland



African influence.

Drums are played in ensembles with a double reed aerophone called *zumari*, which is played with a circular breathing technique. In *vugo*, the *zumari* has been replaced by a modern trumpet, called *tarumbeta*.

Another instrument in the ensemble is the *utasa*, a flat metal dish placed inside a larger metal cooking tray, *sanja*, which is struck with two pieces of thick rope called *zibojolo*. Used in almost every ensemble, the *utasa* adds a higher pitched, almost piercing, rhythmic sound to the lower throb of the drums.

Three other instruments are limited to religious contexts. The first of these is the *tari* (pl. *matari*), a frame drum which is held in the left hand and struck by the fingers or palm of the right hand. The *tari* resembles a large tambourine because of its single head, the metal discs placed in holes in its frame and the manner in which it is held. Because it is struck with intricate finger and hand patterns in ensemble with other *matari* and without the shaking that is so characteristic of tambourines, and because its sound is deep and resonant rather than sharp and ringing, it is best classified as a drum. The Arabic name for the *tari* is *daf*, although the *daf* does not usually include the metal discs in the rim of the drum that are part of the *tari*. The second instrument is the *kigoma* (pl. *vigoma*), a small single-headed drum which is struck hard by the fingers of one hand, adding a snapping sound to the *matari* ensemble. The third is the *nai*, a small end-

blown flute with five finger holes on the upper surface and a thumb hole underneath. Today *nai* are made of metal or plastic, but formerly they were crafted from bronze or wood.

The instruments played to accompany secular events are never played in mosques. In addition, the *nai*, the *tari* and the *kigoma* have been accepted into the mosques of Lamu only since the early years of this century, and a minority of men still oppose such usage. They say a mosque should be a quiet place, a place of prayer; instruments create noise. The large majority of Lamuans disagree with them and so the dispute today is limited to only one mosque in which no instruments are permitted. Most people would agree with a leading teacher in Lamu who says that it is better that boys make music, sing and dance in the mosques to praise Allah than to be forced to sing in the streets for secular reasons.

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### Acknowledgments

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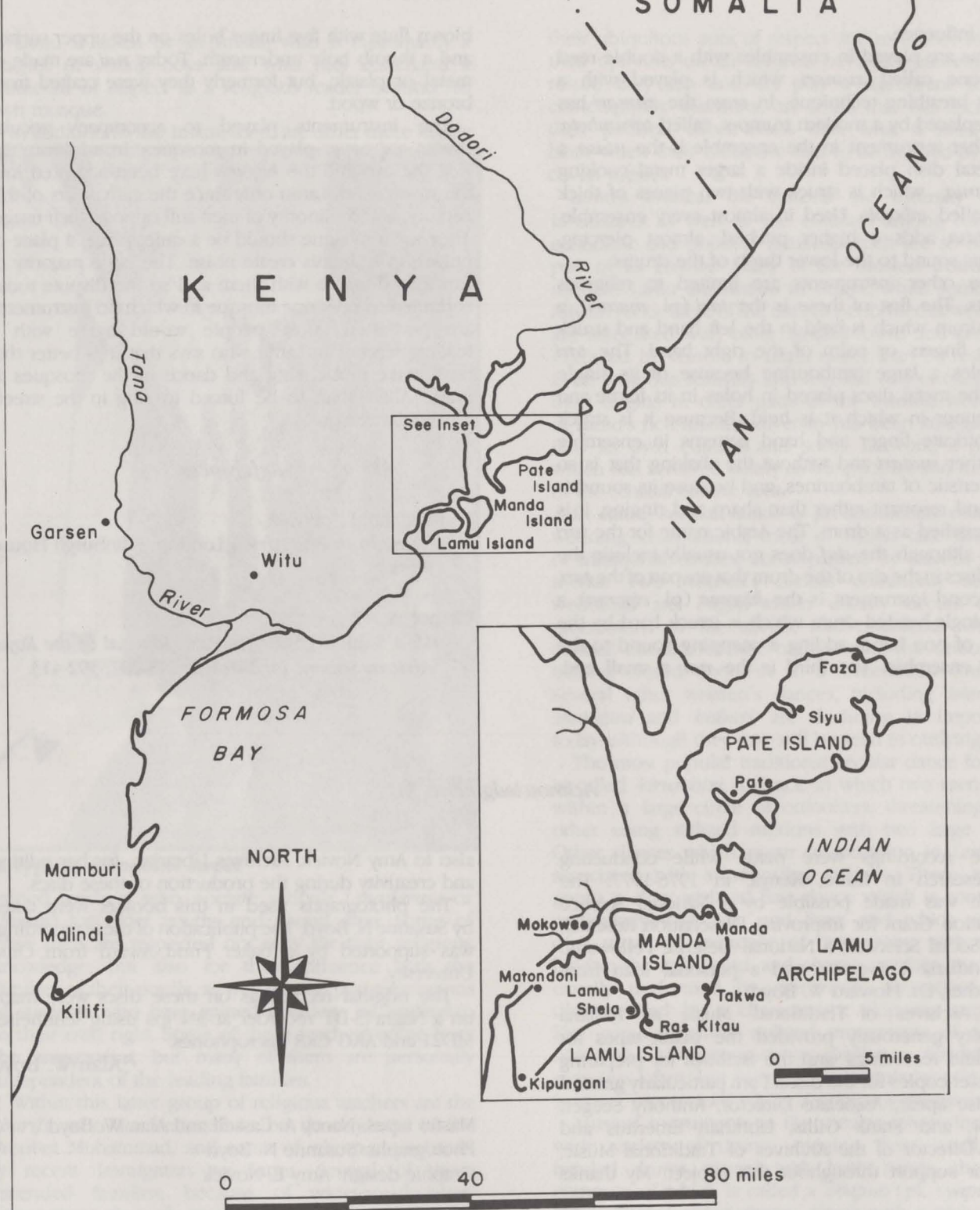
The original recordings on these discs were made on a Nagra IS-DT recorder at 3¾ ips using Sennheiser MD21 and AKG CK8 microphones.

