

# ZANZIBAR

ITS HISTORY AND ITS PEOPLE

BY

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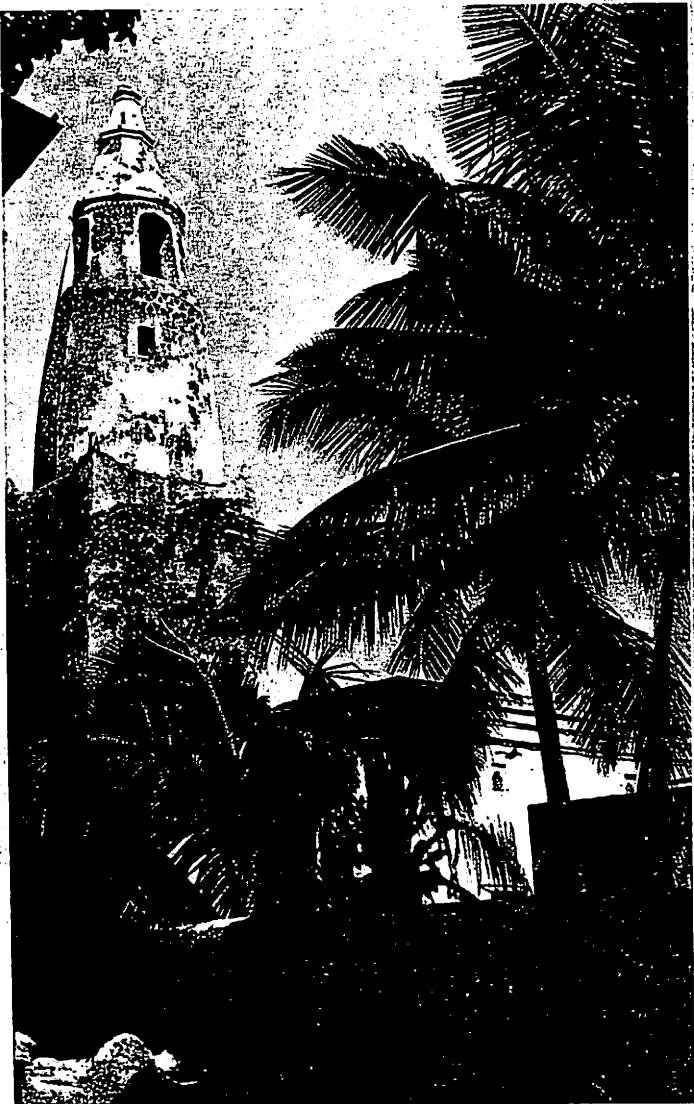
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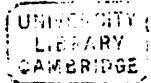
"CHRONOLOGY AND GENEALOGIES OF ZANZIBAR RULERS,"  
"SCHOOL HISTORY OF MAURITIUS," "SCHOOL HISTORY OF ZANZIBAR."

WITH PLATES, TEXT FIGURES, AND TWO MAPS



MOSQUE WITH MINARET, MALINDI, ZANZIBAR.

(Built late 19th century. Shape of Minaret and pattern of Chevron very similar to those used by the builders of Zimbabwe.)  
(Frontispiece)



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probably kept it to themselves for their own purposes, and for the same reason that the Phoenicians concealed their tin mines in Spain and Cornwall, i.e., that they alone might make profit of it. This discovery was of immense importance, as it meant that the Romans sent their shipping into the Indian Ocean. Hippalus's discovery is described in the *Periplus* and referred to by Pliny.

Pliny was more of a naturalist than a geographer, and his *Historia Naturalis* is more valuable in its descriptions of the products of countries than in its geography. He thought that the Atlantic Ocean began at Messylum (probably Ras Hantare, latitude  $11^{\circ} 28' N.$ ), so that his geography was even vaguer than that of his contemporaries.

The evidence of the early geographers shows that but little about Eastern Africa was known in the West, and practically nothing at all about that part of it which includes Zanzibar. It was Hippalus who showed the way to the East, and Western knowledge of the Indian Ocean dates from that discovery.

The most important authority for this period is the *Periplus*, to the unknown author of which we must be exceedingly grateful, for, except Neco's voyage, we have no other written mention of a voyage to Zinj until the flight of Suleiman and Said six centuries after, and but little after that for another three or four hundred years.

But the *Periplus* is of particular importance, because not only does it give us a description, however brief, of these countries in the first century, but it confirms our deductions regarding their early history.

It will be convenient to give in full that part of the *Periplus* which concerns the Zanzibar coast.

The author informs us that from Cape Guardafui to Opone (Ras Hafun) the coast was not subject to a king, but that each market-town was ruled by a separate chief.

