



Christian-Muslim relations: Managing Religious Tensions and Conflicts in Mombasa, Kenya

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PUBLICATION DATE

01-07-2021

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**CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS: MANAGING
RELIGIOUS TENSIONS AND CONFLICTS IN
MOMBASA, KENYA**

by

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(BSc. Agriculture, MDiv, MTh)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Deakin University

July 2021



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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all those who have assisted me in this research project. Special thanks go to my wife Eunice for her patience, and love; to my children Tim, Anna, Junior and Daniel who have endured my absence as I took long hours working on this research. I would also like to thank all the Christians and Muslims in Mombasa who participated in the field research. Thank you for your interest and involvement in this research. Thanks also go to my Executive Supervisor Professor Andrew Singleton and Co-supervisor Dr. Samantha Balaton-Chrimes. The two of you are simply the best supervisors one could hope for. Thank you for the advice, critique and direction through this process. Thanks to Associate Professor Andrew Skourdumbis and the entire staff at the Faculty of Arts and Education for their support. Thank you to Deakin University for granting me the scholarship, without which this research would not have been possible. I also wish to acknowledge the editorial assistance of Dr Floriana Badalotti, Artelingua. Floriana edited the thesis for language, English expression, and consistency. Above all, I want to thank God for the opportunity He gave for me to undertake this research and to learn so much in the process. To Him be the glory.

Abstract

This research explores Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa, Kenya. Christian-Muslim relations have seemingly deteriorated in recent years, compounded by the rise of conservative emerging Christian churches and hard-line Islamism. There is an ongoing need to minimise and manage interreligious tensions in Mombasa to avoid them turning into deeper and more violent conflicts. Studies of Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa have not been immune from treating the two religious traditions as monolithic, and thus, they do not capture the diverse expression of both religions, and how different elements of both enhance or diminish efforts towards peace. This study uses a qualitative mixed-methods approach, including in-depth interviews with Christian and Muslim leaders, focus groups with Christians and Muslims (separately), and ethnographic observation of interreligious events.

The thesis argues that to understand and activate the calming potential of the Christian-Muslim relationship in Mombasa, we need to understand how religious authorities operate within the local ecology—social, political and economic, as well as religious; and we need to appreciate there are also intra-religious differences between those seeking harmonious peaceful co-existence, and those fomenting division and enmity between the two religions. Whereas religious authorities in Mainline churches and moderate Islam use their leadership structures and systemic theological interpretations to push for harmonious co-existence, those in the emerging churches and Islamist mosques lack collaborative leadership structures and rely on their charismatic leaders who, mostly, apply certain literal interpretations of religious texts to deepen the schism between the two religions in Mombasa.

The implications of this research are threefold. First, it addresses issues of how the distinct nature of religious authorities drive Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa, knowing

well that teachings of a denomination and decision-making process can shape relations. Second, the research captures ecological frameworks that are social, political, economic and religious in nature and how diverse religious groups employ them to shape Christian-Muslim relations. Third, the research shows how the heterogeneity of Christianity and Islam means that even within the same faith, there are multiple lenses of viewing the world around them and that some of these can have positive and others negative effect on relations. In addressing these issues, this research offers a contribution to the study of religious difference in places characterised by complex interreligious relations.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	i
Abstract	ii
List of Figures	xi
List of Tables	xii
Abbreviations and Acronyms	xiii
Glossary	xv
PART ONE: CONTEXT	1
Introduction.....	1
Managing interreligious tension in Mombasa	7
Research Aims	11
Conceptual Framing and Approach	13
Overview of Chapters	15
Chapter 1: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework	19
Introduction.....	19
Kenyan Attitudes to Religious Diversity	20
Literature on Differences in Islam in Kenya	22
Literature on Differences among Christians.....	24

Literature on Christian-Muslim relations in Kenya and Mombasa, including terrorism	29
Literature on Christian-Muslim relations in Kenya and Mombasa, including terrorism	34
Religious Discrimination in Kenya: Material Differences between Groups	35
Is Mombasa Radicalising?	41
Beyond Kenya	43
A Conceptual Framework for explaining and understanding Christian-Muslim relations..	45
An Ecological Model for Understanding Interreligious Violence.....	46
Religious Authority: A Weberian Framework	51
Religious Authority and Ecological Framework Combined	59
Conclusion	63
Chapter 2: Research Methods	66
Introduction.....	66
In-depth Interviews	66
Focus groups	72
Ethnographic Methods.....	74
A Case Study	77
Analysis of Data	78
Ethical considerations	79

Positioning	80
Conclusion	81
PART TWO: SETTING THE SCENE.....	82
Chapter 3: Evolution of Christian-Muslim Relations in Mombasa—the Pre-Colonial and Colonial Periods	82
Introduction.....	82
Brief history of Mombasa.....	82
Pre-colonial period (1498-1895)	85
Slave Trade in Mombasa and the Surrounding Towns.....	85
Rivalries between Portuguese and Arabs	87
Economic Battles	88
Social Struggles	89
Religious Battles.....	90
The Colonial Period (1895-1963).....	92
Economic Changes	93
Social Changes.....	95
Religious Changes	98
Conclusion	101
Chapter 4: The Mombasa Ecology (<i>Siaza, Jamii na Uchumi</i>) and Points of Tensions	

and Disputes Between Christians and Muslims.....	102
Introduction.....	102
Political Flashpoints of Tension Between Christians and Muslims in Mombasa	103
Muslims and the National government.....	105
Christians and the Mombasa County government.....	111
External influences on Christian-Muslim Relations in Mombasa.....	117
Social Flashpoints of Tension Between Christian and Muslims in Mombasa	120
Schools.....	121
School Uniforms	130
Economic Flashpoints of Tension between Christians and Muslims in Mombasa	134
Economic Marginalization.....	135
Conclusion	142
PART THREE: ILLUSTRATING THE ARGUMENT	145
Chapter 5: Religious Authorities and Pathways to Peace.....	145
Introduction.....	145
The Role of The Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics Trust (CICC)	147
Values of the CICC and the Leadership Structure.....	150
Intra-religious initiatives.....	153

Limited Success?	155
Interreligious initiatives	157
Direct Engagement	159
Collaboration with Government	165
Challenges of the CICC and other Interreligious Interventions	168
‘Hot Potatoes’	171
Conclusion	171
Chapter 6: <i>Kadhi</i> Courts, a flashpoint for Religious Authority	174
Introduction.....	174
Context of <i>Kadhi</i> Courts Debate and Relevance of the Debate.....	177
Controversies of the <i>Kadhi</i> Court Debate.....	180
Moderate Muslim groups and Conservative Muslim groups	182
Mainline Churches and Emerging Churches	185
<i>Kadhi</i> Courts Debate in Mombasa.....	190
Mainline Christian groups and Emerging Churches in Mombasa.....	190
The Enduring Impact of the <i>Kadhi</i> Courts Debate on Christian-Muslim Relations in Mombasa.....	193
Conclusion	196
Chapter 7: Kongamano, A Micro-perspective on Tolerance and Tension	198

Introduction.....	198
About the <i>Kongamano</i>	199
Christians’ grievances and Muslims’ responses	203
Economic issues.....	204
Political issues	204
Social issues.....	205
Religious issues	206
Muslims’ grievances and Christians’ response to Muslims’ accusations against them	209
Economic issues.....	210
Political issues	211
Social issues.....	214
Religious issues	216
Insight into the Worldview of Christian and Muslim Groups from the Final Remarks	219
Remarks of a Christian from mainline Church (Rational-Legal authority).....	219
Remarks of a Christian from an emerging Church (Charismatic Authority)	220
Remarks of a moderate Muslim (Rational-Legal authority).....	221
Remarks of a conservative Muslim (Charismatic Authority).....	221
Conclusion	222

Conclusion	225
Reference List.....	238
Appendices	252
Appendix 1: Interview Questionnaire for Christians.....	252
Appendix 2: Interview Questionnaire for Muslims	254
Appendix 3: List of Informants' Pseudonyms.....	256

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Ecological Framework (World Health Organization 2002)	47
Figure 1.2. Gary Bouma’s Diagram on Religious Authority (Bouma 1992:82)	54
Figure 1.3: Religious authority—Ecological Framework Combined	60
Figure 2.1: Picture of a mosque in Mombasa – Source: Kennedy Okello 2018 (Taken during Field Trip)	76
Figure 2.2: Picture of a Church in Mombasa – Source: Kennedy Okello 2018 (Taken during Field Trip)	76
Figure 2.3: Picture of a Mombasa Street – Source: Kennedy Okello 2018 (Taken during Field Trip)	77
Figure 3.1: Fort Jesus in Mombasa: built by the Portuguese from 1593-1597 – Source: Kennedy Okello (During field research, August 2018)	84
Figure 3.2: Canon in Fort Jesus facing the Indian Ocean, built by the Portuguese to defend themselves against attacks from Arabs – Source: Kennedy Okello (During field research, August 2018).....	84
Figure 6.1 Muslims hold placards aloft in a protest outside the Mbaruk Mosque in Mombasa after the afternoon prayers. They were protesting the removal of Kadhi Courts in the proposed constitution. Photo: Nation, 28 July 2009	184
Figure 6.2: Muslims walk out of the Mombasa Law Courts after the ruling on a petition case filed by Christians seeking a declaration that some sections of the constitution are null and void and should be removed. Photo by Gideon Maundu. Nation, May 31, 2010.....	192
Figure 6.3: Nominated MP Sheikh Mohammed Dor (second left front row) with other Muslims in the High court during the ruling on a petition case which had been filed by Christians seeking a declaration that some sections of the constitution are null and void and should be removed. Photo by Gideon Maundu. Nation, May 31, 2010.....	193
Figure 7.1: Midview Hotel in Mombasa where the Kongamano between Christians and Muslims took place. Photo taken by Kennedy Okello (During field research, 25 th July 2018)	201

List of Tables

Table 0.1: Christian and Muslim population in Mombasa and Kenya	5
Table 1.1: Pew Finding on Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa (Pew Forum 2010)	20
Table 2.1: People interviewed in terms of religion and gender	67
Table 2.2: Positions and qualifications of those interviewed	69
Table 4.1. Results of the referendum	139

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AIC	African Inland Church
AIC	African Institute of Churches
ACK	Anglican Church of Kenya
CRE	Christian Religious Education
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CICC	Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics Trust
CPI	Coast Peace Initiative
CIPK	Council of Imams and Preachers in Kenya
DUHREC	Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee
EAK	Evangelical Alliance of Kenya
IARF	The International Association for Religious Freedom
ICJ	International Commission of Jurists
IPK	Islamic Party of Kenya
IRE	Islamic Religious Education
IS	Islamic State
KHRC	Kenya Human Rights Commission
KLRC	Kenya Law Reform Commission
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
LSK	Law Society of Kenya
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPF	Mombasa Pastors Fellowship
MRC	Mombasa Republican Council
NAMLEF	National Muslim Leaders Forum
NCCK	National Council of Christian Churches in Kenya

NEMA	National Environment Management Authority
NHMRC	National Health Medical Research Council
ODM	Orange Democratic Movement
PCEA	Presbyterian Church of East Africa
SUPKEM	Supreme Council of Muslim in Kenya
TJRC	Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission
WHO	World Health Organization

Glossary

<i>Adhan</i>	Islamic call to prayer
<i>Al-Shabaab</i>	A terrorist group based in Somalia, linked to Al-Qaeda
<i>Bara</i>	Swahili for ‘mainland’
<i>Bui bui</i>	A piece of cloth worn as shawl over the full body by Muslim women, especially on the east coast of Africa
<i>Dini ya pesa</i>	Swahili for ‘religion that puts emphasis on money’
<i>Dini mpya</i>	Swahili for ‘new religion’
<i>Hadith</i>	A collection of traditions containing sayings of prophet Muhammad and a major source of guidance for Muslims apart from the Quran
<i>Hijab</i>	Head covering worn by some Muslim women
<i>Ijuma</i>	Swahili for ‘Friday’
<i>Jamii</i>	Swahili for ‘community’
<i>Jinn</i>	A spirit of lower rank than an angel, able to appear in human or animal form and possess a person, in Arabian and Muslim mythology
<i>Jimbo la Pwani</i>	Coastal Province
<i>Jumapili</i>	Swahili for ‘Sunday’
<i>Kadhi</i>	A judge in an Islamic court system with authority over inheritance, family, and succession for Muslims
<i>Kaffir</i>	Derogatory term used by some Muslims to refer to non-Muslims or non-believers
<i>Kongamano</i>	Swahili for ‘symposium/ conference/congress’
<i>Kusulumishwa</i>	Swahili for ‘to be converted to Islam’
<i>Madrassa</i>	Quranic school for Islamic instruction
<i>Majini</i>	Swahili for ‘supernatural creature’
<i>Matatu</i>	Taxi in Kenya, usually with a capacity of fourteen and above

<i>Mwambao</i>	Coastal Region
<i>Mihadhara</i>	Street preaching. Can also mean to deliver an education lecture
<i>Mijikenda</i>	Ethnic name for a group of coastal peoples. It originally referred to nine Bantu tribes or clans but has now been expanded to include more
<i>Mskiti</i>	Swahili for ‘Mosque’
<i>Mwananchi</i>	Swahili for ‘citizen’
<i>Pwani</i>	Swahili for ‘Coast’
<i>Pwani si Kenya</i>	Name of a movement seeking secession from Kenya. Swahili for ‘The Coast is not Kenya’
<i>Pwani Uhuru</i>	A movement that advocates independence of the coastal region from other parts of Kenya
<i>Sheikh</i>	A Muslim leader
<i>Sokoni</i>	Swahili for ‘in the Market’
<i>Sharia law</i>	Islam’s legal system that is also a moral guide
<i>Sheng</i>	A language widely spoken in Kenya that is a variant of Swahili
<i>Shia</i>	A Muslim sect that regards Ali as Muhammad’s first successor
<i>Siaza</i>	Swahili for ‘Politics’
<i>Sunni</i>	The larger of the two main branches of Islam, different from Shia in the sense of understanding of the Sunna, the way it views religious leadership, and its recognition of the first three caliphs
<i>Sura</i>	A chapter or section of the Quran
<i>Uchumi</i>	Swahili for ‘economy’
<i>Uwanja wa mchezo</i>	Swahili for ‘sports ground’
<i>Ujamaa</i>	Swahili for ‘brotherhood’
<i>Vichekezo</i>	Swahili for ‘laughter’
<i>Waqf</i>	An endowment made by a Muslim to a religious, educational, or charitable cause
<i>Watu wa Pwani</i>	Coastal people

Watu wa bara

Upcountry people

Wahhabi

Sunni Muslims belonging to a sect founded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab that rejects later innovations

PART ONE: CONTEXT

Introduction

It is a sunny day and I have just arrived in Mombasa for my honeymoon. The sweltering heat makes me want to stay in my hotel room. The Indian Ocean bordering the town saves the day by bringing a desperately needed late afternoon breeze. The town is abuzz with activities. This day, a Friday, the *Adhan* calling people for Muslim prayer can be heard everywhere. People dressed in Islamic clothing, like *hijabs*, dot the city; you would think you are in the Middle East. Then on Sunday, Christian songs emerge from loudspeakers in many churches that spread throughout the city. Men dressed in suits holding their Bibles and women dressed in their Sunday best are rushing into churches all over the place; you would think this is the epicentre of Christianity. From Monday to Thursday, you find yourself confused as you get into a *matatu* (a fourteen-seater taxi) as both Christians and Muslims freely mingle and talk *siaza* (politics) and find themselves in the world of *vichekezo* (comedy/humour), courtesy of some cheeky radio hosts. You can hardly tell who belong to which religion in the *matatu* (taxi), *sokoni* (in the market) or the *uwanja wa mchezo* (sport ground). Welcome to Mombasa, the second largest city in Kenya. It is a world of contradictions: Islamic yet Christian, peaceful yet tense and haunted by past violence; Arab yet African, rich, and yet very poor.



Figure 0.1: A street in downtown Mombasa – Source: Kennedy Okello (Taken during Field Trip, July 2018)

Mombasa in the Kenya Context

Mombasa is located on the Indian Ocean, about 500 km from the capital Nairobi, and 100 km north of the border with Tanzania. It is Kenya’s largest predominantly Muslim urban centre. According to the 2019 census, Mombasa was home to nearly 1.2 million people (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics 2019). Before the adoption of Kenya’s new constitution, Mombasa was the provincial headquarters of the Coast Province, one of the eight provinces. The new constitution removed provinces and replaced them with ‘Counties’ as the new form of devolved governments. The city of Mombasa now forms ‘Mombasa County.’



Figure 0.2: Map of Kenya showing location of Mombasa – Source: Geology.com

The Coast that Mombasa is a part of consists of 13 districts and 21 constituencies, with a population of 3.3 million people, according to the 2010 national census (Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission 2013:99). The main ethnic groups are the Mijikenda, comprising of nine culturally and linguistically inter-related sub-groups; among them are the Rabai, Chonyi, Giriama, Mjibana, Kauma, Kambe, Digo and Duruma. Most of them profess the Christian faith, save for the Digo who are mainly Muslims (Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission 2013:99). The non-Mijikenda groups are the Taita-Taveta, Swahili and people of Arab descent (Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission 2013:99). Other ethnic groups that have migrated from upcountry regions drawn to the Coast in search of better economic prospects are Kamba, Kikuyu, Luo, Luhya and other groups (Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission 2013:99).

Compared to other parts of the Swahili coast, which are predominantly Muslim, Mombasa is more urban and more diverse, in social, political, economic and religious terms.

The diverse nature of Mombasa presents unique sets of hurdles in the quest to ensure harmonious Christian-Muslim relations.

Mombasa is an important economic hub in Kenya. Most tourists that come to Kenya spend at least some of their time in this beautiful city. It is one of Africa’s major tourist destinations, with some of the best beaches in the world. Its economic importance extends to other countries in the region such as Uganda, Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo, as these countries are landlocked and most of their goods must arrive through the port in Mombasa.

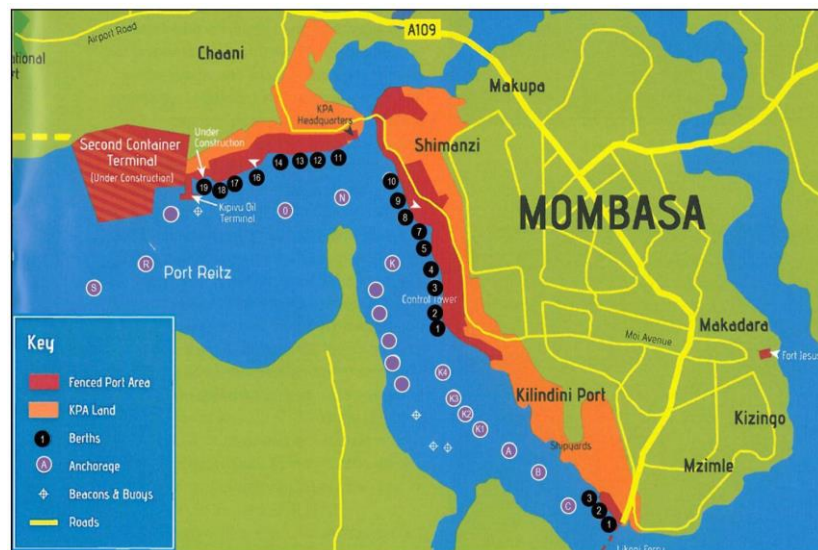


Figure 0.3: Mombasa and its Suburbs – Source: maps-kenya-ke.com

Mombasa has always been an important and influential city in eastern Africa. In the Middle Ages, the King of Zanzibar lived there, as did other kings. From Mombasa, these monarchs exercised political authority all around the East Coast of Africa.

Before the arrival of the Portuguese in 1498, Mombasa was under the control of Arabs. The majority of the residents were Muslims, either of Arab or African descent. Over the centuries, this composition has changed, and Christianity has experienced tremendous growth

in Mombasa. According to a poll conducted in 2013, Mombasa comprised 40 percent Muslims and 60 percent Christians (Wolf 2013; Chome 2019:11). Nationally, 10 per cent of the population identifies as Muslim (Kettani 2009). Christians constitute 80 per cent of population in Kenya (Heath 2017). The table below captures Christian-Muslim populations in Mombasa and in the whole country.

Table 0.1: Christian and Muslim population in Mombasa and Kenya

Location	% Muslim population	% Population	Christian
Mombasa	40	60	
Kenya	10	80	

The Christian and Muslim populations in Kenya and Mombasa are diverse and different. In recent decades, more conservative elements of both Christian and Islam traditions have grown exponentially. It has been argued that

when the Islamist ideology was introduced to mostly urban, Muslim-dominated and poor neighbourhoods, it really took off and gained traction with the locals because of its religious posturing. Most youth may not have understood the ideology but they saw themselves as part of a bigger community. They got carried away very fast (Chome 2019:15).

Similarly, emerging Churches have experienced significant growth since independence (McClendon 2016). This has been attributed to the emphasis of these denominations on a theology that focuses on salvation, deliverance and prosperity (Nyabwari 2014). Similarly, Islamism—an extreme form of Islam—has been on the rise in Mombasa. This is partly driven by messages coming from mosques that portray Islam as being under attack from Christians, and Muslim leaders as being corrupt and not fully following the teachings of Islam. Radical Muslim preachers from other places in the Horn of Africa, along with an influx of migrants from Somalia have contributed to the rise of Islamism.

The Sunni majority and Shi'ite groups have traditionally cohabited peacefully within the town and there has even been mutual assistance between these groups, such as aid for the construction of new mosques (Kresse 2007:68). During the Iran–Iraq war, which was perceived as a Persian–Arab war, most East African Muslims initially sided with the Arab Iraqis with the intention to stifle the newly emerging Islamic power, Iran. The strategy was to cast the Shia as the enemies of ‘true Islam’, then oppose Iran as a non-Muslim country. East Africa thus became a platform for the struggle for hegemony between these two parties (Kresse 2007:189-190).

The rapid rise of emerging Churches has further challenged the influence of mainline Churches which once dominated Mombasa (Throup 2015). The challenge presented by the diverse Islamic sects and new kinds of Christian has been accentuated by the new form of devolved government. The centralised form of government from independence in 1963 led to dissatisfaction amongst many Kenyans who felt that they were economically marginalized, politically dominated, socially excluded, and religiously discriminated against. Throup has accurately described how Kenya’s diverse and divided Muslim communities may increasingly feel a sense of collective grievance because of long-standing political marginalization (Throup 2015). This led to clamour for a new constitution. The new constitution of 2010 ushered in a new form of governance—devolved forms of government replaced centralized government. Under ‘devolution’, Districts and Provinces were replaced with Counties.

The newly formed County governments became the main drivers of economic and social programs. The devolved form of government has meant that Mombasa people and their leaders have more power to determine how resources are used. Mombasa, and coastal people in general, have fought for a devolved form of government even before Kenya gained its independence. There was a widespread perception in the region that the *Pwani* (Coast) was both politically and economically marginalised because it was Muslim-dominated. The Muslim

population across Kenya felt a distance from institutions of power and influence and that the cultural remoteness of the state was deepened by socioeconomic changes that affected Mombasa in the 1990s (Kenya Human Rights Commission 1997). There have been attempts by *Pwani* (Coastal) people in the past to displace *Bara* (Up-country) people to go back where they came from (Kenya Human Rights Commission 1997).

Managing interreligious tension in Mombasa

There is an ongoing need to minimise and manage tensions in Mombasa, especially since devolution in 2013, to avoid them turning into deeper and more violent conflicts. A casual observation of Mombasa shows a city of harmony. However, this calmness hides an at-times deep-rooted mistrust between different segments of the society. The difference and animosity between *Pwani* and *Bara* people sometimes spill over into violence. *Pwani* people see themselves as exploited by *Bara* people, and have made no secret of wanting to evict the latter or even seceding from Kenya altogether.

As for Muslims, there is a great divide between Arabs and the Mijikenda¹ Muslims. Many Mijikenda see Arabs as exploitative and discriminatory. These racial and ethnic identities create divisions in Muslims' political engagement (Ndzovu 2010). Radical groups have also emerged in Mombasa with diverse goals: for example, Somali-based terrorist group *Al-Shabaab* pursues an Islamist terrorist agenda while the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) pursues a secessionist agenda (Botha 2014). The views of conservative Muslims put them at loggerheads with moderate Muslims who see them as lacking a foundation in basic Islam teachings and as prone to misinterpreting terms such as *Jihad*. In this study, moderate Muslims

¹ Initially referred to nine peoples of the region but has currently been expanded to include more. Ethnic groups that constitute Mijikenda include Digo, Giriama, Duruma, Rabai, Kauma, Jibana, Ribe, Kambe, Chonyi.

are regarded as Muslims groups who have embraced tolerance in their approach to non-Muslims. This does not mean that they agree with them but that they are more inclined to use peaceful means to resolve differences with others. On the other hand, conservative Muslims in this study are regarded as Muslim groups who are more inclined to literal interpretations of Scripture and are willing to declare *Jihad* and use violence against those they disagree with.

Similarly, there is a rift between mainline Churches and emerging Churches based on the way they perceive who a Christian is and how they are to interact with those who do not share their faith. In this study, mainline Churches are regarded as Protestant denominations that differ from emerging and charismatic Churches both in history and practice. Mainline Churches have been there longer and are proud of their lineage. On the other hand, emerging Churches in this study are regarded as protestant denominations that started in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, who are different from main Churches in terms of what they emphasise in teachings and practice. In Kenya, these Churches emphasize the message of salvation, deliverance and prosperity. They regard “mainline” Churches as not being spiritual and that they need both salvation and deliverance (Nyabwari 2014). On their part, leaders of mainline Churches regard leaders of emerging Churches as mostly untrained and lacking accountability.

The inter- and intra-religious differences between Christians and Muslims mean that Mombasa can be a very volatile city. This animosity has at times resulted in violence between different categories of people. Based on the frequency and nature of attacks on Christians, it is often stated that Mombasa, and the Coast Province in general, has become increasingly radicalized in recent years (“Church torched in Mombasa as violence flares after killing of cleric”; *The Telegraph*, 4 October 2013).

Christian and Muslim leaders are aware of the tension between their followers. There

is an increased fear that the tension is causing radicalization on both sides. Different Kenyan intelligence agencies estimate that around 100 Kenyan men and women joined the Islamic State (IS) in Libya and Syria, triggering concern that some may come back to stage attacks on Kenyan and foreign targets in a country already victim to regular, deadly terrorism (*The Daily Nation* 2016). Extremism in Christianity also has the potential for violence, as exemplified by a pastor in Mombasa who advocated for members to be allowed to carry guns for self-defence (Sanga and Bernard 2014). It is often claimed that economic marginalization is one of the causes of extremism in Mombasa; indeed, according to a report by Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC),

The idea that the former Coast Province has been marginalized economically by successive governments since independence is a central feature of the historical narrative in the context of Kenyan politics, development and gross human rights violations. Like the former North Eastern Province, the NFD in general and Nyanza, the Coast region could be placed in the category of 'politically dissident' regions that have suffered marginalisation under successive regimes ... marginalisation experienced in the region, especially when understood from the point of view of dispossession, is due also to the confluence of interests arising from the region's strategic value as a principal gateway to the country and the East and Central African region and its valued seafront land resources (Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission 2013:99).

Coastal people are found in all occupations, but are disproportionately concentrated in unskilled and casual jobs because of their low average educational levels (Rakodi, Gatabaki-Kamau and Devas 2000). Successive Kenyan governments have taken several measures to placate Muslims, such as appoint their leaders in cabinet positions. However, these efforts have not allayed Muslims' complaints about discrimination (Oded 2000). Muslim leaders in Mombasa have in the past tried to form Islamic-based political parties such as Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK) to address their issues but this has not been successful, as Kenya prohibits formation of political parties based on religion. As such, the views of Muslims are mostly expressed through their religious and social organizations. All of this suggests that the city is a

tinderbox of potential religious tension.

Some Churches have shown their extreme views and practices by refusing to grant Muslim students admission in their private Christian schools (Alio 2015). This can be an emotive issue, especially given the fact that all students are supposed to be treated equally. There have been also extreme actions by some Christian Churches, such as banning Muslim students from dressing in hijabs (BBC News 2016).

Kenyans' private lives are often much less religiously contentious than their politics, a fact which is hard to fully comprehend without living and experiencing it personally (Hargis 2012). Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa are complex and while there are apparent and seemingly intractable issues of tension, people also just 'get on' and just live their lives. Indeed, in Mombasa, there is a dichotomy between people getting along well in public spaces on one hand and incidences of terrorism against Christians and discriminative laws against Muslims on another. A better explanation is needed to account for this conflicting reality if appropriate solutions are to be devised.

There are efforts by some in Mombasa to produce interreligious harmony. For example, the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics Trust (CICC) was formed by several Christian and Muslim groups with the objective of ensuring peaceful co-existence of the different religious groups in Mombasa and other parts of Coast province. The International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) has also been organizing interfaith meetings in Mombasa. There are other organizations that seek interreligious harmony but these two, especially the CICC, play a major role in bringing Christians and Muslims together.

There has been only a limited amount of research into interreligious relations in Kenya, and less in Mombasa, on why it is a 'contradictory' town and expresses duality such as

‘peaceful and yet not peaceful’ or ‘tolerant and yet not tolerant.’ Most studies of Islam and Christianity in Mombasa have typically underplayed the internally diverse nature of these two religions and therefore inadvertently creating the narrative that both Islam and Christianity are monolithic, two intractable forces at a standoff with one another. A casual discussion with residents of Mombasa lay bare the falsity of this assumption. Moderate Muslims are as different to conservative Muslims as members of mainline Churches are different to members of emerging Churches. To the best of my knowledge, there has not been a study that centrally looks at Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa that considers the diverse nature and expression of these two religions. This study addresses this problem. By looking at the dynamic and nuanced expression of Islam and Christianity, it is hoped that a better explanation will emerge that explains the ‘dual’ nature (tension/harmony) of Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa, expanding our understanding of interreligious relations in the city and in Kenya more broadly.

Research Aims

The objective of this research is to investigate the nature of Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa, with a focus on how different the many different religious authorities and movements (e.g., Islamist, moderate Islam, Christian emerging, Christian mainline) shape the relations. It also examines the way religious authorities are nested in ecological conditioning factors (e.g., economic, social, political and religious) and the signals they send that can bring harmony or create schisms between the two religious traditions as a whole.

The word ‘relations’ in this context includes both positive and negative aspects, such as: peace, dialogue, cooperation, conflict, tension, hostility, restrictions, competition and discrimination. The research will look at issues that have been a source of tension and conflict

between the two encompassing religious traditions and explore ways in which they have sought to address them. My specific aims are to:

1. Understand the complex ecology of social, political, economic and religious factors that produce Christian-Muslim relations; and
2. Explore the role of religious authorities for mainline Churches, moderate Muslims, emerging Churches and conservative Muslim organizations in shaping Christian-Muslim relations based on their perception of ecological conditioning factors and the signals of response they send to followers.

Accordingly, this research asks the following questions:

1. What are the contributions of mainline Churches, moderate Muslims, emerging Churches and conservative Muslims in calming or inflaming the relation?
2. How do mainline Churches, moderate Muslims, emerging Churches and conservative Muslims respond to the economic, social and political ecology of Mombasa?

Different strategies were adopted to explore these questions, which will be addressed in Chapter 2 (Research Methods). This research will build on previous studies, with a specific focus on how Christians and Muslims in Mombasa view each other. It will demystify views that present Christianity and Islam in Mombasa in a simplistic, non-nuanced manner, by identifying and explaining internal differences within each religion. Further, this study will identify, following Max Weber, different forms of religious authority and how different Christian and Islamic groups in Mombasa fit this model of authority. Moreover, this study will identify 'ecological conditioning factors' that drive and shape Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. It will analyse how the different religious authorities in the city respond to these factors and how they exploit them to develop a narrative that is either beneficial or injurious to

Christian-Muslim relations.

Conceptual Framing and Approach

In terms of Christian groups, I am looking at mainline and emerging Churches. In this context, mainline Churches are the well-established Churches that have existed in Kenya for many decades and have well-defined leadership structures. These Churches were initially brought to east Africa by the early missionaries from the Global North. Examples of mainline Churches in Mombasa include: Catholics, ACK (Anglican Church of Kenya), PCEA (Presbyterian Church of East Africa), AIC (African Inland Church) and Baptist. On the other hand, emerging Churches are new Churches founded mostly by Kenyans and having a strong theology of salvation and deliverance. The founders of these Churches are charismatic leaders who wield enormous power over their congregations, and they tend to be the sole authority in shaping the direction of the Church. They give little credence to theological training and instead offer 'literal' readings of the Bible. Examples of these Churches in Mombasa include: The Redeemed Gospel Church, The Deliverance Church, and Neno Evangelism. I have avoided using the term 'fundamentalist' to refer to the emerging Churches in Mombasa in this study as the monolithic application of this label "can effectively obscure significant variations which make it dangerous to assume that such churchgoers inevitably adopt highly traditional attitudes to cross-community endeavours" (Livingstone 1998:152).

In terms of Muslim groups in Mombasa, this research will focus on Conservative and Moderate groups. My narrow definition is that conservative hold on to a rigid view of an imagined past and are reluctant to embrace the present, while moderate Muslims are considered to be open to constructively engage with other non-Muslims, recognizing that religion can morph. Both groups encompass a spectrum of diverse Muslim mosques and organizations.

Even within conservative groups there can be significant differences between one and the other on any given issue. For example, there are those who might believe in conservative Islam without embracing violence, and others who believe in a literal interpretation of *Jihad* and advocate its use. Similarly, the term ‘moderate Muslims’ as used in this research encompasses a range of Muslim groups. It includes those who are for peaceful co-existence without wanting to be involved, and those who are willing to take steps, seen as controversial, to dialogue and engage with Christians. Examples of moderate Muslim groups in Mombasa include SUPKEM (Supreme Council of Muslim in Kenya), CIPK (Council of Imams and Preachers in Kenya) and the majority of Mosques in Mombasa. On the hand, conservative Muslims with extremists’ view include groups that coalesce around radical leaders such as the late Aboud Rogo Mohammed and Sheikh Ibrahim Omar. Some of these extremists’ groups have been known to be instrumental in recruiting young people in Mombasa to join *Al-Shabaab* (Botha 2014:28).

This research uses the theory of religious authority advanced by Gary Bouma (Bouma 1992), drawing on the work of Weber (Weber 1963). In this formulation, religious authority is defined as the ideologies and theologies used by religious leaders and organizations to legitimise beliefs, practices and actions. To augment my analysis of the role of religious authority, this project also takes an ‘ecological approach’ (WHO 2002:12-16) to making sense of interreligious relations between Christians and Muslims in Mombasa by looking at how religious matters are nested within political, economic, social and cultural relations. According to this framework, interpersonal violence is viewed as a result of the interaction of multiple factors at the individual, the relationship, the community, and the societal levels. This study analyses conflict at the societal levels.

This research is significant. While there have been several studies about problems on the Kenyan coast and especially the socio-economic marginalization of Muslims, to the best of

my knowledge, there is no single study that examines how diverse Christian and Muslim groups negotiate and manage their differences in this dynamic Kenyan city. This study is vital in giving us insight into and understanding of how different expressions of Christianity and Islam drive and shape Christian-Muslim relations. Specifically, the study shows that to understand and activate the calming potential of the Christian-Muslim relationship in Mombasa, we need to understand how religious authorities operate within the local ecology—social, political and economic, as well as religious.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter 1 deals with the literature review and theoretic framework. The literature review is structured in a way that considers the national (Kenya) and local (Mombasa) realities. Areas of literature that are reviewed include the binary lens through which Christian-Muslim relations have mostly been viewed; existing studies on Sunni and Shia divide, and the divide between Mainline Churches and emerging Churches. Also addressed in this review are perceptions that Christians and Muslims have about each other and the schools of thought within these religions that drive those perceptions. The theoretic frameworks of ‘religious authority’ and ‘ecological conditioning factors’ are also discussed in this chapter as they provide a way of making sense of the context in which religious groups in Mombasa operate.

Chapter 2 describes the methodological approach adopted in the study. A rationale for the different approaches is considered before justifying the qualitative approach. I discuss my project participants and why they were chosen to participate. The process leading to the fieldwork and the ethical considerations for the study are also considered in this chapter. The chapter describes how the data were analysed. Finally, this chapter also describes my own positioning as a researcher.

Chapter 3 lays the historical context of the study. This is done with the understanding that the present realities are very much a product of the past. By exploring the pre-colonial and colonial eras, context is given for the current state of Christian-Muslim relations. This chapter builds into my thesis by demonstrating a long history of interreligious animosity by two different colonising religious forces.

Chapter 4 addresses *Siaza, Jamii na Uchumi* (political, social and economic factors) as ecological conditioning factors. In this chapter, I examine how different Christian and Islamic religious authorities employ perceptions of political discrimination and social and economic marginalization to create a narrative that either brings together Christians and Muslims or seeks to create a schism between them. This chapter argues that not only do mainline Churches and moderate Muslim groups perceive social, political, economic challenges positively and in a way that promotes harmonious co-existence, but the religious authorities in these organizations also find other non-religious explanations for those challenges, and therefore send peaceful signals to their members. On the other hand, emerging Churches and conservative Muslim groups, especially Islamists, redeploy social, political and economic challenges as a mobilization tool for religious agendas.

Extreme violence sometimes occurs in Mombasa. Chapter 5 explores how Christians and Muslims authorities have dealt with tension and conflict between them. The chapter assesses how Christians have dealt with the burning of Churches and killings of Christians by Muslim extremists, and how Muslims have dealt with what they perceive as a campaign to demonise Muslims through anti-terrorism laws and acts of extra-judicial killings of their leaders. This chapter argues not only that there are intra-religious differences between Christians and Muslims in Mombasa, but also that different religious authorities engage differently with the ecological framework of Mombasa to shape Christian-Muslim relations. It

is further argued that even though the CICC does a commendable job of bringing the groups together, there are intractable differences and sensitive issues that are avoided. Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa are characterized by ‘shadow-boxing’, which evades issues that are potentially explosive.

Chapter 6 addresses *Kadhi* Courts by analysing how this debate affected and continues to shape Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. Just like in the other chapters, the role of religious authorities in shaping relations by leveraging *Kadhi* Courts is examined. This chapter argues that churches differed in their response to *Kadhi* Courts, with mainline Churches showing understanding and restraint on the issue, while emerging Churches strongly resist them and spread antagonistic messages about Islam. Similarly, moderate Muslims opted for cooperation and dialogue with Christians to peacefully resolve the differences on the subject, while some conservative Muslims and Islamists use threats and intimidation to push for the adoption of *Kadhi* Courts. These contrasting responses are yet another example of how Christian religious authorities in Mombasa do not have a unified position. This makes broader peacebuilding efforts between religious groups a struggle that may not be readily resolved.

Chapter 7 will examine a *Kongamano* (symposium) that was held in Mombasa between Christians and Muslims. I was an observer of this event. Describing what I saw will contextualise the main issues discussed in the previous chapters. Since this was a forum where Muslim and Christian leaders gathered to highlight causes of tension between them and how to resolve them, my analysis of the proceedings of this meeting will provide insights not captured by theoretical studies on the problem. Christians and Muslims in Mombasa do have numerous events to raise and resolve issues between them, and ponder and adopt ways of harmonious co-existence. This chapter argues that Christians from mainline Churches are more understanding of the struggles of Muslims and that their approach of engaging Muslims is

likely to promote harmony rather than division; similarly, the approach of understanding adopted by moderate Muslims in dealing with Christians also promotes peaceful co-existence. On the other hand, Christians from emerging and charismatic Churches and conservative Muslims are dismissive of each other's struggles and their confrontational approach creates a schism rather than harmony.

Finally, in the conclusion I tie together the research questions and the findings. It is the contention of this thesis that to understand and activate the calming potential of the Christian-Muslim relationship in Mombasa we need to understand how religious authorities operate within the local ecology—social, political and economic, as well as religious; and we need to appreciate there are also intra-religious differences between those seeking harmonious peaceful co-existence, and those fomenting division and enmity between the two religions. Whereas religious authorities in mainline Churches and moderate Muslims use their leadership structures and systemic theological interpretations to push for harmonious co-existence, those in emerging Churches and conservative Mosques lack collaborative leadership structures and rely on their charismatic leaders who tend to apply certain literal interpretations of the scriptures to deepen the schism between the two religions in Mombasa. This study concludes with an analysis of how the findings of this work might inform research on religious tensions in other contexts.

Chapter 1: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This thesis explores Christian-Muslim relationships in Mombasa and how different Christian and Muslim religious authorities perceive and respond to the local ecology (social, political, economic and religious) that shape Mombasa. In this chapter, I build on the existing academic literature on interreligious relations, including in Kenya, to contextualise my study.

First, to understand this relationship, it must be clear that Christianity and Islam in Mombasa are not homogenous groups. Different religious authorities² drive the relations differently. It is vital when looking at Christian-Muslim relation in Mombasa to consider literature that captures the diversity of the two groups and how they positively or negatively affect the relations. Some of the complexities are reflected in the *Sunni-Shia* divide and the manner they engage Christians, as well as the mainline-emerging Churches divide and their approach to engaging Muslims. Examples of these will be drawn from Kenya, Africa and other parts of the world. I situate these differences within the conceptual framework of religious authority, which assigns different Christian denominations or Muslim sects to categories, depending on their leadership structure and decision-making process. How particular religious authorities view interreligious relationships is important and, therefore, there will be a literature review of attitudes Christians and Muslims have towards each other.

Second, these heterogenous groups meet each other in a broader social context—this needs to be factored into our understanding of interreligious relations. Several factors have converged to shape Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. These include the global, national

² In this research, religious authority is defined as the ideologies and theologies used by religious leaders and organizations to legitimise beliefs, practices and actions.

and local contexts, and the ecological conditioning factors (social, political, economic and religious)—at all levels that impact on the relationship. I review the existing literature on how ecological factors condition interreligious relations, for example facilitating radicalisation or fostering certain views between groups. In doing so, I establish this ecology as part of the theoretical framework, alongside religious authority, through which we can understand interreligious relations in Mombasa. This background establishes the rationale for the research questions this thesis examines. I begin this review of the literature by examining attitudes to religious diversity in Kenya.

Kenyan Attitudes to Religious Diversity

The Pew Research Centre, an American research organization that has done extensive research in Africa, has sought to capture how Christians and Muslims in Kenya perceive each other. They surveyed a national sample of Kenyans on this topic. While the study is about Kenya in general, it is safe to assume that it offers glimpses of what happens in specific parts of Kenya such as Mombasa. Below is a table that summarizes a number of issues reported in a 2010 national study of religion in Kenya (Pew Research Centre 2010).

Table 1.1: Pew Finding on Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa (Pew Research Centre 2010)

Issue	Percentage (% of adult population surveyed)
Percentage citing religious conflict as a problem	29%

Percentage citing crime as a problem	79%
Percentage citing political leaders as a problem	85%
Percentage citing unemployment as a problem	95%
Kenyan Christians say they know not very much/nothing about Islam	75%
Kenyan Muslims say they know not very much/nothing about Christians	55%
Kenyan Christians express overall positive view of Muslims	48%
Muslims express overall positive views of Christians	44%
Kenyan Christians say that Christians face hostility from many or most Muslims	34%
Kenyan Muslims say that Muslims face hostility from many or most Christians	22%
Kenyans are very/somewhat concerned about religious extremism	57%
Concerned about religious extremism of Muslim groups	25%
Concerned about extremism of Christian groups	21%

Kenyans say most/many/all Muslims in Kenya support Islamic extremists like al-Qaeda 33%

From this study, Kenyans as a nation see more significant existential threats than religious conflict. Although Christians and Muslims get along relatively well, they hardly know much about each other. Although there is no data that is Mombasa-specific about how much Christians know about Islam or how well Muslims know about Christianity in Mombasa, it can be inferred that in the city the knowledge of the other faith is higher than the national average given the demographic composition.

That said, less than a half of Kenyan Christians have an overall positive view of Muslims. The same is true of Muslims' overall positive view of Christians. A higher percentage of Kenyan Christians say they face hostility from many or most Muslims compared to Kenyan Muslims who say they face hostility from many or most Christians. More Kenyans are very/somewhat concerned about religious extremism. This broader notion of distrust frames the Kenyan situation, and as will be seen in later chapters, is a feature of life in Mombasa.

Literature on Differences in Islam in Kenya

There is considerable scholarly work on theological differences within Islam and how these materially affect interreligious relations in a range of locations (Duderija 2018). That said, there is little literature that directly address the character and activities of sects of Islam in Kenya, generally, and Mombasa, specifically. However, the scarce available literature provides a hint of activities and beliefs of these sects that directly affects how they engage with Christians and other non-Muslim groups. This section is focussed on the literature that touches on sects in Islam. However, it has to be stated that the expression of Islam in Mombasa is very much shaped by global events and views. There are also local issues that make Islam and

Christian-Muslim relations Mombasa-specific.

There is no data on the religious affiliation of the different Muslim sects in Mombasa. However, a study of the city suburb of Kibokoni suggests a trend. According to the *Conservation Plan for the Old Town* prepared for the National Museums of Kenya and the Municipal Council of Mombasa study, religious affiliations in Kibokoni (in the wider sense) in 1990 was 63 per cent Muslim *Sunni*, 22 per cent Muslim *Shia* and the rest were not affiliated to the two sects (Kresse 2007:66). This situation is accurately captured as “Mombasa’s heterogeneous Muslim landscape” (Goodman 2020:26). In terms of sectarian affiliation of Muslim in Mombasa,

Shafi‘i Sunnis are the most numerous, both in Mombasa and throughout East Africa; in Mombasa, these include Swahilis, Somalis, and people from Mijikenda communities who trace their origins to the coastal hinterland. A large number of Muslim communities of Gujarati origin reside in the city, each counting a few thousand members. These include Hanafi Sunnis (Goodman 2020:26).

It is indisputable that in Mombasa, most Muslims follow the *Sunni* rather than *Shia* tradition. Aside from the *Sunni-Shia* divide, it has been observed that the growth and appeal of a Salafi vision of Islam over the past 30 years has resulted in less influence of the Chief *Kadhi* and SUPKEM (Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims) within the Muslim community in Mombasa, as they are perceived as being co-opted by the government, and that is not positively viewed by a majority of Muslims (Throup 2015:47). Increasingly, Muslim organizations that were thought as independent such as the National Muslim Leaders Forum (NAMLEF) and the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK) are seen as far too moderate by radical Muslim youths, who are attracted by *jihadi* ideology (Throup 2015:47). There is a view that Islam in Mombasa is shifting from moderate to extremism (Botha 2014).

