Censoring Music through Race

The struggle between African and Arab values and politics in the music of Zanzibar

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During the time I have been studying the East African musical style taarab, international as well as local impressions, evaluations, and understanding have undergone great changes. When I first visited Zanzibar in 1981, taarab was recognized as an all present but little known music coming out of *chai*-houses and contributing to the local soundscape, but since that time international and primarily western interest has grown and today the music is part of the cultural industry which markets Zanzibar as a peaceful and exotic destination for tourism. However, taarab music is deeply embedded in a social and political discourse which relates to the islands' complex historical situation. By sounding a taarab song or giving a particular drum beat in performance an utterance is given which, depending on its context and its relation to race, class, and ethnicity, is interpreted in terms of the cultural and political soundscape. Because of its contested and important role, control over the taarab environment has been crucial and censorship has been clandestinely or openly employed. The musician Seif Salim Saleh was a prominent member of the Zanzibari musical environment and through his story, which I had the privilege of hearing from him directly and over time, I will discuss how one important aspect of the censorship in taarab was based on race.

The study of the influence and impact of the censorship of musical utterances is a relatively new matter in musicology, and it is theoretically related to post-colonial studies. Traditionally, studies of censorship in music have been mostly related to forms that ally music to words, that is primarily music for theatre and operas. As the present Grove entry on censorship has it: 'Censorship is not readily practised on music, because music does not as a rule convey a precise statement such as persons in authority might wish to tone down or ban'.[1]

In this article I argue that even if music does not convey precise or semantic statements, it affords a unique affective platform for expressing meaning and identity[2] and contributes to social and human dialogue. For this reason and despite the general belief that words are more at risk of being banned, music and its practitioners are made subjects to regulations, prohibitions, and silencing surprisingly often. More attention has been paid to writers and the international PEN has been a major force in fighting for the right to freedom of expression, but recently researchers

1 John Rosselli, art. 'Censorship', *Grove Music Online* (accessed Nov. 2008).

2 Bruce Johnson and Martin Cloonan, *Dark Side of the Tune: Popular Music and Violence* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 141.

have documented and drawn attention to the numerous cases in which musicians, singers, and composers have been harassed, persecuted, and even killed because of their music and sound.[3]

As a new area of interest and concern to both musicologists and ethnomusicologists, the field of research is in my opinion still very open and undefined. However, research on musical censorship draws on basic principles of post-colonial theory which regards culture in relation to power relations and political action, and acknowledges that music is not an innocent agent in social and cultural matters.[4]

Swedish musicologist Johan Fornäs proposes three major ways in which censorship is applied to music. He defines these as state laws, market rules, and life-world constraints. The three might work independently controlling each their part of society, but they might also work together in intricate ways, affecting artists and performers severely.[5] In the case examined here, all three sections are at work as national interests, economic earnings, and civil society's values all influence the discourse about race. However, a study of censorship must not only include its victims but also its initiators. Here Martin Cloonan offers the insight that censorship 'is the process by which an agent (or agents) attempts to, and/or succeeds in, significantly altering, and/or curtailing, the freedom of expression of another agent with a view to limiting the likely audience for that expression'.[6] In the Zanzibari case these initiators and agents must be found among participants in the contemporary cultural life as well as with the conveyors of previous power structures which can and must be traced through a historical examination.

Race – albeit substantially also tied to power relations – draws on seemingly different assumptions, and as it is also according to Ronald Radano and Philip Bohlman one of the most conspicuous reasons for censorship in music, it adds a particular dimension to the debate.[7] Tracing bans and exclusions through the major diasporic master narratives of the Jews and the African Americans in modernity, they argue that race is embodied in music. In the history of the popular East African music culture, taarab, racial distinctions play important roles and have resulted in severe cases of musicians having been silenced. These took place in colonial times and even before, when slavery and human trafficking were dependent on racial defi-

3 Since 1998 also the NGO Freemuse – The World Forum for Music and Censorship – has been pioneering in documenting and raising attention to musical censorship, seeing their work as an equivalent to what the international PEN organization is doing for writers. I am indebted to Freemuse for inspiration in the work presented here.

4 Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, 'Introduction', in Born and Hesmondhalgh (eds.), *Western Music and its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music* (London: University of California Press, 2000), 5.

5 Johan Fornäs, *Limits to musical expression* (Copenhagen: Freemuse, 2002), 2 (internet publication on www.freemuse.org).

6 Martin Cloonan, 'Call That Censorship? Problems of Definition', in Martin Cloonan and Reebee Garofalo (eds.), *Policing Pop* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 13–29, on 15.

7 Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman, 'Music and Race, Their Past, Their Presence', in Radano and Bohlman (eds.), *Music and the Racial Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1–53.

nitions and separations of peoples in tribes and the differing colour of their skin. But the repercussions of colonialism have also dominated social life in the larger part of the twentieth century. In order to explain why race can be understood as a basis for censorship in Zanzibar and to highlight the complexity of the processes which are at stake in censoring music through racial categories, the following short examples will serve as appetizers.

Having been a guest in Zanzibar during several periods of fieldwork covering many years, it is striking how diversified the population and the city look. The architecture differs greatly as do dressing and ways of life. Some people have very light complexions and look like Indians or fair skinned Arabs. Others are very black and look like the stereotyped 'Africans'. In the daily routines and the cityscape the colours mingle but even so racial divisions can be spotted, for instance in social and musical life. The dancers of ngoma are usually all very dark, while the performers at a taarab concert display a larger variation, some of the musicians and singers clearly being Indian or Arab. Controversial as observations like these are, they are nevertheless at the heart of the discussion I offer here.[8]

Race is also an important part of taarab history. The famous Siti Binti Saad who is celebrated as the first and most skilled taarab female singer is a good example. Saad was already a legend along the entire Swahili coast in her own lifetime, and her fame became international through recordings in India in the 1920s. Siti Binti Saad was born in Zanzibar around 1880 and both her parents were immigrant workers from the mainland. When Saad moved to Zanzibar Town around 1910, she met several musicians and was introduced to music, to the Arabic language and the Qur'an as well as Arabian literature. Saad became the first woman in Zanzibar to be a popular star and her fame quickly made her a frequent guest in the house of the Sultan.[9] This was a rather paradoxical position for a woman singer of mainland origin in a traditionally male-dominated and Arab centred culture. Her band was small and the male musicians in the group were in no way connected to the elite in Zanzibar Town. It included a *dumbak* – the small drum which gave name to the taarab style *Kidumbak*,[10] and which is associated with Ngoma events. Saad often sang in a veil, but she did sing in public – an otherwise forbidden activity in Muslim culture of that time. It has been discussed why Siti Binti Saad covered her face in the *buibui* when she sang. Traditionally it has been believed that the reason was

8 In this article I use the words 'African', 'Arab', and 'Asian' or 'Indian' as discursive terms, as 1) they are used so in the empirical world and 2) that they are in my theoretical understanding fundamentally subject to manipulation.