He then goes on to say: "Beyond Opone, the shore trending more towards the south, first there are

the small and great bluffs of Azania; this coast is destitute of harbours, but there are places where ships can lie at anchor, the shore being abrupt; and this course is of six days, the direction being south-west. Then come the small and great beach for another six days' course, and after that in order, the Courses of Azania, the first being called Sarapion and the next Nicon; and after that several rivers and other anchorages, one after the other, separately a rest and a run for each day, seven in all, until the Pyralaæ Islands and what is called the channel; beyond which, a little to the south of south-west, after two courses of a day and night along the Ausanitic coast, is the island Menuthias, about three hundred stadia from the mainland, low and wooded, in which there are rivers and many kinds of birds and the mountain-tortoise. There are no wild beasts except the crocodiles; but there they do not attack men. In this place there are sewed boats, and canoes hollowed from single logs, which they use for fishing, and catching tortoise. In this island they also catch them in a peculiar way, in wicker baskets, which they fasten across the channel-opening between the breakers.

"Two days' sail beyond, there lies the very last market-town of the continent of Azania, which is called Rhapta; which has its name from the sewed boats (*πλοίαρια ραπτά*) already mentioned; in which there is ivory in great quantity, and tortoise-shell. Along this coast live men of piratical habits, very great in stature, and under separate chiefs for each place. The Mapharitic chief governs it under some ancient right that subjects it to the sovereignty of the state that is become first in Arabia. And the people of Muza now hold it under his authority, and send thither many large ships; using Arab captains and agents, who are familiar with the natives and intermarry with them, and who know the whole coast and understand the language.

"There are imported into these markets the lances made at Muza especially for this trade, and hatchets

and daggers and awls, and various kinds of glass; and at some places a little wine, and wheat, not for trade, but to serve for getting the good-will of the savages. There are exported from these places a great quantity of ivory, but inferior to that of Adulis, and rhinoceros-horn and tortoise-shell (which is in the best demand after that from India), and a little palm-oil.

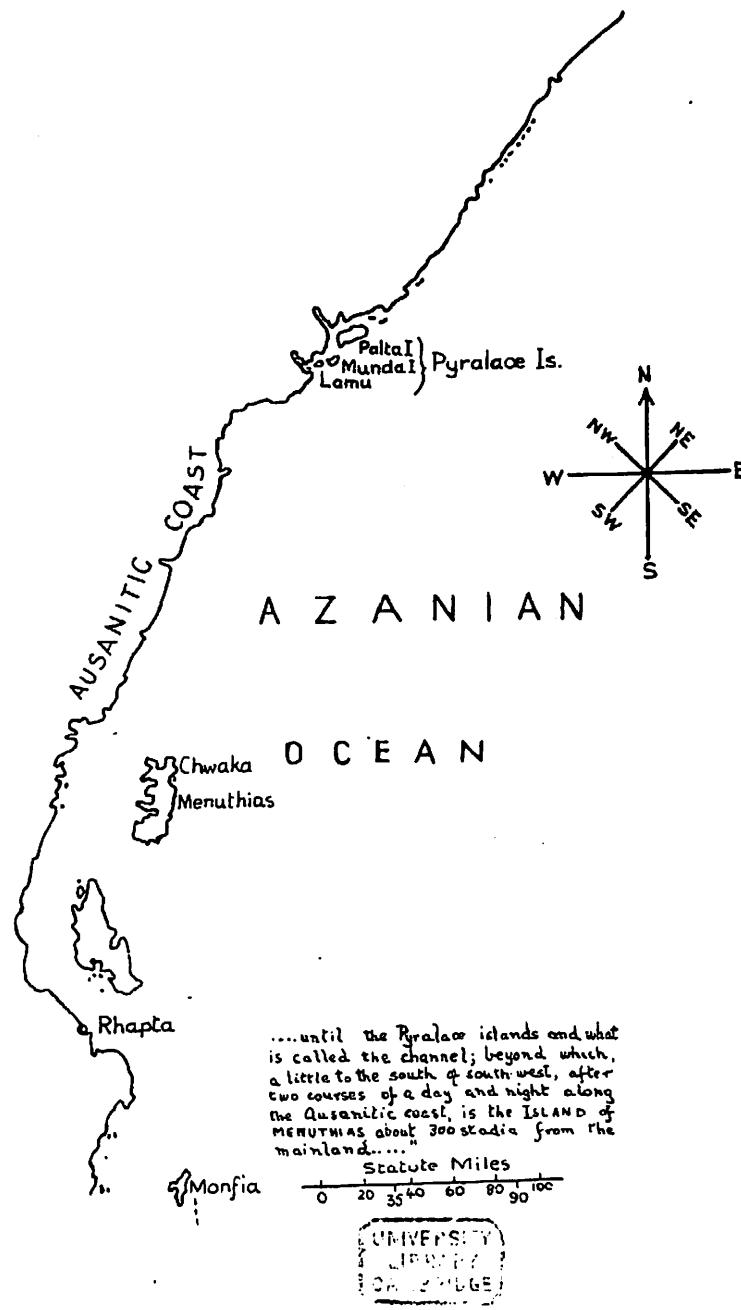
" And these markets of Azania are the very last of the continent that stretches down on the right hand from Berenice; for beyond these places the unexplored ocean curves around towards the west, and running along by the regions to the south of Ethiopia and Libya and Africa, it mingles with the western sea."

