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ABSTRACT

ISLAM, INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS, AND ADVENTISM IN KENYA:  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY TO DETERMINE EFFECTIVE  
APPROACHES TO EVANGELIZE KENYAN MUSLIMS

by

Joseph M. Kilonzo

Adviser: Walter Douglas

## ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: ISLAM, INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS, AND ADVENTISM IN KENYA:  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY TO DETERMINE EFFECTIVE  
APPROACHES TO EVANGELIZE KENYAN MUSLIMS

Name of researcher: Joseph M. Kilonzo

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Walter Douglas, Ph.D.

Date completed: November 2001

### Problem

Islam is spreading speedily in Kenya from the coast and the north towards inland areas, converting great number of persons and communities. The Islamic influence is evident in almost all spheres of life in the country, including social, political, economical, and spiritual. Muslims are particularly hard to reach with the gospel. However, this does not mean the task of reaching them is unsurmountable.

The task of this project, therefore, was to provide a biblical, theological, and missiological strategy for presenting the gospel to Muslims in Kenya with the view of winning them over to Christianity (Adventism).

## Method

The research was primarily bibliographic, using books, journals, and electronic databases of the James White Library at Andrews University and Notre Dame University. The initial stage researched the historical origins and development of Islam. A brief review about the origin of Seventh-day Adventists in Kenya was considered too. Factors contributing to the spread of Islam in Kenya were examined. A comparative study between Islam, African traditional practices, and Seventh-day Adventists was undertaken.

Information relating to the relationship between Islam and Seventh-day Adventists in Kenya was gathered through a questionnaire survey. The data collected through this questionnaire are incorporated into the study.

This study endeavored to determine the reasons or factors that contribute to the success of Islamic evangelism and how we could make use of the same strategy to evangelize them. An analysis of the impact of Islam on Kenyan people and subsequently the indigenous effects on Islam was studied. Mission strategies for evangelizing Muslims were developed.

## Conclusions

Islamization in Kenya was essentially carried out by Africans themselves, who shared the same life, spoke the same language, and lived in the same cultural locality entirely. The advent and spread of Islam and Adventism precipitated a different kind of religious situation in contemporary Kenya. A vast majority of the population have abandoned the religions of their ancestors to convert to one or another of the missionary faiths now available in the country. In spite of the many problems and difficulties

confronting the converts, it is undeniable that both Islam and Adventists have sunk deep roots in Kenya. The faith of the vast majority of the population now lies mainly with Islam and Christianity.

I came up with only six strategies that act as a guide pointing out the sensitivity of the Islamic people and elements that Adventists ought to be aware of. The emphasis is on finding agreements at least on the reality of God, revelation, Scripture, angels, and judgment. Disagreement areas about Christ's identity, death, and resurrection, and the authority of the Bible can be dealt with carefully and passionately after laying the common ground and winning respect.

Therefore Adventists have a unique opportunity to advance the truth to the Muslims, if only they are handled with respect and love. This, again, is the friendship model that I have emphasized throughout this project. The creation of the Kenyan Community Center of Isa is the ultimate solution for preserving Adventists in a Muslim setting. The Adventist evangelist must know what the Kenyan Muslim believes, and must try to state the full Adventist message in a way least offensive to them. Evidently, the survey results in chapter 3 indicate that Adventists in Kenya do not understand who the Muslims are, and that the majority of them have a stereotyped mind-set that Muslims are enemies, commonly known in Adventist circles as the "beast" or "babylon."

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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APPROACHES TO EVANGELIZE KENYAN MUSLIMS

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

Joseph Kilonzo

November 2001



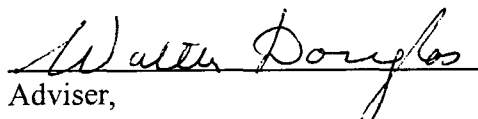
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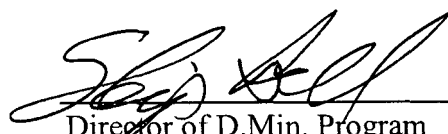
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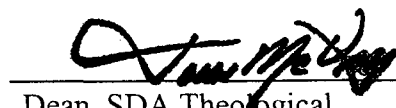
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background**

One general pattern has remained largely unabated and that is the rate of growth in the membership of Islam itself in Kenya. Islam is steadily gaining new adherents, above and beyond the natural increase of existing Muslim communities, in Kenya.<sup>1</sup> The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kenya knows that there is a rising awareness and consciousness of Islam, and the church feels compelled to evangelize Muslims. It is the firm conviction of many Adventists that there is the need to equip the church for the task of reaching the Muslims.

The evangelization of Muslims involves the curious mixture of opportunity and challenge. There are similarities between the two faiths, which would constitute opportunity. Both these religions claim that their theology is based on faith that is connected to the truth of the divine revelation that they have received. Adventists and Muslims claim that their revelations are from God. In other words, God/Allah has communicated the truth. But despite this common ground, however, there is great

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<sup>1</sup>Stephen Neill, *Christian Faith & Other Faiths* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 66-67; John Renard, *Responses to 101 Questions on Islam* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 133.

hostility between the two faiths in Kenya today.

The antipathy is understandable since both Adventism and Islam view the tolerance of other religions with difficulty. Similarly, both religions are universalistic in world-view, appealing to and welcoming all peoples. In addition, Adventism and Islam have adapted to many varied cultural situations and both maintain their commitment to recruiting new members throughout the country. Yet no matter the Adventist disposition toward Islam, Muslims in Kenya cannot be ignored with any prospect of success. They have succeeded in becoming a part of Kenya's social, economic, political, and even spiritual life. In fact, no religion has succeeded in making such inroads into the realm of the indigenous traditional lifestyle as has Islam. Yet more significantly, no faith of the magnitude of Islam has resisted so perceptibly the influence of the Christianity in Kenya. Therefore many Adventists perceive it as difficult to reach.

Given the enormity of this success on the part of the Muslim population, some have tended to ignore them. For example, most of the Adventist strongholds in Kenya are mainly involved in those fields that have proved to be more fertile and responsive than others. Only a slight proportion of individuals are engaged in reaching Muslims for Christ. Consequently, the Muslim world remains the greatest challenge for Adventists and other Christians. Whatever course the church wants to adopt, the way of confrontation is not likely to yield any success.

The *East African Standard*<sup>1</sup> newspaper headlines for February 17, 1997, read: "Muslims Engage SDA Faithfuls in a Bloody Battle." On that fateful afternoon at

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<sup>1</sup>One of the major daily newspapers in Kenya.

about 4:30 p.m., the town of Mumias (in Western Kenya) was in turmoil. The Kenyan Muslims were angered by remarks that were supposedly made by an Adventist pastor who was preaching in an open-air meeting. He made negative remarks against Muhammad and belittled Islam. In Islam there are three absolutes that anyone standing up to preach the gospel in a Muslim setting must always be conscious of, says Osindo.<sup>1</sup> They are the Qur'an, Muhammad, and Islam. So the Muslims were enraged and declared war on the pastor and wanted him killed immediately. He was stabbed on his shoulders and, according to Osindo, the pastor was pierced four inches deep. The Muslims thought he was dead. But the pastor was taken to hospital and thereafter recovered. The East African Union together with the local Field in Mumias called upon Osindo, the only famous Muslim evangelist from his local church in Mombasa, which is about 900 km away, to go and help out. Though hesitant, he finally agreed to go with two of his comrades and once there they reconstructed the rostrum, readvertised the meetings, and for seven days preached, quoting both the Bible and the Qur'an. They had a record attendance, baptized many, and even received a donation of a church plot from one of the Muslim converts. Most of the Muslims in Mumias who had conspired to kill the pastor, ended up being baptized, including the man who stabbed the pastor, and that was our revenge, Osindo remarks. Now they are co-workers in Christ. According to Osindo, when fundamentalists meet Christ, they become great tools in the hand of the Master.

In pursuit of an alternative approach to reaching Muslims, several questions

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Osindo, local pastor, Mombasa, Kenya, to Joseph Kilonzo, June 4, 2001, email.



have to be addressed with urgency. But one question looms largest: Could it be that mutual lack of knowledge between Adventists and Muslims has led to the creation of barriers between the two groups, reinforced by Adventist cliches and stereotypes that hurt our relationship with the Muslims? It appears that the time is ripe for the Adventists to create a workable relationship between themselves and Muslims. This is the reason why this dissertation is necessary.

### **Purpose of the Dissertation**

Islam is growing fast in Kenya, and it presents a persistent challenge to Adventists. It is not sufficient to merely recognize this fact, but the challenge has to be met. This study provides a comparative study of Kenyan Islam and the indigenous people with a view to clarify the implications of such an examination for Adventist-Muslim relations. This includes an understanding of the origin, spread, and the impact of Islam in traditional Kenya, with the purpose of attempting to modify the attitudes of Adventists and revise some prevailing unfruitful evangelistic strategies to reach Muslims, hoping to have better results. The study is also intended to furnish both the leaders and lay people with a reasonably unbiased basic knowledge about Islam in Kenya.

### **Justification for the Dissertation**

Currently, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kenya does not have any specific strategy to reach the Muslims. After going through the minutes of the East African Union since 1975, I found no record in relation to Muslim evangelism. There is a need for Adventists to avoid misconceptions. A serious knowledge about Islam should be

developed to help the Church have a clear attitude towards Islam and, hence, review their policy. Meanwhile, there is much common ground between Seventh-day Adventism, African traditions, and Islam. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, as a denomination, has a philosophy that furnishes an impressive bridge for associating with Muslims and people of other faiths. This opens up the possibility of dialogue between the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the indigenous religionists, and Muslims, in place of a separateness based on ideologies.

Exploring the awareness of the culture and fundamental effects and beliefs of Islam in Kenya is a necessary step to devising a specific strategy for evangelizing them effectively. This dissertation is a necessary effort to present a truthful yet sympathetic understanding of Islam in an effort to forge interfaith dialogue and enhance friendship between Adventism and Islam in Kenya. A study of this nature is long overdue.

### **Methodology**

The research methodology of this study relates to the purpose of the dissertation. The research focuses primarily on library sources such as books, journals, and electronic databases obtainable from Andrews University and Notre Dame University libraries. As a Kenyan, some information and materials are from personal experience and common knowledge.

Information relating to the relationship between Islam and Adventists in Kenya was gathered through questionnaire survey. The data collected through this questionnaire are incorporated into the study.

## **Outline of Study**

The focus of attention is Islam, its relationship with Seventh-day Adventist church, and its impact on the indigenous life in Kenya. This study contains five chapters. Chapter 1 presents the introduction, purpose of study, justification of this dissertation, methodology, outline of study, definition of term, limitations, and expectation from this study. Chapter 2 contains the historical origins, development, and impact of Islam and Adventism on Kenya. This chapter begins by exploring how Islam entered Kenya. The study of this chapter includes Arab, Persian, Indian, and Asian immigration from the Indian Ocean and the Islamic encroachment from North Africa through Somalia in north eastern Kenya and Sudan and from the northwest. The next portion studies the different Islamic sects or groups found in Kenya, their distinct origin and characteristics. I will examine the presence of some mosques in Nairobi and their significance in this section. The chapter also looks into the past and present factors that contribute to the spread of Islam in Kenya. There are several sections that give reasons how and why Islam spread to certain parts of the country. It includes past and present factors for spread, that explores intermarriage, and communication, which explores the inception of Swahili culture, then the translation of the Koran into local languages. The next part considers Muslim trade prosperity with non-Muslims. Then comes the highlights of Islam as a way of life. The impact of Islam upon Kenya's society is also examined.

The same chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the impact of Islam on Kenya's traditional life and subsequently the indigenous effects on Islam. There are three main sections and the first one examines the understanding of both Islam and Kenyan

traditional religions. This includes presenting general differing characteristics of Islam and Kenya's indigenous people. For some, Islam is the religion of the high class or the educated. Then comes the examination of the characteristics of Kenya's traditional life with the view to studying both the differences and similarities between Islam and indigenous lifestyles. I will attempt to describe what I mean by "Africanized Islam" and also point out major differences between the two that calls for respect and understanding of each group. The factors that make traditional people receptive to Islam will be analyzed to determine why they are receptive to Islamic evangelism and how the Adventists could make use of the same receptivity to evangelize the cultural people groups in the country. Also to be studied are the impact Islam has had on the indigenous lifestyles. Likewise the study will consider how the African cultures have affected Islam in Kenya. I will share the contributions of the by-product of Islam merging with traditional Kenya to the world as a whole. Then I will cover changes in contemporary Kenyan Islam. Some possible common ground between Islam and Kenyan traditional spiritual life will also be discussed. I will also analyze important stages or occasions of African life that have been affected by Islam. This includes birth, female circumcision, marriage, and death. Folk Islam, which is the religion of the common majority will be discussed in this section too. It is folk because it is based on folk belief practices connected to animism. This chapter will also give a brief account of the origins of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Kenya.

Chapter 3 gives a concise description of how the survey in the form of questionnaires was done. The first section of this chapter describes the results of the

analysis of the data collected from Adventist church members and Church leaders in Kenya. Out of the many questions, I have dealt only with seven of them. The second section describes the need for mind-set change for Kenyan Adventist church members and Adventist leaders.

Chapter 4 sets forth the development of mission strategies for reaching the Muslims. It is a process of creating an empowering environment for every church member and church leaders, aimed at emphasizing the development of friendly relationships. The chapter also explores several strategies that would enhance friendship evangelism to replace the traditional crusade “verbal attack” approach which has created animosity between the Adventists and Muslims in Kenya. Successful evangelism calls for new, gracious, and more friendly approaches.

The dissertation ends with a brief summary of conclusions and possible suggestions for further studies.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Allah:** The one, single god of Islam, considered to be the same God as that worshiped by the Jews and the Christians (although Muslims believe the Christian Trinity misrepresents his nature). The word “Allah” is a contraction of the Arabic words “al illah” which mean “the god,” thus, like Christianity which calls its god “God,” Moslems called their god “The God.” According to Mohammed, Allah is a singular being who was neither born nor gives birth. He is the Creator, the Merciful Judge who will bring the believers into heaven and put the unbelievers and sinners into hell. In Islam, he is the object of

submission, that is to say, in accordance with the meaning of “Islam,” Moslems submit to Allah.

**Madarasa:** These are the established Islamic Schools that provide education to Muslim children.

**Koran/Qur’an:** A record of the exact words revealed by God through the Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad. It was memorized by Muhammad and then dictated to his Companions, and written down by scribes, who cross-checked it during his lifetime. Not one word of its 114 chapters, Suras, has been changed over the centuries, so that the Quran is in every detail the unique and miraculous text which was revealed to Muhammad fourteen centuries ago. The Koran, the last revealed Word of God, is the prime source of every Muslim’s faith and practice. It deals with all the subjects which concern us as human beings, wisdom, doctrine, worship, and law, but its basic theme is the relationship between God and His creatures. At the same time it provides guidelines for a just society, proper human conduct, and an equitable economic system.

**Hanifs:** Seekers after God. Pure Islamic Monotheism (worshiping Allah alone and nothing else).

**Hadith:** A story, narration, a report,<sup>1</sup> a story about and sayings of Mohammed. After his death, these were tested for accuracy and collected into an organized body of material. The Hadith provides examples of proper behavior and instances of Mohammed’s understanding of his role.

**Islam:** Has a two-fold meaning: peace, and submission to God. This

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<sup>1</sup>Rahman Fazlur, *Islam* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 53.

submission requires a fully conscious and willing effort to submit to the one Almighty God. One must consciously and conscientiously give oneself to the service of Allah.<sup>1</sup> This means to act on what Allah in the Koran enjoins all humans to do and what His beloved Prophet, Muhammad, advocated in the Sunnah (his lifestyle and sayings personifying the Qur'an).

**Masajid:** "Mosque"- Place of worship for the Muslims. Singular: Masjid. The whole earth is a Masjid for the Muslims, the dome of the heaven its roof.

**Shahada:** The central Moslem statement of faith. It is short, but in two parts. The first one is "There is no god but Allah" (Arab. "La illahah illah 'lla"). The second is "And Mohammed is his Prophet" (Arab. "Wah Mohammadan rasulu 'llah"). Saying the Shahada in Arabic with the intent of becoming a Moslem immediately makes a person a member of the Umma (i.e., the Islamic Community).

**Sunnah:** Comes from the root word "sanna," which means to pave the way or make a path easily passable, such that it becomes a commonly followed way by everyone afterwards. From the Islamic standpoint, *Sunnah* refers to anything narrated or related about the Prophet Muhammad authentically traced to him regarding his speech, actions, traits, and silent approvals, before and after the revelation.

**Sura:** The Arabic term for a chapter in the Koran.

**Ulama:** Religious leaders.

**Umma:** Commonwealth of Islam or Islamic Community; the entire community of Moslems, who have submitted themselves to Allah.

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<sup>1</sup>Marston R. Speight, *God Is One* (New York: Friendship Press, 1989), 2.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This project is written with the circumstances of Islam in Kenya only and its effect on the general life of Kenyans. However, the principles can be applied to many Islamic situations elsewhere. This study is based on limited sources. Therefore it lays no claims to exhaustiveness. Its focus is to provide perspective and facilitate understanding about Kenyan Islam and thereafter supply the church with a mission strategy to reach Kenyan Muslims with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The word “mission” is employed in many contexts and may be given various meanings. In this study the term is specifically directed to the biblical understanding of God’s mission, which means the communication of redemptive gospel and the responsibility of the people of God to engage in this mission.

### **Expectations from the Dissertation**

This dissertation will help acquaint one with the roots of Islam in Kenya, as well as the Muslim worldview and religious inclinations. It will discover why the Muslims are growing so rapidly in Kenya and will provide the East African Union of Seventh-day Adventists with the facts behind Islamic growth. As a result, the study will present a mission strategy for the evangelization of the Kenya Muslims, introducing strategic tools to replace the traditional “attack” approach, reassessing and refocusing the purpose of the Church to meet the needs of the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Muslim areas.

In Kenya there are more than seventy-five tribes or groupings with different



theological traditions, and religious and secular authorities. There may be similarities of culture within dialects and language groups, but the most significant differences are the language differences and all the socio-psychological problems this diversity encompasses. For any religion to evangelize Kenyans, it must realize that there is no compartmentalization of life in the African religion. To convert one person means allowing them to come with all their many relatives.<sup>1</sup>

### Conclusion

Since Islam as a course is not taught in detail in many Adventist colleges and universities, it is possible to receive theological training without being introduced to Islam. According to the survey I conducted in Kenya (see Appendix A) there is a serious need to attempt to understand Islam as a minister or lay church member. The Adventist Church needs every tool necessary to reach the Muslims, which includes books, Islamic courses in college, among others. This project will distinctly point out that Kenyan Islam is unique in many forms compared to that in other parts of Africa. I shall give hints on how to approach the Muslims in the country, but I will resist the temptation to give simple how-to-do-it answers. Indeed, it is unrealistic to pretend that engaging in Muslim witnessing is an easy project. In the following chapter, I will attempt to point out historical origins of Islam and Seventh-day Adventists in Kenya.

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<sup>1</sup>Jacob K. Olupona and Sulayman S. Nyang, *Religious Plurality in Africa* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1993), 371.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL STUDY

#### Introduction

Renard has rightfully stressed that the religion of Islam is one of the three monotheistic religions to arise in the Middle East, along with Judaism and Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Merlin Swartz sees a close affinity between Islam and the other two religions. He points out that Mohammad knew his teachings agreed with the faithful who died seeking God. The belief of these faithful, generally known as the hanifs, accents the oneness and uniqueness of God/Allah. The hanifs are famous for their vigorous pursuit of salvation both in Judaism and Christianity. Since Mohammad's teachings reflected those of the hanifs, Swartz maintains that his teachings are similar to those of Jews and Christians.<sup>2</sup> The Islamic word 'Allah' is an Arabic word that means "God."<sup>3</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kenya has a central mission theme of proclaiming to all peoples the everlasting gospel in the context of the three angels'

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<sup>1</sup>John Renard, *In the Footsteps of Muhammad* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 15.

<sup>2</sup>Merlin L. Swartz, *Studies on Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 90-91.

<sup>3</sup>Speight, 2.

messages of Rev 14:6-12, leading them to accept Jesus as their personal Savior, encouraging them to unite with His church, a body that nurtures them in preparation for His soon return. Among those to be reached in Kenya are the Muslims. For the Adventists to carry out an effective mission to them, they must understand who the Muslims are and what their origins might be. The next section deals with origin, sects and mosques of Islam in Kenya. It also examines the factors that contributed to its spread and contact with African traditional religions in the country. The effects of Islam in Kenya is also discussed.

### **Islam: The Origin of Islam in Kenya**

Islam entered Africa soon after its commencement in the seventh century A.D. After the death of Muhammad, the “Messenger” and Prophet of Islam, in 632, the first caliph of Islam, Abu Bakr, ambitiously ventured a series of military conquests to spread the new faith across the world. In 636, the Muslims occupied Jerusalem, Damascus, and Antioch. In 651, they had conquered all of Persia. But they also moved west into Africa, and the Arabic culture established itself, not only with Middle Eastern culture, but with northern African culture as well. In 646, the Muslims conquered Egypt and quickly spread across northern Africa. Finally, Islam reached the East African coast by 622 A.D.<sup>1</sup>

Wars in Arabia, and subsequent turmoil in Persia, caused many people to flee and most of them settled permanently on the East African coast. The fertile, hospitable coastline was embraced as a haven from their own dry and war-torn countries. As a

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<sup>1</sup>Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 19-20.

result, many of these immigrants brought the new Islamic religion with them.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, throughout the eighth and ninth centuries, the Arabs and Persians continued to trade with their original homelands, and *dhow*s (boats or ships) regularly sailed north with gold, ivory, rhino horn, leopard skins, tortoiseshell, and ambergris. African slaves were also carried to the Persian Gulf, probably to work in the marshlands of Mesopotamia and were exposed to Islamic culture and faith. Trading links between East Africa and Asia also continued to grow.<sup>2</sup> Other links were established to the rest of the world. Ivory was exported to India, and later China, while Indian cloth and Chinese porcelain were imported to Arabia and Zanzibar in East Africa.<sup>3</sup>

Islam has given its adherents a general sense of unity among themselves as well as against their non-Muslim rivals. This oneness extends to all those Muslim trading interests and enterprises which have spread along the coastal countries of the Indian ocean, Mombasa in Kenya being among the first, through the centuries. The Kenyan coast flourished from the commerce and production the Muslim community plied. At the same time, the Arab sailors, whose exploits were vividly evident, took their new faith far down the East African coast trading with Somalia, Kenya, and Tanzania.<sup>4</sup> They converted some

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<sup>1</sup>Nehemiah Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels, *The History of Islam in Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 38-41.