9 Seif Salim Saleh remembers that Siti Binti Saad used to sing there once a week and primarily on Thursdays; personal communication with Seif Salim Saleh, Zanzibar, Oct. 1994. All references to information obtained during my fieldwork are referred to in this manner. Primary interviews for this article were conducted during fieldwork in Zanzibar in 1994 and 1998 with the late Seif Salim Saleh. A number of other interviewees made important contributions, but in order to shield them in the ongoing struggle over meaning, race, and power in this rather small community of Zanzibar I have chosen not to give their names.

10 Janet Topp Fargion, 'The role of Women in *taarab* in Zanzibar: an Historical Examination of a Process of "Africanisation"', *The World of Music*, 35/2 (1993), 117.

that Saad was ugly. Historian Laura Fair gives reasonable evidence that she was in fact not ugly per se, rather she was African and looked like it. The *buibui* – itself a signal of urbanity and modernity – concealed both class and race, and gave access to recognition otherwise not available for people of African origin.[11]

History, ethnicity, and racism in Zanzibar

Its long history of cultural encounter, dating at least back a millennium, has resulted in a particular demographic composition and a diversified socio-political identity among the peoples of Zanzibar. Many different waves of immigration have taken place and Arab and Portuguese sailors and merchants in particular have influenced the development of the region. The most numerous and well known people of the coast, crossing modern national borders, are the Swahilis. Being essentially urban and commuting continuously between Arab and African values and cultural forms, the Swahilis have dominated the history of the region. In Zanzibar the term Swahili includes many different groups and through wars, economic supremacy, and slavery the peoples have experienced shifting and conflicting relations.

However, since independence inherent ethnic complexities and clashes have been muted in public and political discourse, and the image of the population in Zanzibar has been that of peaceful coexistence, relatively smooth cultural integration, and accordingly a musical style embracing the demographic diversity in gentle and beautiful sounds. Today this interpretation has become a trope cleverly used by entrepreneurs in the emerging tourist industry. The discourse is nevertheless superficial and misleading, and the music scene offers a good view of a contested space, in which the performance of taarab can be interpreted as an active statement in an ongoing political and cultural struggle.

Kelly Askew and John Kitime have convincingly documented the way in which musical censorship has been part and parcel of Tanzanian politics since the days of colonialism.[12] Ngoma regulations which in the first decades of the twentieth century strived at controlling primarily the organizations around the *Beni* dance, which was modelled on German military drills and customs and whose leaders held titles like 'Kaiser', 'König' and 'Bismarck', often included bans and prohibitions on performing the dances. In the eyes of the British authorities, Beni dance organizations not only bore associations to the 'enemy', but more seriously via their trans-tribal composition provided a cultural platform which opposed the divide and rule strategy of the British colonial system. Therefore it had to be censored. In Zanzibar the conditions were even more complicated because of the importance of the East African and Indian Ocean trade. The islands had been the site of the former slave market and

11 Laura Fair, *Pastimes and Politics. Culture, Community, and Identity in Post-Abolition Urban Zanzibar 1890–1945* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001), 85ff.

12 Kelly M. Askew and John Francis Kitime, 'Popular Music Censorship in Tanzania', in Michael Drewett and Martin Cloonan, *Popular Music Censorship in Africa* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 137–56. Tanganyika was a German colony until 1916, when it came under British rule.

because slave labour had been imported from the mainland to work the big plantations 'racial'/ethnic dynamics in Zanzibar developed along much more politicized lines than in Tanganyika'.[13]

History

As ethnic and demographic relations in Zanzibar were fused with both slavery and colonialism, the cultural encounter was not always a peaceful marriage.[14] Some cultural markers are nevertheless coherent and they seem to indicate a kind of affinity or homogeneity of the islands.

One such important factor is the presence of Islam. On the coast and in Zanzibar, Muslim faith is ascribed to almost 95 per cent of the population, and historically the introduction of and adherence to Islam has had great impact on ethnic and racial identities. The Omani Arabs who settled in Zanzibar saw the Swahili coast as a periphery of the Arabian world and therefore on the borders of civilization. The Swahilis of the coast of course saw it differently. Being Muslim, the Swahilis felt part of the total Islamic community – the *umma*. Thus they saw themselves clearly differentiated from the 'impure' people of the hinterland and their towns as social centres in a wilderness of unbelievers.[15] Music served as a crucial vehicle for conversion[16] and the reading of the Qur'an, being a clear marker of religious identity, has audibly affected musical preferences, even outside the Qur'anic schools (the *Madrassas*) and the Mosque.

Language provided another important factor in coastal culture and served increasingly as a unifying phenomenon. Kiswahili is the linguistic result of the merger of African and Arab words and enforced by the practice of Islam. The Zanzibari version of the language – believed by many to be more refined and authentic[17] – gives a notion of supremacy and civilization to the island culture. Since taarab relies heavily on poetry and communication, the capacity of Kiswahili to express nuances and meanings in dialogue is crucial to the social power of taarab.

The Swahilis have a reputation for being open to news, fashion, foreigners, and guests, and their culture is said to be eclectic. This is officially held to be positive, not least in music and culture, but below the surface, there is and has always been strong ethnic and social competition. As Laura Fair has documented, cultural markers such as clothes, sports, and music display an inherent conflict, and the negotiation over slavery, manumission, and positioning within the Zanzibari urban society is often

13 Ibid. 144.

14 Already before the advent of the wealthy sultans from Oman in the beginning of the 1830s, Arab merchants and soldiers, Bantu or African chiefs and warlords, and shifting guests from Persia, India, and even China had a role to play in the genesis of both culture, language, and skills of for instance sea and land transport.

15 John Middleton, *The World of the Swahili: an African mercantile civilisation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 162.

16 Radano and Bohlman, 'Music and Race', 20.

17 This is apparently due to its stronger relation to Arabic and to poetry.

expressed in these events.[18] In the early part of the twentieth century female veiling signalled social status as only freeborn citizens were allowed to cover their heads. However, soon after being manumitted former slaves took up the use of the black *buibui*, in this way claiming equality with their former mistresses. Likewise restrictions and rules, many of them gendered and based on class, governed the making and performance of music, but also soon afforded possibilities for changing usages.

Problems of defining ethnicity and race are related to social power relations and often there is insecurity over categories like Shirazi (Persians), Omani or even Arab, mirroring of course the impossibility of essentializing ethnicity.[19] Many categories are simply based on British colonial ideas and therefore to a very large extend constructed. Zanzibari history shows shifting instances in which ethnicity and race are negotiable and where people decide according to the situation which group they want to belong to.[20]

This leaves us with the basic recognition that ethnic and demographic relations in Zanzibar are variable and shifting. Race, however, appears to be a stubborn marker of identity (probably because of its visual presence) and as suggested by Bohlman and Radano racialization limits choices and options.[21] When ruling cultures and elites make use of colour distinctions and physical appearance to limit choices and to impose differences and borders between people, the process must be termed racism. Colour is, however, still subject to interpretation, and the definitions of which 'shade' belongs to which group can, as in the Zanzibari case, at a general level vary grossly through history. It is, however, my claim that music is a strong agent, and possibly complicit, in conducting, performing, and negotiating these structures.

