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Religious Teaching in Government Schools in Colonial Zanzibar

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1. Political Decisions and Educational Developments: An Overview

Zanzibar was proclaimed a British Protectorate in 1890. This was followed by the restructuring of the government administration into various departments led by British rule. The Oman Arab rulers were forced to surrender their power to the British colonialists.

This paper examines the introduction of religious teaching in government schools in colonial Zanzibar. It demonstrates that the intention of the colonial state was to provide Zanzibari children with the capacity to serve the colonial government. The colonists were not much interested in introducing Islamic religious teaching in these government schools. Religious teaching and Qur'an classes were introduced in government schools only when Muslim parents in Zanzibar resolved to resist colonial education..

Prior to their colonisation, Zanzibar and the other East African coastal towns (circa 1840) were put under the control of the Busaidi rulership. Said b. Sultan (1840-1856), the first Oman Arab ruler in East Africa, chose Zanzibar as the headquarters of the East African domain. He ran the administration of Oman and the East African coastal towns while in Zanzibar. In order to ensure political stability as well as the support of his co-religionists in East Africa, Said b. Sultan invited Muslim scholars from Arabia, India, Somalia, Yemen and Oman to come and settle in Zanzibar. It was from 1840 onwards that the Ibadi, Sunni and Shi`ah scholars settled down in Zanzibar. This transformed the island into a

center of religious learning throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many Qur'an schools and *madrāsas* spread throughout the Island of Unguja and Pemba, which formed Zanzibar, in urban and rural areas. The higher centers of religious learning and *tariqa* centers which emerged in Zanzibar were concentrated in Zanzibar Town. The *Gofu* mosque and *Ukutani Madrasa* became famous religious centers in Zanzibar and on the East African coast.

1.1 Qur'an Schools

Traditionally, the first schooling a child receives in Muslim societies is in a Qur'an school. These are to be found in the cities, towns and villages of almost all Muslim countries. In these schools children chant Qur'anic verses and chapters, prayers and religious poems on a daily basis. These schools are located in mosques, private houses or premises set aside specifically for this purpose. Normally, the teacher sits facing the students. In some cases the teacher is assisted by one of the pupils who is considered the brightest or the oldest in the class. Children between the ages of six and fifteen are admitted to the Qur'an schools where boys and girls memorize the whole Qur'an. The higher class of learning, namely the *madrasa*, normally begins for these children after they have memorized the Qur'an; for the older children these classes are usually conducted in the mosques.

It is probable that Qur'an schools were first established in Zanzibar in the tenth century when Muslim traders from Arabia and Persia migrated to the island. The Shirazi Muslim migrants built a mosque at Kizimkazi to the south of Zanzibar in 1012 A.D. It is among the oldest mosques in East Africa. It appears likely that the Qur'an schools first sprouted in this area and later in other parts of the Islands. Many Omani Arabs settled in Zanzibar after the downfall of Portuguese in East Africa in 1728, leading to an increase in the Muslim population on the Island. The subsequent migration of Muslim communities from Arabia, India, Yemen, Lamu, Comoro and Kilwa from the mid nineteenth century necessitated the introduction of more Qur'an schools. By 1850 many Comorian Qur'an school teachers had migrated to Zanzibar which resulted in an increase in the number of such schools in the urban and rural areas of Zanzibar.

1.2 Missionary and Communal Educational Institutions

Western education in Zanzibar was started by missionary societies in the mid-nineteenth century. The Mission of the Holy Ghost, which was a French society under M. Fava, started an elementary and industrial school in Zanzibar Town in 1861. In 1865, the Universities' Missions for Central Africa pioneered by David Livingstone started its activities in Zanzibar. They introduced Western education for slave boys and girls to become teachers and catechists. Most of those who joined the schools were the emancipated slaves brought from the interior of East and Central Africa. This was a time when missionary societies expanded their tentacles into many African countries, which were later colonized by the Western powers such as the British and the French. In 1910, the Industrial School was established at Chake Chake, Pemba by the Friend's Industrial Mission Society led by the Quaker Society.¹ However, missionary education had not succeeded in converting the Muslim population in Zanzibar as it had done in other African colonies.