Alan W. Boyd

Master tapes: Nancy A. Cassell and Alan W. Boyd  
Photographs: Susanne N. Boyd  
Graphic design: Amy E. Novick



# THE KENYA COAST

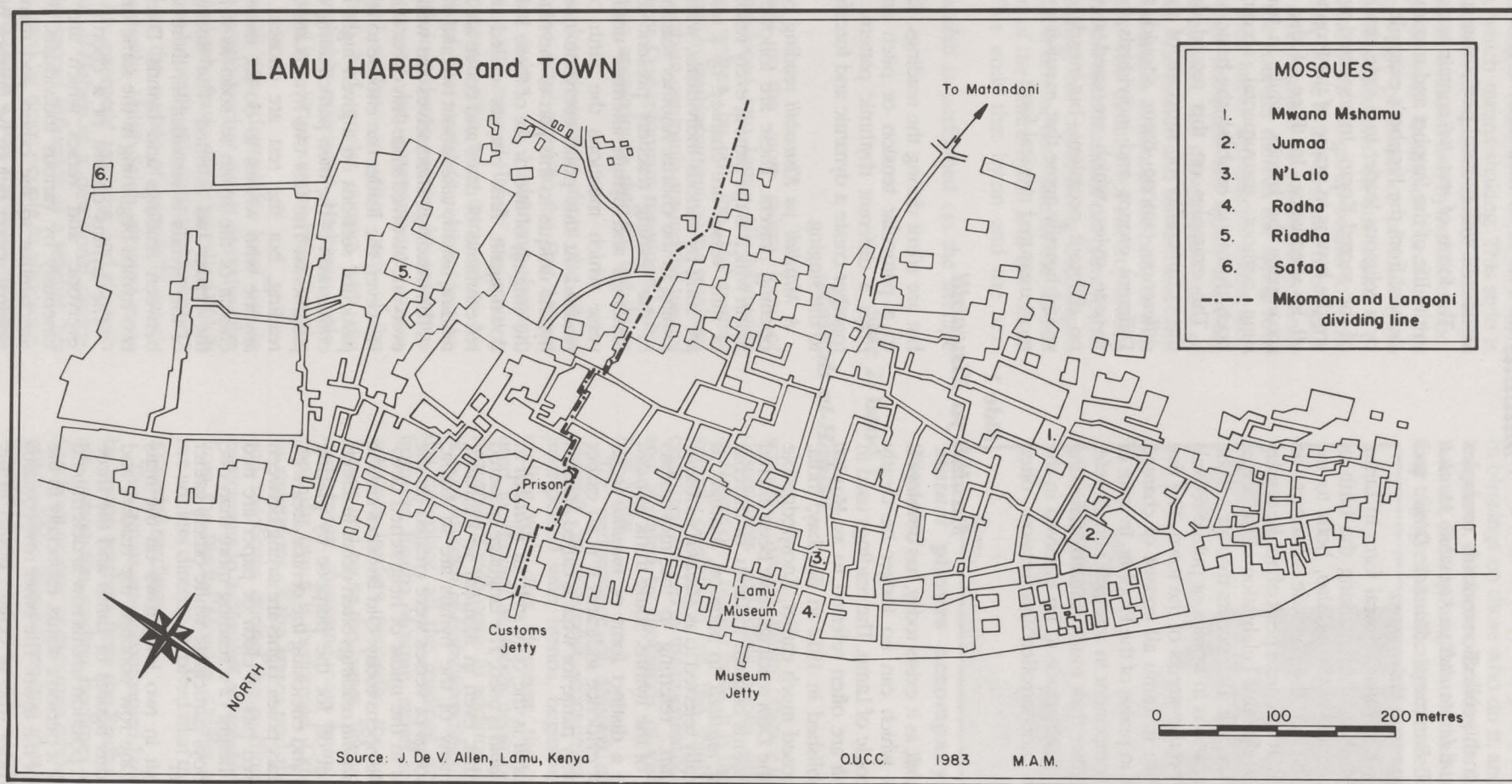


Source: J. De V. Allen, Lamu, Kenya

O.U.C.C. 1983 M.A.M.

Map I





Map II



## Volume I

### *Maulidi*

The first volume in this collection contains examples of five forms of *maulidi*: *Maulidi ya Kiswabili*, *Maulidi al-Habsbi*, *Maulidi Barazanji*, *Maulidi Diriji* and *Maulidi Sharaful Anam* or *Kukangaya*.

*Maulidi* is the most popular musical form in Lamu. It is first of all a Muslim ritual marking the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, but it is also, both to the local participant and to the outside observer, an exciting performance. It reaches a peak of public display during the month-long annual celebration of the actual birth of the Prophet, but it also occurs throughout the year in private celebrations in homes or public recitals in the mosques or on the streets of the town. The five different styles in use in Lamu all consist of chanted readings and hymns in praise of the Prophet. In spite of the strong musical component in *maulidi*, people refer to it as "readings" rather than music, thereby reflecting the orthodox Muslim reluctance to be involved in the overindulgence or uncontrolled expression often

associated with musical performance.

The forms of *maulidi* contain texts describing events in the life of the Prophet and maxims for proper living derived from the Prophet's example. These are chanted by a religious leader in a style similar to the chanting of the sacred Koran. Interspersed with these readings are the hymns in praise of the Prophet, usually sung by all in attendance. In three of the styles, the *matari* accompany the hymns, while in two, the hymns are sung without instrumental accompaniment, using body rhythm to establish the basic pulse.