<sup>2</sup>*Daily Nation*, 10 September 1986, p. 17; *Kenya Times*, 21 May 1987, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Sir Reginald Coupland, *The Exploration of East Africa 1856-1890* (Evanston, IL: Northwest University Press, 1967), 1-13.

<sup>4</sup>Gerhard Endress, *An Introduction to Islam* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1988), 114.

of the coastal rulers and established themselves in settlements that were wealthier, stronger, more ambitious than before, marrying local women as their predecessors had done. Being Islamic in their faith, strongly conscious of their membership in the Muslim world, these immigrants to these ports and towns remained nonetheless African.<sup>1</sup> The Islamic settlers drew these ports and settlements into the trading community of the Indian Ocean, and thereby laid the foundations of an Islamic civilization. Among the coastal peoples of Kenya, the Digo indigenous tribe is 90 percent Muslim. Dayton and Wilson point out that Islam has deep roots among the indigenous, featuring the marriage of Islam and traditional beliefs.

Many of their traditional animistic beliefs have been preserved through traditional cultural practices. Islamic influence during the past 80 years has altered their religious and political structure. The people have adopted new attire and diets from Muslim Arab neighbors. Few Digo have studied Islam in any depth, and most only have a superficial knowledge of the principles and doctrines of Islam. A folk Islam has resulted. Dead ancestors are still venerated and spiritism is practised. Witchdoctors are consulted regularly and play an important role in Digo society. Agriculture, fishing and trade have all been sources of livelihood. The Digo have long been involved in trade with Muslim Arabs and enjoy a higher standard of living than many other neighboring tribal peoples.... Since the Digo have been economically self-sufficient, they (cannot be) reached through traditional social programs sponsored by Christian agencies and Churches. Materialism and secularism are becoming increasingly widespread and in the absence of a Christian alternative, the Digo are influenced in these ways. Few have shown interest in Christianity. Only about 5 percent can read.<sup>2</sup>

By the tenth century there were markets of importance as far south as

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<sup>1</sup>R.W. Beachey, *The Slave Trade of Eastern Africa* (London: Rex Collins, 1976), 1.

<sup>2</sup>Edward R. Dayton and Samuel Wilson, "Registry of the Unreached," in *The Future of World Evangelization*, ed. Edward R. Dayton and Samuel Wilson (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1984), 310.

Mozambique, building their wealth and power on trade with ivory and gold products of the interior.<sup>1</sup> Islamic trade routes in Kenya introduced new ideas, people, and skills into the culture. Muslim scholars competed for control over the crucial, powerful past, while literacy, scholarship, and industry prepared for a pious but prosperous future. This *intensification of Muslim identity on the Kenyan coast* is just one example of a larger process throughout Africa. In many other areas, especially in the Sene-Gambian region and in Hausaland, this period of renaissance set the stage for religious reformation and political revolution.<sup>2</sup>

Due to the historical synopsis given above, I decided to write about how Islam entered Kenya mainly from the coastal immigrants from Arabia, Persia, Asia, and India. Islam also came to Kenya from Somalia in the east north, from the north by the Nubi people came and from Sudan in the western north part of the country. See Appendix C for the map of Islamic distribution in Africa and also a map of Kenya.

### **Immigrants from Arabia**

Islam and the Arab people trace their origins to the Arabian Peninsula. They are distinguished by their unique ancestry, language, religion, and culture. Islam originated in the western Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century. The Koran is a unitive

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<sup>1</sup>Norman R. Bennett, *A History of the Arab State of Zanzibar* (London: Methuen & Co., 1978), 7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

factor in matters of language and religion.<sup>1</sup>

Islam infiltrated East Africa shortly after the advent of the Islamic period but remained confined to the coast for some time. The Sultan of Oman was the ruler of the East African coast for centuries. This territory was called Uswahili. Mombasa and Zanzibar rebelled at times, as did Lamu once. But ultimately the whole area was securely under the suzerainty of the Sultans. Omani Arabic was a significant linguistic influence in East Africa, leading to the creation of Swahili.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, most Swahili etymology borrowed from Arabic was different from the standard Arabic which is akin to Yemeni-Omani forms.

Original Arab traders came from Arabia, settled on the East African coast and learned the local Bantu languages, but remained predominantly Arab-Islamic. Since they did not bring their women along, they married local women, and introduced Islam as well as the advancement of much Arab culture and vocabulary. This is how the Swahili language and culture were created. The Arabs may have maintained their Arabic, but also spoke Swahili, the Bantu mixture common to the East African coastal peoples.<sup>3</sup>

East African Arabic is classified as a dialect of Omani Arabic but most coastal non-citizen Arabs are of Yemeni origin. Even though there are also Persian and Asiatic influences on the coast, the Arabs dominated the Swahili culture by importation of Arabic

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<sup>1</sup>John Middleton and Jane Campbell, *Zanzibar; Its Societies and Its Politics* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 15-20.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

words and expressions. There are many Arabs in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, and they come from Yemen, and serve as businessmen, sheikhs, imams, and teachers in schools.<sup>1</sup>

The Coastal Arabs originally lived along the coasts of Tanzania and Kenya, East Africa, an area commonly known as the Coastal Belt. They continue to be concentrated in some of the ancient settlements along the coast and in cities such as Mombasa and Dar es Salaam. Today they are also found in major urban centers throughout Kenya.<sup>2</sup>

The Coastal people are virtually all Muslim. Generally, all Muslims in Kenya follow the teachings of the Koran because it provides hope for a better life after death. Like other Muslims, the Coastal Arabs adhere to the five “pillars” of Islam. These include reciting prayers five times a day while facing Mecca, affirming that Allah is the only god and Mohammed is his prophet, observing the prescribed fasts, giving alms to the poor, and making at least one pilgrimage to Mecca in their lifetimes.

The Omani Arabs in Kenya speak both Arabic and Kiswahili. Their past influence on the coast was extensive, for they developed and started the caravan trade, established commercial centers, contributed to language, literature, architecture, music, crafts and lifestyles in general, and of course introduced Islam to Kenya.<sup>3</sup> The Arabs did

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<sup>1</sup>Levtzion and Pouwels, 46.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 25-35.

<sup>3</sup>Godfrey F. Dale, *The Peoples of Zanzibar* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 22-24.



not always hold sway over this area. They did lose some land to the Galla, an indigenous people, from the seventeenth century through the eighteenth century. Protected by Zanzibar troops, the Arabs reoccupied Malindi and other coastal sites in the nineteenth century, and Omani Arab authority was firmly reasserted at the expense of the Swahili/Shirazi culture, which had flourished on the coast during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup>

The development of coastal and caravan trade, the establishment of commercial centers, the contributions to language, literature, architecture, music, crafts and lifestyle in general, and the introduction of Islam were valiant influences of this culture in Kenya. But they were limited mostly to the coast. Their influence in the interior was minimal, except in one particularly negative form, namely, slave trade.<sup>2</sup>

### **Immigrants from Persia (the Shirazi)**

The historically attested settlement of Persians, also called the Shirazi in East Africa, dates back to the beginning of the twelfth century.<sup>3</sup> Booth reports that according to the African indigenous source, a Sultan who had six sons sailed from Shiraz in Persia in seven ships and landed at the east African coast.<sup>4</sup> Yet between the fifth and the eleventh

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Mervyn Hiskett, *The Course of Islam in Africa* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 154.

<sup>4</sup>Newell S. Booth Jr., *African Religions: A Symposium* (New York: Nok Publishers, 1977), 307.

centuries, Indian Ocean trade had shifted to the ports at the head of the Persian Gulf, particularly Hormoz, which traded East African products to India, the Far East, and the West. From the late seventh century to the thirteenth century, the main center of East African trade moved to the South Arabian Coast, even though some pottery from the Persian Gulf found its way to East Africa in the period of the ninth to the fifteenth centuries. By the time of Portuguese contact, East Africa was trading directly with either Aden or the ports of western India, and not with the Persian Gulf itself.<sup>1</sup>

Some African traditional history recognizes early connections with the Persian Gulf. Surviving titles such as *Sheha*, a term for a locally elected chief as well as for the ruler, have been cited as evidence for Persian links. However, these are more the evidence of the general readiness of Swahili Muslims to adopt Arabic terms for civil officers and functionaries than proof of any early cultural exchange between East Africa and the Persian Gulf. Islamization of the East African coast may have followed trade contacts with Shiraz. The remains of a tenth-century mosque at Shanga suggest a structure very similar to that of family mosques in Syria.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the Persians whose forbears, in order to preserve their Zoroastrian faith, had originally emigrated from Persia to India after the Islamic conquest in the seventh century, settled in Zanzibar beginning about 1845. While in India, the Parsi's became "Indianized" in language and culture, adopting Gujarati as their language

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<sup>1</sup>J. Spencer Trimingham, *Islam in East Africa* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1964), 31-61.

<sup>2</sup>Hiskett, 160-161.

of communication and prayers. Yet, the cardinal features of Zoroastrian identity were retained, including the consecration of the sacred fire from Persia, the establishment of burial places, called “the towers of silence”, and the creation of the *anjuman*, the community.<sup>1</sup> These features were recreated in their new settlement in Zanzibar.

In Kenya, as elsewhere in their diaspora, the Persians have distinguished themselves as a dynamic community which places a high regard on education. Although a community of relatively small numbers, their contribution has been significant.

### **Immigrants from Nubi/Nuba**

During the third and fourth centuries AD, groups of migrating peoples from the north began to arrive on the east coast of Africa, having originally come from Nuba mountains, the area around present-day Sudan.<sup>2</sup> These people were Bantu and they traded with the Arabs, exporting ivory, rhino horn, tortoiseshell, and palm-oil, and importing metal tools and weapons, wine, and wheat.

During the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, the British administered “the Sudan” jointly with the Ottoman Turkish province of Egypt. The populations of these territories were basically Muslim in composition. A religious leader called the Mahdi led a rebellion against the British-Ottoman government. The Sudanese, who agreed to join the British forces, were rewarded after the British victory with land in Kibera, now within

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<sup>1</sup>Everett Jenkins, Jr., *The Muslim Diaspora* (London: McFarland & Co., 1999), 316.

<sup>2</sup>Edwin W. Smith, ed., *African Ideas of God* (London: Edinburgh Home Press, 1950), 208.

Nairobi in Kenya. The Nubians are still strongly associated with Kibera, though it is now a crowded slum area of people from virtually every tribe in Kenya.

The Nubi have consistently maintained their Sunni Islam while living in Kenya for about a century. In the Kibera neighborhood of Nairobi alone, there are eight mosques, all led by Nubis.

### **Immigrants from Sudan**

The term Sudan is an Arabic idiom that literary means the land of the Blacks, which in essence is assumed to cover most of Africa south of the Sahara and especially the Islamised areas from the Atlantic to the Red Sea. The English also used the same word administratively referring to the eastern Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.<sup>1</sup> But I am more concerned about the Sudan as a nation which borders Kenya to the north and whose Islamic influence is felt in Kenya. According to Lewis, the eastern part of Sudan located in the Nile valley is the area known as Nubia whose peoples were united under or against Islamic pressure.<sup>2</sup> Islam entered the Sudan through the Red Sea and from Egypt. The Red Sea route was mainly through the Sudanese ports that provided entrance for the Muslim merchants. In 641 and 652 there were clashes between the Nubians and Muslims from Egypt.<sup>3</sup> The Egyptian war against Nubia deliberately spread Islam southwards to

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<sup>1</sup>J. Spencer Trimingham, *Islam in the Sudan* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1965), 1.

<sup>2</sup>I. M. Lewis, *Islam in Tropical Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 144.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 145-147.

Kenya, the country directly south of Sudan.

Trimingham points out that when the Arabs invaded Sudan, they found a people of mixed Caucasian Hamitic Negroid extraction and quickly arabized them by intermarriage and religion. After the Arabs in Sudan succeeded to force their language and religious culture on all the people, they literary welded the Sudanese into one people possibly with one religion, namely Islam.<sup>1</sup>

### **Immigrants from Somali**

The Somali population extends from the north and into the eastern north part of Kenya.<sup>2</sup> The Somali coast has been exposed to Islamic influence for about a thousand years and was the center of trading stations developed and founded by the Arab and the Persian Muslims. Lewis observes that virtually all Somalia is under the Islamic Sunnis of the Shafi sect. From the Somali coast, Islam spread southwards coming directly to the northern frontier districts of Marsabit and Moyale, among others. The peoples around this location are basically Muslims, namely Galla, and Boran, among others. Thus Somali is important here because it helped spread Islam from the eastern horn into Kenya.<sup>3</sup>

### **Immigrants from Asia and India**

The Asians have been associated with the Kenya coast since Vasco da Gama

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<sup>1</sup>Trimingham, *Islam in the Sudan*, 5-7.

<sup>2</sup>Arye Oded, *Islam and Politics in Kenya* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 3.

<sup>3</sup>Trimingham, *Islam in East Africa*, 29.

opened the way to India from Malindi in 1498. The group of Asians discussed in this dissertation are the Cutchi-speaking Asians who are either Cutchi Sunnis, or Memons, or the Patels.

The Memons in Kenya are considered to be descendants of Lohana Hindus of the Sindh, in Pakistan, who were converted to Islam in the mid-1400s. In the seventeenth century some of them moved to Cutch, which is a region on the northeast coast of India, at its border with the Pakistan. Some of them then came to the Kenyan coast in the 1850s as textile merchants and naturally brought their Islamic faith. After Kenya gained her independence, some of the Memon families moved to the city of Nairobi, spreading Islamic influence inland. The Indian population in Kenya increased considerably after World War II. These Indians were traders, and economically were a well-to-do people because of their hard work and consistency in business. They own huge businesses and have employed thousands of natives who became Islamized in the process.<sup>1</sup> After exploring how Islam entered Kenya, it would also be appropriate to discuss Islamic sects or groups in the country.

### **Islamic Sects/ Groups in Kenya**

Apart from the Kenyan coast, Islam is largely an urban religion, with sections of major cities identified as the Muslim neighborhood. Although there is a considerable Muslim population in major towns, they are generally either blended into the larger population or live as separate communities.

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<sup>1</sup>Olupona and Nyang, 286-287.

### **Sunnis**

The Sunnis embody the majority of Muslims in Africa.<sup>1</sup> Most indigenous Kenyan Muslims are Sunnis. Most of them came from Sudan in the northern part of Kenya.<sup>2</sup> The practices and traditions (Sunnah) of Prophet Mohammad, which include his sayings (Hadith), became the guide for Muslims in the understanding of the Koran and the practice of Islam. Besides this emulation of the Prophet in all aspects of life and thought, his sayings were assembled by various scholars. Finally, they were codified in books of Hadith where the authentic were separated from the spurious. Thus, the Sunnah tradition has always remained, after the Koran, the second source of everything Islamic. The Sunni Muslims acknowledge the first four Khalifs to have been the rightful successors of Muhammad.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Shias**

The Shiite Moslems of Asian origin constitute an exception. Many Shiites came to East Africa during the colonial era, and many of them are rather well to do and live somewhat secluded. There is a large Asian population in Kenya, mainly the Shi'ite, whose contact with the Kenyan coast was enhanced by trade with Arabs from Arabia. Whereas every group claims adherence to some school of thought, Islam generally is more of a light practice than a deeply practiced religion, except among the Asians and the

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<sup>1</sup>Omari H. Kokole, *Islam in Africa* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1993), 240.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>*Encyclopedia Britannica* (New York, NY: University Press, 1910), 17:805.

coastal Swahili peoples.

The Shias believe in the hereditary succession of Khalifs. To them, Ali, the nephew and son-in-law of Muhammad, was the first rightful Khalif, and his sons (one of whom was assassinated, and the other abdicated the throne) should have succeeded him.<sup>1</sup> As far as tradition is concerned, the twelfth in the hereditary line is Imam-al-Mahdi (a kind of Messiah), who is perceived to be alive today and waiting to appear before judgment. Shia has split into many splinter groups, among them, the Ismailis, who play a very dominant role in Kenya and are undoubtedly less fanatical than the Iranian Shiah Muslims, but more devoted to charitable endeavors. Their spiritual leader is the Agha Khan who has become a well-respected international figure.<sup>2</sup>

For the most part, the center of Shiite operation originated in Iran where the Ayatollah Khomeini established a new base for a Shiite Islamic missionary thrust, which is felt in almost every corner of Kenya today. Lamu, on the Kenyan coast, is known as “the Mecca of East Africa.” There is great evidence of Iranian Shiite control, influence, and finance in Lamu.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Ahmadiyyas**

This group originated from India and was founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad

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<sup>1</sup>Phil Parshall, *Beyond the Mosque* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 51.

<sup>2</sup>Schimmel, 91-92.

<sup>3</sup>Akbarali H. Thobani, “Asians of East Africa,” in *Muslim Peoples: A World Ethnographic Survey*, 2nd ed., ed. Richard V. Weekes (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984), 1:56.



who was born in 1839 and died in 1908.<sup>1</sup> The Ahmadiyyas are orthodox but differ in their teachings in that they reject the possibility of miracles and certain aspects of the life of Jesus. While the Koran rejects the crucifixion completely, Mirza Ahmad said that Christ was on the cross but was taken down alive, migrated to Srinagar in Kahmir, and died in old age.

Ahmad alleges to be the expected Mahdi or Messiah. His followers call him Khalifa. They are very missionary-minded, have a more scholastic approach, and make an impressive use of literature. Characteristically, they pursued the translation of the Koran into various Kenyan languages even before the Sunnis. In an attempt to make Islam appealing to modern humanity, they are open-minded and espouse an Islamic socialism. They advocate monogamy. Generally, the Ahmadiyyas are totally recanted by the rest of the Muslim world and are not considered to belong to Islam. In East Africa they have their headquarters in Kenya, the center of their mission activities.<sup>2</sup>

### **Sufism**

This is the mystical expression of Islam. The various groups may be pantheistic, ascetic and monastic.<sup>3</sup> They all seem to have a strong hinduistic element in their teaching/practices. Small groups of disciples are formed around a Shaikh (guru), their

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<sup>1</sup>Parshal, 58-62.

<sup>2</sup>Jack Mendelson, *God, Allah and Juju* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1962), 102-103.

<sup>3</sup>Julian Baldick, *Mystical Islam* (New York: New York University Press, 1989), 1-5, 15-27.

spiritual leader. Motivated by fear of judgment, they seek to chasten their bodies, purify their hearts, and have a desire for secluded contemplation.<sup>1</sup>

The components of Sufism are repudiation, that is, holiness by personal effort, and ecstasy. The aim is the experience of the eradication of self in god. This experience involves technical means, such as dancing, chanting, and music. The Hindus in Nairobi use “mantra,” a type of religious secret word, which is to be repeated thousands of times to induce ecstasy. Eventually, they see the “inner light.”<sup>2</sup>

They recognize no difference between good and evil, all is unity, and unity is God. The body is the cage of the soul; so a Sufi longs to die. His journey begins as a searcher, then advances as a traveler. The third stage is service, then love, seclusion, knowledge, ecstasy, truth, union with God, and then extinction. The perfect man has lost his identity. Monks in Sufism live in a community of property, including their women.<sup>3</sup>

Generally, Sufism is a syncretistic Islam, having a number of elements taken from other religions. This also implies that Sufis, being less orthodox, seem to be much more open to the Gospel than most other Muslims.

### **Ishmaili/Ismaili**

Ishmaili sprang out of shiism, and derived its name from the seventh Imam of the succession whose name was Ismail. The Ishmailis are also known as “seveners.” They

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Parshal, 64.

are followers of Aga Khan and have concentrated on establishing schools, hospitals, libraries, building societies, and guest houses as well as engaging in industrial development.

Their beliefs are comprised of immense influence from Greek philosophy that emphasize the Pythagorean system, consecrating the number “seven.” They generally believe in the unity of God, divine mission of prophets, and the authority of the Koran. Ishmailis are a small group in Kenya, but they have spread throughout the world.<sup>1</sup> Several of the mosques in Kenya have been piloted by the indigenous themselves, thus enhancing the spread of Islam. Here are a few of them.

### **Islamic Mosques in Nairobi**

#### **Jamia Mosque**

The primary purpose of any mosque is to nurture spiritual progress, but Jamia Mosque in the city of Nairobi represents something more. It is so beautiful that it has also become a scenic and tourist attraction. Jamia mosque was built by Maulana Abdullah Shah, a saint (or *wali*), whose blessings (*baraka*) continue to benefit Muslims in Kenya. Until today, his death anniversary (*Urs*) is commemorated in Jamia Mosque with recitation of *Qur'an Kareem*. By 1967, according to the members of Jamia mosque that I interviewed, there used to be, at most, ten people who would come for *Isha* (Night. The fifth and last Fard Salat (Prayer). It's time starts about one and a half hours after sunset, when the redness has disappeared from the night sky and the stars have appeared, and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 54-56.

ends a little before dawn) and *Taraweh* (Nafli Salat (prayers) that are done after Isha Salat during the month of Ramadan, in order to recite the Qur'an as fully as possible, or completely. They are usually done in congregation, but may also be done individually) in Jamia Mosque Nairobi.<sup>1</sup> Shaikh Ramadhani Gathiyaka (an indigenous Kikuyu by tribe), a Shaikh in Tariqa tu'l Qadiriyyah, was the Imam. After *Taraweh*, invocation to Allah (*dua*-supplication: invoking Allah for whatever one desires) would be recited from "The Exalted, The One Who Is High Above" (Tabaraka Dhu'l 'Ulaa) of Hujjat u'd Deen Muhammad bin 'Abdul' Azeez al-Waraaq.

Shaikh Ramadhani is revered by many indigenous people as a man who preached Islam in the villages in his own local Kikuyu language. He furnished dignity to the position of Imam of masjid. In addition, he brought enormous stability to Jamia Mosque, which saw tremendous expansion. During his time Jamia Mosque used to be full for *Isha* and *Taraweh*, and people used to overflow to the outside. People of all races, whether African, Arab, or Asian, used to come to kiss his hand, demonstrating yet again that there is no bigotry in Islam. He passed away in 1990. Nairobi, being the capital city of Kenya, is also the center for almost all Islamic groups found in the country. The following are just a few of them.