Islam in Mombasa is increasingly influenced by the global context and the rise of the global Ummah (see Singleton 2014). The literature indicates that this influence has caused intolerance and extremism to rise. For example, young Muslims in Mombasa have been offered scholarships at

universities in the Middle East by a variety of Islamic missionary groups from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Pakistan, Sudan, Kuwait and Iran (who desired influence in Mombasa and other coastal towns in the region); upon their return, the graduates fluent in Arabic implemented changes in local religious education (Kresse 2007:94).

As a result of the emergence of new religious leaders trained in Islamic studies in Middle East, there has been tension with traditionally oriented elders who see them as disrespectful and not acknowledging the roles and achievements of local leaders, who see them as arrogant and are angered by their criticism of locally established Muslim practices as a whole (Kresse 2007:94). As a result, Muslim lay people, largely the older generation, have felt increasingly uneasy in this changing environment that characterises them as members of *dini mpya* (a new religion) and *dini ya pesa* (a religion of money) (Kresse 2007:94).

There are huge implications from this new form of Islam in Mombasa that has been adopted by young Muslims, trained and influenced by outside forces. Their view that the older Sheikhs are not teaching pure Islam means that they will continue to push for conservative and even Islamist views. This can only complicate Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa.

Literature on Differences among Christians

Christianity in Mombasa is as diverse as there are denominational affiliations and ethnicities. This section will look at literature that address both the mainline Churches and emerging Churches and how they drive Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. The phrase ‘emerging Churches’ is used interchangeably with ‘charismatic Churches’ in much of the literature. Mainline churches in Mombasa include Catholics, ACK (Anglican Church of Kenya), PCEA (Presbyterian Church of East Africa), and Baptist Church. Emerging Churches in Mombasa include Redeemed Gospel Church, Deliverance Church, Winner’s Chapel

Mombasa, Zion Fire Anointing Centre, and Repentance and Holiness Ministry Church.

The new churches have experienced considerable growth in the past few decades throughout the global South (see Singleton 2014). Many of the members of these new churches have transferred from the existing mainline Churches (e.g., Catholic; Anglican; Lutheran etc.). This makes mainline Churches concerned about their growth. A study by Deacon and others have made clear that mainline Christian Churches in Kenya are losing members to new Churches (Deacon et al. 2017). This research will provide further insights into whether competition from emerging Churches is transforming the ways in which Mainline churches engage with Muslims.

Studies such as the one conducted by Knitter have looked at the global trends and dynamic of mainline Churches and emerging Churches. The study observes that emerging Churches and others who have embraced exclusivism mostly engage in dialogue with persons of a different faith with the goal of converting those people to Christian faith (Knitter 1995:27). On the other hand, the Catholic Church and some mainline Protestant Churches embrace the concept of inclusivism and are more willing to engage with non-Christians on the basis of humanity, inspired “by the more positive Roman Catholic views of other faiths” (Knitter 1995:27). Undoubtedly, the approach adopted by a Church in engaging with Muslims is crucial in determining whether there are going to be positive or negative encounters between the two groups.

The emergence of African independent Churches such as Deliverance churches, Redeemed Gospel amongst others, have dealt away with conservative views and long upheld traditions that characterise mainline Churches (Kahenya 2010). Some of their views resist any attempt to bring together interreligious groups to tackle issues of any kind. Kenya’s Christian population has become increasingly fragmented with the rise of Pentecostalism and a rapid

proliferation of Prosperity Gospel preachers in recent decades (Throup 2015). Just like conservative Muslims, most emerging Churches are unwilling to accept the proposed rules. This “new, more correlational approach to other religions include their desire to move away from and correct the excesses of the exclusivist model and to clarify or resolve the good intentions but lingering ambiguities of the inclusivist perspective” (Knitter 1995:29).

Many of the new emerging Churches are themselves far less interested in participating in intra-Christian, much less interfaith, organizations or dialogues. At a time when Muslim communities are increasingly stigmatized, this does not bode well for the possibility that these increasingly influential Churches will play a role in bridging national divides or building social cohesion (Throup 2015:39). It is already known that views of Kenyan Christians on Islam can be dictated by their religious affiliation. Michael Dennis Brislen’s dissertation investigates diverse voices of Kenyan Christians by looking at Kenyan scholarly Christian literature through the prism of the theology of reconstruction and its emphasis on the priority of African culture as a framework in determining the perceptions of Islam (Brislen 2015). The study established that historically, many in the mainline Churches have viewed Muslims as not fully African, while in the Pentecostal imaginary, Islam is also linked with demonic spirits (Brislen 2015). As a result of these perceptions, Muslims’ contribution to Kenyan national identity and to healthy national community formation is doubted and minimised, and can only be trusted if they integrate into an African Christian-led process or through conversion (Brislen 2015).

Another aspect of the debate in the Christian-Muslim relations in Kenya is the role emerging Churches play in creating tension with Muslims, which is not covered by much literature. The existing literature indicates that emerging Churches have shaped their members’ position on issues such as *Kadhi* courts, for example (Mwangi 2012). One of the foci of this research is to examine how emerging Churches in Mombasa are impacting on conflict and

conflict resolution between Christians and Muslims.

There are arguments made in the literature that the focus of the leaders of the new Churches is proclamation of a message of salvation at the expense of issues of social justice and governance (Deacon et al. 2017). Whether this means that they are indifferent to the challenges Muslims in Mombasa face can only be ascertained through a deeper study into the issue, as this research will attempt to do.

Emerging Churches have aligned themselves with the government, which is complicating their relationship with Muslims. This is demonstrated in Deacon's study, in which he accurately points out that Kenya's politicians have shown themselves to be flexible in their religious allegiances (as are the populace); they attend multiple Churches, and combine practices of both mainline and emerging Churches, especially conservative views on social issues, emphasis on salvation, focus on prosperity, and views that are hostile to Islam (Deacon et al. 2017).

Further, Deacon's study has found that the leadership of new Churches in Mombasa and other surrounding towns tended to be dominated by a theology of personal transformation, and opposition to anything that might hinder that (Deacon et al. 2017). This emphasis on personal transformation places little value on engaging members of other faith. It is believed that the Western influence on new Churches has shifted the focus from a relational to a salvation message (Deacon et al. 2017). A study done by Lynch also observes that Kenya's politics is not only fiercely dominated by a conservative, exclusionary Christian ethos, but this has taken on a Pentecostal and stridently evangelical tone which at best excludes Muslims, and at worst is openly hostile to them (Lynch 2013).

Thus, the existing literature seem to imply that the emerging Churches are contributing to the tension between Christians and Muslims. This work, however, has not specifically

interviewed the key religious leaders to understand their point of view on the matter—at least, not in Mombasa. Thus, the assertions explored in this section remain under-examined until Muslim leaders, mainline Church leaders and the leaders of those emerging Churches are given the opportunity to articulate their views on the subject. This research will address the gap of knowledge in this area by conducting interviews with these leaders in order to understand their position and to probe further the teachings and beliefs that shape the views of these new groups in relating to Muslims and Islam.

The situation of Christian-Muslim relations in Kenya is not helped by the decline of the role of mainline Churches. Throup's study, which examined roles of Churches in expanding the political and social space in Kenya, found that Kenya's diverse Christian institutions, united in the struggle for democracy during the 1980s and 1990s, became fragmented along ethnic and political lines with the advent of competitive multiparty politics in 2000, and that mainline Churches lost considerable moral authority by entangling themselves in divisive political debates in the decade that followed (Throup 2015). To complicate matters, Kenya's diverse and divided Muslim communities may increasingly feel a sense of collective grievance because of long-standing political marginalization, a tendency that is reinforced by a perception that the government's counterterror approach is unfairly and indiscriminately targeting them (Throup 2015).

While the focus of this section is on national-level developments, the broader issues that shape Christian-Muslim relations in Kenya largely apply to Mombasa. This is because of the interconnected nature of government and religious leadership. Many of the top Muslim leaders in Kenya are based in Mombasa (Mwakimako 2003). Decisions they make affect Christian-Muslim relations nationally, but also locally in Mombasa. Decisions made by the Kenyan government also impact both the nation and all the Counties in the country.

Literature on Christian-Muslim relations in Kenya and Mombasa, including terrorism

This section will examine literature that addresses the subject of Christian-Muslim relations in Kenya generally, and where possible, Mombasa. There is scarce scholarly literature on this topic about Mombasa *per se*. While studies have significantly contributed to our understanding of Christian-Muslim relations, their focus, to the best of my understanding, has not been to present the heterogeneous dynamics of this relationships. Different sects of Islam have their interpretations of the Quran and *Hadith* that directly shape their relations with Christians. Similarly, the approach and view a Christian denomination adopts about Islam and Muslims determines whether they are going to have a constructive engagement or antagonistic encounter. The study of Christian-Muslim relations should consider these nuances for a deeper exploration of the relations. Mombasa presents a unique study of Christian-Muslim relations in the sense that its population is 40% Muslim and 60% Christian, and that there are significant diverse expressions of Christianity and Islam: mainline Churches and emerging Churches; moderate Muslims and conservative Muslims.

Christian-Muslim relations in Kenya and Mombasa are portrayed in various ways in the literature. Some scholarly literature presents Christian-Muslim relations as a model for peaceful interreligious dialogue (Beusmans 2020) while others paint a picture of a relationship riddled with tension and conflict between the two religions (Otieno 2019). Others show it is not a case of either/or and point out that there are incidences where Muslims and Christians have collaborated in addressing shared political goals, and times when political and theological considerations have antagonized Christian-Muslims relations (Mwakimako 2007). Mwakimako goes further to state that “There is no doubt that, on average, Kenyans are deeply religious. Elements of both fanaticism and moderation are found in the social behaviour of both

Muslims and Christians” (Mwakimako 2007).

As already indicated, some scholarship presents Kenya and places like Mombasa as a model of harmonious interreligious co-existence. Mombasa is a relatively peaceful town compared to other parts of Africa such as the northern parts of Nigeria. Undoubtedly, Islam and Christianity have a long history of coexistence in Kenya, and compared to other parts of the world, the two religions have lived together in relative peace for centuries (Rukyaa 2007).

In his recent work, Omari Hassan Kinyua argues that at the national level, the relationships between Muslims and Christians are good, but not as good as they were ten years ago (Omari 2014). Grace Hargis’ study on the importance of interfaith peace-building for development in Kenya observes that the religious climate in coastal Kenya has certainly improved in the past decade, as demonstrated by positive interreligious communications that resulted in mutual understanding between Christians and Muslims (Hargis 2012). Mwakimako, on the other hand, suggests that “the optimism about cordial Muslim–Christian relations proved exaggerated” (Mwakimako 2007).

Other literature portrays Christian-Muslim relations as tense and antagonistic. Christians are afraid of the growing Islamic presence in Kenya (Tayob 2011). One of the reasons that lends credence to this view is the issue of terrorism. Terrorist activities such as those that have targeted Churches or Christian organizations have created an environment of mistrust and uncertainty. Kenya has had several terrorist attacks in the past two decades, some of which allegedly had a religious motive. The attacks include the 1998 bombing of the United States embassy in Nairobi; the Kikambala hotel (Mombasa) bombing in 2002; the Westgate Mall shooting in 2013; Mpeketoni attack in 2014; and the Garissa University attack in 2015. These attacks have led to deaths of thousands of Kenyans and foreigners, escalating the tension between Christians and Muslims. The situation is inflamed by heavy-handed government

security response as this increases the appeal of extremist ideologies (Throup 2015:30).

Whereas Muslims see themselves as discriminated against by the Christian-led government of Kenya, Christians see themselves as vulnerable and targets of ‘Islamic terrorism’, as exemplified by series of attacks on churches, including one in the southern Mombasa suburb of Likoni in 2014 that resulted in the death of multiple church attendants (Deacon et al. 2017). Aden Sheikh Hassan’s study on the interrelationship between Muslims and Christians determined that terrorism is straining the relations between the two, and increasing the mutual level of mistrust and suspicion (Aden 2009).

In Hassan’s study, when asked whether they based their relationship on terrorist-related activities, both Christian and Muslim respondents said they did. This indicates that they think terrorism affects how they choose to relate with one another. It may also indicate that the two groups are suspicious of each other, especially on issues that relate to terrorism (Aden 2009). The study shows that most of the respondents, Christians and Muslims, think that terrorism damages relations between them (Aden 2009).

On the question of the causes of terrorism, the study by Hassan Aden found that most Christians believe that there are religious provisions in Islam that perpetuate terrorism. This might be the reason why Christians are suspicious of Muslims on issues of terrorism and the resulting mistrust between the groups (Aden 2009). Muslims, conversely, pointed to aspects such as a sense of personal and collective alienation, humiliation, deprivation, victimization and discrimination as a cause of terror (Aden 2009).

Mwangi’s study mentioned earlier suggests that Christian-Muslim relations do reflect a cyclic movement: a terrorist attack is usually followed by a heavy-handed response by the police that involves beatings and allegedly torturous investigative methods, resulting in revenge attacks by mostly Muslim youths by way of burning churches; and the circle begins

again (Mwangi 2014). Two examples here highlight this fact. Following the death of Aboud Rogo, a radical Muslim preacher, allegedly killed by police officers in August 2012, Muslim youths burned down the Salvation Army church in Mombasa. Two police officers and a civilian were also killed in Mombasa by Muslim rioters following the killing of Rogo (Akwiri 2013), who had been suspected of helping Islamist militants in Somalia. A similar event happened in 2013 when Muslims burnt a church, killing four people after the killing of another Islamic cleric, Sheikh Ibrahim Omar (Akwiri 2013). A number of Muslims believed the cleric was killed by Police (Akwiri 2013).

The above examples show the cyclic nature of terrorism and the reactions it elicits—from Christians, the government’s heavy-handed response, and from Muslims (usually youths)—which has inflamed Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. In the above case, the Mombasa Church Forum, a Christian umbrella body that brings together mainline and emerging Churches, held a meeting at which it demanded an apology from the ‘Muslim leadership’ for the burning of the church, and called for (unspecified) government action, declaring that ‘enough is enough’ (Deacon et al. 2017).

Concerning governmental response to acts of terrorism, reports from Amnesty International (Amnesty International 2005) and the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ 2006) have consistently shown that in the aftermath of the *Kikambala* bombings the subsequent arrests and intimidation of Muslims resulted in an environment of fear amongst Muslims in the Coast Province. The heavy-handed response by the government on acts of terrorism has pushed some moderates to be sympathetic to extremists. It has been noted that the situation has been made worse by the fact that reformist and revivalist influences within both religions are connecting with followers in a way that political and traditional leaders have not (particularly among long-aggrieved Muslim communities on the coast); this trend, along with heavy-handed

government security tactics, may increase the appeal of extremist ideologies (Throup 2015:30).

The literature on Christian-Muslim relations in Kenya demonstrates that the situation is a complex one. Beside religious affiliations, age and gender also plays a vital role in defining Christian-Muslim relations. In her PhD dissertation, Anne Nkirote Kubai investigated Muslim presence and representations of Islam among the Meru people of Kenya in the twentieth century. She established that close ties between Muslims and non-Muslims are frowned upon as this may jeopardise a person's faith (Kubai 1995). Her methodology entailed asking 43 randomly chosen informants (24 women and 19 men) who their friends were under the following possible categories: Muslim neighbours; non-Muslim neighbours; and non-Muslims outside Meru town. She found that thirteen (68%) of the men interviewed said that they have friends among fellow Muslims regardless of whether they are within or without Majengo; and six (31%) have non-Muslim friends who are neighbours or clients. Twenty (83%) of the women said that their friends were fellow Muslims, while 4 (16%) of them had friends among non-Muslim neighbours (Kubai 1995). Her study also found out that even though on the whole, Muslims prefer to make friends with fellow Muslims, this is truer of older men and women, while younger people are more inclined to make friends with non-Muslims (Kubai 1995). She attributes the openness of men to have friendship with non-Muslims compared to women to the relatively high degree of public exposure to which they are subject in their places of work (Kubai 1995). Although this data may not be representative, given the few people interviewed, it is interesting nonetheless.

Kubai's research is insightful in the sense that instead of a general sweep, it draws a distinction between how different genders and age groups amongst Muslims relate to non-Muslims. This significant difference raises interest in how other categories fare in this respect. In the case of this research project, looking at religious authorities—reflected in 'conservative

and moderate Islam’ and ‘emerging and mainline Christianity’—will help develop a deeper understanding of the holistic dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations.

Literature on Christian-Muslim relations in Kenya and Mombasa, including terrorism

Obviously, leadership is a vital function in shaping perceptions and attitudes towards a different religious group and is a key interest of my study. Christian-Muslim relations in Kenya are significantly shaped by the role of religious leaders. A study by Isaac M Mwangi (Mwangi 2014) examined the critical role that religious leaders and the media play in fomenting conflict between Christians and Muslims. According to this study, whereas Muslim leaders have been vocal in condemning attacks against Churches, this is not reciprocated by Christian leaders and Christians are often silent on issues affecting Muslims (Mwangi 2014). Often, Kenyan Christian political leaders engage in negative rhetoric that sets Christians and Muslims against each other. President Moi’s assertion that the Muslim perpetrators of the 1998 bombing of USA embassy in Nairobi would not have done so if they were Christians only muddied the waters in the Christian-Muslim relations. Muslims strongly condemned this assertion (Oded 2000, Mwakimako 2007). Mwangi argues that religious leaders generally have a strong influence on their followers, and it is important that those involved in campaigns for peace between Christians and Muslims should be more focused if they are to counterbalance their more radical counterparts (Mwangi 2014). Hassan Aden’s study has also established that a Church or Mosque is involved in determining what kind of relations to maintain with adherents of the opposite faith (Aden 2009). Christian-Muslim relations in Kenya vary from place to place and from denomination to sect. It is therefore important that this study uses the framework of religious authorities to analyse how different Muslim sects and Christian denominations and organizations have shaped Christian-Muslim relationships in Mombasa through their

leadership roles and styles.

No study has been conducted to explore role of denominations/sects or the nature of religious authority in shaping Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa specifically. There is a need for research that looks at different expressions of Christianity and Islam and the contribution they make to interreligious harmonious co-existence. This research aims to achieve this goal by looking at different religious authorities in both religions, whether in religious organizations or Muslim sects and Christian denominations. The view those religious authorities espouse on ecological conditioning factors (religious, economic, social and political) largely determine whether they are for inflaming tension or quelling it.

It is vital that a study that takes into consideration the different variations of Christianity and Islam is conducted in Mombasa. Livingstone, Keane, and Boal found in their case study of Belfast that religious space is not uniform and that “the monolithising of the Catholic and Protestant communities conceals the rich variety of religious cultures that profoundly influence everyday life in Northern Ireland” (Livingstone, Keane and Boal 1998:145). According to the study, “Catholic and Protestant spaces are themselves far from monochrome. Rather they constitute a diverse array of sites and social spaces within which culture is differentially reproduced” (Livingstone, Keane and Boal 1998:168).

This study intends to address the information gap on the perception of variations of Christian and Islam faith of their social, political, economic and religious ecology and how this shape their relations.

Religious Discrimination in Kenya: Material Differences between Groups

Christian-Muslim relations can thrive or survive in stable social, political, economic and cultural environments. Conversely, adverse conditions can put a strain on relationships or

cause clashes. Christian-Muslim relations go beyond theological and historical differences; there are also material differences that have far-reaching implications for the formulation of images and attitudes of the other religious traditions (Sarbah 2010). Kai Kresse draws the link between material conditions and extremism by stating that

in Mombasa as well as in other coastal towns, economic desperation has led to youths finding themselves between two extreme poles of social life, both imported from the outside and integrated as internal elements of social dynamics: the challenge of political Islamic radicalism and the trap of drug addiction (Kresse 2007:214).

He observes that despite the reality of economic desperation and the pressure to be part of extremists group, the majority of youths do not actively participate in either of these extremes, even though there is danger that the younger members of society might be sympathetic or embrace extremism should socio-economic pressures continue to increase (Kresse 2007).

Muslims in Kenya generally see themselves as discriminated against by both Christians and the Christian-majority government on religious, economic and socio-political issues. Similarly, Christians in Majority-Muslim areas such as North-Eastern Kenya and even areas where both populations are almost at parity see themselves as discriminated against. A number of studies have explored this issue. When addressing the issue of Muslim-Christian relations in Kenya there is a sense that one is looking at Muslim-State relations: the 'State' is easily conflated to mean 'Christian', given the reality that Christians mostly dominate the Kenyan government. In a sense, Christian-Muslim relations are significantly shaped by the Muslim-State relationship. Although there is a clear understanding among many Muslims that the State is different from the Church and although Kenya is formally a secular state, the mostly Christian-dominated government is blamed for policies and actions that impinge on Muslim welfare and growth, seen as enacting Christians' agenda.

Although Muslim civil society organisations engage in interfaith programmes with Christians, radical preachers are more likely to see the Churches as Allies of the Kenyan state, and as a threat to Islam. Moreover:

The prominence in coastal Christianity of people from elsewhere in the country allows Churches to be seen as symbols of the oppression both of Islam and of the coast; explicit hostility to Christianity has grown, contrapuntal to the evangelical Christian denunciations of Islam. Islam has come to provide the principal public space for opposition; but this has made leadership, and its messages, even more fractured and contested (Deacon et al. 2017).

There is almost a consensus among scholars that Muslims are materially discriminated against. It has been accurately argued that

economic as well as political changes are certainly occurring at a rapid pace in modern Kenya, and, as on so many previous occasions on the Kenya coast, this creates further shifts in what is in the end a subjective notion of social strata, in which people try to reconcile differences of wealth and power (Parkin 1989:162).

This can mean that Muslims understand that the economic power of non-Muslims is used to dominate them.

In Mombasa, as well as in other coastal towns, economic desperation has led to youths finding themselves between two extremes, imported from the outside and integrated into local social dynamics: the challenge of political Islamic radicalism and the trap of drug addiction. Most youths do not actively participate in either; rather, they mark the outer limits towards which the younger members of society are likely to be pushed, should socio-economic pressures continue to increase (Kresse 2007:214).

The country's Muslim population—among whom there is a widespread sense of grievance and a perception of political and economic marginalization—is likewise fragmented, transformed by *Salafist* teachings and the infusion of vast sums of money from Saudi Arabia

and Iran, a massive inflow of people fleeing Somalia, and increasing numbers of conversions to Islam in traditionally Christian parts of Kenya (Throup 2015:29). In other words, there is the view that marginalization experienced in Mombasa put Muslims in a vulnerable position that made them easy targets for recruitment by extremists' groups. Some studies have drawn a direct correlation between economic marginalization in Mombasa and the inclination to join extremists' groups (Otieno 2019).

A study by Chembea (2017) points to the issue of land as one aspect where Muslims have been discriminated. He traces this to conversion of *waqf*³ lands that were converted to Crown lands in the 1970s to 1990s and used to reward political loyalty or to settle non-locals, particularly up-country Christians. He observes that this incident epitomizes perceived historical injustices in relation to economic exploitation and political marginalization of the Muslim community by subsequent predominantly Christian regimes (Chembea 2017). He adds that the control and ownership of resources is an emotional, sensitive issue that occasionally flare up into bloody conflict between the predominantly Christian *Bara* people and the Muslim *Pwani* people (Chembea 2017). According to Chembea, State control of *waqf* in Kenya both interfered with Muslim religious practices and is also partly responsible for the present economic and political marginalization and exclusion of Muslims. *Waqf* entry into constant religious, economic, and political negotiation ensured the emergence of independent thinking Muslims who were not afraid to challenge the status quo (Chembea 2017).

Other studies have highlighted further examples of discrimination. A study established that before the 2013 Kenyan election, a number of pastors asked Christians not to vote for Muslim leaders in Mombasa as they were fearful that Muslim leaders would introduce sharia law in the region (Deacon et al. 2017). In another study, it is argued that Christian leaders have

³ An endowment made by a Muslim to a religious, educational, or charitable cause.

engaged in practices such as forbidding Muslim girls to wear the hijab despite directives by the Ministry of Education to allow the scarf in institutions of learning and forcing Christians of varying persuasions as well as members of other religions to attend church services; these practices have driven a wedge between them and Muslims (Mwangi 2014). The same research also stated that Christians in political power have engaged in acts such as inciting people to demonstrate against the construction of a mosque (Mwangi 2014).

Research such as that conducted by Anne Nkirote Kubai have argued that economic and political problems are exploited for religious reasons hence creating tension in Muslim-Christian relations (Kubai 2004). According to Deacon, Christians and Muslims portray themselves as vulnerable, but they conceived the remedy for that in very different ways in the sense that while Christians demand that the Kenyan State should protect them from radical Muslims, Muslims seek to protect themselves from the State (Deacon et al. 2017).

The perception of religious discrimination is prevalent. Mwangi argues that police have religious biases when handling issues to do with criminality. For example, *Mungiki* (a gang mostly constituted by Kikuyu, the most populous tribe in Kenya) from *Bara* peoples are classified as criminals while members of the Mombasa Republican Council from *Pwani* are branded terrorists (Mwangi 2014). Police are often seen by many Muslims as being pro-Christian and anti-Muslims. Police have had to deny that the killings of a number of Muslim clerics is part of a crackdown on Muslims (Akwiri 2013).

An argument of media biases is also made, with suggestions that reporting on religious issues is heavily slanted in favour of Christians and against Muslims and that media coverage does not portray the level of knowledge and sensitivity required (Mwangi 2014). In analysing the conflict between Christians and Muslims in the area of South B, Nairobi, Mwakimako suggests that:

in the reports of the violence associated with the burning of the mosque, the religious identity of the victims was referred to, but not that of the perpetrators. When it came to the burning down of the church, Muslims were held responsible (Mwakimako 2007).

Another study also shows that attacks by Christians on Muslim interests are not reported, as exemplified by the desecration of the mosque at Olkejuado High School and burning of copies of the Qur'an (Mwangi 2014). The reporting of Christian-Muslim issues seems to be skewed towards sensationalized accusations of Muslims (Mwakimako 2007). It is argued that there is open bias against Muslims in the actual reporting of published stories and that in some instances the stories and opinions were actually written by Christian religious clergy (Mwangi 2014).

It has been established that stories portraying Christians and their practices in a positive light far outnumber those directed at Muslims (Mwangi 2014). The idea that this reflects the local market (since the newspaper is expected to make sales in a Christian-majority country) (Mwangi 2014) might make sense but is purely speculative. A study that looks at the media portrayal of Islam and Muslims and how this shapes Christian-Muslim relations concludes that media fosters negative perceptions of Islam and Muslims, resulting in Islamophobia and tension (Thiong'o 2016).

It is apparent from the above studies that there is a feeling of alienation among Muslims and a sense that they are victims of injustice and a system that is rigged against them. It is not known whether there are sects or religious authorities of Islam in Mombasa whose perception of marginalization and discrimination is more pronounced compared to others. There is a scarcity of studies of how different denominations perceive the issue of discrimination. Questions of how 'evangelical' emerging Churches in Mombasa are perceived by the Muslim-dominated County government compared to mainline Churches will be explored in this research. This study will also seek to gain an understanding of the issue of discrimination by

exploring what is happening between Christians and Muslims in schools and workplaces. How interfaith dialogue in Mombasa is addressing the issue of religious marginalization and discrimination will also be examined in this study.

Is Mombasa Radicalising?

As already seen, there is a difference in opinion as to whether Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa are getting better or worse. This section will seek to explore what the literature says about radicalisation in Kenya and by extension, Mombasa. To a large degree, the state of Islam in Kenya reflects its state in Mombasa—the most populous and influential Muslim city in Kenya. There are scholars who are of the opinion that Islam in Kenya is radicalizing and that this trend has manifested itself in the spread of extreme Islamist views, mainly perpetuated by the *Wahhabi* ideology (Agade and Mogire 2011). Other scholars such as Haynes, in an earlier study, found limited support for militancy among Kenyan Muslims and that greater assertiveness or militancy did not represent a shift in Muslim politics or public engagement in the region in general, or in Kenya in particular (Haynes 2005). It is argued that the Kenyan government and Western countries exaggerate the severity of the terrorist threat to put pressure on Kenya to take desired actions and are sometimes based on flawed intelligence (Agade and Mogire 2011). However, the recent series of attacks in Garissa, Nairobi and Mombasa where Christians were killed and Muslims were left unharmed show that there is a brand of Islamic extremism never seen before, the number of Muslims supporting or sympathising it notwithstanding.

Moderate Muslims in Mombasa are also becoming the target of extremists who argue that the moderates have deviated from the truth; in other words, there is hostility toward less reformist Muslims and a shift toward more conservative and radical version of Islam in Mombasa (Goodman 2020:30). This has a direct bearing on Christian-Muslim relations in

Mombasa.

As a result of the complexity brought about by radical Muslims' attacks on mainly Christians and the subsequent heavy-handed response from the government, "prominent Muslims have struggled to strike a balance between distancing themselves from radicalism while condemning state violence—and have attracted fierce criticism for doing so" (Deacon et al. 2017). For example, "In Mombasa, 'moderates' accuse 'radicals' of recruiting for Al-Hijra, while many condemn the silence of Muslim leaders when radical activists are killed or abducted" (Anderson and Mcknight 2014). The existence of diverse Muslim thinking on the issue of terrorism and the impact of this on Christian-Muslim warrants thorough probing.

Numerous articles have described acts of terrorism in Mombasa. The threat of radical groups such as *Al-Shabaab* against moderate Muslim preachers has been clear since 2011, although the implementation of those threats seems to have begun in December 2013, when two men in Malindi were killed for allegedly sharing information with local and international security agencies (Anderson and Mcknight 2014). Sheikh Mohammed Idriss, chairman of the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK) and a campaigner against radicalization and jihadist teachings, was one of the victims, shot through the chest at close range in Mombasa on 10 June 2014—a direct response from *Al-Shabaab* to the activities of the moderates who were engaged in a power struggle with radical Muslims at the Sakina Mosque in Mombasa (Anderson and Mcknight 2014). As a moderate leader, his role in fostering good Christian-Muslim relation was significant. A lack of Kenyan-Muslim leadership has been blamed for radicalisation, and it is suggested that leaders are widely viewed as elitist and self-serving, corrupt and beholden to foreign interests (Hassan 2015).

Leadership is at the core of setting the direction on the issue of terrorism. Without proper leadership, extreme views that are not conducive to interreligious co-existence begin to

emerge. Fathima Azmiya Badurdeen's study on Al Shabaab terrorist recruitment in Kenya from the perspective of social movement theory indicates that radicalization and recruitment of youth have spread to marginal regions of the Swahili Coast, North Eastern and to the major estates of Nairobi (Badurdeen, n.d). The radicalized group is looking for a 'pure' brand of Islam and despises 'mixing' or 'diversity' in its version of Islam.

The events in Somalia, Kenya's neighbouring country to the East, have introduced aspects of radicalism at a scale never known before. The emergence of *Al-Shabaab* has meant that radicalized Kenyans can cross the border and be militarily equipped to attack their targets. The involvement of the Kenyan government and especially the presence of the military means that Kenyan residents are now targets of retaliatory measures by *Al-Shabaab*, as reported in the literature.

Kenya's growing Muslim community is under the political spotlight as never before. Government attempts to address the security threat posed by terrorist group *Al-Shabaab* have tended to target adherents of Islam as a monolithic collective, ignoring their doctrine and ethnic diversity and their multiple, legitimate sources of grievance. The government's muddled response has compounded a long-standing perception among Muslims that they are treated as second-class citizens. Paradoxically, the government's failure to discriminate between the large Muslim mainstream and the small number of extremists is the most likely impetus for greater support for extremism across the country's diverse Muslim communities (Throup 2015:39).

Beyond Kenya

Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa do not exist in a vacuum and are driven by regional and global forces. Studies of Sub-Sahara Africa are especially useful given the proximity and interdependence of countries in this region. The Pew Research Centre found that inter-religious

conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa is seen in many countries as less of a problem than unemployment, crime or political corruption. However, in a few countries, including Nigeria, Rwanda, Djibouti and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, roughly half or more of the populations say religious conflict is a very big problem (PewForum 2010, p. 37). There is more concern about Muslim extremism compared to Christian extremism (PewForum 2010, p. 38).

It is noteworthy that according to the findings of the Pew study, Muslims in Christian dominated countries see more common ground between the two faiths compared to their Christian counterparts (PewForum 2010, p. 40). Generally, Christians and Muslims give credit to their governments for treating both religious groups equally (PewForum 2010, p. 41). However, in Christian-dominated countries more Muslims than Christians say that Muslims are sometimes treated unfairly by the government (PewForum 2010, p. 41).

The Pew research in Sub-Saharan Africa shows that on the whole, “Most people do not perceive widespread hostility between Christians and Muslims in their country” (PewForum 2010, p. 42) (apart from those countries noted above). Similarly, Muslims tend to view Christians as tolerant, honest and respectful of women. In most countries half or more of Christians say Muslims are honest, devout and respectful of women. Majorities of people say they trust people who have religious values different than their own. Significant minorities (20% or more) of those who attend religious services say their mosque or church works across religious lines to solve community problems. Similar numbers of people also report involvement in interfaith dialogue (PewForum 2010, p. 36). Fewer than half of respondents in most countries surveyed perceive widespread anti-Muslim or anti-Christian hostility in their countries, and most give their governments generally high marks for treating both groups fairly (PewForum 2010, p. 36). Tellingly, the Pew research shows that “neither group knows much about the other, and significantly more people in most countries say the two religions are very

different than say the two faiths have a lot in common”. (PewForum 2010, p. 37). This broader idea – that different faiths get along – is common in Mombasa. As is shown later, this does not match the reality.

Beyond the Pew research, other scholars have looked at regional aspects of Christian-Muslim relations. Lissi Rasmussen examined Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria and Tanzania, and finds that relations there are driven “partly by socio-economic conditions and political aims, and partly by the openness in the traditional African religious outlook” (Rasmussen 1993, p. 110). According to her, African values are stabilising agents of inter-religious tensions between Christians and Muslims, mostly caused by western influences and political motives.

The data in this study suggest that it is both local and global forces impacting on Christian-Muslim relations.

A Conceptual Framework for explaining and understanding Christian-Muslim relations

The previous literature review reveals that historical, political, economic, cultural, social and religious factors are important aspects conditioning Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. In particular, religious understandings of others and attitudes to interreligious relations are shaped by leadership structures and sources of religious authority. The literature review suggests that an ‘emic’ ecological model could best explain interreligious relations in Mombasa rather than a single, abstract theory. Too many factors are at play for one overarching theory to explain all the dynamics: economic hardships strain Christian-Muslim relations, as do unresolved historical grievances; discriminative policies create a sense amongst Muslims that they are the target of marginalization; cultural and racial differences foment division

between groups. Additionally, religious authority provides a lens through which traditions view each other. This places religious authority and religious meanings as factors that critically shape how different groups see reality and behave towards one another.

Consequently, this research is adopting two interrelated theoretical frameworks: an ecological framework that explains tension and violence as a series of interdependent factors, and Weber's theory of religious authority (as adapted by Gary Bouma). An ecological framework (WHO 2002) is relevant given the fact that Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa have, unfortunately, been characterized by violence and acts of aggressions. Additionally, the complexity of the different sects of Christianity and Islam and the way they are all different in organization and attitude towards members of a different religion makes Gary Bouma's theory of religious authority relevant. Is there relation between violence and religious authority? Is there an intersection between religious authority and the ecological conditioning factors?

An Ecological Model for Understanding Interreligious Violence

There is consensus among scholars that violence is caused by multiple factors as opposed to singular causes. This shift comes on the back of enormous data consistently showing that several factors combined can predict violence level of a given group or segment of society. This became clear after the World Health Organization report of 2002, a product of three years of work by more than 160 experts from more than 70 countries and regional consultations held in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East (WHO 2002). The report came up with the ecological framework as a model of understanding violence.

This model was originally conceived to explain interpersonal violence (especially against women), but it has proved helpful in understanding other patterns of violence. The

ecological framework postulates that no single factor can explain why some people or groups are at higher risk of interpersonal violence, while others are more protected from it. The diagram below best captures an ecological model for understanding gendered violence, but it can readily explain religious violence.

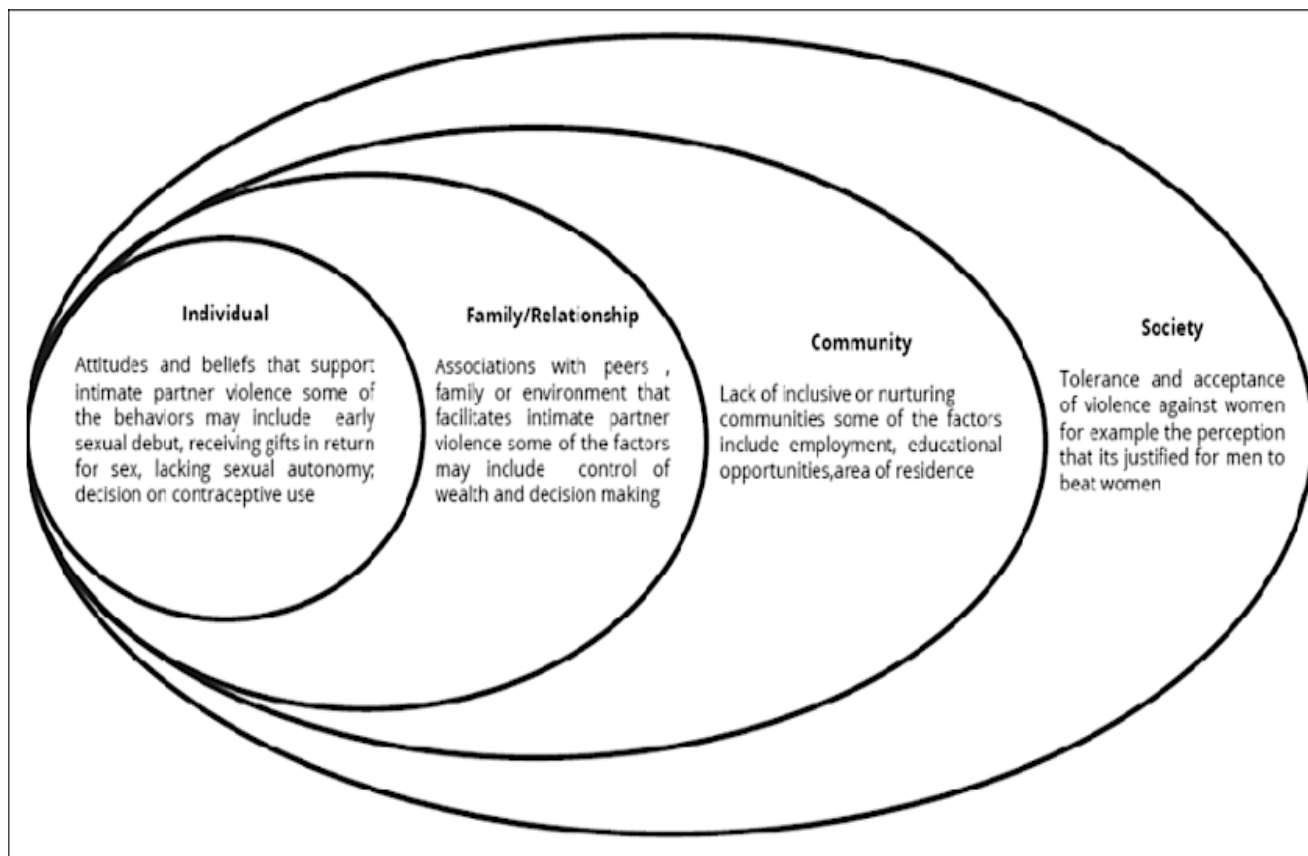


Figure 1.1: Ecological Framework (World Health Organization 2002)

According to this framework, interpersonal violence is a result of the interaction of multiple factors at the individual, relationship, community, and societal levels (WHO 2002:12). To represent the complexity of violence, the World Health Organization report uses an ecological model with four levels (WHO 2002:12-16). At the individual level, personal history and biological factors shape individual’s behaviour and the likelihood of becoming a victim or a perpetrator of violence. Child maltreatment, psychological or personality disorders, alcohol and/or substance abuse and a history of behaving aggressively or having experienced abuse increases likelihood of violence. Similarly, personal relationships such as family, friends,

intimate partners and peers may influence the risks of becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence. Community contexts such as schools, neighbourhoods, workplaces and the risk factors such as unemployment, population density, mobility and the existence of a local drug or gun trade influence the risk of violence. Finally, societal factors such as economic and social policies that maintain socioeconomic inequalities between people, the availability of weapons, and social and cultural norms such as those around male dominance over women, parental dominance over children and cultural norms that endorse violence as an acceptable method to resolve conflicts shape risks to violence (WHO 2002:13).

Although the different levels are vital in understanding the issue of violence or aggression, this research will especially focus on the societal factors (which include religion and religious authority) and how this affects Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. As the diagram points out, violence can be exacerbated either by tolerance or justification of it. Are there groups in Mombasa that tolerate, are indifferent to, or seek to justify violence against members of the other religion?

The religious causes of violence at societal level in Mombasa manifest in the form of terrorism activities such as burning of churches, killing of clerics or aggressive opposition to the other religion, and adoption or support of policies that hurt its members. Investigation of policies of exclusion will be pursued in religious, social, economic and political spheres.

In this research, and as explained in the introduction, the different groups that shape societal attitude and responses are seen from this point of view: the mainline Churches and the emerging Churches; moderate Islam and conservative Islam. These groups have different ways of perceiving and responding to economic, social, religious and political challenges that face Mombasa. An ecological framework is vital in giving us understanding of those perceptions and responses.

The high level of unemployment amongst youths in Mombasa, the influence of Al Shabaab terrorist organization and other extremists' groups in terms of their beliefs and teachings, male dominant culture, the inequality between *Bara* and *Pwani* people and other conditioning variables in Mombasa are suggestive of an ecological framework as a good lens to analyse the Christian-Muslim relations in the city. The ecological model can also be used as a framework for violence prevention by acting across several different levels at the same time with programmes focusing on individuals, families, community-based efforts and societal approaches (WHO 2002:16).

One weakness of this theoretic framework is that in its design, the focus is on other forms of violence and not necessarily religious-related violence. This means that it does not fully capture the entirety of religiously instigated violence. However, it is hard to dispute that there are parallels between the conditioning factors of other forms of violence and the religious ones. A study has found that an ideology advocating violence usually was derived from parent congregations; it may be learned independently from most other characteristics of an overall belief system, and be shaped by congregationally inherited economic and political factors, rather than by theology (Matthews 2013).

There are a number of reasons why this research has opted for the ecological framework championed by the WHO. Firstly, Mombasa is known for its diversity and every group in this diverse setting has unique needs and grievances. It does no justice to the different groups to attribute a one-size fit all approach when addressing the issues of the relations between people. Secondly, Christians in Mombasa have been concerned about the issue of violence that is meted against them. Similarly, as the literature review has revealed, Muslims have expressed frustration at what they consider as continuous aggression against them by Christians through agencies such as the police force. A framework such as the ecological framework that addresses

the issue of violence helps explain a number of issues on the relations. Thirdly, it has correctly been pointed out that Christians and Muslims coexist in shared social spaces and are usually “exposed to the same societal and political conditions” (Beekers 2019). As such, studies of Muslims and Christians interacting together in a given ecology expand our understanding of the entire society (Beekers 2019).

Part of the ecological model is religion. Religion in Mombasa is largely driven by leaders who are vested with enormous religious authority. A number of instances of religious violence have taken place in Mombasa in the recent past and this is largely determined by the kind of environment one is exposed to in terms of teachings and influence by religious leaders. Religious leaders in Mombasa are extremely influential and they do create an environment that encourages peace and harmonious co-existence or division and violence against other religious groups. The social and cultural norms might inspire, justify or legitimize acts of religious violence or prevent violence—that is religion, and religious meaning (Singleton 2014). Meaning is known to come from authority.

The WHO model is relevant in the context of Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa as it makes clear that no single factor explains why some individuals behave violently toward others or why violence is more prevalent in some communities than in others. As such, the WHO model demonstrates that violence is the result of the complex interplay of individual, relationship, social, cultural and environmental factors (WHO 2002: 13). It is known that understanding how these factors are related to violence is an important step in preventing violence (WHO 2002: 13).

It is clear from the literature review that how groups in Mombasa act towards one another is shaped by multiple factors that are economic, political and religious in nature. Poor economies exacerbate conflicts between rival groups; toxic political discourse creates schisms

between diverse religious groups; intolerant religious views stifle opportunity for interreligious dialogue. The WHO model offers a way of conceptualising this interdependence.

The focus of this research is especially on the larger societal factors that influence violence. I examine factors “that create an acceptable climate for violence, those that reduce inhibitions against violence, and those that create and sustain gaps between different segments of society – or tensions between different groups” (WHO 2002: 13). Some levels of the WHO are not part of the analysis in this thesis, especially those at the individual psychological level or the level of families. This is social research that is more concerned about social interactions between groups and smaller relations were beyond the scope of this work.

Religious Authority: A Weberian Framework

The focus now turns to the second theoretic framework—the theory of religious authority as advanced by Gary Bouma (Bouma 1992), drawing on the work of Weber (Weber 1963). In this research, religious authority is defined as the ideologies and theologies used by religious leaders and organizations to legitimise beliefs, practices and actions. This section will look at what theory of religious authority entails and how it is relevant to Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa.

Religious authority is characterized by “the ability to have one’s rules and rulings followed, or obeyed, without recourse to coercive power” (Kramer and Schmidt 2006:1; see also Dabashi 1989). Equally important is the idea that

a religious authority structure [is] a social structure that attempts to enforce its order and reach its ends by controlling the access of individuals to some desired goods, where the legitimation of that control includes some supernatural component, however weak (Chaves 1994:755-756).

In this case, it is safe to argue that those authorities with weak or no structures will resort to coercive power. In this study, this coercive power might range from simple actions such as lack of cooperation with members of the other religious group to extreme ones such as acts of terrorism against those disagreed with.

How religious texts and traditions are interpreted and by whom is also at the core of the differences amongst different religious groups. Religious authority is located in people like pastors, and expressed in rituals, myths, and sacred texts and experienced by people in relation to the sacred (Cloete 2016). In Christianity, religious authority is viewed in at least four diverse ways: the authority of God, the authority of sacred texts, the authority of the church/denomination, and the authority of church leaders (Smith 2013). In this sense, religious authority is understood by studying four aspects of it: religious hierarchy; religious texts; religious structures; and religious ideology (Campbell 2007). Consequently, this research will grapple with the connection between the type of religious authority and a group's role in peace-making and harmonious relations. For example, does a strong religious hierarchy among Mainline Churches in Mombasa produce a calming effect when engaging with Muslim groups? Conversely, does a weak religious hierarchy or lack of training in religious texts that is characteristic in emerging and charismatic churches inflame tensions with Muslims? Similar connections between type of religious authority and recourse to coercive force will be examined both in Mainline Islam and radical Muslim groups in Mombasa.