The examples on this record demonstrate clearly the commonality of structure of the five styles. The differences among them should also be apparent. Different groups and individuals in Lamu have their favorite styles, which are used at various times and on different occasions, but nearly everyone in Lamu would heartily agree that *maulidi* is undoubtedly their most treasured musical form.

#### Side 1

#### *Maulidi ya Kiswabili*

*Maulidi ya Kiswabili*, as it exists today, has developed out of older forms which can no longer be clearly described by the people of Lamu. The readings used in *Maulidi ya Kiswabili* are often referred to as *Maulidi al Debi*, a form published in 1912 in Bombay, India, but no doubt composed much earlier. Knowledgeable informants say that the *Debi* readings have been altered by the addition of poems original to Lamu or material from other forms of *maulidi*. In addition, *Maulidi ya Kiswabili* is occasionally referred to as *Maulidi ya Rama*, the "shaking *maulidi*," referring to the movements made at the climax of the hymns. Some think *Maulidi ya Rama* was once a distinct form of *maulidi* in its own right, but most evidence indicates it is an earlier and perhaps derogatory name for what is called *Maulidi ya Kiswabili* today.

*Maulidi ya Kiswabili* is the only style of *maulidi* in Lamu in which *Kiswabili* is used. The language of sacred ritual is Arabic, so that, even in *Maulidi ya Kiswabili*, the readings and many of the hymns are in Arabic. Traditionally, new songs or verses were created on the spur of the moment in the midst of heightened devotion, but this rarely happens today. Old favorites are the rule. *Maulidi ya Kiswabili* readings often occur in streets which have been set off for the purpose by placing mats on the ground and enclosing the central area with ropes tied to temporary poles. Lights are strung between the poles and colored bits of cloth or paper are tied to the ropes. At the height of a reading more than one hundred men and boys participate while others gather around the perimeter.

The participants sit in two long rows on the mats facing each other. One row contains the readers and other leading religious figures of Lamu and the three *matari* players. Exact position in this row is determined by age or respect for a person's status, especially in the religious hierarchy of the town. The other row contains younger men and boys who at certain points in the ritual perform stylized dances on their knees, swaying from side to side. The drums accompany the hymns

but are silent during the readings. Each drum is tuned to a particular tension or pitch and each drummer plays a different rhythmic pattern. The three drums together create a dynamic and forceful accompaniment to the singing.

A *Maulidi ya Kiswabili* reading begins with *fatiba*, opening prayers. These are followed by the opening hymn which is the same at every reading. The first eight or nine verses are chanted by a teacher and the rest are sung by various individuals, with the whole group joining in the chorus. Another reading, chanted by one of the leading teachers present follows the hymn. Readings and hymns alternate until the *maqam*, the verse which mentions the birth of the Prophet, is reached. At this point everyone rises and a series of hymns unique to this part of the reading is sung. After the singing of five or six of these hymns, everyone sits down again, final prayers called *dua* are said, and refreshments of dates and coffee are served. The whole reading usually takes about two and a half or three hours.

The readings themselves are well known to nearly everyone involved since they occur at every performance. However, the leader can choose to leave out or include particular sections on a given night depending on the enthusiasm of the men participating or other subjective judgments. The first two hymns are the same for every reading, but the rest are chosen spontaneously by anyone who wishes to do so, merely by reciting the chorus of the hymn as soon as it becomes apparent the reader has finished. The timing of the entrance of the hymns is remarkable; there is very little pause between readings and hymns. Direct competition of two hymns beginning at the same time is also rare.

The hymns consist of a chorus which is sung by everyone, and verses which are introduced spontaneously by various individuals. Most of the verses are familiar to the others and many join in with the original reciter before he finishes his lines. The verses for a given hymn vary from reading to reading and are interchangeable from hymn to hymn, so long as they fit

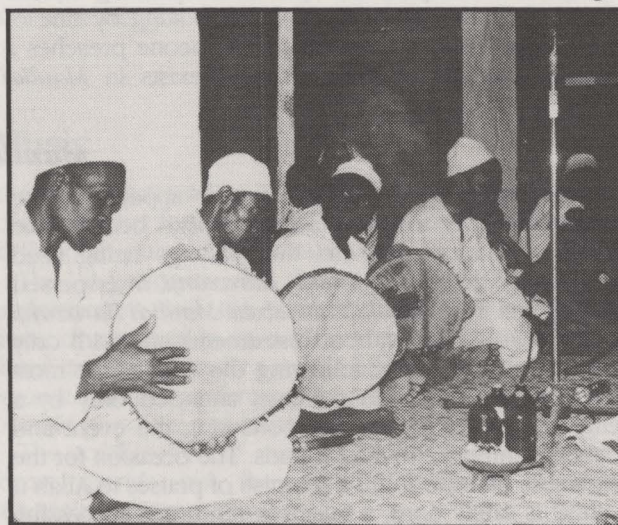


the scansion of the musical line. The number of verses also varies from ten to as many as thirty. On occasion, someone chants a longer verse than usual in a style called *kukangaya*, which means shaking. This style is borrowed from the form of *maulidi* called *Maulidi ya Kukangaya*, which is now known only by a small number of older religious devouts. Examples occur in this recording, and the single performance of *kukangaya* witnessed in the field is excerpted on this record.

At an indeterminate point the group begins to recite the last phrase or line of the hymn over and over again. This repetition is accompanied by synchronized body movements of all the younger men in the facing row, who rise up onto their knees and quickly adjust their positions so that their shoulders are lightly touching and their knees are aligned. The movements consist of gentle swaying from side to side and forward and back with the arms held at angles in front of the body or with hands on shoulders. The duration of the repetitions depends again upon the enthusiasm of the participants. Tension mounts during this chant, being encouraged by the intensity of the drums, until one of the leaders begins a repetition of the entire hymn and the whole group joins in. This ends that hymn and the next reading begins.