Social history of taarab in Zanzibar

The origin of taarab music is profoundly tied to the ethnic and racial distinctions of Swahili culture and to historical power struggles between local African peoples and incoming Arab and European rulers. But migration within the so-called Indian Ocean Area was also of great importance to the development of taarab. When Sultan Barghash returned to Zanzibar in the 1880s after a prolonged stay in India, he brought with him the style and culture he had met in the East.[22] He copied the exuberance of Indian culture, as is still visible in the architecture of the stone town of Zanzibar, and he sent for the most famous musicians in the world

18 Fair, *Pastimes and Politics*, 64 ff.

19 Martin Stokes, 'Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity and Music', in Martin Stokes (ed.), *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The musical construction of place* (Providence: Berg, 1994), 20.

20 From the 1931 census to the census in 1948 the population of Shirazi decreases from 40,891 to 175, which is 'neither due to mortality nor to emigration, but simply that the same people changed their ethnic or racial identity and adopted another'; J. Mosare, 'Background to the Revolution in Zanzibar', in I.N. Kimambo and A.J. Temu (eds.), *A History of Tanzania* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969), 214–38, on 222.

21 Radano and Bohlman, 'Music and Race', 8.

22 Fair, *Pastimes and Politics*, 171.

at the time, that is, musicians from the Egyptian court in Cairo and the Ottoman capital, Istanbul. Accordingly the court culture in Zanzibar rose to famed heights for its splendour and romance, which also pleased European guests and allies. The palace of the Zanzibari Sultan became the point of departure and return for European travellers and missionaries en route to the dark interior of the continent, and tales of its hospitality and civilization were reported by both Richard Burton and David Livingstone.

The style of taarab is believed to originate in the male clubs, the oldest of which, The Ikhwani Safaa Musical Club, goes back to the early twentieth century. The name taarab, which means to enjoy or be moved, is probably also from this time.[23] The clubs were organized in brotherhoods, common all over the Muslim world, and in the club houses the music was enjoyed as an aesthetic art form among equals. The language was initially Arabic and its musical instruments, modes, scales, and vocal lines were part of an international Muslim world culture.

Since the 1920s, however, new musical influences made their way into taarab. The migrant mainlanders and descendants of manumitted African slaves gradually claimed social and cultural importance, and soon they began to adopt the musical art form of the ruling elite – that is, taarab. It was, however, happening in clear opposition to the Sultan, who tried to get control of the style by restricting the legal use of taarab to the palace grounds exclusively. The rules were broken easily, and taarab was increasingly performed outside the palace walls. From this time on rhythms known to the African part of the population from ngoma events were introduced into taarab, and simultaneously male privileges were challenged by female singers.[24]

The introduction of the Kiswahili language into taarab is one other feature often attributed to women and especially Siti Binti Saad. The clubs were still centred on ethnic, gendered, or even racial affinity – some being exclusively for Arabs and others for Africans – and even if women had access, social distinctions were upheld. The Michenzani Social Club was formed in 1954 in the Michenzani district of Ng'ambo, and significantly '[t]he club was the first to be started in Ng'ambo [the African Quarters of town], and the founder members were all people of African Descent'.[25]

Siti Binti Saad was never a member of a club, and certainly not of the Ikhwani Saafa Musical Club, which according to present day taarab 'idol', Bi Kidude, only accepted Arabs.[26] Still she was a regular guest in the court of the Sultan, where she sang in weekly performances.[27]

23 The word, however, is a localization of the concept *tarab*, which is known broadly in Arab music. See, for instance, A.J. Racy, *Making Music in the Arab World: The Culture and the Artistry of Tarab* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

24 Topp Fargion, 'The role of Women in *taarab* in Zanzibar', 110.

25 Janet Topp, *Women and the Africanisation of taarab in Zanzibar* (unpubl. Ph.D. diss.; London: School of Oriental and Asian Studies, 1992), 89.

26 During an interview in the film *As Old as My Tongue, The Myth and Life of Bi Kidude* (2006 DVD-edn.), cf. www.asoldasmytongue.net (accessed Jan. 2008).

27 A plate in the Sultan's palace states that Saad used to sing every Thursday; field notes 1994.

Musical characteristics of Zanzibari taarab

Classical taarab is musically characterized by the prominence of the sung word or rather, sung poetry. This has a strong influence on the form, which is strophic and in verse rather than cyclic as many African musics. The dialogue between solo parts and a mixed choir singing in unison is extended to a repeated interchange between voice and an instrumental group, and in breaks between lines and verses, instruments take over in call response structure. Both in vocal and instrumental passages, the harmonic structure is based on what is known in large parts of the Muslim world as *heterophonia*, which is singing or playing a shared melodic line in parallel octaves and with variations in intonation, rhythmic timing, and sonority. Singing in harmonies is very seldom heard as it remains closely related to Christian missionary song, thus the affinity with Arabic musical ideals is still audible.

Many of the instruments used in taarab, like *oud*, *qanun*, and violin, have equally strong relations to the Arab Muslim world and thus carry a unique and recognizable sound. This closeness is further strengthened by the occasional use of modes and scales from the classical Arab music system, and it determines the melodic lines of the songs and tunes.[28] Vocal lines often have Eastern tonality (so-called micro tonal intervals) and the voice quality relies on both Arab and Indian influences.[29]

However, the increasing presence of musics of local African people, immigrant plantation workers from the mainland, and women's musical organizations, have continuously challenged the style of taarab. It has influenced the repertory, the instrumentation, and the structure of the music as well as the sound. The introduction of ngoma rhythms and later also Latin American dance rhythms, which probably came by way of the post-independence urban dance musics from the mainland,[30] was heavily influential on taarab style in the middle of the twentieth century.

The creative openness of the culture has resulted in a ready acceptance of new ideas, and during the twentieth century electric instruments such as guitars, bass, keyboards, and synthesizers, and global dance rhythms as well as elements from Indian film music have all been included. Accordingly, taarab can be found in different formats ranging from large scale orchestras with up to 40 participants, formal membership, and regular practice evenings, to small groups put together on an occasional basis. The sounds are very different, but taarab to its audience still emerges as an audibly recognizable and coherent style. However, disputes over control of the style are frequent, most clearly seen in the conflicting relations concerning so-called 'modern taarab',[31] and are in some cases included in the performative structures of the culture. The competitiveness between orchestras is strong and often they duel in pairs. Much energy is put into inventiveness and creating images, and these often involve ethnicity and race.

28 Interview with Seif Salim Saleh, Zanzibar, Oct. 1994.

29 Seif Salim Saleh demonstrates this vocal style on his song 'Nipepee', which was recorded by Globestyle, cf. Annemette Kirkegaard, 'Nipepee, en taarab-sang fra Zanzibar', *Musik og Forskning*, 16 (1991), 155–68.