Those with religious authority are able to not only define correct belief and practice (or orthodoxy and orthopraxy, respectively) but also to shape and influence the views and conduct of others. Furthermore, they are to identify, marginalize, punish or exclude deviance, heresy and apostasy and their agents and advocates. Similarly, they have the power to compose and define the canon of "authoritative" texts and the legitimate methods of interpretation

(Kramer and Schmidt 2006). More broadly,

a religious authority structure [is] a social structure that attempts to enforce its order and reach its ends by controlling the access of individuals to some desired goods, where the legitimation of that control includes some supernatural component, however weak (Chaves 1994:755-756).

Religious authority is often conceptualized in an institutional structure and mostly tends to centre on official systems or hierarchical power structures (Campbell 2007).

According to a Weberian framework, different Christian traditions have a way to justify their theologies. The theory of religious authority shows that different styles of church approach the question of authority differently. Mainline Churches are very different to emerging Churches. Bouma's (1992) explication of Weber's theory brings new nuances to understanding the nature of religious authority. Modelled on Max Weber's forms of authority, Bouma's theory locates different forms of authorities on different types of Christian organizations, namely: Traditional authority and episcopal organisation; Rational-legal authority and Presbyterian organisation; Charismatic authority and congregational authority. Below is Bouma's diagram on religious authority.

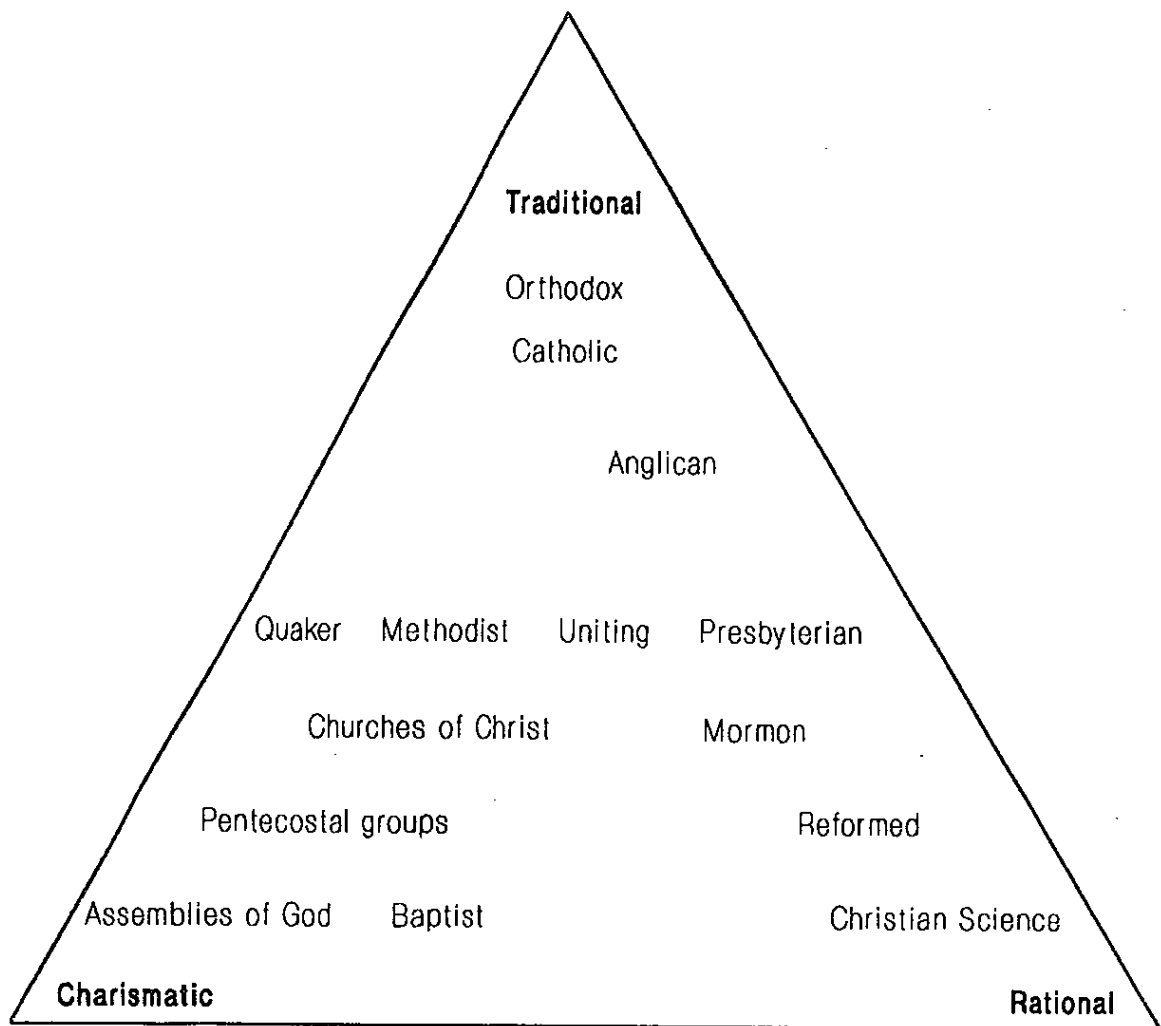


Figure 1.2. Gary Bouma's Diagram on Religious Authority (Bouma 1992:82)

According to Bouma, traditional authority is frequently found in episcopal, ecclesiastical organisations such as Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox (Bouma 1992:75). In the ideal type of traditional episcopal organisation, the ultimate power and authority are vested in Bishops who serve in an immemorial tradition. Conflict is resolved by reference to tradition, to persons who hold office by virtue of being invested with the right and power to do so. Rational-legal authority is often found in Protestant traditions and this form of authority emphasises 'reason' as a determinant of correct interpretation of the sacred texts and of right belief (Bouma 1992:75). Decisions are made by majority vote after careful consideration of theological and biblical basis for several courses of action. In this study, this might mean that several leaders weigh in on a decision that if not properly considered might lead to conflict

with members of the other religion. Charismatic authority makes decisions on what is interpreted as the 'will of God.' Under Charismatic authority, leadership is accepted, a doctrine believed, and a course of action adopted because they feel right and evoke a positive emotional response (Bouma 1992:78). In this study, this might mean a leader making decisions based on feelings, which results in serious tension of members of the other religion.

This research found mainline Churches such as Catholic and the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) have traditional forms of authority, Churches such as the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) have a rational-legal type of authority, while most Pentecostal and emerging churches have charismatic and congregational authority. These Churches have different priorities and how they go about pursuing them. The forms of Church authority as advanced by Bouma are critical in this research in analysing how different authorities engage with Muslims and Islam in Mombasa. In other words, this research explores how traditional, legal-rational and charismatic authority shape Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa.

So far, this model of religious authority is Christian-centric. However, as pointed by Campbell,

When it comes to Islam, Max Weber's theory is faced with the challenge that Islam does not necessarily have a prescribed leadership structure—rather the emphasis is on the pre-eminence of the word. This is different to other forms of Religious authority that are often conceptualized in an institutional structure and mostly tends to centre on official systems or hierarchical power structures (Campbell 2007:1043-1062).

Just like Churches are diverse and religious authority is exercised differently, so is Islam. Different Islamic organizations differ on their beliefs about different issues, and they all have ways of justifying their position. For example:

The distinction between Salafism and Sufism is one of the most basic in Sunni Islam ... Salafism is behaviourally oriented. For Salafis, Islam is primarily the performance of rituals defined by Shari'ah as obligatory or

recommended, and the regulation of social behaviour. Many, though not all, Sufis share these concerns but are also concerned with cultivation of spiritual states and the development of an experiential relationship with God. Many, though not all, Sufis approach God through the intercession of religious leaders and saints. Salafis maintain that nothing should stand between people and God. These differences are rarely reconcilable. Both Sufism and Salafism are diverse traditions with deep roots in Islamic scripture and history (Woodward 2013:60).

There are other reasons that makes the application of religious authority in Islam more complicated than in Christianity. One such reason is that Islamic authority is structured in a non-hierarchical and decentralized manner and therefore, it is “largely defined by the dynamics of a free market of religion” (Yildirim 2019:8). It is also argued that in Islam, there is a lower level of institutionalization and thus religious authority is more diffuse and associated with Imams, Muftis, Preachers, and Intellectuals. Since there is no centralized hierarchical institution to establish the orthodoxy for its adherents,

the fundamental religious texts are in need of interpreters who wield authority. This necessity constitutes the primary reason why we frequently hear of “right” or “wrong” interpretations of the Qur’an, especially as it relates to extremist fringes. Islamists of various traditions continually refer to the Qur’an and the hadith (prophetic sayings) to justify their political positions and to wield religious authority in support of their political campaigns (Yildirim 2019:9).

It has been observed that in the absence of an officially sanctioned set of religious actors to exclusively claim religious authority, God and the Prophet embody the “authoritative center” in Islam (Kersten and Olsson 2013:10). Further, in *Sunni* Islam, there are not usually formal initiations into the “priesthood” or religious leadership, as is the case in Protestantism, Catholicism, and Shia Islam (Turner 2007:119). The absence of a centralized hierarchical institution means that following a religious authority in Islam is “entirely voluntary”; individual Muslims cannot be compelled to accept the religious authority of a person, body, or institution—it is an “individual decision” (Kersten and Olsson 2013:8). Just like Bouma’s categorisation of Rational-Legal Authority, in Islam,

The real power in the mosque is not in the hands of the Imam but of the organising committee or, if the mosque belongs to a larger association (such as Milli Görüş or Diyanet), the executive board of that association (Van Bruinessen 2003).

In this sense, Islam is like the way Presbyterian Church authority functions. On the other hand, the charismatic nature of Shi'ism in Islam makes it fit well under the charismatic authority umbrella in Bouma's theory. Moreover, it has been argued that the role of Sunni caliphs and Muslim rulers more generally in setting the boundaries of legitimate expressions of the faith is similar to those played by Catholic Pope and Bishops, as they not only enjoy wide-ranging powers in organizing the judicial sphere within their realm, allowing them to privilege specific schools of law (and theology) to patronize individual scholars, but they are also able to intervene "in dogmatic issues, formulating creeds and attempting to enforce them" (Kramer and Schmidt 2006:11). They are also "concerned with defining and defending correct belief and practice (orthodoxy and orthopraxy), and by the same token, preventing heresy and apostasy, and not necessarily as mere executioners only, lending their sword to the men of the pen" (Kramer and Schmidt 2006:11). In this sense, following Bouma's Weberian framework, they fall in the category of traditional authority and episcopal organisation.

The issue of religious authority is made more complex amongst Muslims in Mombasa given the diverse factors at play that sometimes pull in different directions. Race, ethnicity or clan, economic disparity and age differences all play a role in defining religious authority and the interreligious relations that go with it.

It has to be noted that communication and information technology has also shifted Islamic authority to impersonal sources, such as Internet, TV, books, magazines and CDs, resulting in religious authority becoming more diffused and differentiated over time (Jinan 2012). The reality of this 'other sources' of religious authority demonstrate the difficulty of viewing religious authority in a binary manner—mainline Churches or emerging Churches,

conservative or moderate Muslims. The influence of other emerging sources of religious authority means that traditional ones are influenced either positively or negatively in ways unimagined in the past.

How is this theoretical model applied empirically? How does it structure the approach to the research? I am interested in two levels: the community and the organisational, and the data I collected explores these two things. At the first level of analysis, I examine the religious beliefs and practices of the different communities in Mombasa. The second level of analysis is the social organisation of faith. In this case, Christian and Muslim groups are analysed in terms of its organisational structure, beliefs and patterns of worship (Bouma 1992:28).

The translation of Weber and Bouma's theories to the Kenyan context is justified because the different religious authority structures are found in the diverse religious groups in Mombasa. That said, there are potential shortcomings associated with the translation of Weber and Bouma's theories to this context. First, the expressions of religious authorities in Kenya and Mombasa are modified and shaped by cultural and social issues that are local and unique and therefore may not perfectly capture the model anticipated by both Weber and Bouma. For example, the animosity between *Bara* and *Pwani* people might colour how traditional and charismatic authorities operate. Second, the introduction of parallel religious authorities such as online sources might add another dimension to how groups operate. Nonetheless, there are sufficient resonances between the Kenyan context and this theoretical framework to justify using it to analyse the impact of socio-cultural context and sources and types of religious authorities.

There are benefits of using the Weberian theoretical approach. It is known that all formal organisations use some form of authority to order the parts of the organisations into an integrated whole, to settle disputes and to direct the activities of the organisation (Bouma

1992:75). Settling disputes and organising activities is precisely what is happening in Mombasa. Weber did not include Islam in his formulation, and this is a big part of interreligious relations in Mombasa. This thesis mostly analyses Christian groups using the Weberian framework, although I have mentioned above where Muslim groups might fit on that schema. This represents a novel extension of Weber's approach, although one that would benefit from further exploration in future research.

Religious Authority and Ecological Framework Combined

The interest of this research is to introduce different religious authorities and how they respond to 'ecological conditions' prevailing in Mombasa. This has implications for how each group contributes to Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. Below is a diagram that captures the different conditioning factors, how different religious authorities respond to them and how this impact on Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa.

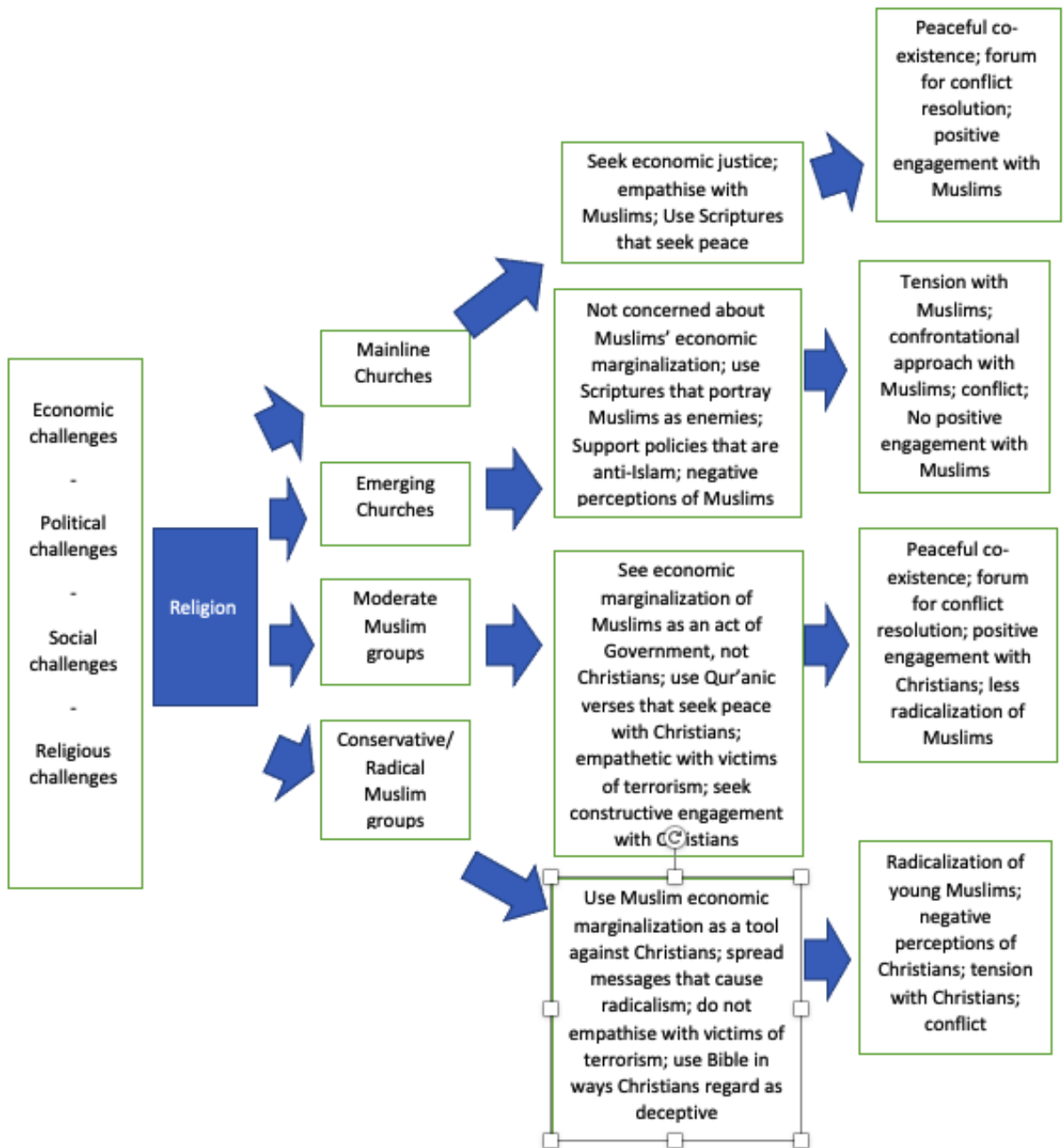


Figure 1.3: Religious authority—Ecological Framework Combined

The issue of religious authority is very important in this research as a tool of analysis. For example, it has been noted that *Al-Shabaab* is finding increasingly fertile ground for its narrative in Mombasa and that the city, amongst other coastal towns, has witnessed the growth of *jihadi* elements among young Arabs, Swahili, Mijikenda and Bajuni (Throup 2015). The reason given for this is that Salafist teachings are taking roots in this region and with them an entrenching of conservative movements (Throup 2015). This trend could mean that a number

of Muslims are finding ways to justify *Jihad* (or war) against *Kaffir*. A change in religious authority in this case means deterioration in Christian-Muslim relations as Salafist view Christians as being responsible for the vices in Mombasa (Throup 2015). This framework also explains instances of some Muslim groups developing a strategy of establishing authority (and of delegitimizing others') by way of a frontal attack on some established practice (Van Bruinessen 2003). It has been noted that religious leaders with traditional authority and episcopal organization have condemned pluralism, liberalism and secularism (As'ad 2009) and this impacts on interreligious relations.

Most Kenyan Muslims, including those of African, Arab, and South Asian origin, are Sunni, with a strong Sufi influence. Traditionally, Islam in Kenya has been syncretic, incorporating elements of African traditional beliefs. Most of the key imams until recent years were of Arab origin, and Arab and Asian elites dominated the leading mosques and the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) until the 1990s (Throup 2015). The syncretic nature of Islam in Mombasa means that religious authority is heavily influenced by cultural and traditional issues. It has been argued that suspicion of Arab influence by indigenous African groups such as the Mijikenda has so far prevented *Salafism* and its *jihadi* extremist wing from making major inroads into the coast's African communities, although this is beginning to change because of disquiet over the government's harsh counterterrorist strategy (Throup 2015).

The theory of religious authority in this study tests the assumption that there is a strong correlation between varieties of Muslim thought and violent tendencies. In this study, the focus is on moderate and conservative Muslims. Different schools of thought in Islam are categorised as moderate or conservative. For example, *Salafism* holds conservative ways of interpreting certain scriptures, which is why it is often associated with intolerance and violence (manifested

in acts such as terrorism). Based on their conservative values, this study considers it conservative. On the other hand, *Sufism* holds teaching and practices associated with nonviolence and therefore this study groups it under the category of moderate Muslims.

The debate about the perception of violence nature of Sunni (Salafism and other) and tolerance nature of Shiite (Sufism and others) has raged with some scholars such as Mark Woodward, Muhammad Sani Umar, Inayah Rohmaniyah, and Mariani Yahya using historical and contemporary cases in Southeast Asia and West Africa to argue that these assumptions are baseless (Woodward 2013). Other studies show that traditionalist *salafism* promotes a literal and exclusivist interpretation of the Qur'an, the Prophetic *sunnah* and Islamic law (Saada 2018) that results in violence and acts of terrorism against those they do not agree with. However, it is important to point out that teaching can vary within each group; for example, there are Salafi members that criticize the modern oppositional and revolutionary methods enacted by other Salafi factions, e.g., political Islamists, as being at odds with the Prophetic *sunnah* and the righteous Salafi (Wiktorowicz 2006). According to them, those who commit acts of terrorism are not only un-Islamic, but are evil people who misuse scripture to achieve their evil objectives (Ali 2019). In Mombasa, it seems that the issue of violence and intolerance characterise Sunni conservative groups (Wahhabis) and that even Shiite, regarded as moderates, are victims of their extremism (Goodman 2020:30).

The issue of religious authority among Muslims in Mombasa presents dilemmas on Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. Firstly, there is a struggle for legitimacy and the struggle for authority within each religious population, and that what Shiite might regard as a religious authority might not be regarded as such by Sunni and vice versa (Takim 2006). Secondly, just like there are mainline and emerging Churches, there are both conservative and moderate Muslims in Mombasa. Their leadership and interpretation of authority are different.

They therefore can hardly devise a common approach for engaging Christians. A similar distinction applies to the latter, as both the mainline Churches and emerging Churches can hardly present a united approach of engaging with Muslims.

There is tendency in the public mind to look at a place like Mombasa and think of it simply in terms of Christian versus Muslim, in competition for adherents, authority and power. This characterisation misses the diverse expressions of these faiths and how there are myriads of social, political, economic and religious considerations at play in this context.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at previous studies of and commentary on interreligious relations in Kenya and, where available, Mombasa. For the most part, there are few local studies of Mombasa, with much of the research looking at Kenya in general. This literature review shows how important it is to not treat either Islam or Christianity as homogenous religious groups. This leads to a binary approach that fails to capture the diversity in both religions.

Secondly, the sparse literature that has looked at the diverse nature of Christianity and Islam in Mombasa often paints Sunni school of thoughts as responsible for terrorism and radicalism of the region. On the other hand, Shiite sects are portrayed as tolerant and good for peace. By implication, this view erroneously advances the view that Sunnis are responsible for the worsening Christian-Muslim relations while Shiites are responsible for improving it. The complex layers of factors, including the role of the internet, means that such conclusions are simplistic. Similarly, the sparse literature available also tends to advance the idea that mainline Churches are peaceful and responsible for cordial relations with Muslims, while emerging Churches are intolerant and cause toxic relations. Whereas there might be some elements of

truth to this, the whole terrain of Christian-Muslim relations is more complex than this.

The available literature presents conflicting views about the state of Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa and Kenya. On one hand, there is literature that presents Mombasa as a “model city” where there is peaceful interreligious co-existence between Christians and Muslims, as opposed to places like Nigeria where interreligious conflict is a common occurrence. On the other hand, other literature presents the city as “under siege” from extremists. Indeed, the subject of terrorism in Mombasa is a common theme for literature that seeks to paint it as experiencing a deterioration in Christian-Muslim relations.

Interestingly, a third view in literature also emerges that entertains the idea that the optimism about cordial Muslim–Christian relations is exaggerated, just as the issue of terrorism is, for political reasons. It is likely that Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa are dynamic and ever-changing, constantly in flux, and their stability should not be taken for granted (Mwakimako 2007). My study will hopefully clarify the current state of relations, offering the opportunity to probe further into these diverse views.

Fourthly, there is consensus in this literature review that Muslims in Mombasa are discriminated against. However, there is glaring gap as to how the diverse expressions of Islam and Christianity in Mombasa perceive and respond to this discrimination. It is hoped that this study will address this gap.

I have adopted two theoretic frameworks as lenses through which to view this study: the Religious Authority framework developed by Gary Bouma and an Ecological Framework developed by the WHO. Bouma’s theory locates different forms of authority as representing different types of Christian organizations, namely: traditional authority and episcopal organisation; rational-legal authority and presbyterian organisation; charismatic authority and congregational authority. This study will explore issues such as whether the lack of theological

training among certain groups makes it easy to advance teachings that create tension with other religious groups. Christian and Islamic religious authorities respond differently to religious differences, political discrimination, social exclusion and economic marginalization.

The ecological model was developed by World Health Organization and advances the idea that violence is a result of interaction of multiple factors at the individual, the relationship, the community, and the societal levels (WHO 2002:12). This model will be applied in examining how Christians and Muslims in Mombasa get into conflict and how they manage it. The role of religious authorities in calming or inflaming those conflicts will also be investigated.

The framework of religious authority and the ecological framework will together guide analysis of the data that this research generates. Which Christian and Muslim organisations in Mombasa are contributing to the harmonious co-existence of the two encompassing religious traditions (or to division and intolerance between them), and what are their sources of authority? Does the type of religious authority a church or mosque belong to determine interreligious relations in Mombasa? How does a given Christian denomination or Muslim sect perceive and respond to social, political, economic and religious challenges? These questions will be investigated in this study.

Chapter 2: Research Methods

Introduction

My research project needed several qualitative methodologies to properly explore a multi-faceted, complex problem. This chapter will explore the data collection methods, which included in-depth one-on-one interviews, focus group meetings, participant observation (informal conversations; photography) and some additional archival research. The data collection took place during the fieldwork period in Mombasa between June and August 2018.

A qualitative approach was adopted in this research as it offered a suitable avenue to understand details of the Christian-Muslim relations in a way that a quantitative approach could not. In this chapter, I describe the nature of the interviews as well as the informants and the criteria for their inclusion in my project. I also look at ethical issues that arose in conducting this research. Finally, I look at how the data will be analysed. My positioning as a researcher on this subject is made clear at the end of the chapter.

In-depth Interviews

This entire study has a non-random, purposive sample design. It was designed specifically to examine in-depth Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. Since most decisions that affect these relations are made by religious leaders, data from them formed a vital part of this research. The interview sample design for this project thus sought to include people affiliated with both Islam and Christianity, all of whom were living in Mombasa. To understand how different denominations of Christianity or sects of Islam engage in Christian-Muslim relations in the city, I created a 'sample frame' that sought participants from Mainline Churches (e.g., Catholic; Anglican, Lutheran), emerging churches (e.g., African independent;

Pentecostal and Charismatic), moderate Islam and conservative Islam. Loose gender targets were applied and achieved so that there would be sufficient balance in the sample.

Several influential informants interviewed are part of an interfaith group that seeks harmonious co-existence between people of different religious faith. An investigation of the history, structure, composition, mission and vision of Mombasa Interfaith, The Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC), provided invaluable data that is useful in both understanding the causes of conflict between Christians and Muslims in Mombasa and solutions that this body has devised in the past. In sum, the interviews involved 40 people, 20 Muslims and 20 Christians (see Appendix 3). In terms of gender, there were 30 males and 10 females. Females were equally represented in both faith—5 Christians and 5 Muslims. The table below represents those interviewed in terms of religion and gender.

Table 2.1: People interviewed in terms of religion and gender

Religion	Male	Female	Total
Christians	15	5	20
Muslims	15	5	20
Total	30	10	40

Both Christian and Muslim leaders were the focus of the interviews. Since the goal is to understand the relations fully, assessing why there is harmonious co-existence in some instances and schism in others, it is vital that leaders are engaged on this as they are instrumental in promoting behavior change (Valente 2007). Through key informants in Mombasa, I was able to secure appointments for interviews with key Christian and Muslim leaders. Mombasa people have ‘a polite culture’; this means that they may not express directly

when they are offended, and tend to accommodate people even if they are uncomfortable. Therefore, I had to give people a polite opportunity to not participate. All who participated were asked and accepted that they were participating voluntarily.

Although most respondents were leaders, several lay people were also interviewed. This ensures that the views captured also gave insights into ordinary Christians and Muslims, as lay people can have insights that religious leaders may not have. Christian and Muslim informants came from diverse denominations and sects. Both Christian and Muslim leaders (Pastors, Sheikhs, and leaders in Christian and Muslim non-governmental organizations) were interviewed. Other groups interviewed included members of the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC), the Mombasa Pastors Fellowship (MPF), and the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK). Some of the respondents were not just leaders in Mombasa but also nationwide, overseeing millions of people. This meant that some of these leaders had a significant depth of understanding of the broader national religious relations.

The educational levels of the respondents were varied. Two (male) informants (a Christian and a Muslim) had doctoral degrees. The female informant with the highest educational level had a Master's degree. Most of the respondents had studied past high school. This was expected as most of the informants are leaders in their institutions and, increasingly in Kenya, education is a valued aspect or requirement in leadership, even though it might not be explicitly expressed. In terms of age, participants ranged from 25 years and 70 years. This variation proved valuable as it was important to get views that covered different eras.

Although other informants were not directly leading religious organizations, they were very influential members of Christian and Muslim community in Mombasa. For example, there was a Muslim informant who is a professor in a coastal University, a Muslim Principal who heads a public high school with over four hundred students, and a Christian lawyer who has

represented Christian cases in Mombasa high court. The knowledge and interpretation of these influential members of Christian and Muslim community offers an important window of understanding of how the two groups perceive their relations.

It was also important that women’s voices were represented in my study. Mombasa has a long history of discriminating against women (Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission 2012). Women are typically not given public platforms to express their views. Kenya is a deeply patriarchal society. However, women in Mombasa are influential and are known to shape opinions that men express publicly; hence, it was important that women were given opportunity to express their views on Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. As is the experience of male researchers in Mombasa, accessing potential female informants (especially Muslim women) can be a challenge (Kresse 2007). This study was designed to ensure that several women participated to have a representative sample (Roberts 1981).

Table 2.2: Positions and qualifications of those interviewed

Target of Interview	Number
Christian Bishops	5
Christian Pastors	8
Leader(s) of Christian organization Christian	3
Christian Scholar	2
Christian lay people	2
Muslim Sheikhs	5

Imams	2
Leader(s) of Muslim organization	5
Muslim scholar(s)	2
Muslim lay people	6

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the names of all the informants in this research are pseudonyms. The assurance to the informants that they were going to be non-identifiable gave them a degree of confidence to freely express their views. Although other informants did not have any issue with their identity being revealed, I have opted to give them pseudonyms out of an abundance of caution. Appendix 3 identifies the different categories of the people interviewed. I have also changed other details about them so that they cannot be recognized.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, recorded and transcribed. Research shows that much is gained by letting people express themselves without too many restrictions (Cachia 2011). Interviews were conducted in respondents' mosques/churches, offices, and restaurants. Some respondents were happy to do the interview on the streets. It is known that finding a suitable venue for interview is important as the venue can determine how one behaves (King 2010). The goal before any interview was to consult with the informant and identify the best venue for meeting, to ensure that the informant was comfortable enough to give their story.

Interviews were conducted in both English and Swahili. Respondents were free to use the language they felt most comfortable with, to ensure language was not a barrier. I am fluent

in both Swahili and English and so I adjusted the interviews to suit the need of those that were interviewed. Kenyans are known to switch conversation from one language to the other and even communicate in “sheng” (a local dialect)⁴. It was clear that Muslim respondents, with few exceptions, preferred to take the interview in Swahili even though they were fluent in English. Muslim women especially chose to respond in Swahili. This is important as many of them cannot respond to questions posed by any man, for cultural reasons. It is common knowledge that Muslim women in Mombasa and other parts of the Kenyan Coast have cultural values that make it difficult for them to have a conversation with strangers, especially if they are male. In this culture, it is not surprising for a young male to respond to questions on behalf of the mother. It was heartening in this research to see women actively engaged and answering questions without paying attention to other Muslim informants in the meetings. The environment created through free interaction by participants made everyone feel comfortable and welcome to engage.

The interviews lasted between twenty minutes and two hours. The average time for the interview was forty minutes. Many of the informants had much to say on any given issue, and were passionate in the way they responded to questions raised. Mombasa is a deeply religious city, and this was reflected in both the style and content of the response given by informants.

Before the interviews were conducted, the informants were informed of the aims and objectives of the research. They were informed of their rights and those of the researcher and thereafter signed agreeing that they were participating in the interview out of their own free will. Informants also had to agree to be recorded. This was clearly explained before any interview took place. None of the informants objected to being recorded.

⁴ Sheng is a variation of Kiswahili, mostly spoken by young persons from poor neighbourhoods, a mix from many dialects/languages. It can be used to include or exclude who is to be part of the discussion.

The interview questions covered a wide range of topics, including:

- the state of Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa;
- the issue of *Kadhi* Courts;
- acts of terrorism targeting Christians;
- extra-judicial killings of Muslim leaders;
- social, political, economic and religious discrimination;
- county and national government;
- anti-terrorism laws; and
- members of the other religion.

See Appendices 1 and 2 for a complete list of interview questions.

Focus groups

I also conducted two focus groups: one with Christians and one with Muslims. The focus group meetings were held on different days for Christian and Muslim informants. Both focus groups were held at the offices of the Coast Interfaith Council for Clerics.

Recruitment of Christian and Muslim leaders to be part of the focus group meeting was conducted by two contacts of the researcher (a Christian and a Muslim) who are heavily involved in interreligious initiatives in Mombasa. These two contacts have been working together in seeking to promote harmonious co-existence between Christians and Muslims.

The focus group meetings offered opportunity for members of a religion to be as candid as possible. This is sometimes difficult when members of the other religion are present, especially when dealing with religiously sensitive topics. Separate focus group meetings enabled them to assemble a more reliable assessment of the relations (Grootaert 2002). The Christian focus group had both Mainline and emerging church members represented; similarly,

the Muslim focus group included conservative and moderate members. This was beneficial in terms of balanced views, but also meant that opportunities to speak had to be given to all sides and all informants, instead of just the ones more willing to talk. The same applied to the Christian group.

There are kinds of social research issues for which focus groups are most and least suitable, and they depend on optimum group size and composition (Bloor 2001). In the case of this research, there were 14 respondents in the Muslim focus group and 10 in the Christian one. It was important that the group was not too numerous, as this would not be conducive to interaction and engagement. Since the researcher met with more men for the one-on-one interview, it was necessary to increase the number of females to reflect the reality that they are equally represented both in mosques and Churches.

Conducting these focus groups was both exciting and challenging. They were conducted in both Swahili and English according to respondents' level of comfort; all of them understand English, but some are more expressive in Swahili. The questions were also asked in both English and Swahili to allow for flexibility in discussion. The deliberations were recorded using a mobile phone.

There were a few who were more talkative than others and had to be sensitively convinced to summarize their points to allow others the opportunity to express their views too. To ensure that everyone participated, I directed questions directly at those who had not spoken about any subject that we were covering. I was surprised and encouraged that women were just as involved as men and did not suppress their views due to men's presence. As I later learnt, this confidence was due to the fact that many of the participants have met a number of times in seminars and conferences.

For both the focus groups and the interviews, the questions asked were varied and

covered topics on the nature of Christian-Muslim relations, terrorism, anti-terrorism laws, radicalism, *Kadhi* Courts, and experiences with members of the other religion. Because of the semi-structured nature of the interviews and focus groups, the answer to these questions provided an opportunity to probe further to understand reasons behind the answers. The interview schedule was designed to enable the interview to cover enough ground on different subjects that needed to be explored. Predictably, those interviewed had much to say on any subject matter. I had to intervene and guide the deliberations to remain focused on the issues under discussion whenever an informant digressed.

In addition to the focus group meetings, I was able to attend a symposium in Mombasa that comprised Muslim and Christian leaders. This symposium was organized by the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC). I was invited by a Muslim leader who was coordinating the event. This meeting was relevant to my research as both groups, Christians and Muslims, were discussing issues of differences between them. This meeting is the subject of Chapter 7 of this thesis.

Ethnographic Methods

An ethnographic methodology was also adopted. While I am Kenyan, and familiar enough with Mombasa, I am not from the Coast, so it was vital for me that I spend time with people in the streets, in their homes, in the markets, in workplaces, in schools, in sports arenas, in their churches and mosques. Sermons in places of worship that are relevant to this research were examined to give a clear picture on this subject. This approach of immersing myself in the culture of Mombasa enabled respondents to give an unadulterated view of what they think of Christian-Muslim relations and gave me the opportunity to obtain views from diverse Christian and Muslim informants *in-situ*. Although the focus was on church and mosque leaders, views of laypeople from both divides were also extracted. I was able to meet with

several Muslim and Christian lay people on the streets of Mombasa. One Muslim woman offered invaluable data as she had converted from Christianity to Islam and therefore knew both ‘worlds.’

Visits were made to three Mainline churches, two emerging churches, two mosques, and two offices of Islamic Organizations, one conservative and the other moderate. Attending these institutions offered me opportunity to observe and hear unfiltered sentiments from diverse expressions of Christianity and Islam. Special attention was paid to both the content of the discussion points and observation of the environment.

Conversing with members of the public on the streets of Mombasa was a great way to gather data as people freely shared their frustrations and positive views about Christian-Muslim relations without the restraint that comes with the position of being a religious leader.

I recorded the data by taking daily field notes. Those notes included what I observed, the people I saw, and the interactions I had with them. I also took pictures of places if it was appropriate and acceptable.

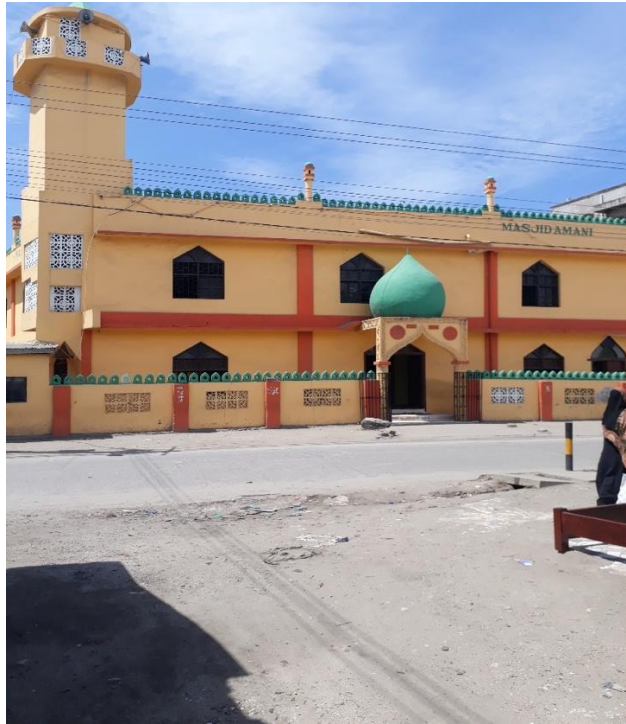


Figure 2.1: Picture of a mosque in Mombasa – Source: Kennedy Okello 2018 (Taken during Field Trip)



Figure 2.2: Picture of a Church in Mombasa – Source: Kennedy Okello 2018 (Taken during Field Trip)



Figure 2.3: Picture of a Mombasa Street – Source: Kennedy Okello 2018 (Taken during Field Trip)

A Case Study

The research entailed a case study about *Kadhi* Courts in Kenyan constitution. The debate on *Kadhi* Courts during the constitution review process and the referendum was a flashpoint in Christian-Muslim relations across the whole nation, but particularly in Mombasa. Different religious authorities from the Christian and Islamic side acted and responded differently on the issue. It is hoped that this case study will highlight aspects that fully capture how mainline Churches, emerging Churches, and conservative and moderate Muslim groups respond to ecological conditioning factors that are religious in nature. Addressing this subject requires that special attention be paid to the court case that was filed in Mombasa by Christians against the *Kadhi* Courts. This court case was filed by Mombasa Pastors' Fellowship, who

argued against the inclusion of *Kadhi* Courts in the Kenyan constitution. Primary documents, especially reporting on the subject by contemporary Kenyan leading newspapers such as *Nation* and *The Standard*, are examined to determine points of divergence. Christian leaders who filed the case and Muslim leaders who were defendants were interviewed to ascertain the impact the debate on *Kadhi* Courts had on the relation, and how they have worked to resolve their differences post-*Kadhi* Courts case.

Analysis of Data

The data gathered is viewed through the conceptual framework I discussed in the earlier Chapter, namely religious authority and a socio-ecology. Having gathered data on views of informants, the findings of the research were then put into the context of the above-mentioned conceptual frameworks.

Data analysis in this research goes beyond the views expressed by participants to take into account the way they expressed it, their body language and signals, and the consistency of their views. This research appreciated words expressed but also extracted meaning from respondents' behaviour. This is especially so, because even though the honesty of the informants is not being questioned, Mombasa people have other ways of expressing meaning other than by words, conveying nuances through body movements and facial expressions.

Epistemologically, the position I take in this research is that of "critical realism". I am approaching this research with the understanding that there is a "social reality that exists independently of human conceptions and interpretations" (Ritchie 2014:13). By this, I mean that reality entails what we experience through our senses and what exists regardless of whether it is observed, and the underlying processes and mechanisms (Ritchie 2014). For example, the reality of an informant might be the feeling of being discriminated against. The underlying

processes and mechanism contributing to the reality of discrimination might be economic marginalization and political domination. This is different from ‘Idealism’, which sees reality as “fundamentally mind-dependent” (Ritchie 2014:16). This means that there are some aspects of reality which are absolutely and totally beyond the mind’s comprehension or experience. In other words, my interest is not just what people say and their subjective experiences, but also the external structural issues in Mombasa that *shape* those views. For this reason, this research will look at broader issues in Mombasa such as the historical context, the economic situation, the racial divide, religious authorities and affiliations, and political struggles, and how my informants’ accounts shape and are shaped by those external realities. To reiterate, I take seriously the answers given by informants in this research, *and* I also try to understand broader structural issues that shape and drive those views.

Ethical considerations

This was deemed a high-risk research project (including for my own safety) and required ethical approvals from DUHREC (Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee). I had to undergo a very strict ethics committee approval process to ensure that the research was going to meet the ethical standards set by the National Health Medical Research Council (NHMRC) framework, which informs social research in Australia. The committee had to be sure that the safety of the researcher was not compromised and that research-related activities were sensitive to Mombasa culture and to the existing Christian-Muslim relations. It was approved under the Project ID number 2018-012.

Although Mombasa has experienced religious tensions before—ironically, the subject of the research—it is a safe place for Kenyan nationals. I am a Kenyan national and know the city well. I consider the city safe. It was safe enough for me to choose it as the place to spend my honeymoon. My experience of working with both Christians and Muslims is also an

advantage as I was able to conduct this research with a high level of cultural awareness and sensitivity. Questions to be used in the interview were developed and submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval before being administered in the field, due to the sensitive nature of this kind of study.

Many informants that were contacted were willing to talk about their experiences. I did the research at a time when the city was calm. Mombasa felt safe and I did not feel endangered in any way, and nor did I endanger participants. Several Muslims and Christians expressed their excitement about participating in this research. They indicated that this kind of research is long overdue and asked to be informed of its findings in some form.

One of the challenges was the expectation of the informants. Given the fact that some organizations offer financial rewards to people who participate in interviews, it is generally expected, though not verbalised, that a payment of some kind would be extended to participants. I had to make very clear that in accordance with my commitment to the ethics committee, the interviews were voluntary, and no payments would be made to any participant. Many appreciated this upfront honesty and did not object to it.

Positioning

It is important that I position myself as a researcher. Having worked as a Christian Missionary in Kenya for close to a decade, I have close working relations with the Pastors' Fellowship in other parts of Kenya. I have also been engaged in relief efforts amongst Muslim groups in other parts of Kenya. Notwithstanding my experience, I entered into this research with an independent mind, determined not to let my previous experiences colour the findings. Although I have been to Mombasa a few times and I am up-to date with what happens in the city, I still came to this research as an empathetic outsider rather than an insider. Coming as an

outsider offered me the opportunity to understand the subject of my study from the perspective of the insiders without undue assumptions. Equally, having worked with both Christians and Muslims in other parts of Kenya, I was able to have a unique connection with informants as I knew what to ask and what not to ask.

I am keenly aware that this is a social-religious study and not theological research. As much as several participants were tempted to deviate into discussing doctrine issues, I was more interested in what affects their relation with each other, and not let doctrine points take up time instead of issues that were critical in this research. As a *Baraa* person (from other parts of Kenya) and not *Pwani* (from the Coast), I had to be sensitive to informants from the Coast who might have seen me as one of the oppressors. I had to be transparent with them on questions they had about me and my research. Answering their doubts helped develop trust, which in turn allowed for genuine interaction in the focus groups.

Conclusion

This research sought to engage with both Christian and Muslim leaders and lay people in Mombasa to get as much data as possible on Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. The data gathered are invaluable as the first-hand experiences of people who have been in the thick of navigating this relation. The honesty and sometimes the emotional attachment shown in several interactions with the informants indicated how people are willing to lay on the table what they know to be true. Some of the informants have been victimised at times when the relations soured. Some of them have helped forge an interfaith organization that offers a forum where disagreements can be addressed. Some of the informants were hostile to the idea of Christians and Muslims engaging each other through dialogue. The different methodologies adopted for this project ensured that as much data as possible was gathered from diverse groups of people.

PART TWO: SETTING THE SCENE

Chapter 3: Evolution of Christian-Muslim Relations in Mombasa—the Pre-Colonial and Colonial Periods

Introduction

This chapter investigates Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa in the pre-colonial and the colonial periods. It also examines issues that emerged from the colonial period with which independent Kenya was confronted. The pre-colonial period in this research refers to the early encounters between Christians and Muslims during both Arab and Portuguese domination of the area, from when the Portuguese first arrived in Mombasa in 1498 to the time of colonial administration in 1895. The colonial period (1895-1963) refers to the British domination of the east coast of Africa, in particular Mombasa, to the time of Kenyan independence in 1963. The focus of this chapter is to explore how the period of pre-colonial and colonial times shaped Mombasa's ecology and how decisions made in those periods continue to have ramifications in the present Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. It is argued that the pre-colonial and colonial periods established a set of social, economic, political and cultural conditions that influence present-day encounters.

Brief history of Mombasa

The port town of Mombasa was already in existence in the 12th century (Musker and Mungai 2017:4). For centuries Mombasa has been pre-eminently a Swahili settlement and an important one at that (Berg 1968:35). There is a first mention of Mombasa in written sources in 1154 by Arab geographer AI-Idrisi (Aldrick 1995). It is often indicated that traders from the

Arab subcontinent were swept by seasonal winds to the eastern coast of Africa, landing on the shores of the Indian Ocean (Musker and Mungai 2017:4). The growth of the town is attributed to the thriving slave trade, a major source of its revenue (Musker and Mungai 2017:4). Wealthy merchants and traders lived alongside poor slaves (and later freedmen) from the coast and mainland, and even from further afar in Southern Africa. Islam and Christianity coexisted with varied traditional African faith systems (Musker and Mungai 2017:4).

The Portuguese first visited Mombasa in 1498 but it was too powerful to conquer then (Aldrick 1995:12). Eldredge reports that “Mombasa and Pate resisted the Portuguese until an attack by a Turkish expedition, followed by a Portuguese attack and an attack from inland (Zimba) invaders, weakened it (2018:147). The Portuguese burnt the town least four times before it submitted to their authority in 1589, after which they ruled the town for about one hundred years (Aldrick 1995:12).

Arabs from Oman attacked Mombasa and replaced the Portuguese in 1698 as the foreign dominating power of the area (Aldrick 1995:13). A series of Omani leaders governed the town. Between 1741 and 1837 the town was governed by an Omani family called the Mazrui, who did not recognise the Busaidi sultans of Oman and thus considered themselves independent rulers (Aldrick 1995:13). In 1837 the Mazrui were overthrown by the Busaidi, who, although they were Omani just as their predecessors the Yarubi, had their capital in Zanzibar (Swartz 1979:33). From 1837 to 1888, Seyyid Said ruled Mombasa from Zanzibar through a representative appointed by the Sultan, called a Liwali (Aldrick 1995:13).

