Chapter 8
Exchange Values: Commodities, Colonialism, and Identity on Nineteenth Century Zanzibar

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Introduction

Picture brightly painted ceramic bowls. These are large bowls – too large for an individual serving. Hard white earthenware forms their bodies, with a clear glaze overlying painted and printed decoration. Bright pink, blue, and sometimes black bands around the edges, in varying thicknesses; sometimes large floral patterns bedeck the interior of the bowls, pink and blue petals, stamped sponge-printed repeating flowers, and leafy green foliage (see Fig. 8.1). Flip the bowls over, as surely no user would have done during the course of a meal, and sometimes a maker's mark, locating the piece as manufactured in the Netherlands or Great Britain, will be your reward. For despite the fact that these ceramics are found in Zanzibari houses, curio stores, and in sherd form spread across farmers' fields, no East African manufacturer is represented by the marks (see Fig. 8.2).[1] It is these ceramics – mostly in bowl form, but with the odd teacup, platter, and saucer, that form the material examined within this chapter.

The narrative takes, in part, a traditional archaeological form, presenting the proportions of sherds found across different clove plantation sites on nineteenth century Zanzibar. In doing so, an archaeological context which is firmly capitalist and colonial is established. Capitalist through the context of plantations producing a mono-crop (cloves) for a global market during the nineteenth century; and in tracing findings of a mass produced ceramic, manufactured as a commodity and sold for cash to plantation residents. All of the material discussed in this chapter took place

[1]Locally produced ceramics of Zanzibar formed the majority of the assemblage from the archaeological investigations discussed in this chapter. Their usual form was open "carinated cooking pots" regularly decorated with arc decorations and occasional burnishing and red paint (Croucher 2006; Croucher and Wynne-Jones 2006).

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Fig. 8.1 Ceramics in a Zanzibar curio shop, 2006

within the context of Omani colonialism – the majority of clove plantation owners were Omani colonists, and the Omani Sultanate controlled the islands. Such a background provides the colonial context, albeit not the European colonial context we are most used to as historical archaeologists, but still one in which colonial rule coexisted with capitalist practice. Within this field, I am taking capitalism to mean the form of intense agricultural production and the increasing inability for Zanzibaris to procure the basic necessities of life without involvement in a cash economy, as was the case by the late-nineteenth century on Zanzibar (Bose 2006; Pearson 1998; Sheriff 1987). Capitalism is a complex concept, with widespread debates as to periodization and meaning within a range of social sciences, and it could be argued that the lack of industrial production on Zanzibar in the nineteenth century means that this was only an incipient capitalist economy and society (Goody 2004; Harvey 2010; Wolf 1997 [1982]). This chapter is specifically concerned with the discourse about the multiplicity of capitalism*s* within the field of historical archaeology as it is usually constituted by US-based scholars. Within historical archaeology, an understanding of a very broad definition of capitalism which includes plantation agriculture within a global economic system has become a near-universal definition of the field (Delle 1998; Orser 1996). As the place of Africans seems so often troubled within these global narratives of capitalism (Lane 2007; Prestholdt 2008; Schmidt and Walz 2007) I wish to interrogate how we might address the potential multiplicity of social systems if we are to retain this large-scale definition of capitalism within our field as a heuristic device allowing for meaningful comparative discourse. This argument moves forward beyond a semantic or methodological debate about the term "historical archaeology" as utilized within the African context and instead considers the core concepts at the heart of the discipline (capitalism and colonialism),

Fig. 8.2 *Top*, white earthenware teacup base with maker's mark, painted floral decoration. *Bottom*, base sherd of European imported ceramic, showing makers mark (Societie Ceramique, Maastricht, made in Holland)

attempting to question and broaden these so that they apply to the later historical archaeology of Africa within a postcolonial theoretical framework.

At the micro-level, with specific regard to Zanzibari, East African, and Indian Ocean historical analysis, I am interested in the manner in which exchange took place within plantations. Although these were cash purchased commodities, by juxtaposing archaeological data and oral histories, I argue that social relations were also embedded in the exchange of goods within nineteenth century Zanzibari plantation culture. In so doing I take a familiar path of drawing out the complexities of commodity exchange, noting the manner in which a *partial* "gift" economy – which emphasizes reciprocal social obligations (Mauss 1990 [1950]: 3) – was in operation between plantation residents, often in relation to circulating some of the most highly

commoditized goods. Through this exploration the manner in which the colonial context of Zanzibar shaped a particular cultural iteration of commodity exchange for plantation residents will become clear.

At a macro-level, these brightly decorated ceramics, all of which were manufactured many thousands of miles away in Europe, provide a useful material form for applying a "commodity chain" analysis to mass produced goods on nineteenth century Zanzibar. Such approaches are now widespread in a number of disciplines, including geography, history, and anthropology (Brewer and Trentman 2006; Clarence-Smith and Topik 2003; Hansen 2000; Jackson 2004; Marcus 1995; Mintz 1985; van den Bersselaar 2007; Walsh 2010). Their premise is that commodities in a globalizing world can only be fully analyzed through tracing their meanings through production and various exchanges, taking note of the cultural contexts within each step (Crang et al. 2003; Jackson 1999; Tsing 2005). These "chains" also echo what Appadurai (1986: 27) called "ecumenes"; the entirety of networks between producers and consumers of commodities. This has the advantage of being focused on no sole context of production, exchange, or consumption. It offers instead a means of tying together all of these into a single frame of analysis. As anthropology as a field increasingly grapples with how to analyze global connections at a meaningful local scale (Marcus 1995), this approach links together various contexts through the flow of materials and cultural translation which occur within commodity chains.

Within historical archaeology, debates have been intensifying on how to frame the global relations within which the subjects of our studies were enmeshed. Some have attempted to make a clear geographical linkage between sites: for example, a field of Atlantic historical archaeology has emerged, in which relations of trade, forced-, and voluntary-migration played out between Europe, North, and South America (DeCorse 2001; Hall 2000; Hicks 2005; Ogundiran and Falola 2007; Orser 1996; Richard 2009, 2010, Chap. 9; Singleton 1995, 2005; Stahl 2007). Grappling with these global questions is vital in order to attempt to interpret the particular contexts we study and the manner in which global relations were understood by past subjects. But it is vital we focus a critical postcolonial gaze upon broader discourse in our own subject. Historical archaeology risks essentializing capitalism within the West in an uncritical manner (Carrier 1992: 205). Concomitantly, sometimes insidiously within the work of those focused exclusively on the West is the manner in which cultural Others (in this case Zanzibaris on the "periphery" of global capitalism) are often used as uncritical foils to our constructs of Western capitalism (Richard 2010; van Dommelen 2010: 38), in the process creating both as monolithic cultural types.