30 Dance rhythms have also been believed to relate to influences from Indian commercial music.

31 Modern taarab is based on the influence of more dance related musics and uses synthesizers.

Taarab thus is a melting pot in both musical and cultural ways, but also a contested space. Seated listening to the music is associated with Arabness and Muslim values, while dancing to the music adheres to Africanness. In a typical Zanzibari compromise, at public taarab concerts dance is often transformed into an elaborate walk to the stage in order to spray the performers.[32] Instrumental pieces like the *Basrafs* of the large orchestras are in close encounter with popular musics of the Arab world, while initiation tunes and musics like the *Unyago* of rural Zanzibar signal a unity with African and mainland cultures. Sometimes the issues merge, and accordingly political and ideological dialogues and conflicts are often acted out in taarab performance.[33]

The Zanzibar revolution and taarab

By the end of the 1950s, the British colonial period declined and independence was at hand on the African continent. In Zanzibar independence was obtained 10 December 1963. Backed by British interests in upholding Muslim norms and values in the islands, the Arabs hoped for a continuation of the sultanate, and due to dubious election procedures they won the election in spite of the absolute majority of votes of the African population. An independent sultanate was proclaimed.

In January 1964 the African side reacted in a violent revolution, during which tens of thousands of Arabs were killed and many more forced into exile.[34] After the revolution the biggest African party – Afro-Shirazi-Party (ASP) – took over, but unrest continued. Power in the new state was concentrated in the hands of Sheik Abeid Karume, who worked to establish a socialist state. The calamities which followed have to be understood partly as a reaction to centuries of suppression and economic exploitation of the African population, but they had clear racial overtones. All major plantations – for many the quintessence of Arab supremacy – were nationalized, and those individuals who could not document African descent were robbed of their citizenship. Karume was popular in the African part of the population because of his campaign against the Arabs, but still hated by most groups because of his tough policy of rationing. After having survived two attempted assassinations, Karume was murdered in 1972 and power was transferred to Sheik Aboud Jumbe.

The violent struggle had major consequences for taarab music. In the period between the election and the revolution the Sultan's government required that all music aired on the radio should be Arabic music, 'thus fuelling fears that Zanzibar was being turned into an Arab, rather than an African, state'.[35] When the revolutionary forces broke into Radio Zanzibar on the morning of 12 January 1964, they destroyed

32 This procedure is very popular and primarily women flock to the stage donating small amounts, so that they can go to the stage many times in order to be seen.

33 Kelly M. Askew, *Performing the Nation. Swahili Music and Cultural Politics in Tanzania* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 127.

34 This is a painful part of the history of the islands. See, for instance, the internet site 'Zanzibar Unveiled' for photos and reports (www.zanzibarhistory.org).

35 Askew and Kitime, 'Popular Music Censorship in Tanzania', 144.

almost all the old 78 rpm records containing taarab music.[36] From around the same time Latin American rhythms imported from mainland popular dance music such as Congolese and Swahili pop began to dominate taarab. It is not known whether this was deliberately promoted by those in power, but it is clear that the new government in its quest to emphasize everything 'African' wanted to do away with Arab rhythms in particular, which had dominated the music for a long time.

But the new rulers were not opposed to music and culture; for instance Karume himself is reported to have owned a taarab-club for Africans before independence.[37] The regime, however, strongly opposed the alleged Arab character of most taarab music, so clubs and other leisure activities based on ethnic or racial grounds were forbidden from the first day of the revolution.[38] Also all groups were ordered to sing exclusively in Kiswahili instead of Arabic. In fact most of the purely Arab clubs were closed for shorter or longer periods, and they were all forced to Africanize their names. The Ikhwani Safaa Musical Club became Ndugu Wanaopendana ('Brothers who love one another'),[39] but soon the group was merely called Malindi Musical Club after the location of their house in Zanzibar Town. Like other social organizations it became a branch of the local ASP. After the political thaw in 1984 the club officially reinstated its old name, Ikhwani Safaa. However, many people in Zanzibar today still call them Malindi.[40]

In 1964 the taarab group Shime Kuokoana, a youth group affiliated with the ASP, formed the basis of the political construct The Zanzibar and Pemba Dramatic and Musical Club, which was set up under the direct order of the Ministry of Culture. Later renamed Culture Musical Club, since that period the club has been regarded as the group of the ruling nationalist party, while Ikhwani Safaa remains associated with the days of the sultanate and the Arab-Omani rule. As the ruling party had strong ideological links to the mainland, it also has a racial dimension, since mainlanders are considered more 'African'.

Accordingly, a socialist, African culture was initiated also changing the themes of taarab lyrics from romance and love to political instructions and praises. In order to be able to control the taarab musical scene, Swahili lyrics were demanded instead of the Arabic texts which were not intelligible to the official censorship boards. What happened around independence is a classical example of state censorship as defined by Johan Fornäs,[41] and the way in which different parts of society during the unrest of the election and the subsequent revolution tried to seize control over music and taarab lyrics through bans and prohibitions illustrates the importance of music and culture in nation building.

36 Interview with a record dealer, Zanzibar, 1994.
37 This was reported to me during fieldwork in 1994 but I have not been able to substantiate it.
38 Esmond Bradley Martin, *Zanzibar, Tradition and Revolution* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), 59.
39 Topp, *Women and the Africanisation of taarab in Zanzibar*, 100.
40 This is based on personal communication with local people in Zanzibar, Oct. 1994.
41 Fornäs, *Limits to musical expression*.

Musical censorship in post independence Zanzibar

In October 1964 Zanzibar had joined Tanganyika in the political union, Tanzania. But relations with the mainland were problematic and full of conflict, and strict borders with custom and currency boundaries and special passport-rules were upheld between the two partners. Zanzibar's ruling party, ASP, merged with Tanzania's TANU to become the united Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM). However, even though it was subordinated to the federal government, an independent constitution, parliament, and president governed Zanzibar.

In the Karume years a rule built on fear was founded and through a strong influence from East German intelligence (who tested their policies for development aid in Africa in Tanzania and Zanzibar especially) new measures for controlling civic society were practised.[42] Also Chinese expatriates – on a similar mission – were present in Zanzibar in big numbers.[43]

The new Zanzibari rulers, inspired by the cultural policies already launched in mainland Tanzania in 1962, wanted to use the music scene politically, as a vehicle through which it might liberate itself from both the Eastern and the Western domination of arts and culture, which were felt to suppress the indigenous culture of the country. Accordingly, imports of music, films, and books from outside were broken off, and '[w]estern publications were subject to censorship and occasionally banned'.[44]

The state controlled and monopolistic radio was an important factor in the struggles in Zanzibar as well as in Tanzania, and censorship boards were set up to control lyrics and musics. A general ban on soul music had been issued in the mainland on 12 November 1969 by the coast Regional Commissioner[45] and soon this spread to the islands as well. The regulation was not strictly followed, but in 1975 a more severe censorship was put on broadcasting foreign music on the national radio TRD in order to 'promote local culture and impede Western cultural (and capitalist) imperialism.'[46]

Film censorship was systematic and based on moral values, but the censorship also affected song lyrics and bans were put on selected records. In Zanzibar 'those who refused to comply were dismissed or hit with a cane'.[47] Throughout this period Arab musical ideals in taarab were downplayed in both national politics and public performances, and many events concerning the Arab-Asian population in Zanzibar went underground.[48] Rumours of harassment and discouragement of cultural associations

42 Bernd Fischer, 'Das Wirken der Hauptverwaltung A in der "Dritten Welt"', in Klaus Eichner and Gotthold Schramm (eds.), *Hauptverwaltung A. Geschichte, Aufgaben, Einsichten* (Berlin: Edition Ost, 2008), 122–52. Fischer states that Karume invited the East Germans to assist in the securing and stabilization of the young state by building security organs and creating a new profile for the police force, ibid. 138f.