East Africa also began to draw the attention of Western powers who saw it as an area ripe for development and expansion (Aldrick 1995:14). The Sultan in Zanzibar was displaced by Germany and England, and from 1888 Mombasa became the main port of the British, managed by a private chartered company called the Imperial British East Africa Company

(Aldrick 1995:14). The British succeeded the Busaidi as rulers of Mombasa in 1895 and a number of important developments followed their assumption of control. Separate secular courts were established in addition to the *Kadhi* courts (Swartz 1979:34).



Figure 3.1: Fort Jesus in Mombasa: built by the Portuguese from 1593-1597 – Source: Kennedy Okello (During field research, August 2018)



Figure 3.2: Canon in Fort Jesus facing the Indian Ocean, built by the Portuguese to defend themselves against attacks from Arabs – Source: Kennedy Okello (During field research, August 2018)

Pre-colonial period (1498-1895)

Slave Trade in Mombasa and the Surrounding Towns

For centuries, Mombasa has been characterized by complaints of religious, social, economic and political marginalization. It is hard to understand this until a study is made of slave trade in Mombasa and the surrounding towns in the pre-colonial period. As already observed, slave trade was a common practice in Mombasa. The Swahili complained of the “iron yoke and of the injustices” done against them (Owen in Freeman-Grenville 1962b:213).

During Vasco da Gama’s first journey in the late 15th century, he observed that

Mombasa is a large city seated upon an eminence washed by the sea. Its port is entered daily by numerous vessels. At its entrance stands a pillar, and by the sea a low-lying fortress. Those who had gone on shore told us that they had seen many men in irons; and it seemed to us that these must be Christians, as the Christians in that country are at war with the Moors (cited in Ravenstein 2017:39).

Another eye-witness, Gaspar de S. Bernadino, observed during his journey in Mombasa in 1606 that a boat arrived with “slaves on board who were similar to the Negroes of Mozambique and the rest of Cafraria” (de S. Bernadino 1962:154). In Pate, not far from Mombasa, de S. Bernadino records that Muslims from Arabia arrived in a small vessel with the purpose of bartering for African boys, whom they then carried to their country. Once arrived, “the boys were made to follow the Moorish religion and treated as slaves for the rest of their lives” (de S. Bernadino 1962:162). Accordingly,

A search was quickly organized throughout the whole city, in which my companion and I and the Portuguese took part. After making inquiries of all, we finally found the boys, sad and tearful, shut up in a house. To our question whether they wished to be Christians, they all answered yes. The Portuguese thereupon bought them, and had them baptized, and I have since seen two of them here in Lisbon (de S. Bernadino 1962:162).

The slave trade was being conducted even by Muslim religious leaders. For example, it is stated that

As for the Imam's slaves [Swahili] who had put Nasr bin Abdallah in chains and nominated Sheikh Rumba in his place, they had been imprisoned and put in irons when the Portuguese arrived, but later they were allowed to go as they pleased (Freeman-Grenville 1962a:249-53).

Enslavement of Africans in Mombasa is also suggested by the fact that "archers were all Negro slaves of the white Moors, and obedient to their masters in their captivity..." (Freeman-Grenville 1962a:109). Another eye-witness account reveals that Christians were under "subjugation" by Muslims (Ravenstein 2017:39).

Swahili slaves were used in agricultural activities such as plantation of oranges, lemons, and sugar-cane (Ravenstein 2017:36). Other plantation crops were corn and pepper (Ravenstein 2017:39). In other instances, African slaves would be moved to the Middle East. The record shows that Muscat Arabs were involved in capturing African slaves and taking them to the Middle East. In one incident, they carried 1,400 captives into irredeemable slavery (Badger 1871:91). De Barros talks of slaves from the region being transported in chains to Muscat, where most of them died from the rigors of their captivity (Pankhurst 1951:16).

Ali Mazrui indicates that "Islam may have been somewhat compromised in East Africa by the nature of its purveyors (who, in addition to slaving, also created Arab city-states along the East coast)" (Mazrui 1975:725). Although purveyors of Christian faith fought against slavery, they were at times the beneficiaries of the slave trade, as seen in examples where Muslims gave them slaves (Correia 1971:87; 89). However, according to the communication between the captain of the region and the King of Portugal, whenever slaves belonging to Muslims converted to Christianity, the Muslims were "greatly displeased" (Da Silva Rego 1963:523). The Mombasa Chronicles indicate that, at the coming of the Portuguese, "The

Swahili saw their power disappear: injustice and the law of the strongest prevailed” (Owen in Freeman-Grenville 1962b:213).

This section has demonstrated how slavery became a tool of oppression in Mombasa and how it strained Christian-Muslim relations in the pre-colonial period. The attempt by the Portuguese to stop the trade threatened the economic situation and the social status of Muslims in Mombasa. They fought back and displaced the Portuguese. Even though slavery was stopped during the colonial period (which will be discussed later), the oppressive system that it helped establish has been redeployed in other settings to the present day.

Rivalries between Portuguese and Arabs

As already seen, pre-colonial Mombasa was characterized by battles over the control of the city between Arabs and the Portuguese, and kept shifting from being under the control of one to the other, and back. The political, social, economic and religious landscape of Mombasa was significantly shaped by who was in charge. This section seeks to understand diverse expressions of both faiths in the pre-colonial era, practices adopted in dealing with members of the other religion, and the nature of engagement between the two faith groups. It is argued in this section that the pre-colonial period in Mombasa was characterized by acrimonious Christian-Muslim relations shaped by bitter rivalries between Arabs and the Portuguese, resulting in political, economic, social and religious dominance of one at the expense of the other.

The history of Islam and Christianity on the east coast of Africa is also the history of Arabs and Europeans. The Arabs introduced Islam in the region and settled in coastal towns such as Mombasa in the 12th century, where they intermarried with locals and shaped the social, economic, political and religious lives of residents. The east coast of Africa has been associated with Islam for centuries. It is believed by some in the region, especially Somali people, that

there were Islam converts on the east coast of Africa even before Islam reached Medina, the religion's first capital city (Mukhtar 1995).

Similarly, upon the arrivals of the Portuguese, missionaries sought to spread Christianity in the region as their political leaders back in Portugal were sending explorers and initiating programs to politically dominate and economically exploit Mombasa and other towns in the region. We get insight into Christian-Muslim relations in the region after the arrival of Vasco da Gama in 1498 in Mombasa. His account (da Gama 1898) and those of other Portuguese missionaries and explorers give us a glimpse of the beginnings of these relations. Those missionaries and explorers included Alvares Cabral (1467–1520), Father Monclaro (Portuguese observer who reported on Francisco Barreto's 1569 expedition), Gaspar Correa (1496–1563), Joao de Barros (1496–1570), Duarte Barbosa (Portuguese India officer between 1500 and 1517), St. Francis Xavier (1506–1552), Manoel De Almeida (1580–1646), and Bocarro (1594–1642).

Economic Battles

As an important city along a strategic trade route, Mombasa became a battleground in east Africa for Muslims and Christians to exert economic dominance. There were attempts by both sides to undermine trade activities of the other. Muslims were known to patrol waters to stop unwanted entry (da Gama 1898). In response, Christians patrolled Mombasa waters to ensure no blockage by Muslims (Albuquerque 1964).

Primary documents show that there was a fight for economic dominance by members of one religious' faith over the other. Economic disparities, in addition to religious differences, were a major cause of the antipathy between Christians and Muslims. Prior to the coming of the Portuguese, Muslims were making huge profits from the locals—among other things, from slave trade. One of the early Christian leaders in the region, Father Francisco Alvarez, observed

patronisingly that the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims “was not based on any friendship but on the basis of their trade and merchandise, from which Muslims made much profit” (Alderley 1881). The arrival of Christians threatened Muslims’ economic progress.

Others claimed that that Arabs’ dealings with early European missionaries in the region was based on deception (Correa 1869). For example, Arabs stopped local Africans from bringing their gold directly to the Portuguese and instead purchased it cheaply and sold it at an exorbitant price to the Portuguese. Christians in turn sold goods at high price to Muslims. This animosity caused de Almeida to urge the King of Portugal to “take the Moors from here, for they have never been anywhere without causing great damage and bringing no profit” (de Almeida 1969:279). These actions ensured use of economic levers to apply pressure or punish members of another faith.

Social Struggles

The pre-colonial period in Mombasa was characterized by initiatives from both Arabs and Portuguese to socially exclude the other. By implication, Muslims and Christians introduced social exclusion as a strategy of dealing with members of the other faith.

There are clear accounts of attempts of social exclusion by members of one religious’ faith over the other. It is recorded that conversion to Islam enabled the ‘low people’ [Bantu Africans] to go where they liked, gain their livelihood, and eat as they pleased (Correa 1869:156). Becoming Muslim gave the converts opportunity to attend well-constructed wooden mosques (Middleton 1992) and gain a higher social status. It was also observed that:

When they became Moors the Moors gave them clothes and robes with which to clothe themselves, and so many of them became Moors and were converted to the religion of Mohammed, and they increased so much in numbers that all the country became full of them (Correa1869:156).

Social exclusion was a strategy used by both religious groups. For example, permanent

residency was denied to Christians by Muslim leaders in Mombasa. While travelling through Mombasa, Vasco da Gama observed that “The Christian merchants in the town are only temporary residents, and are held in much subjection, they not being allowed to do anything except by the order of the Moorish King” (da Gama 1898). In other instances, apart from denying them permanent residence, Muslims sometimes denied Christians entry into Mombasa altogether (Albuquerque 1964). This trend seemed to have been widespread in the region. The only exception were towns that were friendly and tolerant to Christians. For example, Christians were not subjected to the same harsh rules in Malindi (only about one hundred kilometres north-east of Mombasa) because the King of Portugal had a strong relationship with the King of Malindi even though he was a Muslim (Correa 1869). The King of Malindi had information about how the Portuguese had defeated other rulers in the region and wanted them to give him protection against rulers of cities such as Mombasa, with whom he was in constant war with.

Religious Battles

Both Arabs and the Portuguese saw themselves as purveyors of the message of Islam and Christianity, respectively. The Portuguese saw themselves as representatives for Christ. The European ships were dressed in Christian flags (da Gama 1898:34-35) and the Cross of the order of Christ was painted on each sail (da Gama 1898:165). At the very heart of the mission of the explorers was the idea of taking the message of Christ to the ‘pagan’ world. The Portuguese were even seeking to convert Africans who had been captured by Muslims to become Christians (de S. Bernadino 1962:162).

Muslims in Mombasa took seriously the task of converting local Africans to Islam. One of the tasks of slave owners was to give them religious instruction (Lovejoy 2012:16). In Islam, everything was intricately linked to religious duty (Mazrui 1975). The battles that took place

in Mombasa during the revolt against the Portuguese were characterized by a conversion message as will be seen later.

The fight for the local African converts, in addition to competition for local resources, defined and shaped Christian-Muslim relations. Local Africans found themselves in the middle of great rivalries between two foreign religions they had embraced or rejected, even as both sides sought to persuade local Africans to reject the other faith. For example, Muslims sought to convince local Africans that Christians were exploitative (Soarez 1964:463).

Prior to the arrival of the Portuguese in Mombasa and the East Coast of Africa, Islam had spread unhindered, except for the resistance of the locals. The arrival of the Portuguese offered Christianity as an alternative not only to the local faith systems but also to those who had earlier converted to Islam. This new development was bound to exacerbate tension between Muslims and non-Muslims. When a renowned Arab traveller, Ibn Battuta, visited Mombasa, as far back in 1332, he observed that Muslims and Christians were at “war” (da Gama 1898:39). A Portuguese explorer, Duarte Barbosa, observed that “the men thereof are oft-times at war and seldom at peace” (cited in Freeman-Grenville 1962c:132). Additionally, while in Mombasa, Alvaro observed that “half of the people were Moors [Muslims] and the other Christians, and that these Christians were at war with the Moors” (Alvaro 1962:19).

Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa were largely defined and driven by antagonistic religious motives. Both Christians and Muslims had a strong ambition to proselytise members of the other religion across the entire east African coast. There were a number of training institutions whose work was to train Muslim ‘missionaries’ to take the message of Islam to nearby and far towns. In other instances, ‘students of religion’ were based in boarding facilities where they would get their training in Islam (Freeman-Grenville 1962a:29; 179-196). Christians also had mission centres like the one in Frere town near

Mombasa, where they trained missionaries in how to spread the gospel (Holway 1971:201).

Two wars in particular in the pre-colonial period were fought in Mombasa between Muslims and Christians and left bitter memories. The first one was the 1631 Mombasa uprising led by King Yussuf Bin Hassan who had converted to Christianity and then became a Muslim again. According to *The Goa Document*, authored by the Archdiocese of Goa, found in the Rome archives by Freeman-Grenville, eye-witness account shows that Christians were targeted and killed by Muslims on the account of their faith (Archdiocese of Goa 1980). The second war took place between 1696 and 1698 culminating in attacks on Churches where many Christians died; Christians were forced to convert to Islam and those who refused were killed. A Church was even turned into a Mosque (Tolmacheva 1993).

At other times the Portuguese had also targeted Muslims in Mombasa. They had killed a number of Muslims, not just in Mombasa, but also in other coastal towns in places such as Mozambique; the King of Mombasa was determined to revenge against the Portuguese on account of how they had treated Muslims in the region (Correa 1869:106).

This section has captured differences between Christians and Muslims in Mombasa in the pre-colonial period. When the colonial administration took control of Mombasa, they inherited the city with all the challenges of Christian-Muslim relations. The next section will examine Christian-Muslim relations in the colonial period.

The Colonial Period (1895-1963)

Mombasa was officially relinquished to the British in 1887, and the city became the capital of the British East Africa Protectorate (Musker and Mungai 2017:6). The arrival of the British had significant consequences for the country as a whole, and Mombasa was no different. With British colonial rule came the construction of the Uganda Railway with Mombasa as its

sea terminal, which opened up inland Kenya for exploration, exploitation and subjugation, and had the indirect effect of reviving the port city. Once the railway was completed, settlers advanced rapidly into the mainland, occupying large swathes of land and claiming it for themselves while systematically displacing locals (Musker and Mungai 2017).

The colonial period ushered in a new era in Mombasa in which Muslims lost their social status, became economically marginalized, lost their political clout and, even though they were seen by some as being favoured by the colonial government, they began experiencing religious competition from evangelical mission organizations sent from Europe. Those changes directly contribute to current struggles of Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa and will be examined below. In this section, it is argued that the colonial administration introduced new political, economic, social and religious systems that radically altered the status quo, breeding resentment and rivalries between Muslim-dominated *Pwani* and Christian-dominated *Bara*.

Economic Changes

The colonial period was characterized by the economic empowerment and more economic opportunities for *Bara* Christians, who took better jobs in Mombasa. The economic model adopted by colonial government ensured that Christians did better than Muslims and this imbalance, a source of acrimony, persists to date. This section will investigate how the economic policies of colonial government shaped Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa.

Inception of the colonial rule in Mombasa resulted in damage to the economic prestige of the Arab elite. In 1908, the Land Titles Ordinance passed; the British claimed all “waste” land as Crown land, and began to consider “native” claims to land rights, which many Swahili and Arab nobles claimed (Mathews 2013:136). This denied coastal people the ability to generate wealth. It is indicated that between 1910 and 1912, Arabs were exempted from the

hut tax⁵, which would have been an enormous benefit to them, but which began to create an administrative divide between them and the often-indistinguishable Swahili (Mathews 2013:136).

Better educated *wakristo* (Christians) from *Bara* (up-country) were better placed to work in the colonial government in Mombasa. This created another gap in the city: the economic disparity between *wakristo kutoka Bara* and *waislamu wa Pwani*. Christians from up-country and Muslims from Coast would later take leadership positions in most economic activities in Mombasa. The initial refusal by Mombasa Muslims to embrace western education for fear of being ‘Christianised’ meant that at independence they were ill-equipped to take over jobs previously held by British officials. As a result, the management of the coastal economy, and especially that of Mombasa, came under the direction of *Bara* people, who flocked to the coast to take up employment and by the end of the 1960s made up about half, if not more, of Mombasa’s population (Strobel 1979:36). The Counties in the Coast still lag behind in education, transport infrastructure and are some of the poorest counties in Kenya (Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission 2013:99-119). Fearing their unfair treatment by the dominant ethnic groups, some coastal Muslims even launched the *Mwambao*⁶ movement to agitate for autonomy (Chande 2008:97).

According to Chembea, there was also an interference by the British colonial government in normative precepts related to the practice of *waqf* (Chembea 2017:4433-4). *Waqf* is a contribution given by a Muslims toward a religious or charitable cause. Interfering with this sent the signal that the British colonial government was out to undermine Islam

⁵ The ‘hut tax’ is a type of taxation initiated by British during colonial period in Africa where they charged locals “per hut”

⁶ *Mwambao* is a Swahili word that means Coastal region. This movement seeks autonomy of the Coast.

(Chembea 2017, pp. 433-4). Moreover, the colonial government adopted certain economic positions that shaped Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa and beyond. Firstly, the British colonial government started opening the hinterland through massive transport projects, especially railway lines, running from Mombasa through Nairobi to Kisumu. Mombasa, as a port city, experienced massive economic growth as a result, as products such as coffee and tea had to pass through there (Van Dongen 1963). This in turn led the hinterland ethnic groups such as Kikuyus, Luo, Luhya, Kalenjin and Kambas to go to Mombasa to look for job opportunities. As discussed above, these hinterland ethnic groups were more educated through mission schools. They therefore were better placed to receive administrative jobs and other formal positions that required reading and writing. This trend continued after independence, leading to *watu wa pwani*'s resentment toward *watu wa bara*.

The economic changes that took place during the colonial period caused a decline in Muslims' power and led to Islamic reform. By the 1930s there were calls by Muslim reformists for a return to pre-colonial period when they enjoyed economic hegemony (Mathews 2013). This led to the emergence of a militant version of Islam in the coast. Muslims religious leaders began to frame economic activities of the colonial government as moves to advance Christianity and curtail Islam. For example, Sheikh Al-Amin Mazrui founded a Muslim newspaper (*al-Islah*) in 1932 which advocated for Islamic reform, urging a return to pre-colonial hegemony and stressing sharia in constituting Islamic identity. In this case, the narrative was that Islam had become weak or too moderate and needed to go back to its roots of resistance and non-cooperation with non-Muslims (Mathews 2013).

Social Changes

While Muslims rejected Western education, *Bara* people embrace it, and this opened the door for them to dominate other political and economic spheres. This section will analyse

some of the social changes that took place during the colonial period.

British colonial rule in Mombasa and the East Coast of Africa resulted in several social changes that affected both Muslims and Christians. Another issue that caused tension between the two was the social empowerment of the latter. Under the colonial rule, schools were started amongst *Bara* people. This happened as Muslim-based education declined. The establishment of a disproportionate number of Christian mission schools and the concentration of economic development in Christian-inhabited areas during the colonial period meant that the Muslim community exists in the shadow of the dominant Christian population (Cruise O'Brien 1995). The emergence of mission schools in *Bara* represented something of a transition, whereby the Muslims started to slip from the social advantage they had experienced before the British came, to social disadvantage, mostly driven by the new education system.

The education system of the colonial government was viewed as a conduit for spreading Christianity. An element of extremism began to emerge as *Pwani* Muslims rejected any form of Western education. Some Muslims in the colonial period refused to enrol their children in public schools, claiming that they would be converted to Christianity (Alio 2015). Many local Muslim elders declared that sending Muslim children to the missionary schools was Haram (forbidden), and most Muslim children were withdrawn from them (Alio 2015). This issue of education in the colonial era is a major contributor to the inequality not just in Mombasa but other parts of the east Africa.

The colonial rulers also threw into disarray the networks of marriage, trade, and religion linking coastal Swahili, Arab, and Mijikenda, therefore negatively affecting the spread of Islam (Mathews 2013:149). Christian missionaries through the colonial government introduced formal education, but many Muslims viewed it with suspicion on account that it was a disguise for evangelization, since baptism was a prerequisite for admission (Chembea 2017:4438; Kubai

1995).

The strategy used by the British was to keep up the appearance of respect for Islam while severely curtailing its influence (Kubai 1995; Mathews 2013:1149). This they did by driving a wedge between the Mijikenda and the coastal Muslim people in towns (Mathews 2013:1150).

Political Changes

The colonial period was characterised by a political shift in which a secular administration took control of Mombasa and other parts of Kenya. This section will examine the political changes that took place during the colonial period and the implications they have for present-day Christian-Muslim relations. It is argued in this section that Christians were empowered politically by the colonial administration, putting them in a position where they would shape the economic and social life of both *Pwani* and *Bara* people.

during the colonial period, Mombasa and other parts of the coastal strip of Kenya theoretically belonged to the Sultan, even though in practice they were administered by the British. The British colonial government adopted policies that promoted Christianity and checked Islam. At first, despite the opposition of British missionaries, the colonial governments in East Africa took care to recognize Islamic and African customary laws to accommodate the needs of the different faith communities; ultimately, however, the British common law (influenced by Christianity) was made supreme over both (Kiriama 2017).

The British colonial government also adopted policies that were both anti-Arab and anti-Muslim. For example, by 1921, Arabs were ambiguously classified by the British as “natives” under criminal law and “non-natives” for taxation purposes. This resulted in unrest (Salim 1973:188): it led to *Bara* (people from parts of Kenya other than coastal region) being

resented by *Pwani* (people from the coast), especially Arabs, who saw these policies as a deliberate attempt to punish Muslims. This suspicion of and resistance to the government by some groups of Muslims would later morph into more extremist groups post-independence.

The emergence of British colonial power in Mombasa marked the decline of Muslims' political power and the ascent of Christians. The process of colonization, moving governance from the coast to the interior, shifted the balance of power in favour of the hinterland ethnic groups (Chande 2008:97). This pre-independent decision would later concentrate power among *Bara* elite at the expense of *Pwani* people.

Religious Changes

The British colonial government adopted policies on religious issues and engaged in practices that significantly changed the religious landscape of Mombasa and beyond. The inability of the colonial government to find solutions to some of the problems it created in Christian-Muslim relations means that the problem was transferred to the new independent Kenya leadership to deal with. Some of those problems persist to this day. Various groups amongst Christians and Muslims have to devise their own mechanism of dealing with unresolved issues handed over from the past. This section will examine some of the religious changes in the colonial period.

The colonial administration allowed churches and mission organizations to buy land at subsidized rates and sometimes helped contribute towards the cost of Church construction (Frankl 2008:214). Many of these Churches still stand and are perceived by Muslims to have been given freely to Christians. These actions of colonial past still drive resentment against Christians and Christianity.

One of the policies of the British colonial government was the continuation of an

Islamic legal system for Muslims in the Sultan's territories, which included Mombasa (Chesworth 2011:4). The British also set up Islamic Courts in *Bara* (up-country areas), outside the ten-mile strip, where there were significant numbers of Muslims (Anderson 1970). The British colonial administration for the first time established secular courts administering a body of law entirely separate from the Qur'anic law. The colonial administration set up the legal system in such a way that the secular courts had complete and sole jurisdiction over all criminal cases, and were available for those who chose to use them across the full range of civil law as well (Swartz 1979:34). *Kadhi* courts were available to all Muslims who agreed to use them in the area of domestic affairs and inheritance and could also be used with respect to debts and contracts (Swartz 1979:34). Also, a new office was created, Chief *Kadhi*, to advise the secular High Court on matters concerning Koranic law and to serve as the first court of appeal from decisions in the *Kadhi* courts. Decisions by the *Kadhi* or Chief *Kadhi* courts were enforced in the same way as any other court's decisions in Kenya (Swartz 1979:34). This arrangement, including the existence of the office of Chief *Kadhi*, has continued under Kenya's independent government (Swartz 1979:34).

As a result of the introduction of secular laws, Muslims sought favourable court rulings outside *Kadhi* Courts as they no longer had independent jurisdiction, and many sought education and jobs in a British colonial system less favourable to Islamic learning. The Arab elite in Mombasa imagined their cultural and religious identity with a focus on reform where Muslims were increasingly a demographic minority and culturally marginalized (Mathews 2013).

Even though this was a positive gesture to the Muslim community in Mombasa and the surrounding environs, it introduced a religious angle to a secular state that was supposed to follow British common laws at independence. This action seemed contradictory to the notion

of a secular state. As such the colonial government left a crisis that was both sensitive and explosive to manage.

The colonial period also introduced a model of governance where the relations between the state and religious organizations were ambivalent, in the sense that sometimes they worked together and sometimes they opposed each other. For example, it is known that the relations between Protestant missions and the colonial state in Kenya moved from ambivalence, through co-operation, to conflict, and these phases overlapped (Githige 1982).

Although the colonial administration was not responsible for Christian Mission organizations, and even opposed some of their plans, it created an environment where they could thrive (Githige 1982). A thriving Christian community was in direct competition with Islam as they presented competing narratives. Although it is widely believed that the colonial administration was supportive of Muslims, it is also observed that it gave full support to Christian missionaries whilst imposing restrictions on preaching Islam inland, which led to a domination of Christianity over Kenya's interior (Alio 2015). This kind of action only bred perceptions of bias, which remain to this day.

The changes brought about by the colonial administration caused Islam to seek reform. Prominent scholars such as Sheikh al-Amin Mazrui—Kenya's most prominent Islamic scholar—founded a newspaper called *al-Islah* in 1932 which advocated for Islamic reform “in a milieu where Muslims were increasingly a demographic minority and culturally marginalized” (Mathews 2013:135).

How much of an impact has the past had on the present? Several studies address the role of colonial powers and their impact on current Christian-Muslim relations in Kenya. Some studies have argued that the present state of disharmony between Christians and Muslims in Kenya is a product of historical antecedents caused by Western colonialist and missionaries,

who created a competing narrative between Christians and Muslims (Chembea 2017; Maina 2009:778). One of the areas where this competing narrative is historically displayed is on the issue of slave trading. The depiction of Arabs and Muslims as slave traders and the Christians as liberators has persisted in the memory of most Christians in Kenya and is still a source of prejudice, even though history points to both Muslims and Christians having participated in the practice of slavery (Mwakimako 2007:2292).

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that there is a long history of interreligious animosity in Mombasa by two different colonising religious forces. The enmity was inspired by a desire to rule politically, dominate economically, exclude socially and proselytize members of the other religious group. The Arabs and the Portuguese enjoyed both the privilege of being the dominant force and the struggles of being the victim at different times. By implication, both Muslims and Christians in Mombasa have been at times the victors, and at others the vanquished.

Throughout the pre-colonial and colonial periods, there have been attempts to address the underlying issues that created the schism between Islam and Christianity. A culture of evading the issue rather than confronting it emerged when the British handed over leadership to Kenya at Independence, and the problem was passed over to the new leadership. The social, political, economic and religious status of Christians and Muslims in Mombasa evolved in the pre-colonial and colonial periods, setting the scene for current Christian-Muslim relations.

Chapter 4: The Mombasa Ecology (*Siaza, Jamii na Uchumi*) and Points of Tensions and Disputes Between Christians and Muslims

Introduction

Having explored the history of relations in Mombasa, this chapter focuses on the contemporary ‘social ecology’ in Mombasa, and particular areas of tension, specifically in politics, society and the economy. Although the focus is Mombasa County, I will situate the case within Kenya as a whole. Special attention is paid to religious authorities and how they leverage the ‘ecological’ factors to shape Christian-Muslim relations and how this inflames or quiets them in the city. It is argued that mainline Churches and moderate Muslim groups perceive social, political, economic challenges as solvable and posit non-religious explanations for those challenges. This sends peaceful signals to their members. On the other hand, emerging Churches and conservative Muslim groups, especially Islamists, redeploy social, political and economic challenges as a tool for mobilising their religious agendas. This chapter will explore the thoughts and feelings of both leaders and everyday people using the data from focus groups and interviews.

Daniel Nilsson DeHanas has done a comparative ethnographic study on the role religion plays in the civic integration of Jamaican (Christian) and Bengali (Muslim) second-generation youth in UK cities (DeHanas 2016). This approach is important as it recognizes the uniqueness of Jamaican youth within Christianity and the uniqueness of Bengali youth within Islam. In the end, he is “able to compare them across religious traditions, showing how they are (or are not) influenced differently by particular strains of Islam or Christianity” (DeHanas 2016). This study will follow in the footsteps of DeHanas’ work by critically analysing how Christian and Islamic groups (religious authorities) in Mombasa are shaped by the intersections of social,

economic, political and religious aspects.

Political Flashpoints of Tension Between Christians and Muslims in

Mombasa

It is important to paint the picture of the complexity of politics in Mombasa to understand the dynamics of Christian-Muslim relations. Kenya has a two-tier system of government, the National or Central government and the County government. The National government is run from Nairobi and is dominated by Christian politicians; on the other hand, the Mombasa County government is dominated by Muslim politicians. This section will focus on the National and County governments and how decisions made at different levels, often supported or opposed by different religious leaders, impact on Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa.

During this research, I was able to conduct a focus group with Muslims and another with Christians (see Chapter 3). Most participants in these focus groups had been mobilized to participate in the focus group by a Muslim or a Christian contact. It was very clear from the start of my focus group meeting with the Muslim cohort that there was a suspicion that I was a government undercover officer on a mission to get information about them. Given that my name and appearance point to the fact that I am from *Bara*, these Muslims from *Pwani* needed enough reason to believe that mine was purely research and not a mission for a Christian-majority Kenyan National government. One conservative Muslim informant, Mwengiza, was clear and blunt:

Before we continue, we would like to be sure that you are a student, to enable us to be at peace, because some of us Muslim leaders are very careful, since we are being watched closely by authorities. Is there evidence that you are a student apart from your own words?

Another conservative Muslim informant, Sadio, followed with:

we would like assurance of how this information will be used and who is going to handle it, because we Muslim leaders are being sought day and night and our lives are not secure. So, can you give us that assurance?

Another informant, Swalehika, added, “there are things that I can’t tell you in this forum, because the authorities will not take them positively. So, in a sense the government is also contributing to this conflict.” These concerns illustrated Muslims’ fear of the National government. They feel targeted and persecuted.

It is only after I produced my Deakin University Student Identity card and Australian driver’s license that these Muslim focus group members relaxed and agreed to share their views. Toward the end of the interview, Mwengiza observed: “I am telling you the truth, the things we have told you, no one has ever heard them, but you showed you Identity card, we got the confidence to say these things.” From their experience, Muslim informants felt that the National government is ‘out to get them; and are always careful of what information to give as it can be used against them.

From a political standpoint, the situation of Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa is that of a double-edged sword in which Christian informants see Christians and Christianity as being under attack from a Muslim-dominated County government, and Muslim informants see Muslims and Islam as being under attack from the Christian-dominated National government. The County government is dominated by Muslims and led by Governor Hasan Joho, while the National government is dominated by Christians and led by a Christian President, Uhuru Kenyatta and a Deputy President, William Ruto, who is open about his Christian faith and is a member of an evangelical Church. The response of a particular government can either draw religious groups closer or drive them further apart; it can help with moderating voices or drive them to have extreme views. The next section will look at the dynamic of the National government and Muslims, and how that shapes views of religious authorities and Christian-

Muslim relations in Mombasa.

Muslims and the National government

There was a tendency of the Muslim informants to conflate the National government with Christianity. Part of this is because the National government is dominated by leaders who profess Christianity as their faith. Many government leaders freely ‘mix’ their Christianity with their politics. Kenya’s President Uhuru Kenyatta and his deputy William Ruto are Christians who frequently gather in Church-related meetings. William Ruto in particular is known for his participation in fundraising for construction of Churches. It is known that “National and local politicians attend church services—and act as patrons at church fund-raisers—in a very public way” (Deacon 2017:10).

There’s also the perception amongst Muslim informants that the National government embraces Christian-friendly policies. Muslims’ complaints of bias on the part of corrupt civil servants include accusations that they are denied the same services and rights as other citizens. This includes the greater difficulties they face in accessing and being issued with travel documents and national identification cards as compared with other communities (Mwakimako 2007:299).

The Muslim informants created a picture of Muslims and Islam as being under siege from the National government. They tend to see the National government as having the agenda of promoting Christianity while curtailing the progress of Islam. One Muslim female leader in the focus group, Mushusinga, stated:

Right now, Muslims live in fear of Christians because the government has Christians as the majority, while Christians live in fear of Muslims because they believe that when a Muslim decides to do something, he does not fear. So, everyone lives in fear of the other person, which is not good.

One of the areas where Muslims in Mombasa feel targeted by the National government

is the issue of anti-terrorism laws. These laws have led many Muslims to believe that they are being profiled. A Muslim conservative informant, Asyala, argued that Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa “are not good because of the profiling of Muslims, where everything bad, like criminals, gangs and other evils are labelled against Muslims as the main cause”. In other words, Muslim informants argued that they are wrongly blamed for everything that goes wrong in the country. One moderate Muslim informant, Swalehika, explained:

For example, in Kisauni where I come from, if something happens, the first people to be blamed are Muslim youths, yet there are many people of different religions that live there. Worse still is the fact that, we Muslims, know youth who are not Muslims who engage in these evil activities. So, people just pretend that they care for each other but in the real sense hate each other. So, it is important that we honestly deal with these things that bring hate among us. The government also contributes to these, because when a Muslim is caught with weapon, he is called a terrorist, but when a Christian is caught, he is not a terrorist. So, these needs to be resolved, with Christian and Muslim leaders being honest with each other, so that we can achieve a true and loving relationship.

Another conservative Muslim informant, Muniremba, also indicated that Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa “are not as good as they were in those early years, because they see us as terrorists, [and yet] our children are the ones being killed.” She succinctly captured the issue of what they consider profiling, indicating:

But there is that one Conservative who goes out to destroy other people properties, kill and things like that. Just because of that one Conservative, now that has led the government to generalize all Muslims as Conservatives because of one person’s act...this is what has made some of us to join this organization [Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics] in order to find solutions and harmony but that harmonious living cannot happen unless the root causes of suffering are solved.

From the informants, it was clear that the perception of Muslims being profiled is even leading others to be sympathizers of terrorists’ organizations such as the *Al Shabaab*. Muniremba observed that:

We have been profiled many times and killed. The killing of our people has

made many people to be sympathizers with radicalization. For example, last week, three young men were killed in Kisauni, but when you ask people, they will tell you, yes, these youth were gangs, but they had reformed; so, what do you do with a reformed criminal?

The killing of terrorist suspects is viewed negatively by many Muslims, who are of the opinion that due process of the law needs to be followed when dealing with these cases. A Muslim informant, Asyala, argued that:

Another problem with our government is that they don't adhere to law which says that, a suspect is innocent until proven guilty; especially for Muslims it is the other way around; that you are guilty until proven innocent. So, this brings a lot of conflicts and sufferings for the Muslim community, because the government does not see us as people but criminals. Have you ever heard a Christian Al-Shabaab being arrested?

The perceived contrasting ways Christian and Muslim are treated further strengthens the view that Muslims are being profiled. Swalehika observed:

Sometimes I get the feeling that, the government we have is for Christians; for example, during Easter, have you ever heard Christians being harassed yet they conduct their festivals at night? But when it comes to Muslims, big numbers of youths are arrested as they leave the mosque after prayers.

The perceived unfair treatment coupled with the past injustices perpetrated against Coastal people only compound Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. Swalehika argued further:

Like I said before, everything falls on leaders, for example we ask ourselves, does the government serve Muslims the way they serve Christians? is there fairness? are Muslims and Christians treated equally? Then there are historical injustices, like my sister has said, when the Christians came to the Coast, they were welcomed, because Muslims knew their intentions were good. Even the first churches were built in Coast, not Up-country, but later this well-meaning hosts realized their visitors did not mean well. So, this goes further to explain the relationship of Muslims and Christians is not that good.

The profiling perception has a lot to do with the way Kenyan Police have dealt with issues that affect Muslims. There was general feeling amongst Muslim informants that the

government employs police who are Christians from *Bara*, who are heavy-handed when dealing with Muslims. A Muslim informant, Muniremba, indicated:

[the] problem is that the police who are serving us are not our own; even the watchmen are not indigenous, they are here for a mission. Like I said, this is Dubai⁷ for them but for us it is not Dubai, in fact we have been oppressed, we don't have a voice in our own land. You see, all bad things are labelled on us: terrorism, gangs, [etc.]

My interactions with Muslim informants revealed that the 'mission' referred to is that of advancing a Christian agenda and values. Emerging Churches are the ones who are at the forefront of advancing the gospel message. Muslims in the meeting narrated how some police officers are involved in preaching in Christian crusades⁸.

Muslim informants reported seeing police officers and other government workers as people who are there to hamper them and advance Christianity. Mwakimalo, a *Pwani* Muslim scholar whom I interviewed, captured this well by stating that:

One thing that also is not easy to detect amongst Muslims is that the Muslims feel that officers of the national government are largely Christians and when they, the officers, for example, in the line of their duty they do something that the Muslims are not very happy about, they don't look at them as officers of the national government, they look at them as Christian officers of the national government...so, if someone feels that a Policeman has done something wrong to them, then they look at the religious traditions of the Policeman and feel that because this Policeman is a Christian.

Although the perceived profiling and mistreatment of Muslims is a significant problem for Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa, there was no indication from the informants that Muslims are seeking to engage Christians and the National government to address the issue, or that the latter feel this is a significant problem that warrants seeking solutions. As a result, there

⁷ Dubai in this context means a place you visit or go to for business but you have no attachment to.

⁸ 'Crusade' here means preaching in the streets or stadiums

is the risk of young Muslim people who feel targeted and profiled embracing the kind of radicalism that *Al-Shabaab* has strategically placed itself in the region to spread. Although my informants were mostly talking about the police and government, they do not see this as separate from religion. To them, religion comes into every part of it.

By contrast, Christian informants were mostly positive about the role of the National government. Then again, some even think the National government favours Muslims, a curious sentiment given the grievances expressed by Muslims. For example, an informant, Suleimanga, from an emerging Church said: “The National government is ignorant, so by design they are on the side of the Muslims, and this is seen mostly on how they handle issues related to Christians and Muslims—there is that bias.” Overall, Christian informants indicated that despite its weaknesses, the National government is positively playing its role.

This section reveals several insights into Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa, including the Muslim perception that the political decisions advanced by National government are geared towards fulfilling a Christian agenda of evangelizing the region and frustrating Islamic efforts. It does not help matters that despite police officers being accused of profiling Muslims, some of their members from emerging Churches do engage in ‘open-air crusades.’ This was confirmed by a Christian informant, Liuembeka, who leads one of the emerging Churches in Mombasa. The practice of police preaching in police uniform only cements the perception that the National government is after advancing the Christian agenda of conversion of people in the region and frustrating Islam. Later on, the government banned the practice of police officers preaching while in police uniform (*The Star* 2019).

The tacit role of some religious authorities in fostering these grievances is made clear by anecdotal evidence provided by the informants. For example, the police officers that participated in the crusades or ‘open-air’ meetings were largely from Pentecostal and

charismatic emerging churches such as the Deliverance Church, Redeemed Gospel Church and Neno Evangelism (matching the charismatic styles of religious authority described in Chapter 2). Decisions to hold such meetings are usually made by the charismatic leader based on what they feel is the ‘will of God’, and are not put to debate by the members to determine the implications of police preaching while in their official government uniforms. The implicit message is that the government is working with churches to advance Christianity at the expense of Islam. It is also clear in these cases that the nature of religious authorities in emerging Churches leads to decisions that end up straining Christian-Muslim relations: while religious authorities of mainline Churches would debate sensitive issues such as ‘crusades’ and deliberate based on context, in emerging Churches decisions are made by the charismatic leader based on feelings.

In the past, conservative Muslims have responded to the perceived discrimination and marginalization by attempting to form their own political parties. An example of this is the Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK), formed by postcolonial regimes by “mobilizing Muslims to demand justice by resorting to politicized Islam” (Ndzovu 2012:25). This party was also formed as a response to what was perceived as the failure of moderate Muslim organizations such as SUPKEM, who were seen as being too close to the National government and not doing much to address issues of Muslims (Ndzovu 2012:35). The National government rejected the registration of IPK on the grounds that the Constitution prohibits religious-based political parties. As a result of the absence of a Muslim political party to address Muslim grievances, a number of organizations were formed to provide them with a platform for engaging in national politics, thereby increasing the politicization of Islam (Ndzovu 2012).

Some conservative Muslim groups have also responded to political challenges by demanding the establishment of an independent Muslim state or autonomous region along the

coastal strip where Muslims could live according to *Sharia* law (Oded 1996:406). Conservative Muslims in Mombasa have in the past attacked Muslim politicians who cooperated with the government and accused them of taking care of their own private interests and ignoring fellow Muslims (Oded 1996:409).

Christians and the Mombasa County government

This section will briefly look at the dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa as it relates to decisions made by the County government of the city, which can either create an environment that facilitates and encourages tolerance, or engage in policies and practices that enable intolerance and extremism.

Mombasa County government is led by members of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM). This is a party whose leader, Raila Odinga, professes Christian faith. He entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a Muslim organization, the National Muslim Leaders Forum (NAMLEF) stating that the organisation's support would depend, amongst others, on the commitment that he will "initiate, within the first year, deliberate policies and programmes to redress historical, current and structural marginalization and injustices on Muslims in Kenya" (Ndzovu 2014:59). This was an amendment to another controversial version of this MOU which stated that, as a condition for NAMLEF to mobilize Muslims to support Raila Odinga's presidential bid, "The Candidate—who recognizes Islam as the only true religion—is seeking to become the next President of the Republic of Kenya" (Ndzovu 2014:162) and that "within 6 months [he would] re-write the constitution of Kenya to recognize Shariah as the only law sanctioned by the Holy Quran for Muslims community" (Ndzovu 2014:163). The same version of the MOU also allegedly required that Raila Odinga:

Ensure that the Coast Province shall henceforth be known as JIMBO LA

PWANI⁹ and shall have full autonomy in Governance in all matters apart from National Defence and International Accreditation. In addition, while freedom of worship will be upheld at the JIMBO LA PWANI. the Council of Islamic leaders shall be permitted to have oversight role to monitor activities of ALL other religions and any application for religious activities and institutions will require their approval. They shall have the right to deny approval to cults and other evil practices (Ndzovu 2014:163).

Even though the veracity of this controversial MOU is debatable, what is certain is that the ODM as a party has drawn overwhelming support from Muslims in Mombasa in the last decade. This is partly because Muslims in particular, and coastal residents in general, believe that Raila Odinga can help correct injustices against the people of the region.

Mombasa County is politically dominated by Muslims who hold important roles, including governor and other strategic positions. Although Christians make up a substantial part of the population in Mombasa, this is not reflected in leadership roles at the County level. The governor of Mombasa is Hassan Ali Joho, a Muslim. The current majority leader Hamisi M. Mwidani, the current minority leader Maimuna Salim Mwawasi, and Speaker Aharub Ebrahim are also Muslims (Mombasa County Assembly n.d.; Mombasa County Assembly 2017). Christians are seen as outsiders and are always hesitant to seek higher political roles in Mombasa. This has led to Muslims having an edge over Christians on elected positions. Consequently, decisions have been made at the county government level that Christians view as discriminatory against them, which has created further division.

According to an informant from an emerging Church, Elijaza, even though Christians are overshadowed in the Mombasa County government, given the significant number of Christian voters in Mombasa some small steps are taken to avoid the backlash of ignoring them. My understanding, gleaned from discussions and interviews, is that the ‘unwritten’ rule in

⁹ Coastal Province.

recent elections in Mombasa is that if a candidate vying to be governor is a Muslim, they always choose a Christian running mate. Currently, there is a Muslim governor and a Christian deputy governor, William K. Kingi. Nevertheless, a deputy governor can hardly bring meaningful changes needed by Christians in a Muslim-dominated County government that has the strong backing of conservative Muslims. The political structure, which ensures that decisions are made by a majority Muslim council, makes it hard to adopt decisions that are favourable to Christians. According to Elijaza, “The Mombasa County government has several public forums, where Christians are not represented, because we are not even informed of these forums.”

Christian informants were mostly negative about the County government, as opposed to their views about the National government. The informants gave several reasons for their negative views. Firstly, they argued that they are excluded from decision-making processes. Tindilo, a Christian informant from an emerging Church, indicated that

the politics of this city have also affected the relationship [between Christians and Muslims], because when you look at the leaders who have been elected, all are Muslims and there is a word that the governor influenced the outcome; so, this does not go well with Christians hence affecting the relationship.

Similarly, another informant (Lagomba) from a mainline Church indicated that

The leadership at the County level is a major concern for both Muslims and Christians; historically, they believe that Muslims must always be the leaders of this region and that is something that has made Christians to feel left out in the leadership.

Secondly, Christian informants argued that the Mombasa County government is hostile to them and that it is determined to frustrate Christianity while promoting Islam. They point to several decisions to support their position. Many respondents complained that Christians in Mombasa are no longer allowed to distribute flyers to advertise open-air meetings and

conferences. I myself was surprised that, unlike years back when I would receive brochures at the entrance of the Churches I attended, this time there were none in any of the churches I attended. When I asked the reason for this, I was told that the County government banned them.

Informants also indicated that the Mombasa County government is charging exorbitant prices for church billboards and as such it makes it difficult to advertise Church services and crusades. Applications for a permit to allow Christian meetings is also subjected to unnecessary and difficult hurdles. An informant, Sammale, from an emerging Church observed that

Just for your information, the Church in Mombasa is under siege from Muslims, because they are the leaders. For example, we cannot hold crusades anymore, most church venues have been taken by Muslim schools and you cannot also put up a signboard for your church, put up posters or issue fliers because it is very expensive and prohibitive.

There was the perception amongst Christian informants that the Mombasa County government was determined to stop Christian activities that were evangelical in nature. Tindilo expressed the view that one must pay a premium to have billboards, posters or other signage and that the county government “wanted to start a monthly premium for all the church structures in the town.” However, he indicated that they talked to the Minister about not charging church structures and that “they put the issue on hold.” This decision is especially affecting members of emerging churches as they are the ones heavily involved in crusades, revival meetings¹⁰, and the use of brochures and flyers as advertising tools.

Another informant, Brunaki, from an emerging Church who was planning a crusade the following month was not sure whether it would happen because of the high fee charged by the County government to hold such meetings. However, it does seem that even Muslims have to

¹⁰ Preaching that focus on spiritual awakening and healing.

pay for permits to hold *mihadhara*,¹¹ as indicated by informant Adamale (a conservative Muslim), who said that the reason for the few meetings they currently conduct is

because of the permit which you have to pay a fee to NEMA [National Environment Management Authority] 5000 Kenya Shillings [around \$60-100AUD depending on exchange rate]; and then I can do *mihadhara* for one week, so it will become hard if I don't have that money every week; but it is not because you are fearing someone.