The missionary schools were followed by community schools which were introduced by the Indian community in Zanzibar. Jafferbhoy Tharia Topan, one of the most prominent Indian merchants, and other Indian merchants stimulated the introduction of Western education. In 1890, with the encouragement of the British Agent and Consul-General from 1889-1891, Sir Euan Smith, Indians raised Rs. 56,000 to build a school which was opened in 1891. Named the Sir Euan Smith Madressa, it started by enrolling about 190 pupils, mostly Indian Khojas and offered four years of instruction. In the first two years the medium of instruction was both English and Gujarati; in the final two years it was English only.²

1.3 Government Educational Institutions:

Primary & Industrial schools

The first government school was established by Ali b. Humud, the Zanzibar Sultan (1902-1911). In 1903, he requested the Egyptian government to send

¹ S. Farsy (1980) p.19 & p.20; Lugumba and Ssekamwa (1973) pp.161-162.

² Zanzibar National Archives (ZNA) AD1/12 Annual Report for 1957, Department of Education, Zanzibar

three teachers to Zanzibar to inaugurate a new educational system that was intended for the Zanzibari children. The main aim was to replace the many Asians in Government offices with Zanzibaris. The Egyptian government readily responded and sent Shaykh Abd al-Bari Al- Ajzy who arrived in 1905 and taught Arabic and English. The Department of Education was established by Basil Cave, a British resident. In 1907, S. River-Smith was seconded from Egypt to Zanzibar to become the first Director of Education. From 1908, the elementary schools, which provided three years of education, were in operation in urban and rural Zanzibar and in all of these schools teaching was in the Swahili language. Primary schools, which were established in Zanzibar Town, ran a primary educational program over a period of four years; in these institutions English was used as a medium of instruction and the Arabic language became a compulsory subject of study. ³

After the First World War, the colonial state in Zanzibar introduced the industrial school, which provided a three year apprenticeship program following the three years of elementary education. Attached to this school were vocational classes where boys learned carpentry, mechanical works, boot-making and tailoring. This was aimed at providing Arab and African school leavers with skills which would qualify them to be employed as junior officers by the government. As the local market was able to absorb a very small number of the artisans - mainly tailors - the heavy expenditure entailed in maintaining the training was not justified. The school was closed in 1932 when the European Superintendent retired, although boot-making classes continued for two years and tailoring until 1943.⁴

In 1927 an European lady was appointed to organize an educational program for girls. As a consequence, the first Arab Girls' school was opened and a class for African girls was started in 1930. In addition, a hostel for girls from rural areas was opened in 1932. In 1933, a teacher training class was inaugurated to train female teachers. Girls' primary schools were later established in rural areas; the first permanent school was opened at Makunduchi – a rural village in the South of Zanzibar at the beginning of 1940. In the same year, it was decided to open a

³ ZNA AD1/12

⁴ ZNA AD1/12

Women Teacher Training Center which offered a two year training course. A Domestic science centre was also established in Zanzibar Town in the same year. In 1947, a girls' secondary school opened its doors to all Arabs, Indians and Africans, and the first School Certificate Examination was successfully completed at the end of 1950.⁵

2. Educational Innovation and Communal Opposition

There was a general failure to enroll a large number of Muslim children in the government primary schools up to the mid 1920s; this may be attributed to a number of factors some of which will be mentioned below. However, there were a few from among the Arab elite who resided in the town and who sent their children to these schools. Muslims in rural areas were inclined to send their children to these government schools emphasizing that their children should memorize the Qur'an first. By 1924 the colonial state inaugurated a commission to consider how the Qur'an can be best taught in District Schools. It suggested the reduction of the number of Qur'anic chapters children were expected to memorize and it also recommended that the moral teachings be taught through the medium of Swahili. The commission was made up of C. Hollis, Director of Education and four leading qādis of Zanzibar Town: Sidi Ahmad b. Sumeit (1861-1925), Shaykh Tāhir b. Abī Bakr al-Amawy (1877-1938), Shaykh `Alī b. Muhammad al-Mundhir and Shaykh Burhān `Abd al-Azīz al-Amawy (1861-1935). These qādis also agreed that the *Risāla al-Tawhīd* be translated into Swahili and that the schools make use of a side-by-side Arabic and Swahili translation for the teaching of religion during the early years of child education. The *Risāla at Tawhīd* is a collection of moral precepts, which was expounded in simple Swahili with references to the Qur'anic passages. The committee also approved the publication of *Aya Zilizochaguliwa* (Selected Qur'anic Verses that were translated into the Swahili language). The *Risālat al-Jamia* was revised and introduced to the schools in 1926. Despite these efforts, most Muslims were not ready to accept the replacement of Arabic with Swahili.⁶