By exploring the commodity chain of nineteenth century imported ceramics on Zanzibar, it is possible to do more than simply explore a narrow case study exchange relations on Zanzibar. Beyond this, we begin to see the various scales of capitalism in operation, and the manner in which agency and cultural practice are able to traverse global relations through the very medium of commodity chains, even if this be diffuse, and sometimes without the intent of individual subjects. Commodity chain analysis presents a clear methodology for archaeology since it is possible to trace the relations and meanings of material culture in various contexts with a combination of artifactual and historical data. It is also an important analysis in providing us with a

means to further engage with the global meanings of capitalism in the nineteenth century, a subject of relevance to *all* historical archaeologists of this period, wherever their context of research.

Contextualizing Capitalism: Plantations on Nineteenth Century Zanzibar

Zanzibar during the 1800s was a major entrepôt for trade from the intensifying caravan trade which transported ivory and enslaved Africans from mainland East and Central Africa[2] (Rockel 2006; Pearson 1998; Sheriff 1995a). Politically the islands of Zanzibar,[3] along with a strip of land along the East African coast, were at this time under the control of the Omani sultanate. The importance of Zanzibar was, until the mid-nineteenth century, based largely on mercantilism, with ivory fetching a high price and with a ready market for enslaved labor across the Indian Ocean region and beyond (Sheriff 1987). From the 1810s however, a new crop began to be planted on the islands, closely associated with the Omani elite – the clove tree. This spice required specialized environmental conditions for growth which were found across much of the islands (see Fig. 8.3). This environmental factor, combined with availability of land and slave labor on Zanzibar (another push was a shrinking market for enslaved persons elsewhere, as the British and other colonial powers attempted to abolish the slave trade during the nineteenth century) made for the rapid expansion of plantations across Zanzibar, with Pemba becoming a preferred location for new plantations from the mid nineteenth century onwards (Cooper 1977, 1979; Sheriff 1987).

Cloves were a highly marketable commodity. Spices had long been a mainstay of global commodity trade (Crofton 1936; Dalby 2002), and continued to command a high price into the nineteenth century, even as the price of cloves fluctuated according to the glut of production produced by Zanzibar into global markets. Plantation agriculture is thought to have been influenced greatly by knowledge of European plantations in the Indian Ocean region, brought to Zanzibar by its cosmopolitan population who were traveling widely in the region (Cooper 1977; Prestholdt 2008;

[2]The Swahili cities of the East African coast have been shown to be participants in inter-regional trade across the Indian Ocean from at least the ninth century AD (see Horton 1996; LaViolette and Fleisher 2005; Juma 2004 for comprehensive archaeological discussions). Swahili towns were linked into wide Indian Ocean regional trading networks which spread from East Africa, through the Middle East, India, and across to China. This network, termed by Michael Pearson (1998: 36) the "Afarasian Sea" had a truly global scope from the close of the fifteenth century with the entry of the Portuguese into Indian Ocean trade. However, important European trade may be to the later history discussed in this chapter, it is important to note that this grew out of a long established mercantile system, and scholars of this region have been keen to point out the long-term historical build up to nineteenth century mercantile trade (Pearson 2006; Sheriff 2010).

[3]In this chapter, I refer to the two islands by their proper names; Unguja, the southern of the two main Zanzibari islands is that usually referred to as Zanzibar, and Pemba, the northern portion of the political entity which forms Zanzibar. The term Zanzibar is used to refer to the islands as a whole or to the urban center of Zanzibar on Unguja.

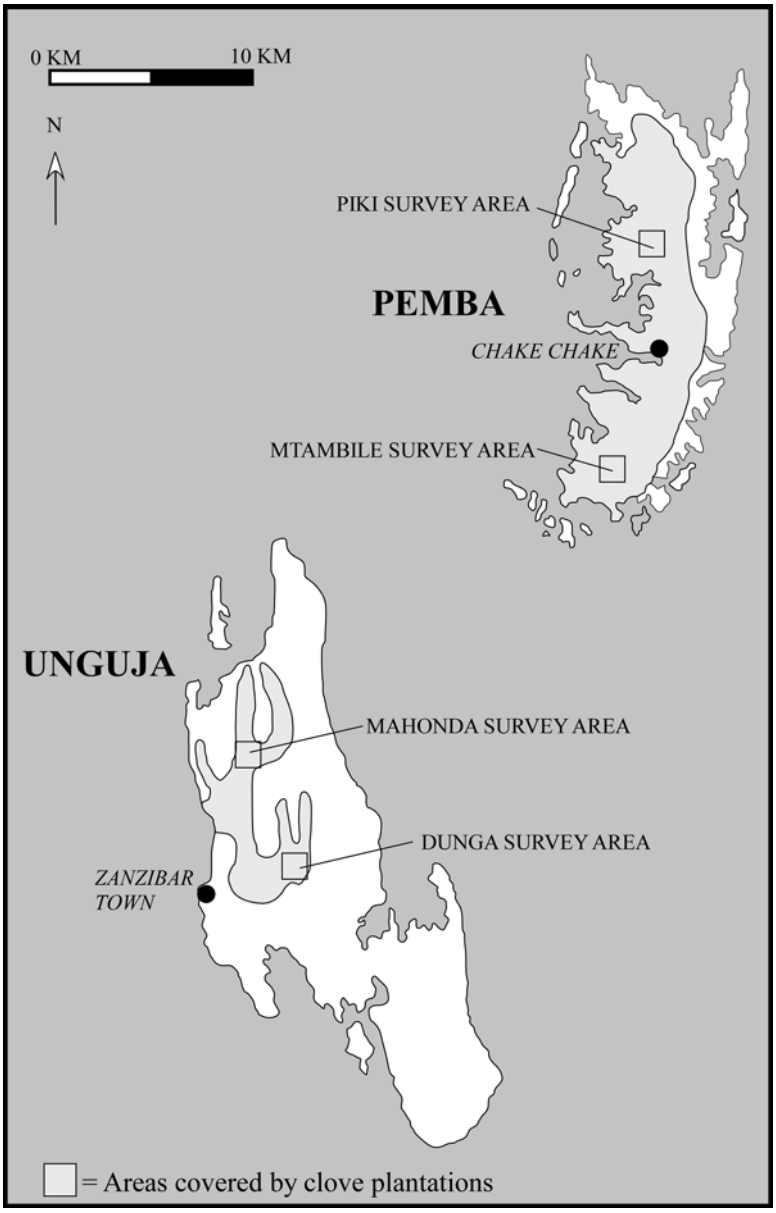

Fig. 8.3 Map showing the extent of clove planting on Zanzibar, and the location of the survey areas for the ZCPS03

Sheriff 1987). Archaeological evidence demonstrates close similarities and divergences with the more widely known forms of European plantations (for archaeological studies of these see, for instance, Delle 1998). Zanzibari planter's homes appear to have followed a spatial ordering which drew heavily on pre-existing Omani and Swahili

spatial norms, particularly in architectural style and in the gendering of space. In these homes would have lived plantation owners, their wives, concubines, children, and those of the enslaved population who may have worked closely within the household. Outside of these homes, spaced out into the wider plantation landscape would have been the home of enslaved field laborers. Excavations have also shown that new spaces such as clove drying floors for monitoring work on the plantation, which appear to be tailored to regimes of labor mirroring those seen in plantations in the Americas, were also built into the landscape of nineteenth century plantations. Such spaces provided a clear area in which we can see that spatial practices were not simply those of prior cultural convention but were instead shaped by new economic models (Croucher 2006, 2007, in preparation).