43 Martin, *Zanzibar, Tradition and Revolution*, 60: 'By the late 1960s, there were 700 Chinese, 50 Russians and 200 East German residents in Zanzibar.'

44 Ibid. 63.

45 Askew and Kitime, 'Popular Music Censorship in Tanzania', 148.

46 Martin Sturmer quoted in ibid. 148.

47 Sturmer quoted in ibid. 149.

48 Personal communication, Zanzibar/Tanzania, 1994.

with the Arab world were heard, but these have never been properly examined. In addition, due to strict custom regulations following economic problems, the availability of musical instruments decreased.[49]

In the early 1980s reports of human rights violations and torture and detainment in prisons on the islands began to emerge, and it appeared that the taarab environment was also affected by the situation.[50]

In 1985 Tanzania's first president, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, withdrew and was succeeded by Ali Hassan Mwinyi. Being a Zanzibari, Mwinyi's appointment meant a softening of the tense relationship between the mainland and Zanzibar. After his accession, first as president in Zanzibar and later of Tanzania, some of the restrictions towards the Arab-Asian population were eased. The environment for culture and for taarab in particular began to grow and due to foreign interest in the music a legendary recording by Ben Mandelson and Werner Graebner for Globestyle in 1985–86 drew international attention to the style. The recordings, *The Music of Zanzibar*, vols. 1–4, featured all the major groups and orchestras in Unguja (Zanzibar Island) and displayed a diversity stretching from large orchestras to smaller bands, not least the exciting phenomenon of women's taarab, the *Tarabu ya Wanawake*.[51] These groups, consisting of all female members and singers but drawing largely on the assistance of hired male instrumentalists for performances, enhanced the traditional strategy by using song to make social comments. The strong and often abusive language was termed *mipasho* and the backbiting of the texts grew to unheard-of dimensions. As the competition between the leading groups, as for instance The Royal Air Force Musical Club and Royal Navy Musical Club – note their clear origin in colonial structures – began to cause serious trouble in the community and fears of violent clashes, the government intervened and banned the activity.[52] Then, simultaneous with restrictions on the competing groups of Ikhwani Safaa and Culture, who were also on the threshold of causing riots in the community due to their fierce competition, the government enforced united, national ensembles for male as well as female taarab. The Kikunda Cha Taifa (National group) came into being in 1985 and it has since played at important national events such as the National Day and has travelled abroad. In these groups the best singers and musicians were asked to take their part and a temporary truce was established.

In this case the censorship is close to what Johan Fornäs has termed 'life-world constraints', as the moral and emotional questions which were acted upon were

49 In mainland Tanzania the market for foreign goods also decreased dramatically and this meant that the only people who had access to instruments and musical gear were bar and hotel owners, who hired musicians. This situation meant that control over the music was moved to the new patrons; cf. Annemette Kirkegaard, *Taarab na Musiki wa densi* (unpubl. Ph.D. thesis; Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 1996).

50 I was informed of this by my Danish contact in Dar Es Salaam, Niels Vittus Hansen, who worked in Zanzibar as an architect. He reported dubious trials and prison violence and he supported the opposition as early as 1981 (field notes, Dar es Salaam, 1981).

51 *The music of Zanzibar*, ORBD 032, 033, 040, 041, released 1988–89 by Globestyle Records, London.

52 Topp Fargion, 'The role of Women in *taarab* in Zanzibar', 118.

more related to civil society and community concerns than to state interests. It was, however, the state which had the capacity and the power to impose the prohibitions and accordingly it censored for the benefit of the community.

But the most important consequence of restrictions in the life-world is that self censorship becomes the order of the day, and that musicians and artists adjust to the moral, religious, and political demands of civil society. The impact of self censorship is hard to measure as it is the most opaque kind of silencing, but most researchers agree that in relation to music it is crucial.[53]

In 1995 the first multi-party election was scheduled to take place, and tensions between the two major parties, the ruling CCM and the oppositional Civic United Front (CUF), which has a strong propensity toward the Arab World, were rising. The elections were postponed several times, and during the campaign the leader of the CUF advocated relative independence for Zanzibar, thereby seriously challenging the Union with former Tanganyika.[54] I was on fieldwork in Zanzibar in the autumn of 1994 and already at that time political rallying was frequent. As at the time of the revolution in the 1960s, both parties were drawing on the popularity of music and taarab in their campaigns, but it was clear that the favourite of the CCM was again Culture Musical Club, which for a period in the 1990s won the privileges of playing at important events and state celebrations. Some claimed that the Ikhwani Saafa and its former members were actively being excluded from the taarab scene, and it was obvious that the club in that period had very few jobs. Some of the musicians went instead to play in Pemba, which was and is the base and stronghold of the CUF. It was also obvious from talks with both Zanzibaris and Danish expatriates that a more open discourse seemed to surface and grow stronger, probably because the strict systems of cultural control were increasingly destabilised by the growth of commercialism and the subversion of the television and radio monopoly through satellite technology.[55]

The transition to multi-party rule had implications for socio-cultural conditions, and a new awareness of diversity has emerged since that time. Despite the official policy of praising the multi-ethnicity and eclecticism of Zanzibari cultural life, the distinction between 'races' is still commonly heard and 'colour' is noted in daily talk. People associate pale skin with 'Arabness', just as a very dark complexion suggests African ancestry – sometimes even indicating servility and slavery.[56] According to some of my informants in Zanzibar in the 1990s the distinction often led to molestation of members of the Arab-Asian community. The situation was dominated by fear and many of the former nationalist Africans at the first multiparty election still voted, though reluctantly, for the CCM because they feared a return of the Arab sultanate and the Muslim values and suppression which had been the norm in the days prior to independence.

53 See John Baily, *Can you stop the birds singing* (Copenhagen: Freemuse, 2001), also available as internet publication on www.freemuse.org.