⁵ Zanzibar Government, Report on Education Department 1946, Zanzibar: Zanzibar Government Printer, 1947:7

⁶ ZNA AD3/8 Religious Teaching in Schools, Zanzibar

The Muslims opposed the proposal by Harry Johnston and John Kirk, senior education officers of the colonial government, to utilize Roman characters in place of Arabic for the Swahili language in teaching and writing in the government schools. In 1927, Sidi Saleh b. Kindeh, a representative of the Arab Association wrote, to the Legislative Council expressing his opposition to the use of Kiswahili in Roman characters in the curriculum. Another three Arab Association members from Pemba, Suleiman b. Mbaruk, Nasser b. Suleiman, and Mohammed b. Hilal stressed that the teaching of Arabic and the use of the Arabic script in schools were important and must be retained. The colonialists were not pleased with the resistance that they encountered among the Arabs whom they suspected of wanting to maintain Arabic to foster feelings of nationalism and ethnicity.⁷ It should be borne in mind that for a long time the East African Swahili coastal communities used the Arabic script in their writings, and the introduction of Roman characters by the colonial government was viewed by Zanzibari Muslims as indicating its desire to undermine their religious identity.

The Zanzibari Muslims were, therefore, extremely angered when the colonial government also decided to select a few Qur'anic chapters to be taught in the schools. In 1926 the Muslims of Pemba Island sent a petition, which was signed by Umar b. Abdullah b. Umar al-Mazrui, on behalf of Pemba Arabs to H. H. Sultan, the British Resident; in which they demanded that "our boys should be taught Qur'an completely in thirty chapters, Arabic language and *Diana* (religion) as before".⁸ They also observed: "we have noticed that Qur'an, *Diana* and English language have been wiped off the syllabus of Chake Chake, and to us, Qur'an and *Diana* is (sic) the real religion and the English language is considered as useful for their career in the world."⁹ By this time, the school children were being taught only six chapters of the Qur'an that they were expected to memorize, and the government schooling system also interrupted the Qur'anic school programs. Muslims preferred the older method through which their children were gradually taught the basic alphabets and vowels until

⁷ ZNA AB1/390 Teaching of Koran and Arabic in Government Schools, Zanzibar

⁸ ZNA AB1/390

⁹ ZNA AB1/390

they finished all thirty Qur'anic chapters. As a result of the opposition, the British sought the Sultan's intervention to reduce the time spent by the children in Qur'an schools. The Sultan wisely refrained from making any such intervention fearing the growing resistance of the people. The colonial government, however, argued that the Qur'an was still taught according to the advice of the three qādis selected by the government to probe religious teaching in the schools.¹⁰

In 1940, the British colonial state decided to change its attitude towards Qur'an schools and religious teaching in schools, whereby the scope of rural primary education was extended by the additional department ranks of the village school staffs of Qur'an teachers chosen by the Muslim parents themselves. The village Qur'an schools were amalgamated with the government schools in 1941. The Qur'an teachers brought their students with them and a Qur'an class was formed in each rural school. The village Qur'an teachers were given responsibility of supplying annually at least 30 boys and girls of school age. They henceforth taught a class on the Qur'an in each government school. Pupils who were formerly enrolled only in Qur'an schools increasingly joined government education. This became possible due to the respect the Qur'an teachers had in the villages. Later on, Qur'an classes were adopted all over Zanzibar in urban and rural areas.¹¹

The introduction of Qur'an classes in government schools somehow removed a major source of friction between the government and villagers. For these classes pupils progressed to the primary course - from Standard I to IV - while the secondary course was provided from Standards VII to XII. F. B. Wilson, a British administrator who was assigned a task of commissioning to study rural education showed that: "a meeting of mind had not occurred between the British administrators and Zanzibari" before the introduction of Qur'an classes. He further noted that 12 out of 23 rural schools were closed up to 1939 due to parental preference for the village Qur'an schools. The immediate result of the introduction of Qur'an teaching in government primary schools was an increase in the demand for such schools. The number of boys and girls in primary