On the basis of mono-crop plantations which fed into a global commodity market, it would seem easy to characterize Zanzibar as fully participant in global capitalism of the nineteenth century. Yet the fact that this was run by colonial rule and capitalist subjects entirely within an Islamic, African, and Arabic cultural context seems to prevent the full realization of this image. Implicit within many of our writings about global capitalism in the nineteenth century is the idea that capitalism is a European institution and culture, with non-European cultures as only ever being peripheral to global capitalism (e.g., Wallerstein 1976; for further discussion of core and periphery models in historical archaeology see Crowell, Chap. 4; Gaitán-Amman, Chap. 7). A key issue of this chapter is therefore an interrogation of whether we can view the culture of clove plantations on Zanzibar during the nineteenth century as being fully part of capitalism, or whether the Islamic and East African context made these plantations only peripheral to the wider globalization of capitalist social relations at this time.

Building further upon this issue is how we might fit nineteenth century Zanzibar within broader historical archaeological discourse of colonialism and capitalist modernities, linking to the analysis of global capitalism via commodity chains. In the clearest iteration of "African historical archaeology/ies" (Reid and Lane 2004; Schmidt 2006; Schmidt and Walz 2007), we might argue that the situation on Zanzibar is something apart from the mainstream of USA/European historical archaeology, with African subjects placed at the center of our analysis not fitting with larger ideas articulated by the canon of historical archaeology (which are most usually cited as Deetz 1996; Orser 1996). As I have outlined in my narration of nineteenth century Zanzibari history, however, the situation is not so clear. It is easy to see that we can identify Omani colonialism as in many ways fitting many of the patterns of contemporaneous European colonial rule, particularly in developing new areas for plantation agriculture to feed into global markets. The increasing use of enslaved Africans simply as agricultural labor during the nineteenth century also marked a move into the conceptualization of slavery as a means of gaining the labor necessary to produce cash crops. This replaced slavery as a way of increasing a client base and gaining higher social prestige – although the two systems were not antithetical and a mixture of understandings of enslavement were in play in nineteenth century Zanzibari society. Even though the majority of Zanzibari residents were Swahili, Arab, African, or Indian, it is important to recognize the influence of a growing undercurrent of European dominated global capitalism on the islands (Pearson 1998: 162). Historical archaeological analysis of plantations on Zanzibar

must, therefore, be aware of all of these elements and a sophisticated study must attempt to identify and analyze the various strands of social, economic, and political action being played out in material realms.

Taking Notice of Ceramics

Turning back to material culture, outside of the archaeological realm, my fieldwork on Zanzibar was characterized by frequent introductions to late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries mass produced ceramics from Europe. It is, of course, with hindsight that I placed together these different moments, but the contemporary context of these ceramics – now cast into roles as heirlooms, antiques, and museum pieces – adds an important dimension to understanding the social role of these objects in the past. My first realization that these might be culturally important came from my landlady in the city of Zanzibar. I had been working at the Zanzibar archives and lodging locally. I would eat with my landlady and her daughters every evening, sitting on a large mat in the front room to share dishes. All of the dishes for the daily meals were kept in a sideboard in this room with some dishes used every day and others only used now and then, mostly when we ate special meals. One platter in particular was never removed during my stay. Just before my survey fieldwork was due to begin, my landlady engaged me in conversation about this platter. It was her best – a treasured family heirloom and used only for very special meals she told me. But on Pemba, people had plenty of big platters like this, and sometimes sold them. If I was offered one at a reasonable price, could I buy it on her behalf and bring it back?

No one offered a platter for sale, but I did see more of these dishes on Pemba. One day when my field crew and I were undertaking survey fieldwork, a man whom we had met earlier when asking about sites suddenly reappeared with a sack. Inside were some things that he wanted to show us, family heirlooms passed down to him from his grandmother (Fig. 8.4). At the time I was most interested in the wooden pot he had that was filled with paper jewelry. The bright colored ear decorations were something some interviewees had told us had been commonly used by poorer women in the past on Zanzibar, but of course we never found any on archaeological sites. The platter was interesting – a large rectangular willow pattern platter with the common blue and white design printed across the entirety of the vessel. But it had no maker's mark on the bottom, just a smooth surface of white glazed earthenware. I guessed it could date from anytime from the late-nineteenth century into the twentieth century, and thought little more of it until later when a sherd of a nearly identical platter was recovered from excavations at a clove plantation site (Fig. 8.5).

Returning to those brightly colored bowls, the material at the center of my analysis comes from archaeological survey data drawn from the Zanzibar Clove Plantation Survey 2003 (hereafter ZCPS2003, see Fig. 8.3 for a map of survey areas) and from excavations at the plantation site of Mgoli on Pemba, located in the Piki survey area. The combination of this data provides a between materials found on different

Fig. 8.4 Heirlooms on the road: a willow pattern platter and wooden boxes containing jewelry (this photograph was taken with full consent that it be published in sources that would be circulated and read internationally and on Zanzibar)

nineteenth century clove plantation sites on Zanzibar and a more detailed interrogation of materials found at a single site.[4]

Drawing out contextual archaeological data from one site, at the earliest excavated contexts at Mgoli imported commodities, including non-ceramics such as glass, beads, and metals, figured as a fairly small proportion of the overall assemblage; just 11.4%. Out of this assemblage mass produced ceramics made up only 6% overall and a little over half of the nonlocally produced goods.[5] When taken as a percentage only of the ceramic assemblage, mass produced imports from the mid-nineteenth century made up 7%.

[4]Survey data are drawn from the Zanzibar Clove Plantation Survey 2003. This consisted of purposive surface survey conducted at four different areas on Unguja and Pemba (see Fig. 8.3 for a map showing these areas). No subsurface testing was conducted, and the visibility of artifacts at different sites did vary upon the level of recent digging for purposes of farming. However, imported ceramics were found to be readily visible. For the purpose of analysis, material here is largely considered in terms of the presence and/or absence on different sites. Proportions of different materials at sites with this survey data offer extremely tentative evidence, since they were collected in a nonsystematic manner. Proportions of material presented from excavation data, all of which derives from excavations at Mgoli, Pemba in 2004, are based on 100% collection and sieving and can therefore be taken as valid proportional data.