54 Kirkegaard, *Taarab na Musiki wa densi*, 127.

55 Field notes, 1994.

56 Numerous conversations with Zanzibaris and expatriates during my fieldwork in 1994 and 1998.

Throughout this period and because of the complexity of the political situation, Zanzibar was reported by international NGOs for violating human rights and suppressing freedom of speech and assembly.[57] Citizens of the islands have experienced this in numerous ways, and it has affected their lives profoundly. It also acts on the music.

Seif Salim Saleh – a musician's perspective

During my fieldwork in 1994 and 1998 one of my most important contacts was the late Seif Salim Saleh (1942–2000). He had been a prominent musician in the taarab environment since the 1960s and was for a long time a core member of Ikhwani Safaa Musical Club as one of the most skilled instrumentalists. He played the *ud*, the *ney*, and the violin, and claimed knowledge of both Arab and European music theory. In the 1980s he was director of the Department of Arts and Culture in the Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism in Zanzibar; he had travelled to Europe as a performing musician and he had given lectures on taarab in London and Germany. In the mid-1980s he had been recorded on the previously mentioned Globe Style anthology *The Music of Zanzibar*, both on the volume of 'classical' *ud* and *qanon* and with the Ikhwani Safaa Musical Club on volume two.[58] When I met with Saleh in 1994 he had recently been taken out of his office in the Ministry of Culture to teach in Nkhruma College, a little north of Zanzibar town. He was not very pleased with this situation, as it did not involve much music and it could easily be seen as a kind of demotion. He was still a performer and held a 'revered' position in Ikhwani, though I never saw him play. In Zanzibari ethnic discourse Saleh belonged to the Arab-Asian part of the population and one informant indicated that the harassment he went through was caused by his being 'white'.[59] What was even more conspicuous was the fact that he was a strong defender of the so-called classical taarab (the style which is called 'ideal' by Janet Topp).[60] This style, which is conspicuous for its big orchestras of up to 40 members, a large group of stringed instruments and their formal dress, in suits and ties with evening gowns for the female singers, was also the style which in his own words balanced the four major components of taarab music:

57 Cf. www.amnesty.org for documents from Amnesty International. – In 1998 Denmark in unison with other Scandinavian countries cut off official relations with the Zanzibari CCM branch, because of the internment of leading CUF members without trial. The imprisonment went on for years and every month embassy staff attended the mock trials (Field notes, 1998).

58 *The Music of Zanzibar*, vols. 1–2.

59 This is the term used to signify Arabness and light or pale complexion. It has as its counterpart 'black' and the words are sometimes used derogatorily. In this case the informer was an important administrative officer, who gave the opinion (Field notes, 1994).

60 Seif Salim Saleh was also a primary informant to the work of Janet Topp Fargion. In her dissertation from 1992 he is quoted for many important statements on the history of the taarab environment, and his shifting roles as musician, teacher, and administrator are mirrored in the double layered explanations he gave, cf. Topp, *Women and the Africanisation of taarab in Zanzibar*.

> … Taarab shouldn't be polluted so much the way it is now. It should remain the way it was in the 1960s, because I feel at that time everything was in balance, the Indian flavour, the Arabic flavour, the African flavour, and the European flavour – could combine very nicely, and give us a very good thing that is unique by itself. That's what is my feeling.
>
> But going to one side more really distresses me. I don't mind if there would be a touch of it but not too much.[61]

The quotation refers to the musical styles which were present in Zanzibari taarab at that time, and Seif Salim Saleh's remark about 'going to one side more' is here directed at the so-called modern taarab, which involves dancing and 'indecent' lyrics. It is, however, very important that his stress on 'balance' between the Arab, African, and European musical flavours is established as the ideal.

Saleh was not only a skilled instrumentalist, but also a composer of many songs – some of which he performed himself in a highly ornamented way. He composed these from texts, and he explained carefully how he would look for the right sounds to convey or express the meaning of the lyrics.

He was classic, conservative and kept in mind the historical orientation towards the East, which made him prefer Arab, Omani, and not least Egyptian sounds. He was, in other words, finding the core identity of taarab in the modal tonality and instrumental sounds of the Arab musical system.

When I asked Saleh about the origins of taarab he gave this explanation:

> We don't know exactly when it started but because the instruments which are used in taarab are all foreign, we say that taarab started when the first foreigners came to this place – with their instruments in their white sailed dhow.
>
> They took something that would make them occupied during their leisure time, so in most of these dhows were musicians who used to entertain; they introduced these instruments.[62]

This statement, however, in dissonance with the earlier quotation, indicates that taarab is not an indigenous musical style but instead defined by its foreignness through the importance put on the origins of the instruments here. In this interpretation Saleh is clearly advocating a return to the classical instruments of taarab and their musical sound, but he is also making a political statement, perhaps directed at the ongoing struggle over control of the taarab environment, and perhaps even directed at the nationalist use of the style by the CCM and competition with Culture Musical Club. In 1994 Saleh never directly referred to the political situation, but only deplored his limited opportunities to play the music he loved.

When I came back in 1998 many things had changed. The political situation was different, multi-party rule had replaced the former one-party system and, as Saleh told me by e-mail, he had become a professional musician. Maybe he was sacked

61 Interview with Seif Salim Saleh, Zanzibar, Oct. 1994.
62 Ibid.

from his job in Nkrumah College, maybe he did not want it anymore. He said that he was tired of sitting idle as a musician in Ikhwani Safaa (hinting perhaps both at their amateur attitude to the music[63] and of the exclusion from the official events as mentioned above) and had therefore started collecting instruments at his own home and developed a new way of playing, relying more on acoustic sound. He also carefully explained that during this time he got the idea of playing taarab for the tourists, because he thought that this could save the music.[64] Before this move, like so many other taarab musicians, Saleh had made a relatively good income from playing at private wedding celebrations, some of them held at the renowned Bhawani Hotel and attracting very large audiences. The money for these concerts was paid both by the hosts and by the audiences who, when satisfied with the music and not least the lyrics, sprayed the singers and instrumentalists lavishly. It was this commercial but non-official side of the musicians' work that he now also brought to a more public sphere, significantly one in which audiences were strangers and outsiders to the taarab tradition.

What I witnessed was that he lived in Stone Town, that he owned his own phone and car, which he did not like to drive, though, and that he had a regular job playing at the Serena Inn, at that time the most luxurious new hotel in Zanzibar town. He was also negotiating jobs and concerts for his small group, a new version of the band Twinkling Star, with Emerson Skeens, an entrepreneurial American who has had strong influence on the cultural life of Zanzibar Town for some time.[65]

In Serena Inn, Saleh and three members of Twinkling Star played acoustic taarab at sundowner time twice a week. The group also performed at special events and many private wedding parties.[66] Occasionally they teamed up with Bi Kidude who, being a contemporary of Siti Binti Saad, is increasingly being seen as an icon for women's taarab and ngoma.[67] Her combination of dance rhythms and maqam-inspired vocal lines are unique at present and even if Kidude is representing the 'African' side of taarab, she is welcomed by all.[68]

63 The ideal of Muslim male clubs was typically following the complicated relation of Islam to music and culture, that the time spent on performing should not be exaggerated and that accordingly the preferred position was that of the free amateur, cf. Kirkegaard, *Taarab na Musiki wa densi*, 131ff.