¹⁰ ZNA AB1/390

¹¹ ZNA AB1/390

schools rose from 14 in 1939 to 23 in 1942. By 1957 there were 944 Qur'an teachers in 942 government schools; the number of boys was 10,641 and the number of girls was 5,777. It thus became necessary to re-introduce the training of primary school teachers and a teacher-training of primary teachers. In line with this need, a teacher primary center was opened in 1943 under a Woman Education Officer on secondment from Malaya.¹²

The Director of Education in Zanzibar stated clearly that the religious education was introduced by the government due to slow progress in secular schools. He demonstrated that the Qur'an class was for the pre-standard I class in which the teacher was selected by the villagers and paid and supervised by the government to teach the children. According to the curriculum, the child was expected to complete the whole Qur'an before entering in standard I. In these Qur'an schools the only instruction given was the recitation of the Qur'an and the reading and writing of Arabic characters. This was continued in standard I as an addition to learning secular subjects, and the introduction of the teaching of Arabic was started in Standard II. The Director of Education in Zanzibar indicated that the religious teaching was introduced in the government schools to encourage the very conservative Muslim parents to send their children to school in which six years of primary education was preceded by one year in the Qur'an classes that were attached to the primary schools.¹³

By then most of these Qur'an school teachers wanted full recognition from the colonial state for their services; for instance, in 1946 they demanded gratuity on retirement and thus sent a petition to the Director of Education requesting for pension. They were considered as temporary employees and the government hesitated to meet their demands. In 1954 the conditions of service for Qur'an school teachers were revised in which they were expected to be promoted if they possessed the ability to teach: '*tajweed*', Qur'an, '*maulid barzanji*', and Arabic up to Standard VI. They should have the ability to teach and should have the ability to manage the classes. And they were also expected to assist in enrolling more students in order to increase the number of pupils at the school.¹⁴ In 1955

¹² ZNA AD1/12 Annual Report for 1957, Department of Education, Zanzibar

¹³ ZNA AD3/8 Religious Teaching in Schools

¹⁴ ZNA AB1/447 Koran Teachers: Salary & Condition of Service

among the senior promoted teachers was Shaykh Yahyā Hussein who completed Standard IX in Zanzibar and studied privately for two years under Shaykh Hassan b. Ameir, a prominent Zanzibari born scholar in the early 1950's. The shaykh also studied for one year in the Muslim Academy under Shaykh Dahhan. He then worked for four years in Dar es Salaam at the El- Hassanain Grant-Aided School and then joined schools in Zanzibar in 1955.¹⁵

The Department of Education appointed a Religious Committee in schools in 1946. The Director of Education stated that: "I have not been entirely satisfied with the Islamic teaching given in Government schools and, in consequence, have appointed a committee of teachers, all of whom are recognized authorities, to make proposals and to draw up a syllabus designed to improve such teaching." The committee was founded by the leading Sunni religious leaders such as Shaykh `Abdallah Sālih Fārsy, Shaykh `Umar Abdallah, Shaykh Ahmad Zahrān, Shaykh Muhammad Abū Bakr and Shaykh Hassan Shaykh. The committee was assigned the task of translating religious books and inspecting religious teaching. They were also responsible for the introduction of a new syllabus, which included Qur'an recitation, *Diana*, the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, *mawlid*, Swahili in Arabic script. In 1947 it was decided that an Ibadhi scholar should be appointed in the religious teaching committee since there were a lot of Ibadhi students especially in Pemba.¹⁶

Subsequently, the teaching of religion in government schools was accepted by the colonial state and it was seen as important in order to control the behaviour of the pupils. It has been perceived that the teaching of Islamic religion in government schools might alleviate many of the social and economic problems. Idleness was conceived as a sin, and so all anti-social occupations. The colonial government proposed that teaching should be insisted on good conduct and moral behavior. The teaching should be presented in a lively way that the children will clearly see the seriousness of certain habits. They insisted that some of the teaching could relate with hygiene.¹⁷ This might reduce suffering to these children whom the colonial state considered them the future labourers of Zanzibar.