### **Other Mosques in Nairobi City**

The many Somali people in Nairobi do not have to go all the way to Mogadishu to pray. They can go to the mosque in Eastleigh, in Nairobi. It is in a perfect

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<sup>1</sup>Based on the interviews conducted in Jamia Mosque, Nairobi, August 1999.

Somali setting. These Somalis follow the Shafi'i madh'hab, one of the four major schools of Muslim law. In this mosque, they do recitations of *dua* and *qasida* (hymn) from *Tabaraka Dhu'l 'Ulaa*. The *dua* is very important and is recited in many *masajid*, including those in the other Nairobi locations of Pumwani, Kibera, Dandora, and South "C," among others, because it combines with it blessing (*salawaat*) on the beloved Prophet. There is more remembrance of Allah (Zikr) in a circular position for longer periods. Likewise in Masjid Noor in South "C," Qasida tu'l Burda of Imam al-Buseeri Rahmatullahi alaih is also recited once a week.

Muslims of Pakistani or Indian ancestry, who have roots in Kenya stretching back more than a hundred years, meet at the Pangani mosque where the whole Koran is recited in Taraweh in the month of Ramadhan, as in many mosques in Kenya. This group follows the Hanafi school of Muslim law. The Pangani Mosque is known for doing *I'tikaf*, which means seclusion for the worship (*'ibadah*) of Allah Ta'ala in the last ten days of Ramadhan. Apparently, more and more people are beginning to do *I'tikaf*<sup>1</sup> in mosques all over Kenya. According to oral tradition, one of the pioneers of this Sunnah in Kenya was al-Allamah al-Hajj Ebrahim Jin Saheb who was the first person to do *I'tikaf* in

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<sup>1</sup>Usually spelled as *'Itikaf*: Being secluded in a Masjid while fasting for the sole purpose of worshipping Allah. The person who is in the state of *'Itikaf* must not leave the Masjid unless it is absolutely necessary, e.g, answering the call of nature or to alleviate the problems and burdens of a fellow Muslim.

There are two types of *'Itikaf*:

- (1) *Fard*. Compulsory when one promises Allah to do *'Itika* if Allah Subhana wa Ta'ala answers his invocation, e.g, "I promise to do *'Itikaf* for seven days if my son is cured." If Allah Subhana wa Ta'ala answers his du'a, then the *'Itikaf* of seven days becomes a *Fard*.
- (2) *Sunnah*. Voluntary. Voluntary practice, following the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad.

Memon Jamia Mosque in Mombasa about a hundred years ago. He was such a great 'aalim (learned scholar) that 'ulama (learned scholars) from as far as Hejaz used to come to ask him questions on Islam.

Since my focus is on Islam, let us now turn to the next section that discusses the past and present factors that contribute(d) to the spread of Islam in Kenya. Only then shall we understand that indeed Islam has deep roots in Kenya.

### **Factors That Contributed to the Spread of Islam and Related Results**

#### **Introduction**

Muslims are considered a minority in Kenya even though they reached the country long before the Christians.<sup>1</sup> By the seventh century, there were Arab settlements already established and supported by flourishing trade.<sup>2</sup> Later, by around the eighteenth century, Islam began to penetrate the interior as Arabs hunted inland for ivory and slaves. Several factors facilitated the spread of Islam in the hinterland. In the first place, the religion was brought to Sub-Saharan Africa via the trade routes from the Arab countries and North Africa. The African Muslims have always maintained quite close links with the Arab world, from which a number of reformers came. After the completion of Mombasa-Uganda Railway, Islam spread rapidly into Uganda.<sup>3</sup> But Islamisation was essentially carried out by native Africans themselves, who shared the same life, spoke the same

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<sup>1</sup>William R. Ochieng, *Themes in Kenyan History* (Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya, 1990), 84-85.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Arye Oded, *Islam in Uganda* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974), 23.

language, and lived in the same cultural setting. There is no doubt that for African Muslims, Africanity and Islam are not opposites. For them, Islam is not an imported religion. They consider abandoning the Muslim religion equivalent to the rejection of all their family and tribal traditions. Both Islam and African traditional universes are deeply intermingled, socially and religiously. Therefore, Islam in Kenya, in its traditional African form, is fundamentally a part of the African cultural heritage and thus an African reality.<sup>1</sup> This leads us to the discussion about the past and present factors that enhanced the spread of Islam in Kenya.

### **Past Factors for Spread**

#### **Intermarriage**

The occupants of the coast were primarily Arab although there were significant numbers of Africans who worked as laborers. Intermarriage between Arabs and Africans was common, and a unique culture developed that more closely resembled people of the Islamic Persian Gulf than tribes of the interior Kenya.<sup>2</sup>

Arab migration to East Africa continued, particularly from the Hadramaut in southern Arabia. Over time a distinctive Islamic culture resulted in the coastal region from intermarriage between indigenous Bantu-speaking Africans and Arab settlers. This physical and cultural integration was accompanied by the development of the Swahili language, which came to serve as the lingua franca of the East African littoral as

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<sup>1</sup> B. G. A. Martin, *The Spread of Islam in Africa*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 99.

<sup>2</sup>Bennett, 5-9.

well as the mother tongue of the mixed population. The Swahili peoples of Kenya share a great deal, including their language and culture.<sup>1</sup>

#### Swahili language communication

The Swahili language grew out of the mix of Arabs, Bantu, Portuguese, Persian, and other tongues and is one of the most common and widespread major languages spoken in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Congo, Burundi, and Rwanda.<sup>2</sup> In other words, Kiswahili is a secondary language that is a combination of two or more languages. The name comes from the Arabic word *sawahil* which means "coast." The language is primarily a Bantu language with some Arabic elements. It is written in the Arabic alphabet. Today the people of the coast are the Swahili who speak Kiswahili, a language that evolved as a means of communication between the locals and the Arab traders.<sup>3</sup>

The development of Kiswahili fulfills a necessary linguistic bridging function in East African life. The African languages are, in general, languages with a concrete vocabulary, which is rather limited in the expression of more abstract realities or more developed reflections. But the development of the Swahili language has changed verbal communication irreversibly in this regard.<sup>4</sup> Nearly one thousand years of contact between Indian Ocean peoples and Swahili have resulted in a large number of borrowed words

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<sup>1</sup>Geoffrey Parrinder, *Religion in Africa* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969), 195.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis, 138-139.

<sup>3</sup>Bennett, 7-8.

<sup>4</sup>Trimingham, *Islam in East Africa*, 66-67.



entering the language, mainly from Arabic, and to a lesser extent from such other languages as Persian and various Indian languages. At different periods Kiswahili also borrowed vocabulary from Portuguese and English. Such borrowing is comparable to the proportion of French, Latin, and Greek loan words used in English. Although this proportion for Arabic loans may be as high as 50 percent in classical Swahili poetry, it amounts to less than 20 percent of the lexicon of the spoken language.<sup>1</sup>

Among the oldest surviving documents written in Swahili date from the early 1700s. They are written in an Arabic script, reflecting the influence of Islamic culture on Swahili society. Most of these documents are interpretations of Swahili myth poetry, some recorded on paper and others by oral tradition, works intended for chanting or singing.<sup>2</sup> The most common of these poems is called Utenzi (Utendi), a drawing that reflects conventions of both Arab verse and Bantu song. Its earliest composers most likely worked in Kenya, in the Lamu, using one of the northern Swahili dialects. The tradition later spread south to Mombasa and Pemba, where the focus of the verse shifted from religious legends to social commentary, which continues to be a theme used by contemporary Swahili poets. The classical poetry still plays a major role in Swahili culture and it is recited on special occasions and regularly quoted.<sup>3</sup>

Kiswahili, the official language of Islam in Kenya and East Africa, spread

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Louis Brenner, *Muslim Identity and Social Change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 226-238.

through eastern Africa beginning in the nineteenth century when Arab trade expanded from the East African coast, to Zanzibar, and along the trade routes to the trading centers in the interior. As a result, Kiswahili spread inland and eventually became the basis for Standard Swahili in colonial and post-independence Kenya.<sup>1</sup>

Long before the arrival of European colonizers, it was the Swahili dialect of Zanzibar Town (Kiunguja) that spread inland. Many African peoples, some hardly touched by Islam, have borrowed a complete abstract, and especially religious, vocabulary from Arabic, with no more than the changes proper to the structure of each language. The actual Islamisation came later, confirming and assembling within a coherent structure these scattered modes of thought and expression that were from Islam in the first place. Thus the inculturation of the religious message has in many cases preceded the Islamisation itself.<sup>2</sup>

The Swahili language is growing fast in the world today and it is taught seriously in many countries due to its beauty and simplicity. The 'world' in this context includes all neighboring countries such as Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, and Zaire, to mention but a few. Apart from the native Bantu languages, the Arab, Portuguese, and Persian cultures had the greatest influence on the Swahili culture and the Swahili language. To demonstrate the contribution of each culture to the Swahili language, take an example of the words as they are used in Swahili. These are words of Bantu origin in East and

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<sup>1</sup>W. H. Whitely, *Swahili, the Rise of a National Language* (London: Methuen, 1969), 32-35.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Central Africa: “moja” means one, “mbili” means two, “tatu” means three, “ne” means four, “tano” means five, “nane” means eight, “kumi” means ten.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the following are words derived from Arabic: “sita” means six, “saba” means seven, “tisa” means nine. Of interest here is the “saba” which according to the Swahili calendar means seven. It corresponds with the day seven of the creation week in the Bible (Gen 2:2ff.). Muslims in Kenya have prayers on Friday, being the seventh day according to the Swahili calendar. However, Friday is not considered a day of rest because many of them work on that day.<sup>2</sup> “Jumamosi” (“Juma” means week, while “mosi” means one or first) in Kenya stands for the first day of the week, which is Saturday. Corresponding with the Swahili calendar in Kenya, the seventh day therefore ends up as Friday (Ijumaaa).

The following Swahili words are derived from Persian: “chai” means tea, “achari” means pickle, “serikali” means government, “diwani” means councillor, “sheha” means village councillor. Besides Arabic, Bantu, and Persian, Kiswahili has some words borrowed from such other languages as Portuguese, English, and German, due to colonial influence. The Portuguese colonialists who ruled over East Africa for more than two centuries had some influence on the Swahili language and culture. They introduced to Swahili such words as: “leso” means handkerchief, “meza” means table, “jela” means prison, “pesa” means ‘peso’, money, “kasha” means Portuguese ‘caxa’ for a box, “mvinyo” means Portuguese ‘mvinho’ for wine, etc. English words borrowed by the

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<sup>1</sup>Swahili is my second language and most of these words are common knowledge among Swahili speakers.

<sup>2</sup>Geoffrey Parrinder, *Religion in an African City* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 68.

Swahili are numerous. For example, “baiskeli” means bicycle, “basi” means a bus, “penseli” means pencil, “mashine” means a machine, “kompyuta” means a computer, “koti” means a coat, etc. Among these foreign languages, Arabic’s influence is the greatest. The western influence in Kenya has caused the Arabic to be written in the Latin alphabet. To give an example, the gospel in Arabic is “injl” and in Swahili it is “injili” with just an “i” addition at the end. The same is “kafir” in Arabic, which in Swahili is “kafiri.”

Koran translated into Swahili

Crucial to the expansion of Islam and the dissemination of religious knowledge to the new converts was religious writing in the vernacular languages in Kenya. The use of the vernacular had first been in oral teaching, as Arabic texts were extemporaneously translated into local languages. The earliest existing document in Swahili, written in Arabic script, is from the second half of the eighteenth century. Traditions and circumstantial evidence point to an earlier date, perhaps in the seventeenth century for the beginning of the writing of Swahili, widely used in East Africa as a trade language. Compared to the limited comprehension of the Arabic language, knowledge of the Arabic script was common. As we have already seen, such literacy on the Kenyan coast increased the political power of the Arabs and intensified Muslim identity.

Swahili translations of the Holy Koran have a relatively short history in so far as the printed word is concerned.<sup>1</sup> For centuries, Swahili remained as the language for the

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<sup>1</sup>Some of the translations published in Nairobi are of Ahmadiyya view point, but nevertheless, it contains a commentary on the Koranic verses. See Harries Lyndon P.,

people of the East African coast. Long-time interactions with other people bordering the Indian Ocean, spread the Swahili language to distant places such as on the islands of Comoro and Madagascar, Oman and United Arab Emirates.

Trade and migration from the Swahili coast during the nineteenth century helped spread the language to the interior, particularly Tanzania. This constant interchange between Islam and indigenous Kenyan cultures gave rise to a change in Kenya's social and political institutions and was influential in changing artistic production. The mosques of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda are a striking example of the subsequent heterogeneity in artistic and spatial languages as well as social practices which took unique form in each setting in which the two came together. The later migration of the Swahili people to the South helped spread the language in the southern regions of now Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, and Mozambique. The trade routes to central Africa helped spread the Swahili language to Zaire, Uganda, Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, and the Central African Republic. Swahili is the official Islamic language in East and central Africa, among Africans.

Very few people in Kenya can read Arabic. Given the fact that only the vocabulary can be associated with these groups but the syntax or grammar of the language is Bantu, this argument has been almost forgotten. It is well known that any language that has to grow and expand its territories ought to absorb some vocabulary from other languages in its way. The majority can read and write Swahili using the alphabets. Since

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*Islam in East Africa* (London: Parret & Neves, 1954) 52.

Swahili (Kiswahili)<sup>1</sup> is a mixture of Arabic, Portuguese, and the native languages, it is the medium of communication among many people in East Africa. It is an undeniable truth that the Arab and Persian cultures had their greatest influence on the Swahili culture and the Kiswahili language. The need to translate the Koran to Kiswahili arose. Consequently, Koran was translated into indigenous languages.

Christian missionaries learned Swahili as the language of communication to spread the Gospel in Eastern Africa. Thus, the missionaries also helped to spread the language. As a matter of fact, the first Kiswahili-English dictionary was prepared by a missionary. During the colonial time, Kiswahili was used for communication with the local inhabitants. Hence the colonial administrators pioneered the effort of standardizing the Swahili language. Since Zanzibar was the epicenter of culture and commerce, colonial administrators selected the dialect of the Zanzibar town (Unguja) as the standard Swahili. The Unguja dialect (Kiunguja) was then used for all formal communication such as in schools, in mass media (newspapers and radio), and in books and other publications.

The first translation attempt was carried by Godfrey Dale (1861-1941), an Anglican priest serving the Universities Mission to Central Africa and their expert on Islam.<sup>2</sup> Later in the 1930s Shaykh al-Amin bin Ali al-Mazrui was the first Muslim to attempt a printed translation of the Holy Koran. He ventured a Koran translation into

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<sup>1</sup>Swahili and Kiswahili are used interchangeably in this project to mean the language. Swahili in most cases refer to the Swahili as a people.

<sup>2</sup>G. Dale, *Tafsiri ya Kurani ya kiArabu kwa lugha ya kiSwahili, pamoja na maelezo roachache (The Koran in Swahili)* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1923).

Swahili for the young pupils of al-Ghazali Muslim school, near the Konzi mosque in Mombasa. Born and bred in Mombasa, Shaykh al-Amin enjoyed an enviable command of kiMvita, the Swahili of Mombasa, and his Swahili publications remain models of stylistic excellence. The main task of translation began in 1936. However, work was virtually halted on account of the second World War and the death of Shaykh al-Amin in 1947.<sup>1</sup> His unfinished project was continued by his son-in-law, Shaykh Muhammad Kasim al-Mazru'i, also a *qadi* of Mombasa. Then, in spite of ever-increasing visual impairment, Shaykh Muhammad Kasim brought out a second volume which contained two further chapters, also in the Swahili of Mombasa.<sup>2</sup> By 1953 an Indian head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission in East Africa was preparing his own translation and exposition. This work was written in standardized Swahili, which is the lingua franca of millions, but the mother tongue of none.<sup>3</sup>

Another translation was undertaken by Shaykh Abdallah Saleh al-Farsy. It compiled a complete orthodox Swahili translation and exposition of the Koran.<sup>4</sup> Thereafter, Shaykh Ali Muhsin al-Barwani came up with a translation of al-Muntakhab, an Arabic word that means a selection from various Koranic commentaries, compiled by a

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<sup>1</sup>Al-Amin bin Aly Mazrui, *The Holy Qur-an, translation in Swahili, English and Urdu with Text in Arabic and Roman Characters* (Lahore: AH/AD, 1940).

<sup>2</sup>Al-Amin bin Ali Mazrui, *Tafsiri ya Qur'ani Tukufu: Aal-Imraan, An-Nisaa* (Nairobi: Shungwaya Publishers, 1981), 3.

<sup>3</sup>Ahmad Ahmadi Mubarak, *Kurani Tukufu, Pamoja na Tafsiri na Maelezo Kwa KiSwahili* (Nairobi and Tabora: Islamic Foundation, 1953).

<sup>4</sup>Saleh al-Farsy Abdullah, *Qurani Takatifu* (Nairobi: Islamic Foundation, 1969).

team of scholars at the University of al-Azhar in Cairo with the aim of producing an exposition of the Holy Koran acceptable to all Muslims everywhere. It is this Arabic work which Shaykh Ali Muhsin was commissioned to translate into his mother tongue, Kiswahili. Shaykh Ali was born in Zanzibar in 1919. He has given to the Swahili-speaking world both a translation and a work of art. Shaykh Ali's Swahili translation appears in Roman script although, in a perfect world, he would undoubtedly have preferred Swahili-Arabic script. Like Arabic, Urdu, Persian, and Malay, Swahili was always written in Arabic script, until the mid-nineteenth century when European and Christian missionaries in East Africa began to publish Swahili in Roman script. Today, 150 years later, the battle of the two scripts has been decisively won by the Western influence, so that virtually no printed Swahili now appears in Swahili-Arabic or Arabic script.<sup>1</sup> In Kenya today, Swahili is the national language, but official correspondence is still conducted in English.

#### Trade influence with non-Muslims

The coastal region of Kenya and the interior have experienced unique but connected histories. The first traders on the coast were Arabs from the Persian Gulf who had developed several communities by the twelfth century.<sup>2</sup> Trade activities on the Kenyan coast facilitated the spread of Islam. Prophet Mohammad, himself once a successful merchant, started a religion that assures believers that it is not abominable to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Philip H. Stoddard, *Change and the Muslim World* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1981), 146.



seek a livelihood in trade. By the end of the fifteenth century, settlements had grown into established towns, and so had Islam.

The Portuguese arrived in 1498 and quickly gained control of the entire coastal region. Trade remained their primary interest until the seventeenth century when they became distracted by competing interests.<sup>1</sup> In 1698 the sultans of Oman united to attack Fort Jesus, a Portuguese stronghold.<sup>2</sup> Before long the entire coast was under the control of the Omani ruler, Seyyid Said. It is during this period that the slave trade flourished as laborers were shipped to the plantations on Zanzibar and beyond. Islam as a religion also thrived whenever the Arab merchants did business. As economic activity developed, the export of coconut, cloves, ivory, and hides slowly replaced slave trade as a revenue producer. Seyyid Said signed a treaty banning the export of slaves in the mid-1800s. Despite this concession, the British East Africa Company took over the administration of the interior of Kenya, allowing a 10-mile-wide coastal strip to remain in the Sultan's control.<sup>3</sup>

Major Swahili economy today, as in the past, is intricately associated with the Indian Ocean. Likewise, the Kenyan coastline is associated with Islam. For many years, Swahili merchants acted as middlemen between eastern and central Africa and the outside world. They played a significant role in the trade of ivory and slaves, which reached its

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<sup>1</sup>John Gray, *History of Zanzibar* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1962), 31.

<sup>2</sup>Beachey, 10.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 54.

peak during the nineteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> Trade routes extended across Kenya, into Tanzania and Uganda, along which goods were brought to the coast and were sold to Arab, Indian, and Portuguese traders. Many slaves sold in Zanzibar from the mainland ended up in Brazil, which was then a Portuguese colony.

Long before the conquest of East Africa by the Arabs, the Kenyan coast had established a legitimate trade with the Arabian peninsula. This led to increased Muslim merchants in East Africa. Muslim merchants used those peoples who were familiar with the region as guides and some of them became influenced by Islam and later became Muslims. As a result, as the Muslim merchants increased, commercial centers began to develop and spread along the trade routes towards inland.<sup>2</sup>

This continued contact between Muslim traders and non-Muslims in Kenya gradually resulted in the conversion of some Kenyan Africans to Islam. Islamic travels brought Islamic faith into present-day Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and beyond.<sup>3</sup>

### **Islam as a Way of Life**

On one hand Islam is a religion and on the other it is a total way of life. It legislates order for individuals, societies, and governments, codifying law, family relationships, matters of business, etiquette, dress, food, hygiene, and much more. Similarly, the community, or the “ummah” of believers, is united far beyond national

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<sup>1</sup>Oded, *Islam and Politics in Kenya*, 10.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis, 20-26.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

boundaries by its deliberate acceptance of the oneness of God and its mission on earth. Islam has no human hierarchy to intervene between the human and God. All people are equal, hence the spirit of brotherhood.<sup>1</sup>

God is the foundation of Islamic faith. The Koran is the holy book of Islam, the word of God as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in the Arabic language.<sup>2</sup> For many years the Koran has enlightened and affected the lives of Muslims with its eloquent message, shaping their community, everyday lives, anchoring them to a unique system of law, and inspiring them by its guiding principles. Again the Koran is regarded as the final revelation, just as Muhammad is regarded as the last prophet.

The Koran and the *sunnah* provide the structure for *Shariah*, which is the sacred law of Islam, that governs all aspects of public and private, social and economic, religious and political life of every Muslim.<sup>3</sup>

### **Present Factors: Impact on Society**

#### Madarasa

According to Totah, the original intention for “madarasa” was to indoctrinate the coming generations with sunnite orthodox beliefs.<sup>4</sup> The word “madarasa” means

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<sup>1</sup>Hans Küng, *Christianity and the World Religions* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1986), 28-29.