[5]Particular contexts were drawn out for analysis from the material at Mgoli as a whole. Where mid-nineteenth century material is discussed, these contexts are from Trench C, numbered 3005 and 3009. Where late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century material is mentioned, contexts were analyzed from Trench D, numbered 4007 and 4008. Overall numbers for the site of Mgoli refer to material from all contexts. Percentages provided here are calculated by count.

Fig. 8.5 Four conjoining rim sherds of a black transfer printed willow pattern platter, recovered from Mgoli, Trench C

Later material from the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century showed a small increase in the number of imported ceramics. Figures were skewed by a large dump of metal refuse such as rusted can pieces, so the proportion of mass produced imported ceramic sherds made up just 5% of the assemblage in these later contexts, but a significantly larger 11% when taken only as a percentage of ceramics. These data appear to support the idea that commodified goods – here in the form of mass produced ceramics – were becoming increasingly common at the close of the nineteenth century, although they still formed a minority of wares in comparison to locally made dishes.

If the ceramic sherds from Zanzibar discussed here were laid alongside assemblages excavated by the majority of other historical archaeologists, many clear differences would immediately be apparent. The first would be in the design of many of the vessels. The decoration of mass produced imported vessels fell mostly into two clear categories: transfer printed or hand painted and/or sponge print decoration.[6]

[6]Less than 4% of mass produced ceramics excavated from Mgoli overall had a design falling outside of these two categories. Full details of these materials can be found in Croucher (2006) Chapter 7 and Appendix D. By far the most common decorative form on transfer printed vessels was willow pattern, found on several "platter" sherds – these would have been from large, flat, rectangular serving plates, still used today for special occasions. The proportion of transfer printed ceramics fell over the course of the nineteenth century, comprising 40% of imported sherds in earlier analyzed contexts and dropping to just 9% in later contexts. Painted and sponge designs were most common overall, forming 38% of the imports from the site of Mgoli overall, 43% from mid-nineteenth century contexts, and 19% of those from late-nineteenth century/early-twentieth century contexts, where numbers of decorated ceramics had dropped significantly.

Bright colored lines and sponge printing dominated the most common bowl forms of material.[7] The brightly painted and/or sponge decorated wares that formed the majority of imports used by are little discussed in the majority of historical archaeological literature. In most European and American contexts, they are found in much lower numbers in comparison to decorative styles such as transfer prints, flow blues, and other styles of designs, if they are even found at all (Miller 1980, 1991). Their use in European and American contexts tended to be limited to very cheaply produced cut-sponge decorated earthenwares, used only in poor households, and often differing in form – e.g. mugs and small individual bowls – than those found in Zanzibar (e.g., Brooks 2003: 125).

This leads neatly to the second major difference visible between Zanzibari material and that from other regions of the world studied by historical archaeologists: the forms of the ceramics. Large bowl forms predominated on Zanzibar – as is clear from the ceramics curated through time and now on sale in curio shops – with teacups, small plates, and large platters following in frequency.[8] Comparison of these frequencies of forms to other East African contexts is impossible, since no data exist for these, although it has been noted that such brightly colored large bowls are the common form of imports at later sites (Fleisher personal communication; Horton personal communication). Zanzibari material does have clear contrasts with mass produced ceramics from other areas of the world where historical archaeologists work. In Cape Town, South Africa, for instance, predominant forms of nineteenth century ceramics were tablewares, predominantly plates used for individual servings of meals at a table (Malan and Klose 2003: 202; Weiss 2009, Chap. 10). Since many trade routes ran from Europe around South Africa (although the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 did change this pattern) we might expect that trade goods sent along these routes would be similar. The South African ceramic signature, however, although not identical, had far clearer parallels with British, Australian, and North American contexts, where

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[8]Bowls were most common in mid-nineteenth century contexts, where they accounted for 61% of diagnostic mass produced sherds, a further 29% of diagnostic imports were teacups, with a few further sherds of large platters. Numbers were significantly different for late-nineteenth century/early-twentieth century material, where only 4% of diagnostic mass produced sherds were bowl forms, with a much higher 57% of sherds being recognizable teacup forms. While this seems to signal a shift toward more common use of teacups, the overall percentages of material from the site where 40% of diagnostic mass produced ceramic sherds were bowl forms and 37% were teacups, seems to suggest that when a wider range of data is available for this period, we may not see such dramatic differences. Clearly the ceramics surviving today testify to the importance of bowls, as do oral histories. But teacups may have had a wider usage in daily life, and been viewed as more of a utilitarian form than bowls. If more were available and their daily frequency of use was higher, teacups may also have been more liable to breakage, therefore presenting more sherds in the archaeological record.

plates and bowls used to serve individual placements at tables were common during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (for some examples, see Brooks 1997; Brooks and Connah 2007; Leone 1999; Shackel and Palus 2006; Wall 1999).

Another contrast in ceramic assemblages between East Africa and regions studied by the majority of historical archaeologists would be that produced imported ceramics were only a small proportion of vessels utilized at mealtimes on Zanzibar. They made up just 4% of the overall ceramic assemblage from the site of Mgoli ($n = 11{,}090$) across all periods from the mid-nineteenth century into the twentieth century.[9] Such small numbers perhaps make them easy to ignore as an important artifact category with which to examine nineteenth century plantation society on Zanzibar. Thus, we could bookmark them as a useful dating tool, note their presence, and move on to analyze the majority locally produced wares. But the ubiquity of their use stood out: drawing upon survey data, 85% of recorded ceramic sherds were mass produced European imports, and imported ceramics were visible on the majority of sites recorded.[10] Only a single site from the 64 recorded had only locally produced ceramics with a complete absence of visible imported ceramics, and this site (recorded as SC34, see Croucher 2006: 385 for site details) was one which we were told had been the location of a village inhabited by enslaved plantation workers. Therefore, the low percentage of their overall proportions at the site of Mgoli must be contrasted with their widespread presence on clove plantation sites.

What then could these different factors mean? Non-local ceramics were rare by their low percentages in the Mgoli site assemblage – and it is worth noting that this related to the home of a wealthy plantation owner. Yet survey data indicated that mass produced ceramics had apparently been used at many different types of settlement, including those inhabited by enslaved workers (see Croucher 2004, 2007, for full

[9]Ceramics in total made up 76% of the entire assemblage by artifact count ($n = 14{,}602$). The remainder of the ceramic assemblage was made up of majority locally produced wares (93%) and non-mass produced imports (3%) – the majority of this latter category being "Indian" water pots (mitungi), which may have been produced locally (see Croucher 2006: Appendix E for details).