¹⁵ ZNA AB1/447; ZNA AD 20/62 Kuran Teachers 1954-64

¹⁶ ZNA AD3/8 Religious Teaching in Schools

¹⁷ ZNA AD3/8

Muslim parents in Zanzibar continued to pressurize the colonial government in the matter of their religion even after the introduction of Qur'an classes and teaching of religion and Arabic in these schools. They mostly showed their dissatisfaction regarding the progress of Arabic teaching. In 1947 an article appeared in *Mwongozi*, the leading newspaper in Zanzibar Town, mainly supported by the Arab Association members, requesting for more Arabic teaching in government schools. The parents expressed their views that Arabic examination was not held between 1945 and 1946 in the primary classes, and they pointed out that in 1947 Arabic lessons had been reduced from the Junior Secondary School and that boys were more exposed to art. They lamented that in Standard IX and XII Arabic was not taught at all.¹⁸

Subsequently during that year an Arabic speaking school was established in Zanzibar Town. The graduates were then employed in the *qadiship* offices and in the teaching of Arabic in government schools. By 1954 the matter of Arabic teaching in school was raised again in the Legislative Council. The Muslims were still dissatisfied with the manner in which Arabic was taught and during 1957 Shaykh `Ali Muhsin, a member of the Legislative Council, representing the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (Hizbu), suggested that the state should import Arabic teachers from abroad to teach in primary schools. Alongside this Shaykh Ameir Tajo, a Zanzibari and a Pemba People's Party member, proposed that Arabic teachers from abroad should train local teachers and Zanzibari students should be sent abroad for training as teachers of Arabic.¹⁹

Government initiatives to enroll more students in the government schools attracted the attention of Education Departments from the Muslim countries. In 1950 the head of Muslim Teacher Training Center in Kasawo (Uganda) — which was a government training center that trained primary school teachers and responsible for Muslim schools in the Uganda Protectorate and accountable to the Uganda Muslim Education Association— wrote to the Director of Education in Zanzibar requesting the religious syllabus for Uganda Muslims. Soon after these developments, the Director of Education in Zanzibar was posted to Gambia to introduce the religious syllabus in Muslim Schools in 1950. And by

¹⁸ ZNA AB1/390 Teaching of Koran and Arabic in Government Schools, Zanzibar

¹⁹ ZNA AB1/390

1952 the religious syllabus of government school in Zanzibar was adopted by the Colony of North Borneo and in Sudan they succeeded in bringing the Qur'an schools into the education system by attempting to bring the *mallams* in for occasional training.²⁰

Meanwhile, the colonial government was not satisfied with the operation of Qur'an schools, which were located in Zanzibar Town. In a meeting with the Ng'ambo Council during 1945, it was proposed that Qur'an schools be upgraded in order to promote the welfare of children. Most of these schools were located in huts that are poorly ventilated and have no lights. The colonial state assumed that these Qur'an schools produced street boys and shunned doing any form of manual labour; this, they argued, could be attributed to the fact that after completing the memorization of the Qur'an the boys were too old for the secular school and remained unemployed. The government also expressed the view that most of these Qur'an schools were not well managed. The colonial government overlooked the Qur'an teaching in homes and mosques by demonstrating that the Qur'an was normally taught in parrot fashion and that most of the teachers did not possess adequate qualifications to justify their claim to the title of teachers.²¹

The colonial government also made other suggestions to curb the overcrowding condition in township Qur'an schools. It suggested that a *banda*, i.e. a big hut, be built in flourishing areas to accommodate the children and pay the Qur'an teachers. They also suggested to combine all Qur'an schools located in Ng'ambo into four Qur'an schools to feed the Government Central School, Gulioni and Ng'ambo Girls schools. They stated that children could attend the Qur'an schools for a year after which they would be admitted into one of the government schools. And it was proposed that all the Qur'an schools in Ng'ambo be under the control and supervision of the Education Department.²² The government's intentions to control the local Qur'an schools were quite evident in a letter, which was written by the Director of Education to the Zanzibar Town Municipal officials in 1945. In it it was reported that the