<sup>2</sup>Jacques Jomier, *How to Understand Islam* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 150-152.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Khalil A Totah, *The Contribution of the Arabs to Education* (New York: Bureau of Publishers, 1972), 20.

informal Islamic schools.<sup>1</sup> These are similar to Koranic schools that teach the children to read the Koran in Arabic. Among the towns with Islamic schools in Kenya include Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, Nyahururu, and Garissa to name just a few. They are not mission schools in the sense that there are hardly any schools promoted exclusively by Muslims in terms of method and scope. This form of education is informal, and the children repeat verses from the Koran taught by a Muslim teacher. Generally, this kind of education has been very effective in introducing tribal African children to Islamic religious practice in Kenya.

Apart from providing education, these schools are training grounds for *imams*, who played a pivotal role in directing, advising, and guiding their congregations. The establishment of Madarasa should be viewed as the Muslim minority's resistance to cultural hegemony and their attempt to preserve their cultural identity. Influence of Arab institutions through exchange and scholarly contact also played an important role in formation of the culture of Muslims in Kenya.<sup>2</sup>

Islam has made abundant contributions to Kenya, especially in the area of education. Islam places a high value on education as a channel through which to create a universal and cohesive social order. The Muslims in Kenya are committed to promote projects dedicated to improving education among adherents to Islam. For instance, in Northeastern Kenya, there is a Muslim orphanage primary school with more than 800

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>2</sup>Shaikh Farzana, *Islam and Islamic Groups* (Westgate House: Longman Group, 1992), 133.

students. Located in Garissa, it is noted as a center of excellence for that district. It was established in 1969, and was funded by Muslim well-wishers and Muslim governments abroad.<sup>1</sup>

The Muslims throughout the country supervise their schools, provide Islamic infra-structure and equipment, while the government supplies the teaching staff to teach the national 8.4.4 syllabus. In addition, the Muslims in Kenya pay the salaries of several teachers in Islamic Religious Education throughout the country, an effort to ensure that Muslim children in all secular schools, receive an Islamic education. At the same time madarasa teachers throughout the country are paid salaries. Islamic centers are found in almost every major town. This is all part of a project that emphasizes *Hifdh-ul-Quran*, where students reside at the center until they complete their courses.

In 1988, Muslim elders committed themselves to providing a comprehensive curriculum of Islamic religious education for Muslim girls. As a result, they developed a Girls Training Institute of Islamic Education in Pangani, a suburb of Nairobi city. By 1999, more than 170 Muslim girls graduated, as qualified Islamic teachers in fields such as tailoring and cookery. Similarly, there is a plan to establish another for boys. The ultimate goal of these schools and centers is to produce qualified and self-reliant male and female Islamic Imams, teachers in primary and secondary schools and colleges across the country.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>I conducted an interview at the Supreme Council of Muslims Office, Nairobi, August 1998.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Muslim children attend madarasa, whose curricula seek to instill Islamic practices and rituals rather than foster independent and critical thinking. Imparted is a basic knowledge of how to read the Koran and perform a few other rituals in private households. This is supplemented by the input of mothers in an extended family situation, where the elderly also help shape and pass on religious knowledge. Madarasas are organized and follow standard syllabuses. They are conducted by constituted bodies in state schools, mosques, or especially built madarasas.

Pupils between ages six and twelve attend the Madarasa each afternoon between 3:00 P.M. and 5:00 P.M. An eleven-year-old child in grade 6 is taught *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *sunnats* (ways of the Prophet), *duas* (supplications), Islamic History, *akhlaaq* (proper behavior), *hadiths* (sayings of the Prophet), and other parts of the Koran. Children learn *hadiths*, which emphasizes such ideas as greeting fellow Muslims, the method of eating food and drinking water, not to backbite and speak ill of others, and respect for parents. They are taught the qualities of God, angels, the compilation and revelation of the Koran, the life of the Prophet, the signs of the Day of Judgment, death, and the punishment of unbelievers. As in formal secular schools, children are given tests on a weekly basis, examinations are held quarterly, and regular meetings are held with parents. The madarasa characterizes the renewed vigor to guard Islamic identity. This syllabus is very intensive and provides a comprehensive knowledge of Islamic traditions and values to children. Apart from madarasa, the other area that has had the greatest influence in spreading Islam is in commerce. It comprises both past and present impacts.

## Trade and commerce

For a long time now Indians and Asians have played a very important economic role in Kenya, exposing many Kenyans to their faith, Islam. By 1822 increasing commercial activity at the Kenyan coast brought Sayyid Said sufficient wealth to buy ships and pay troops. It also attracted to the East African coast migrant Indians, who became heavily involved in the country's economic expansion, and who, together with the Arabs, made profits from their clove plantations. Indians helped to finance the new up-country trading caravans. The increased economic activity that centered upon the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba served to enhance the importance of the smaller towns that stood on the mainland. It also attracted an inflow of Western traders, of whom the most important were the Europeans and Americans.<sup>1</sup>

The Cutchi-Sunnis, one of the twenty different groups that have adapted to the Swahili environment on the coast better than any other group of Asians, are mostly involved in trade. The other Asian communities consider them as poor and uneducated, but on the contrary, the Cutchi Sunnis are proud to be called Africans. Among the Cutchi-Sunnis there are different groups that are divided along ancestral and occupational lines. The Dhobi, for example, are washermen.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, there is also a large number of the Patels in the country who are Cutchis, mostly known as the Cutchi Leva Patels. These Patels own most of the construction companies in Kenya. In the nineteenth century, an additional group of

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<sup>1</sup>Gray, 128-131, 140-154.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Asians, of the so-called Shia Muslim communities, came to Kenya. They are Cutchi speakers who are also called the Ismaili, Ithnashari and Bohra. One of the leading newspapers in the country, *The Standard*, was founded by a Bohra.

Indians and Asians are well known for their activities in the area of merchandise which justifies their relatively privileged prestige, high class, and status compared to the indigenous Africans. Some of them are wealthy, but the majority are shop owners in major towns and small villages in Kenya.

### **Politics: Participation and Influence**

Though Islam still has effective forms of ideological mobilization, they are constantly confronted with secular conflicts that challenge their religious affiliation and solidarity. Muslim identity in Kenya goes beyond the problem of deities and belief. It extends to include various social patterns such as family affairs, job requirements, budget and food, feelings, and knowledge.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the Muslim community, though religiously oriented, is forced to enter the political arena to either promote its values or to defend the material interests of its own, such as business codes.

Kenya has a centralized bureaucracy that enforces representation from every community and, as a result, the Muslims are represented in the Kenyan parliament. Meanwhile, the supreme council of Kenyan Muslims was formed to create Muslim national supreme councils. The Muslims in Kenya today have prominent politicians who have access to government resources and work diligently in the interest of Muslim

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<sup>1</sup>Brenner, 36-50.



community.<sup>1</sup> In 1992, Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK) was formed to organize riots throughout Muslim-concentrated areas of Kenya. The government had banned religious parties for getting involved in the country's first multi-party elections. The leader was Khalid Salim Ahmed Balala.<sup>2</sup> Also to confirm that Muslims have a stronghold in Kenya, there are 120 non-political Islamic associations in the country, whose welfare is to maintain and preserve mosques.<sup>3</sup>

Many Muslims consider themselves as 'Muslim' first and foremost. In other words, they are Muslims first, then an Indian, then an Arab, and only then a Kenyan. Finally they say Kenya is their country and they have a huge representation in the government and are very active in politics as a whole. Most of them have never been to India or Pakistan and seem content to stay. They were born in Kenya and have always lived there and, consequently, have nowhere else to go.

### **Health Care and Hospitals**

The Ismaili Khojas, also called Ithnasharia, are the most prominent division of Shi'a Islam in Kenya, whose leader is His Highness, the Agha Khan. The Agha Khan, a cultured Indian prince, is considered one of the most influential leaders in Muslim reform movements whose efforts are geared towards improving the conditions of the Muslim

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Farzana, 134.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 133.

community.<sup>1</sup> There are a total of three Agha Khan hospitals in Kenya. They are found in Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kisumu which began as early as the 1950s. In Nairobi, the Agha Khan hospital is one of the best medical facilities in the country run by the Muslims. Beyond all this, Agha Khan also provides health services, a comprehensive and non-profit private health-care system. These programs are based on the Ismaili Community's health-care efforts that provide primary health care and curative medical care.

### **Conclusion**

Islam, indeed, entered East Africa at the very beginning of the Islamic period but remained confined to the coast for some time. On the East African coast, where Mombasa is located, Islam was spread by trading relations, immigration, political conquests, tribal movements, subjugation, and cultural assimilation. As a result, Islam in Kenya can be viewed as "indigenous," traditional, and even African. If Islam has succeeded to become indigenous, then it must have affected the traditional African lifestyle and it is imperative to understand the mixture of the two (Islam and traditional religions). The following section explains how. This will be the basis for Adventist strategies to witness to Kenya Muslims.

### **African Traditional Religions and Islam in Kenya**

As the second largest religion in the world after Christianity, Islam plays a very important role in the political and cultural lives of millions of Africans, especially in Kenya. The Muslims form a significant minority of about two million according to the

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<sup>1</sup>Harries, 80-81.

1998 census out of a population of about 28 million.<sup>1</sup> Encountered from a global perspective, Islam, Christianity and African traditional religions are attaining an intensifying power not only in Kenya but in other African societies as well. Each religious community has to face the necessity of considering others with respect and dignity instead of the traditional attitude of simple tolerance of minorities. However, the religious situation is not exactly the same in all countries of Africa.

Contemplating African Christianity and Islam, there are three different situations. In some countries Muslims are a large majority: Sudan (71% Muslims, 7% Christians), Senegal (85% Muslims, 5% Christians), and Mali (64% Muslims, 5% Christians). In other countries Christians are the majority: Zaire (60% Christians, 1% Muslims), Burundi (70% Christians, 1% Muslims), Uganda (66% Christians, 8% Muslims), Kenya (68% Christians, 6% Muslims), Cameroon (35% Christians, 8% Muslims), and Ghana (43% Christians, 13% Muslims). And yet there is a situation where Christians and Muslims are relatively equal or have a significant presence. That is the case of Nigeria (45% Muslims, 40% Christians), Tanzania (30% Muslims, 35% Christians), and Ivory Coast (40% Muslims, 15% Christians).<sup>2</sup> Additionally, Mazrui observes that

in geographical distribution, Islam is primarily an Afro-Asian religion. Christianity is primarily an Afro-Western religion in dispersal. The area they share is the 'Afro' part. The two religions continue to compete for the soul of Africa. Africa is destined to be a laboratory of both religious ecumenicalism and ideological co-operation; marxism, capitalism, Christianity and Islam are well represented in

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<sup>1</sup>Oded, *Islam and Politics in Kenya*, 1.

<sup>2</sup>Victor Mertens, "Nouvelle vitalite de l'Islam en Afrique Noire et ses implications pastorales," *Telega: Revue de Reflexion et Creativite chretienne en Afrique (Kinshasa)*, January-March 1981, 31.

African conditions.<sup>1</sup>

### **Understanding Islam versus Kenyan Traditional Religions/Beliefs**

The history of Islam in Kenya shows its wide-ranging interaction with African traditional beliefs and practices. At certain times, particularly when Muslims constituted a minority, a pluralist response to other cultures and religions occurred. Muslims took the view that different forms of primal religion could exist side by side with them in the same society. Coupled with this was the recognition that the social and political structure of the wider society could be accommodated. Individual Muslims, and whole communities, throughout Kenya have incorporated different aspects of traditional life into Islam to varying degrees. It has been the remarkable ideological achievement of Islam in Kenya to present itself convincingly as more essentially “African,” despite a history of repudiation, sometimes militant, of many aspects of African cultures.<sup>2</sup>

Islamic religion portrays women as inferior to men spiritually, physically, mentally, and even intellectually.<sup>3</sup> But they have reasons why they treat women differently. An Imam I interviewed in Jamia Mosque, Nairobi, Kenya, said that Islam style of worship is physical in nature and any mixture between sexes would distract the attention to the Divine and loose concentration in prayer. Male domination is not a new

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<sup>1</sup>Ali Mazrui, *Cultural Forces in World Politics* (London: James Currey and Nairobi Heinemann Kenya, 1990), 256-7.

<sup>2</sup>John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1969), xii, 229.

<sup>3</sup>Tim Matheny, *Reaching the Arabs; A Felt Need Approach* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981), 50.

phenomena in Kenyan societies. As in the traditional African context, men are regarded as superior to women. "Men are in charge of women because Allah hath made one to excel the other" (Sura 4:34). Male children are preferred to females, who bring gloom and despair. As Sura 43:15 relates: "yet when a new-born girl is announced to one of them his countenance darkens and he is filled with gloom." The Koran divinely sanctions and decrees this negative impression. The Koran has been corroborated by the Hadiths (traditions of Muhammad's sayings and deeds) and perpetuated by the interpretation of the mullahs, the sheiks, and the imams. By coincidence, most African cultures uphold the same principles.

Islamic Women in Kenya are not allowed to move about unveiled, nor are they allowed to vote, hold public office, or have social, political, or economic power. They are not given the freedom to choose their marriage partners. Their parents betroth them to the Mallams and the Alhajis in order to cultivate friendship, and to extend and cement bonds between families. For instance, in Muslim-dominated coastal Kenya, arranged marriages are still common. Compared to the indigenous, Islam also endorses polygamy. Though Muslim men are allowed to marry more than one wife, their women are forbidden to keep more than one husband.<sup>1</sup> If the woman loses her husband, she is subjected to all sorts of deprivations and humiliation akin to the widow's plight in the traditional African setting. She is entitled to only a quarter of the legacy, and if the deceased has more than one wife, the wives are obliged to share a quarter or one-eighth of the legacy.

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<sup>1</sup>Trimingham, *Islam in the Sudan*, 23-25.

Moreover, the Islamic faith is associated with the use of witchcraft, charms, and amulets-another practice very common in Africa. Muslims and Africans believe these fetishes and concoctions scare away evils and misfortune, kill one's enemies, and enhance one's progress and success in life. In Nigeria, for example, Muslim spiritualists are reputed for their extraordinary feats in "juju" and the production of talismans.<sup>1</sup> By accepting many traditional African practices, Islam, has been very instrumental in the continuation of these customs.

Inasmuch as the primal religions of Kenya are, by definition, not world religions with mission and expansion as goals, they are not competitors with Islam or Christianity. Yet their tenacity and the resilience of their traditional ritual and spiritual life pose a challenge to a religion like Islam with holistic demands on its adherents. The elimination of "pagan practices" has therefore been a theme of Muslim renewal as much as it was the theme of early mission diaries.<sup>2</sup>

As a universal religion, Islam has confronted indigenous religious systems whose solutions to existential concerns have often appeared more effective to the Kenyan community. The relevance and immediacy of masked cults and the figurative art of shrines, which at least in theory Islam rejects, have clearly not diminished under the impact of Muslim practice. Indigenous religious systems, embedded in particular social formations and economic activities, have therefore rarely been eliminated due to native

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis, 64-65.

<sup>2</sup>Dean Stewart Gilliland, *African Traditional Religion in Transition: The Influence of Islam on African Traditional Religion in North Nigeria* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1972), 72-85.

contact with Islam. The process of Islamization in Kenya has more often produced creative adaptations of traditional practices to Islamic forms. In some cases the wider socio-economic changes have more abruptly destroyed the cultural attachment in which forms of primal religion thrived. In the latter case, Islam is often the beneficiary but rarely the sole cause.

Islam does not, of course, reject as false every aspect of belief and practice found in indigenous religions.<sup>1</sup> For example, it accepts a spirit world, and the Koran sanctions belief in mystical powers. In consequence, it has been able to accommodate itself to many of the spirit forces found within the primal religions of Kenya. Moreover a number of other important traditional practices, like divination, or magic accepted as *sahr*, are, with qualification and modification, recognized by Islam as legitimate.<sup>2</sup> With this in mind, the next section explores African Islam, a process by which Islam became African in Kenya.

### **Africanized Islam in Kenya**

The process of the Islamization of Africa did not cease during the colonial period and continues even today with the result that most Africans who are now Muslims are carrying on a tradition which has had practically as long a history in certain areas of sub-Saharan Africa as Islam itself. Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa has known many years of coexistence with traditional religion and adaptation to it, even to the extent of

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis, 64-65.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

intermixture. In Kenya, perhaps more than elsewhere, the Islamizing tendency, in whatever form it presents itself, is a challenge to an entire way of being, behaving, and living in community.<sup>1</sup>

And indeed, in all the difficulties of life, as the African is uprooted from or disillusioned with his or her traditional socio-religious universe, the Muslim is offered a new framework, as all-embracing, as secure, and as reassuring as the old one. A new solidarity within the Muslim community replaces the village and tribal solidarities without changing the laws and habits of the life of the group or tribe.<sup>2</sup> New prescriptions and prohibitions replace the old ones, without the need to try to understand their deeper meaning. The only real novelty is the centralization of the worship on God, especially in ritual prayer. But this does not exclude other ritual practices from existing alongside, and for a long time, in order to appease the intermediate powers, African Islam has never expressly forbidden these.<sup>3</sup> On the contrary, given the central place of the sacred Koranic text in Islam and the impossibility for most Africans to gain direct access to the text, since they do not know Arabic, the more or less qualified custodians of the Scriptures have themselves become the new intermediaries, sought out and feared, who replace the healers, the charms, and the other members of the secret societies without which

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<sup>1</sup>Dean S. Gilliland, *African Religion Meets Islam* (New York: University Press of America, 1986), 68-74.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



traditional religion could not function.<sup>1</sup>

### **Nature of African Indigenous Religions in Kenya**

The bedrock of African traditional religion is faith, a faith based upon dogmatism. It is that kind of faith that does not call for any hard evidence. Again, it is that kind of faith that does not engage in metaphysics. It is simply “what was will be.” In most cases, perception, intuition, or the presence of a perplexing event can have a compelling effect on the belief system. Nothing is taken for granted when it comes to traditional religion. An individual may challenge the gods at his or her own risk. This does not in any way mean that all Kenyans have common traditional religious practices. There are variations, but they are not strong enough to blur the common strands that give Kenya its distinctive religious practices.<sup>2</sup>

Another important aspect of African traditional religion in Kenya is the presence of spirits. In the Kenyan traditional world, spirits are everywhere, in persons, trees, rivers, animals, rocks, mountains, and even in automobiles and other personal effects. The presence of these spirits in the Kenyan societies offers a serious challenge to the behavior patterns of the people on the continent and elsewhere because traditional religious practices permeate every aspect of life in the country. These spirits, in many

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<sup>1</sup>Benjamin C. Ray, *African Religions* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976), 103.

<sup>2</sup>John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1991), 45-46.

ways, act as moral backbone of the indigenous people.<sup>1</sup> They deplore crimes like adultery, stealing, cheating, and suicide. These spirits communicate their wishes, demands, and prescriptions to the larger society through the traditional priests, who are able to satisfy their clients through the performance of rituals. In Kenya, and Africa as a whole, every major event has its own ritual, a ritual that may never be overlooked for any reason. The rituals are often performed through dance, music, libation, or art, etc. In the presence of other religious practices in the country, these rituals have survived in one form or another.<sup>2</sup>

African spirits in Kenya draw their strength, inspiration, and wisdom from God. In African traditional religion, God is seen as the author of life, the maker of everything. African traditional religious belief does not offer any other version of the creation. It is simply the work of God, the omnipotent, the everlasting, ever-faithful, and merciful Father of all.

Symbols figure prominently in the traditional society. These are transferred into the religious realm to establish a strong link between the unseen spirits and the living. It is common to see some of these symbols on the walls of the shrines or on the clothes worn by the traditional priests and other people who wish to express their mood through any of these symbols. Other symbols, like the sun, are personalized as a giver of life.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Malcom Ruel, *Belief, Ritual and the Securing of Life* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 32-33.

For many indigenous believers, ghosts form a distinct category of ancestral spirits and are thought to return to seek revenge on the living. Beliefs in sorcery and witchcraft play important roles in many indigenous belief systems in Kenya and often persist after conversion to Adventism or Islam even when other elements of traditional religions have faded.<sup>1</sup>

There are variations in the religious practices of Kenyans. These variations do not in any way make Kenyans alter their strong belief in God. These beliefs are, in point of fact, less than the common threads that link them as a people. Ancestor worship, for example, is something fundamental to traditional religion if ever anything was, and yet it is completely foreign to Islam. Otherwise, the real proximity of Islam with traditional religion lies far more in the fact that both are more than a religion pure and simple, in the sense of one dealing solely with the relationship of man to the Spiritual.

### **Reasons for the African Receptivity to Islam**

In many regions of Africa, including Kenya, Islam has gradually substituted itself for the traditional religion, sometimes under the influence of external factors and in the overwhelming majority of cases without any violence. However, today a significant number of Kenyan African Muslims turn consciously to the Arab model of living Islam, as they imagine it to have been instituted by the Prophet Mohammad and lived by the founding community in Medina. In Kenya, and Africa as a whole, the Islamizing tendency, in whatever form it presents itself, is a challenge to an entire way of being, behaving, and

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<sup>1</sup>Patrick E. Efori, *Black African Traditional Religions and Philosophy* (Liechtenstein: Kraus-Thompson Organization, 1975), 271.

living in community, which is a challenge to the very roots of the African way of life. The question that arises is, What is a valid African way of being Muslim in Kenya?

In the process of Islamization the primary motive is clearly the desire to belong to a community, far more than the interior assent to a new religious message. In this respect it has demonstrated great flexibility and patience over the centuries. Gaining access to the Muslim community has always been very easy, a change of name and the recitation, before witnesses, of the profession of faith (*shadada*).<sup>1</sup> The regular fulfillment of other religious duties and the deepening of religious knowledge will follow perhaps only a generation or two later. There is no real break in the passage from one community to the other, but simply a progressive disengagement from the one and a progressive integration into the other.<sup>2</sup> Finally, it would be prejudiced to see Islamization as contributing to the death of indigenous African institutions in Kenya. Moreover, to do so would result in a failure to understand both Kenya cultures as well as Islam. To understand Islam in Kenya more, let us consider its implication in the country.

### **Islamic Effects on the Kenyan Indigenous Lifestyles**

Islam has been a highly notable factor in Kenya for many years, adding much to the structure of indigenous African cultures through various dimensions of its religious faith and visual language. The long cohabitation of Islam with traditional African religion in Kenya has also had an effect at the cultural level. The Kenyan languages are, in general,

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<sup>1</sup>David Waines, *An Introduction to Islam* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 30-31.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

languages with a concrete vocabulary, rather limited in the expression of more abstract realities or more developed reflections. With the Arabic language Islam has been able to fill the gap. Many Kenyans, some scarcely touched by Islam, have borrowed a complete abstract, and especially religious, vocabulary from Arabic, with no more than the changes proper to the structure of each language. The actual Islamization followed later, confirming and assembling within a coherent structure these scattered modes of thought and expression that were from Islam in the first place. Thus the inculturation of the religious message has in many cases preceded the Islamization itself.