[10]Using quantitative data from this survey evidence is problematic. Since only purposive surface survey was carried out (for a discussion of full survey methodology and results see Croucher 2004), it is impossible to say that these data are a representative sample of material from all nineteenth century clove plantations across the four survey regions from which data were collected. Of 64 sites recorded on the survey, 86% (55 sites) had imported ceramics visible, compared to a slightly lower 75% (48 sites) with local ceramics visible on the surface, with many sites having both. The reasons for this distribution seem unclear, although they are explored in more detail further on in this chapter. In interpreting them it may be worth noting that the majority of survey sites, although by no means all, were those associated with plantation owners. Over three-quarters (76%) of all sites recorded had no stone remains visible on the surface. This means that despite the higher correlation with plantation owners, the majority of these sites related to people who likely did not have the economic means available to build a stone house (see Croucher 2006, in preparation for further discussion of the relationship between architectural styles on Zanzibar and social standing, as well as Myers 1996, 1997). A slight skewing of the data may have been caused by the visibility of ceramic remains in a tropical landscape context. On sites with dense undergrowth, locally produced wears which lack the reflective qualities of glazed imports may have been harder to pick out visually. Nevertheless, thorough visual examination was undertaken at each site recorded and so this is likely to cause only very minor differences in the recorded artifacts.

analysis of site types across the landscape). The use of mass produced ceramics on nineteenth century Zanzibar also seemed to represent a particular taste in commodity purchases, particularly through the brightly painted and printed bowls and the platters, differing from that found in most historical archaeological contexts. Thus, the commodity supply of ceramics to Zanzibar was not simply the overflow of that to the nearest European colonial settlements, but appears to represent the desires of nineteenth century consumers on Zanzibar and particular patterns of use which show the manner in which commodity exchange was incorporated into the cultural context of clove plantations. It is to these factors that I now wish to turn in my discussions.

Wealth and Reciprocity on Zanzibar

If mass produced ceramics formed only a small part of the assemblage of mid-nineteenth century plantation household wares, growing to a slightly larger proportion by the beginning of the twentieth century it is possible to hypothesize that they were potentially expensive goods and were available on a limited basis which grew over time. This pattern does not seem unexpected, and can be compared with work on commodity consumption in other capitalist contexts. As the use of commodities grew in other parts of the world, a "consumer culture" grew, in which social status was increasingly demonstrated through the consumption of material goods, particularly within North America (see Sassatelli 2007: Chapter 2 for an overview; Mullins 1999: 1). Debates range about the nature and spread of consumer culture, but for the purpose of this chapter it can be summarized that subjects – now consumers – are understood to increasingly express their subjectivities through commodities, usually mass produced, and bought through alienated cash exchanges (Douglas and Isherwood 1996 [1979]: 38; Foster 2008: 11; Miller 1995). Within historical archaeology, interpretation of assemblages from periods in which the consumption of commodities was increasing has been dominated by a straightforward cost-value index approach, in which the amount and expense of goods within an assemblage was assumed to allow for comparative analysis of the level of wealth of a household represented (Brooks and Connah 2007; Henry 1991; Miller 1980).[11] Processes of

[11]Debates within historical archaeology are now moving beyond a straightforward equation of the cost of goods and the status of a household, including some of those cited previously. Many of the more recent debates within historical archaeology about the nature of consumer goods within households stem from the work of Mullins (1999, 2004; see also Cook et al. 1996). Studies have shown that households may buy goods that exceed expectations based on their income, particularly when these are readily available in urban situations (Brighton 2001). However, underlying all of these discussions is a general assumption that the consumption of commodities is based upon consumers acquiring goods in an attempt to present symbolic messages – most often relating to class or economic status – to their immediate neighbors and acquaintances. The end result may be more nuanced than a direct correlation between economic wherewithal of a household and their material possessions, but where differences occur, these are most usually in the form of poorer households attempting to apportion larger amounts of their income to consumer goods in order to present the façade of a higher status than might otherwise be accorded by their social standing and economic means.

commodification were certainly taking place within nineteenth century Zanzibar, fuelled by the capitalism of caravan trading and plantations (Prestholdt 2004). Owning imported goods in nineteenth century East Africa could indeed function as symbolic markers of wealth, particularly when these were symbolic of elite coastal identities (Glassman 1995: 50; New 1875: 416).

From the growth of imported ceramics at sites over time (see also Pawlowicz 2009 for comparable data from survey on the southern Tanzanian coast) it is possible to conclude that an intensification of commodification was occurring on nineteenth century Zanzibar; increasingly mass produced goods and other products could be bought for cash and these we might expect would be understood to be symbolic of the wealth and/or status of a household, the two clearly being connected. But the mass produced ceramic data does not seem to straightforwardly conform to this general pattern, because sherds had such a wide distribution across different plantation sites. To interpret this pattern, we must delve a little deeper into the evidence surrounding processes of commodification on Zanzibar at this time. Oral histories, recorded in conjunction with the ZCPS03 and excavations at Mgoli shed some insights into how we might begin to see the particular form of consumer culture as it began to exist on nineteenth century Zanzibar.[12]

Some interviewees said that imported ceramics were used every day, particularly the smaller plates and teacups, although the households with the smallest available cash resources may have kept imported ceramics solely for use on special occasions.[13] Comments in these interviews led to the conjecture that in the past the level of *everyday* use of imported ceramics depended very much upon the economic status of households, and that if somebody could afford to buy imported goods then there were no impediments to buying them, whether they be a rich plantation owner or an ex-slave. In commenting on imported ceramic use during their childhoods, one interviewee, who remembered imported ceramics "all having very nice flowers" said that ceramics were used every day by her family in the past, but did note that some people had "extra" dishes that they kept only for guests, while another said that in his household only local ceramics had been used every day, although adding that the "strength [of imported ceramics] and the kinds of decorations on them depended on your money," suggesting that finances were the only impediment to using items such as European made teacups in daily dining. Another added that "owning ceramics depended on money, anyone who had money could buy them"

[12]Interview transcripts can be found in Croucher (2006), Appendices A and K. Specific references are provided to these transcripts where appropriate. These interviews were conducted between 2003 and 2005. Although interview subjects were usually older, most of their recollections can be expected not to fall before the 1940s, and most spoke about the period prior to independent rule. This is obviously *not* the same time period as the plantation archaeology data, which runs from the nineteenth through to the early-twentieth century. However, these provide a heuristic tool to begin to think about the social structures of Zanzibari society which may have been similar 50 years or more before these recollections are based.