*Maulidi ya Kiswabili* is performed on the average

of once a week by one of two loosely organized groups in the town, for no reason other than to praise the Prophet. It is believed that praises of the Prophet result in blessings on those who do it, and so the more often it is done, the better. Besides, for the people of Lamu, it is an exciting addition to their regular prayers and they take great satisfaction in a well executed reading.



**Matari players accompanying *Maulidi ya Kiswabili***

## Side 2, Band 1

### *Maulidi al-Habshi*

*Maulidi al-Habshi* is the most recent form of *maulidi* to be introduced into Lamu. All informants agree that it was written by Ali ibn Muhammad al-Habshi, who taught in the Hadramaut on the southern coast of the Saudi Arabian peninsula around the turn of the twentieth century. One informant mentioned 1295 a.h. (1915 a.d.) as an approximate date for the death of al-Habshi.

Sources in Lamu knowledgeable about the life of al-Habshi say that the ritual came to the East African coast because the Sultan of Hadramaut became alarmed at the rising influence al-Habshi was gaining with Bedouin tribesmen, who were attracted to his teachings because of the *maulidi* celebrations he regularly performed. In order to prevent his teachings from being suppressed by governmental action, al-Habshi dispatched students to other parts of the Muslim world which had regular contact with the Hadramaut and probably contained Hadrami settlements. These included Java, Singapore, and significantly, Lamu.

Al-Habshi's *maulidi* was adopted for local use in Lamu by a saintly ascetic teacher, Saleh ibn Alwy ibn Abdullah Jamal Al-Lail, who has come to be called Habib Saleh, *Habib* being an honorific title meaning "beloved," which is attached to the names of especially saintly teachers after their deaths. Habib Saleh attracted many students both by his energetic teaching and through the use of *Maulidi al-Habshi* as a devotional device. Because of his widespread influence as a teacher, his house came to be used by many people as a mosque. Some time before his death a new and larger mosque, called the Riadha Mosque, was built near his original house. The Mosque is now one of the most influential

schools of Muslim law and practice in all of East Africa. His descendants and their pupils still practice *Maulidi al-Habshi* on a regular basis. It is the form used for the annual celebration of the birth of the Prophet, organized and led by the teachers of the Riadha Mosque, and attended by thousands of visitors from all over East Africa.

The performance of *Maulidi al-Habshi* resembles *Maulidi ya Kiswabili*, containing regular readings interspersed with hymns, beginning with *fatihah* and ending with *dua*. However, the readings or hymns used in *Maulidi al-Habshi* never occur in *Maulidi ya Kiswabili* or vice versa. In addition, the social organization of *Maulidi al-Habshi* readings is very different. In the first place, all the readings are done by teachers from the Riadha Mosque rather than by a variety of religious leaders. Secondly, the teachers start all the hymns and recite the verses. The verses are regular for each hymn, the same ones being used each time a particular hymn is performed. Other participants join in repetitions of the verses and the chorus of hymns and responses during the readings. The most active participants in a *Maulidi al-Habshi* reading are students from the Riadha Mosque. Others attend the readings, but are less directly involved than they are in *Maulidi ya Kiswabili* readings.

The hymns are accompanied by two *matari*, played by young teachers from the Riadha Mosque. Occasionally, when the reading becomes very enthusiastic, a few boys or one or two men who participate in nearly every public *maulidi* reading in town beat the single-headed drum, *kigoma*, with a snapping motion that enhances the sound of the *matari*. This also happens on occasion in a *Maulidi ya Kiswabili* reading. The boys,



who are seated facing their teachers and other dignitaries who are attending the reading, dance with a subdued swaying and forward and back motion. The dancing is not as coordinated as in *Maulidi ya Kiswabili* readings, but when the fervor reaches its peak, it does allow considerable room for individual expression.

After the *maqam* with its accompanying hymns and the *dua*, a special song is often sung by one of the Riadha leaders. Occasionally, someone preaches a sermon. Neither of these features exists in *Maulidi*

*ya Kiswabili* readings.

During the month long celebration of the birth of the Prophet, *Maulidi al-Habsbi* is read in nearly every mosque in Lamu. *Maulidi ya Kiswabili* is not read at all during that month. After the celebration reaches its climax in the Riadha Mosque itself, the teachers and students travel to many of the towns on the islands surrounding Lamu, bringing the celebration and reading of *Maulidi al-Habsbi* to those mosques as well.

## Band 2

### *Maulidi Barazanji*

Occasionally, at a celebration that appears to the outside observer to be *Maulidi al-Habsbi* because the Riadha sharifs are present, the readings being used are actually those of *Maulidi Barazanji*, interspersed with hymns from *Maulidi al-Habsbi*. *Maulidi Barazanji* is customarily read without instruments and with only one song immediately following the *maqam*. It most often occurs in private readings attended only by a religious leader, the family sponsoring the event and a small number of invited friends. The occasion for the reading is often to fulfill a promise of praises to Allah if a child is safely born, a business venture is successful, or someone's desire to make the pilgrimage to Mecca has become a reality. *Maulidi Barazanji* is commonly used by women for private devotions. Some readings, especially those in honor of a deceased relative or an honored teacher, have become annual events.

The form of *Maulidi Barazanji* is similar to

*Maulidi ya Kiswabili* and *Maulidi al-Habsbi*, consisting of *fatiba*, four basic chapters which can be supplemented, and *dua*. The whole reading takes less than an hour. Refreshments after the reading are often very elaborate since a small number of people attend and the success of the reading is a reflection upon the generosity of the host.

*Maulidi Barazanji* can be enlarged by the addition of sacred songs or hymns, but it has no hymns of its own. As is heard on the second volume in this set, the use of *Maulidi Barazanji* readings combined with a particular style of hymn, *samai*, is becoming very popular in Lamu. When it is used in this way, the readings are referred to by the name of the musical style rather than as *maulidi*. The recording of *Maulidi Barazanji* on this record is as it is most commonly known in Lamu.