Besides religion, there are several important cultural practices that the Arabic culture of Islam gave to Kenya. The first is literacy. There is a long tradition of writing, and the neighboring Ethiopians had acquired it through their ties to the Semitic peoples of southern Arabia.<sup>1</sup> But these writing systems did not spread throughout Africa. Islam, however, as a religion of the book, spread writing and literacy everywhere it went. Many Africans dealt with two languages, their native language and Arabic, which was the language of the texts. In Kenya, the merging of the two brought about Kiswahili, the most widely spoken and written language after English. However, this gradually changed as Kenyans began using some of the Arabic language to communicate.

As far as education is concerned, the Arabs brought formal educational systems to East Africa. These systems and institutions produced a great increase in African thought. Islam also brought the collapse of African social structures. As the faith

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<sup>1</sup>J. Spencer Trimingham, *Islam in Ethiopia* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1965), 138-142.

spread throughout East Africa, political authority of established African institutions and kingdoms began to collapse in the hands of Muslims who declared holy war, or jihad, against pagan social groups.

Islam, being a universal religion, is a civilization based on a unity which stands completely against any racial or ethnic discrimination. Examples of such major racial and ethnic groups include the Arabs, Persians, Turks, Africans, Indians, Chinese, and Malaysians who embraced Islam and contributed to the building of its civilization. In addition, Islam in Kenya was not opposed to learning from the earlier African civilizations and incorporating their science, learning, and culture into its own world view, as long as these civilizations did not oppose the principles of Islam. Each ethnic and racial group which embraced Islam made its contribution to the one Islamic civilization to which everyone belonged. The sense of brotherhood and sisterhood was emphasized so much that it overcame all local attachments to a particular tribe, race, or language. On the Kenyan coastal strip, Islam created a global civilization that permitted people of diverse ethnic backgrounds to work together in cultivating various arts and sciences. Islamic religion was responsible not only for the creation of a unique civilization in which people of many different ethnic backgrounds participated, but it played a central role in developing the intellectual and cultural life of the Kenyans.<sup>1</sup>

Islam has given a sense of unity to the peoples of the Kenyan coast, at least against their non-Muslim rivals if seldom among themselves. Moreover, this religion also

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<sup>1</sup>L.W. Hollingsworth, *Zanzibar Under the Foreign Office* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975), 10-22.

initiated trading interests and enterprises which had spread along the coastal areas of the Indian ocean. As a result, many of the towns like Mombasa, Lamu, and Malindi began to flourish in a new way, forming among themselves a wide community of commerce and production. Many Swahili cities on the east coast of Africa, such as Kilwa, Mogadishu, Mafia, Mombasa, and Zanzibar, grew rich from trading with both India and China. Today, Mombasa is the second largest city in Kenya. At the same time, the Arab sailors took their new faith far down towards the mainland of Kenya. They converted both the mainland and coastal people, and at times, together with their rulers, they established themselves in settlements that were wealthier, stronger, and more ambitious than before, marrying the local women.

Many parents see education as an all-embracing process that influences every aspect of their children's lives and are therefore keen to ensure that their children are educated in the right environment. As far as secular education is concerned, Muslims attend one of three types of schools. The first type of school is the secular government and private school which is non-racial, multicultural, and non-denominational. The second type is the Muslim school, where students are exclusively Muslim but the curriculum is largely secular, with a small number of courses in Islam. The final type is the Islamic school, where the focus lies heavily on transmitting knowledge of Islam. Students from this school type may not transfer to secular government schools. Historically, Kenyan Muslims received formal education from a very young age at madarasa.

There has been a rapid growth of Muslim schools, which are seen to provide the 'right' environment for their children. Parents believe that at secular schools their

children would learn un-Islamic values from teachers, peers, and the syllabi. Muslim schools, on the other hand, can impart moral education along the lines of Islamic culture and instill values that parents are trying to inculcate at home. Many Muslims believe that because of the explosion of knowledge and ideas, their children can remain untainted only if they are taught in an environment that has a strong element of moral and religious training integrated with the secular. They oppose the inclusion of sex, AIDS education, etc., in the school syllabus and argue that the need for these subjects would cease to exist if children were taught the correct morals from a young age.

Some parents send their children to Muslim schools because they believe that the standard of education is higher than that at government schools. Many Muslims also want to minimize the contact of their children with non-Muslim children. They read about the problem of drugs and gangsterism at schools and see Muslim schools as a means of protecting their children from such influences. Some parents fear that the changes in the education law, which has given parents greater control over schools, might result in less tolerance for the needs of Muslim children. They fear that schools might take away privileges previously enjoyed by Muslim children. These prerogatives include permission to pray on Fridays, for girls to wear long pants and scarves, and for days off during the Eid festival.<sup>1</sup>

Also growing in popularity are Islamic schools in Kenya, where the entire syllabus is modeled on Islamic lines with the addition of elementary English and mathematics.

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<sup>1</sup>A talk with Muslim elders in a Nakuru (Kenyan town) Mosque, August 1999.



As discussed before, Islam affected the Kenyan calendar as well. The names of the days of the week are based on Swahili, which in turn originated from Arabic. In Swahili, the days are Jumamosi (Saturday), Jumapili (Sunday), Jumatatu (Monday), Jumanne (Tuesday), Jumatano (Wednesday), Alhamiisi (Thursday), and Ijumaa (Friday). Jumamosi stands for the "first day" of the week, Jumapili, the second day, Jumatatu, the third day, Jumanne, the fourth day, Jumatano, the fifth day, Alhamisi, the sixth day, and Ijumaa, the seventh day. According to Kenyan Muslims the first day of the week is Jumamosi (Saturday) while the seventh day of the week is Ijumaa (Friday). Each day of the year was categorized as either good or bad, in accordance with Muslim modes of reckoning. Activities are scheduled with reference to the quality of the days. Monday and Friday are favored days because the Prophet was born on the former and the latter is the day of congregational community prayers.

Most Arabs in Kenya are involved in businesses such as trucking, import, export, clearing agencies, as well as general merchandising. Some are very wealthy, while others are poor. Men and women generally live separate lives in the patriarchal society. The women do have a degree of control in the home and influence on the children's lives. Marriages, usually with first cousins, are usually arranged. Another Islamic effect is that many years of interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims in Kenya brought about many changes in political, social, and artistic structures, and the mosque is the typical expression of the complex relationship between Islam and indigenous African culture. A mosque illustrates an environment that is the spatial representation of both Islamic faith as well as indigenous beliefs.

### **How Islam in Kenya Has Affected Africa and the Rest of the World**

Today, Swahili is the most widely spoken language in Kenya and most of East and Central Africa. There are several radio stations in the world that have Swahili programs, for example, Voice of America, BBC, Radio Deutschewelle (Germany), Radio Moscow International, and Radio Japan International. Swahili is very popular in the world today as it is used in songs, movies, and television programs. For example, the song titled "Liberian girl" by Michael Jackson has Swahili lyrics. Then there is the well-celebrated Disney movie, "The Lion King," which features several Swahili words. The names of the characters in that movie are Swahili words, like "simba" for a lion, "rafiki" for a friend. Equally, the words "Hakuna matata" are derived from Swahili and it means "No troubles" or "No problems."

### **Changes in Contemporary Kenyan Islam**

The Zanzibaris (inhabitants of an island south of Kenya coastal region) have abandoned many of their traditional practices. Most Muslims of Indian origin found in Kenya and Tanzania also no longer practice many of the earlier forms of rituals. This change is attributed to a number of factors. In Kenya, the most important factor was the introduction of Islamic education through the madarasa schools. Islamic schools differ from the state schools in one major respect: The madarasa curriculum is integrated with the normal school curriculum. Attendance at such schools and exposure to a uniform syllabus resulted in some measure of homogeneity in the expression of Islam in Mombasa.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dale, *The Peoples of Zanzibar*, 18-21.

The major factors which have substantially influenced various sectors of the Muslim community in Kenya in the past few decades include easy access to Islamic literature, particularly in English, visits by international Muslim scholars to Kenya, contact with Muslim organizations abroad, the return of graduates from institutions in the Muslim World, and the influence of modern Muslim writers and scholars.

However, with the far-reaching social and political changes taking place in contemporary Kenya, the development of an indigenous expression of Islam is a distinct possibility. There are many “indigenous” Muslims in Kenya today who can be perceived as forerunners of this trend.

### **Islamic Relationship with African Religions**

In Kenya, it is difficult to say that there is an Adventist or an Islamic culture as such. Indigenous Adventists and Muslims share the same “African traditional culture” that finds its roots in Kenya’s African traditional religions. African traditional culture, therefore, is a bridge among Adventists and Muslims, and constitutes a necessary starting point for any meaningful reflection on religious relationship in Kenya. Mazrui points out that before Christianity and Islam came to Africa, there were no religious wars. He continues to say that the African religion is not universal but communal, whereas both Christianity and Islam are faiths that are universal, seeking to convert the whole of human-kind. As a result, the competition for converts resulted in rivalry and conflict.<sup>1</sup> Shorter, commenting on the Islamic encounter, points out that there is no reason to ignore the

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<sup>1</sup>Ali A. Mazrui, *African Islam and Comprehensive Religion: Between Rivavalism and Expansion* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1993), 248.

challenge.

The Churches in Sub-Saharan Africa could afford to ignore Islam, as long as Muslims were backward and poor. Today, the Islamic revolution in Africa, funded by petrodollars from the Middle East, represents a formidable challenge, and there is no foundation of past goodwill on which to build a future dialogue between Muslims and Christians.<sup>1</sup>

Analyzing the possible common ground between Seventh-day Adventists and Muslims, Swidler stressed the relationship based on the common history and, to some extent, common cultural worldview summarized in the adjective “Abrahamic” used to express the common origin and the basic unity among Christians, Muslims, and African traditional religions. According to Swidler this unity is revealed in the covenant, the divine Law, the faith, the conception of God and human nature, the conception of history and the creation of the world, the sense of community, and many other religious elements shared by Africans with Christians and Muslims.<sup>2</sup> Even though African traditional religion cannot historically qualify as an “Abrahamic religion,” we find in it a conception of God, human nature, religious law, and a relationship between God and creation and between God and humankind that share many similarities with Adventists and Islam. For Adventists to undertake any effective evangelistic pursuit, it is imperative that they understand the context of the targeted people. For this reason, let us examine common grounds between Islam and African spiritual lifestyles.

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<sup>1</sup>Aylward Shorter, *The African Synod: A Personal Response to the Outline Document* (Nairobi: Saint Paul Publications, 1991), 91.

<sup>2</sup>Leonard Swidler, *After the Absolute: The Dialogical Future of Religious Reflection* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 122-123.

## **Common Ground between Islam and Kenyan Traditional Life**

Kenya's traditional religions are, in essence, not world religions with mission or expansion struggles as objectives. In that case, they are not contenders with Islam or Adventists. On the other hand, their persistence and the durability of their traditional ritual and spiritual life pose a challenge to a religion like Adventism, which places holistic demands on its adherents. It has been the amazing ideological consummation of Islam in Kenya to present itself convincingly as more essentially "African," despite a history of dissent against many aspects of African cultures. The purpose of exploring the common ground between Islam and indigenous people is to provide Adventists with a basic knowledge of Kenyan Muslims, who are in many ways African. Thereafter, this common ground can be used by the Adventists to lay a strategy for reaching the Muslims. The following section considers a few common ground that include: Communal or societal lifestyle, Notorious religiosity in all aspects of life, Supreme God, the Creator, Theological similarities, and Group identity.

### **Communal or societal lifestyle**

For traditional Kenyans, community is much more than simply a social grouping of people bound together by reasons of natural origin and/or deep common interests and values.<sup>1</sup> It is both a society as well as a unity of the visible and invisible worlds, the world of the physically living on the one hand, and on the other, the world of

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<sup>1</sup>Harry Sawyerr, *The Practice of Presence*, ed. John Parrat, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 117.

the ancestors, divinities, and souls of children yet to be born to individual kin-groups. In a wider sense, the Kenyan traditional community comprehends the totality of the world of African experience including the physical environment, as well as all spirit beings acknowledged by a given traditional group. The corporate way of thinking is an element prominent in the Kenyan indigenous lifestyle. This societal lifestyle is a strength in community life, expressed by participation in the life of the community into which the individual is introduced by various initiation rites. The community also accounts for the deep sense of the family shown by the attachment to the family and the bond with the ancestors. Closely connected with the family and community at large is the great respect shown to the head of the family and other members of the communal authority.

The Kenyan traditional religion is a typical religion of structure. Being the sole world view with which the people explained, predicted, and controlled space and time events, it sustained every facet of life of the Kenyan people. It was particularly significant in inculcating and promoting the sense of community living and certain key values associated with that. African traditional religion permeated and gave meaning to life, in its aspects. Leonard has observed the African in general that:

They (the Africans) are, in the strict and natural sense of the word, a truly and a deeply religious people, of whom it can be said, as it has been said of the Hindus, that "they eat religiously, drink religiously, bathe religiously, dress religiously, and sin religiously." In a few words, the religion of these natives, as I have endeavored to point out, is their existence, and their existence is their religion.<sup>1</sup>

While it is true that the traditional religion still has considerable influence in

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<sup>1</sup>A.G. Leonard, *The Lower Niger and Its Tribes* (London: Frank Cass, 1968), 409.

the life and culture of many Kenyans, it no longer enjoys exclusive dominance and control over the life of the vast majority of the population. There are civil governments, civil law, agencies of government responsible for law and order, and Western-type schools for formal education and socialization. Above all, plurality of religions is now the existing order in Kenya with Christianity and Islam being the dominant faiths.<sup>1</sup>

The prevailing radical social change has far-reaching implications for the ideal of community living in Kenya. On the one hand, the world view with which people explain and control reality is no longer the traditional one which is religion dominated. Certain traditional African beliefs, customs, and practices associated with the idea and promotion of community among many Kenyan groups have been outlawed. They were considered either too cruel, or simply opposed to the aims of colonial administration and/or Christian missionaries. For example, the major objective in polygamy, which was to produce many children and thereby increase the size of the community as much as possible, is now in serious decline in many parts of Kenya.<sup>2</sup> As a result of the destabilization, wide gaps have been developed in the traditional religious social structure, particularly in the bonds of interpersonal and intergroup relationships. Christianity and Islam now largely provide the new framework and elements for community living and harmony in most societies of Kenya.

In the Islamic viewpoint, the human's entire individual and social life is an

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<sup>1</sup>Bernt Hensen Holger and Michael Twadole, *Religion and Politics in East Africa* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1995), 212-213.

<sup>2</sup>Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 142.

exercise in developing and strengthening his relationship with Allah.<sup>1</sup> Islam means submission to the will of Allah in all aspects of life. The Islamic code of conduct is known as the Shariah. Its sources are the Koran and the Sunnah of the Prophet. The chief characteristic of Islam are that it makes no distinction between the spiritual and the secular in life. It aims to shape both individual lives as well as society as a whole in ways that will ensure that the Kingdom of Allah may really be established on earth and that peace, contentment, and well-being may fill the world. The Islamic way of life is thus based on a unique concept of humanity's place in the universe. That is why it is necessary that, before we discuss how to reach the Muslims in Kenya, we should have a clear idea of what concepts are shared with traditional Africans in the country.<sup>2</sup>

While Adventism is a religion of faith in Jesus Christ, Islam is a religion of law. The Koran and the Hadith in Islam dictate all facets of life, be it politics, government, home life, or even business.<sup>3</sup> Allah, who is the Creator, the Ruler, and the Lord of the universe, has created humans and provided a temporary home in that part of His vast kingdom which is the earth. He has endowed them with the faculties of thinking and understanding, and provided the power to distinguish right from wrong. The individual has also been invested with free will and the power to use the resources of the world as desired. That is, humankind has a measure of autonomy, while being at the same

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<sup>1</sup>Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann, *Islam: A Challenge for Christianity* (London: Orbis Books, 1994), 80.

<sup>2</sup>John Obert Voll, *Islam* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 6-8.

<sup>3</sup>Bernard Palmer, *Understanding the Islamic Explosion* (Orlando, FL: Christ for the World, 1995), 17-18.



time Allah's representative on earth. All those persons who are assimilated into Islam are welded into a community, and that is how the 'Muslim society' comes into being.<sup>1</sup>

It is an ideological society, radically different from those which are founded on the basis of race, color, or territory. It is the result of a deliberate choice, the aftermath of a 'contract' which takes place between human beings and their Creator. Those who enter into this contract undertake to recognize Allah as their Sovereign, His guidance as supreme, and His injunctions as absolute Law. They also undertake to accept, without question, His word as to what is good or evil, right or wrong, permissible or prohibited. In short, freedoms of the Islamic society are limited by the commandments of the omniscient Allah. In other words, it is Allah and not man whose will is the primary source of law in a Muslim society.<sup>2</sup>

#### Religiosity in all aspects of life

The Kenyan traditional Africans are religious, just like many other African traditional religions.<sup>3</sup> This assertion by one of the renowned African scholars can be verified in the lives of most Kenyans, whether they are exposed to the Euro-American influences or not. Religion permeates every aspect of life. John Mbiti expresses this religiosity forcefully:

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<sup>1</sup>Athar Husain, *Prophet Muhammad and His Mission* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1967), 64-79.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>*Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* (Louvain, Belgium: Peeters Publishers and Booksellers, 2000), 57-59.

Wherever the African is, there is his religion: he carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop; he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or in the university; if he is a politician he takes it to the house of parliament. Although many African languages do not have a word for religion as such, it nevertheless accompanies the individual from long before his birth to long after his physical death.<sup>1</sup>

The Kenyan African lifestyle is a wholesome framework, embracing every human situation and governing the whole of society. It is closely linked to the ancestral soil and situates each Kenyan both in the succession of the generations (of ancestors), in his relationship with his/her fellow creatures and in his/her productive activities. Everything is religious.<sup>2</sup> Most traditional Kenyans consider the Supreme Being (God) to be always the God of those who suffer, the Savior of the poor, and the Judge of the oppressor. Judaeo-Christian faith encompasses the African social ethos in all aspects including both in ethics and social motif. In addition, the natives have from the very beginning been the herald conveyers of the Christian faith in the country.

A similar view also holds for Islam. Many passages in the Koran deal with humanity's relationship to Allah and the concept of life, which naturally follows from that relationship. Its message is illustrated in the following verse:

Verily Allah hath bought of the Believers their lives and their properties for the price that theirs shall be the Paradise: so they fight in the way of Allah and slay and are slain. It (i.e. the promise of Paradise) is a covenant which is binding on Him in the Torah and the Injil and the Qur'an. And who is more faithful unto his covenant than Allah? Rejoice then in your bargain that ye have made, for that is the supreme triumph (al-Tawbah 9: 111).

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<sup>1</sup>Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 1.

<sup>2</sup>Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), 70-72.

Islamic belief asserts that everything in this world belongs to Allah. As such, man's life and wealth, which are part of this world, also belong to Him, because He has created them and has entrusted them to every human for their use. But there is one thing which has been conferred on the human, and which now belongs fully to him, and that is "free will"<sup>1</sup> which gives him freedom to choose between following or not following the path of Allah. Yet, because of this free will, the individuals may, if they like, consider themselves free of all obligations to the Lord and independent of any higher authority.<sup>2</sup>

#### Supreme God, the Creator

The concept of God in many religions rests at the core of the religion's beliefs, precepts, and practices, and it determines what its members regard as admissible or otherwise. This concept shapes their attitudes towards others whom they categorize as "unbelievers." It inspires their perceptions, framing how they conceive their role in life, how they should treat one another, and what they should do when they sin or fall into error. It determines the extent of their humanity and provides them with a criterion to measure that of others. It dictates ways to treat other living beings around them like animals, plants, and the environment at large, how they look at nature, and how they understand their responsibility to protect and preserve it. It paves their path to worldly

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<sup>1</sup>Sulaiman Khalid, "Sociology, Islam and Islamic Sociology" in *The Islamic Quarterly*, 44, no. 4 (2000): 624.

<sup>2</sup>Ahmad Mirza Ghulam Hazrat, *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam* (London: London Mosque, 1979), 20-22.

happiness and to salvation in the hereafter.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, be it Adventism, Islam, or African traditional religions, it is a big mistake to under-estimate the significance of the belief in a Supreme Deity, God Almighty, Creator of everything and everyone.

First let us consider the traditional Kenyan perspective of God. Ps 53:1 reveals that the fool says in his heart “There is no God.” In traditional Kenya there are no such “fools.” Traditional Kenyans have been brought up with godly values and are naturally religious in all spheres of life. As a matter of fact, Spencer came to a conclusion that ancestor worship is the root of every religion.<sup>2</sup> Islamic religion and ethnic groups in Kenya recognize the existence of a supreme god (God/Allah). Traditional groups believe that people should seek help from the gods and the ancestors. They pray and offer sacrifices to the gods or spirits to gain good health, get rain, or have fertile land. Both Christianity and Islam accommodate the natives’ ceremonies to celebrate a person’s passage from childhood to adulthood.<sup>3</sup>

The belief in ancestors is an important element of Kenya’s African traditional religions. The belief occupies an important place in understanding the role of the traditional religion in inculcating the ideal of harmonious living among Kenyan peoples. One needs, however, to know the content of the belief to be better able to appreciate this ideal of harmonious living.

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<sup>1</sup>Smith, 28.

<sup>2</sup>Spencer Herbert, *Principles of Sociology* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1969), 1:411.

<sup>3</sup>Peter Lang, *Readings in African Traditional Religion* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1991), 44.