[13]Croucher (2006: Appendix K), interviews 1, 5, 8, and 9.

and another that the use of imported ceramics "was just a matter of having money to buy them. After the clove harvest some people kept money to buy cups and other ceramics." This latter comment suggested that in the early-twentieth century, as clove harvesting became organized via wage labor, ceramics were one of the important investments of cash wages.[14]

In contrast to this daily use, larger plates and platters and certain cups might be kept only for use at special occasions, particularly weddings, even in richer households where these goods could most easily be replaced in the case of breakage. The same interviewee who commented that as he was growing up had only local ceramics in his household said that they had owned "big serving plates" used for guests and when village families – as many as 10 to 15 gathering at once – would eat together during Ramadan, or that would always be bought out for the use of visitors to their home. He added that when families had special dishes such as these, sometimes they would wrap them in *kangas* (a local printed cloth worn by women) and hide them under the bed when they were not in use.[15] This special use was significant as weddings were important occasions for the negotiation of identities via demonstrating full participation in coastal Islamic cultural norms, and special "Zanzibari" foods, consisting of large plates of biryani or pilau – made from the "luxury grain" rice (Cooper 1977: 64) – were always served to guests at a wedding. Large platters for serving guests were reserved "just for rice; pilau or biryani" and pilau was eaten by another interviewee in the past only "during wedding days, or when somebody rich had died".[16] Cementing the correct foods to be served was the manner in which these foods were to be served; on imported ceramic dishes. It is in such moments requiring particular conventions of etiquette that the widespread distribution of imported ceramics may begin to make sense. For if dishes, platters, or even teacups were needed in order to maintain the requirements of entertaining guests, neighbors would customarily assist those in need. One interviewee told us that "if any cup had lost its handle then they [her family and neighbors in the past] would never give it to guests. They would rather borrow another cup from a neighbor." Further comments stressed this point, with one woman saying that "Local families couldn't afford ceramics so they would just borrow them from neighbors for special occasions" although they would only use local ceramics on a daily basis, and another that "For a wedding neighbors would come and borrow extra plates from you." So although those who could afford it might buy extra plates in preparation for a wedding and invest in ceramics for daily use, if this was not financially possible extra dishes could be borrowed from neighbors for the use of serving guests. Such loans might also occur to the poorest households if they had guests for other meals and required imported dishes or teacups to serve their visitors.[17]

[14] Croucher (2006: Appendix K), interviews 1 and 9.

[15] Croucher (2006: Appendix K), interviews 4 and 9.

[16] Croucher (2006: Appendix K), interview 4.

[17] Croucher (2006: Appendix K), interviews 1, 4, and 8.

Understandings of neighborliness, which were a crucial part of Zanzibari society (Myers 1994: 204), were thus cemented through the reciprocal obligations of lending goods to those in need. This is evidenced by the widespread distribution of imported European mass produced ceramic sherds which since these show no differentiation between sites according to the economic means of the sites inhabitants. These social norms of reciprocity, which could in part have worked to cement social unity and community cohesion (Sahlins 1972: 188), would also have served to highlight wealth disparities and unequal relations. Poorer neighbors were indebted to those richer via the loan of goods, and it could be conjectured further that this may have been deepened in some cases if those borrowing expensive imported ceramics broke or damaged goods which were only temporarily in their possession.

Such relations can be understood through shifting our focus on exchange from envisaging capitalist societies, such as nineteenth century Zanzibar, as being engaged only in commodity exchanges. Economic anthropologists have looked at the range of transactions that occur as objects move from one person or group to another. Even within the USA, where we might assume that society is very deeply immersed in commodity culture, the lines between gift and commodity can be blurry (Herrman 1997; Thomas 1991). The movement of mass produced ceramics through non-commodified loans into relations which help to build up the social network of Zanzibar whilst these goods were still recognized as being at a state of readiness for commodity candidacy (Appadurai 1986: 13) is no unusual thing. Within anthropology, it is now almost axiomatic to place the social understandings of gifts and commodities on a sliding scale of meanings, rather than as two contrasting forms of exchange which never exist within the same cultural system. In an examination of mass produced ceramic use on nineteenth century Zanzibar, we see a particular iteration along this scale. This is perhaps more linked to African systems of valuation where importance may be placed in social relations and obligations as a form of wealth, rather than wealth simply inhering in amassing cash or particular objects (Graeber 2001; Guyer 1993; Guyer and Belinga 1995; Piot 1999). This system of valuation may have related to networks of patronage and clientage on Zanzibar, which were also intertwined with the social positions of enslaved workers (Cooper 1977; Glassman 1995). Thus, the distribution of commodities through purchase would largely have served to demonstrate wealth and status differences, even as the actual ability to be able to *use* commodities may not have depended on monetary wealth. Buying and owning mass produced commodities would have been a means of easily displaying status through the regular use of imported ceramics at mealtimes, and through setting up obligations from those who were socially indebted through their requirement to borrow an object. Commodities were commodities, in that they were bought for cash and had limited availability dependent on economic means. But commodities could also be temporary gifts and had gift candidacy (to borrow Appadurai's (1986) phrase on commodities) understood at this time not directly from their cash value, but through their place in social obligations and networks.

Trading Identity

To this point, the role of mass produced ceramics appears to have reflected and reinforced social bonds between groups of plantation residents, bridging between plantation owners, enslaved laborers, and others living upon plantation sites. As has been argued above, this system of exchange managed to create a sense of shared identity through reciprocity, whilst also still emphasizing economic difference and ties of dependency. If plantation owners were expected to lend to enslaved laborers as seems to be evidenced via sherd distributions across sites, this would seem to suggest one arena in which notions of enslavement as clientage was in operation (Cooper 1977). All those on plantations shared in a common cultural understanding that these dishes, platters, and teacups should be used at particular social occasions. But nineteenth century Zanzibari residents did not have a singular homogenous identity. Outside of clove plantation society – which largely consisted of plantation owners, enslaved workers, and those who had formerly been enslaved, along with some indigenous Swahili involved in owning or working on plantations (and it should be noted that the lines between these groups were not always clear) – were groups who were recognized as having identities which were distinctly *not* Zanzibari. These people, it may be expected, would not have participated in the same reciprocal relations outlined above. Exchange was, however, a crucial part in the mediation of these identities. For from both formal interviews and informal conversations it became clear than when most Zanzibaris spoke of "traders" in the past, the term implied an Indian ethnic identity. One person remembered that in the past (during the rule of the penultimate Sultan of Zanzibar thus definitely predating 1963) "In Wete, Chake, Mtambile, and Mkoani [the largest towns on Pemba], there was a lot of Indian traders with big shops." Imported ceramics were said to have been imported such by Indian shopkeepers in multiple interviews. Several also commented on the different eating habits of Indians, which they had largely heard about by rumor. For instance, one commented she "had heard that with Indians everyone [when eating] had their own plate," although she had never actually seen this practice herself. In contrast "Arabs ate like other Pembans all from the same dish." Foodstuffs of Indians, in contrast to other Zanzibaris/Pembans/Arabs (labeled by ethnonym as such in interviews) were also rumored to be different, with one person having heard that "Indians mixed rice with peas, green beans, or lentils" but there "was no difference between the ways Arabs and Pembans ate."[18]