## Band 3

### *Maulidi Diriji*

This recording of *Maulidi Diriji* is unique. It was performed in Pate, a village which today sits in the middle of the ruins of a much larger and more powerful town, which was dominant in the northern coastal region until the seventeenth century. *Maulidi Diriji* was played during a large wedding celebration in Pate to which many people from Siyu, another town about an hour's walk away on the same island, were invited. It is likely that some of the drummers and "readers" were from Siyu.

People said very little about *Maulidi Diriji*, except that it was old and its performance was restricted to Pate and Siyu. Its form is similar to other *maulidi*

consisting of chanted readings (recitations would be a better word, since there is no book present) and hymns chanted by a number of men at the same time. The readings are longer than those contained in *Maulidi ya Kiswabili* or *Maulidi al-Habsbi* and are recited in a more songlike style. The whole form could be said to consist of hymns alone, but without further study, this judgement should be withheld.

The hymns were accompanied by seven, or occasionally eight, *matari*, which were larger than those used in Lamu and most of which did not have the metal rings in their rims.

## Band 4

### *Maulidi Sharaful Anam (Kukangaya)*

*Maulidi Sharaful Anam* means "the model of mankind." It is a form that is known only to a few men in Lamu, and it was performed only once during the year of my stay there. It is executed without instrumental accompaniment and is performed without reference to any written sources. It consists of three parts called *Witiria*, *Hamzia* and *Burdai*. The whole of *Maulidi Sharaful Anam* takes more than twelve hours to perform, ideally with each section performed from beginning to end without interruption. If time does not allow for a complete reading, the first section is interrupted in the middle and the second started. The performance from which this excerpt is taken lasted nearly seven hours.

Another name for *Maulidi Sharaful Anam* is *Maulidi Kukangaya*, which refers to the "trembling" vocal quality used during the solo singing. The songs consist of sections chanted by the leader interspersed with repetitions and choruses by the whole group. However, because very few know this form in its entirety, most participants were able to join in only sporadically. In fact, the leader of this performance, which took place in the house of a deeply religious man in Lamu, was from Siyu. He brought a group of his students to assist him, and these men contributed the bulk of the group recitations.

Occasionally *kukangaya*-style chanting is used during a hymn. When this happens, the group activity



is interrupted while a leader chants. The texts used may be from *Maulidi Sharaful Anam*, although no one could identify them as such. Only the style of presentation was recognized as *kukangaya*. As was mentioned in relation to *Maulidi ya Kiswahili*, this style has carried over into that form also.

*Maulidi Sharaful Anam* is considered to be very old. The latter two sections are said to have been composed by a teacher called al-Busry. *Kukangaya*

came to Siyu over three hundred years ago from the Comoro Islands, which have had contact with the Lamu Archipelago for many centuries. It is said that al-Busry composed *Burdai*, which refers to Muhammed's outer garment, during an illness when he had a vision of the Prophet covering him with his cloak. All the men familiar with *Maulidi Sharaful Anam* treasure it highly and were delighted when a reading of it was performed.

## Volume II

### Other Sacred Music

The distinction between religious and secular music is indigenous to Lamu. It is not expressed in categorical terms, but becomes apparent in the attitudes of people toward certain song styles and instruments and toward the context in which they occur. In fact, with the exception of funeral processions, each of the musical forms heard on this disc occur in close association to *maulidi*, the paramount religious musical form of Lamu.

*Samai* is performed during the annual celebration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad by members of mosques other than the Riadha Mosque, as an enthusiastic supplement to the central readings. *Kasida* and *dhikiri* are performed by the celebrants

after a *maulidi* reading in order to continue the praises of the Prophet for several more hours. *Zefe* always occur at the high point of the annual celebration.

The instruments that appear in sacred musical performances are the *matari*, the tambourine-like frame drums used in *maulidi*, *nai*, the small, end-blown flutes, and occasionally a very small single-headed drum, *ngoma*. Sacred performances occur both inside and outside mosques and in private homes.

The combination of *maulidi* and these other sacred forms rounds out the exciting religious musical repertoire of Lamu, Kenya.

### Side 1, Band 1

#### *Samai*

*Samai* in Arabic means "spiritual concert." It originally was applied to mystical performances which included song, dance and teaching. In Lamu the term is usually applied to a particular song style rather than to an entire ritual, although *samai* performances often include all three of the original elements.

*Samai* is said to have been introduced into Lamu by Habib Saleh, the same teacher who was responsible for the development of *Maulidi al-Habsbi* in the religious life of the community. It is usually played by members of the Jamal al-Lail family, descendants of Habib Saleh, or by their students. Many of the songs are thought to be very old, but others are known to have been composed by contemporary musicians, particularly two leading teachers from the Jamal al-Lail family.

*Samai* songs are sung to the accompaniment of at least three *matari*. In addition, several *nai*, small

end-blown flutes, are used. Originally these flutes were crafted out of bronze or wood, but most modern *nai* are plastic or metal. They have five finger holes on the upper surface and a thumb hole underneath. The *nai* is placed on the mouth slightly off center so that the player is not blowing directly into the end, but is also not blowing strictly across the opening. The sound is not as clear as that of a recorder nor as "breathy" as many side-blown flutes. The clarity of sound depends upon the mastery of the instruments by the player. Many young boys and men play the instrument in Lamu, but few have learned to control the sound.

The singing style of *samai* songs resembles that used in *Maulidi al-Habsbi* readings. A leader sings verses while the group joins in the repeat of the choruses. Often during the performance of a modern *samai* song, a *nai* player executes a solo passage in a manner not unlike a jazz musician playing a riff.