The " Bluffs of Azania " and the small and great beach are respectively El Hazin and Sif El Tanil, and the " Courses of Azania " are the Barr Ajjan and Benadir coast of the Arabs. The Pyralæ Islands are undoubtedly Pate, Manda and Lamu.

It is interesting to note that at this date the Pyralæ Islands were of no importance, for beyond the name no note is given of them. It is just possible that *Πυραλαῖ* is a corruption of Kipungani, for the channel referred to behind Lamu is called Mlango Kipungani by the natives, and is said by the *African Pilot* to be deep enough for large boats at low water.

The expression " Ausanitic coast " is interesting, as it shows that dominion over the coast by the South Arabians was well recognized. Ausan was a state of Arabia, independent about the seventh century B.C. Later Ausan was absorbed by another state, Kataban, and the coast became Katabanic. When Kataban fell to Saba, the Zanzibar coast passed with it too to the Sabæans, who in turn surrendered it to the Himyarites on their access to power.

We now come to Menuthias, which is generally identified with Pemba, Zanzibar or Mafia (in which it is supposed that the name is still perpetuated—till recently Mafia was called Monfyeh, though the native name is Chole). I prefer an identification with



trade is bounded only by the time during which there have been strong men and weaker for them to prey on. Tortoise-shell, rhinoceros-horn and palm-oil are still articles of export from Zanzibar. The imports—lances, hatchets, daggers, awls, glass, wine and wheat—are still much the same if brought up to date. In these days the most notable addition is clothing. The natives of Zanzibar wore their own vegetable-cloth clothing in those days, if indeed they wore anything at all.

Mr. Wells has picturesquely summed up the trade of this period thus: "Galleys and lateen-sailed ships entered and left crowded harbours, and made their careful way from headland to headland, and from headland to island, keeping always close to the land. Phœnician shipping under Egyptian owners was making its way into the East Indies and perhaps even farther into the Pacific. Across the deserts of Africa and Arabia, and through Turkestan, toiled the caravans with their remote trade; silk was already coming from China, ivory from Central Africa, and tin from Britain, to the centres of this new life in the world." From the emporia of Punt, of Ophir, and of Azania, these luxuries came to deck the temples and adorn the women of Babylon, of Nineveh, of Egypt, of Tyre and Sidon, of Jerusalem, of Greece and of Rome.

## CHAPTER VI

### REASONS FOR PAUCITY OF INFORMATION ABOUT EAST AFRICA FROM SECOND CENTURY TO SEVENTH CENTURY

FROM the time of Ptolemy to the time of the birth of Islam, information as to what was happening in Zanzibar is of the scantiest. In fact, during the whole of this time, we have not one single date on which to hang a narrative. The reason for this is that Europe and the Near East, from which alone any information concerning the coast could have been obtained, were far too occupied with their own troubles to give any attention to those of an outpost of the Himyaritic Empire, which was itself decaying.

During the second and third centuries A.D., the Roman Empire steadily declined, and, in the fourth and fifth centuries, the western part of it was overrun and destroyed by the Goths, the Vandals, the Huns and other barbarians. Though Constantinople was well placed to exercise dominion in any direction, the ineptitude of Constantine's successors, and the lack of spirit and sea craft are sufficient reasons for the fact that no advantage was taken of its favourable position.

### BANTU INVASION

The cradle of negroes in Africa was probably somewhere in the neighbourhood of the great lakes, where they pursued their agricultural calling, and expanded rapidly without interference, until a pastoral people, the Hamites, crossed over from Arabia into Africa.

The original home of the Bantu race is supposed to have been somewhere in the south-western basin

would appear from a passage in the book of the *Marvels of India* that A.D. 945, they sent a fleet numbering a thousand ships to conquer that Island of Cambalu (probably Pemba) in which the Arabs had established themselves two centuries earlier, with the intention of procuring for themselves and the Chinese, ivory, tortoise-shell, leopard skins, amber and slaves. They would not have succeeded in their main object, but by way of consolation, they would have carried fire and sword into many towns of the land of Sofala. It must be added, however, that the author of the book of *Marvels* seems not to have believed altogether the man who gave this information."