64 Interview with Seif Salim Saleh, Zanzibar, Oct. 1998. He believed that the demands of tourists would be directed towards the somewhat old fashioned Egyptian sound and that they would in this way raise so much attention to the music that it could survive the fierce competition with so-called modern Taarab, a style held to be more westernized, synthesizer-backed and played at dances.

65 Skeens is the initiator of many of the initiatives in Zanzibar which have sought to reinstall cultural forms from the past, and he is probably also the initiator of the 'Dhow Countries' concept as a commercial label. He is founder and committee member of both the Zanzibar International Film Festival (ZIFF), the Sauti Ya Busara music festival, and the Dhow Countries Music Academy (DCMA).

66 Interview with Seif Salim Saleh, Zanzibar, Oct. 1998.

67 Cf. *As Old as My Tongue, The Myth and Life of Bi Kidude*.

68 While she is generally held to be a living link to the legendary Siti Binti Saad, her voice and her singing differs greatly. This can be clearly heard from recordings of the two.

The music at Serena Inn was played solely on acoustic instruments – violin, *ud*, *ney*, *darabouka*, *qanun*, and accordion, and the small size of the band was at the insistence of the owners. This band line is synonymous with the instruments mentioned by Saleh as the ones brought to Zanzibar by foreigners and thus represents an Eastern influence. Songs were partly from the well known taarab repertoire 'Juwa toka', 'Nipepee' and older basrafs, partly 'modern songs' like 'Dr. Zhivago', 'Quantanamera', and 'Never on a Sunday' in taarab setting.[69]

The group sat with their backs to the Indian Ocean dressed in white *kanzus* and *kofias* (gown and cap), giving the audience a view of the setting sun, occasionally with a white sailed dhow in the background. This was a highly exoticized setting which also in musical terms, despite the international repertory, was more Arab in its tone than African. This kind of taarab was popular with tourists, but the hotel also gave traditional ngoma evenings. It is beyond any doubt that the staging of both ngoma and taarab has undergone a process of stylization and revival,[70] and that in that process, racial and ethnic markers have resurfaced. The demand for authenticity is at the heart of the needs of the tourist markets, but it also provides an asset for re-invoking formerly suppressed or neglected musics. In the case of Twinkling Star and Saleh this situation also meant that a style which, for both political and generational reasons had been looked down upon and sometimes even silenced, could be given an active role in contemporary Zanzibari culture. In 1998 this was a relatively new situation and the musicians were struggling to overcome the mistrust in 'Arab' music and its Eastern affinity. Many daily troubles were annoying. It was difficult to find instruments, to get spare parts such as qanun-strings and it seemed that only a very few people mastered the technique of playing the old instruments. The development since then of the Dhow Countries Music Academy and the annual festivals of ZIFF and Sauti Za Busara have reduced this difficulty, making 'Arab' sounds available in the public scene and giving new musicians access to instruments and instruction.[71]

But while the re-emergence and interest in the 'classical' and more 'Arab' or 'Eastern' elements and history of taarab now allows its display side by side with 'African' traditions, demonstrating publicly the diversity of the style, the importance of racial concerns is not diminishing. Bohlman and Radano claimed that '[t]he transnational mix has not erased race from music, rather it has recontextualized it',[72] and this statement is indeed relevant for the Zanzibari cultural struggle. By playing a rather classical taarab on Arab instruments at their concerts in Serena Inn, Saleh and Twinkling Star were actually perpetuating the struggle over meaning and sound of race and ethnicity.

69 Annemette Kirkegaard, 'Tourism Industry and Local Music Culture in Contemporary Zanzibar', in Maria Eriksson Baaz and Mai Palmberg, *Same and Other: Negotiating African Identity in Cultural Production* (Stockholm: Elanders Gotab, 2001), 59–76.

70 Tamara E. Livingston, 'Music revivals: Towards a General Theory', *Ethnomusicology*, 43/1 (Winter 1999), 66–85.

71 I wish to thank Daniel Nygaard Madsen and Hanna Trondalen for important updates on the Dhow Countries Music Academy and the restoration of taarab.

72 Radano and Bohlman, 'Music and Race', 37.

Taarab is part of the world music circuit, and it is globally sold and commercialized distinctively on the grounds of its Arab-Asian identity rather than as an African music.[73] In fact, referring to Johan Fornäs' distinctions, taarab can in this sense be claimed to be commercially censored by the international market to the benefit of Arabness.

It is without doubt a fact that the life cycle of Seif Salim Saleh followed the ups and downs of racial, ethnic, and social struggle within the Zanzibari environment and that this combat in his case was conducted in musical sounds: true to his general ideas he struggled to find acceptance and financial success during the many years he made music. The fact that he spoke out quite openly in the late 1990s about the horrors during the revolution and the repression of Arab-Asians under the Karume years can be seen as a result of the new agenda of the multiparty system and the surfacing of the CUF, and of the subsequent return, for better or worse, of race-related discourses in public culture.

In this way his example represents the fact that musicians are important and even dangerous because of their role in society: '[t]heir positions result from the possession of certain skills and capacities that the average member of a social group does not have'.[74] From the very beginning of his musical career Saleh claimed that this capacity could also be used positively. To the BBC correspondent, Will Ross, he stated: 'You can find people of different political opinions, different religions and different races in a Taarab club. Taarab is beyond all these things so I think it has contributed to the harmony of life in Zanzibar'.[75] But as seen above, the balance is fragile and the situation can also lead to censorship and restriction of their activities, which was certainly also a tough reality for Saleh.

The fact that Seif Salim Saleh and other so-called 'white' members of the community who were, for racial or ethnic reasons, controversial in the life-world nevertheless held a position in the music business has two explanations. For one, their skills were much appreciated and favoured in the taarab community, not least because of their knowledge of instruments and their musical abilities. The other is that the emerging world music market, because of its fascination of the exotic and even orientalistic 'clothing' of the music, in fact preferred the 'Arab' part of the musical conflict.[76] This tendency has developed further and the newly established Dhow Countries Music Academy enhances this tendency by bringing teachers from Cairo

73 I am aware of the work done by Werner Graebner and others to rightly oppose the master narrative of taarab as a music primarily rooted in the court music of the Sultanate, but in the marketing of taarab this story is the primer, cf. Werner Graebner, 'Between Mainland and Sea: The Taarab Music of Zanzibar', in Kevin Dawe (ed.), *Island Musics* (Oxford and London: Berg, 2004), 171–97.

74 Alenka Barber-Kersovan, 'Music as a parallel power structure', in Maria Korpe (ed.), *Shoot the Singer! Music Censorship Today* (London and New York: Zed Books Ltd., 2004), 6–10, on 9.