Another decision by the County government that Christians in Mombasa have taken as an attack on Christianity is a decision to stop religious gatherings in schools or to charge costs that are prohibitive. According to an informant, Tindilo,

most of the churches had been meeting in schools which are owned by the County government; so, the governor passed law that no more religious gathering in schools, and if any, they should pay a premium of three thousand shillings per meeting; when you look at it, this was targeting Christians.

The reason most Christians believe that this decision targets Christians is that they (and especially emerging churches) are primarily the ones who hire or rent schools for their services. Muslims in Mombasa hardly use schools for their religious meetings because they have their own mosques and *madrassahs*¹².

Christian informants see the actions of the Mombasa County government as deliberate efforts to curtail Christianity and promote Islam. An informant, Sammale, argues that Muslims and County government “have succeeded in silencing the church because that was their agenda; even overnight prayers you need a permit to do them.” He also indicated that even though Muslims are required to abide by all religious requirements set by the County government, they are easily exempted if they make a request—a privilege that is hardly given to Christians.

¹¹ Street preaching. Can also mean to deliver an education lecture

¹² Arabic word for any type of educational institution, secular or religious.

Indeed, the impact of policies of the County government on Christian activities was evident in the period of my fieldwork in Mombasa. It seemed that the numbers of crusades were drastically down, Christian posters (which used to be ubiquitous in the past) can hardly be seen now, and what Christians call “Revival Meetings” are significantly subdued. It is hard to see the impact of these policies on Muslim organizations other than *mihadhara*, given that Muslims in Mombasa do not have the equivalent of revival meetings and ‘open-air meetings.’

It is not clear what the various Christian responses to the actions of Mombasa County government are going to be, or whether there will be any lobbying efforts. An informant, Earnepato, from an emerging Church stated: “Actually, we cannot tell if there is anything cooking. But the only thing that might be cooking, is the political aspect, where if a Christian becomes very aggressive to be a governor that might trigger a conflict.” This is especially true because *Pwani* people are likely to interpret the aggressive political participation of *Bara* people as an attempt to dominate them. This can only give momentum to the *Pwani si Kenya* (Coast is not part of Kenya) movement. *Pwani si Kenya* is an expression of secessionism that characterises Mombasa and other coastal places based on historical political debates of the late 1950s and early 1960s, when politics in coastal Kenya revolved around the possibility that the Ten-Mile Strip in Mombasa, nominally the sovereign territory of the Sultan of Zanzibar, might not become a part of independent Kenya, and around the regionalist constitution of 1963-4 (Willis 2013). Following the elections of 2007, there was a significant increase in public expressions of secessionist feelings on the Kenya coast. During 2010 and 2011, one manifestation of this was the emergence of the Mombasa Republic Council (MRC), which demands independence for the coastal region (Willis 2013).

Although the position of the deputy governor is not as powerful as that of the governor, there were signs that the current office holder is bringing a Christian agenda for consideration.

A moderate Muslim informant, Mwakimalo, indicated that:

now, since last year, we have the governor's Christmas tree. But for sometimes it was not there—maybe the last two-three years—it was not there. Until now we have a deputy governor who is a Christian and very Christian (sic). Now we have the governor's Christian tree. But you know the person who strongly participate in it is the deputy governor. And the moment they started doing that, the Muslims started saying that 'oh, why are they bringing this thing here?' You know, so you see they start asking questions, but they don't bring it to the open. Only when they are together as Muslims do they say, 'you see now they want to erase our Muslim tradition; they want to bring this Christian tradition.' But the Christian themselves also they say 'we must also assert ourselves; our tradition must be recognized—so, we need something to show that.

Although symbolic, this issue of the Christmas tree shows a deputy governor willing to advance a Christian agenda, at least through symbolism.

This section advances our understanding of Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa in several ways: politics in Mombasa is not divorced from religion, and political decisions are seen by ordinary people through a religious prism. To Christians, the Mombasa County government has adopted political decisions that have been perceived to target activities carried out by Churches, especially emerging Churches. These deep-seated, perceived, and real grievances show how politics and religion are wedded in Mombasa.

External influences on Christian-Muslim Relations in Mombasa

When I have been in Mombasa for personal reasons in the past, it was common to find Muslims gathered in the evening listening to the BBC on the radio. I found upon my return for fieldwork in 2018 that news updates from television stations such as *Al Jazeera* are religiously followed by many Muslims. Social forums such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter have also become important avenues for consuming both international and national news. An expression of the global *ummah*, any religious tension involving Muslims in any part of the globe, is immediately felt in Mombasa (see Singleton 2014). Similarly, a number of Christian television

channels and radio stations have emerged that propagate charismatic gospel, which Christians in Mombasa access through their social media. This has a direct link to Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. This section will look at how actions of extreme groups outside the local Mombasa ecology are shaping Christian-Muslim relations in the city. It is argued in this section that external forces are bringing teachings that are radicalising both Christians and Muslims, and in the process are contributing to negative relations between the two.

Some of the tensions in Mombasa are driven by the global political environment. I find that Muslims are very keen and interested in global affairs; this theme was evident in the focus groups. Muslims in Mombasa are especially sympathetic to the situation of the Palestinians in Middle East. A Muslim informant, Muhusinga, observed that “For example, in Palestine, the Muslims who are there feel oppressed, because they have been denied what belongs to them by the people they welcomed in their land.” This sentiment is very common amongst Muslims in Mombasa; the idea of global *ummah* is strongly experienced there just like in other parts of Kenya.

According to another moderate Muslim informant, Khalifando, who is a leader of one of the largest Muslim organizations in Kenya:

We can say that something that brought about a problem in Christian-Muslim relations here is the world's political direction. The focus of the world on Al-Qaeda, the actions of the Jews on Palestinians have caused problems between Christians and Muslims ... then the actions of Al-Qaeda while they are being dealt with by countries such as America and her friends has stoked hatred. Now the fight against terror has dramatically changed the good relationship between Islam and Christianity for the worse

Mombasa has also experienced several terror attacks. A number of these attacks were based on global issues and not local ones. One such attack took place at the Kikambala hotel in Mombasa. This hotel is owned by an Israeli national and it is believed the hotel was targeted because of the issues in the Middle East. Although the targets of these attacks are usually

foreigners, most casualties are usually Kenyans. This in turn has a direct impact on Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. The foreign-inspired terror attacks on mostly Christian targets (or in this case, Jewish) and symbols of Christianity sends the message to Christians that they are under attack from Muslims. An emerging Church informant, Elijaza, stated that charismatic religious authorities pass this message to their members leading to fear and intolerance.

A number of Westerners have also been abducted on the Coast and taken across to nearby Somalia to send message to the international community (Rice 2011). A number of perpetrators have been identified as foreigners, especially from Somalia (*The Washington Post* 2018). According to a moderate Muslim informant, Khalifando, “although the terrorists have other agendas, they always portray their activities as defending Islam and curtailing Christians and their agenda to draw people to Christianity”.

Actions like the abduction of foreigners and other terror activities do attract disproportionate government actions on local Muslims, which then continues the cycle of churning up new Conservatives who see themselves as targets of Christian-dominated government. For example, following the terrorist attack in Kikambala, “initially any national root causes or responsibility for the attacks was denied” and then “there was a disproportionate response by the Kenyan security apparatus (Botha 2013:6). For example, in September 2003 police officials in Mombasa arrested more than 800 people. This formed part of a wider campaign in which an estimated 1,200 people, mostly foreigners, were arrested in an effort to identify terror suspects. This dragnet approach caused a public outcry, which included allegations of the violation of people’s right of free movement and assembly (Botha 2013:6). As a result,

Discriminatory responses further fuelled sentiments of marginalisation. Many of the arrests appear to have been discriminatory and arbitrary, with many Muslims, particularly ethnic Somalis and Arabs, being targeted ...

Growing frustrations as a result of anti-Western sentiments manifested themselves in attacks being perpetrated against a number of churches and businesses with Western connections (Botha 2013:6).

In summary, global terrorists' attacks and other activities of extreme Muslim groups and the corresponding anti-terrorism responses (supported by emerging churches) that mostly target Muslims directly affect Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa in a negative way. Global terrorist attacks create a negative perception of Islam, while anti-terrorism laws strengthen radical groups who use it to persuade recruits that Christians and the West are out to curtail Islam and punish Muslims.

Having explored religion and politics, the next section will look at religion in the everyday social world of people in Mombasa.

Social Flashpoints of Tension Between Christian and Muslims in Mombasa

There are several social issues that either unify or divide Christians and Muslims in Mombasa. This section will look at how they respond to social issues in the city and how this in turn shapes their relations.

A mainline Church informant, Anikatu, who is heavily involved in interreligious dialogue in Mombasa, observed:

What I find in Mombasa—you have like let's say most of the butchers for example, they are owned by Muslims so it is a very easy way of solving a conflict of having *halal* meat, for example, so everyone can go now to that shop to buy meat. For the Christians it is okay, for the Muslims it is okay.

Indeed, there are several issues like this that are not sources of tensions between Christians and Muslims, unlike other parts of the world. It can be said that the same social issues that unify can also be sources of tension between Christians and Muslims. I will now look at one of these issues, specifically schools, because these are melting pots where people

of various religious backgrounds converge to learn together.

Schools

Schools are highly regarded in Kenya as providing a good education, and have been the vehicle for many to break out of poverty. Primary education is universal in Kenya, but often not great quality. Kenya has both public and private schools. Public schools are usually overcrowded and poor students. As such, many parents who have the means are increasingly turning to private schools to give their children a better opportunity to succeed. A number of those private schools are religious, and there are Christian and Muslim ones. A further distinction is that there are schools run by mainline Churches, emerging Churches, moderate Muslims and conservative Muslims. It is argued in this study that private schools run by emerging Churches and conservative Muslim organizations are stricter in applying exclusive values that end up causing tensions and division with members of another religion compared to private schools run by mainline Churches and moderate Muslim groups.

Just like in the neighbouring country of Tanzania, where the education sector is growing stratified and commodified (Dilger 2013), the same has been happening in Kenya over the years. At secondary level, public schools are classified under different categories: national, provincial, district and divisional.¹³ In most cases, National schools are the best-performing schools and only accept academic high achievers from different parts of the country. Many religious private primary schools have established a reputation for equipping their students to attain grades that qualify them to join 'National Schools.' Religious private schools at the secondary level also compete for the few spaces at public universities.

¹³ National Schools are the top-ranked schools that accepts the best students from all the counties; Provincial schools are the second-ranked schools that accepts smart students who were not absorbed by National schools while district schools accept students at the district level.

Demand and competition for good schools has led to the mushrooming of private schools in cities such as Mombasa. As of May 2011, there were 43 private secondary schools in Mombasa County alone (Racho 2011). Many of these private schools are run by religious institutions, Christians or Muslim. Some of Christian private schools in Mombasa include: Mombasa Baptist High School, Bridge of Hope Academy, St. Angeline Maraluot Academy Primary School, Star of David Christian Academy, Mombasa Starshine Primary School, Faith Junior Academy, High Visioned Academy Primary School, Sunshine Junior Academy Primary School and Maranatha Primary School. Some of Muslim-based private schools in Mombasa include: Mombasa Muslim Academy, Qubaa Muslim School, Al Kheir Muslim School, Liwatoni Muslim Secondary School, Zulfaa Muslim School, The Falah Muslim School Society and Mujahidina Muslim School. In terms of costs, schools set different fees depending on their understanding of what parents can afford. Others charge 500 shillings (USD 5) for admissions fee, 200 shillings for tuition (USD 2), 40 shillings for the feeding programme (USD 0.4) and 30 shillings (USD 0.3) for general school fund (Williams 2009:16). Al-fa'tihah Academy charged 6000 shillings (USD 60) for lower primary and 6,500 (USD 65) for upper primary. Alfarsy charged 8,000 shillings (USD 80) for primary (Williams 2009:23). Some private schools can cost up to USD 5,000 per annum, while public schools are supposed to be free.

How private religious schools shape Christian-Muslim relations depend on whether they are managed by mainline Churches, emerging Churches, moderate Muslims or conservative Muslims. Schools that are managed by moderate Muslim groups may focus on religious values but they are also open to the presence of Christians in their school. For example, many Muslim schools in Mombasa are dominated by Christian teachers and that this could be because not many Muslims have the qualifications to undertake this very specific professional task (Williams 2009:12). In these moderate Muslim schools, Christian teachers feel “very comfortable and accepted at work” and point to the fact that they are not

discriminated (Williams 2009:21). However, conservative Muslims prefer to have Muslim teachers as they do not wish to have students influenced by non-Muslims (Williams 2009:12).

Undoubtedly, whether private or public, schools can produce effective cross-religious interactions, as is the case in other locations (Singleton, Halafoff, Rasmussen and Bouma 2021). This became clear when I met a moderate Muslim informant, Mwakijeo, who is a principal of a public school. Most of the students in the school are Muslims but there is a significant number of Christian students. There are more Christian teachers than Muslim ones in this school. As I sat with the principal in his office, I witnessed Muslim students freely mingling and in deep conversation with their Christian peers; they did not seem to notice any difference between them. When I asked the principal about the friendship between Muslim and Christian students, he replied: “Yeah, they get along very well. These are students who have been in the same primary school—most of them have grown together here and have become friends.” It is clear from the interaction of Muslim and Christian students in this school that the more time they have spent together, the more they have learnt to trust one another and get along regardless of their religious background. Their friendship enables them to overcome stereotypical labels that society places on members of the other faith.

The positive role of schools in peaceful co-existence was further demonstrated by a mainline Church informant, Yakobo, who has spearhead interreligious dialogue between Christians and Muslims in Mombasa. He attested to the fact that “our children go to the same schools, so we don’t have an alternative other than live together as a people.” Spending time together has enabled friendship across religious divide to flourish. Because Christians and Muslim students are friends, it is hard to find any religious conflict between them; these students have learnt to embrace friendship despite their allegiance to different religious faiths. As a Muslim Principal Mwakijeo indicated, “we have not had any problem of religious

conflict.” This point seems to be validated by another moderate Muslim informant, Nassorombe, who said, “There is a friend of mine called Kelvin. We are friends from school and when we have ceremonies both on our side and on their side, we cooperate in many ways, it’s like brotherhood.” According to Nassorombe, “for those close to me, I know they have friends who are Christians and vice versa”.

Data such as the Pew Research report mentioned in the first chapter paints a picture of how there are widespread negative attitudes between Christians and Muslims. However, what it fails to capture is that some of those who do not have negative attitudes towards members of another faith are not neutral—they are like Nassorombe and other Muslims, who maintain friendships with their Christian neighbours, colleagues and school mates.

Friendship in schools does not mean that students are subscribing to a particular faith. As a matter of fact, in the school that I visited to interview the principal students attended different religious classes: Muslims attend courses on Islamic Religious Education (IRE), while Christians attend courses on Christian Religious Education (CRE). All primary school students in Kenya were expected to study both the IRE and CRE. Knowing what the other believes is vital in addressing misconceptions (Singleton, Halafoff, Rasmussen and Bouma 2021). According to Mwakijeo, the idea of respecting another person’s religion is encouraged “because even the founders of religion [Islam] respected other people’s religion.” A mainline Church informant, Lagomba, appreciated Muslims in Mombasa because “they have embraced education, even want their children to learn in Christian school. This is good, because the more people are educated the more you avoid incidences associated with ignorance”. This point was demonstrated by the Muslim Principal, Mwakijeo, who indicated that he attended a school where Muslims were the minority and the principal was a Catholic, and that there he learnt vital lessons on how to co-exist with people from a different religious belief.

Unlike public schools, religious private schools in Mombasa have been sources of tension between Christians and Muslims. Christian and Muslim schools have the goal of achieving high academic standards, as this is a major reason why parents send their children there. However, they also have certain religious values to maintain, which members of a different religion may not want to partake in. Negotiating a balance between academic excellence and meeting religious obligations or requirements is one of the fine lines religious institutions have to walk.

Instead of religious private schools becoming avenues where students from Christian and Muslim backgrounds can meet and build friendships that could quell hostilities, they have, unfortunately, become places where religious conflict, suspicions, and ‘dictatorship’ thrives. The drivers of the hostility are, however, usually not students but adults, who tend to politicise schools. According to Mwakijeo, “Most of the challenges that schools face are not brought by the students themselves but by outsiders and that the students themselves don’t care about their differences because they are friends, they share their books, they share pens...”. Schools, like other social institutions in Mombasa, cannot escape the ecology in which they operate.

There are several reasons why religious private schools have become a battleground between Christians and Muslims. From Muslim parents’ point of view, Christian schools aim to convert their children to Christianity. According to Nassorombe,

First, these Catholic schools when we take our children to these schools, they are forced to do Christian traditions like worship, which is hard for a Muslim child to be told to worship like a Christian, so this is one thing that offends us as Muslims.

The issue of Muslim students in Mombasa being required to do things that make them uncomfortable from a religious standpoint is not uncommon.

As explained in Chapter 1, the World Health Organization has identified the unequal

distribution of educational services as an important factor that can contribute to conflict between groups (WHO 2002:221). Religious differences in schools can also cause tension. Muslim students who convert to Christianity face isolation. Christians who convert to Islam might experience isolation too, but according to an informant, this pales in comparison to a Muslim. A moderate Muslim informant, Swalehika, who is a high school teacher, indicated that:

what I know is of students who went through madrassa but at some point, in their school life they convert to be a Christians and live on as a Christian even in their adult life. But what I know it is normally not received well, even in the school where I teach, if a Muslim student becomes a Christian, she faces isolation from those who are Muslims, but as a teacher even though I don't like her decision, I have to protect her as teacher.

This statement reveals that as much as school staff may not be happy with a Muslim converting to Christianity, they are tolerant and even willing to "protect" those that have converted from persecution. This reveals that public schools that are led by moderate Muslims recognize individual choices made by students even when they find them disappointing.

Ironically, the same informant indicated that

we rejoice when one or two Christians become Muslims, to us it is an achievement; like in the school where I teach. Once they convert, we have a function where other schools come, we call the converts [to Islam] to give a testimony that they are now Muslims.

This makes clear that moderate Muslims do not necessarily divorce their work from their religious responsibilities.

Christians too have issues with the Islamic schools that they send their children to. As a matter of fact, Christian informants also expressed concern about how Muslims are using some public schools for their purposes. According to an emerging Church informant, Suleimanga, "today every public secondary and primary school you will find a mosque, but try

to build a church inside there, there will be fire...they will not allow [it].”

Conservative Muslims have politicised the issue of schools and have even demanded the establishment of an Islamic University in Mombasa and other coastal areas (Oded 1996:408). To help address the issue of conversion to another religious faith, Mwakijeo indicated that in some public schools they do not allow students to convert to another religion without the permission of their parent. On the question of whether his students are involved in sharing their faith with other students who don't belong to their religion, the respondent said,

No, no, in fact we discourage religious arguments ...we don't like that, we tell you to practice your religion and someone will follow you because of your good character and not because of good talking; in fact, I myself I don't like *mihadharas*.

This reasoning strengthens the argument that moderate religious authorities, whether in Churches and Mosques or in schools, elevate messages that focus on peace and harmony while suppressing what they see as divisive messages of salvation and redemption.

The strategy adopted by the above respondent Mwakijeo and other public schools' principals in Mombasa is clearly an attempt to avoid conflict between the two religious groups. Even though private education is in high demand, Muslims who are on the extreme spectrum of conservative's views do not consider Christian-run schools as an option. They see these schools as places where the morals of their children become corrupted. Their preference is to send their children to 'independent integrated schools' that alternate between secular and *madrassa* classes (Williams 2009:19). For many of these conservatives, it does not matter whether those education centres are run by mainline Churches such as Catholics, who might relax rules around dress code, or emerging Churches who are strict in implementing dress code. Other Muslims can consider taking their children to Catholic schools but not those run by emerging churches and evangelical ones. According to Elijaza, moderate Muslims in Mombasa

do not mind taking their children to any Christian-run schools as long as good academic progress of their children is guaranteed.

Schools run by emerging Churches not only base their schools on Christian values, but also put a premium on salvation message. The robust way they present their salvation message to non-Christians escalates the risk of conflict, especially given the insensitivity with which they approach Muslim beliefs. Similarly, the way Muslim schools are run depends on whether they are led by moderate or conservative leaders. Some conservative Muslims do not even accept non-Muslims in their schools. They also propagate a message of exclusion that emphasizes their position as the true believers and depicts non-Muslims as infidels who are lost and enemies of Allah. In some conservative Muslim schools, although administrators do indicate that Christians are given an equal chance to attend, a teacher admitted that “[they] would prefer to keep their student population totally Muslim” (Williams 2009:22). Parents of those conservative Muslim schools also “want to know that their children are surrounded by fellow Muslims who can support and encourage them and not non-Muslims who might negatively influence them” (Williams 2009:22).

According to an informant from an emerging Church, *Elijaza*, there are more Muslim students attending Christian private schools compared to Christian students who attend Muslim private schools. This can be attributed to the fact that a number of Muslim private schools require their students to attend some purely Islamic activities such as Friday prayer (Williams 2009). However, it has been correctly pointed out that “Attitudes to the type of school to which churchgoers would prefer to send their children provide only one measure of potential social interaction across the communities” (Livingstone 1998:152). The same is likely to apply to Muslim groups.

Although the number of Christian students attending private Islamic schools is lower

compared to Muslims attending Christian schools, the behaviour is similar. Christians from emerging Churches do not want their children exposed to Islam because they see it as a corrupting force. An informant from an emerging Church, Brunaki, expressed the view that to take a child to such a school is to compromise on Christian faith. These Christians would rather send their children to Christian schools where, other than academic performance, the emphasis is on salvation and experience with God in supernatural ways. On the other hand, Christians from mainline Churches do not mind sending their children to Muslim-run schools if the school has a good track record of academic performance. This was made clear by an informant from a mainline Church, Ngalate, who indicated that those who have grounded their children in Christian faith need not be afraid of taking their children to such schools. Although it may be simplistic to say that informants from emerging Churches opposed the idea of sending their children to Muslim-run schools while those from mainline Churches were not, the general feeling from the focus group with Christians was that informants from emerging Churches were concerned about the very idea, while there were mixed but not strong viewpoints from informants from mainline Churches.

It needs to be pointed out that even in public schools, Muslims and Christians have different views of how they are to co-exist, as captured by Muhdar Khitamy, SUPKEM's provincial chairman for the Coast, who indicated that public school arrangements (whereby Muslim students receive a few hours of Islamic religious instruction weekly, while Christian classmates attend Christianity classes) is not enough, and that it is time for Muslims to be in separate schools from Christians (Muhdar Khitamy, cited by Zirulnick 2015).

This section demonstrates that schools are another flashpoint in Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. Religious schools offer the kind of academic standard that public schools do not, and yet these religious schools from both sides are viewed with suspicion from

members of the other faith. It was clear that emerging churches and conservative Muslim groups are opposed to sending children to a school run by members of a different religion, while mainline Christian and Muslim groups were not strongly opposed or were indifferent to the issue.

School Uniforms

Another cause of religious tension in Mombasa's schools, especially religious ones, is the issue of school uniforms. Private schools in Kenya do determine the kind of school uniform for their students. Christian schools and Muslim schools have adopted dressing codes that are vehemently opposed by the other. Many Christian schools insist that all students must dress the same and that *hijab* is not accepted; conversely, many Muslim schools have the *hijab* as part of their dressing code, requiring Christian female students to wear it as well.

A moderate Muslim informant, Khamisidiye, observed that

When we have schools that are religion-based, with rules that's are religious, for example if it is Christian-based, there you will find conflict about *hijab* and other religious clothes. They will demand that Muslim students don't put their religious clothes. The constitution does not give room for a religious organization to deny anyone his or her right; but you find institutions have put rules that go against the constitution, like a Muslim-run school demanding that all wear *hijab*.

A mainline Church informant, Yakobo, who is a leader in a Catholic Church, admitted that the issue of *hijab* affects Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa, indicating that "when the issues of *hijab* came into our schools where we insisted that the pupils must wear school uniform; that affected the relationship." The school uniform debate can be emotive, as the uniform can be a symbol of what the school represents. One might see it as an equality issue in the sense that school uniforms place rich and poor on the same level, while another view sees uniforms as loaded with religious symbolism. Churches run by charismatic and mainline churches argue that it is best when the schools and (church) sponsors determine the dress code

for students, and that “When (Muslim) children are being asked to dress according to schools’ dress code, it’s not discrimination. It’s part of holistic education and they are learning how to be tolerant of other people’s ethos” (Nzwili 2019: para. 4). On the other hand, “Muslim leaders and civic groups counter that the enforcement of uniforms without hijab constitutes a denial of children’s right to worship” (Nzwili 2019: para. 5).

Schools managed by mainline Churches have adopted a number of responses to the issue of school uniforms. As to how Christians address the complaints of dress codes by Muslim parents, a mainline Church informant, Kivulama, who is the leader of an organization with many Christian schools in Mombasa, said:

Well, we engage with them especially in schools, for example we have schools where their children come, we sit in the same [school] board [meeting] with them, like ‘Star of the Sea’¹⁴ where we are sponsors, in forums of security issues, public holidays and meetings that are sometimes organized by the government. Although sometimes we have had challenges with them in our schools, especially in areas of uniforms where they would demand their children to wear *hijabs*.

On how they have addressed the sensitive issue of the *hijab*, this informant said, “Through dialogue, we engage them and if it’s an issue of education, we engage the stakeholders up to the national level and come to an agreement.” Another mainline Church informant, Yakobo, who is a leader of an interreligious organization, indicated that to solve the issue of *hijab* “We had interventions at different levels, and we lastly involved the CICC, where Muslim and Christian leaders sat in a round table and resolved the issue.” However, despite the efforts of Christian school leaders, the complaints and tension about the dress code persist.

The issue of school dressing is one of the most sensitive ones in Mombasa. Christian schools insist it is their right to enforce a dressing code that reflects their values. Many

¹⁴ This is a Christian School that is run by Catholic Church in Mombasa.

Christians to whom I spoke believe that “dress codes and uniforms—customarily pleated skirts or plaid dresses for girls with sweater vests—not only provide discipline and equality but are also part of church and school traditions” and therefore if Muslims join Christian schools, they “should also follow our ethos when they come to our schools. It is about respecting the other people’s cultures. We are not trying to convert or change them” (Nzwili 2019: para.7). To conservative Muslims, “Asking the girls to remove the *hijab* is equivalent to asking the Catholic nuns to remove their veils,” and most girls who have been wearing hijab since childhood “feel naked” without it (Nzwili 2019: para.12).

Inasmuch as leadership in some of the schools, for example the Catholic schools mentioned above, have had dialogue with Muslim parents, the general view is that the issue is intractable, a small thing that expresses larger fault lines when religious traditions cannot agree of fundamental issues. My observation was that Christian schools run by emerging churches are very strict and uncompromising on their insistence that all students dress in the school uniform prescribed in the agreement with the parents. This puts them on a ‘collision course’ with very conservative Muslims who view dressing in Islamic way as something necessary and non-negotiable. In a sense, the biggest threat at present to harmonious relations is the presence of ‘strong’ or fundamentalist religions.

The way mainline Churches respond to the issue of school uniforms vary from school to school. Some of the schools have adjusted their school uniform code to allow Muslim students to come dressed in *hijab*. In many of the cases, everything about the uniforms remains the same except Muslim girls add *hijab* and put on long trouser under their skirt. Other Mainline Churches have also taken a hard stance and insists on every student wearing the same type of uniforms. Some in Mainline Churches even regard the *hijab* issue as “a ploy by a few Muslim Conservatives wishing to drive a wedge between Muslims and Christians” (Nzwili 2019:

para.14). Moreover, “this is their [Muslim] culture and we have to respect their culture.... [But] the place is owned by the Catholics,” and “We’re supposed to go by the culture of the school” (Zirulnick 2015).

There are religious reasons underlying the position different religious authorities take on social issues such as dress code. Members of emerging churches argue that they have ‘liberty in Christ’; my interpretation of what they mean by that is that they have freedom to dress the way they want if they do not have the wrong motive for doing so. These churches are trying to do away with ‘religious laws’ as much as possible and embrace a life guided by the Spirit. On the other hand, Catholic schools prefer structure, order and seek equality by way of insisting on the same dress code. Islamist groups insist on dress codes that even other Muslims are uncomfortable with. Some of this is ethnic as it is religious.

The issue for schools and school uniforms has been problematic in Mombasa and other parts of the country. In one of the instances, a case was taken to the Kenyan Supreme Court over whether Muslim students may wear hijab in Christian schools. The court reversed a lower court ruling that had allowed female students to wear Muslim headscarves to school (Nzwili 2019). Prior to this, Kenya’s Appellate Court ruled in 2016 that disallowing headscarves was unlawful, saying that forcing students to abandon a practice “genuinely held as a manifestation of their religious conviction” was against the law (Nzwili 2019: para.9). Some Muslims opposed the decision of the Supreme court, indicating that “We will continue to have our children attend the schools with the hijab” (Aden Duale, cited in Nzwili 2019: para.15). Other moderate Muslims have argued that “We need to sit, discuss and agree as the faiths,” and that “As Muslims, we still need these schools” (Nzwili 2019: para.13).

The issue of conversion in schools and that of school uniforms fit into the bigger picture and trend of religious differences impacting on social issues. In this case, even though students

seem to be able to get on well with each other, a division emerges from the way religious schools and uniforms are viewed through the religious lens. The external influence on issues such as school uniforms from parents with extremely conservative views is only blunted by friendship developed across the religious divide. Having looked at socio-political issues that condition and reflect the Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa, the next section will examine the economic issues.

Economic Flashpoints of Tension between Christians and Muslims in Mombasa

Economic marginalization of the coastal region and other Muslim-dominated regions of Kenya is an established fact. Previous chapters have already explored how economic issues were used to shape Christian-Muslim relations in pre-colonial and colonial Kenya. According to the ecological framework underpinning this thesis, we know that unequal distribution of resources can contribute to conflict between groups (WHO 2002:221). This section will examine how *current* economic issues are a locus of tension between Christians and Muslims and how different religious authorities leverage economic disparities and inequality to shape Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. It is argued in this section that mainline Churches and moderate Muslims in Mombasa perceive economic difficulties as a consequence of multiple factors, including corruption, incompetence and discrimination, and that to deal with economic challenges there is need for constructive engagement. On the other hand, members of emerging Churches and conservative Muslims perceive economic challenges as a direct result of discriminatory policies and decisions made by the political class to marginalise them on the basis of their religious inclinations.

Economic Marginalization

Mombasa is one of the counties with the highest unemployment rate. The youth unemployment rate stands at 44 per cent and is more than double the national average (Mungai 2017:6). Furthermore, Moreover, 56 per cent of the population earns less than Kshs 25,000 a month (\$250), and only 16 per cent of the population earns over Kshs 50,000 (\$500) a month (Mungai 2017:6). This, combined with the fact that 40 per cent of Mombasa population experience frequent food shortages (Mungai 2017:7), makes conflict a real possibility.

Mombasa residents have pointed the finger at different sources of their economic problems. Because of the governance structure in Kenya, it was easy for certain tribes to dominate the decision-making process and favour their own when it came to resource allocation (Botha 2014:3). Kenyan history demonstrates that the economic fortune of some regions or parts thereof has historically been tied to proximity to power (Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission 2013:101). Coastal people have blamed the Kamba, Kikuyu, Luo, Luhya and other groups for excluding them and exploiting their resources (Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission 2013:99).

In the process, many Muslim-dominated areas had poor infrastructure, poor economic activities and poor academic standards. As explained in the previous chapters, the issue of discrimination of coastal areas pre-dates independent Kenya. The colonial government developed areas that were receptive to them. Many Kenyans from *Bara* attained education way before *Pwani* people. As a result, some of these educated people went to *Pwani* where they got managerial jobs at the expense of the local people. These managers, in turn, hired people from their own tribes. This led to resentment against ‘outsiders’ as stealing what rightfully belongs to *Pwani* people (Willis 2013).

A conservative Muslim informant, Muniremba, argued that

Before, it was easy to get a job in Mombasa even if with a form 4 certificate (secondary certificate), but as our friends (*Bara* people) came with more qualifications than us, they took the jobs that belonged to us and that is where the problem began. If everyone was coming to Mombasa to do business and go back to their homes, then we will not have problems. But our friends came and settled here, taking what is ours.

Although jobs are offered on merit, *Pwani* people expect their people to be in managerial positions. According to conservative Muslim informant Muniremba,

So, when these visitors [Christians from up-country] came, we welcomed them knowing that it is our brothers and sisters because they were black like us; even though we knew they had their own religion, and we had our own. We also knew that they will do their stuff and leave us do our stuff (sic), knowing that this is our home and they are here to meet their needs and go back to their homes. Unfortunately, that's not what happened, because they settled down, and as we [indigenous Africans] continued to give birth, the space and opportunities became few. As a result, the indigenous people began to get education to be the same with the visitors, and this is how the conflicts began to arise, due to competition for employment as the locals wanted jobs and the visitors [Christians] wanted to take everything without considering the welfare of the locals. But from the beginning, we Muslims, did not have a problem with Christians, because if we had, they would not have stayed here till today.

It was clear from interacting with participants in the Muslim focus group that they felt Christians were the source of their economic woes. There was consensus from all members as one speaker after the other continued to express how the presence of Christians from *Bara* have caused their economic problems. The indisputable economic disadvantage of *Pwani* people is part of the reason why the Coast overwhelming supported devolution and a Constitutional referendum, seen as an opportunity to correct this economic marginalization. This does show, however, that in places where there are issues of religious tension, there are also often deeper threats of other kinds of marginalisation, whether racial, cultural or economic. This has been captured well in a Belfast case study, which found that:

Responses to questions about fairness in employment in Northern Irish society show that an overwhelming majority of all Protestant denominations (95 percent+) is convinced that 'Catholics generally get a fair deal'...In contrast, there is a strong Catholic sense that, in its

employment practices, Northern Ireland has been less than kind to Catholics; only a quarter agree that Catholics are equitably treated while a massive 96% believe that Protestants get a fair deal. It is plain, then, that both communities shoulder some sense of grievance, though this is more widely felt amongst Catholics. At the same time, neither community seems to have much sense that the 'other' is disadvantaged in the job market. For each community the geographical distribution of perceived disadvantage follows the contours of their own ethnic group (Livingstone 1998:155).

One of the most sensitive economic issues in Mombasa is land. Although the issue of title deeds is a problem in other parts of Kenya, it is especially worse on the Coast and in Northern Kenya. This means that most residents are unable to receive loans from banks to advance their businesses, given the fact that a title deed is one of the prerequisites for a bank to grant a loan. The result is the economic impoverishment of the locals, who often must depend on government handouts. The situation has been made worse by the persistent failure by successive governments to address the issue, thus fuelling conspiracy theories and allegations that *Baraa* people have taken land from *Pwani* people (Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission 2013:103).

Different religious authorities have responded differently to the land issue. Although moderate and tolerant Muslim leaders see it as a stumbling block toward peaceful Christian-Muslim relations, they advocate for the government to resolve this and other issues of economic injustice toward *Pwani* people. On the other hand, Conservatives and radical Muslim groups use the issue of economic marginalization to create a schism with Christians and to recruit young people into organizations with extreme ideologies such as *Al Shabaab*.

The issue of land allocation also applies in Mombasa. Muniremba observed that:

The problem is that; people who came to Mombasa took advantage of that kindness of people of Mombasa. For example, in Mombasa, there are more churches than mosques; and when you look at the history of this town, most of the leaders have been Muslims but they allowed these churches to be built, because according to our religion, for us to connect with our God we must live well with fellow human beings...the problem with those (visitors)

who came to Mombasa is that they were given an inch and now they want to take everything from the owners. This problem forced the people of Mombasa to now want to put everything on the table and solve this, but we realized this when it was too late.

The issue of land is not just limited to allocation to Churches. Most beach plots and prime land in Mombasa are owned by people from *Bara*. According to a TJRC report,

“Only the President of the Republic of Kenya had the power to allocate beach plots and land facing the sea. It is not surprising that most of this land would be allocated and is now controlled by well-connected up-country Kenyans or foreigners, many of them absentee landlords (Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission 2013:105).

Although many Muslims see themselves as victims of economic marginalization, many Christians in Mombasa also complain of being marginalized by Muslims. An emerging Church informant, Penimbo, indicated that some Muslim bosses prefer to employ fellow Muslims even though a Christian candidate might be more educated and qualified. However, the fact that some Muslim private schools employ more Christians than Muslims shows that the issue of Christians being discriminated in employment might not be as entrenched and systemic as is implied.

This inequality was a very important reason why people in Mombasa and the Coast in general overwhelmingly voted for change of constitution to allow for a devolved system of governance. Below is table of the results from constituencies in Mombasa that I have adapted from the *Kenya Government Gazette* (The Constitution of Kenya Review Act (Referendum) Regulations 2010:3144):

Table 4.1. Results of the referendum

Constituency	Yes Votes	No Votes	% Yes Votes	% No Votes	% Rejected
Changamwe	42,515	13,658	73.30	23.55	3.15
Kisauni	54,494	15,989	74.97	22.00	3.03
Likoni	22,710	4,322	80.32	15.29	4.39
Mvita	32,820	7,065	80.09	17.24	2.67

The devolved governance brought in County governments, which include Mombasa County. Although not perfect, the devolution system of governance is popular amongst Kenyans and is seen by many as a better system, as it ensures that a given percentage of funds are allocated to every county (whereas in the past, the central government single-handedly determined resource allocations to different regions). Despite *Pwani* people paying significant taxes due to the touristic appeal of the area, the money was hardly ever returned to *Pwani*; instead, the National government would use it to develop other regions, mainly Christian-dominated (Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission 2013:99).

There is evidence that devolution is working by economically empowering residents of Mombasa (Mwikali 2015:769). A mainline Church informant, Kivulama, argued that devolution has helped improve Christian-Muslim relations, and that it “has helped in terms of bringing resources to the grassroots and involving the common *Mwananchi* [citizens].” It was

clear from interactions with respondents that some straining of Christian-Muslim relations was caused by the perception that Christians are economically favoured and Muslims economically marginalized. This explains why economic empowerment through a devolved government is resulting in improved relations, as resources are distributed on the basis of an agreed formula, hence allaying any fear or perception of discrimination.

The one-on-one interviews and focus group meetings revealed that many Muslims do not understand that Christians in *Pwani* are often victims of economic marginalization. The perceived marginalization of *Pwani* and the lack of education about its cause puts Christians in jeopardy, and indeed Christian-Muslim relations.

There is evidence that the impact of economic difficulties has affected not only Christian-Muslim relations but also tribal relations within both faiths. In Mombasa, Muslims of Arab descent are typically wealthier compared to indigenous African Muslims (Shepherd 2013). This is not surprising given the fact that they are descendants of those who dominated the political and economic landscape of Mombasa in the pre-colonial and colonial period. This economic inequality is a cause of resentment that is reflected in where one attends the mosque. A moderate Muslim informant, Mwakimalo, a scholar himself, said that in Mombasa Muslims of African descent prefer to attend a mosque that is led by an indigenous Sheikh and not an Arab one. Indeed, it is common to find mosques predominantly attended by those of Arabic descent, others by Somalis, and others by Mijikenda (Indigenous Africans).

Although many Muslims in Mombasa see themselves as one, ethnic tensions are still strong. The difference between Arabs and indigenous people is deep and has a long history (Pretholdt 2014:250). This is a source of tension with indigenous Muslims who see Arabs as invaders. Furthermore, the issue of slave trade and oppression of local Africans in the pre-colonial period caused a divide whose effect is still felt in the present (Pretholdt 2014:255-6).

Overall, responses to the issue of economic marginalization of Mombasa are viewed differently by Christians and Muslims, depending on what kind of religious authority guides their theology. Mainline churches such as Catholic ones see inequality as the fault of the government, and consider Muslims' anger on this issue as justifiable. Mainline Churches are also heavily involved in economic interventions that improve the quality of life of Mombasa residents. Their projects are not tied to the mission of conversion and in most cases, Muslims are happy to be involved. On the other hand, emerging churches are dismissive of the economic concerns of Muslims. Some even attribute their prevailing poverty to lifestyle choices and lack of work ethics among *Pwani* people. Emerging Churches do not engage as heavily as Mainline churches with the development agenda and when they do, it is invariably tied to the message of conversion. Most Muslims are hesitant to be a part of their projects. Whereas the response from Mainline churches addresses the concerns of Muslims, that of emerging churches is antagonistic and has negative impact on Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa.

There is strong evidence that this dire economic situation has pushed people to adopt religious extremism and be supportive of religious authorities that encourage such views: the sense of alienation caused by poverty, joblessness and hopelessness reign has driven young people in Mombasa to adopt ideologies of extremism (Gaitho 2012). According to Ngala Chome's interview with a local resident,

when the Islamist ideology was introduced to mostly urban, Muslim-dominated and poor neighbourhoods, it really took off and gained traction with the locals because of its religious posturing. Most youth may not have understood the ideology, but they saw themselves as part of a bigger community. They got carried away very fast (Chome 2019:13).

The consequences of this abject poverty and social deprivation are reflected in an increased incidence of insecurity, theft, drug-taking and trafficking, prostitution, hunger and malnutrition, high mortality rate, high levels of illiteracy, child labour, domestic violence and

family breakups (Kenya Government 1999a; 1999b); there is also strong evidence that economic pressure is forcing young people to join organizations with extreme views amongst Muslims and Christians. In case of Muslims, young recruits are promised Shs 40,000 (USD 400) in advance if they join *Al-Shabaab*'s ranks, and a similar sum monthly during training in Somalia (*The Nation* 2014). This is extremely enticing to young people, who can hardly make that amount in a year. Moreover, according to media reports, most of those caught in anti-terror swoops are new converts seeking easy money in the name of religion (*The Nation* 2014).

Conclusion

This chapter has established that Mombasa has a number of political, social and economic challenges. Those challenges are blamed on either the national government or Mombasa County government. Mainline Churches, emerging Churches, moderate Muslim organizations and conservative Muslim organizations perceive and respond differently to those challenges. For the most part, Muslims blame the national government, whereas Christians blame Mombasa County government. Just as DeHanas has argued that “religious identity are formed within a complex web of strategies and counter-strategies” (DeHanas 2016:82), this chapter has established that Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa are shaped by perception and response to complex social, political, economic and religious issues in the city.

In terms of politics, the national government is viewed by Muslims as discriminatory and marginalizing. Conservative Muslim groups view moderate Muslim groups as compromised by the government. Conservative Muslims tried to start their own party (Islamic Party of Kenya) to demand action against discriminating and marginalizing Muslims and address issues that moderate Muslim organizations had failed to address. On social issues,

conservative Muslims are more inclined to adopt exclusive positions on institutions such as schools for fear of being corrupted. On the other hand, moderate Muslims are able to compromise on certain negotiable issues such as school uniforms. On economic issues, conservative Muslim groups use economic challenges for religious purposes and to scapegoat *Bara* people (Oded 1996:408). Moderate Muslims are more holistic in their assessment of the causes of economic difficulties and are likely to embrace solutions that are not polarising. Moderate religious authorities engage with political leaders both at the county and national levels to resolve issues. Radical/conservative Muslim groups frame the economic marginalization of *Pwani* in religious terms, advancing the idea that it is an attempt to frustrate Islam. Moderate Muslims tend to work with the government to address the issue without using it to advance their religious objectives.

Amongst Churches in Mombasa, there is a perception that they are discriminated and marginalized by the County government. However, there is a difference in the way the mainline and emerging Churches perceive and respond to political, social and economic discrimination and marginalization. Emerging Churches see themselves as a target of the County government, which in their view has adopted policies that make it difficult for these churches to carry on their mission; for example, they have demanded that the County government stop charging exorbitant fees for meetings. Similarly, Christians from emerging churches use economic activities to advance their religious goals, while those from mainline Churches mainly focus on the humanitarian impact of economic activities. On social issues, emerging Churches have adopted strict interpretations of the scripture on issues such as school uniforms in such a way that those that are non-Christian feel excluded. On the other hand, Mainline Churches are more understanding of non-Muslims and are mostly inclusive when dealing with non-Christians.

This chapter has demonstrated that there are flashpoints in many aspects of everyday life in Mombasa and that the way that different religious authorities handle these challenges can either foment or reduce religious differences. The hard stance taken by emerging churches and conservative Muslim groups make compromise difficult to achieve. On the other hand, the fact that mainline Churches and moderate Muslim organizations do not take very strong positions on these issues enables some dialogue. Having established some of the points of conflict and tension, the next part of the thesis looks at how different religious authorities attempt to reconcile differences.

PART THREE: ILLUSTRATING THE ARGUMENT

Chapter 5: Religious Authorities and Pathways to Peace

Introduction

The single most important organization in Mombasa when it comes to addressing differences between Christians and Muslims is The Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC). This chapter will deal with the role of the CICC and the values and leadership structure of this organization. This chapter examines both intra-religious and inter-religious initiatives adopted by the CICC to ensure that the goal of the organization is achieved. Furthermore, this chapter examines how the CICC collaborates with the government to achieve peaceful co-existence, the challenges the organization faces and the approach it adopts in addressing certain ecological issues of contention between Christians and Muslims. The nature of religious authority and how it shapes the kind of response to the tension between the two religious traditions is a key driver of the relations and therefore an important theme throughout this chapter.

The previous chapters have explored points of differences between Christians and Muslims in Mombasa, past and present. Some of these issues appear intractable, and revolve around topics such as school uniform, radicalisation, killings of religious leaders, aggressive evangelisation, and burning of churches. The causes of some of these issues lie in race, culture, politics and economic disadvantage, and yet the outward manifestation is often religious. This chapter investigates ways in which these tensions, conflicts or issues of differences are handled by the CICC in Mombasa. This chapter argues that there are both intra and inter-religious differences between Christians and Muslims and that different religious authorities engage differently with the ecological framework of Mombasa to shape these relations. It is further

argued that even though the CICC does a commendable job of bringing the groups together, there are intractable differences, and sensitive issues are avoided. Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa are characterized by ‘shadow-boxing’, an approach that evades potentially explosive issues. Most of the time, this successfully allows people from the two religions to live side by side without conflict, but it does not resolve the underlying tensions between them. In addition to the data from interviews and observations, in this chapter I use material from the leadership of the CICC, who were generous with their time and provided me with access to their reports and strategic plans.