Mbiti points out that the ancestors, or the living-dead, are believed to be disembodied spirits of people who lived upright lives here on earth, died a good and natural death, that is, at a ripe old age, and received the acknowledged funerary rites. They could be men or women. But, more often than not, male ancestors are prominent since patrilineage is the dominant system of family and social integration in most traditional Kenyan societies. However, in a few matrilineal groups, both male and female ancestors are duly acknowledged. With the completion of prescribed funeral rites, a deceased person is believed to transform into an ancestor. The funeral rites, in this case, serve as some kind of 'rites of passage'. The disembodied spirit joins the esteemed ranks of fully achieved ancestors in the spirit world.<sup>1</sup>

The direct relation with God in Kenya is rarely explicit but the belief in one God, who is Creator, underlies everything else.<sup>2</sup> Such traditions believe that God does not intervene in the day-to-day affairs of life. These are governed by other invisible forces, good or evil, from whom it is possible to win favors through the ritualized experience of the ancestors. Strict observance of the rites and taboos and total solidarity within the group are the best guarantee of group survival and the transmission of life to numerous descendants. Seen from the outside, constraint and fear seem to be the dominant notes of traditional Kenyan religion, but this perception often forgets that this practice offers an overall framework of security in an often very hostile environment, where only the survival

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<sup>1</sup>Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 29.

<sup>2</sup>Dominique Zahan, *The Religion, Spirituality, and Thought of Traditional Africa* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 15.

of the group ultimately counts.<sup>1</sup>

Traditional African religion in Kenya, aside from the distracting diversity of its actual forms of expression, is in reality much more than the term "religion." It is a global framework of life, encompassing every human situation and governing the whole of society. It is closely linked to the ancestral ground and places each African both in the succession of the generations, called the ancestors, in a relationship with his/her fellow creatures and in his/her productive activities. Again, everything is religious. The invisible members, especially the ancestors and spiritual beings, are powerful and by far superior to human beings. Their reality and presence in the community are duly acknowledged and honored among various traditional African groups. Their neglect could spell disaster for human beings and the community. The invisible beings are represented by different kinds of symbols like carved objects, shrines, and sacred altars. They may also be recalled in personal names given to children, especially in cases where particular ancestors or spirit beings are held to have reincarnated in individual children. The presence of the ancestors is particularly felt in the traditional Kenyan community. They are believed to be benevolent and powerful representatives of the community in the spirit land. Their symbols and shrines are common and evident features among most traditional Kenyan groups. The reality and presence of spiritual members are equally acknowledged through several taboos found in many Kenyan communities.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John S. Mbiti, *The Prayers of African Religion* (New York; Orbis Books, 1975), 78.

<sup>2</sup>S.A. Thorpe, *African Traditional Religions* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1991), 114-117.

On the other hand, Muslims believe in the same God as the God of Noah, the God of Moses, the God of Abraham, and the God of Jesus as well as all other prophets of Islam. Key to the Islamic concept of God is that Muhammad's prophesy cleaned away all false associations people had made with God and established finally the pure religion of monotheism. The first thing Islam asserts, and the last, is that there is no god except Allah, being the primary name of God in Arabic that means 'the god'.<sup>1</sup>

In Islam, one true God is a reflection of the unique concept that Islam associates with God. Thus to a Muslim, Allah is the Almighty, Creator and Sustainer of the universe, who is similar to nothing and nothing is comparable to Him. The Prophet Muhammad was asked by his contemporaries about Allah and he answered in the form of a short chapter of the Koran, which is considered the essence of the unity or the motto of monotheism, saying:

"In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Say (O Muhammad) He is God the One God, the Everlasting Refuge, who has not begotten, nor has been begotten, and equal to Him is not anyone." (Chapter 112)

The primary source of statements on the attributes of God is the Koran. Muslims consider the Koran to be the exact word of God. In the Koran God describes Himself in many places and in many ways.<sup>2</sup> In order to be a Muslim, that is, to surrender oneself to God, it is necessary to believe in the oneness of God, in the sense of His being the only Creator, Preserver, Nourisher, etc. Many of the idolaters knew and believed that

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<sup>1</sup>Harries, 45-50.

<sup>2</sup>Derived from a magazine from *World Assembly of Muslim Youth* (WAMY), P.O. Box 10845, Riyadh 11443, Saudi Arabia.

only the Supreme God could do all this, but that was not enough to make them Muslims. To do *tawhid ar-rububiyyah*, one must add *tawhid al'uluhiyyah*, that is, one acknowledges the fact that it is God alone Who deserves to be worshiped, and thus abstains from worshiping any other thing or being. Having achieved this knowledge of the one true God, man should constantly have faith in Him, and should allow nothing to induce him to deny truth. At the heading of the chapters of the Koran and at the start of every action by a Muslim, the phrase *Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim* is found. This contains three names or attributes of God. It declares that the action is in the name of Allah the Most Gracious, the bestower of Grace. This is the most important set of attributes because of how often it is mentioned. The first name "Allah" is the common Arabic word for God. Literally it means "The Divinity." It is a word that has no plural and has no gender. It is a uniquely specific word in the Arabic language. The second name is *ar-Rahman*, which means the "Most Gracious." This is in comparison with *ar-Rahim* meaning the bestower of grace. The difference between these two words is like the difference between an adjective which describes a nature and a verb which describes an action. Allah is the source of all good and mercies to all of creation. He actively wills good and mercy on creation.<sup>1</sup>

When faith enters a person's heart, it causes certain mental states which result in certain actions. Taken together these mental states and actions are the proof for the true faith. Foremost among those mental states is the feeling of gratitude towards God, which

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.



could be said to be the essence of 'ibada' (worship).<sup>1</sup> The feeling of gratitude is so important that a non-believer is called 'kafir,' which means one who denies a truth and also one who is ungrateful. The unique usage of Allah as a personal name of God is a reflection of Islam's emphasis on the purity of the belief in God which is the essence of the message of all God's messengers. Because of this, Islam considers associating any deity or personality with God as a deadly sin which God will never forgive, despite the fact that He may forgive all other sins.

A believer loves and is grateful to God for the bounties He bestows, but being aware of the fact that his/her good deeds, whether mental or physical, are far from being commensurate with divine favors, he/she is always anxious or else God should punish, here or in the hereafter. The believer, therefore, fears Him, surrenders to Him, and serves Him with great humility. One cannot be in such a mental state without being almost all the time mindful of God. Remembering God is thus the life force of faith in Islam, without which faith fades and withers away. The Koran tries to promote this feeling of gratitude by repeating the attributes of God very frequently. Most of these attributes are mentioned together in some of the following verses of the Koran:

He is God; there is no god but He, He is the Knower of the unseen and the visible; He is the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate. He is God, there is no God but He. He is the King, the All-Holy, the All-Peace, the Guardian of Faith, the All-Preserver, the All-Mighty, the All-Compeller, the All-Sublime. Glory be to God, above that they associate! He is God the Creator, the Maker, the Shaper. To Him belong the Names Most Beautiful. All that is in the heavens and the earth magnifies Him; He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.(59:22-24)

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<sup>1</sup>Badru D. Kateregga, *Islam and Christianity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), 154.

There is no god but He, the Living, the Everlasting. Slumber seizes Him not, neither sleep; to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth. Who is there that shall intercede with Him save by His leave? He knows what lies before them and what is after them, and they comprehend not anything of His knowledge save such as He wills. His throne comprises the heavens and earth; the preserving of them oppresses Him not; He is the All-High, the All-Glorious.(2:255)

People of the Book, go not beyond the bounds in your religion, and say not as to God but the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only the Messenger of God, and His Word that He committed to Mary, and a Spirit from Him. So believe in God and His Messengers, and say not, Three. Refrain, better is it for you. God is only one God. Glory be to Him - (He is) above having a son.(4:171)

According to the Islamic way of life, God teaches human beings in the Holy Koran that they were created in order to worship Him, and that the basis of all true worship is God-consciousness. Since the teachings of Islam encompass all aspects of life and ethics, the consciousness of God is encouraged in all human affairs. Islam makes it clear that all human acts are acts of worship if they are done for God alone and in accordance to His divine law. As such, worship in Islam is not limited to religious rituals. The teachings of Islam act as a mercy and a healing for the human soul, and such qualities as humility, sincerity, patience, and charity are strongly encouraged. Likewise, Islam condemns pride and self-righteousness, since Almighty God is the only judge of human righteousness. The Islamic view of the nature of man is also realistic and well-balanced. Human beings are not believed to be inherently sinful, but are seen as equally capable of both good and evil. Islam also teaches that faith and action go hand in hand. God has given people free will, and the measure of one's faith is one's deeds and actions.

#### Monotheism

Affirmation of monotheism and the condemnation of polytheism furnish the

source of greatest similarity between the teaching of the Koran in Islam and the Bible for Adventists. Throughout the Koran, God is affirmed as being the one and only God, the creator and sustainer of the universe (1:1ff.; 2:163; etc). In addition, God has chosen to reveal His will to man through the prophets (2:137ff.).

Similarly, the stress on resurrection and judgment is slightly common between Adventism and Islam (22:5ff.). For example the Koran describes the resurrection with familiar terms such as "The trumpet shall be sounded, and from the graves, men will rush forth to their Lord." The holiness and justice of God are also revered in 2:202, 281.

Just like in Christianity (Adventism included), the mercy and forgiveness of God are emphasized in Islam. The holy men of God confess their sins (3:147) and God forgives sins, blotting them out (3:193ff.). The Koran affirms that all men have sinned, although it affirms a more optimistic view of human nature (16:61-63).<sup>1</sup> The religious concept of worship, prayer, and helping the needy in the Koran finds numerous parallels in the Old and New Testament (98:4ff.). The prophets of the Old Testament often declared that true religion is that which takes care of the widows and orphans (Ezek 18; etc). The concept correlates with African traditional religions. Worship and prayer also played important parts in the life of Israel and the church, although they were not considered as being efficacious for salvation as they are in Islam.

#### Group identity

The family, for the Kenyan, usually includes one's direct parents, grandparents

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<sup>1</sup>J. Dudley Woodberry, ed., *Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 156.

and great-grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles, and aunts, cousins, nieces, and nephews. And normally, a child would refer to any uncle or aunt as his/her father or mother, the nephews and nieces as his/her sons and daughters. People generally do not ask a child his/her personal name. Rather, a child is identified as a child of the parents. The extended family system is the model. Thus, the nuclear family pattern is alien to Kenyans and is believed to be hostile to the traditional value of community. Actually, it is only in recent times that the latter system has begun to surface, mainly in urban towns, like Nairobi and Mombasa, to mention but a few, due to external influences in the country. The extended family structure is held up to people as the model, one in which parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, nephews, and nieces live together and are cared for by their children, grandchildren, and other relatives in mutual love and respect.

To the Muslim, the Shariah prescribes directives for the regulation of the individual as well as collective lives. These directives affect various forms of life such as religious rituals, personal character, morals, habits, family relationships, social and economic affairs, administration, the rights and duties of citizens, the judicial system, the laws of war and peace, and international relations. Likewise, they advise on what is good and bad, what is beneficial and useful, and what is injurious and harmful, what virtues people have to cultivate and encourage and those evils that people have to suppress and guard against. The Shariah also guides on any personal and social action and what the limits might be. Finally, the Shariah counsels what methods can be adopted to establish a dynamic order of society and what methods should be avoided. The Shariah is a complete way of life and an all-embracing social order for the Muslim. As discussed, Islam became

part of life of the Africans who embraced it, and as a result many of the traditional rites of passage, as examined in the next section, became Islamized.

### **African Rites of Passage Affected by Islam**

Right from the womb, through birth, infancy, puberty, initiation, marriage, and death, many Kenyan societies have religious rituals for each phase of life. According to Kenyatta, Kenyas first president, human life revolves around four major events namely, birth, puberty, marriage, and death, which affects not only the individual but also the whole family, its neighbors and friends.<sup>1</sup> Each day begins with prayer, offering, and thanksgiving. Major steps in the life of any traditional community involve the consultation of fortune tellers and diviners to ascertain the will of God and the spirits. It is rare to find any act, human or otherwise, without a religious explanation.<sup>2</sup>

This religiosity explains, in part, why there has been a high turnover from traditional religion to Islam in Kenya. It accounts also for the quick spread of Islam to many groups of religious families and traditions in the country and Africa as a whole. While Indian Muslims celebrate *maulud* on the occasion of the Prophet's birthday, during the month of *Rabi al awwal*, *maulidi* was recited by Zanzibaris during festivals of birth, circumcision, and marriage throughout the year and on other religious occasions. Let us now consider some of the important stages of life in Kenya that have been affected by Islam.

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<sup>1</sup>Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (London: Oxford, 1968), 234.

<sup>2</sup>Mbiti, *The Prayers of African Religion*, 39.

## **Birth**

Although the Muslims did not observe any special rites of passage, the Zanzibaris and Kenyan coastal Muslims were influenced by African traditional practices in their various rites and ceremonies. For example on the fortieth day after birth, the newborn child was taken outside where the "maulidi" was recited at the father's house after the naming ceremony followed by the cutting of the infant's hair. Typically, such a rite was rooted in African traditions, but Muslims recited it, fashioned in Islamic.

## **Female Circumcision**

Female circumcision has triggered a passionate public debate in the West. Many national, non-governmental, and international organizations are showing their concern. This debate has found an echo among the Muslims. The feminist circles demand its abolition, while at the same time, the Muslim religious circles try as often as they can to justify female circumcision, only in the form called *sunnah*, which is said to be the one conforming to the tradition of Mohammed. Contrary to female circumcision, male circumcision does not really interest anyone.<sup>1</sup>

Female circumcision is repeatedly described as an old Muslim ritual, when in fact it predates Islam and is even believed to be pre-Judaic. In Africa, 28 countries appear to practice it, among them many traditional tribes. Such African countries include Sudan,

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<sup>1</sup>Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices affecting Women's and Children's Health. President: Mrs. Berhane Ras-Work, 147 rue de Lausanne, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland, Tel: (022) 7312420. Founded in 1984, this committee represents 23 African national committees.

Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya, to mention just a few.<sup>1</sup> Even though there is no mention of it in the Koran, scholars of the Shari school of Islam, found mostly in East Africa, consider female circumcision obligatory. The Hanafi and most other schools maintain that it is merely recommended, not essential.

According to Islam, to define an act means to declare it forbidden, reprehensible, permitted, advisable, or mandatory. These are the five categories into which a Muslim believer classifies any act. The adversaries of circumcision regard it as forbidden when it concerns girls. On the other hand, they do not oppose male circumcision and even consider it mandatory. Meanwhile, the supporters of male and female circumcision are divided on the qualification that should be attached to it. The importance given to virginity and an intact hymen in Kenya is the reason why female circumcision still remains a very widespread practice. Other reasons given for clitoridectomy in Kenya are the promotion of cleanliness and the prevention of female promiscuity. Behind circumcision, there is the belief that by removing parts of girls' external genital organs, sexual desire is minimized. This permits a female who has reached the 'dangerous age' of puberty and adolescence to protect her virginity, and therefore her honor, with greater ease.<sup>2</sup> In some Kenyan societies, it is also believed that if the baby's head touches the clitoris during delivery, the infant will die. Circumcision is most often performed on female children at the age of seven or eight, before the girl begins the

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<sup>1</sup>Economical and Social Council, *Rapport sur les pratiques traditionnelles* (Addis Ababa, 1990), 56.

<sup>2</sup>Mahmoud Koraim and Rushdi Ammar, *Female Circumcision and Sexual Desire* (Cairo: Ein Shams University Press, 1965), 12.

menstrual periods. Circumcision is usually done by the local midwife.

## **Marriage**

African wedding is a wedding ceremony not just for two people, the bride and the groom, but is for the two social groups from both sides.<sup>1</sup> Throughout Kenya, laws provide for a variety of marriage forms, usually civil, customary (indigenous), or Islamic. But the way in which individuals negotiate through these systems differs from tribe to tribe. The two largest Muslim groups in Kenya, Sunnis and Shiites, have two very distinct patterns of marriage. The Shiite populations allow for polygyny, but rarely actually practice it. Yet polygyny is common in the Sunni culture. Among men with more than one wife, there is little homogeneity of living arrangements. In polygyny, each wife may live separately from the others and from her husband, who circulates between/among his wives' households, or they may all live together, with the first wife being treated with respect as an elder.<sup>2</sup> This is an aspect that Islam found existing in Kenya. It is also interesting to note that both the Sunnis and the Shiites had a similar practice before they immigrated to Kenya.

There are tangible changes in many areas of married life. There is a distinct change in attitudes toward marriage where Muslims are urged to marry young and spurn lavish decor. According to a "moulana" in Nairobi, a Muslim cannot be considered a believer until she or he is married. Marriage is a protection against "zinna" (adultery). At the

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<sup>1</sup>Theo Sundermeier, *The Individual and Community in African Traditional Religions* (Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1998), 69.

<sup>2</sup>Thobani, 1:56.



same time it is emphasized that Muslims should not waste their resources on lavish functions that are against the Islamic ethos. Likewise, as far as “moulana,” the law of marriage is a great “ibadah” that goes along with the customary practices that were brought from India. In most cases it is difficult to distinguish between a Hindu and a Muslim wedding in Kenya.

Among the Arabs of the Kenyan coast, marriages take place as a way to continue a family lineage or as a means of meeting the family’s needs. Both in traditional Kenya and in Muslim communities, marriage is viewed as the union of two families rather than the union of two people, and couples work hard to make their marriages successful.<sup>1</sup> As a result, divorce is very rare. The coastal Arabs tend to marry among their kind, and occasionally, Somalian Arabs do because they are proud of their heritage and desire to remain a closed group. Although polygyny is accepted by Muslim Arabs, it is generally practiced by only the wealthier men whose first wives are barren, or those who desire to establish new family ties.<sup>2</sup>

Kenyan law validates Islamic and customary marriages, largely treating them the same way. In both systems polygyny is legal. Nonetheless, there are certain differences in the way the state relates to the first and subsequent wives, often discriminating against the latter. Insurance coverage provides an apt example of this type of preference. The payments for national health insurance are ordinarily taken out of a

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<sup>1</sup>Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 130.

<sup>2</sup>Michael Sims, “Swahili,” in *Muslim Peoples: A World Ethnographic Survey*, 2nd ed., ed. Richard V. Weekes (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984), 2:734.

man's salary for both himself and his wife. If, however, a man has two or more wives, insurance premiums of all the wives after the first are not automatically deducted from her husband's salary, leaving her uncovered by the health service. Although it is possible to ask for her payments to be deducted as well, this rarely happens, a problem attributed to ignorance on the part of the insurance system.<sup>1</sup>

On the average, the Kenyan woman is considered ready for marriage between age nineteen and twenty-two. The law of the land concerning the minimum age for marriage is fifteen for girls. Girls who are the offspring of Kenyan Islamic or customary marriages can be married off by their guardian even before puberty. The girl has the right to negate the marriage upon reaching puberty. However, the practice of child marriages is diminishing, and there is a general sense among practicing communities that early marriage is not good for the girls. Some of the girls who leave their first marriage at puberty have started returning to school to complete their education.<sup>2</sup> Also common among the coastal islands, particularly among the poor, is that girls are eligible for marriage shortly after reaching puberty.

Generally, family law in Kenya is a combination of civil law, customary law and practices, and religious law for Muslims. Early Muslim marriage ceremonies were distinctly influenced by Christian practices such as the placing of a mirror behind the bride,

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<sup>1</sup>Vicky W. Mucai-Kattambo, Janet W. Kabeberi-Macharia, and Patricia Kameri-Mbote, "Law and the Status of Women in Kenya," in *Women, Laws, Customs and Practices in East Africa: Laying the Foundation*, ed. Janet Kabeberi-Macharia (Nairobi, Kenya: Women and Law in East Africa, 1995), 89.

<sup>2</sup>Mucai-Kattambo, Kabeberi-Macharia, and Kameri-Mbote, 90.

a crown on her head, and a veil over her face.<sup>1</sup>

### **Death**

Islamic's last rites following death were also widely observed. Special services were held for the deceased on the third, seventh, tenth and fortieth day after burial. The 'service' consisted of Koran recitation, "dhikr" and "maulidi," followed by a feast. The main rites were held on the fortieth day. An all-night vigil was kept in the house of the deceased and prayers were chanted by all those present (often in chorus). Humorous stories with a moral content were narrated, cakes were baked, a special dish of chicken was served, and stories about the deceased were related amid much sobbing. A year after the death of the deceased a further celebration was held in his or her memory when friends and relatives were fed.<sup>2</sup>

### **Folk-Islam**

The constant interchange between Islam and indigenous African cultures of Kenya gave rise to a change in African social and political institutions and was instrumental in the creation of Folk Islam. Folk Islam in Kenya appears structured with fixed sets of rules and beliefs because of their attachment to either structured Islam or African tradition. However, it is far more accommodating than Christianity could ever be in Kenya. For an indigenous African to become a Muslim, he/she only needs to believe

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<sup>1</sup>Bill Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam* (Edinburgh: MARC, 1989), 131-136.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., I talked with Imam at a Mosque in South B, Nairobi, Kenya, August 1999.

and say the “kalima”: “There is no god except Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger.”

Almost all Kenyan tribal religions have an occult background. Spirit or animism involvement and ancestor worship are the dominating factors in all tribal beliefs in the country.<sup>1</sup> Witch doctors, to use a common designation, claim to be in contact with the spirit world in order to appease or even manipulate spirits with their magic. Spells, charms and amulets are used for protection against negative influences from the spirit world. The witch doctors will resort to the finding of more potent charms or spells, when a person feels he or she is under bondage or is sick. The adherents are bound to live under constant fear of the spirit world and are at the same time dependent on the witch doctors. Islam, on the other hand, not counting a few exceptions, harbors few reservations toward/about the occult. It is either tolerated, accommodated, or Islamized.

### Conclusion

The fact that Islam has succeeded to interact with the indigenous in Kenya, it is bound to make some Muslims more open to compare Islam with Adventism. With Christianity and traditional religions, more Muslims have been exposed, and the faith of the educated and the more thinking Muslims have been tarnished by contacts with Western education, materialism, and even Marxism. As discussed, Islam and Adventism have a lot in common. Having discovered this fact, then, it would be prudent for the Adventist Church to approach Muslims using the “indigenous” context since the Muslims already have a bias against Christians (including Adventism). Islam in Kenya stands firm against

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<sup>1</sup>Dean C. Halverson, *World Religions* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1996), 37-40.

Adventism and seems impregnably resistant to all attempts at Christian witness at large (Adventists are Christians). The following section is a brief study of the origin of Seventh-day Adventists in Kenya and some of the evangelistic methods they used.