The Chinese records yield a fair amount of information which gives an idea of the knowledge they had of the coast. One of the most important books is that of Chau ju k'ua, entitled *Chu-fan, chi*, which deals with the Chinese and Arab trade in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Of Zanzibar Chau ju k'ua speaks as follows:

*"Ts'ong-pa*

"The Ts'ong-pa country is on an island of the sea south of Hu-ch'a-la.

"To the west it reaches to a great mountain. The inhabitants are of Ta'shi stock and follow the Ta'shi religion. They wrap themselves in blue foreign cotton stuffs, and wear red leather shoes.

"Their daily food consists of meal, baked cakes and mutton.

"There are many villages, and a succession of wooded hills and terraced rocks.

"The climate is warm, and there is no cold season.

"The products of the country consist of elephants' tusks, native gold, ambergris and yellow sandal-wood. Every year Hu-ch'a-la and the Ta'shi localities along the sea coast send ships to this country,

with white cotton cloths, porcelain, copper and red cotton to trade."

Ts'ong-pa is the Chinese form of Zanzibar. Here the author means not only the island, but the whole of the territory formerly known as Zanguebar.

Hu-ch'a-la is Gujarat, and the Ta'shi are Arabs. The great mountain is probably Kilimanjaro.

As regards Pemba, the following item which appears in Probsthain's *Catalogue of Chinese Art*, is of interest.

*"The K'un lun Ts'eng K'i country [the Zandj (or blacks) of K'un lun (Madagascar or Pemba)]*

"In the south-west parts adjoining is an island in the sea. This land possesses a huge bird. (The ruc of Arab writers; see *Marco Polo*, Book III, Chapter XXXVII, on Madagascar and Zanzibar.)

"You may cut the quills of their wings to make water-carrying utensils out of them (meaning: carrying on each end of a shoulder-pole). Moreover, they are black-bodied wild men; if you entice them with food you barter as many as you like to do work (as slaves) for the foreign (i.e., Arab) trader."

This painting is numbered as Item IV in a list of six pictures of the Sung dynasty attributed to Li Lung Mien, one of the most famous artists of the world, and the first among all the painters of the Sung dynasty. The set represents scenes from "Foreign and Strange Lands"; opposite each picture there is a Chinese explanation. The English translation in this particular case is given above.

The parentheses are those of Professor Parker who identifies K'un lun as Madagascar or Pemba. This identification, I believe, rests on a note in Yule's *Marco Polo*. Yule says, "Barbier de Meynard (in his edition of Masudi's *Meadows of Gold*) thinks this (Kambalu—of which K'un lun is the Chinese form)

may be Madagascar. I suspect it rather to be Pemba." Yule gives neither here nor elsewhere any reason for his supposition, but his alternative identification has been quoted by several authorities.

In the chapter dealing with the records of the Arabian geographers, Kambalu has been identified with Mkumbuu in Pemba, and the reasons there given for this identification make it tolerably sure that in the above picture we have a representation of the Chinese idea of Pemba at some time during the period A.D. 960-1280.

Chau ju k'ua has the following chapter in the section of his book called "Countries in the Sea."

*"K'un lun-ts'öng-K'i*

"This country is in the south-west. It is adjacent to a large island.

"There are usually there (i.e., on the island) great p'öng birds which so mask the sun in their flight that the shade on the sundial is shifted.

"If the great p'öng bird finds a wild camel it swallows it, and if one should chance to find a p'öng's feather, he can make a water-butt of it, after cutting off the hollow quill.

"The products of the country are big elephants' tusks, and rhinoceros' horns.

"In the west there is an island in the sea on which there are many savages, with bodies as black as lacquer and with frizzled hair.

"They are enticed by (offers of) food, then caught and carried off for slaves to the Ta'shi countries where they fetch a high price.

"They are used as gate-keepers (lit. to look after the gate bolts). It is said that they do not long for their kinfolk."

The large island is probably Madagascar, and the p'öng or pheng, as the Japanese called it, is the rukh of the *Arabian Nights*.

Madagascar was considered adjacent to the Zanzibar coast. The method of enticing children with sweetmeats, and then capturing them as slaves, is an old one, used successfully until the abolition of slavery. The natives of Tumbatu still refer to its use on that island, while Idris (I. 58) says that the Arabs of Oman kidnapped children on the Zanzibar coast by this means. This was in the twelfth century.

In these days then, especially those of the Ming dynasty, Chinese shipping reached far over the seas, and they had a considerable overseas trade; as this was so, and as their descendants are still trading here to-day, it may be wondered why they have not developed their sea trade more.

Mr. Wells has admirably summed up the reasons in his *Outline of History*, and traces them without doubt to the difficulties of writing, speaking and learning Chinese, which even to this day makes Chinese history and the general study of China a closed book to all but the few. Such a drawback cannot but have acted adversely on their relations with Bantu peoples. Other languages they could, and did assimilate, but Chinese would offer almost insuperable difficulties.