In the earlier chapters, I mentioned that I use Weber’s theory of religious authority to explain interreligious relations in Mombasa. Organisations such as the CICC and mainline Churches in Mombasa are well structured, with a clear hierarchy of leadership positions and functions of each office. Given the heavy presence of the Catholic, Anglican Church of Kenya and other Protestant Churches such as the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, mainline Churches in Mombasa share characteristics that mirror a hybrid of traditional authority and episcopal organisation (Bouma 1992:75) and rational-legal authority and presbyterian organisation. This means that decision-making processes in mainline Churches in Mombasa are decided by either Bishops who are trusted with the ultimate power and authority or a group of leaders who deliberate on issues and come up with solutions, often grounded in a biblical/rational-legal approach.

The emerging churches in Mombasa mostly appeal to emotion, intuition and subjective feelings. This means they fit the charismatic authority and congregational organization of Weber’s formulation (Bouma 1992:78). The charismatic leaders are seen as having personal qualities or power (Bouma 1992:78). Based on my visits to several emerging Churches in Mombasa, there was no doubt that they share traits of charismatic leaders as explained by

Bouma.

My interactions with and observations of the moderate Muslim groups in Mombasa revealed that they are composed of groups that invest religious authority in Imams and Sheikhs. Their leadership structure is suggestive of a tendency towards rational-legal authority – if the Weberian frame were to be applied to them. On the other hand, the radical Muslim groups in Mombasa are mostly led by charismatic leaders and that these leaders employ charisma, and a more emotional reading of religious texts.

In the subsequent analysis in chapters 5-7, I will attempt to demonstrate the ways in which these different approaches to religious authority *shape* interreligious relations – a causal agent.

The Role of The Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics Trust (CICC)

The role of the CICC in promoting harmonious co-existence of the different religious groups in Mombasa is significant. According to the strategic plan of the organization, “CICC was formed in 1997 as a response to the emergence of political violence, which have increasingly affected Kenya’s coastal region since the violent 1992 election period” (CICC 2015:1). For example,

On 19 May 1992, violent disturbances broke out in Mombasa, Kenya's second largest town and its main port, where Muslims form the majority. The immediate cause of these disturbances was the arrest of seven Muslim religious leaders by the security forces. The unrest was fanned by the activities of the Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK), a party which the government refused to register, asserting that no party should be based on religion. (Oded 1996:406).

The CICC started as a network of organizations under the umbrella of the Coast Peace Initiative (CPI), an organization that gave relief support to victims of political violence in Mombasa and other coastal towns (CICC 2015). Even though members of emerging churches

and radical Muslim groups are part of the CICC, the agenda is set and driven by leaders from Mainline Churches and Mainline Muslim groups. This is reflected in the leadership of the organization as both the chairman and the secretary of the CICC are from Mainline Christian and Muslim groups, respectively. The CICC fits the profile of traditional authorities compared to the charismatic ones, whose dominant motif is that of the message of salvation and deliverance. As a matter of fact, the CICC makes it clear that it is not an institution for religious conversion (CICC 2015: iv).

The Coast Peace Initiative (CPI) morphed into CICC after realizing that people in the region trusted religious leaders and religious institutions to address issues of violence and religious extremism (CICC 2015:1). According to a moderate Muslim informant, Khalifando, who is one of the founders of the CICC,

It is now about twenty years since we created the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics. We created this organization to deal with any differences that might arise between Christians and Muslims. That remains the goal. This initiative to address Christian-Muslim relations issues long started here at the coast before the one in Nairobi.

According to a mainline Church informant, Anikatu, the CICC is composed of 'like-minded' clergy and that they support the idea of "interreligious dialogue, of engaging with others, of peace-building." When informants in this research were asked what they were doing in terms of interreligious engagement, they mostly referred to CICC activities. Even a conservative Muslim informant, Adamale, observed that "Yes, we have the CICC, they are doing good work and trying to bring some respect and tolerance in the community." A moderate Muslim informant, Nassorombe, expressed a positive view of the CICC, stating "I strongly support what they are doing because they are like a bridge between these two religions and it is there where issues of faith are clarified." The general view is that the CICC is fighting to ensure that all religious groups in Mombasa peacefully co-exist.

The CICC has become an embodiment of peace initiatives that even those hardly involved in interreligious movement support. The CICC has also positively embraced its acceptability among the religious groups and is taking advantage of this positive relation by empowering members or those close to it to be their ‘megaphones’ for the message of peaceful interreligious co-existence, whereby (according to a mainline Church informant) members are encouraged to take this specific message back to their Mosques and Churches.

The CICC straddles the delicate line of toning down voices of extremism and amplifying initiatives that seek solutions to interreligious engagement and tolerance. This is especially a difficult responsibility considering that the CICC has among its membership all manner of leaders and organizations, those for tolerance and those with conservative views. Although this combination makes it difficult to reach unanimity on a number of issues, the dominance of tolerance groups ensures that decisions that bring cohesion are the ones adopted in most cases. For example, whenever churches have been burnt in Mombasa, the CICC have come up with statements condemning the violence. This is despite some conservative Muslims in the CICC who feel that Christians have not done enough to stop the extrajudicial killings of Muslims, and therefore the latter should not be expected to solve problems affecting Christians.

Whenever instances that threaten Christian-Muslim relations have occurred in Mombasa, the CICC has been at the forefront to ensure that the situation is contained and that the public is led to the path of tolerance, justice and understanding. The CICC has organized a number of press releases affirming the above immediately after acts of terrorism or when the threat of terrorism is imminent. For example, immediately after the attacks of Christian students at Garissa University by *Al Shabaab* that left 148 dead, Willybard Lagho, a Mombasa-based catholic priest and chairman of the CICC at the time, said that, “We are very concerned about the security of our churches and worshippers, especially this Easter period, and also because it

is clear that these attackers are targeting Christians” (cited in Honan 2015: para.6).

According to a mainline Church informant, Anikatu, who has been coordinating some of the work of the CICC, the organisation has a broader strategic plan that includes areas such as the environment, governance, capacity building, and the fight against violent extremism. Some of its other strategic objectives include “to improve public participation for accountable and people-centred governance”, “to reduce economic marginalization by strengthening faith-centred environmental stewardship for increased food security in the republic of Kenya”, and “to strengthen programmatic effectiveness, institutional systems and financial security” (CICC 2015:9).

Values of the CICC and the Leadership Structure

The values of the CICC include ‘fear of God’, non-partisanship in all dialogue and arbitration processes, and religious tolerance in the sense that it accommodates members regardless of their religious affiliation (CICC 2015: iv). For a number of informants, the basis of peaceful religious co-existence stems from the fact that it was promoted by their religious founders. Many Muslims pointed to the fact that Prophet Mohammed was granted safety by Christians (CICC 2015: iv), which for them justifies working together. My observation indicates that Muslims in the CICC relied on both the Qur’an and *hadith* that emphasize good relations with Christians. The emphasis on the way Prophet Mohammed positively dealt with Christians and vice versa sets Muslims in the CICC to be empathetic and understanding of Christians who might be victims of religious fanaticism and vice versa.

The emphasis on ‘religious tolerance’ is a vital part of why the CICC is having some impact on harmonious peaceful co-existence in Mombasa. However, this also is a source of tension for those whose religious authority provides justification for dominance and

exclusivity. My observation was that members of the emerging Churches and conservative Muslim groups find navigating the nature of their religious authority and the objectives of the CICC difficult. This has to do with the way they put more value on scriptures that emphasize the message of salvation, redemption, deliverance, dominion over messages that emphasize love, respect, understanding, humility and peace. The values emphasized by a group was a good predictor of how they viewed their relationship with members of the other religion. This will be clear as we discuss how different religious authorities responded to different variables that drive Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa.

The CICC has a broad membership drawn from Mainline Churches such as Catholic, Anglican Churches of Kenya, Baptist, and Presbyterian Church of East Africa, as well as emerging churches such as: Redeemed Gospel Church, Deliverance Church, Mombasa Pentecostal Church, Evangelical Alliance of Kenya, National Council of Christian Churches in Kenya (NCCCK), and the African Institute of Churches. Muslim groups that are part of the CICC include conservatives and Mainline Muslim organizations such as the Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims (SUPKEM), and the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK). Anikatu stated that the CICC is regarded by many as ‘a network of networks.’

The CICC leadership structure includes a Board of Trustees, a Board Executive Committee, a Chief Executive Officer, Board Sub Committees, Program Manager(s), a Finance/Grant Manager, a County Committee, Support Staff, and a Ward Committee. Any Christian Pastor or Muslim Sheikh can become a member of the CICC. Leadership positions are elected by members. Usually, the board of the CICC is composed of the top religious leaders such as Imams, Sheikhs, Archbishops and Bishops. According to Anyati, there is always a balancing act to ensure that there is equal representation of Christians and Muslims in leadership positions.

According to Anikatu, the Counties and Wards mentioned above are administrative centres. The CICC have six County officials in each County across the whole Coast Province (Mombasa, Kilifi, Kwale, Lamu, Tana River and Taita-Taveta). The local ward and County officials of the CICC are tasked with the responsibility of identifying issues of tension in the community and devising strategies for addressing them. The CICC mostly deals with issues that cause religious tension and conflict, but they also address economic, social and political causes of conflict (CICC 2015). According to Anyati, they do have regular meetings and whenever there are issues of tension between groups, they bring them together to resolve them peacefully.

Although the leadership structure of the CICC does not resemble any of the religious authorities identified by Bouma (Bouma 1992), it closely resembles the rational-legal authority. In this type of leadership, decisions are made based on ‘reason’. For example, Anyati points out that if Christians and Muslims in Mombasa are having a conflict about any issue, the CICC will bring both parties together and reason together to find a solution. In this sense, the CICC resembles the Protestant traditions where authority makes a decision guided by reason and not emotions. However, given its leadership structure, it is clear that the CICC is a hybrid of both traditional and rational religious authorities (Bouma 1992). Given that the CICC has Church leaders from emerging churches and conservative Muslim leaders who are known to exercise charismatic authority, it is reasonable to conclude that the hybrid traditional and rational authority of the CICC is held at tension by the charismatic forces that are part of it. This tension is reflected in the decision-making process that the CICC goes through when dealing with issues of conflict in Mombasa. Anikatu highlights the fact that leaders in emerging Churches and some Muslim conservative groups—who mostly make decisions for their own organizations without much consultation—find themselves in a situation where the decision-making process entails consultations and consensus amongst members of the CICC. Similarly,

mainline Christian and moderate Muslim leaders are faced with a situation where they must work hard to ensure that decisions are made through a process and not hijacked by charismatic leaders from emerging Churches or conservative Muslim groups.

The CICC has adopted several strategies to address issues of differences and causes of tensions between Christians and Muslims in Mombasa. These strategies are both intra-religious and interreligious in nature as well as incorporating the local government's help. The next sections of this chapter will delve into those strategies as well as specific issues that Christians and Muslims have had to deal with, and the challenges that both sides have faced in attempting to resolve them.

Intra-religious initiatives

The CICC recognizes that for a healthy interreligious environment, there is a need for healthy intra-religious relations. Poor intra-religious relations create a toxic environment that can easily impact on interreligious relations; hence, to ensure a healthy environment where all faiths are accepted and valued, the CICC has adopted ways of strengthening intra-faith relations both in Christianity and Islam in Mombasa. This section will look at those initiatives.

The intra-religious distinctions noted in this research highlights the fact that the Churches in Mombasa are not homogeneous groups and that they have differences amongst themselves on issues to do with beliefs and values and the leadership structure and how they employ their religious authority in addressing social, economic, political and religious issues. Ethnic background is also a source of the intra-religious distinctions as religious groups dominated by certain ethnic groups might experience animosities from another religious group dominated by a different ethnic group.

The CICC has intra-religious strategies that seek to resolve issues affecting different

sections of a given faith community with the goal of resolving differences and building unity (CICC 2015). According to Anikatu,

the organization is doing intra-religious dialogue because there are some issues, they need to discuss among themselves first before they enter dialogue with others. For example, it is confusing for Muslims who view Christians in a general sense without considering that Christians themselves are from different denominations and they all have different opinions. That is why it is important for those in the same religion to engage in dialogue themselves before entering into interreligious dialogue (sic).

The intra-faith dialogue forums organized by the CICC are aimed at enhancing members' understanding of belief and practices of their own religions (CICC 2015:27). For example, the CICC has played a vital role in addressing issues exacerbated by emerging churches. According to Anyati,

We have what we call intra-conversation. Here we have what we call Pastor's fellowship. We identify first whether that church is part of the fellowship. If it is not, we still use the Pastors' Fellowship [and] the elders there to call this pastor. And say 'that is not how to [behave]...we will conduct our business this way'.

By creating opportunities for intra-faith dialogue, the CICC is ensuring self-regulation to promote harmony in society. For example, Churches and Church leaders engage with each other to identify specific churches that are inflaming tensions with Muslims; the same applies to Muslim organizations.

Anyati (an informant from a mainline Church) indicated that the CICC is a place that provides some semblance of theological training for several clerics who do not have any, arguing that it has "become a place for theological enhancement" and that "we must start giving practical solutions and say, 'theologically this is the position'."

The CICC is facing the unprecedented challenge of extremism and it not clear that they have effective training to match current realities. For example, it is clear that although the

teaching on *Jihad* is a strong motivator for the young people in Mombasa crossing to Somalia to join terrorist organization *Al Shabaab*, there was no evidence that the training conducted by Muslim members of the CICC adequately addressed the issue. According to a mainline Church informant, Lagomba, who has been in position of leadership at the CICC and is an expert in both Christianity and Islam, for effective intra-religious training to occur there is need for Muslim trainers to be conversant with Christianity and for Christian trainers to be conversant with Islam so they can teach their members how to productively engage with members of the other faith. However, Lagomba indicated in the interview that members of the CICC lack the understanding of both religions to effectively address the issue of differences. This means that even though the intra-religious training is effective in some areas, it is not so when it comes to preparing members to confront sensitive subjects that are a source of difference between Christians and Muslim.

Limited Success?

As the previous chapters have shown, there are differences between moderate and conservative Muslims in Mombasa. Most Muslims who are part of or support the activities of the CICC are open-minded, tolerant people who are keen to foster peaceful interreligious relations in Mombasa. However, some conservative Muslims oppose the CICC and see even the mere mingling with members of other religious groups as compromising the Islamic faith. Several informants in this research are moderate Muslims who have been targeted by some conservative Muslim groups.

The intra-faith initiatives of the CICC are meant to make these intra-religious differences manageable. According to a moderate Muslim informant, Abdallamah,

one time there was clashes in Tana River, and those involved were all Muslims; so, the only people who could bring them together were the

Imams who are part of the CICC, and so we went and got a solution.

This reflects the credibility that CICC has in being able to bring together Muslim groups who have different views.

Abdallah observed that even though Muslim CICC members are seeing some positive results in reconciling Muslim groups, some of these are radical and very conservative and see those CICC members as compromisers who have joined 'the enemy', and they reject initiatives driven by the Council. As a result of the challenges presented by these groups, the sphere of influence of the CICC in bridging intra-faith differences is significantly reduced.

Similarly, there are several Churches in Mombasa that are not part of the CICC and remain untouched by its work. This is partly because leaders of such Churches avoid this type of forums where they might be held accountable. For example, a Bishop, Telika, who is an informant in this research had major issues with the neighbouring emerging Church. He indicated that it was too loud and disrupted services held in his church. This situation was worse during sermon time as it was difficult to follow the words of the preacher with blasting noise coming from across the fence. The solution to this problem has not yet been found because the Pastor across the fence is not accountable to any organization in Mombasa. This is just an example of the challenges that intra-faith initiatives are facing.

From my discussions with several respondents, one of the major causes of division amongst Churches is the way they are formed. A number of them form through schisms, because of the way they are operated. The leader is in charge with very little accountability and no interest in divergent opinions. Those who are dissatisfied are left with no option other than start their own churches. Once they leave, alongside members sympathetic to them, the seed of bitterness is sown between this church and the 'parent church.' According to one of the emerging Church leaders and an informant, Elizaza, in many cases the breakaway leader does

not see eye to eye with the leader of the 'parent church.' They try to avoid any forum that might bring them together. For all of these reasons, the CICC has had only moderate success in bringing together the divergent strands within the two major religious traditions.

Interreligious initiatives

To achieve the goal of interreligious harmony, the CICC has implemented several activities that ensure that both Christians and Muslims in Mombasa accept each other regardless of differences in faith, understand each other, and engage in difficult but necessary conversations. This section will explain the initiatives to obtain the above objectives.

A way that the CICC address issues of tension and conflicts between Christians and Muslim is by training religious leaders both on religious and non-religious matters. Many Christian and Muslim leaders in Mombasa lack theological training on religious matters. According to Elijaza, Christians lack theological training mostly because they are charismatic leaders who believe that they have been chosen by the Holy Spirit and therefore do not need it. He indicates that others even believe that theological training leads to compromise of faith because people begin to depend on it rather than on God. For Muslims, the lack of training is mostly because of lack of education. This makes them prone to misinterpret their texts, especially when addressing issues of other religious faiths, which in turn causes friction with them. Christian and Muslim experts in interreligious relations are engaged by the CICC to offer training to both Christian and Muslim leaders to ensure that there is religious harmony between them. According to a mainline Church informant, Kivulama,

We had forum under CICC, where we used to bring those young Muslim leaders who teach in madrassa and the Christians who teach Sunday schools for training, to give them the right teaching, because you know people use the Qur'an to justify their evil activities, so through that intervention we have been able to give some sense.

According to a mainline Church informant, Earnestina,

The CICC meetings are really helping, because when we go for peacebuilding, we go with pastors and Imams in order to try and teach the word by expounding on what the Bible and Qur'an say, and try to show them that we are one people.

It must be noted that in some instances, these kinds of interventions are the only means of training available to these preachers. Another mainline Church informant, Anikatu, indicated that the CICC plans to have theological discussions between Christian and Muslim clergy with the intention of understanding what both the Bible and the Qur'an say on different subjects, and use those as building blocks for peaceful co-existence. According to another mainline Church informant, Anyati,

We have trained a lot of Imams; we have trained a lot of Pastors. They come, CICC has programs as when we get donors to train mostly younger Imams, younger Pastors in the active listening, basic communication—and of course, we speak about tolerance.

Interreligious initiatives by the CICC help manage the extremism that sometimes characterizes Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. While this extremism is the product of social circumstances, it is often justified through religion. A major justification for Islamic extremism is the way some portions of the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* are interpreted. Various Imams, especially those without formal theological training, have offered a radical reading of certain verses to the detriment of Christian-Muslim relations. On the issue of *Jihad*, there was no clear sense that Muslim leaders in Mombasa were doing much to elaborate and convey to the members how to walk the fine line on this sensitive subject based on the systematic theology derived from both the Qur'an and *Hadith*.

Muslim leaders who are influential members of the CICC emphasised the efforts they have put in educating others about the dangers of teachings by Muslims who do not offer moderate interpretations of the Qur'an. According to a moderate Muslim informant,

Abdallah, who is one of the leaders of the CICC, it is important that Muslim leaders are central when it comes to finding solutions to problems facing and emanating from Muslims, as “they are the ones who are on the ground, since they meet with the people five times a day in the mosques.”

Similarly, the CICC’s interreligious initiatives have helped several emerging Church leaders who initially were antagonistic to any engagement with Muslims. An emerging Church informant, Nzukiza, stated that the CICC has helped reshape his views about Muslims and that even though he disagrees with the religious teachings, he is all for constructive engagement with them. Another emerging Church informant, Javano, narrated how he avoided mingling with Muslims and that his interaction with Muslims was to seek their conversion. He indicates that his approach has changed and that it is possible to have productive discussions with Muslims.

Direct Engagement

The CICC has opened the door for Church and Mosque leaders to individually engage each other in case of a specific difficulty in relations. There are four ways that the CICC directly engages with both Christians and Muslims in addressing issues of differences. First, they warn members who are engaging in actions that might cause interreligious tension. For example, an emerging Church informant, Liuembeka, noticed a visiting emerging Church preacher in a crusade using divisive rhetoric; she called the host of the visiting preacher and told him: “we don’t want that kind of preaching, we need to focus on evangelizing.” She added that, “we have extremists among us, but we normally call them and warn them.” Furthermore, the Council of Imams and Preachers in Kenya (CIPK) who are represented in the CICC has a pattern they follow when dealing with an issue that can potentially result in skirmishes. According to a moderate Muslim informant, Mahamudabi, in case a Muslim group or person is seen as the

source of the problem in the Christian-Muslim relations, the CIPK call those concerned and warns them to stop engaging in activities that may bring conflicts. They hope that the warning can compel the aggressor to reconsider their position and seek peace. Although the effectiveness of this approach is questionable, a mainline Church informant, Anyati, attested that this is working. According to him, the fear of the consequences of being reported to the government seems to achieve the desired outcome.

Second, CICC members can directly talk about the issue of difference with the person involved. This was exemplified by an anecdote given by leaders of CIPK who successfully persuaded a Pastor to turn down the volume of the speakers in his Church while Muslims were in worship session. According to a moderate Muslim informant, Twahate, this intervention averted a real risk of the Church being burned by Muslim youths who were on their way to the Church. In the absence of a rapport between Christians and Muslims, small differences can escalate. The fact that leaders are engaging each other means that potentially explosive results might be avoided. To demonstrate this point, an informant, Anyati, gave several anecdotes of how cooperation between Christians and Muslims averted potential acts of terrorism. In one of the incidents, both Christians and Muslims noticed suspicious foreigners in a neighbourhood and reported the matter to the police who arrested the foreigners after confirming that they were on the terrorist list.

The CICC has created a solution-based environment where Christians and Muslims are willing to engage each other whenever they detect potential risks to their relations. According to a moderate Muslim informant, Twahate,

Conflicts used to explode everywhere. These days we bring both religions together. In case there is a pastor who is interfering with peace, I just pick a phone, asks the Church denomination he belongs to and call the leader of that denomination, he in turn calls that person and before long that pastor vacates the place.

There are a number of ways that Christian and Muslim CICC members manage their issues. According to an informant, Anyati, a Muslim leader who feel aggrieved by the behaviour of a Church leader or member of a Church can directly engage the Pastor and vice-versa. In case the issue is too complex and emotive, the leadership of the CICC are engaged, who then facilitate a meeting between the aggrieved parties. According to Elijaza, there are mixed results in this approach. Other than reporting aggressors to the government, there is very little that the CICC can do about those who have chosen not to be part of it. However, the credibility the CICC has cultivated means that not many resist their advice.

Third, both Christian and Muslim members and groups of the CICC stand in opposition to the extremists amongst them. Muslim moderates oppose radicalization and extreme ideologies that lead to terrorism. Christians in the CICC stand against leaders in emerging churches who propagate messages that might create tension with Muslims. In terms of what moderate Muslims in the CICC have done about the Islamic extremists, a moderate informant, Twahate, observed that “We directly oppose them [*Al Shabaab*]. We are the only people [Muslim group] who were opposed to the group of *Al Shabaab* in Kenya. We were the only [Muslims] who publicly came against them.” A mainline Church informant, Anyati, expressed how they opposed a pastor of an emerging Church who was pushing for the government to give Christians guns for protection.

Fourth, there are times when Muslims who are part of CICC have had to intervene to calm situations to stop agitated Muslims from torching Churches or doing harm to Christians and vice versa. According to the CICC, “over the past five or so years CICC has intervened to prevent and/or manage violent conflicts in places such as Mombasa ... Our network of clerics has contributed to discouraging young men from joining radical and extremists’ groups” (CICC 2015:7). It is important that Muslims be the ones confronting extremists amongst them.

According to a moderate Muslim informant, Khalifando,

We tried the much we could restore good Christian-Muslim relations. So, our relationship here is good unlike other countries that have bad Christian-Muslim relations” and “This is despite challenges like when young people were demonstrating and wanted to destroy a church and rob shops belonging to Christians.

Fifth, both Christian and Muslim members of the CICC have stood with members of the other religion in condemning hate or acts of terrorism directed against members of the other faith, as recounted by Muslim informants. In case of any attack against members of a certain faith, the CICC do convene meetings and condemn such attacks—sometimes via press release or through radio, television, and social media. The genuineness of the message of condemnation, however, is debatable. A conservative Muslim informant, Salimu, argued that

[Christians] celebrate when we are arrested, even their statements might appear to sympathise with us, but in the real sense they are happy. ... These friends of ours like it when we get into problems so that they can come and pretend that they care for us, when in the real sense they don't. That's why we don't love them.

An emerging Church informant, Sammale, expressed the idea that Muslims are ‘pretending to care’ and stated: “That actually is the nature of Muslims, when you have a conflict, they will pretend to be involved in solving it but down there they are fuelling the conflict. They are not sincere.” A conservative Muslim informant, Salimu, even went as far as stating that

there is no case where Muslims are affected you will see Christians coming out to condemn, yet we support them. For example, in Majengo, when the police started arresting people, they arrested Muslim youth, women in *bui buy* [special Islamic dress for women], but the Christians didn't come out to stand with us.

However, it was clear from a number of informants that in some cases Christians have come out to show solidarity with Muslims and vice versa. Indeed, the issue of how much Muslim intervene on behalf of Christians and vice versa is highly debatable, mostly depending

on what religious authority they belonged to. My observation was that conservative Muslims and Christians from emerging churches downplayed the other faith's support, while moderate Muslims and Mainline Church Christians were more positive about it.

In other instances, members of the CICC have gone beyond condemning acts of terror by members of their faith to actually help victims of the other faith. According to a Muslim informant, Khalifan,

there was an attack in a Church, where a bullet hit a child, and needed to be removed. So, a big fundraiser was organized for hospital expenses for that child and later the mother was given cash to start a business. The majority of those who came to support this family were Muslims.

As to why Muslims help Christians when they are attacked, a moderate Muslim informant, Swalehika, indicated that “we do this to show Christians that we respect them and those who come to attack are just a few elements who want to spoil our relationship.” Even though Muslims were helpful to Christians when the Church was attacked and a bullet hit a child, there was no indication that the cause behind the attack of the Church was addressed, although it is well known that those who attacked the Church were Muslim extremists (Magak 2014:53). This means that the help given only gave relief to the victims of the aggression without addressing the root cause of the problem of religious extremism. In this sense it is understandable that Prof. Mwakimalo, a moderate Muslim informant in this research, would assert that Christian Muslim relations in Mombasa is about “shadow-boxing.”¹⁵

Another Muslim informant, Muniremba, observed that

the Salvation Army church in Majengo which is populated by Muslims, when people burned it, the Muslim neighbours took the Pastor and hid him in their house and later did a fund raising to help the Church without

¹⁵ Pretend to solve a problem while avoiding any direct engagement.

considering religion.

A conservative Muslim informant, Sadio, addressed a national issue that affected Mombasa:

during the just concluded elections last year, those areas where “baba” Raila [Opposition Leader] comes from, a big number of people were killed in those areas. Majority of those killed were Christians, in fact all of them were Christians. But after the ‘handshake’ [peace deal] between Uhuru [President] and Raila, the Sheikhs from Mombasa came out and called out the government and told them that true peace comes from administering justice to those who were affected.

Although Muslim respondents characterised their response to attacks on Christians and their houses of worship as empathetic and positive, the majority of them did not view Christians’ response to attacks on Muslims and Islam as reciprocal. A conservative Muslim informant, Mwendiza, indicated that despite them always being ready to offer Christians help in their time of need, Christians don’t respond in kind when Muslims are the victims, and that

we have had Muslim youths being shot and killed, but no Christian leader has ever come to initiate a way to support this affected families. That’s why we no longer see any need to put effort in promoting harmony, and we have decided to just live like that.

Another conservative Muslim informant, Sadio, shared the same view, indicating that “when we get into trouble, for example, if one is arrested, it is you to look for ways on how to get him out [of prison/remand], whether you have money or not.” Similarly, another conservative Muslim, Asyala, stated that “there is no case where Muslims are affected you will see Christians coming out to condemn, yet we support them.”

The involvement of the CICC in addressing issues of difference between Christians and Muslims in a Mombasa is a reflection and demonstration of the way different religious authorities pull in different directions. Emerging Churches and Conservative Muslim groups have charismatic leaders whose message of salvation, redemption and domination is exalted,

resulting in hostility to members of the other faith. On the other hand, mainline Churches and moderate Muslim groups, heavily represented in the CICC, balance the above messages with other scriptures in a systematic way, thereby presenting a message that is broadly unifying, even if at a superficial level.

Collaboration with Government

The CICC engages with the government in resolving issues they cannot address on their own. According to a moderate Muslim informant, Abdallah, the CICC have multiple ways of engaging with groups to address tension but “If they refuse to listen, we forward the matter to the government authorities to deal with that person, because he will have refused the peaceful way of settling the dispute.” According to him, “our recommendations are the ones that will be followed by the authorities.” The authorities referred to by the informants would usually be either County government officials or police leadership. According to an emerging Church informant, Elijaza, the latter is the preferred option because there is usually fear of police, and therefore people choose to solve their issues themselves, instead of being involved with police officers. According to a mainline Church informant, Anyati, “because we cooperate with the government a lot at the CICC, when we take cases like those [to the government] they quickly intervene.”

The CICC has asked for the Mombasa County government’s intervention in cases where the leadership of the Church or Mosque refused to cooperate. The government intervention has included meetings between aggrieved parties facilitated by Mombasa County leadership, or police dialogue with those involved in a dispute. For example, there was a church that made too much noise (according to both Muslim and Christian neighbours) because of the way they positioned their external speakers, and dialled them up to maximum volume during their service. The CICC tried to intervene but the pastor was not cooperative. The CICC had to

engage the government. According to an informant from a mainline Church, Anyati:

We have used government intervention to address disputes. This is because extremists do not listen. They think they are above the law. So, we go to the Mombasa County leadership or police and let them know that a particular Sheikh or Pastor is putting peace in jeopardy. We have done it here in Kisauni... there was a pastor who was not listening to us. We went to the deputy county commissioner and said, 'in our opinion that is not a Christian. He is just being unreasonable; we have spoken to him.' So, top leaders in the County government went to him and told him: "even your own people have come to you and you are not reasonable. And for the sake of peace, they have come to us. So, we must agree that you make necessary change and lower the volume of your speakers or we will shut down your Church.

According to Anyati, many Pastors and Imams do respond to government interventions.

This is mostly because they know that they could lose their license to operate if they refuse to abide by the government's instructions. The respondent indicated that

We've sent for the National Environment Management Authority [NEMA], the ones who control noise. If you don't listen to us completely, we say we will send NEMA ourselves—Then he is in trouble with the law. From there it is no longer us. If he comes to us, we tell him: 'we told you. Just deal with it in court.'

Another example where the CICC involved the government was on the issue of *Mihadhara* (street preaching by Muslims in a debate setting, using the Bible). *Mihadhara* is controversial because unlike conservative Muslims who using the Qur'an to proclaim their message, these preachers also use the Bible to prove the point. Emerging Church informant Elijaza indicate that both emerging and mainline Churches in Mombasa have had problems with this approach because Christians see the way these conservative Muslims use the Bible as dishonest and offensive. A moderate Muslim informant, Twahate, indicated that many Muslims are against this approach and that Muslims should not use the Bible to attack Christians, just as Christians should not use the Qur'an to attack Muslims.

Moderate Muslims have been at the forefront in seeking to stop *Mihadhara* preaching

and Christian street-preaching on the ground that they are a threat to harmonious peaceful co-existence. A moderate Muslim informant, Khalifando, indicated that “Street preachers, both Christians and Muslims, don’t have discipline or manners, and they engage in speeches that can bring animosity. Indeed, they have caused animosity.” According to a moderate Muslim informant, Mahamudabi, the friction caused by *Mihadhara* preaching at Kilifi forced the County government to ban the preaching and instead turned the place into a bus station.

To address the issue of *Mihadhara*, it is important that moderate Muslims who are members of CICC confront the issue; this way, any attempt to portray those opposed to it as anti-Islam is minimized. Moderate Muslims have taken a stand against this practice. According to a moderate Muslim informant, Mahamudabi,

we called the Muslim clerics and told them to only preach about Islam and they should not attack Christianity; and today you will find both Muslims and Christians sharing the same podium, and only focusing on explaining their religion, without attacking each other.

A moderate Muslim informant, Khalifando, regards *Miadhara* preachers as “*watu hawana nidhamu mara nyingi*” (people who engage in loose talk) and believes that “*wanaeza kunena maneno ambayo yanaweza yakaleta chuki*” (they can sow bitterness in the community). Muslim and Christian leaders in the CICC have had meetings with authorities in Mombasa County government and police leadership and urged them to stop religious leaders who were provoking the public by using the religious texts of others as a means of preaching their message. They have also been involved in reporting those who violate such rules.

Having the courage to condemn *Mihadhara* is a vital step taken by moderate Muslims who are part of the CICC as it clarifies that such divisive ‘evangelism’ is neither Islamic nor a representation of the views of Muslims in Mombasa. The presence of both Muslim and Christian leaders lends credibility to the CICC as it tackles issues that cannot be addressed by

any single religious group.

The fact that the CICC has to turn to the government to sort out issues between Christians and Muslims shows that its influence and authority amongst these groups is limited. Moreover, the County government tends to adopt reactive measures rather than methodologically understand the conflict and devise a comprehensive solution to it; these interventions are viewed negatively by some Muslims. The problem of the government's intervention is that this approach avoids the problem and focuses on the person. Punishing the person does not guarantee that the issue is resolved. Indeed, this has sometimes been counterproductive in Mombasa, where anti-terrorism measures only increased the number of youths being recruited to *Al-Shabaab* terrorist organization, as they saw those measures as means of persecuting Muslims.

Challenges of the CICC and other Interreligious Interventions

Despite the positive contribution of the CICC in promoting a harmonious coexistence through dialogue and training, the organization faces a headwind in pushing for its goals. This is discussed in much greater detail in the next two chapters, however, for now, a few points are worth anticipating. Interviews with both Christian and Muslim informants evidenced a widespread suspicion of the other based on religious texts from both sides, especially from emerging churches and conservative Muslim groups. This was captured well by an informant from an emerging church, Elijaza, who stated that being part of the CICC was a difficult decision because,

well, you know from our faith, we didn't see it as important to the call that God has called us to do, so getting evangelicals to accept and see its importance was not easy, because we see Muslims as not part of us or the mission. So, sitting down with them around the same table, is like sitting down with the children from the other mother.

Reference to “children from the other mother” is poignant with meaning as it evokes both Genesis 21.10 and Galatians 4.30, where it is stated that descendants of the slave woman Hagar [read Muslims] cannot inherit what belongs to descendants of the free woman Sarah (read Christians). As indicated earlier in this research, Christian respondents admitted that some extreme preachers amongst them use this type of text to create a schism between Christians and Muslims in Mombasa.

Similarly, members of emerging churches are concerned about the influence of interreligious groups such as the CICC. For example, the above informant indicated that “we were feeling that meeting them [Muslims] might influence us to leave our faith and become like them.” According to a moderate Muslim informant, Twahate, there are also Christians, especially from emerging Churches, who portray Muslims has a group of people engaged in *majini* (witchcraft), hence fomenting suspicions between the two. Indeed, Christian perceptions of Muslims have also been shaped by certain texts in the Bible. In the words of an emerging Church informant, Penimbo, “the reality is that these are two kingdoms which can never agree, so these differences will never end.”

A number of Muslims hold anti-Christian views that make participation in an interreligious body like the CICC difficult. Some of these views are shaped by both the Qur’an and *hadith*. How one interprets or perceives some of the messages from those books determine whether they embrace or antagonise the CICC. For example, conservative Muslims who are Islamists refer to non-Muslims as *Kafir* and enemies of Islam, and hence view Muslims who are part of the CICC as ‘friends of the enemy’: a number of Muslim informants attested that they have experienced persecution from conservative Muslims for being part of the CICC. While meeting with two moderate Muslim informants who are leaders of one of the largest Muslim organizations in Kenya, they narrated the persecution they have faced from

conservative Muslims. One of these moderate informants, Twahate, pointed to me that the other informant (was also in the room as part of the interview) had to be protected from rowdy conservative youths who had come to attack him in his mosque where he had been preaching, and that had it not been for the intervention of the bodyguards of the other informant, the outcome would have been a painful one.

Another challenge of the CICC in addressing issues of difference between Christians and Muslims in Mombasa is the negative attitude both have toward each other. The literature review already covered this. Muslim respondents are aware of Christians' negative attitude towards them. According to Twahate,

the biggest problem is that when people come from 'up-country' they blame Muslims for living with the evil spirits and for using those evil spirits. People attend their crusades and Churches to be delivered from the evil spirits. You will hear them shout 'come out! come out!'

As a result of these negative attitudes formed, the intentions of members of the other religion are viewed with suspicion. A moderate Muslim informant, Swalehika, stated that "this organization [CICC] here has brought together Muslim and Christian leaders, we sit together, share, encourage each other outwardly, but inwardly, there is no love or unity. Actually, we hate each other." Similarly, an emerging Church informant, Sammale, pointed to a lack of sincerity on the part of Muslims in tackling differences indicating that despite the CICC,

What was intended to be for peace and co-existence has now turned upside down. That's actually the nature of Muslims, when you have a conflict, they will pretend to be involved in solving it but down there they are fuelling the conflict. So, what I can say is that they are not sincere.

The huge task facing Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa is reflected in the words of an emerging Church informant, Penimbo, who stated that "The Muslims only pretend to be with you but in the real sense they have hidden agendas against you."

‘Hot Potatoes’

Despite the immense efforts by members of the CICC to manage both intra-religious and interreligious differences, my observations indicated that there are issues that are deemed too sensitive and potentially explosive to address. These are the ‘hot potatoes’ that neither Christians nor Muslims in Mombasa are willing to handle. What makes some of these issues challenging is that they are embedded in the Qur’an for Muslims and the Bible for Christians.

The strategy adopted by the CICC is to adopt an opaque view to avoid controversy on these issues, and hope they do not precipitate. It is not uncommon in Kenya for institutions to adopt opaque views on certain difficult issues and this approach can be useful (Balaton-Chrimes 2021:56). A respected Muslim scholar and an informant in this research, Mwakimalo, captured the idea of “avoidance” as a means of conflict resolution in Mombasa by succinctly stating:

It is a relationship of hide and seek, shadowboxing. I think in the public eye Muslims would want to portray themselves as not having any problem with Christians. The same for the Christians. In the public eye they want to say that we have no problem with our Muslim brothers and sisters. But actually, both of them in the private spheres they tend to want to plunge (sick), to find ways to undermine the other, in various ways. I think for me, this is the biggest risk in Muslim Christian relations. They don't speak openly to one another. They tend to practice a lot of hypocrisy.

The consequences of avoidance are real, and are compounded by the fact that Islamists and Charismatic Church leaders who have no allegiance to the CICC are not keeping quiet about the “hot potatoes”: rather, they are adding fuel to the flames.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC) as a religious authority that is actively involved in pursuing religious harmony in Mombasa. This chapter has

established the tension amongst Christians and Muslims who are part of the CICC. It has also established intra-religious differences that exists amongst Christians and amongst Muslims. The CICC has adopted intra-religious and interreligious cooperation with the Mombasa County government as strategies for addressing issues of differences. These initiatives have provided avenues for Christians and Muslims in Mombasa to raise issues of concern, address tensions and bond together. For many members of the CICC, the training it offers is the only theological training they have ever received, since many of them have not attended any seminary or madrasah. The interreligious initiatives have helped dispel some negative perceptions held by both Christians and Muslims about each other. Just by interacting with each other, friendships have been established between Christians and Muslims, stereotypical views dismantled, and contacts established. Some of the friendships and contacts established in the interreligious forums are now interacting outside the CICC umbrella to let their member engage and to solve local challenges.

Although the above strategies are successful to some degree, there is still an enormous challenge in addressing several issues of tensions between Christians and Muslims. This is made clear by the fact that some issues end up being referred to Mombasa County and Mombasa police leadership. Some of those issues are beyond the government to manage or resolve. This is particularly so on sensitive issues that are embedded in the Qur'an for Muslims and the Bible for Christians. To maintain the illusion of peace and not confront those issues, the CICC has opted for opaque views on sensitive issues that maintain the status quo. It is a 'shadow-boxing' strategy, hoping that the issues remain suppressed. The problem is that Islamists in Mombasa and Charismatic Christian leaders who are not part of the CICC are inflaming the situation by tackling those issues head-on.

This chapter also demonstrates that even within an interreligious organization like the

CICC there are huge differences amongst members of the same faith, and that this makes finding a united approach to deal with any singular issue very difficult. Furthermore, ecumenical organisations have little ability to address the embedded structural issues that ultimately cause these religious differences. Some issues are so deeply embedded in theological differences that common ground might never be found between Christians and Muslims. The case of the *Khadi* courts is one such example in Mombasa. That is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 6: *Kadhi* Courts, a flashpoint for Religious Authority

Introduction

Kadhi Courts are Muslim religious courts that enforce limited rights of inheritance, family, and succession for Muslims. They are a flashpoint for religious authority and illustrate some intractable aspects of contestation between Christian and Muslim religious authorities. This controversy provides important insights into Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa and will be analysed in this chapter. This is achieved by examining the context of the *Kadhi* Courts debate at both the national and local level, its controversies and relevance, and contrasting how mainline Christian groups and moderate Muslim groups approached the issue compared to conservative Muslim groups and emerging Churches. Finally, I will look at how diverse religious authorities perceive the impact of this debate on Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. It has to be pointed out from the outset that Mombasa is the headquarters of most national Muslim organizations. The national agenda and approach for Muslims on the issue of *Kadhi* Courts was therefore being set from Mombasa. In other words, the national story of *Kadhi* Courts is closely linked to the city of Mombasa.

This chapter argues that churches differed in their response to *Kadhi* courts, with mainline Churches showing understanding and restraint on the issue while emerging Churches strongly resisted them and spread antagonistic messages about Islam. Similarly, moderate Muslims opted for cooperation and dialogue with Christians to peacefully resolve the differences on the subject while conservative Muslims used threats and intimidation to push for the adoption of *Kadhi* Courts. These contrasting responses are yet another example of how Christian and Muslim religious authorities in Mombasa do not have a unified position. This makes broader peacebuilding efforts between religious groups a struggle that may not be

readily resolved.

Kadhi Courts are religious courts that deal with cases “that concern personal status, that is, ‘Family Law’: Marriage, divorce, custody and inheritance” (Chesworth 2011:3). According to the Constitution of Kenya, “Parliament shall establish *Kadhi* courts, each of which shall have the jurisdiction and powers conferred on it by legislation” (Kenya Law Reform Commission [KLRC] 2010). Moreover,

The jurisdiction of a *Kadhi* court shall be limited to the determination of questions of Muslim law relating to personal status, marriage, divorce or inheritance in proceedings in which all the parties profess the Muslim religion and submit to the jurisdiction of the *Kadhi* courts (Kenya Law Reform Commission [KLRC] 2010).

The constitution also makes clear that “There shall be a Chief *Kadhi* and such number, being not fewer than three, of other *Kadhis* as may be prescribed under an Act of Parliament” and that

A person shall not be qualified to be appointed to hold or act in the office of *Kadhi* unless the person professes the Muslim religion; and possesses such knowledge of the Muslim law applicable to any sects of Muslims as qualifies the person, in the opinion of the Judicial Service Commission, to hold a *Kadhi* court (Kenya Law Reform Commission [KLRC] 2010).

The Courts initially served Mombasa and surrounding areas during the colonial period but have expanded since independence to other parts of Kenya, especially the North-Eastern Province. *Kadhi* Courts are specifically for resolving issues amongst Muslims and therefore Christians and people of other religious beliefs are not required to be a part of it.

Kenya was a one-party state until 1991. Once Kenya became a multi-party state, it embarked on a journey to change its constitution to reflect reality of its post-independence values. The constitution was considered outdated and in need of change to address the issues of inequality and other socio-political issues.

From the mid-1990s to 2010, Kenyans were involved in public debate about the change of constitution (Tayob 2013:105). In 1998, the process of reviewing the constitution gained momentum after the parliament passed the *Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (Amendment) Act* to facilitate the drafting of a new Constitution. One of the contentious issues was that of *Kadhi* Courts. Most Muslims wanted them enshrined in the constitution while a number of Christians wanted the status quo maintained, where *Kadhi* Courts would operate under the law but would not be embedded in the Constitution. This was a bitter debate that was full of propaganda. The relationship that Christian and Muslim leaders had cultivated over the years suffered a serious setback over the *Kadhi* Courts debate.

The Constitution of Kenya Review Act of 2000 established the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (CKRC), chaired by Yash Pal Ghai. It was responsible for the collection and collation of views of Kenyans. This resulted in the “Wako Draft”, which established, among others, subordinate religious courts, including Christian courts, *Kadhi* courts, and Hindu courts (Mraja 2011:33).

In the end, a referendum was held on August 4, 2010 that saw an overwhelming majority of Kenyans (67%) approve the adoption of the new constitution. This was in no way a vote on *Kadhi* Courts although it arguably was the single most important issue that shaped the views of the 33% of those who voted ‘NO’ in the referendum (Tayob 2013:105). The issue of *Kadhi* Courts is a great way to explore Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa, as different Christian and Muslim entities had different views on this subject and this had a direct impact on how both sides viewed the other. Therefore, this chapter will explore the debate both at the national and city level. Mombasa residents were supportive of the new constitution given the fact that it had popular issues of devolution and *Kadhi* courts for Muslims. They overwhelmingly supported the new constitution in the referendum with 70% approval across

the four constituencies (The Constitution of Kenya Review Act (Referendum) Regulations 2010:3144).

After gaining independence from the British, Muslims expected the new leadership to protect *Kadhi* Courts following a treaty between Kenya and Zanzibar. The treaty of 1963 that guaranteed *Kadhi* Courts along the coastal strip has not only been honoured but also extended to other geographic locations in Kenya. *Kadhi* Courts are now found in other parts of Kenya.

As rightly noted in a study, during the constitutional review process, Muslims proposed to expand the *Kadhi* Courts, integrate them into the national legal system and their jurisdiction extended to civil and commercial matters (Kanyoni 2006). Muslims also expressed the need to codify into legislation the Muslim personal law on marriage, divorce, inheritance and succession. They disputed the need for *Kadhis* to observe the *Evidence Act and the Civil Procedure Act*, which according to them, contradicted Muslim law (Kanyoni 2006). They also advocated for the need to legislate relevant terms of service for the Chief *Kadhi* and all the *Kadhis* (Kanyoni 2006).

Context of *Kadhi* Courts Debate and Relevance of the Debate

After Kenya ceased to be a single-party state in 1992, different groups, including Muslims, started to advocate for the expansions of their rights. The start of the constitution review process offered Muslims opportunity to entrench *Kadhi* Courts in the constitution. This was a step that intended to elevate these religious courts. *Kadhi* Courts were not only to be expanded, but those serving in those Courts were to be paid from public taxes. This became a divisive issue between Christians and Muslims.