### **Origin of Seventh-day Adventists in Kenya**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church found its footing in Kenya for the first time in 1906 when A.A Carscallen and Peter Nyambo were sent by the British Union Conference. Carscallen was a Canadian and a graduate of Newbold College, while Peter Nyambo was a Malawian Adventist teacher who had gone to Britain for further studies.<sup>1</sup> The same year, these men established the first Seventh-day Adventist Mission Station on a five-acre plot south of Kisumu at Gendia Hill, two miles from Kendu Bay, near Lake Victoria. The selection of this site was by A.A. Enns of the German mission who had crossed the boarder from Tanzania to Kenya. On May 1911 there was the first ever baptism of ten Luo believers.

The scarcity of converts did not daunt the early Adventist missionaries to Kenya. In the seven years between 1906 and 1913, seven mission stations were established. These stations, Gendia, Wire Hill, Nyanchwa, Kanyandoto, Karungu Bay, Got Rusinga, and Kamagambo, were mainly among the Dholuo community. Between 1920 and 1932, the Adventist message spread to the neighboring Gusii District. Thereafter, Adventism spread to the rest of the country propelled by the work of the Central Kenya Mission, which was established in 1933, and the Kenya Coast Mission at

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Lang, *Seventh-day Adventists Contributions to East Africa, 1903-1983* (New York: Verlag Peter Lang, 1985), 28-30, 59-61.

Changamwe, which was founded in 1934. The Kenya Coast Mission targeted particularly the Muslims.<sup>1</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventist church, both in towns and rural areas, has a clear focus and purpose, an element of second quality characteristic echoed by Schwarz in his book based on a gift-oriented ministry in evangelism.<sup>2</sup> This is according to Christ's commission, to proclaim to all the world the message of a loving God (Matt 28:18-20), most fully revealed in His Son's reconciling ministry and atoning death. The Adventist Church also recognizes the Bible as the dependable and authoritative revelation of God's will. Thus the Church presents the Bible's full message, including the second advent of Christ and the continuing force of God's ten commandment law with its injunction to remember the seventh-day Sabbath. In terms of education, this church recognizes that the development of mind and character is essential to God's redemptive plan, that promotes the growth of a mature understanding of God, His Word, and the created universe.

By affirming the biblical significance on the well-being of the whole person, the Adventist Church makes the preservation of health and healing of the sick a priority and, through ministry to the poor and the oppressed, it cooperates with the Creator in His compassionate work of restoration. In accordance with the great prophecies of the Scriptures, the Adventist Church reaches the high point of God's plan, which is the restoration of all His creation to full harmony with His perfect will and righteousness.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development* (Emmelsbull: Churchsmart Resources, 1996), 24-25.

In addition, the Adventist Church believes the Bible as the only creed and has come up with twenty-seven fundamental beliefs, which are solely from the scriptures. These beliefs are: the Holy Scriptures, the Trinity, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Creation, the Doctrine of Humanity, the Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ, the Experience of Salvation, the Church, the Remnant and Its Mission, Unity in the Body of Christ, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, Spiritual Gifts and Ministry, the Gift of Prophecy, the Law of God, Sabbath, Stewardship, Christian Behavior, Marriage and the Family, Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary, the Second Coming of Christ, Death and Resurrection, the Millennium and End of Sin, and, finally, the New Earth.<sup>1</sup>

Today the majority of Adventists in Kenya are basically from the Luo and the Kisii communities in the western part of the country, where Adventist preaching in the country began. Interestingly, there is heavy Islamic influence both in Luoland and in Kisiiland. In major towns like Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, Eldoret, etc., the Adventist Church comprises the majority owing to the influx of the Dholuo's and Gusii who moved to the towns due to urbanization and other reasons. The worship styles between town and rural Adventist churches are slightly different. The rural churches remain predominantly dogmatic and conservative in disposition, whereas town churches have been influenced by contemporary Western culture and they more or less have a free worship style, which includes the use of instruments, clapping, and body expressions.

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<sup>1</sup>General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Takoma Park, MD: Review and Herald, 1982), 4-374.

### **Traditional Methods of Verbal Attacks**

Kenya's traditional Adventist evangelism is full of negative language regarding other religions. In this context, a genuine technique requires a cognitive and linguistic conversion that remains sensitive to the naming process by banishing pejorative terminology.

The challenges that face the Adventist church today signal a re-examination and re-adjustment of the way mission and ministry are presently conducted in the country. Dismantling the traditional methods of doing ministry may not be the solution. But there is need to refine and enhance the Church's organizational structure and mission attitude for greater efficiency and effectiveness. While preaching to the Muslims, the Adventists have openly rebuked them, labeling them as "lost," "Babylon," and "Beast." Some Muslims attending such meetings have been forced to strike back. In many parts of Kenya, the Muslims and Adventists see each other as enemies, making it hard for any evangelistic endeavors. The fact is, every day brings new challenges not only to the church as a body but to the individual church members as well.

### **Conclusion**

Islam landed in Kenya basically from the Northwest (through Sudan and into Uganda, then to Kenya), the Northeast (from Somali), and the East (Indian Ocean) respectively. Meanwhile, Adventism came much later and established itself in western Kenya. In the next chapter, the questionnaire reveals that the Kenya Adventist Church ministers and lay members alike seem to lack adequate understanding of the Kenyan



Muslims. The chapter examines how Adventists in Kenya have a lot to offer Muslim friends.

## CHAPTER III

### ADVENTIST ATTITUDES TOWARDS ISLAM IN KENYA

This chapter is organized into two sections: (1) a discussion of the results of the questionnaire survey conducted in Kenya, and (2) an examination of the attitudes of Adventist pastors, administrators, and lay church members toward Muslims.

#### **Categories of People Interviewed**

The categories of people interviewed were: (1) Adventist lay church members, (2) Adventist church administrators- pastors, teachers in Adventist schools, church officers in fields, conferences and the East African Union personnel, and (3) former Muslims in Adventist churches. In addition, there were several unplanned interviews with Muslims, Imams, and former Islamic converts to the SDA Church who later returned to Islam.

#### **Interview Questions**

The major objective of the questionnaires was to examine how the SDA church leaders and lay members in general were knowledgeable about Islam in doctrines and theology. At the same time, there was a need to find out why the Adventist Church was not officially engaged in Muslim evangelism in Kenya, and why the church does not

have official experts in Islamic education whose work is to train lay members.

The gender, age, marital status, religion, occupation, location (town or upcountry), and town (Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, Mumias) of each respondent were ascertained. There were three types of questionnaires as indicated above, and were basically conducted in three major cities in Kenya- Nairobi, Mombasa, and Nakuru.

I prepared 300 questionnaires for Adventist church members, each with 48 questions, 50 questionnaires for Adventist church officers and administrators each with 50 questions and 50 questionnaires for Muslim converts to the SDA Church with 67 questions. For the Adventist lay church members, I distributed the questionnaires on Sabbath morning before the programs for the day began and encouraged every member to fill out and return the completed questionnaire to the local church pastor at the end of the service. After giving out 300 questionnaires in the three major towns, only about 65 of them were completed and returned. Of the 50 distributed, only 12 of them were completed and returned by administrators and church officers, and finally, out of 20 questionnaires for Muslim converts, only 3 were completed and turned in. Since there were so many questions, there is no way I can assimilate them here, but I have selected just nine of the responses as summarized below. In terms of gender, there were 60 males, and 19 females who participated.

### **First Question**

Question: Do you have a Koran? This was question 9 for both church member

and administrators, but was question 10 for Muslim converts.<sup>1</sup> See table 1.

TABLE 1  
RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE A KORAN

Q. Do you have a Koran?	Not Answered	Yes	No	Total
GROUP				
1. Church Members	0	15 23.4%	49 76.6%	64 100.0%
2. Administrators	0	3 25.0%	9 75.0%	12 100.0%
3. Former Muslims	0	3 100.0%	0	3 100.0%
<b>Total</b>	0	21 26.6%	58 73.4%	79 100.0%

More than 70% of both the lay church members and church administrators did not have a Koran. Most of them indicated that they had nothing to do with it. They felt like they were apostatizing their faith if in possession of a Koran. One of the lay church members openly said that he can serve only one master. Former Muslims, who are now Seventh-day Adventists had their Korans. Asked why they did not throw it away or burn it, they indicated that they could use the Koran to support the Bible and therefore attract Muslims. The Koran is very special to a Muslim and if used correctly, can be a powerful tool for evangelism to Muslims.

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix A for verification and clarification.

## Second Question

Question: Do you have any Muslim as a close friend? This question was relevant to only the lay Church members and the administrators. This was question number sixteen for both Church members and Administrators. See table 2. Apparently, the majority of Adventist Church members and administrators claim to have Muslims as close friends.

TABLE 2

### NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE CLOSE MUSLIM FRIENDS

Q. Do you have any Muslim as a close friend?	Not Answered	Yes	No	Total
GROUP				
<b>1. Church Members</b>	1 1.6%	37 57.8%	26 40.6%	64 100.0%
<b>2. Administrators</b>	0	8 66.7%	4 33.3%	12 100.0%
<b>Total</b>	1 1.3%	45 59.2%	30 39.5%	76 100.0%

Of the church members, 57.8% have close Muslim friends, while 66.7% of the administrators state the same. Muslims are unlikely to become Adventists until they first become your friends. These figures are quite encouraging. True friendship is one of the strongest bonds where Adventists are able to build and develop such friendships with Muslims. Such a bond can lay the strongest possible foundation for an effective witness of

the Gospel. It is imperative that Adventists in Kenya encourage and seek to establish personal contacts with Muslims.

### Third Question

Question: Can you reach a Muslim with the Gospel if given the opportunity.

See table 3.

TABLE 3

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS WHO CAN REACH THE MUSLIMS IF GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY

Q. Can you reach a Muslim with the Gospel if given the opportunity?	Not Answered	Yes	No	Total
GROUP				
<b>1. Church Members</b>	2 3.1%	57 89.1%	5 7.8%	64 100.0%
<b>2. Administrators</b>	0	12 100.0%	0	12 100.0%
<b>3. Former Muslims</b>	0	3 100.0%	0	3 100.0%
<b>Total</b>	2 3.1%	72 91.1%	5 6.3%	79 100.0%

About 89.1% of church members and 100% of the administrators indicated that they are ready to witness to the Muslims. These figures are overwhelming numbers, but the only problem is the fact that the church has not come up with a systematic way of training and equipping ministers and lay members alike to reach the Muslims. The East African Union

feels that at present there is no one qualified to do evangelism among Muslims.

#### Fourth Question

Question: Do you have difficulty sharing your faith with Muslims? The lay members (54.7%) and the administrators (58.3%) indicated they had difficulty sharing their faith with Muslims. None of the former Muslims had any difficulty sharing their new faith with Muslims. See table 4.

TABLE 4

#### RESPONDENTS WITH DIFFICULTY SHARING THEIR FAITH WITH MUSLIMS

<b>Q. Do you have difficulty sharing your faith with Muslims?</b>	<b>Not Answered</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>GROUP</b>				
<b>1. Church Members</b>	2 3.1%	35 54.7%	27 42.2%	64 100.0%
<b>2. Administrators</b>	0	7 58.3%	5 41.7%	12 100.0%
<b>3. Former Muslims</b>	2 66.7%	0	1 33.3%	3 100.0%
<b>Total</b>	2 3.1%	42 53.2%	33 41.8%	79 100.0%

The overall analysis is that most Adventists have difficulty witnessing to Muslims. The history of Muslim evangelism in Kenya has been characterized by hostility and hatred, and most Adventists have no suitable approach that would appeal to the

Muslims. It requires much patience and longsuffering to develop positive fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). What is needed, primarily, is a desire to win Muslim confidence, to build up a spirit of mutual trust and a bond of true friendship. This is why it is so important that we endeavor to build lasting relationships with Muslims, in an attempt to win them to Jesus Christ. Once Muslim confidence is earned and established, Adventists will find it much easier to share the truths of the Gospel. There is no more appropriate background against which to declare the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ than genuine love and trust.

#### Fifth Question

TABLE 5  
RATING RESPONDENTS WITH KNOWLEDGE ABOUT ISLAM

Q. How would you rate your knowledge about Islam (in terms of doctrines and theology)	Not Answered	Very good	Good	Poor	Very Poor	Total
GROUP						
1. Church Members	3 4.6%	5 7.7%	22 33.8%	27 41.5%	8 12.3%	65 100.0%
2. Administrators	0	1 8.3%	4 33.3%	4 33.3%	3 25.0%	12 100.0%
<b>Total</b>	3 3.9%	6 7.8%	26 33.8%	31 40.3%	11 14.3%	77 100.0%

Question: How would you rate your knowledge about Islam (in terms of their



doctrines and theology)? This analysis clearly shows that Adventists in Kenya have a very little understanding about Islam, its doctrines and theology. The church members (41.5%) indicated they had a little knowledge about Islam. Only 33.8% had a fair knowledge about Islam, but not enough to dialogue with them. The administrators ranked between good and poor their understanding of Islam's doctrines and theology with 33.33% indicating that they had a good knowledge of Islam, while the same percentage of 33.3% were less informed. See Table 5.

Theological discussions and debate cannot, by themselves, bring persuasion to the Muslims. Any approach which seeks purely to convince Muslims of the truth about Adventism by a process of reasoning and, at times, argument is likely to be fruitless. A balance must be maintained, both by expression and by a lifestyle experience behind it, to the living efficacy of the Gospel and the transforming power that Jesus Christ brings to Christian lives. I do not intend to disregard discussion and debate. I have used it occasionally, and I believe they have a vital function in Christian witness to Muslims. However, such methods, by themselves, without the living power of Christ being manifested in our lives and witness, cannot avail to persuade Muslims to become followers of Jesus Christ. Goldsmith, speaking from experience, makes the same point:

The Muslim will not often be converted through anything except the attractive perfection and love of the person of Jesus Christ. In our witness with Muslims we must talk much of Jesus, resisting all pressures to engage in mere theological debate. He alone saves, redeems and gives new life. In him alone are to be found all the glories of the Christian life and faith. He alone will satisfy the heartaches of mankind and in our evangelism we shall find that only he can attract-men like a magnet with

the sheer beauty of his person and utter holiness of his nature.<sup>1</sup>

Maintaining a balance between theological debates and living the truth is very crucial. A purely subjective approach will prove equally inadequate to bring about a real work of regeneration among Muslims. Similarly, avoiding all theological discussion, apologetics and the like, and hope to influence purely through testimonies of what Jesus means to us will not succeed in reaching the Muslims. There is a fundamental need for a well-balanced witness with the experience of Jesus Christ in our lives, which is grounded in sound theology, and which can defend itself and withstand all critical investigation.

#### **Sixth Question**

Question: How often have you wondered why the SDA church is not actively involved in Muslim evangelism?

In response to this question, most church members were unconcerned about the issue. Conversely, the ministers often wondered about this problem. The church members (53.8%) indicated they sometimes wonder, while the ministers (50.0%) often wondered, as shown on table 6.

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Goldsmith, *Islam and Christian Witness: Sharing the Faith with Muslims* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1982), 85.

TABLE 6

**RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE WONDERED WHY THE SDA CHURCH IS NOT  
ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN MUSLIM EVANGELISM**

<b>Q. How often have you wondered why SDA church is not actively involved in Muslim evangelism?</b>	<b>Not Answered</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>GROUP</b>						
<b>1. Church Members</b>	1 1.5%	24 36.9%	35 53.8%	2 3.1%	3 4.6%	65 100.0%
<b>2. Administrators</b>	0	6 50.0%	5 41.7%	1 8.3%	0	12 100.0%
<b>3. Former Muslims</b>	0	3 100.0%	0	0	0	3 100.0%
<b>Total</b>	1 1.3%	33 41.3%	40 50.0%	3 3.8%	3 3.8%	80 100.0%

### **Seventh Question**

Question: Have you experienced any form of conflict with Muslims before?

Previously, several conflicts have occurred between Adventists and Muslims in Kenya. It was with this idea in mind that this question was deliberately raised, just to provide evidence that indeed the conflicts are real. Of the church members (46.2%) evidenced conflicts with Muslims and only 33.3% of the ministers did. It is also interesting to note that 100% of the former Muslims experienced conflict with Muslims. See table 7.

TABLE 7

**RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED ANY FORM OF CONFLICT WITH MUSLIMS**

<b>Q. Have you experienced any form of conflict with Muslims before?</b>	<b>Not Answered</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>GROUP</b>					
<b>1. Church Members</b>	1 1.5%	30 46.2%	33 50.8%	1 1.5%	65 100.0%
<b>2. Administrators</b>	0	4 33.3%	8 66.7%	0	12 100.0%
<b>3. Former Muslims</b>	0	3 100.0%	0	0	3 100.0%
<b>Total</b>	1 1.3%	37 46.3%	41 51.3%	1 1.3%	80 100.0%

Adventists need a keen sensitivity towards Muslims. Yearning for quick converts from Islam is a very subtle approach that causes evangelists to make the mistake of pointing fingers, which eventually upsets the Muslims. Short-cut methods to elicit an early response or force a formal decision can do untold injury and harm to Muslims. Just as an untimely birth will damage or destroy a child, so a premature commitment will injure a Muslim, and many have, in fact, turned against the Gospel permanently as the result of such hasty, insensitive approaches. No Muslim should be pressed into a premature commitment. Let the Spirit of God give the growth while we plant and water, and only when the Muslim himself/herself shows a genuine desire to become an Adventist should he/she be persuaded to do so. I believe by following these, we may reduce the

number of conflicts that bring animosity between Islam and Adventism. Thus Adventists in Kenya need to change their mind-set and crave for Islamic Knowledge. The next section discusses this possibility.

### **Changing the Mind-set of Adventists in Kenya about Islam**

The rapid growth of Islam in Kenya, the incredible development of independent churches, and the revival of traditional religions in post-colonial Africa have made interreligious dialogue an urgent necessity. This issue is worthy of attention in Kenya because, like other African countries, it contains a large composite of different religions. Nearly every religious system of the world, according to Mbiti, is represented in our continent, making Africa look like the dumping heap of the religions of mankind.<sup>1</sup> Kenya, being a small country in Africa, has a number of such religions. There are not only African people but also immigrant people from Europe, Asia, and America who practice their home religions. Since Islam is a reality in the country, it is imperative that Adventist church leaders and lay members change their cynical attitude towards Islam.

Over the years the Adventist church in Kenya has baptized scores of Christians from other denominations and proclaims vigorous membership growth, but nothing is said about evangelizing Muslims. This phenomenon therefore raises the question of the church's understanding of Islamic doctrines and way of life as a whole. Could it be true that Adventists as a church have less attention to the Muslims as a people, just because of what they believe? Or do they still have the old mentality that identifies

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<sup>1</sup>John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1990), 266.

Islam with mystical Babylon, and have nothing to do with them? This attitude does not mean that the church's present and future Islamic challenges and conflicts will go away, but that a new mind-set and mode of leadership is needed to face the challenge. Most Adventist leaders in Kenya, at all levels of administration, are actively engaged in "problem-solving." This approach will overwhelm the leader that gets stuck in that mode of thinking. Church leaders need to move their thinking from "problem-solving" to "change-anticipation." Muslims have an operative value system in Kenya, and Adventist leaders need to base their decisions on reflections that go below the surface of human thinking and religious practice. There is need for church leaders to be exhaustive with a vision that encompasses the needs of the entire church, not just the interests of select groups of the same. The fact is, in Kenya, the year 2000 became for Muslims and Christians a focal point for testing the vitality of their missionary activity. For the Adventist church, the 1990s were clearly defined as a crucial "Decade of Evangelization." On the issue of evangelization, in November 1989, an international conference on "Islam in Africa" was held in Abuja, Nigeria, by the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs and some major world Islamic organizations, such as the Islamic Council of London. The reason for this conference was to focus world attention on the fact that Africa constitutes a great Islamic potentiality that needs to be explored.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the conference, an organization called "Islam in the African Conference" was created in order to promote the Islamization of Black Africa. The fact is, Islam is a religion that can no longer be ignored,

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<sup>1</sup>John Onaiyekan Olorunfemi, "Etre Eglise dans une societe islamo-chretienne: Un point de vue Nigerian." *Concilium* 239 (1992): 61-62.

and its significant impact is felt in major cities in Africa, including Mombasa, Nairobi, Nakuru, and Kisumu, to mention but a few. Whether we like it or not, Islam is a dare, and it is high time that all Adventists, both lay members and leaders (pastors), in Kenya change their attitude towards it and accept them as a people who needs to be witnessed to. Naturally, every religion has a tendency to guard their beliefs from the aggressors and this should not be mistaken to mean defiance.

### **The Remnant Attitude**

Adventists in Kenya identify themselves as a people with a common affinity and a similar world view. Having the belief that the truth only sojourns with them, they comprise a set of values that differs from those of Islam and the other Christian groups. Similarly, when it comes to evangelism, the Adventists in Kenya have a world view and assumptions that carry with them obstacles that hinder effective evangelization to the Muslims. Such obstacles include the use of terms like “crusades,” and “evangelization,” to mention but two.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kenya takes great pride in its message and does whatever it takes to share it. Seeing itself as the remnant, the church in Kenya has the tendency to lean towards denominational superiority and to look at other denominations as being inferior to itself. This bias puts the church in tension with existing religions such as Islam, which vigorously defends its beliefs and doctrines.

The way Adventist pastors and evangelists teach and preach the gospel reflects the stance of denominational superiority. It is often difficult, almost impossible,

for our members in Kenya to accept invitations to visit the services in a mosque on a Friday, or even to visit other denominations on a Sunday. The refusal implies that the Adventists have the truth and others do not. Thus, the Adventist approach to other denominations has created huge barriers, alienating them from other faiths. They pose as teachers, who know it all, giving no room to listen to what others have to say. There is an urgent need to alter the Adventist mind-set in Kenya that venerates the Advent message at the expense of communal fellowship and sensitivity to the needs of other people. This attitude and behavior produces denominational superiority and an “us-against-them” mentality. In a traditional way, the Adventist church in Kenya poses as a religious elite and the bulwark of religious truth, characterizing Muslims and other religions as part of the system of mystical Babylon. Is this really our mission to the world?