### Band 2

#### *Kasida*

*Kasida* is an Arabic term which in Lamu is applied to many hymns and songs sung in praise of the Prophet. It is not applied to the hymns used in any form of *maulidi*, nor to *samai* songs, although on occasion a *kasida* may be sung as an added hymn of praise or be performed with *matari* and *nai* accompaniment. *Kasida* are sung by men, women and children at almost any time of day for no more reason than to enjoy the pleasure of the song. The origins of particular *kasida* are not well known; they are simply part of the repertoire of nearly every person in town.

Contemporary musicians compose *kasida* for religious performance whenever the opportunity arises.

The song on this recording, *Mzuri sana Nabia*, is performed by the composer, Hussein Badawy Jamal al-Lail. He is a well-known teacher and musician in East Africa, having founded mosque colleges in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Arua, Uganda, where he was residing at the time of the recording. He has recorded several other of his songs for public distribution to disseminate his appealing songs of praise of the Prophet. This song was recorded on the porch of a house near the beautiful mosque college in Mamburi, Kenya. The college was founded in a coastal village near the resort town of Malindi by a son-in-law of Habib Saleh and is now led by Muhammad Sharif



Said, who played the *nai* in the previous *samai* selection. The musical as well as religious contribution of

this family to the East African Muslim community is profound.

## Side 2, Band 1

### *Dhikiri*

*Dhikiri* is not regularly performed in Lamu. Several informants encouraged me to attend a *dhikiri* performance, but I could not locate one until one night, in Mambui, Kenya, I happened to be present when *dhikiri* was performed. The mosque in Mambui is a satellite of the Riadha Mosque in Lamu, being noted for its musical rituals. Several of its teachers are outstanding musicians.

*Dhikiri* is known to occur in many parts of the Muslim world. It is supposed to be based upon the Quranic injunction, "Remember God with frequent remembrance and glorify Him morning and evening." This mandate has evolved into recitations that involve the chanting of songs, accompanied by constant repetition of the name of Allah. In some places these recitations reach a high pitch of intensity, due at least in part to the hyperventilation that results from aspirating "Allah"

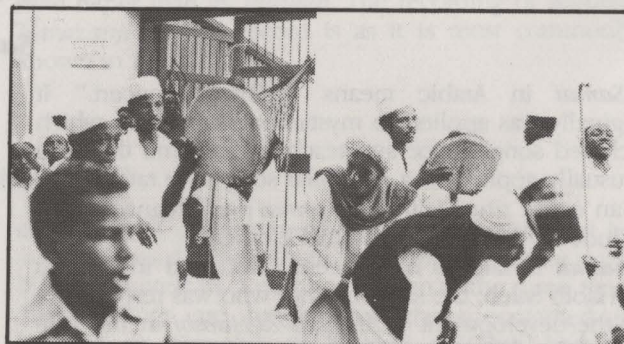
over and over again. On occasion, some may experience seizures by the spirit or indulge in self-flagellation during *dhikiri*.

In Mambui, the performance of *dhikiri* reached a peak of emotional intensity and one seizure did occur, but most of the performance was marked more by the involvement of the men in the joy of their praises and in the beauty of the hymns. The soloist in the first song on this recording is Mohammad Khitami, a young teacher, scholar and musician who was teaching in Malindi at the time. He is a son of one of the leading descendants of Habib Saleh. The reciter and leader of the second song is Hussein Badawy, the singer and composer of the *kasida* heard on side 1, band 2, of this record. The combination of these two men together was electrifying.

## Band 2

### *Zefe*

A *zefe* is a procession, not a style of music, yet in Lamu some music was used exclusively in *zefe*. Hymns from *Maulidi ya Kiswabili* and *kasida* were also performed, but exclusively *zefe* songs were especially popular. They are performed in grand processions through the streets of the town before crowds of women and children and an occasional tourist who is attracted by the music. *Zefe* usually precede and often follow a ritual called *ziara*, which is a visit to the grave of an honored person to sing praises of the Prophet and to heap blessings upon the head of the deceased. Some *zefe* were more elaborate than others, the largest of all being the one to the gravesite of Habib Saleh at the end of *maulidi*, the celebration of the birth of the Prophet, sponsored by the Riadha Mosque. The many visitors to Lamu for the festival contribute great enthusiasm to the *zefe*, each group performing music associated with its own village or school. One of the most popular songs is a justification of singing *maulidi*, directed at those who oppose such "noisy" displays



***Zefe* being led by teachers dancing enthusiastically**

of overenthusiastic devotion. Today, there are few such opponents in Lamu, but in the past such resistance was much more widespread. Songs like this one reflect a tension that was once a serious problem for the teachers and leaders of the community.

## Band 3

### *Funeral Procession*

The chants sung by a group of school boys who precede the procession and by the men bearing the coffin of a deceased person to the burial ground are among the most sensitive musical lines to be heard in Lamu. The contrast between praise and sorrow as expressed in these songs is a clear expression of the religious convictions that permeate Lamu society and the tragedies that affect the lives of every man and woman.

The body of the deceased is prepared for the burial at home and is then taken to a mosque where family

and friends gather for prayers. Immediately thereafter the coffin is borne to the graveyard for interment. The boys walk first and are followed closely by the men who are continuously replacing each other as pallbearers. At the grave the body is placed on a terrace dug out of the side of the grave, lying on its side facing Mecca.

After the burial special prayers and praises are sung either at the homes of close relatives or in mosques. Women close to the deceased must remain indoors and mourn for at least three days.



## Volume III

### Secular Music

Secular music in Lamu is clearly marked by the contexts in which it occurs. The first and most important context is the wedding. Although marriage is contracted in the presence of a religious leader, often in a mosque, the great majority of events that occur during a wedding are non-religious, being clearly viewed as separate from the short, formal ceremony itself.