75 *Rhythms of the Continent. Tanzania & Kenya, The Modern Voice of Taarab*. By Will Ross for BBC World Service at www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/rhythms/tanzaniakenya.shtml (accessed Jan. 2008).

76 Annemette Kirkegaard, 'East African Taarab as a Contemporary Mediator of the Diversity and Vitality of a Musical Tradition within Islamic Culture', in *Proceedings from the conference 'Music in the World of Islam', Assilah, Morocco*, internet publication on www.mcm.asso.fr/site02/music-w-islam/articles/Kirkegaard-2007.pdf (2007).

and Palestine to the academy in order to enhance knowledge of the Arab instruments *ud*, *qanon*, and *ney*, yet again bringing the tonality of the *maqam* to work within the taarab circles. Even if a similar tendency of professionalization and formal education can be seen within the so-called African styles like *unyago* and ngoma in general, the change is remarkable.[77]

Perspectives

Is, then, what is going on in the taarab environment censorship, and is it based on racial distinctions? There is definitely a censoring of the expression of musicians and performers, and, yes, to some extent it can be said to happen on the grounds of racism and ethnic division. But in what way is it internalized in the music and its cultural frame?

The sound of taarab – for instance in Saleh's reception and work – seems very different from ngoma. The difference is audible in modes, in instrumentation, in voice quality, and in the musical form, still strictly in verse. The size of the groups differ greatly and the smaller *kidumbak* ensembles, which are related closely to ngoma and African cultural values, are at the moment favoured for wedding celebrations at the cost of the larger bands.[78]

However, borders and limits between the different musics in Zanzibar are blurred and elements from one are taken over by the other, and vice versa, as for instance in the inclusion of ngoma rhythms in taarab in the early part of the twentieth century and today in the emergent mix of taarab and hip hop. Increasingly the limits and boundaries between ngoma and taarab are being questioned. The career of Bi Kidude (and possibly even Siti Binti Saad) bears witness to a possibly more intimate relation between the two sides than that which is normally perceived. However, race as well as gender are very important elements in the historiography of musical life in Zanzibar, and thus the undoing of the previously accepted official accounts of the development of taarab is in fact a post colonial reading.

The continued struggle for supremacy between Culture Musical Club and Ikhwani Safaa is clearly based on politics and cultural power relations and represents the outcome of a fierce competition within a highly complex musical culture. Lyrics to the taarab songs illustrate this, as utterances from Culture Musical Club very often allegorically represent outright CCM positions in ongoing conflicts and political themes. Often these are answered by other orchestras. Ikhwani Safaa represents old time values and musical elements related to the Arab music system and perhaps also a close tie to Omani and Egyptian partners, and they are often considered 'white' in local discourse.

The enforced merger between the groups in the 1980s in order to form a national taarab ensemble was marked by mistrust and superstition between the members, but the idea survived in such a way that even at the 2008 annual Sauti Za Busara

77 The website for DCMA, www.zanzibarmusic.org (accessed 2008).
78 Kirkegaard, 'East African Taarab as a Contemporary Mediator'.

festival, a national taarab orchestra was performing.[79] It is important to remember that the fight was also expressed in purely musical terms as when Seif Salim Saleh accused the leader of Culture Musical Club of not knowing the maqam system properly.[80] The ideology and history accordingly must be understood as embedded in the musical sound and as Alenka-Kersovan has stated: '[t]he integrative force of music is based on values and normative orientations. In most cases these orientations are implicit and yet able to fulfil their social function even if the protagonists are not aware of them'.[81]

The distinction between race and ethnicity in relation to music censorship must be understood as contested. Arab-Asian musical sounds and ideals are brought to the fore when authorities – and now also the market – wishes to do so and are used as grounds for limitation and exclusion, when the political and cultural tide is turning. The people of the exposed 'race' can do nothing to hinder that, and contrary to the implications of racial imagination, the possibility of using or exploiting the ethnic lines and borders gives room for acting and a space for singers and musicians to choose.

Both instances are in reality constructed, but the agency behind the construction is determining whether one can say that censorship is based on ethnicity or race.

In the Zanzibari case it must be concluded that throughout history and relying on intricate and complex power relations, the censorship of music has in varying degrees and more or less openly been based on race and racial demarcations.

Some of the incidents could possibly be coincidental, and others have much to do with the Zanzibari cultural community and its way of acting, its competitiveness and secrets, the doubletalk and the use of coded language relying on proverbs and local sayings for taarab lyrics. Maybe this distinction is not that interesting to the people affected: censorship, restrictions, and limits to freedom of expression are in themselves almost always an injustice.

The danger of music – and accordingly the reason to censor it – is perhaps given in the understanding of music's role in identity making. No longer just mirroring identities, but rather performing these, it must be seen as an agent of affinity making. Barber-Kersovan states that music can be a sensual instrument of power, and she further emphasizes how instead of believing that social or ethnic groups have their inherent music, '[w]e talk about music-centered social groups'.[82] This understanding of music as an identity maker actively opposes the idea of essentializing sound. Taarab, its history and the different and complex ways in which it has been censored through time, race, and ethnicity, gives evidence for this understanding.

In this article I have illustrated how the categories 'state' and 'market' coined by Johan Fornäs have been at work in the cultural history of Zanzibari taarab over the last hundred years. Fornäs' last category 'life-world constraint', which I interpret as 'civil society', is however also at work, when local audiences and performers, hotel

79 See Sauti Za Busara Festival program at www.busaramusic.org/festivals/2008/index.php.
80 Interview with Seif Salim Saleh, Zanzibar, Oct. 1998.
81 Barber-Kersovan, 'Music as a parallel power structure', 7.
82 Ibid.

owners, international donors, and cultural entrepreneurs all contribute to the continued discourse over taarab.

By combining the definitions of music censorship proposed by Martin Cloonan in his claim that censorship must be systematic in order to qualify with the statement of Radano and Bohlman that race as opposed to ethnicity is less negotiable,[83] I believe that censorship based on race is a particular and possibly dominant phenomenon. It has the double strength of making use of seemingly biological features and social categories. The fact that both are negotiable does not change the overall suppression, and in the past as well as in our own time the limitations that this phenomenon of racially based censorship is enforcing on musical utterance are severe.

Radano and Bohlman claim that the presence of the racial imagination in musicology has affected the knowledge of musical development and history and obscured or even muted important elements in the complex negotiation over style and identity in music.[84] Seen in this light I believe that many of the 'unclear' points in Zanzibari cultural history and the musical shaping of taarab are caused by the contested presence of the racial divisions in the state, the market, and the life-world of the Zanzibari people.

Summary

Since the beginning of the popular musical style taarab in the eightteenth century, many instances of musical censorship have occurred. The diverse restrictions have often been related to the continued struggle between Arab and African values. Language, religion, singing style, instruments, and the inclusion of women have all been issues of great importance in the history of taarab. In this article I trace instances of the impact and effect of ethnic diversity and racism in taarab music in Zanzibar.

83 Radano and Bohlman, 'Music and Race', 8.
84 Ibid. 10.