The issue of *Kadhi* Courts was a polarising one during the constitution review process. What was a matter for Muslims, over the years became a “lightning rod” that divided opinions

and created negative attitudes between them and Christians. According to John Chesworth, even though *Kadhi* Courts had been in the Kenyan constitution before and after independence, the negative views about them formed as a result of the constitutional review debate that advocated for a devolution system of governance (Chesworth 2011:13).

According to Abdulkader Tayob, the coincidental timing of the constitution review might have contributed to Christians' suspiciousness of *Kadhi* Courts, as it occurred on the back of the 1998 US embassy bombing in Nairobi by Muslim extremists, which resulted in the death of many Kenyans and foreigners. The global wave against Muslim extremists following the 9/11 attack at the World Trade Centre only hardened Christians' view of *Kadhi* Courts (Tayob 2011). According to a Muslim scholar based in Mombasa, Christian views on *Kadhi* Courts were mostly shaped by the "Abuja declaration", which was drafted in a meeting in Nigeria in 1998 where Muslim leaders set their goal as making "Islam the Religion of Africa" (Mwakimako 2007:290). He argues that The Abuja Declaration was overly zealous wishful thinking on the part of certain Islamists, yet the story was portrayed by radio stations as having been "a secret", and directly feeds into Christian fears of Muslims gaining too much power and turning the tables to marginalize them (Mwakimako 2007:290). This argument does not take into account the fact that those who gathered in this meeting were influential people who represented a number of countries. Presentations were made by respected scholars including world-renown Mombasa academic Professor Ali Mazrui (Chesworth 2007). To categorize them as a fringe group is not doing justice to both the influential representatives who attended the meeting and the Arab countries that were backing it. This meeting led to the formulation of the Islam in Africa Organization (IAO) to implement agendas to achieve the goals of the meeting (Chesworth 2007).

Although some might think that the issue of *Kadhi* Courts has long been dealt with and

therefore irrelevant to current Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa, most informants felt that the issue plays an important role in the way both sides engage each other in the present day. It may as well be that those who see it as irrelevant are so consumed about peace that they are quick to dismiss the current reality of the impact that debate had and continues to have on Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. The reality is that despite the fact that *Kadhi* Courts are now embedded in Kenyan constitution, the poisonous rhetoric that circulated during the debate has formed a basis of enduring suspicion between Christians and Muslims that underlies the thinking behind any engagement between the two groups. One influential Muslim and an informant in this research, Mwakimalo, insists that Christians must apologise to Muslims for the things they said during this debate (examined later). The same informant indicated that the impact of this debate on Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa endures, as Muslims are suspicious of Christians, the very people who “were against them.” A mainline Church informant, Muhorola, argued that it “created some tensions, although it was not a case of Church against Muslims, but Church against the government, but of course the Muslims felt that the church was opposing their Courts, hence creating some tensions in the relationship.”

A few informants sought to downplay the importance and relevance of the *Kadhi* Courts on Christian-Muslim relations. For example, a moderate Muslim informant, Khalifando, indicated that:

It was not considered as something that would bring problem in the relations. There were some MPs [Members of Parliament] in opposition who were saying that our government is secular [therefore should not have religious Courts]. This issue of *Kadhi* Courts was supported by non-Muslims in parliament and other top leadership who argued that Muslims have a right to have their Courts, and that the secular Courts do not have expertise in Islamic laws and that these Courts are good and not bad in the sense that they complement the secular Courts. Many people supported us, especially lawyers, LSK [Law Society of Kenya], arguing that this is a requirement of the Muslims and therefore must be entrenched in the constitution.

My interaction with informants revealed that despite some stating that there is no present impact of the bitter debate on *Kadhi* Courts, there is strong evidence that the mistrust and adversarial attitude that emerged from the debate continues to shape Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. This debate made clear that the Christian–Muslim relations in Kenya are constantly fluid and in flux (Mwakimako 2007). Christian-Muslim relations are undoubtedly being tested by the prevailing religious, political and socio-economic environment of the day.

Controversies of the *Kadhi* Court Debate

Because Christians were keenly aware of an Islamic agenda, it was not surprising that religious authorities in evangelical and emerging Churches were opposed to the change of the constitution: in their view, the new constitution would elevate *Kadhi* Courts and therefore create a possibility of *Sharia* laws in certain parts of Kenya. This created an obvious dilemma, as the government was determined to push for the new constitution, and yet it was faced with strong opposition from its allies among Christian religious leaders who were not ready to compromise on the inclusion of *Kadhi* Courts.

According to Kimeu, as a way to appease Christians Attorney General Amos Wako and his team came up with a draft, popularly known as the “Wako draft” (2005), that established *Kadhi* Courts under the broad umbrella of religious courts, alongside Christian, Hindu and other religious courts, and left their actual structure and jurisdiction to be determined at a later date through an Act of Parliament (Kimeu 2011). Not only did this draft weaken *Kadhi* Courts, it also created Christian courts that were not needed, since existing Magistrates Courts apply the *African Christian Marriage & Divorce Act* in resolving family disputes and the Succession Act on matters relating to inheritance (Mraja 2011).

Because of the pressure from Christian groups, Attorney general Amos Wako sought to diminish the issue of *Kadhi* Courts by introducing a clause that stated that “The subordinate Courts are—(a) The Magistrates’ Courts, Christian Courts, *Kadhi* Courts, Hindu Courts and other religious Courts” and that these Courts were to deal with “Laws relating to personal status, marriage, divorce and matters consequential to divorce, inheritance and succession in proceedings in which all parties profess the respective faith, as may be prescribed by an Act of Parliament” (“Wako Draft” 2005). Muslims were dissatisfied with this draft. These controversies created tense Christian-Muslim relations, as the competition to win the debate pits them against each other. A national referendum was held on 21 November 2005 and the draft was defeated 57 per cent to 43 per cent. According to Chesworth,

Whilst other factors led to the rejection of the draft constitution, it can also be said that for both Christians and Muslims, the place of *Kadhi*’s courts in the constitution, was regarded as a significant reason for their rejection of the Wako draft of the constitution (Chesworth 2011:10).

Changes were then introduced in Harmonised Draft Constitution of Kenya (2009) Part 3 that indicated that the *Kadhi* Court was one of the Subordinate Courts and that “Parliament shall by legislation confer jurisdiction, powers and functions on the courts established” (Republic of Kenya 2009). The fact that *Kadhi* Courts were explicitly listed among other subordinate courts was appealing to those who had opposed them. Following another referendum accepted by most Kenyans, a new constitution that included *Kadhi* Courts was promulgated on August 27, 2010. The new constitution was supported by 67% of those who voted in the referendum.

The next section will look at how different religious groups responded to the debate on *Kadhi* Courts. The religious authorities in question are Mainline Christian churches and organizations, Mainline Muslim mosques and organizations, emerging and charismatic churches, and conservative and radical Muslim groups.

Moderate Muslim groups and Conservative Muslim groups

The issue of *Kadhi* courts was extremely important to both moderate and conservative Muslims. So intense was the debate that even a moderate Muslim cabinet Minister in the Ministry of Tourism, Najib Balala, threatened to resign from Government if the Courts were to be listed among contentious issues in the constitution to be debated (Kiarie 2009). Addressing a press conference outside Masjid Mbaruq Mosque in Mombasa, officials of the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK) and the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) said they would not support a new constitution that would do away with the Courts (*Nation* 2009). Sheikh Mukhtar Khitam, SUPKEM Coast branch chairman, accused a section of Christian leaders of trying to create chaos by opposing the Courts, and stated: “The Courts have nothing to do with the constitution making and some Christian leaders are being used to derail the process,” and “we will defend the presence of the Courts in the constitution by all means” (*Nation* 2009). But the approach adopted by moderate and conservative Muslims to ensure that the *Kadhi* Courts became part of the constitution differed.

There were moderate Muslim groups with well-organized national structures, such as SUPKEM, which were seeking to entrench the *Kadhi* Courts through a broad coalition of both Muslims and Christian leaders. This was pursued through consultative forums and interreligious groups, such as the *Ufungamano* initiatives (named after the building where the deliberations were taking place) which sought to build consensus from diverse religious groups (Tayob 2011:7). Here, Muslims canvassed for the inclusion of *Kadhi* Courts.

Moderate Muslims adopted a consensus approach on the issue of *Kadhi* Courts that had a calming effect on Christian-Muslim relations. This consensus-building effort was reported in the county’s leading newspaper: “SUPKEM director general Abdulatif Shaban said talks between Christian and Muslim leaders to find a common ground on the *Kadhi* Courts were

ongoing” (*Nation* 2009). During the constitutional review process, it was pointed out by Abdulkader Tayob that “In public forums, Muslims often appeared only to react to the Christian objections and did not seem to have their own perspective and view of the *Kadhi* Courts, their history, present and future” (Tayob 2011:56). However, this obscures the different approaches that were adopted by different Muslim religious authorities—moderate Muslims canvassing and appealing for Christians to support the issue of *Kadhi* Courts.

According to a moderate Muslim informant, Khalifando, who was heavily involved in this process, most non-Muslims supported Muslims on the issue of *Kadhi* Courts, and:

“When constitutional review was taking place at the Bomas of Kenya [venue of the conference], it was a matter of ‘give and take.’ We were supported by 65% of all the committees. Even though Muslims were very few in all committees, accounting for less than 10% or 15% in representation. But we went everywhere asking for support. ... we even told Christians to feel free to bring their religious Courts if it is prescribed in their religion, but they said they are sufficiently being served by the existing Courts.

Another way moderate Muslims canvassed for the *Kadhi* Courts was through members of parliament. In Kenya, MPs wield enormous influence when convincing their constituents to rally behind an idea. According to a moderate Muslim informant, Khalifando, given that Muslims were for devolution (a concept that other ethnic groups such as Luo, Luhya, Kamba and several other *Baras* ethnic groups supported), these ethnic groups were willing to consider *Kadhi* Courts in exchange for devolution, a system they thought would bring economic developments in their region.

Unlike moderate Muslim groups that have well-defined leadership structures, some conservative groups have no clear leadership structure. For this reason, they resorted to threats and intimidations as a means of achieving *Kadhi* Courts. One such person indicated that

We should try to mobilise Muslims countrywide for *jihad* if anyone will try

to intimidate us and provoke our religion...we shall fight up to the end with all ways to retain the *Kadhi* Courts in the constitution even if it means to seek help from our fellows [Muslims] around the globe (Maina 2011:51).

Similarly, “In some cases like in North Eastern Province, Muslims asked for the full application of *Sharia*” (Maina 2011:51). This kind of demand only helped confirm the suspicion by many Christians that *Sharia* law, Islam’s legal system applicable to Muslims, was the goal of those pushing for *Kadhi* Courts.



Figure 6.1 Muslims hold placards aloft in a protest outside the Mbaruk Mosque in Mombasa after the afternoon prayers. They were protesting the removal of Kadhi Courts in the proposed constitution. Photo: Nation, 28 July 2009

As can be seen in the above placard, some Muslims took a hard stance indicating that “No *Kadhi* Court, No Constitution.” The strong language that was used by some Muslim religious leaders did not create a conducive environment for calming the tension on this sensitive issue.

The aggressive push for *Kadhi* Courts was perceived by Christian informants differently. According to a Christian informant from an emerging Church, Tindilo, Muslims’ aggressiveness in pushing for the inclusion of *Kadhi Courts* in the constitution

is not going to stop, because [Muslims] like the use of violence as one way of achieving that. And so, what we need to do as Christians is to continue championing for equality and not just favouring a group, and also to remember that we need each other, whether Muslims or Christians, but we

need to co-exist peacefully.

Other Muslim groups threatened armed conflict if the new constitution did not enshrine the *Kadhi* Courts (Maina 2008).

In conclusion, moderate Muslims used available diplomatic avenues to canvass for the inclusion of *Kadhi* Courts in the constitution, while conservative Muslims used intimidation. The former approach endeared them to Christians, while the latter confirmed suspicion that the demand for *Kadhi* Courts foreshadowed a demand for *Sharia* law. Because most of the extremists are led by charismatic authorities who are not accountable to any organizational leadership, these leaders made statements that alienated many Christians. On the other hand, Muslims in traditional leadership structures used the structure of their organization and the years of collaboration with Christians to seek cooperation and consensus with the latter to persuade them to support the inclusion of *Kadhi* Courts in the constitution.

Mainline Churches and Emerging Churches

The Mainline church groups—composed mainly of National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK) affiliates, the Anglican, and the Catholic churches—were at the forefront of pushing for constitutional reform in Kenya. This group showed a willingness to work with a Muslim group, the SUPKEM, to achieve constitutional change. Religious leaders in Mainline Churches were willing to work with Muslims and have *Kadhi* Courts in the new constitution. For example,

Anglican Archbishop David Gitari and Rev. Timothy Njoya of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) using the jurisprudential principle of choosing a ‘lesser evil rather than the greater evil’, urged Kenyans to accept the proposed constitution as being far preferable than the current supreme law and warned them against turning the referendum into a battle between Christians and Muslims (Mraja 2011).

Mainline Christian and Muslim groups put enough pressure on the government to

ensure a merger of civil and religious groups (Ufungamano initiative) with the parliamentary select committee. The merger of the two was crucial, as the divide between religious groups and political class was minimised for the common good.

Mainline Christian religious authorities adopted a consensus approach on the issue of *Kadhi* Courts that had a calming effect on Christian-Muslim relations. It is a fact that the Mainline Churches were also opposed to *Kadhi* Courts. This is made clear in the reporting from the most widely circulating newspaper in Kenya, *Nation*, which indicated that

At a meeting attended by representatives of the mainstream churches—Dr Gideon Githiga of the Anglican Church of Kenya, Bishop David Kamau of the Nairobi Catholic Archdiocese, Presbyterian Church of East Africa moderator David Gathanju and John Mugecha of the African Independent Pentecostal Church of Kenya—the clerics said *Kadhi* Courts should not have been in the current Constitution in the first place (*Nation* 2009).

However, it is important to note that this was in response to the report that “The evangelical churches have taken a hard line on the *Kadhi* Courts Door but were on Tuesday joined by clerics from their big churches at the press conference at PCEA St Andrew’s Church in Nairobi” (*Nation* 2009). The evangelicals were leading in opposition to the *Kadhi* Courts and the mainline Churches were merely following. It would also appear that mainline Churches were likely influenced by emerging and charismatic Churches in their opposition to the *Kadhi* Courts. It has been argued that given the previous enthusiasm of the mainline churches for reform, their opposition to the two drafts of the constitution were influenced by the concern of losing members to emerging Churches (Deacon 2017:8). However, the “Big churches” became “wary of hard-line stance” of the evangelicals (*Nation* 2009).

The role of emerging Churches in influencing mainline Churches’ stance on *Kadhi* Courts is well captured by Paul Gifford’s observation that

these courts seemed to become a major issue especially for the newer

churches whose agenda was adopted by the Catholics and NCCK; ... much Christian activity against the new constitution revolved around narrowly evangelical concerns rather than the broad human rights issues that initiated the drive for a new constitution (Gifford 2009:41).

It was even observed that “If the mainstream churches join the evangelicals in opposing the *Kadhi* Courts, then this will be a serious setback in consensus-building for the new constitution” (*Nation* 2009). It is not even clear whether mainline Christian authorities were all against the *Kadhi* Courts: the report indicates that “It was not clear whether the statement at the press conference represented the views of the leadership of the mainstream churches, or whether the representatives attended in their personal capacities” (*Nation* 2009).

Several religious authorities from Mainline churches were willing to confront what they perceived to be extreme views from emerging and charismatic Churches. It was reported that some of these clergy were “spoiling for an intellectual fight with their counterparts” who were opposed to *Kadhi* Courts being included in the constitution (*Nation* 2010). The newspaper reported that “Retired Archbishop David Gitari [Anglican Church of Kenya] and controversial Presbyterian cleric Timothy Njoya dared their colleagues opposing the document to a debate on the contentious issues in the proposed Constitution” and stated, “Let them come so that we can debate honestly. If they refuse to come, then we’ll know they are cowards” (*Nation* 2010). It is also noted on the same newspaper that “the two sounded bellicose in their speech terming themselves as the ‘country’s best theologians’, while dismissing the clergy in the ‘No’ camp as ‘traitors’ and ‘bastards’ with ‘degrees from the streets’” (*Nation* 2010). This statement was not surprising given the fact that Catholics and mainline Churches have a dim view of many of the emerging Churches: they see them as having no structural leadership and lacking in theological grounding and accountability. This was confirmed by a mainline Church informant, Anyati, who has been heavily involved in interreligious initiatives. He observes that leaders of emerging Churches “see a dream at night and start a church [the following day]” with

membership rising to thousands, and then become “powerful person[s]” who are “out of control.” He also described the leadership structure of emerging Churches as “a committee of relatives or friends [of the preacher] and so they don’t oppose him, they actually treat him as a king.”

The retired Anglican Bishop Dr. Gitari also observed that “There is a lot of *sharia* phobia in the Christian church. More than 80 per cent of Kenyans are Christians. There is no way 20 per cent can push their way over everybody” (*Nation* 2010). Furthermore, Presbyterian cleric Dr Njoya accused some colleagues of having abandoned the gospel and peddling lies on the *Kadhi* Courts, stating that “Their conduct has shown that the church needs redemption” (*Nation* 2010). Another Mainline Church, Seventh Day Adventists, asserted “let *Kadhi* Courts be” (*The Standard* 2010).

Kenya’s leading newspapers captured the frustration of religious authorities in mainline Churches with titles such as: ‘Opposition to *Kadhi* Courts uninformed and misplaced’ (*The Standard* 2009); ‘Campaigns against *Kadhi* Courts malicious’ (*The Standard* 2010); ‘Christians have no basis rejecting *Kadhi* Courts’ (*The Standard* 2010); ‘*Kadhi* Courts fear is built on a solid rock of misinformation’ (*The Standard* 2010); ‘Christians must give Muslims a break’ (*The Standard* 2009); ‘Church stand on draft law self-serving’ (*The Standard* 2010).

Religious authorities in emerging and charismatic churches adopted a hard-line position on the issue of *Kadhi* Courts, inflaming the tension and putting the whole constitution review process in jeopardy. Leading newspapers captured the hard stance that emerging and charismatic Churches had taken on *Kadhi* Courts. One explicitly stated that “evangelical churches have taken a hard line on the *Kadhi* Courts” (*Nation* 2009), reporting that “Leaders of evangelical churches earlier in the week vowed to mobilise their followers against the proposed constitution if the *Kadhi* Courts were included in the draft expected to be ready by

early next year” (*Nation* 2009). The frustration in the newspapers was palpable with headlines such as “Clergy’s views on *Kadhi* Courts selfish” (Aol 2009:17), “Kenyan Christians behaving like a dog in the manger” (Mwaura 2009:11) and “There’s more to law reform than the Church locking out *Kadhi* Courts” (Wambilyanga 2009:16). A Muslim writer captured the mood of many when he wrote on *The Nation* that “We must reject both Christian and Muslim extremists” (Abdullahi 2010:18). Muslim leaders such as Mohamed Sheikh Dor argued that the issue of *Kadhi* Courts has been blown out of proportion by Christian leaders with extremist views (Kiarie 2009).

The entry of the Kenya Church in the debate marked the disintegration of the *Ufungamano* initiative and put the whole process in jeopardy. The Kenya Church comprised religious leaders of mainly Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Nairobi and other major cities such as Mombasa, who were ‘gate keepers’ of Christianity and who were concerned about Muslims’ agenda. This was a very influential organization as it helped shape negative views of Christians on the issue of *Kadhi* Courts, working to ensure that they were not in the constitution. Their approach was confrontational and uncompromising. Unlike the NCCCK, who were willing to forge working relations with a Muslim group (Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims), Kenya Church framed the debate as a battle to rescue Kenya from an imminent Islamic take-over through *Sharia* law, with *Kadhi* Courts a step in that direction. The goal of Kenya Church was to “ensure the final Constitution not only reflects the wishes of Kenyans, but also the eternal purposes of God” (Tayob 2011:59).

Even though the issue of *Kadhi* Courts was settled through a referendum in 2010 that saw it adopted in the constitution, the effect of the acrimonious debate still reverberates today in terms of suspicion, hostility and antagonistic approach to issues. There has not been any serious debate on how healing can take place. This is especially problematic given the fact that

the debate generated suspicion of the ‘other’. The reality is that those unresolved issues have cast a long shadow on current relations and that any arising issue is seen through the prism of that acrimony.

Kadhi Courts Debate in Mombasa

Although the *Kadhi Courts* debate was a national one, it was in Mombasa that the battle was most fiercely fought. In essence, Mombasa was driving the national debate on *Kadhi Courts* and the intensity of the debate in Mombasa was even greater than at national level, given the city is undoubtedly both the religious and intellectual capital of Islam in Kenya. I will briefly discuss these local specificities.

Mainline Christian groups and Emerging Churches in Mombasa

There were different responses from Christian denominations in Mombasa once it became clear that *Kadhi Courts* were certain to be part of Kenya’s new constitution. Evangelicals and emerging churches in Mombasa were disgruntled at the inclusion of *Kadhi Courts* in the new constitution despite their opposition, and under the auspices of the Mombasa Pastors Fellowship, Church leaders asked the High Court in 2009 to declare *Kadhi Courts* illegal in the proposed Constitution arguing that their rights would be infringed upon (Mraja 2011:35). This is because they believed that their taxes would be used to pay for the operation of *Kadhi Courts* and that only Muslims could serve as Judges in these Courts. An informant, Tindilo, represented MPF in the court case. He recounted:

We were instructed by the Mombasa Pastors Fellowship, to file a petition in a special court as per the constitution of Kenya 2010; the challenge was that *Kadhi Courts* were being mentioned in the constitution whereas the other faiths were not being recognized, hence creating room for establishing sharia law in the country; so, the challenge was we didn’t not want the *Kadhi Courts* to be mentioned in the constitution. ... the other side [Muslims] was not represented, because no Muslim came to court.

This, however, does not mean that Muslims were not following the proceedings.

The same informant also indicated that:

We had two suits, the initial one was filed in Mombasa, and so he [Judge] delayed and when we came to full argument of the case, he did not issue us with an order but argued that the process had gone too far, and he could not stop it. Two things happened: we took the case to a judge who was a Muslim, and even though he was very cooperative at the beginning he seemed to have been influenced in the process to take the side of his faith. Given the fact that we went to court as Christians and he is a Muslim, there is a chance that this might have influenced his objectivity. We lost the case.

It is improper to question the motivation for the Judge's decision, but members of evangelical and emerging Churches felt that their views were not well captured by experts in the constitutional review committee who were collecting and collating views from stakeholders. They also felt that the Judge overseeing the court case was not fair. According to Tindilo:

Following his decision, we were requested to file the matter before a specialized court, which was in Nairobi. So, we argued the matter and unfortunately the court disagreed with us, and said the process had gone too far and they could not stop it; because in the process of collecting and gathering information from the public there were several views that *Kadhi* Courts should not feature in the constitution, and if they were to feature then they should also bring in other religions aspects; but it seems the committee of experts was leaning so much on leaving the *Kadhi* Courts hanging in the constitution.

From my interaction with the above informant, it does seem that Muslims' strategy was to not seek representation in the court while aggressively pushing their views through the committee of experts. The informant continued to observe that:

During the court proceedings Muslims did not show up in the Courts, but they were very aggressive during collection of views from the public; their argument was based on the agreement made between the sultan who ruled the coastal strip and the governor then, they argued that this was a historical thing that should not be taken away from the constitution.

There is no doubt that Muslims knew the political clout they held on the matter; hence

the reason for not turning up in a case they believed was heading nowhere. A moderate Muslim informant, Khalifando, who is an influential Muslim and leader of a National Muslim organization, observed that politicians, Muslims and Christians, were on their side. Part of the reason for support from some Christian politicians was a strategy of ‘give and take’—in this case, they offered to support Muslims in return for Muslims supporting certain clauses in the proposed new constitution that they deemed beneficial to their community/tribe.

Ultimately, Christians lost the court case. In the words of an emerging Church informant, Telika,

What punctured our case was that the government was on the side of the Muslims, and majority of the nominal Christians did not have a problem with the *Kadhi* Courts, it was the clergy and a few informed Christians that were opposed to it. The majority of Christians did not care.

This statement reveals that even though religious leaders are undoubtedly influential in shaping views of the people they lead, the same people have priorities and even theological justifications that are different to those of their leaders.



Figure 6.2: Muslims walk out of the Mombasa Law Courts after the ruling on a petition case filed by Christians seeking a declaration that some sections of the constitution are null and void and should be removed. Photo by Gideon Maundu. Nation, May 31, 2010.



Figure 6.3: Nominated MP Sheikh Mohammed Dor (second left front row) with other Muslims in the High court during the ruling on a petition case which had been filed by Christians seeking a declaration that some sections of the constitution are null and void and should be removed. Photo by Gideon Maundu. Nation, May 31, 2010.

Overall, Muslims won the argument on the issue of *Kadhi* Courts in the public space as they rallied Members of Parliament on their side. Christians who were opposed to *Kadhi* Courts were portrayed by moderate Christians as intolerant religious extremists who lacked theological training (*Nation* 2010). People overwhelmingly supported the new constitution in the referendum, a sign that Christians and the broader public opinion did not fear *Kadhi* Courts despite leaders of emerging Churches using this argument to convince Christians to reject the new constitution in the referendum.

The critical question is how the debate on *Kadhi* Courts impacted and continue to impact the Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. The next section will seek to answer this question.

The Enduring Impact of the *Kadhi* Courts Debate on Christian-Muslim Relations in Mombasa

There are different views as to the impact of the debate of *Kadhi* Courts on Christian-

Muslim relations in Mombasa. Most informants from Mainline Churches and moderate Muslims take the view that the debate has not had any long-term negative impacts, while Evangelical/emerging churches and Radical/Conservative Muslim groups take the view that the negative impact of the debate continues to define how Christians and Muslims in Mombasa relate.

According to a moderate Muslim informant, Mwakimalo, the debate on *Kadhi Courts* caused great damage to Christian-Muslim relations and this has not been resolved. According to him,

it [*Kadhi Courts Debate*] has caused a lot of damage [to the relations] because even now Muslim will keep on saying that ‘you see these, Christians; don't you know them? didn't you hear what they said during the Kadhis debate?’ So, they say ‘it is the same thing that they used to say during the debate on the constitution’.

Mwakimalo states that following the *Kadhi Courts* debate, Muslims have come to believe that Christians are prepared to do anything to disadvantage Muslims. From this view, Christians' opposition to *Kadhi Courts* during the referendum is a point of reference for Muslims, a powerful tool they use against Christians when engaging them on any issue. Christians are painted as fundamentally anti-Islam and the common view is that they should not be trusted. According to Mwakimalo:

in my academic life, I completely refused to comment on the debate on *Kadhi Courts* when it was going on. I completely said no, no, no, I am not going to say anything on this because I was listening to the reasoning and I thought that it is unfortunate for Christians who are led to reason that way. Now one of the things, one of the arguments that the Christian church then or the Kenya church, what they called the Kenya Church was saying was that by having the *Kadhi Courts*, it was part of the process of Islamization of the African continent. And that now I would be prepared to ask the Christians, the Kenya church, to provide or even to apologize to the Muslims or even to the Christians by lying to them, by telling them that when the *Kadhi Courts* are in the constitution then they will be used to bestow favour on Muslims.

The fact that misinformation was rampant during the *Kadhi* Courts debate and that those deceptions have not been addressed indicate that the Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa are built on a shaky foundation.

There were also elements of Islamophobia that were being propagated. Church and Christian meetings that I attended used “The Abuja Declaration” as a warning of Muslims’ agenda to make Africa the continent of Islam. Others have argued that “Christian activity against the new constitution revolved around narrowly evangelical concerns rather than the broad human rights issues that initiated the drive for a new constitution” (Gifford 2009:41). The campaign by Christian leaders and politicians for the exclusion of *Kadhi* Courts from the constitution was seen as Christians taking a stand against Muslims. It was argued that whereas Christians were concerned about conversion and were using the *Kadhi* Courts to undermine the national profile of Islam, Muslims were becoming sensitive to any encroachment on the application of Muslim personal law, as seen in demonstrations in Mombasa when a higher court reversed a *Kadhi* court decision on a custody case (Tayob 2011).

What cannot be ignored is the seed of bitterness this debate planted. There is no evidence that the issues of differences that emerged during the debate have been addressed. At best, those issues, potentially explosive, have been conveniently buried as Christians and Muslims seek ‘peace, love and unity,’ the mantra of Kenyan former President, Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi.

Muslims hold diverse views as to Christians’ actions during the constitutional review process. However, it is important to point out that it was clear from this research that people are not very open about their views about the actions of the other religious group and how they feel about them. This was well captured by Mwakimalo, who indicated that “[Muslims] don’t speak in the open. You actually have to go to their meetings when they don’t know that you are

actually there then you will hear the way that they speak bad about other religious traditions.” This word of caution from a prominent Muslim scholar from Mombasa shows the need for caution in drawing conclusions from what Muslims say about Christians in public, as this can be contradicted in private conversations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the issue of *Kadhi* Courts divided Christians and Muslims in Mombasa. The debate also exposed differences between Christian and Muslim religious authorities on how they approached the issue. Emerging Churches adopted a hard-line approach, rejecting the option to embed *Kadhi* Courts in the constitution, campaigning against them, and suing to have them removed from the proposed constitution. These religious authorities saw *Kadhi* Courts as a step toward Sharia law that would ensure an Islamic take-over. This reaction of evangelicals shows how seriously they viewed *Kadhi* Courts and Islam as a threat to both their survival and their mission to proselytize others.

Several mainline Churches were also opposed to *Kadhi* Courts, but the pushback came mostly by emerging Churches. Several religious authorities in mainline Churches opposed the hard-line stance adopted by emerging Churches. They also engaged moderate Muslims in consensus-building on how to address this sensitive issue in the constitution. Moderate Muslims and conservative Muslims were all for *Kadhi* Courts; however, unlike the moderates, conservative Muslims advocated for *Kadhi* Courts without seeking to build consensus with Christians.

The fact that the majority of Kenyans still voted to accept the constitution that includes *Kadhi* Courts shows that Church members can break away from their religious leaders and express their independent opinion on Islam and Muslims. Christians’ vote for the new

constitution that includes *Kadhi* Courts is viewed positively by several Muslim religious leaders and is undoubtedly a unifying factor in Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa, although the impact of the acrimonious debate is still felt today.

The *Kadhi* Courts debate took place in parliament, in conference halls, in public rallies and was settled through a referendum. The next chapter present a unique setting, a *Kongamano*, where various Christian and Muslim groups gathered in Mombasa to address issues they grapple with daily. Exploring engagement in *Kongamano* will further expand our understanding of this relation beyond what we have already learned from the *Kadhi* Courts debate.

Chapter 7: Kongamano, A Micro-perspective on Tolerance and Tension

I have lived in Mombasa since I was a child of three years and I have lived with Christians, grew up with Christians, have friends, family, family friends, particularly the local Christians—the Giryamas, the Mijikendas---these people we have lived together with, and in many cases, they never made a distinction between Christians and Muslims in their relationships. (Mwakimalo, informant)

Introduction

Having looked at the issue of *Kadhi* Courts, this chapter looks at a *Kongamano*, a forum where Muslims and Christians go to articulate their issues, air their grievances about each other and defend their positions on issues of difference as they see them. A forum where influential Muslim and Christian leaders from diverse religious backgrounds are directly engaging each other on problems that affect their relations is a microcosm of the general community trend in Mombasa and is vital for understanding and explaining the status of Christian-Muslim relations in the city. This chapter is important in addressing Christian-Muslim relations as it captures, in an unvarnished manner, the practical ways these groups engage each other. The fact that Mainline Churches, emerging churches, Moderate Muslims and conservative Muslims were part of the *Kongamano* gives me a window into how different religious authorities shape Christian-Muslim relations. This chapter briefly describes the *Kongamano*, and analyses Christians' and Muslims' grievances of an economic, political, social, and religious nature, and the other group's response. Finally, I use the different elements of the ecological model (social; economic; religious; and political) as a framework for understanding and explaining how Christian and Muslim religious authorities in Mombasa view their differences and how they resolve them in the *Kongamano*.

About the *Kongamano*

Kongamano is a Swahili word for a symposium. In the case under discussion in this research, the *Kongamano* covered a broad theme on Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa.

This symposium was held on July 25, 2018 at the Midview Hotel, Mombasa. It was organized by the CICC. I was privileged to attend this meeting. My invitation to be part of the symposium came from a Muslim respondent who is one of the leaders in the CICC organization. He wanted me to witness how Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa play out. It represented an extraordinary opportunity for me to observe in real time how the topic of my research was experienced and understood by those whom I was studying.

There were forty participants in attendance. Participants were mainly Christian and Muslim leaders, both groups equally represented. In terms of gender, about 55% of the Muslim group were male and 45% female. On the Christian side of the aisle, 50% were male and 50% female. The participants of this *Kongamano* were drawn from different Christian denominations and Muslim sects in Mombasa. There were participants from mainline Churches such as Catholic church, Anglican church, Presbyterian Church of East Africa and Baptist church. There were also participants from emerging and evangelical churches such as Redeemed Gospel Church, Deliverance Church, Full Gospel and members of different evangelical organizations. Among Muslims, participants were from moderate Muslim groups such as SUPKEM, CIPK and other conservative groups that practice *mihadhara*. Although not all participants stated their affiliation with any religious authority and social organization, it was apparent from interactions with them that both Christian and Muslim participants fitted the different categories of religious authorities and organisations already identified in Chapter 1. Although a number of conservative Muslims and members of emerging churches are opposed to meetings with members of another religion because they do not want to ‘defile’

their faith, there are those amongst them who see inter-faith forums such as the *Kongamano* organized by the CICC as opportunity to advance their agenda, usually proselytizing members of the other faith. This is even though the CICC makes clear that it is not a place for seeking conversion of members of the other faith (CICC 2015).

Those in attendance were invited by the leadership of the CICC. There were no clear criteria as to the selection of participants, although it was clear to me from discussions with a few of them that many had been part of previous CICC meetings. It did seem that someone had to be an active member of the CICC to attend the symposium. The Symposium was coordinated by a Muslim informant who is an official in the CICC. He worked alongside other Muslim and Christian leaders in making sure that the *Kongamano* was a success. The CICC does have annual planned meetings depending on need such as symposia, workshops and seminars (CICC 2015).

The *Kongamano* was held at Midview hotel in Mombasa, a luxury hotel that hosts regular meetings by various groups including governments, companies and NGOs. It seemed like a place that *watu wa kawaida* (ordinary citizens) could not afford.



Figure 7.1: Midview Hotel in Mombasa where the Kongamano between Christians and Muslims took place. Photo taken by Kennedy Okello (During field research, 25th July 2018)

The meeting was funded by the CICC. Lunch was provided and a payment of one thousand Shillings (approximately \$13) was given to all attendees to cover transport costs.

The CICC is funded from the government of Kenya and other foreign entities such as the European Union. The CICC also receives grant from foreign Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as the *Dutch Mensen met een Missie* (Beusmans 2020). Those funding the CICC do so to promote interreligious dialogue with the objective of minimising religious conflict in Mombasa and other parts of Coastal Kenya (Beusmans 2020).

Upon arrival at the hotel where the symposium was held, I noticed that several participants knew each other. It soon became clear that this was one of the many meetings that the CICC had organized where some of the participants have met to discuss different subjects. Christian participants and Muslim participants freely mingled with each other as they happily inquired how the other one was doing in life. There was no sign of hostility before the symposium begun. At the same time, I noticed that there were Muslims who kept to themselves in the same way that some Christians kept to themselves. There were Christians and Muslims

who were comfortable in the presence of each other and those who were not.

A Muslim Sheikh and a Christian Bishop facilitated the meeting. They seem to have been chosen to lead the meeting because of their seniority in both their Mosque and Church respectively and also as officials in the CICC. The first item on the agenda was for both Christian and Muslim participants to identify and discuss in their respective groups issues they struggle with when dealing with members of the other religion. They selected a representative to capture those issues in writing. These grievances were read in the main auditorium where all Muslim and Christian participants gathered.

The meeting of Muslims seemed animated as conservatives amongst them dominated the discussion. I also observed moderates amongst them putting their points across. Given that Muslim participants were diverse, ranging from conservatives to moderates, the opportunity to debate the issues amongst themselves ensured that they came up with a position that was more acceptable to all the groups. The moderate ones were not insisting on pushing their views after the dominant conservative Muslims spoke. It is hard to tell whether they were just unwilling to challenge views of the dominant conservative voices or whether they shared views expressed by the dominant conservatives.

Christian participants gathered away from Muslim participants and deliberated on issues that were provided for discussions. Although several views were shared on most of the issues, participants from emerging and charismatic Churches were, in comparison to participants from Mainline churches, stronger in highlighting issues of differences between Christians and Muslims. Whereas Mainline church participants provided scriptural backings that were about reasoning and rational arguments, participants from emerging churches emphasized scriptures that portray Christian engagement with Muslims as a battle—a spiritual one. Several of them showed their emotions when giving a response to the issues under

discussion. Their charisma was in full display when engaging in the discussion. This was Bouma's theory of religious authority at work (Bouma 1992).

Once Muslim and Christian participants had discussed the issue in their respective groups, they then reported these issues to the whole group. The response was given by a participant who was chosen by the group. It was clear to me that every group chose a person they thought would best present their views and defend them when questioned by the members of the other religion. They seemed to choose those who were articulate and dominant in their group. Muslim chose a participant, Adamale, who is known for his conservative views and his involvement in *Miadhara* movement (street preachers) while the Christians chose a member of a local Mainline Church, Sammale, to present their views. Sammale was articulate and well-grounded in scriptures. Following this, every group gathered again in their respective groups to form a response to the issues raised by members of the other religious. This then was reported in the main auditorium by a representative chosen by the group from earlier session.

In what follows, I will analyze issues that were highlighted by Christians and Muslims as points of differences and link this to the overall argument for the thesis. The issues raised by both sides were social, economic, political and religious in nature and different religious authorities viewed them differently.

Christians' grievances and Muslims' responses

It is a fair assumption that since participants were from both Mainline and emerging churches that the views captured are both conservative and moderate and capture the breadth of Christianity in Mombasa. Since I was part of this deliberation and the participants introduced themselves and the churches they represented, it was easy to detect a pattern of views from both the Mainline churches and emerging churches. Christian participants raised several issues

that they found antagonising from Muslims in Mombasa. In this section, I explain the grievances articulated by Christians among themselves, as well as the responses elicited from Muslims to those issues once they were raised in the plenary session later in the day. The issues raised by Christians have been categorised as economic, political, social or religious. This discussion had a back-and-forth element to it, which, in a way, shows how intractable these issues are for these groups.

Economic issues

While Christians largely believe that Muslims are economically advantaged in Mombasa, Muslims did not agree. Although Christians did not have many reasons to believe that they are economically marginalized, they still pointed to the activities of the Mombasa County government as sufficient to prove their sentiment. Many participants were convinced that it is harder for Christians, especially from *bara*, to qualify for tenders and contracts from the County government. Other Christian participants believed this is a non-issue and that the lack of tenders is more of a corruption problem with members of the County government than a deliberate side-lining of Christian entrepreneurs simply because of their faith. Those that are from emerging churches mostly nodded at the view that Christians are economically marginalized while those of Mainline Churches were not so supportive of that view, judging from their facial expressions. (In later sections I explore in detail their responses.)

Political issues

While Christians are mostly frustrated about Muslim leaders conflating government with Christian leaders, Muslims maintained that this is not the case. Many Christian participants believed that mistakes made by government officials are used by Muslim leaders to paint Christians in a negative light. According to Christian participants, it is a common approach that if a leader in government pushes for what is seen as ‘anti-Islamic’ laws such as

anti-terrorism measures, their Christian identity is overemphasized at the expense of their government position. The Muslim group argued against this position, stating:

We are able to differentiate very well between the government and Christianity; but when the government passes a law that negatively affect Muslims and Christians appear to celebrate it, it is easy to conclude that you [Christians] are part of that government.

Muslims used the Qur'an in responding to this question. The lack of context to the *sura* of the Qur'an used in response to this issue gave the impression that the interpretation and application of those scriptures depended on the person giving them, a common practice that characterises charismatic religious authority.

Social issues

While Christians believe that Muslims are exercising social exclusion against Christians, Muslims do not. Several Christian participants accused Muslims of forbidding their daughters from marrying Christian men, while encouraging their own men to marry Christian women as a way of converting them to Islam. In response to this grievance, the Muslim group responded:

let's understand that marriage is one thing that God has honoured above all other things, and that's why in surah 2 verse 221 God has given procedures to be followed in marriage on how and who is to marry. So, for us we marry as per the Qur'an. On the issue that we encourage our men to marry Christians, I would say again that this is just an assumption, because marriage is an agreement between two people, and once they agree we can't do anything, so we need to get rid of that assumption, because we have seen people who are Muslims and are married to non-Muslim wives.

This response of Muslim participants on the issue of interreligious marriage exposed the gap between what Christians see as Islamic practice versus the Muslim narrative—that 'marriage is an agreement between two people.' Further discussion with participants in the *Kongamano* made clear that extremists would not allow Muslim women to marry Christians.

Even though moderate Muslims did not approve of Muslim women marrying Christian men, it seemed that the consequences of this event would be worse when conservative Muslims were involved.

The symposium also laid bare social issues that create serious rifts between Christians and Muslims. A number of Christian participants argued that Muslims are forcing Islamic values on Christians. They gave example of instances where Christian tenants have been forced to use water instead of toilet paper in the washroom. There was silence in the whole room when this issue was raised, perhaps indicating how sensitive this issue is. A Muslim representative countered this grievance, not by denying it but by stating that:

I would say that this is a hygiene issue, so, it is ones' choice. Where I live, I am the only Muslim, the rest are Christians, I use water and they as well use water on their own free will. And even the prophet says that water is good for your cleanliness, and so it is upon you to choose. Use it if it is useful for you and if you feel it is not useful, no one can force you to use it.

This response revealed that there are moderate Muslims who invoke 'free will', but the experience of Christian participants in the *Kongamano* revealed that there are also extremists who force non-Muslims to follow practices that are Islamic in nature.

Religious issues

While Christians largely believe that there is a deliberate scheme by Muslims to undermine Christians and Christianity, Muslims do not. The religious grievances of Christians were first doctrinal. Christian participants expressed concern that Muslims have initiated what they consider an attack on their belief and doctrine. For example, Christians indicated that Muslims attack their doctrine of the Trinity, which views God as a triune being—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Some Muslims have viewed this as polytheism as opposed to monotheism. Muslims were given the opportunity to respond to this issue. Using *surah* 72 and 76 of the Qur'an, Muslim participants defended their position on the doctrine of

the Trinity. This *surah* talks about a command not to associate God with any person. This is generally seen as an attack on Christian faith. Muslim participants argued: “for us we do so as it is in the Qur’an, because the Qur’an insists that God is one and is alone.” They maintained it is not an attack on Christians, just the teaching of the Qur’an.

Secondly, Christian participants accused Muslims in Mombasa of engaging in activities meant to hinder the spread of the gospel and of using antagonistic means of achieving their own goal of converting Christians to Islam. Christian participants were especially unhappy with the practice of Muslim preachers using the Bible to convert Christians to Islam. They indicated that Muslims distort and quote biblical scriptures out of context to achieve their goal of creating doubt about Christianity and presenting Islam as the valid option. A Muslim spokesperson responded to this claim by stating that:

We have said that this is just an assumption, because in Surah 82 & 83, Muslims are encouraged to be in close friendship with people, in this case. That’s why it is difficult for us to accept the assumption that we attack Christians. It is a case of one making interpretation from what they hear and failing to seek clarification on issue they don’t understand. According to this verse, it difficult for us to accept that we attack Christians, because as per our book, we are encouraged to be in relationship with those close to us, and those close to us are Christians. So, we can’t attack them, because if someone is close to you, he is your friend and your neighbour; and if you ask the sheikhs here, they will tell you day and night they try to build good relationships between Muslims and Christians.

The response of Muslims was not that of understanding but dismissal. The representative that was giving Muslims’ response is a conservative *Mihadhara* preacher. I interviewed him separately one-on-one and learned his very conservative views on issues of aggressively seeking to convert Christians and his tendency to interpret the Qur’an literally. Although the response given by the representative was meant to be unanimously endorsed by the entire Muslim working group in the meeting, it was clear that the Muslim conservative religious authorities wing of Islam had the final say on the response given the position and tone

taken—a position of dismissal rather than understanding. The responses by Muslims to questions raised by Christians revealed that the powerful voices of conservative religious authorities are dominant over the progressive voices that seek to understand Christians and address issues that divide them.

Thirdly, Christian participants, especially those from emerging and charismatic churches held Muslims responsible for the terrorist activities directed against their leaders and members. This was a valid concern from Christians given the many times Churches have been torched and Christians killed by people who claimed they did it because of their Islamic faith. Although several participants from Mainline Churches expressed frustrations at the constant attacks on Christians by Muslim extremists, they were careful to emphasize the distinction between the actions of the few extremists and the other majority Muslims who are moderates. One Mainline church participant highlighted that some of the Muslim *sheikhs* are also targets of those Muslim extremists. Several participants from emerging churches also held the view that some Muslim leaders show solidarity with Christians in meetings like the one that was being held (*Kongamano*) but secretly are supportive or justify actions of Muslim extremists. None of the participant from Mainline churches expressed such a view.

The Muslim spokesperson responded to this accusation for being held responsible for acts of terrorism by arguing that:

this is an assumption that has no basis, our faith commands us to live in peace with people of different faiths. That's why in surah 6 verse 80, surah 4 verse 40, God has put a protection even in times of prophet Mohammed for people of different religions living together. So, it needs to be understood that Islam has not commissioned anyone to commit a crime, and if anyone does evil, he is doing that on his own behalf and not on behalf of Islam.

The above response captures the reality that moderates in Mombasa are against acts of terrorism and consider them a “crime.” The use of the word “crime” by Muslims in the

Kongamano reminded me of my discussions with other Muslims in the streets of Mombasa. Most of the Muslims I met on the streets and who confessed to be either ‘moderate’ or ‘progressive’ absolved Muslims from terrorism by indicating that those burning churches and killing Christians are *jambazi* (criminals) who are using Islam to achieve their criminal goals and should be thrown in *jela* (prison).

Muslims’ grievances and Christians’ response to Muslims’ accusations against them

I was able to briefly check on discussions that was happening amongst Muslims in their group session. This means that I got a small window to view diverse expressions of views that was taking place there. The inability to spend time fully during this deliberation means that I missed some of the discussions since I could not record that part. However, information that was discussed in this small setting was shared by a representative from Muslim side and another one from Christian side in the main auditorium where everyone was present. The discussions that followed those presentations offered us a good opportunity to experience what had taken place in small group settings of Christians and Muslims. Just like Christians, Muslims had about one hour to formulate the grievances they have against Christians. In this group were both conservative and moderate Muslims. Given the fact different factions within Islam were represented in the deliberation before they presented their views to the rest of the participants, it is fair to argue that the compromised view reflected both the conservative and moderate version of Islam in Mombasa and how they view Christians and Christianity in Mombasa. Just like Christians, Muslims’ grievances against Christians were economic, political, social and religious in nature.