Men dance *goma*, *kirumbizi* and, on occasion, *chama*. Women process in the street carrying gifts and dancing *vugo* and, on the morning after the consummation of the marriage, they carry *msuwaki* to the

groom's home. During the previous night they dance *chakacha* nonstop until dawn. Meanwhile, the men have been listening to *tarab* while enjoying cups of tea.

*Chama* and *goma* have also become associated with national patriotic celebrations, being performed during public ceremonies and on the streets throughout a holiday.

The instruments used in these dance forms never appear in mosques or during religious ceremonies. This distinction alone is enough to clearly mark the separation of sacred and secular music in Lamu.

#### Side 1, Band 1

##### Goma

*Goma* is associated with Siyu and Faza. It was seen once in Lamu itself and that was when visitors from these other towns performed it on the occasion of the annual celebration of *maulidi* in front of the Riadha Mosque.

A space about twenty-five feet square is roped off for the performance. Chairs for special guests may be placed inside the ropes on one side of the square while the accompanying ensemble is placed on the opposite side. The instrumentation consists of a *goma*, a large single-headed drum standing on the ground on its own feet, a *chapuo*, an *utasa* and a *zumari*. Other observers stand outside the ropes. The dancers, dressed in white gowns called *kanzu*, and small hats called *kofia*, assemble in a line, single file, shoulder to shoulder, along the third side. They each carry a cane about four feet long, called *bakora*, in the right hand.

The dance is divided into two parts as can be discerned on the recording. During the first part the dancers quietly shift their weight from left to right while gesturing with the canes. The dancer begins the sequence holding the cane straight up along his right side. On the second half of a count of eight he lifts the cane up to a forty-five degree angle in front of himself. Simultaneously with a heavy thud being struck on the *goma*, he snaps his wrist and the cane away from his body. He then brings it down again beside his body. At intervals the group sings short songs.

During the second half of the dance the drum beat is faster, the gesture with the canes is not done, and no songs are sung. On another occasion than the one on this recording, various other gestures were performed with the canes, such as holding them parallel to the ground in both hands in front of the body, or dropping the ends to the ground while leaning on them.

Throughout the entire dance a leader, *kiongozi*, walks back and forth in front of the line calling on the dancers to keep themselves in order. The dancers must keep their eyes fixed, not allowing themselves to be distracted. Friends may approach a dancer and place a lighted cigarette or a piece of candy in his mouth, or pin money on his clothing. In addition, women may line up outside the cleared area facing a horizontal pole which they strike in time with the drumming.

Sometimes *Goma* is performed by two groups at the same time, as a competition. The contest is one of endurance as the dance continues throughout the night. However, when *Goma* is performed as part of a wedding celebration, it lasts only two or three hours. It is followed by a procession to the bride's house where the dancing continues a little longer and appropriate songs are sung. This part of the performance is called *nimbi berero*.

#### Band 2

##### Chama

*Chama* is a men's dance which is indigenous to Matandoni, the small village on the opposite side of the island from Lamu, near the mainland. It is the newest village on the island. Its inhabitants are principally descendants of immigrants from towns north of Lamu, especially Pate and Siyu. The people of Matandoni have carved out their place in the area by becoming shipbuilders, the town's location being ideal for preparing a dhow and launching it on its maiden voyage. The harbor is shallow and is nearly waterless at low tide.

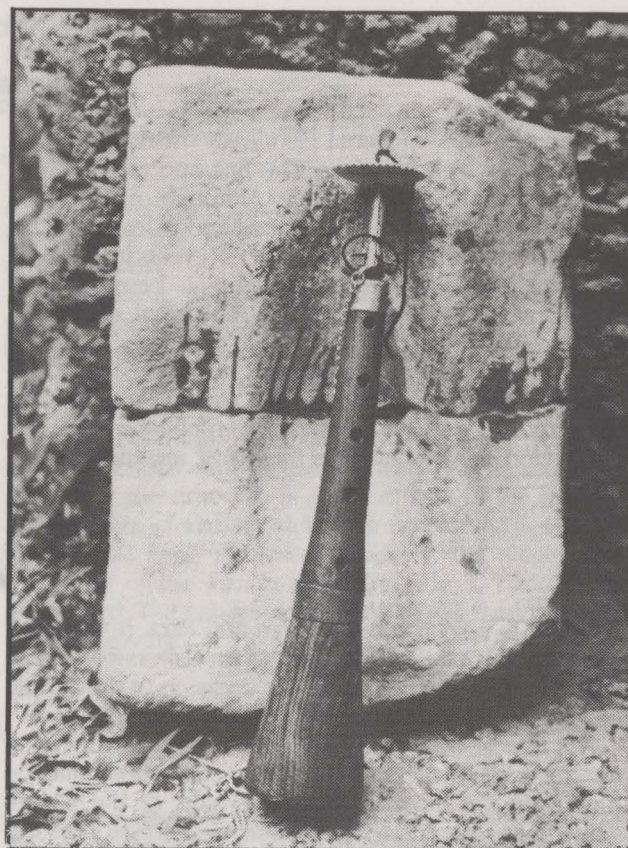
The performance of *chama* on this recording was done by a group of visitors to a wedding in Lamu. Seventeen men and boys from Matandoni performed

the dance in a vacant space on the waterfront. They were dressed in white *kanzu* and *kofia*, the traditional dress of respect for religious men. Each man was also decorated with sashes and garlands of flowers and carried a sword or a cane which he waved in synchrony with the others, not unlike the movements of *goma*. A few wore belts with bells which jingled as they danced. The men entered a roped-off enclosure in a single line, doing a shuffling step which required that the feet remain in the same relationship to each other, the right foot always being in front. The left foot was crossed behind the right, just touching the ground with the ball of the foot. The line undulated as the men shuffled first to the right and then to the left. After all had



entered and circumnavigated the enclosure, they formed a line along one side of the square. At this point, a man emerged from the line and began to shout instructions concerning which song to sing, the position of the canes and coordination of movements. At one point, they all laid their canes and swords on the ground, crossed their arms on their chests and swayed from side to side in unison while continuing the gentle shuffle. The dance ended when the groom joined the line and they processed away from the enclosure and down the street, leading him home.