²⁰ ZNA AD3/8 Religious Teaching in Schools, Zanzibar

²¹ ZNA AD3/9 Ng'ambo Council

²² ZNA AD3/9

government wanted the founding of something like Madressa al-Islamia under Jamiyat al-Islamia of Dar al-Salām, Tanganyika, which effectively taught the Qur'an and Islamic courses to the Muslim children; the method adopted at this institution assisted the children in finishing their Qur'an education at an early age and soon thereafter are permitted to join the secular schools. However, the colonial state wanted to put the burden on the Muslims themselves. They pointed out that any changes must be done and originated from the progressive and public spirited Muslims and not from the government in order to avoid any suspicion against the government.²³ Whilst the government might not have been completely successful in convincing the Muslims, it was able to contribute towards the formation of educational institutions that made an invaluable contribution towards the Muslim society.

3. The Muslim Academy

In 1951 the colonial government founded the Muslim Academy in Zanzibar. It was opened in Zanzibar Town as a result of a demand from prominent Muslims for a centre where a small number of youth could be taught Arabic and the religion of Islam. The Academy was established in order to fill the shortage of religious teachers in government schools in Zanzibar. Apart from Zanzibar, other students who joined it came from Muslim communities in Tanganyika, Kenya, Uganda and Malawi. The college taught Qur'an, *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *siyer* (the life of the Prophet Muhammad), Arabic prose and poetry, *tarikh* (history), *tawhid* (theology), *tasavvuf* (mysticism), *mantiq* (logic), Arabic, English and elementary mathematics. In its inception, Muslim Academy was intended to be the nucleus of a centre of dispersion of Islamic teaching, culture, and inspiration. Its first head was Shaykh Muhammad Dahhān, who hailed from Egypt. The latter proposed that the secondary and primary school should be opened to be feeder of Muslim Academy. The first two years of the course gave much time to the Arabic language, proficiency in which governed largely the advance in the studies later on. The five year course was a non-vocational one, and teaching was confined to a single class only for the first four years. Thereafter, it was decided to admit a fresh entry of about twenty students-

²³ ZNA AD3/9

mainly at post primary level each year. The enrolment at the Academy in 1957 was 14 for the first year, 16 for the second year, and 23 for the third year.²⁴

The graduates were then employed to teach in town and rural schools. The Academy became a source of students who were trained as teachers of Arabic and religion in the schools of the Zanzibar Protectorate. It was also the aim of Muslim Academy to teach Qur'an school teachers and religious teachers. From 1954 it conducted a special examination for Qur'an teachers in government schools to check their proficiency and understanding of Islamic teachings. These teachers were then promoted accordingly. The formation of this institution by the colonial officials illustrated that the Muslim Academy was set up to teach Arabic and to show the Arab Association and the Muslim community of Zanzibar that it had no intention of neglecting the teaching of the Arabic language. The chief objective of the Muslim Academy was to introduce teaching of Islamic law in order to produce individuals capable of filling the posts of the qadis and liwalis in East Africa similar to the Kano School of Native Law in Nigeria, which was established in the early twentieth century. It was proposed that after completing their studies the students should be awarded a certificate and from there were able to proceed to Al Azhar, Egypt and later be either appointed as qadis or as teachers in the Academy/secondary schools in Zanzibar. As qualified individuals they should by then be in the position: to give opinions on religious matters, to be qualified teachers in Arabic and religious subjects in the Preparatory school and in the government schools, and be qualified to lead prayers, to lecture and to teach in mosques.²⁵

In 1955 a committee of a cross-section of Muslim opinion in Zanzibar Protectorate was convened to consider proposals prepared by the Principal of the Academy for the function and future of the college. During 1960 a committee was founded on the future development of the Muslim Academy. They considered whether the Academy should develop as a '*mahad*' or it should develop as an ordinary secondary school. It was recommended to be a secondary school providing an education based on traditional Muslim principles, which would be a satisfactory blend between religious and secular education, and,

²⁴ ZNA AD 23/17 Muslim Academy

²⁵ ZNA AD 23/17

more importantly, one that would act as a feeder to the proposed Islamic Faculty that was considered to be part of the East African University by Sir Edward Twinning.²⁶