Economic issues

While Muslims believe that they are economically marginalized by the national government, Christians respond differently to this view, largely shaped by the kind of religious authority that best represents their Church.

Muslim participants raised concern on a number of economic issues: they indicated that they are economically marginalized by the government that is led by Christians; they were concerned that major businesses are dominated by *Bara* people; Muslim participants also argued that in other parts of Kenya that is inhabited by Christians, land title deeds are promptly offered to owners of land while in Muslim-dominated areas such as Mombasa, nothing is done to facilitate this process—the participants even observed that it is easier for ‘foreign’ *Bara* people to get land title deeds in Mombasa while indigenous people can hardly get the same.

Although the general issue presented by Muslim representative in the large meeting of Christians and Muslims was that of Muslim economic marginalization by the national government, I briefly watched one of the moderate Muslims (Mahamudabi) in the small group settings of Muslim participants express the view that economic problems in Mombasa cannot be exclusively blamed on national government as there are other local issues that contribute to the poverty level in the region, including drug-taking and trafficking, and incompetence at all levels. In other words, whereas the vast majority of Muslim *Kongamano* participants attributed economic disadvantage in Mombasa to sabotage by the national government, there was a progressive voice that attributed it to incompetence at all levels. This does not mean that the progressive voices dismiss the existence of economic marginalization of Muslims by the national government. Going by the input of Mahamudabi above, moderate Muslims seem intended on shifting the emphasis of the poor economic state of Mombasa from one cause to include other causes.

Two Christian participants in the large meeting responded to the issue of economic marginalization raised by Muslim representative. All of them were from Mainline Churches and they all agreed that there was economic discrimination against Muslims. However, during tea break, I had a chat with a Christian participant from an emerging church who argued that even though the issue of economic marginalization of Mombasa and other parts of the Kenyan coast is indisputable, the marginalization is non-religious, and that Christians are just as victims as Muslims.

Political issues

While majority of Muslim participants in the *Kongamano* believed that they are politically marginalized, Christian participants responded differently to this issue, mostly depending on the Church or Christian organization they belonged to.

The Muslim spokesperson in the *Kongamano* raised issues against Christians that were political in nature. These include: that the government of Kenya champions Christian agendas such as political appointment of Christians at the expense of Muslims in Muslim-dominated areas of Mombasa; that Christians collude with Kenya Police against Muslims (based on the fact that a number of Police have been seen preaching while dressed in their official police uniform); that Christians are trying to interfere with the work of *Kadhi* Courts; and that Christians regard them as terrorists and that they get blamed whenever there is a terrorist attack in the country.

Indeed, the issue of profiling Muslims as terrorists is not just a Mombasa problem but a national one. Muslims have complained that they are seen as terrorists. The Kenya Police do not help the situation in addressing this perception as they have been accused of rounding up young Muslim people and subjecting them under cruel grilling in the name of pursuing terrorists (Odongo, Atieno and Mwajefa 2014). Christians from emerging Churches in the

Kongamano were the ones who were mostly forthright and direct in addressing this issue. They accepted the charge and indicated that they have concluded that Muslims either support or are complicit in acts of terrorism against Christians based on several reasons, including the fact that youths who commit terrorism must convert to Islam before they can be recruited into *Al-Shabaab*, they must change their names to Islamic ones, and that people have been killed for failure to recite the *shahada*.¹⁶

Christians also argued, through their spokesperson, Sammale:

We have witnessed attacks on churches and not mosques, and so this gives us reasons that Muslims are behind these attacks, and especially here in Mombasa, we have all witnessed these destructions on churches. Lastly there are extremist Muslim teachers who have been given platforms in mosques to radicalize youths, leading some of the mosques to be closed like the Musa Mosque in Majengo and others; this has made us to believe that you support terrorism because you give these extremists platforms in your mosques.

On the issue that was raised by Muslim spokesperson in the *Kongamano* that the Kenyan government explicitly champions Christian agendas and that there are documents to support this,¹⁷ a Christian participant from an emerging church responded that:

That is a government document which we don't have control of as Christians, and we also have Christians who go through same challenges under government agendas. For example, in Mombasa we have 'a sultan' [governor of Mombasa County], and some of the laws that have been passed are actually oppressive to Christians, because like now the amount of money that you have to pay to get a permit to do a crusade [open air meeting where preaching is made with intention to convert non-believers] is discouraging; so, I would say we Christians in Mombasa we do not have anyone to fight for us, but we can't blame Muslims because of those laws but the government.

Christian participants were so determined to argue against any idea that they are

¹⁶ Confession about God being one and that Mohamed is his prophet.

¹⁷ Muslim participants in the *Kongamano* did not say which documents they were referring to.

working in sync with the government to frustrate Muslims, they even went as far as arguing that, on the contrary, Muslims are the ones working with the government. A Christian participant from emerging church observed that:

During the passing of the new constitution, the church opposed that constitution while the government was supporting it [Muslims supported it too]. So, we don't see how Christians are partners with the government; in fact, right now we have a *Kadhi* Court in the constitution, where the chief *Kadhi* is paid by the government with our taxes; so, we would say Muslims are actually closer to the government than Christians.

A Christian participant in the *Kongamano* from a Mainline Church had to justify why they support different Government initiatives by stating:

As per the scriptures in Romans.13: 3; leadership comes from God, so we have a responsibility to support the government of the day because it is a command, for us to support the government in achieving what is good for the society, as well as correcting it when it does that which we think is not in line with what God wants for his people. And just to elaborate on this, if you go to history you will realize that the church has played vital role in shaping our country, for example repealing section 2A¹⁸ of the constitution, this was due to the contribution of the church leaders such as the late Gitahi [former Arch Bishop of Anglican Church of Kenya], [late] Muge [Bishop of Anglican Church of Kenya] and other church leaders; so our partnership with the government is not on the lines you think; no, we are not in bed with the government.

Muslim participants also accused Christians of harassing them through the government.

Christian participants responded to this assertion by saying:

let it be known that we don't use the police, so if the police decide to come and preach in their uniforms, that is their decision, because religion and faith is a personal choice. Just to say, maybe from how the public views the police as bad people, engaging in evils—maybe when they wear those uniforms, they are trying to clean their image and to show that they are good people, and they can also become Christians.

The criticisms by Muslims that the government of Kenya is in support of Christians at

¹⁸ Section 2A was to change Kenya from a single party to a multi-party state

the expense of Muslims might be seen as a strategic move by the conservative voices of Islam to redeploy political failures of the government into religious mobilization tool to recruit and strengthen their side of religious authority. On the other hand, the moderate voice in Islam at the *Kongamano* that argued for holistic view that does not apportion blame exclusively on Christians and the government is a unifying message. The former has the potential to inflame tension while the later can calm it.

The difference in the response of Christian participants from emerging churches and those of Mainline Churches on the issue of claims of political marginalization by Muslims was both in style and content. The participants from emerging churches adopted tone that might have easily been taken as dismissive by Muslims. Although *Kongamano* participants from Mainline churches shared some of the views of those from emerging churches, their response was that of understanding and of shifting the focus from ‘political marginalization’ of Muslims to possibility that other broader societal issues might be in play.

Social issues

While most Muslim participants in the *Kongamano* argued that they were socially discriminated and excluded, Christian participants had different understanding on the subject depending on whether they closely align to Mainline Churches and organizations or to the emerging and charismatic churches and organizations.

Several social issues were raised by Muslim spokesperson before all participants in the *Kongamano*. The Muslim spokesperson noted that Christians accuse Muslims of discriminating against women; that Christians mock Muslims’ dress styles; that Christians are forcing their values on Muslims in schools; that Christians look down on Muslims and consider them uneducated.

On the issue of discrimination against women, a Christian participant from an emerging church admitted that this is true and that they have come to that conclusion based on several facts, including:

During worship you don't share the same place with women. For us Christians, there is no segregation, we worship together in the same house; [for you Muslims] during burial, women are not allowed to go to the grave, even if it's a woman who is being buried. What is the problem? They are not allowed to talk in front of men; women cannot preach in the presence of men.

The Christian participant concluded that "from the above reasons we feel that women are being oppressed, because they are not given space."

On the issue of dress, another Christian participant from emerging church observed: "In a real sense you are the ones who make fun of our dressing, as you say we dress badly, and our women dress badly; so, we wondered how do we make fun of your clothes yet you are the ones who actually talk about how we dress?" Similarly, on the issue of 'Christians imposing their values', it was not clear which values were being forced and how, but it is common for Muslims in Mombasa and other Muslim-dominated areas to complain about their children dressing in school uniforms instead of being given the freedom to dress in their own religious dress. This subject has already been addressed in a previous chapter. In response to this grievance, a Christian participant from Mainline Church argued that:

let's be honest here, this is an issue that is on both sides; even schools that have Islamic foundation you will find Christian pupils being forced to wear hijab, and so schools that have been founded by either churches or mosques have these rules, and this is a personal choice, you are the one choosing to take your child there or not, and if you chose so, then you must adhere to the rules that are found there because no one has forced you to make that choice.

On the issue of 'Christians looking down on Muslims,' it is indisputable that there is educational disparity between Muslims and Christians given the social and economic

marginalization of Muslim dominated areas. Christians gained much in education from missionaries hence making them more educated than Muslims. However, Muslim participants are bothered that they are seen by Christians as inferior. A Christian participant from Mainline Church denied this arguing that “we have highly educated Muslims that we all admire, such as the late Prof. Mazrui, we have many educated Muslims in all sectors in education, medicine and many other sectors, so that is not true.”

In summary, just like in other areas, Christian participants from emerging churches were dismissive of the concerns expressed by Muslims on social issues. Some participants from Mainline churches agreed with those of emerging churches but framed their response in a polite manner that was conducive to further debate. One of them even complemented Muslims in an area where they think they are weak—he mentioned prominent Muslim scholars from Mombasa when addressing the concern of Muslims that they are considered uneducated.

Religious issues

While Muslim participants in the *Kongamano* believe that Christians in Mombasa negatively portray Islam and Muslims and engage in religious practices that are harmful to their relations, Christians’ response was varied, shaped by religious authority that they align to.

On the religious front, the Muslim spokesperson expressed a few grievances they have against Christians. They asserted that Christians see them as members of a false religion who “worship black stone.” Additionally, Muslim participants argued that there is a concerted effort by Christian authors to criticize Islam and its teachings. Moreover, Muslim participants stated that Christians falsely claim that Islam is “a religion of the Arabs.”

In response, a Christian participant from a Mainline church asserted that they are the ones accused in *mihadhara* of worshiping many gods. He indicated:

On that we would say that even Muslims argue that Christianity is a religion from the West; so, to be fair, because we are here to bring reconciliation, it important that we both stop our arguments of where our religions come from.

Another religious issue raised by Muslims is the way Christian Churches interact with Muslims. Muslim participants alleged that there is a pattern of noise by Christians that interfere with Muslim worship in the nearby Mosques. Muslims were particularly critical of loud worship songs emanating from the Churches. Christian participants who are charismatic leaders of emerging churches used their interpretation of the Bible to justify why they sing loud music in Churches that are close to mosques by indicating that the book of Psalm instructs believers to make music to the Lord. Moreover, Christian participants from emerging churches rebuffed this claim noting that Muslims were the aggressors as exemplified by the noises emanating from their mosques very early in the morning every day. The participants who kept quiet and did not take this line of reasoning were mainly from Mainline churches that have structured religious forms of authority.

Muslim participants in the *Kongamano* were not satisfied with the response Christian participants gave regarding loud worship emanating from Churches. The assertion that Muslims also make noise during their time of prayer elicited a response from Muslims. According to a conservative Muslim participant:

Let it be understood that ‘adhan’ is a call to prayer, and even when there were no public address systems, a person with a loud voice was chosen to call people to prayer, so the intention is not to annoy anyone but to call people from far to come for prayer. According to surah 92 verse 9, God talks of the call to prayer in the Qur’an and so we just do what the Qur’an says. On the other hand, we would say that [Christian] songs are for entertainment. Surah 8 verse 35 talks of noise that are made by those who are not Muslims.

A Christian participant from an emerging church justified why they play music, quoting Psalm 150: 3 and indicating “it is the Bible, so when the scripture tells us to do so, we do not

have another alternative.”

Similarly, Muslim participants raised the issue that Christians build their churches next to mosques and thereby causing friction with Muslims. A Christian participant from a Mainline church denied this indicating that “even Muslims put their mosques near churches, a good example, I am an Anglican, we built our church in Maweni, then Muslims came and built a mosque right near the church. So, it is not true that Christians build their churches near mosques.”

Muslim participants also expressed the view that Christians hate Muslim preachers. This is a very subjective view that perhaps also underlies their perception of Christians. The response of a Christian participant from a Mainline church was heart-warming:

To be very honest we love you brothers [and sisters], and with a clean heart; and I don't know why this has come up but get the assurance today that we love you and it is even a command from our Bible that we love even our enemies, and you are not in the category of our enemies even though the Bible tells us to love them. So, we love you, please.

Muslim participants also accused Christians of bringing religion to the workplace. This view might have been influenced by the common practice of Christians in Mombasa and other parts of Kenya to exchange Christian greetings and to share ‘testimonies’ of what God is doing in their lives. Other Christian practices such as having lunch time prayer meetings is also likely to lend credibility to this view. Given the fact that activities such as lunch time prayer meetings are mostly practiced by emerging churches, grievances of Muslims were more aimed at emerging churches and that these churches are seen as the source of tension. In response to this grievance, a Christian from an emerging church argued that

it is actually the Muslims who bring religion to workplace, because if you look at most of the big companies like Bayusuf, you will find mosques inside, but it is very unlikely that you will find a church inside those companies.

Insight into the Worldview of Christian and Muslim Groups from the Final Remarks

The final remarks of Christians and Muslims brought to the fore the mindset of the different groups of Christian and Muslim religious authorities. These remarks were clear reflections of the interactions that took place in the symposium and the themes that defined the meeting. After Muslims and Christians had given their responses in the *Kongamano*, the masters of ceremony gave an opportunity to a few attendees to indicate what they thought of the responses from the other side. These remarks were given in the main hall where all the participants were gathered to conclude the *Kongamano*. It was clear from views presented that there were those with hard-line views about members of the other religion and those with more tolerant views. This section will look at the final take of four participants: two Muslim (conservative and moderate) and two Christian participants (one from a Mainline church and the other from an emerging church). Their views align with the kind of religious authority that underpins their denominational and sect orientation.

Remarks of a Christian from mainline Church (Rational-Legal authority)

This participant was not only respectful in the manner he gave his remarks, but he also combined it with humour in a manner that attracted laughter from both Christians and Muslims. His view was received positively by the audience as he stated that:

this is a very important meeting, and there is something I want us to understand, that these two religions are not the same, they will never be the same. When you look at the responses that were given by the first two people, there were many assumptions, and I don't think that these assumptions will ever be discussed fully...So, Islam and Christianity can never be the same, and because here we are trying to create harmonious living, let's not try to make our differences to be the same, because they can't. So, let's explain to each other what these differences mean in humility and love each other, but not try to be one because we can't. If we go that way, we will go very far... let's agree we are different, but we need

each other; where we need each other let's assist each other; where we are different let's just go, but let's not compete instead let's respect each other, and with that we will move forward.

This Christian participant from a mainline Church concluded by saying,

if we don't respect each other, we will not agree and we will not go far. Chairperson, I would like to say that, for me, I see we have come from far, that now God has allowed us to sit together and talk like this, this is a sign that where we are going is not a bad place; but let's go slow, if we run, we will not reach our destination.

This speech captured the spirit of tolerance and understanding that drives the way Mainline Churches in Mombasa relate to Muslims. It left both Muslim and Christians in laughter and removed any tension that might have still been lingering.

Remarks of a Christian from an emerging Church (Charismatic Authority)

The Christian participant from an emerging church gave a response that reflected the views of many in the charismatic church movement—that they are in a warfare, in this case against Islam and that they have to be confrontational in their approach. He told the audience:

I also give thanks for this opportunity that brings us together to try improving the good relationship we have continued to have; except that for the answers that Muslims have given, even though they have been quoted from their Qur'an, they are not fully convincing; and what you should know is that, Qur'an is your book, and you cannot use it to judge me or remove me from my stand. I have also noted, even though you use the writings of Paul, mostly you use them to criticize the teachings of the Bible, especially in *mihadharas*.

The same participant also remarked:

I would like to say that this meeting is very healthy, and I like it. I would like to say that we have actually given Bible references, such as Psalms, Romans and others so either they have forgotten or he [Christian representative] has mentioned them very fast such that they [Muslims] couldn't get them.

The symposium confirmed previous research that shows a tendency of evangelical

Protestants and emerging churches to be less tolerant of outsiders compared to Catholics or Mainline Protestants (Maina 2011:55).

Remarks of a moderate Muslim (Rational-Legal authority)

A moderate Muslim participant was one of those that was given opportunity to give final remarks about what he thought of the symposium. He looked happy and comfortable in the presence of people from different religious backgrounds. He was positive about the mission to bring Christians and Muslims together through forums such as this symposium. He finished his remarks by giving a story as follows:

I want to say this: that there was one man with his grandson, and they liked setting up some snares in the garden, so one day they went to check their snares, and there was this ‘tumbi’ (a basket made of palm leaves), each one had one, but both were being carried by the grandson; so, in the grandson’s snare they found a small animal like a mouse and that of the man they found a bigger animal. They argued about which one belonged to whom. They began to walk with the man ahead, and so the grandson asked the man, ‘grandpa’, why do people fight and quarrel? The man answered, ‘is just like what we have done.’

Embedded in this story was the view that the differences between Christians and Muslims are minor and that there is no need to fight each other based on those differences. This captured tolerance and is justified by Qur’an verses that emphasizes living in harmony and peace with neighbours.

Remarks of a conservative Muslim (Charismatic Authority)

Another participant to give a final remark about what they thought of the symposium was a Muslim with conservative views. Having observed him throughout the day in the meeting, he seemed to prefer being near other Muslims and hardly engaged with members of the other faith. He expressed that he was dissatisfied with the way Christians responded to the issues they raised in the symposium. He observed that:

Maybe I didn't get how we were to respond to the issues raised, but what I heard is that we were to respond with the backing of the scripture; now our friends, Christians, as I have listened to their responses, they didn't quote the Bible, they just gave answers based on thoughts from their heads. I don't know if it is because the Bible does not have answers to the issues, we raised.

This reaction was surprising given the fact that Christians' responses relied heavily on scriptures that supported their views. This likely illustrates a pre-conceived bias that conservative Muslims have against Christians on a variety of issues. The opportunity to unify was missed in this instance by a conservative Muslim who was more concerned about reiterating differences than bringing members of both religions together.

A second conservative Muslim sought to discredit points made by Christian participants. According to him:

I would say our friends have tried their best to respond to the issues raised, but I would like to echo some things just to bring some light; for example, when they say that Muslim women are oppressed just because we don't go to the same place during prayers, what about their women? I have never heard of a Pope who is a woman; does that mean their women are also oppressed?

This response reveals the antagonistic approach Muslim conservative religious authorities have adopted. Even though it was time to give final remarks and highlight the positive aspects of the *Kongamano*, this participant chose the path of antagonism.

Conclusion

There are a number of lessons to be drawn from this symposium. The data gathered from it shows that the findings such as that of The Pew Research Centre that shows Christians and Muslims in Kenya view each other negatively (Pew Research Centre 2010) does not give the full picture of the role of religious authorities in mainline Churches, emerging Churches, moderate and conservative Muslim groups. Those negative attitudes cannot be

comprehensively addressed if there is no understanding of religious authorities that shape them.

Firstly, there are voices amongst Christians and Muslims whose response to claims made by either side in the meeting was, “Where it’s a command, please just leave us to obey the command, because the one who receives a command has no choice other than to obey it.” There was no sense that there was an interest to sort out the concern raised by participants from the other religion. The facial expression of charismatic Christians and conservative Muslims and the tense environment when follow-up questions were asked showed that these groups were not satisfied by the response from the other religion.

Secondly, Christians and Muslims showed ambivalent behaviour—honest and evasive, confrontational and friendly, direct and tight-lipped. In other words, it was a mixture of moderate and extreme views, which suggests that the response of the religious leaders in the symposium reflects what is happening in the broader Mombasa community.

Thirdly, it was also clear from observation that a number of participants were friendly with members of the other religion while others kept to themselves. Friendliness is not necessarily an indicator that one is embracing and tolerant to the other religion. Nonetheless, it is a positive step that likely shows less hostility. Muslims and Christians who kept to themselves avoiding any form of interaction with members of the other religion, on the other hand, shows that even in a forum that brings both religious groups together, some are still not willing to embrace the idea of having ties with members of the other religion. This can be evidence that there are Christians and Muslims who see each other as enemies, who must be resisted and conquered. Following the responses given to questions asked by members of the other religion, it was clear that some of the conservative views are driven by Scriptures from the Bible and verses from the Qur’an. How those verses are taken determines attitudes and actions which in turn foster positive or negative relations.

Fourthly, the engagement was mostly cordial, although discussions on teachings that might be perceived as controversial by either side were avoided or just merely mentioned. Several things were clear from the symposium. Based on the Qur'an and the Bible, there are issues which will remain controversial and unresolved between these two religions. Inasmuch as these two books might be similar in a number of aspects, they hold polar views on crucial issues that are critical to what Christians and Muslims believe. The approach used in addressing those emotive issues determine whether the two groups peacefully co-exist or not. Rigid interpretations, sometimes by extreme groups, can only complicate the relations.

Finally, the groups avoided getting deeper into ideologies that cause radicalization and were more than ready to talk about what many would consider peripheral issues. Inasmuch as it is important to address those issues, the 'elephant in the room'—that is, the verses in both the Qur'an and the Bible that are easily misinterpreted or exploited by extremists on both sides to cast the other as the enemy—were left untouched, for example, verses in Q'uran that call for the killing of the *infidels* or verses in the Bible that talks of descendants of Ismael [read Islam] not being heirs of Abraham's inheritance. In this sense, Christians and Muslims in the symposium thought they were extinguishing the fire, but the burning embers were left untouched. This is not necessarily negative, but it also shows that the risk for conflict between the two sides remains, given the unresolved issues.

Conclusion

This chapter summarises the findings of this research and explains how it contributes to debates and understandings of Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. I also discuss some limitations of this research and possible study areas that might help further the knowledge on Christian-Muslim relations.

This research wrestled with the questions to do with the contributions of mainline Churches, moderate Muslims, emerging churches and radical Muslim groups in calming or inflaming Christian-Muslim the relations in Mombasa. This research found that religious authority is an important determinant in these the relations. Relations are also driven by the local religious, economic, political and social ecology that frames Mombasa. The research has met its objective by analysing the complex ecology of social, political, economic and religious factors that produce Christian-Muslim relations. It has also explored the role of religious authorities for mainline Churches, moderate Muslims, emerging Churches and conservative Muslim organizations in shaping Christian-Muslim relations based on their perception of ecological conditioning factors and the signals of response they send to followers. In doing so, the research answers the questions it raised at the beginning of the study by looking at the contributions of mainline Churches, moderate Muslims, emerging Churches and conservative Muslims in calming or inflaming the relations. It also answers the question of how mainline Churches, moderate Muslims, emerging Churches and conservative Muslims respond to the economic, social and political ecology of Mombasa. The research also helps explain the contradiction that is Mombasa—peaceful and yet violent.

The thesis argued that to understand and activate the calming potential of Christian-Muslim relationship in Mombasa, it was necessary to understand how religious authorities operate within the local ecology—social, political and economic, as well as religious; and to

appreciate there are also intra-religious differences between those seeking harmony and those fomenting division between the two religions. Whereas religious authorities in mainline Churches and moderate Muslims use their leadership structures and systemic theological interpretations to push for peaceful co-existence, those in the emerging Churches and conservative Mosques lack collaborative leadership structures and rely on their charismatic leaders who, mostly, apply certain literal interpretations of the Scriptures to deepen the schism between the two religions in Mombasa.

It is argued in Chapter 3 that Christian-Muslim relation in Mombasa is deeply informed by the pre-colonial and colonial periods. To ignore studies on this is to miss the undercurrents from that era that might still be driving how Christians and Muslims view and relate to each other in the present. The constant wars between the Portuguese and the Arabs in the pre-colonial period were seen by those involved as Christian-Muslim wars. It is argued that seeds of bitterness between Christians and Muslims were sowed in the pre-colonial period. Just as the Portuguese and the Arabs devised ways of displacing one another, Christians and Muslims adopted the view that they were competitors. Moreover, just as in the pre-colonial period when the one who dominated politically adopted strategies to socially exclude, economically marginalize and discriminate the other on the basis of religion, Christians and Muslims adopted the same strategy.

It is also argued that the colonial period marked another shift in Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. The fact that Muslims were no longer the dominant force in the city and other coastal towns meant that Islam had to evolve accordingly. The colonization of Kenya saw the introduction of different layers of complexity that shaped relations between the two in Mombasa. Economic opportunities introduced by the colonial government and the education advantage that *Baras* people had ensured that Christians not only moved to the Coast, but also

that they took over important jobs at the expense of *Pwani* people and Muslims in Mombasa. The result is that an environment of resentment by *Pwani* people and Muslims against *Bara* people and Christians emerged. The colonial government introduced social, economic, political and religious infrastructure that put Christian-Muslim relations on a collision course. During this shifting economic and social status of *Pwani* people, Islam sought reform to fit the new circumstances: it was either a case of accepting subjugation, working alongside colonial rulers, or resisting them. Many Muslims sought education and jobs in a British colonial system less favourable to Islamic learning, and the Arab elite in Mombasa imagined their cultural and religious identity with a focus to reform, since Muslims were increasingly a demographic minority and culturally marginalized.

The colonial administration did not resolve divisive issues they helped create. Instead, they left questionable agreements about the issue of *Kadhi* Courts and the autonomy of Mombasa and the coastal strip. The period immediately after colonisation exposed divisive issues, many of which were directly because of the colonial administration.

The post-independent period revealed unresolved issues and introduced new challenges in Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa. The persisting question of the place of *Kadhi* Courts in independent Kenya emerged as a crucial issue. Whereas the colonial administration adopted British common laws to govern Kenya and allowed for *Kadhi* Courts, and even expanded it beyond the original geographic location at the coast, the failure to address the implications of these decisions meant that the problem was shifted to the leadership of independent Kenya. Furthermore, the British colonial administration did little to address the *Pwani-Bara* divide they helped create. Arabs and Muslims were so afraid of what would happen upon independence when the government led by *Bara* people take over. This was a clear sign that the colonial administration failed to unify the country and that its 'divide and

conquer' strategy had put *Pwani* and *Bara*, Muslims and Christians on a collision course. This was compounded by the perceived marginalization of Muslims. The fact that churches and mission organizations acquired large pieces of land in Mombasa and other parts of the Coast during the colonial period and that Muslims were not happy about this testifies to the divisive legacy that was handed over to independent Kenya.

As a result, Muslims pushed to form Islamic organizations to further their interests. Attempts were later made to form the "Islamic Party of Kenya" with no success. The closeness of Islamic organization such as SUPKEM (Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims) with the government and the lack of progress in areas of concern led to more radical Muslim organizations being formed to address their plight. Global and local acts terrorism and the subsequent introduction of Kenya anti-terrorism laws have only made Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa challenging and unstable. The emergence of new evangelical and charismatic churches whose theology emphasizes salvation, spiritual warfare and deliverance meant that, now, more than before, a significant number of Christian believers would adopt an adversarial approach when dealing with Muslims in post-independent Kenya.

In brief, the chapter on the evolution of Christian-Muslim relations built into my thesis by demonstrating a long history of interreligious animosity by two different colonising religious forces. To ignore studies on the evolution of the social, economic, political and religious ecology of pre-colonial and colonial Mombasa is to miss the undercurrents from that era that might still be driving how Christians and Muslims view and relate to each other. As a result of what happened in the pre-colonial and colonial era, Christianity and Islam evolved. Some groups in Islam became more radical even as charismatic churches with antagonistic view of Islam emerged. The views of these diverse expressions of Islam and Christianity formed the basis for Chapter 4.

It is argued in Chapter 4 that different Christian and Muslim religious authorities or denominations/sects respond differently to political, social and economic challenges that Mombasa experiences. It is argued that not only do Mainline Churches and moderate Muslim groups perceive social, political, economic challenges objectively and in a way that promote harmonious co-existence, but the religious authorities in these organizations also find other non-religious explanations for those challenges and therefore send peaceful signals to their members. On the other hand, emerging churches and conservative Muslim groups, especially Islamists, assign religious narratives to social, political and economic challenges that portray their religion as the cause of their marginalization. As a result, they redeploy those social, economic and political challenges as a mobilization tool for a religious agenda. This strategy creates the impression that their religion is under attack from the other side. Obviously, this leads to a schism between the two sides. Whereas conservative and Islamists Muslim groups see the national government of Kenya as their source of their frustrations on social, political and economic issues, emerging and charismatic churches believe that the County government is marginalising them economically, socially and politically. They both believe that the marginalization is for religious purposes.

The differences in response to the ecological conditions by different religious authorities called for the need to study an interreligious organization that includes Christians and Muslims. This formed the basis of Chapter 5. The single most important organization in Mombasa when it comes to addressing issues of differences between Christians and Muslims is The Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC). For this reason, it was investigated in terms of how it is managing conflict and promoting peaceful co-existence between different Christian and Muslim groups.

It is argued in Chapter 5 that there are both intra-religious and interreligious differences

between Christians and Muslims in Mombasa and that different religious authorities engage differently with the ecological framework of the city to shape Christian-Muslim relations. It is further argued that even though the CICC does a commendable job of bringing the groups together, there are intractable differences and issues that are sensitive and are avoided rather than confronted. Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa are characterized by ‘shadow-boxing’, which evades issues that are potentially explosive. The study of CICC also highlights the place of the government in resolving religious conflicts. The very fact that the CICC must involve the county government in resolving certain differences between Christians and Muslims is an indicator that the interreligious organization is not equipped or lacks the resources to deal with certain issues. It is also clear that not all Christian and Muslim leaders have embraced the concept of interfaith dialogue. Some go a step further and consider those that are part of interfaith initiatives such as the CICC as compromisers and betrayers of their faith. Most of those who take antagonistic view of the CICC and other interreligious initiatives belong to emerging and charismatic churches on the Christian side, and conservative and Islamist groups on Islamic side. There are instances when moderate Muslim leaders have faced violence from those opposed to interfaith initiatives. The very presence of purist religious organizations in Mombasa from both sides of the religious divide, who remain untouched by the message of peaceful co-existence, might mean that attaining harmony will continue to remain a challenge.

One of the issues that brought in sharp focus Christian-Muslim relations and how they respond to each other was the issue of *Kadhi* Courts. For a better understanding on how interreligious and intra-religious differences play out on a religious issue, this research investigated the *Kadhi* Courts debate. This formed the basis for Chapter 6.

Chapter 6 shows that churches differed in their response to *Kadhi* courts, with Mainline

churches showing understanding and restraint on the issue, while emerging churches strongly resisted *Kadhi* courts and spread antagonistic message about Islam. A number of Mainline church leaders worked alongside Muslim leaders to resolve sticky issues on the proposed new constitution, including *Kadhi* Courts; some of them even campaigned for *Kadhi* courts to be accepted as part of the Constitution. On the other hand, emerging and charismatic churches were opposed to *Kadhi* courts on the basis that it would lead to sharia laws. The strong opposition of evangelical churches was demonstrated when they lodged a court case in Mombasa to reject *Kadhi* Courts inclusion in the proposed new constitution. Similarly, moderate Muslims opted for cooperation and dialogue with Christians to peacefully resolve the differences on the subject, while conservative Muslims and Islamists used threats and intimidation to push for the adoption of these Courts. These contrasting responses are yet another example of how Christian religious authorities in Mombasa do not have a unified position on harmony. This makes broader peacebuilding efforts between religious groups a struggle that may not be readily resolved. Although the issue of *Kadhi* Courts was settled in a referendum in 2010 and it became part of the Kenyan Constitution, the debate sowed seeds of bitterness and undermined the trust between Christians and Muslims. The *Kadhi* Court debate is used by conservative and Islamist Muslims to convince others that Christians are opposed to Muslims and would do anything to undermine them, even on issues with little relevance to Christians. Having explored a public discourse on *Kadhi* Courts, it was important to observe Christians and Muslims dealing with their issues in real life.

This leads us to Chapter 7, which deals with *Kongamano*, a forum where issues of differences between Christians and Muslims were raised and addressed. I argue in Chapter 7 that Christians from Mainline Churches are more understanding of the struggles of Muslims and that their approach of engaging Muslims is likely to promote harmony rather than division. On the other hand, Christians from emerging and charismatic churches are dismissive of

Muslims' struggles and their confrontational approach creates a schism rather than harmony. Although not in detail, the *Kongamano* exposed how religious authorities from both Christian and Muslim sides use certain scriptures to bolster their position.

Religious communities and their leaders in Mombasa operate within the local ecology by interpreting the local social, economic and religious issues through the lens of their beliefs and values. The moderate groups of Muslims and the mainline churches tend to calm relations by emphasising conflict resolution, dialogue and through pointing out what has been done before that worked well. This is consistent with their religious authority structures, embedded in tradition and their rational/legal theologies. They are also part of the city's mainstream, embedded in politics and with a voice in government. By examining their *actions as an expression of their religious authority*, the analysis has treated religious authority as a causal agent in promoting good inter-religious relations, rather than simply placing different groups onto a framework.

On the other hand, religious authority that is charismatic in nature tends to view the local social, economic and religious issues through the lens of conflict, divisions and elimination. Where traditional authorities use their well-structured and time-tested formula as a way of dealing with complex challenges, the emerging Churches and radical Muslim groups follow charismatic leaders who foment distrust. Given that charismatic leaders tend to emphasize a polarising approach to doctrinal issues, the result is an adversarial approach that is not committed to addressing issues of differences. These groups have more success with those who are experience greater marginalisation and social dislocation in Mombasa – such as young men who are drawn to Islamism.

This research concludes that the challenge Christian-Muslim relations face in Mombasa is enormous. There are groups from both sides that inflame the situation by adopting an

antagonistic approach when dealing with members of another or even of the same religion, and those that pacify the relations by engaging in harmonious interreligious and intra-religious dialogue. Even though the embers can be cooled, they can explode whenever the right conditions are available. Christians and Muslims in Mombasa are faced with complex and sensitive issues that are difficult to resolve. Some of those issues emerge from what might be perceived as contradictory messages on salvation and the deity of God in the Bible and the Quran. To assume that this can be easily resolved is simplistic. Therefore, managing the relations in a way that avoids conflict is a reasonable strategy.

The divergence in terms of seeking harmony and enmity is explained, in part, by the different interpretations and understanding of beliefs and values as promulgated by different kinds of leaders. There are groups that see those of different beliefs as a group to get along with, while others adopt an adversarial position and see those with different thinking as adversaries who need to be vanquished. Groups that are led by charismatic leaders without strong accountability around them are more likely to adopt this adversarial approach in sorting out issues while ‘rational’ religious authorities with strong organization were more likely to advance a moderate approach that ensures there is harmony – despite their differences.

The nature of the ecology is also connected to divergent attitudes noted. Non-controversial and less sensitive social, economic, political and religious issues tend to be responded to with tolerance and the adoption of common ground, while the more sensitive and polarising social, political, economic and religious issues often generate a divergence of positions between mainline groups and emerging/radical groups. The mainline Churches and moderate Muslim groups mostly adopted non-religious means to resolve religious issues, while emerging Churches and radical Muslim groups often turned economic, social-political issues into divisive religious issues. A good example of this is the debate around school uniforms.

This research expands our understanding of Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa by showing how theology and religion (religious authority), as well as culture and society (the social ecology), come together to shape relations. The research emphasises how the uniqueness of different groups, and where they are socially embedded, ultimately distinguishes their behaviour towards members of a different faith (and even those of the same faith but different traditions).

This study offers a framework for understanding Christian-Muslim relations in other contexts, whether that is sub-Saharan Africa or further afield, by looking at the role played by religious authorities in shaping interreligious relations. It also draws attention to other layers the social, economic, political and religious issues that condition interreligious relations. The approach of this study shows how theology and doctrine interact with social structures. The approach of integrating several kinds of data, including participation observation at the *Kongamano*, focus groups, in-depths interview and ethnographic approach encourages future researchers to adopt multiple ways of viewing the relations.

This research contributes to the broader literature discussed in Chapter 1 by expanding on what is already known about the relations. This is done by looking at the subsets of the different religious groups and how their unique leadership structures, emphasis on beliefs, and training level of leaders affect interreligious relations in the face of a challenging social, political, economic and religious environment. The distinction made between mainline Churches and emerging Churches, as well as between moderate Muslims and radical Muslims, in terms of their beliefs, practices and impacts of these on their relations to Muslim groups adds to existing literature by identifying differences in ways of relating that have various potentials – calming and inflammatory. This research also addresses the issue of intra-religious relations in Mombasa, adding specificity to the literature that has thus far overlooked the city.

This research matters because it captures the nuances of Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa that has often been either overlooked, downplayed or ignored. It is easier to look at Christian-Muslim relations in general terms without looking at the unique and specific details about entities that constitute a particular faith belief. This research also matters because it goes beyond a focus on religious differences and looks at non-religious issues that might be exacerbating or ameliorating those religious differences.

This research has several limitations. Firstly, there is lack of specific literature that deals with the interaction of specific Christian churches or denominations with Muslims or Islam in Mombasa, or between a specific mosque or Islamic sect with Christians or Christianity. Literature on Christianity or Islam in Mombasa is rather scarce and the few examples that are there are characterized by generalizations. This is problematic as the paucity of literature hinders comparison and analysis of data.

Secondly, the other limitation concerned the participants. Many, especially some Muslim participants, expressed fear about giving their opinion. This means that some were guarded. This does not mean that they gave misleading answers, but that they might have been more forthcoming, had there not been any suspiciousness. Even though many confessed that they were at ease after I showed them my Deakin student identification card, this may not have been sufficient to address the deep-seated suspicion built over the years about *Bara* people such as myself.

The approach of viewing Christian-Muslim relations through the lens of religious authority and ecology model is important in the sense that it captures distinction that has not been previously captured in Mombasa. However, it is limited in the sense that it does not expand on the role of ethnic groups and their culture in shaping views of different religious authorities and how ethnic views relate to social, political and religious issues that shape inter-

religious views. It is well known that ethnic allegiance in Kenya can be strong enough to colour religious beliefs, regardless of the banner of religious authority. The other limit of the approach that focusses on leadership is that it assumes that leadership is both in charge of and in control of the members. This might not reflect the reality that there are members who are enlightened and are capable of making their own decisions on interreligious relations independent of the religious authorities they are under.

The particular contexts examined such as whether one is from *Bara* or *Pwani* might shape the data in the sense that they have varied views on social, economic and political issues and that their divergent views on those critical aspects have direct relevance to inter-religious relations. The data might be shaped by whether respondents are from *Bara* or *Pwani* and that their views are not necessarily driven singularly by their form of religious authority. The forums where the data were collected might also shape the data. For example, social expectations might have conditioned the way people spoke and behaved, but this is taken into account by analysing the data in the context of an ecological framework that takes social expectations seriously, not as an *undue* influence, but as part of the explanation for why people behave and think the way they do.

Overall, the interviews conducted during the fieldwork gave the perspective of top leaders from both sides who shape opinions not just in Mombasa but across the country. It was encouraging to hear both Christian and Muslim informants indicate that they were happy to be part of this research and contribute to knowledge about Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa.

This research has raised questions that need to be explored in future research. The hostility of some of the conservative Muslim groups and emerging Churches to interfaith initiatives such as the CICC need to be investigated. There is a need to determine how to

minimise the antagonistic views of religious organizations opposed to initiatives that seek to promote peaceful interreligious coexistence in Mombasa and other parts of the world. This research also covered a *Kongamano* (symposium) where Christians and Muslims explored their differences. Further research needs to explore the effectiveness of such forums and whether they lead to a hardening or softening of positions between different groups. There is also a need to explore why conservative religious leaders who are ideologically opposed to initiatives that promote interreligious peace can still be part of an inter-faith organization such as the CICC, or attend interreligious meeting such as *Kongamano*.

Finally, my first paragraph in this study pointed out that Mombasa stands out as a city of contradictions. This study has shown that the contradictions are reflected in Christian-Muslim relations, where mainline Churches and moderate Muslims play a pacifying role, whereas emerging Churches and conservative Muslims foment division and enmity. To understand Mombasa, we need to understand religious authorities in both Christianity and Islam and how they operate within the local social, political, economic and religious ecology.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Questionnaire for Christians

1. What is the state of Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa?
2. What are issues that unifies Christians and Muslims?
3. What are the sources of your differences with Muslims?
4. What sources of differences is external?
5. How are Christians sorting out differences between them and Muslims?
6. What are challenges you face in addressing differences with Muslims?
7. What issues have Christians and Muslims successfully dealt with?
8. How did Christians and Muslims successfully deal with the issues above?
9. What issues have Christians and Muslims failed to deal with?
10. What are the reasons for the failure above?
11. What guides you in dealing with Muslims?
12. What is your expectation of how Muslims are to engage you?
13. What are the principles that govern your engagement with Muslims?
14. What in your opinion is the best way to engage Muslims?
15. What in your opinion is not the right way to engage Muslims?
16. What determines how Christians are to live with Muslims?
17. What does the Bible teach about how to engage people of other religions?
18. What is the wrong approach to resolving Christian-Muslim relations?
19. What are you not comfortable about with the approach of Muslims?
20. Why did Christians in Mombasa take the issue of *Kadhi* courts to Court?
21. Did the issue of *Kadhi* courts constrain the relations with Muslims and if yes how have you sought to bridge the gap?

22. How has the issue of terrorism affected Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa?
23. How have Christians and Muslims dealt with this issue?
24. Are you concerned about the impact of anti-terrorism laws on Muslims?
25. What have you done on this issue?
26. Has the issue of terrorism affected Christian-Muslim relations?
27. Do you think Muslims have been supportive to Christians following terrorist attacks?
28. How have Muslims been supportive to Christians on this issue?

Appendix 2: Interview Questionnaire for Muslims

1. What is the state of Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa?
2. What are issues that unifies Christians and Muslims?
3. What are the sources of your differences with Christians?
4. What sources of differences is external?
5. How are Muslims sorting out differences between them and Christians?
6. What are challenges you face in addressing differences with Christians?
7. What issues have Christians and Muslims successfully dealt with?
8. How did Christians and Muslims successfully deal with the issues above?
9. What issues have Christians and Muslims failed to deal with?
10. What are the reasons for the failure above?
11. What guides you in dealing with Christians?
12. What are the principles that govern your engagement with Christians?
13. What is your expectation of how Christians are to engage you?
14. What in your opinion is the best way to engage Christians?
15. What in your opinion is not the right way to engage Christians?
16. What determines how Muslims are to live with Christians?
17. What does the Quran teach about how to engage people of other religions?
18. What is the wrong approach to resolving Christian-Muslim relations?
19. What are you not comfortable about with the approach of Christians?
20. What did you read from the act of Christians in Mombasa taking the issue of *Kadhi* courts to Court?
21. Did the issue of *Kadhi* courts constrain the relations with Christians and if yes how have you sought to bridge the gap?
22. How has the issue of terrorism affected Christian-Muslim relations in Mombasa?

23. How have Christians and Muslims dealt with this issue?
24. Has the issue of terrorism affected Christian-Muslim relations?
25. Do you think Christians have been supportive to Muslims on issues such as anti-terrorism laws that negatively affect Muslims?
26. How have they been supportive or not on this issue?
27. Have you been concerned that Christians and Churches have been targeted in the terrorist attacks?
28. How have Muslims been supportive to Christians on this issue?

Appendix 3: List of Informants' Pseudonyms

Ref.	Informant	Religion	Gender	Denomination Sect	Position
01	Father Yakobo	Christian	Male	Mainline	Pastor
02	Father Lagomba	Christian	Male	Mainline	Pastor
03	Mwakimalo	Muslim	Male	Moderate	University Professor
04	Alphondi	Christian	Male	Mainline	Bishop
05	Kivulama	Christian	Male	Mainline	Archbishop
06	Muhorola	Christian	Male	Mainline	Pastor
07	Adamale	Muslim	Male	Conservative	Sheikh
08	Nassorombe	Muslim	Male	Moderate	Sheikh
09	Ngalate	Christian	Male	Mainline	Bishop
10	Anikatu	Christian	Female	Mainline	Scholar
11	Tindilo	Christian	Male	Emerging	Lawyer
12	Nzukiza	Christian	Male	Emerging	Pastor
13	Khamisidiye	Muslim	Male	Moderate	Leader of a Muslim organization
14	Salimu	Muslim	Male	Conservative	Sheikh
15	Telika	Christian	Male	Emerging	Bishop
16	Suleimanga	Christian	Male	Emerging	Leader of Christian organization
17	Swalehika	Muslim	Male	Moderate	High school Teacher
18	Mwakijeo	Muslim	Male	Mainline	School Principal
19	Elijaza	Christian	Male	Emerging	Pastor
20	Anyati	Christian	Male	Mainline	Bishop
21	Akech	Muslim	Female	Conservative	Lay person

22	Muniremba	Muslim	Female	Conservative	Lay person
23	Saidio	Muslim	Male	Conservative	Sheikh
24	Mwengiza	Muslim	Male	Conservative	Sheikh
25	Twahate	Muslim	Male	Moderate	National Leader of a Muslim organization
26	Asyala	Muslim	Female	Conservative	Lay person
27	Zeinanga	Muslim	Female	Conservative	Lay person
28	Khalifando	Muslim	Male	Moderate	National Leader of a Muslim organization
29	Muhsika	Muslim	Male	Moderate	Imam
30	Rahmale	Muslim	Female	Moderate	Lay person
31	Earnepato	Christian	Female	Mainline	Lay person
32	Liuembeka	Christian	Female	Emerging	Pastor
33	Penimbo	Christian	Female	Emerging	Pastor
34	Fatipa	Christian	Female	Emerging	Lay person
35	Sammale	Christian	Male	Emerging	Pastor
36	Omarju	Muslim	Male	Conservative	Imam
37	Mahamudabi	Muslim	Male	Moderate	Leader of a local Muslim organization
38	Abdallamah	Muslim	Male	Moderate	Leader of a local Muslim organization
39	Mwangi	Christian	Male	Emerging	Pastor
40	Javano	Christian	Male	Emerging	Leader of a local Christian organization