The instrumental ensemble for *chama* consists of a large single-headed drum, simply called *ngoma kuu*, "the large drum," which is struck with the left hand and with a stick held in the right hand; two *vyapuo*, small double headed drums played with both hands; *utasa*, a small metal plate placed inside a larger one and struck with a knotted piece of rope called *zibojolo*; and a *zumari*, an oboe-like double reed instrument with five finger holes.



**Zumari**

### **Band 3**

#### **Tarab**

*Tarab* is the salon music of Lamu. It does not usually accompany dancing, but rather is heard when men or women are lounging during a wedding celebration, passing time until another important part of the festivities begin. It is a recent addition to the Lamu repertoire, being borrowed in part from Far Eastern sources. None of the instruments is indigenous to the East African coast. In fact, the harmonium, the two small single-headed drums and the bongos are all imported from the Far East. On the other hand, the poems sung to *tarab* tunes are in *kiswabili* and conform to traditional *Swabili* verse forms. These consist of two short lines, the second of which is linked to other sets

of lines by a rhyme in the last syllable. Some of the tunes are original to the poets, others are borrowed from Indian movies which are frequently shown in Lamu.

This performance by the Harambee Music Club was part of a daily exhibition the young men presented in a small room for the pleasure of their friends, themselves, and an occasional tourist. The poem was composed by Famau, the singer, who accompanies himself on the harmonium with the rest of the group playing the rhythmic background. There are several other groups playing *tarab* in the vicinity of Lamu, all in competition with each other.

### **Side 2, Band 1**

#### **Kirumbizi**

*Kirumbizi* is a highly competitive stick dance which usually occurs during wedding celebrations. Two men step around the perimeter of a large clearing approximately sixty feet across, carrying sticks in their right hands. The sticks, called *mpweke*, are over five feet long. At first the men walk in a stylized fashion paying little attention to one another, but soon they turn and approach the center of the circle. Occasionally one or the other strikes the ground with a stick. Finally one strikes the other's stick a hard blow and then quickly holds the stick and his other arm in front of his own head as if to parry a counterattack. Each man does this until someone else enters the circle or until one of the combatants runs to the edge and tosses his stick to

someone else.

Although the competition is basically friendly, once in a while tempers flare. The lead drummer, playing a *vumi* with two sticks, can control the intensity by reducing his intricate drum pattern to a single beat. Whenever he does this, the contestants are supposed to back away and resume the circumlocution of the clearing. On one occasion, a drummer did not slow his beat in time to prevent a few vicious blows from being administered. The surrounding crowd became very angry at the drummer, not the offending dancer.

The other instruments used in *kirumbizi* are a *chapuo*, a *goma*, a *zumari* and an *utasa*. The *vumi* is the lead drum.



## Band 2

### Vugo

*Vugo* is a very popular women's dance, which customarily is done as a procession through the streets of the town. During a wedding celebration, gifts are taken from the groom's family to the bride's household. Some of the gifts are carried on cloth-covered platters borne on the heads of important women of the groom's family. The procession is accompanied by a small band consisting of a trumpet, called a *tarumbeta*, and two drums that can be carried by means of a sash thrown over the drummer's shoulder. One of these is usually a *chapuo*; the other is given various names such as *vumi* or *kunda*. Occasionally, a western bass drum, called *beni*, is used with a snare drum.

The women in the procession carry cattle horns

called *pembe*, which they strike with sticks at various points in their songs. One or two members of the procession act as song leaders; the others join in as soon as they recognize the song, or respond with loud exclamations. At frequent intervals the procession stops and the group forms a rough circle and dances, bowing down and lifting up the horns while striking them more rapidly. On some occasions these steps are prearranged to occur in front of the houses of relatives of the bride, while at other times they occur whenever a leader decides it should happen.

The songs sung during *vugo* processions refer to the bride, events during the wedding or advice on

## Band 3

### Chakacha

In Lamu and the surrounding towns, *chakacha* is a women's dance. It is performed inside houses or in courtyards enclosed by mats hung from ropes strung between poles which are especially placed for the dance. Men, except for the musicians, are not supposed to witness a *chakacha* performance, and traditionally, girls who have never married are not permitted to perform, although today this prohibition is breaking down.

The instruments used in *chakacha* are two *vumi*, which are tuned a minor third apart by heating the heads, a *chapuo* and a long single-headed drum played by a standing drummer with the drum between his legs. In addition, a trumpet and rattles, called *kayamba*, are used. *Kayamba* are most often made from gourds,

although on one occasion they were made with empty tin cans and broken bottle glass.

The dance is done in a circle with the women following each other closely in a counterclockwise direction. Some put their hands on the shoulders of the one in front while others move independently. Each woman moves her feet, hips and shoulders in time with the music. The movements are not unlike some Latin American dances. Songs are sung occasionally, usually in response to the trumpet player. Many songs can be used interchangeably in *chakacha*, *vugo* or *kishuri*, a dance not often seen today, but which was probably the forerunner of *chakacha*. *Chakacha* dances last all night until time for the *msuwaki* just before dawn.

## Band 4

### Msuwaki

*Msuwaki* is not a dance, but rather a procession, during which a gift, also called *msuwaki*, is brought from the bride's family to the groom. The procession occurs after the all-night *chakacha*. The gift consists of perfume, soap and other personal articles, but the

essential factor is the poem that is sung as the procession arrives at the men's party. This is a personal song, composed especially for the occasion and sung by a few women or, if a *tarab* band is present, by one of the musicians.



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