Indian immigrants were widespread around the region at this time, and were deeply involved in Indian Ocean capitalism (Bose 2006: 78). Within nineteenth century Zanzibar, Indian immigrants mostly resided in urban areas (Clark and Horton 1985: 20; Sheriff 1995b). Although they lived in close proximity and shared regular social interaction with other Zanzibari residents, a sense of Indian identity developed which was clearly differentiated from many other social groups on Zanzibar in the ethnic politics of the islands. Indians were commonly viewed to be

[18]Croucher (2006: Appendix K), interviews 1 and 7.

rich (an image for which they suffered in the 1964 revolution) and as the nineteenth century progressed they increasingly had financial stakes in plantations via provisioning mortgages (Sheriff 1987: 106, 204). Thus, they were perceived as being a community apart, not only in some of their social practices, but also through their relationship to capital and their seemingly heavier involvement in trading.

Their sale of goods to plantation residents, even though this was often on a small scale, seems to have heightened the perception of ethnic difference between Zanzibaris – a category consisting of the plantation owners, their children, slaves, and free workers involved on plantations – and Indians. Few Indians resident on Zanzibar were Muslims, and it has been argued that Indians often also built slightly different house forms than their Arab and Swahili neighbors (Sheriff 1995b: 19, 21), these public differences would have been added in to those identified at a level of daily practice in eating habits. It is in the act of exchange, however, that we see this difference expressed at an interpersonal level, through which subjects were able to articulate their distinctions from one another. Even in capitalist society we can still follow the argument that "Exchange relations seem to be the substance of social life" (Thomas 1991: 7) since the "Evaluations of entities, people, groups, and relationships" are still emerging at the moment of a cash transaction (ibid). We tend not to think of exchange as the most important moment of analysis when thinking about capitalism. But the act of shopping for commodified goods is socially important in societies where commodity exchanges take place. As Appadurai (1986: 14) pointed out in his seminal work on commodity analysis, it is in the act of exchange itself that commodities are truly commodities as they are recognized for their role in an alienated cash transaction. Even where subjects are fully immersed within a context of consumer culture having the opportunity to participate in commodity exchanges may be restricted by discriminatory practices, thus turning the act of commodity exchange into a charged social moment (Chin 2001; Mullins 1999).

The perception of Indians as controlling the monetary economy of Zanzibar through trade and mortgages may also have been an aspect which created some tension between Indians and other Zanzibaris. The purchase of mass produced imports from a distinct social group may have stood in stark contrast for plantation residents to those exchange relations shared with their closer neighbors with whom they may have been involved in reciprocal exchange of dishes – even if this heightened recognition of social hierarchies – and in other exchanges such as small-scale purchase or gifts of locally made ceramics. Commodity exchanges were not only for mass produced ceramics; gold, silver and beaded jewelry were also most commonly purchased from strangers in town, generally alluded to be Indians or *not* regular Zanzibaris.[19] Because of the way in which Indian traders stood outside of the regular life of plantations, identified as Other we can imagine them as "strangers" to plantation residents (Thomas 1991: 22). While they might not have been unknown to plantation residents, they were not involved in the intimate social relations that produced shared community cohesiveness. Presenting cash to buy a mass produced

[19]Croucher (2006: Appendix K), interviews 5, 6, 8, and 9.

commodity may therefore has been a significant moment in dis-identification between plantation residents and traders, and simultaneously a moment in which broadly shared identification through non-commodity exchange was heightened between plantation residents, cementing some of the ideas of a new kind of common Zanzibari identity from which Indian immigrants were excluded.

Global Capitalist Relations

> The managers who facilitate this process can tell us: To produce a commodity is the work of the translator, the diplomat, and the power-crazed magician. (Tsing 2005: 52)

I have chosen this quotation to open this final discussion section on the ceramics found on Zanzibar since it emphasizes that commodity production is no straightforward process. Production is a vital part in understanding the complexities of commodity chains, for the output of this must be somehow attuned to the desires and needs of consumer. Mass produced ceramics were increasingly adopted in daily practices for Zanzibaris over time, as their ubiquitous use today also demonstrates. But there is nothing inevitable about the adoption of commodities. Indeed, increasing numbers of studies show the complexities of the subtle cultural choices that underlie the manner in which commodities come to be used widely, selectively, or rejected within specific contexts (for African examples, Burke 1996; Hansen 2000; Holtzman 2003; Richard 2010; Stahl 2002; Thornton 1998: 52). There is no pattern which can predict the desirability of particular commodities, nor whether they will be adopted in commodity form, "domesticated" into particular local uses, or modified into alternative spheres of exchange (Prestholdt 2008; Thomas 1991). Studying the manner in which commodities are desirable, and the shifts in manufacture which attempted to improve the desirability of mass manufactured goods provides an analytical tool for studying the fine grain of relationships for those who are broadly linked on a global scale through capitalism within particular cultural contexts, and to examine the effects of the extension of capitalist trade on the "cores" of production themselves. For we know that the hegemony of Euro-American culture is not a simple one way street – time and time again it has been shown just how much "the rest" have impacted on the very creation of "the west" (Carrier 1992; Clifford 1997; Marcus 1995) and recent studies have begun to highlight the multidirectional flow of cultural information via commodity use in colonial periods (Norton 2008).

As presented above, the imported ceramics from Zanzibar are significantly different from those of Europe, America, or European colonial areas such as South Africa and Australia. But as well as the collections from Zanzibar, ceramics of this design and style have been found in Namibia (Kinahan 2000) and by collectors from India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Burma (Myanmar), and Indonesia (Kelly 1994, 1999a, b), as well as exhibiting design similarities with some of the wares which are found in South African contexts (Klose and Malan 2000; Malan and Klose 2003). Although the stylistic canon of cut-sponge printing to produce brightly colored designs was first used on earthenwares in the early nineteenth century to manufacture cheap goods for local

Fig. 8.6 Avenue Ceramique, Maastricht, The Netherlands. The naming of this street shows the marking of industrial heritage into the landscape of this Dutch city

markets, later in the nineteenth century the technique, along with the painting of bright bands and flowers, spread to the production of specific wares for export markets. Several potteries in Britain and the Netherlands began to manufacture such wares specifically for the Asian market (Cruickshank 1982; Kelly 1999a: 182–183).