The appointment of teaching staff in Muslim Academy became a sensitive case for both the Muslim community in Zanzibar and the colonial government. In 1952 the state sent Sayyid `Umar b. Abdullah (1918-1988) to the School of Oriental and African Studies, (SOAS), University of London, to study Islamic and Comparative Law and not to Al Azhar University, Egypt.²⁷ The colonial state purposely appointed him and demonstrated that he was not in calibre of Shaykh Abdalla Sālih Fārsy, whom the colonial government did not wish to appoint as the head of the Muslim Academy. Seyyid `Umar was considered the right man to head the new Muslim Academy in Zanzibar to provide just that kind of acceptable mix of the religious and the secular to those who had shown initial resistance. In 1963 he attained the B. Phil degree at Oriol College, Oxford. The Muslim Academy became a beacon of the new system of Islamic education for the whole of Eastern African. The Academy drew students from all over the region, some of whom later came to occupy important positions in the social, political and economic life of East Africa.²⁸

In 1952 four Ibadhi leaders met the Colonial Secretary of the state concerning over the lack of Ibadhi teachers at the Muslim Academy. They wanted the recruitment of Ibadhi teachers as most of the teachers were Sunnis. Shaykh Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Fīsh, a Moroccan theologian, who lived in Egypt, was appointed to teach Ibadhi theology in 1960.²⁹ Generally, whilst most of the teachers at the college came from Egypt especially from Al Azhar University, others came from either Aligarh University in India or the Yemen Islamic educational institutions. In 1960, the Muslim Academy teaching staffs included Sidi `Umar Abdallah, `Ali Ahmad Badawi who was a chief qādī of Kenya between 1949 and 1953, Ahmed Hamid Mansab who studied at Ribat College,

²⁶ ZNA AD 23/17

²⁷ ZNA AD 23/17; Knowledge, Vision and Ecstasy, Selected Works of Seyyid Omar Abdullah (Mwinyi Baraka) compiled by Al Faqeer Ahmed Shaykh, Majaalis el-Ulaa el Qadiriyya

²⁸ Mohamed Bakari (2003)

²⁹ ZNA AD 20/71 Muslim Academy- Applications for a Post of an Ibadhi Lecturer

Tarim, Hadhramut, and Sultan Ali Marashi who received his B.A from Baghdad University. In addition to these shaykhs there was, Shaykh Suleiman Muhammad Alawy, a Zanzibari, who received *ijaza* from Mecca, Medina, and Cairo; he taught Arabic prose. And there was Said Muhammad Kindī who studied under the qadi of Oman, namely Shaykh Salim Hamud Assiyābi; the latter taught him Ibādī history.³⁰

4. Conclusion

The introduction of religious teachings in government schools in Zanzibar contributed to the spread of Islamic religious teachings to many Muslim communities in East and Central Africa. The graduates from religious institutions in Zanzibar were employed in Zanzibar and in other East African Muslim schools. For instance, Sk. Harith b. Khelef *Mufti* of Zanzibar born in 1930's became a teacher in Malawi at Kaiyenda African Muhammadan School after graduating at Muslim Academy and Al Azhar University, Egypt, where he attained his B.A in Islamic studies in 1964.³¹ The introduction of religious teachings in government schools increased the popularity of Zanzibar as a center of Islamic learning in East Africa. This became possible since many students from the other East African countries studied in Zanzibar. On the whole, religious teaching contributed to the strengthening of Muslim unity across the Indian Ocean region. Muslim teachers from various Muslim countries such as Yemen, Oman, Egypt, and India were employed to teach in Zanzibar and this resulted in Zanzibari students being admitted by Islamic universities abroad. The introduction of religious teaching in government schools in Zanzibar strengthened the practice of religion in Zanzibar in which the qualified and knowledgeable Muslims were employed in government schools and in mosques. And this also led to the improvement in the Islamic legal practices amongst and within the community. The introduction of secular education did not make the Muslim population in Zanzibar alien to their religion; on the contrary, it strengthened the acquiring of religious knowledge by many Zanzibari children.

³⁰ ZNA AD1/171 Teachers from Sudan and Hadhramut; ZNA AD 23/17 Muslim Academy, ZNA AD 20/70 Muslim Academy

³¹ ZNA AD 20/74 Muslim Academy

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