CHAPTER NINE

THE POLITICS OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN REVOLUTIONARY ZANZIBAR

9.1. The Legacy of the Revolution I: Islam in Revolutionary Zanzibar

The representation of Zanzibar’s post-revolutionary history has been influenced since 1964 by a ‘civil war of memories’ between the supporters of the revolution and its opponents and victims (Loimeier 2006c). Karume’s efforts to marginalize or eliminate any potential threat to his regime, including the religious establishment, were and are interpreted by many opponents of the revolution as an anti-religious policy. Supporters of the revolution, by contrast, contextualize anti-religious policies as being part of a larger policy of ‘Africanization’, or even completely deny any anti-religious acts. In this chapter, established wisdom about the policies of the revolution will be presented and challenged, first with respect to educational policies (chapter 9.1.), then with respect to school development (chapter 9.2.), and the development of Qur’anic schools (chapter 9.3), and finally syllabus development (chapter 9.4.). An overview of the contemporary situation of different types of school (Qur’anic schools, government schools and new models of education) concludes this presentation of the course of Islamic education in Zanzibar in post-revolutionary times (chapter 9.5.).

1 The sources for this chapter were the respective files in the ZNA on the development of education after 1964, in particular ZNA AD 20, especially AD 20/35, which extensively covers the years after the revolution in the sphere of education, then AD 30/19, AD 33/12-16, BA 6, 68, 81, in addition to Ziddy’s work (2001), and numerous discussions, particularly with IC18 (18.2.2001), IC20 (13.1.2002), IC21 (5.9.2002), IC25 (9.3.2001), IC26 (8.8.2002), IC39 (20.3.2001), IC41 (17.8.2002), IC67 (3.4.2005), IC72 (4.3.2001), IC73 (5.9.2002, 4.3.2003), IC77 (23.2.2001) and IC82 (26.2.2001; 12.8.2002). Equally, a number of texts on the revolution written by both Zanzibaris and non-Zanzibaris, such as ‘Babakerim’ (1975/1994), Lodhi/Rydström (1979), Burgess (1999), Purpura (1997), Nisula (1999) or the Afro Shirazi Party documentation of the revolution of 1974 were consulted, but also memoirs such as those by al-Barwâni (1996), those documented by Barwani (at al., 2003) or those of Ali Sultan Issa (ASI). Memories of the early years after the revolution are still contradictory, though. Ali Sultan Issa, who was minister of education from December 1964 to 1968,
When describing aspects of my research in Zanzibar in a number of public lectures (*mihadhara*), for instance in the Sultan’s Palace (30.8.2002; 20.2.2003), in the College of Education (20.8.2002) and in Kikwajuni (2.3.2003), audiences not only accepted my presentation, but often added to my rather critical account. At the same time, this chapter will show that revolutionary politics were far too contradictory and far too inconsistent to allow for just one interpretation. A number of decisions and developments show that revolutionary politics were not as negative as many opponents of the revolution say. The revolutionary regime admitted a number of exceptions to its own rule. Revolutionary discourses and educational policies were far from being hegemonic.

When Zanzibaris describe the revolution, they often refer to well known events of a rather disruptive character. Their tale frequently points out that the old system of education broke down after the revolution and that Zanzibar’s intellectual elite was virtually eliminated in 1964. Many scholars of the Manṣab, Jamal al-Layl, Bā Kathīr and Sumayṭ families left, and the ‘Alawī tradition of learning came to an end. Thousands of books were burned or stolen, religious scholars were imprisoned, beaten up or expelled. In their purges, the ‘largely illiterate soldiers of the revolution’ destroyed not only old texts in Arabic on healing, astrology and numerology but also texts on Islamic law, and even copies of the Qurʾān, which were mistaken for ‘magic books’ (Purpura 1997: 140). In some cases, mosques were destroyed, or work on them was stopped, as in the case of the ‘Barza’ mosque. Karume allegedly ordered the destruction of the ‘Blue Mosque’ in Fungoni, that was later rebuilt by Salmin Amour, and of a mosque in Kilimani that was removed for the construction of new housing blocks and rebuilt at another place. Also, private libraries were destroyed, or were dissolved and lost. Imāms were deposed and replaced by government appointees. In addition, *waqf* properties were taken over by the revolutionary government, and mosques that were part of a *waqf* were no longer maintained. As a result, their condition deteriorated. Karume also stopped the ‘īd al-ḥajj celebrations and Ramadan sermons. ‘Īd prayers in mosques were forbidden and instead were celebrated at the ASP headquarters in Vikokotoni.

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for instance, denied that copies of the Qurʾān had been burned in the revolution (as implied by al-Barwānī 1996) and that religious education was stopped (IC26, 25.5.2004). According to him, Qurʾānic schools were closed ‘temporarily only’ (in 1967) in order to ‘examine’ the teachers (communication Ali Sultan Issa, 9.7.2004).