The acceptance, or not, of mass produced wares from Europe was likely predicated on preexisting patterns of taste in the new markets to which they were taken (Schneider 1987: 441; Stahl 2002: 841). The local cuisine of Zanzibar, where rice and sauce based dishes were eaten in a fairly communal style with diners sharing food from the same dishes,[20] helped shape which ceramics were desirable in local markets where the kinds of individual place settings found in most historical archaeological contexts would have been unsuitable for existing practices. The consumption patterns on Zanzibar, whilst representing local styles of cuisine, were also tied to wider Indian Ocean consumption patterns of rice based dishes. These loosely shared practices of cuisine within Asian and the Indian Ocean region fed back to the potteries of Scotland and the Netherlands. This resulted in the manufacture of wares in designs and styles thought likely to be acceptable to Asian and Indian Ocean markets (Kelly 2006). At these sites of production (Fig. 8.6), it could be argued that potters may have developed ideas about their difference to those far away consumers of the ceramics they produced. Whereas on Zanzibar difference may have been articulated at an interpersonal level via commodities, between Europe and East Africa differences may have been partly understood through the lens of material culture with no face-to-face interaction. The variance in shape and design to the

[20] Such practices are widespread. A contemporary nineteenth century description of the mealtimes of the elite is provided in *Memoirs of an Arabian Princess* (Reute 1998[1886]). Details were also provided in oral historical interviews (Croucher 2006: Appendix K, interviews 4, 5, and 7).

Fig. 8.7 Dutch ceramic manufacturer's maker's mark, along with non-Anglicized script for a local Indian Ocean market

ceramics used within their own homes, and the foreign scripts sometimes used in the manufacture of maker's marks for some export wares (Fig. 8.7) may have been a lens for pottery workers to imagine their European cultural homogeneity vis-à-vis far off populations in Africa and Asia. Their sense of difference to these populations may not have been one in which they were aware of actual cultural practices, but the real material linkages between consumers on Zanzibar, pastoralists living in the !Khusib Delta area, Namibia (Kinahan 2000: 74–75), and others throughout the Indian Ocean region (Kelly 2006) was indeed a nebulous linkage of communities whom, unbeknownst to one another, participated in broadly shared practices of taste in the selection of their brightly decorated dishes.

Conclusions: The Complexities of Capitalism

When reflecting on the varied histories of mass produced ceramics on Zanzibari plantations, the cultural fluidity of the adoption of capitalism becomes apparent. This is not simply a case study of a one way economic relationship between a European colonial power and a colonized culture increasingly bowing to pressure to purchase commodities from their oppressors. By taking over markets for imported

ceramics – and indeed expanding these markets – we do see the British and Dutch enacting their economic might as European colonial powers usurping the previous networks of ceramic sales that had crisscrossed the Indian Ocean.[21] But to take these over was a complex process, and embedded many within the ecumene of the commodity. This network of producers, exporters and importers, merchants, and consumers, was a multidirectional web of cultural communication. Ideas about identities were, in part, created through actions seen and unseen of producers, sellers, buyers, and users. In all of these cases, the commodity candidacy of the mass produced wares was never in doubt. Yet concomitantly this network also passed into an almost gift-like aspect of economics on Zanzibar, where reciprocal relations between people were also passed through the sharing of bowls, platters, and teacups at moments when correct cultural practice required.

In seeing the complexity of capitalism on Zanzibar, it is impossible to adopt any simple evolutionary type approach to understanding the manner in which capitalist practices and meanings pass into colonized societies. As Tsing (2005: 76) has pointed out, capitalism is heterogeneous: "Capitalist forms and processes are continually made and unmade; if we offer singular predictions we allow ourselves to be caught by them as ideologies." This point, a counter-argument to evolutionary accounts of capitalism, resonates with studies such as Thomas (1991) and Piot (1999) as they study the mutability of capitalisms entanglement within colonial cultural relations. The main point I would stress from this brief study of one type of artifact, is that it is impossible to slot capitalist relations into any single "type" of capitalism. We cannot say that colonial powers on Zanzibar were merchant capitalists and therefore place all cultural iterations of capitalism as analogous to those of seventeenth century European merchants (cf. Pearson 1998; Sheriff 1987). Likewise, we cannot take the dominant mode of capitalism in Europe at the time as the "core" of capitalism, and dismiss cultural practices embedded within capitalist modes on Zanzibar as simply a reaction in a "periphery," where capitalism is an external force and unchanged by Zanzibari practices (cf. Wallerstein 1976).

The cultural exchanges which traversed the commodity chain are perhaps as important to note as the economic relations, since it is in these that we see the particularities of the manner in which understandings of capitalism on Zanzibar were shaped by the particular cultural context of the islands and the way in which the practices of Zanzibaris were also integral to the shaping of the wider capitalist world. There are many ways in which we could frame this complexity. One term which has gained widespread usage recently is Tsing's (2005) idea of "frictions"; Thomas' (1991) use of the word entanglement also works well within the Zanzibari context, providing an explanatory frame for the multiple directions of communication that passed through various persons and cultural groups via commodities. Entanglement

[21] Ceramics have a long (pre)history of trade around the Indian Ocean. Early imports are attested from the site of Kilwa dated back to at least the eighth Century CE (Horton 1996), details of further long-term trends in imported ceramics can be found for Unguja in Juma (2004), for Pemba in Fleisher (2003), and for the Kilwa region in Wynne-Jones (2005).

perhaps stops short of the depth of these relations however. As Piot (1999) notes for the Kabre in Togo, it is in part the very relationship of capitalism and colonialism to cultures that has produced what may at first seem to be cultural practices antithetical to capitalism, particularly within exchange relations. Seeing a "friction" between the requirements of enslavement and the need for client/patron relations to establish high social standing for nineteenth century Zanzibaris, against the dominant capitalist mode of production and the purchase of increasing amounts of mass produced goods, it is possible to speculate that perhaps the relations of reciprocity in some publicly used commoditized goods were a novel social practice. This may have been entirely created in the nexus of these two different cultural systems. As increasing amounts of archaeological work is carried out which examines the poorer sections of Swahili society prior to the seventeenth century (Fleisher 2003; Wynne-Jones 2005, 2006), potential exists to compare whether access to imported goods was differentiated along the same social variables as during later historical moments for East African coastal cultures. This question is a complex one, and requires more work (but see Croucher in preparation), yet it opens us up to thinking about whether reciprocal relations are here a fossilized practice of "pre-capitalist" culture in the Western Indian Ocean/East Africa, or whether they are in fact a product of modernity itself – truly a form of capitalism within a colonial context.

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