As Adventists continue seeking to understand the Muslims and other religions, it is not judicious to approach them with an attitude of superiority and self-righteousness. Rather, in general, their confidence in the Adventist truth should give them a sense of security, not superiority, says Rice.<sup>1</sup> According to Rice, with the right attitude Adventists can engage in real dialogue with other faiths. Likewise, they can listen as they speak.<sup>2</sup>

Most Adventist leadership and the church as a whole in the country have failed to realize that because of Christ the competition is over, and there is the need to encompass all people from other faiths as brothers and sisters. Using the Olympics

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Rice, *The Reign of God* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1997), 215.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



illustration, there is a huge contrast between the opening and closing ceremonies. In the opening ceremonies the athletes come parading into the stadium by countries, under their separate national flags, beginning with Greece and ending with the host country. In the closing ceremonies, the athletes once again enter the stadium, but this time as one group, under the Olympic flag, with no national divisions. Why? Because the competition is over! Christ has competed on behalf of all humans, the gold has been won, all humans are winners, and are now one in Christ under the bloodstained banner of the Crucified. This is the message the world desperately needs to hear.

### **Ethnic Pride and Tribalism**

One of the major problems that faces an Adventist evangelist in Kenya is ethnocentrism or hyper-ethnic pride. This is a feeling of being ethnically superior to people of other ethnic groups, especially those of Adventists long standing. This reality is expressed in many forms. For one, an evangelist from one part of the country may not be welcome to preach in certain regions of the country. Kenya is one of the most multi-cultured nations with more than fifty cultural groups or tribes. It is a nation with diverse religions and freedom of worship is exercised by all ethnic groups. Thus, culture and religion in Kenya is not a single point of view, with a uniform set of beliefs. Instead, culture and religion is more like an archeological dig, consisting of many layers, strata, or levels, each with a different world view, bottom-line, perceptions of right and wrong, belief systems, ethical practices, and understanding of the world and mission of Church. Thus a "belief" or "value system" of any religion is a view of the world, a mind-set, a

systematized framework for deep-level decision making at the bottom line, the threshold of no negotiation. Each cultural layer or level of human existence represents a value system. Adventism and Islam in Kenya is welcomed by different types of people from different ethnic backgrounds with different cultural settings. These ethnic issues in Kenya are a major problem not only in the political arena, but in religions as well. There is constant strife between ethnic groups and religions as to who is superior to the other.

### **Adventist Attitude towards Islam: The Value of Koran**

One way of trying to reach the Muslims of Kenya is by understanding their Holy Book, the Koran, and their core beliefs. Many Adventists in Kenya do not have or have never seen a Koran before. My survey revealed that more than 75% of pastors in the country do not have a Koran, resulting in poor relations with Muslims. More than 76% of the laity surveyed do not have the Koran.

It must be understood that the Koran to the Muslim is equivalent to the Bible for Christians and Jews. The knowledge of its teaching about its own authority is required in order to understand Muslims and how to best communicate with them. The Adventist pastors in Kenya need to understand that Muslims are just like any other group of people, who are sensitive about their own belief system. There is need, among others, to understand the importance of the Koran to a Muslim. Some key Islamic elements about the Koran have the potential for remarkable impact. The Koran presents itself as being the inspired, infallible word of Allah (36:5). It claims to be without error (39:28) and claims to confirm the Scriptures given before to the People of the Book (2:101). It is seen as

being the full revelation of God as it fully explains the Law and Gospel (10:37-38). The goal of the Koran is to bring a unity of belief to all peoples (42:15). Additionally, the Koran declares that it was given in Arabic so that it might be understood by its initial audience (12:1). It is imperative that Adventists understand the value of the Koran to a Muslim to avoid any unwarranted bias that would jeopardize their relationship.

### **The Need for a Paradigm Shift**

The pastor is no doubt the central player in Kenya's multicultural ministry. In this section I suggest several reasons why Adventist leaders in Kenya need to revise their attitude towards Islam. First of all, the pastor is one who, hopefully, has had a paradigm shift, a different mindset that moves away from old explanations that no longer explain anything authentically. Kenya today faces multicultural ministry which is the new wine that requires new wineskins, both in terms of mind-set and methodology. A pastor who seeks to launch into multicultural ministry without a new paradigm, a new way of perceiving truth, will bring in old wineskins that will crack under pressure. For example, I believe that the pastor cannot be a tribalist, classist, sexist (Gal 3:28), or an ageist. This means that the pastor cannot favor one group, either by ethnicity, race, social class, gender, or age over another. In doing evangelism, the pastor should not just assume that the Muslims are the mystical Babylon found in the book of Revelation. The pastor needs an inclusive rather than an exclusive approach to ministry, which cuts across all human needs.

Second, the pastor needs to have an open mind. An open mind will allow a

fair distributon of spiritual gifts, one of which is evangelism among Muslims. Presently, the East African Union does not have any personnel for Muslim evangelism. Efforts to allocate a budget for Muslim ministry have been thwarted by those in power who have very limited knowledge about the Muslims.

The third point is the need for a pastor to have a positive self-image and attitude toward Muslims. This is a most vital quality, since a pastor who has low self esteem, with regard to his or her Adventist identity, will have a difficult time working with the Muslims. He/she may negate his/her cultural heritage to become someone or something else. When such a person is placed in charge of a multicultural church, problems such as ethnocentrism, exclusion, religious bias and subtle prejudice will emerge. A negative attitude towards Islam is the outward manifestation of an inward system of values deliberately designed to structure privilege by means of an objective, differential, and unequal treatment of people. I am talking about church leaders who deliberately refuse to support Muslim evangelism simply because they dislike Muslims. Some of them do not simply understand the need to witness to Muslims. Any negative attitude directed to the Muslims is thus an intentional action in the church, perpetuating conflict and disunity.

The fourth ability in a pastor is aptitude for understanding the sociocultural reality behind ministry in Kenya's cosmopolitan society. Most college educated pastors are quite knowledgeable about theology, biblical issues, church history, church polity, administration, sermon preparation, and pastoral care. But many do not always understand interhuman relations, especially along tribal, gender, religious, ethnic, social

lines. It is simply difficult to understand the Muslims without getting to know them on a personal basis. Muslims in Kenya live in the same community with the rest, work together, go to the same shopping centers and markets and even share a common language, Swahili. Therefore, one way of knowing them is to understand what they believe and establish points of contact, thus creating a friendly environment for sharing the “good” word.

### **Conclusion**

To influence Muslims one must know them. If we are in personal touch with them, we must remember that they are people just like us, with their joys and sorrows, burdens and anxieties, fears and hopes, failures and successes. The first step in approaching the Muslims is to know and understand them. One must conclude therefore, that Islam, in its traditional African form, is entirely a part of the African cultural heritage and thus a reality to be taken seriously. As deliberated in chapter 6, the Adventists should capture the Muslim mind-set by contextualizing the gospel to tribes and groups, and that means using the Koran in evangelism. There are two issues that are at hand when witnessing to Muslims in Kenya. Will the believer in Jesus Christ (Isa) need to leave the fold of Islam and join Adventism or can he/she be with a clear conscience remain in the Islamic community and lifestyle and still be an Adventist? Since Islam is part of the indigenous culture in Kenya, it would be unwise to dislocate the believer from his/her society, given the immense community fellowship of Africans. In the following discussion, I propose a unique way of preserving Muslim converts to Adventism, so that they are

neither dislocated nor compromised. Let us defend and proclaim the gospel, challenging Muslim misconceptions with integrity and long-suffering. This will and does prove to Muslims that the gospel is worth believing.

## CHAPTER IV

### STRATEGY TO REACH KENYAN MUSLIMS WITH THE GOSPEL (INJIL) OF JESUS CHRIST

#### **Introduction**

Reaching the Muslim peoples in Kenya with the gospel has presented a terrifying task for Adventists for many years. The presence of Islam in Kenya poses a great political, economic, and evangelistic challenge to the Seventh-day Adventists. Muslims embody about 7.3% of Kenya's population. Other sources claim the percentage to be between 25% - 30% of the total population of about 30 million.<sup>1</sup> This translates to about 7 to 9 million in number, with 1% of them being non-African.<sup>2</sup> With the official 7.3%, of the 1998 census, this number amounts to about 2 million Muslims in the country. The Muslims I interviewed in Nairobi in August 1999 put the total number of Muslims in Kenya to be about 30% of the total population. This clearly shows that Islam is growing at a high rate among the indigenous people. In 1940s Islam declined slightly because of Somali and other non-Kenyan emigrations. Some of them, who were forced to the

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<sup>1</sup>Esther Mombo, "Relationship and Challenge in Kenya and East Africa," *Transformation* 17, no.1 (January-March 2000): 36-41.

<sup>2</sup>*Kenya, Country Profile*, U.S. Department of State, Office of East African Affairs, Bureau of African Affairs, March 1998.

subjection of Mombasa Sultanate turned back to indigenous religions. However, by 1970, Muslims had grown from 3.5% to 6.4% of the total Kenyan population. By mid 1990, they grew up to 7.2% and today, according to Barrett, they comprise 7.3% of the total population of about 30 million.<sup>1</sup> Complicating this situation, there are tensions and often violence between Adventists and Muslims. Christian Protestants comprise 40% of the country's population, Roman Catholics 30%, and traditional 10%, in the country.<sup>2</sup> In Kenya, most Muslims rarely seek to dialogue in agreements, defined by current missiological thinking. In my Islamic encounters, I rarely find a Muslim who is not ready to actively and vociferously defend his/her faith. When it comes to aggressive evangelism, they put Adventists to shame. They preach in more diverse ways and also more aggressively than Adventists. They preach through the radio, television, newspapers, on the streets, in the parks, and on the Internet. When we fail to do the same they assume we have little to say, and even less to impart to them. The presence of Islam and such prevailing problems pose overwhelming challenges to Seventh-day Adventist evangelization as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

Kenya as a country had the Bantu indigenous peoples (including tribal groups) along the coast of Kenya who through thought forms molded and formed the cultural traditions that guided their day-to-day life. As seen from previous chapters, when the

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<sup>1</sup>David B. Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, 1:425-427.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Mombo, 36-41.



Arabs came, they molded or transformed into the Bantu worldview. Likewise, when Christianity came from Europe, they were incorporated into the indigenous lifestyle. The point is, the center of the heart remains African and traditional. Therefore, any inroads towards successful Muslim witnessing must recognize the African at heart. In addition, there is need to sensitize the relevance and essential terms about the African existence.<sup>1</sup> Each tribal group in Kenya has fundamental facts about creation and existence.<sup>2</sup> It is with this approach that I propose “The Kenyan Community Center of Isa,” a community of Jesus in Islamic-concentration localities. In other words, it is a community of Adventists among Muslims. This concept, in the Adventist church, was pioneered by Whitehouse, who organized fellowship groups in high Islamic concentration country of Islamex. His theme, distinct identity known as the “remnant” among Adventists, and “the Hanif” within Islam<sup>3</sup> has had tremendous success in the Muslim world. But the Kenya Community Center of Isa is a Kenyan Model that addresses the needs of Kenyan Muslims that are not found elsewhere. It is a model aimed at the local indigenous Kenyan Muslims.

The best form of communication to the Muslims in Kenya is Swahili and, as already pointed out, today Swahili is a national language after English. Other traditional and African groups are given their due place. Adventists are welcome to evangelize the

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<sup>1</sup>Janos D. Pasztor, “Africanization of Kenya’s Churches.” *Christian Century*, April 2, 1975, 334-336.

<sup>2</sup>Bengt Sundkler, *The Christian Ministry in Africa* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1960), 281-282.

<sup>3</sup>Jerald Whitehouse, *Contextual Adventist Mission to Islam- I, A Working Model*, Typewritten manuscript, May 1992, Heritage Center, James White Library, Andrews University, 1, 2, 17.

Kenyan Muslims, but on African terms. The African terms here means the Kenyan Islamic traditional terms. Before proceeding further, let us examine the Biblical mandate, especially Pauls' methods for witnessing.

### **Biblical Mandate**

Attacking false teaching without preaching the gospel is a failure in witnessing. Overall, Paul's primary desire and prayer was that people be saved (Rom 10:1) through hearing the gospel (1:16). His priority was to win people to Christ. His strategy involved both contextualization and confrontation, but always with the aim of preaching Christ crucified. The Bible gives us some guidelines as to the approach that Paul used. He was a contextualizer, using a different approach for each audience. In the synagogue he established common ground by appealing to Jewish history and Old Testament Scripture (Acts 13:13-51), while with the farmers at Lystra, he spoke of God's control of the seasons (14:14-18). Similarly, with the philosophers in Athens he quoted their own poetry (17:22-31). He took the truth they already knew to establish friendship. Adventist evangelists need to be wise and use different approaches to different levels of Muslims depending on circumstances. The principle here is to identify with the Muslims and reach them from inside out. I find that Paul 'reasoned' (17:17), 'discussed' (19:9), 'argued persuasively' (19:8) and even confronted (13:46). Eventually, Paul summed up his ministry by saying, " We try to persuade' (2 Cor 5:11), 'We demolish arguments and every pretension" (2 Cor 10:5). However, Paul did more than just contextualize and challenge. He preached the gospel about Christ's death, resurrection, and judgment. The

response was great because many people ‘received the message with great eagerness’ (Acts 17:11), others ‘were persuaded’ (17:4) and others ‘believed’ (17:34). Others ‘sneered’ (17:32), ‘became abusive’ (18:6), and some ‘stirred up persecution’ (13:49). As far as this study is concerned, I have come up with six suggested strategies based on what has been discussed in the previous chapters, that might be helpful in Muslim evangelism in Kenya. The following section examines the first strategy and stresses the importance of context in any Muslim setting. For this study, I will deal with the following areas: personified ministry, personified communicator, personified message, and personified Church.

### **Strategy 1: Contextualizing the Gospel**

#### **Personified Ministry**

The traditional approach of working with Muslims has often involved little attention to the contextualization of the message and the forms of the Adventist church in Kenya. This lack of contextualization has hindered the ministry of the church as Muslims found the Adventists’ traditional western messages and forms offensive. For example, the teaching of Christ’s suffering servanthood is rejected by the Muslims because they perceive the message of the cross as dishonoring to Christ.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the lack of the Muslim form of removing one’s shoes in a place of worship is also perceived as dishonoring to God. In light of this evidence, it seems clear that a successful approach to Muslim ministry must include contextualization. In addition, the element of genuine

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<sup>1</sup>Evertt Huffard, “Culturally Relevant Themes about Christ” in *Muslims and Christians*, ed. J. Dudley Woodberry (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1989), 164ff.

spirituality must also be present in order for the church to present not only a relevant but also a credible witness. Contextualization has been defined as “the effort to understand and take seriously the specific context of each human group and person on its own terms and in all its dimensions, cultural, religious, social, political, economic and to discern what the Gospel says to Muslims, in this context”.<sup>1</sup> The Bible demonstrates contextualization throughout, and Paul’s ministry is of particular interest as he holds unwaveringly to the truth but takes care that his hearers understand the true meaning by means of careful communication.<sup>2</sup> The danger involved when applying the principles of contextualization is syncretism. Parshall sums up the issue when he states, “syncretism occurs when the critical and the basic elements of the Gospel are lost in the process of contextualization.”<sup>3</sup>

Contextualization also involves the issue of form and meaning. For example, the pre-Abrahamic form of circumcision acquired new meaning when God made it a sign of the Abrahamic covenant. New meaning may be infused into old forms as long as the form is not prohibited by Scripture. Perhaps the key governing principle is that the missionary or the evangelist enterprise should contextualize to the point that only the core of the Gospel message offend.<sup>4</sup> There are a number of areas which will be affected by contextualization as discussed below.

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<sup>1</sup>Parshall, 32.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 38.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. 46.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 55ff.

### **Personified Communicator**

To ensure effective communication, the communicator must understand the Muslim audience and identify with them. Thus Parshall proposes the “incarnational model” in which the evangelist adopts the dress, housing, language, food, customs, etc., of the people whom he/she is trying to reach.<sup>1</sup> The evangelists should probably live near the standard of living of the Muslims to whom they are ministering, living in similar housing, wearing similar clothes, and eating local foods. In addition, it is simply fundamental to effective communication that the evangelist learn the language of the people and adopt the mind-set of the people. Perhaps the most forgotten element of contextualization for the Western missionary (including Kenyan Adventists) is to adopt an attitude of empathy and forsake any ethnocentrism.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Personified Message**

The communication of the gospel is also contextualized by using various bridges from Islam. Examples include using the Koran’s positive view of the Bible and Jesus, the *Qurbani Id festival* (sacrifice commemorating Abraham’s offer of his son), and the Sufi sect’s emphasis on wanting to personally experience God as a means to communicate the gospel as discussed. The message has to be contextualized to have meaning locally.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 98ff.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 121

<sup>3</sup>Jonquil Hole and Børge Schantz, eds., *The Three Angels and the Crescent: A Reader* (Bracknell: Seventh-day Adventist Global Centre for Islamic Studies, 1993), 249.

## The Personified Church

It is imperative that the church for converted Muslims also be contextualized in order to provide the best environment for nurture and witness. The church for converted Muslims should probably consist of a homogeneous group which meets in a home or in a separate building. In addition, various forms of Islamic worship such as Mosque organization, removing shoes, etc., could be adopted.<sup>1</sup> The leader of a house church could be modeled after an Imam, the leader of the Mosque. In addition, the group should probably bear an inoffensive name such as the followers of Isa.<sup>2</sup>

The Christian (Adventist) practice of baptism may need to be reviewed as it is often misunderstood by Muslims to indicate that the convert has become a Western traitor. Parshall suggests that a substitute to traditional baptism might be warranted such as delaying baptism indefinitely, baptizing in secret, self-baptism, or the use of a functional equivalent.<sup>3</sup>

Muslim rituals such as prayer, chanting, or fasting and social practices such as festivals, birth customs, and funeral customs should also be examined in light of contextualization. They are points of contact that are not necessarily unbiblical. The emphasis should be placed on their meaning not the form. As stated earlier, new meaning

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<sup>1</sup>This represents the approaches that relates the gospel to a new culture, having a self-disclosure of understanding God in their own cultures. It also includes the ability or inability of these cultures to "know" God in the context of their own cultural form.

<sup>2</sup>Parshall, 163.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 189ff.

may be infused into old forms as long as the form is not prohibited by Scripture. For example, the ritual of washing which takes place as one enters the Mosque may be infused with the new meaning of the individual confessing sin and praying that God would keep him from sin. Thus the washing would no longer be considered as a washing away of sin but become a colorful exercise of confession.<sup>1</sup> The goal of these activities is to allow the Muslim convert to remain a Muslim culturally. Thus the convert will remain with his own people and be better able to further communicate the gospel. This method will also help remove the misconception that becoming an Adventist means becoming a Westerner.

Contextualization without genuine spirituality is destined to fail. Certainly contextualization is important, but the missionary must not forget to continually nurture his/her relationship with God. Then and only then will the evangelist present a credible witness.<sup>2</sup> In order to succeed in this area, it is best for the evangelist to find an individual who will hold him/her accountable. The accountability would include not only the areas of prayer and Bible study but also areas of personal struggle. This focus on genuine spirituality is often critical to the spiritual well-being of those who minister to Muslims since the work is difficult and often involves isolation. After laying these foundation, the following section explores a new paradigm for reaching Muslims in Kenya.

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<sup>1</sup>Phil Goble, and Salim Munayer. *New Creation Book for Muslims* (Pasadena, CA: Mandate Press, 1989), 72ff.

<sup>2</sup>Parshall, 241ff.

## Creation of Kenya Community Center of Isa

### **The Kenyan Adventist Paradigm for Reaching Muslims: Africanizing Adventism**

The British colonialists in Kenya often seemed to assume that all the Swahilis were Muslims. Based on facts from chapter 2 African traditional religions continued an easy coexistence with Islam. It should also be noted that not all tribal groups in any given setting in Kenya are Muslims. Thus, in my opinion, Adventists must not seek to destroy what the indigenous consider precious. Instead, they should seek to respect them.

Generally, the Adventist Church in Kenya is perceived as a Western religion, just like any other Protestant faith, with a Western standard of Christian behavior that is against the firmly rooted African customs. According to them (Western religions, including Adventists), most of the African customs are regarded as offensive to Christian morals.<sup>1</sup> The Adventist Church, just like the other Protestant churches in the country, demands a wholesome adoption of Western Christian behavior and morals, putting all traditional customs aside. Anything African that contradicts the Western norm of Christian behavior was considered evil. As a result, there are many indigenous Adventists who still keep their traditional customs in secret. I strongly believe that once the indigenous are taught Bible truths, they should decide their own moral point of view, based on the Scripture without necessarily becoming Westernized. As a result, on their own, they should discard any custom that is not biblical. In other words, it is better for them to use their own eyes, rather than use the Western eye to determine what Christian

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<sup>1</sup>Constantine Mwikamba, "Ethnic Religion: Conflict and Social Changes in Kenya," *Dialogue and Alliance* 7 (Spring-Summer 1993): 53-67.



behavior and morality might be. The indigenous are deeply spiritual in every aspect, as already discussed. Even though some veneration of some of their rituals is extreme in terms of Western Christian standards, I believe God has been preparing them for redemption through Jesus Christ. Adventism should not be bound to Western forms in witnessing to the Muslims in Kenya, because it reminds them of early Christian crusades against them. It is therefore very crucial for Adventists to evangelize Kenya Muslims the Kenyan way, not the Adventist (Western) way. To do this, a new paradigm must be implemented to meet the needs of the indigenous Muslims.

The paradigm or model proposed is based on the critical integration of Islam and African culture as discussed in chapter 2. This means that any Adventist evangelist must first be Africanized before ministering to the Muslims in Kenya. Such evangelists must learn all they can about African cultures and customs of Kenyan groups, and with the advice from the village elders, to preserve the best and use it to make Adventism unquestionably indigenous. The Swahili language, as discussed, is a unique tool that paves the way to study the relationship between Africans and Muslims and their religions. In most cases, Swahili, the official Islamic language in Kenya, is spoken by all the indigenous Muslims. That is why Islamic law is still kept, the Koran is studied, the pillars of faith accepted, and all the five duties of Islam performed.

As already seen, Islam succeeded in penetrating Kenya because it concedes to the local culture more easily than Adventism. Again, Islam demands less while Adventism in general insist on a wholesome transformation. Adventism in Kenya is seen as a religion of the West, and it has been perceived as a White man's religion because some of the

evangelists are indeed Whites and in most cases do not know much about the indigenous people. The Muslims in Kenya see Christians in general (including Adventists) as allies to foreign Western powers, agents, and partners of Western imperialists. Christians, including Adventists, have copied many Western forms, values, practices, and lifestyles. As a result, many Muslims carry over their anti-Western sentiments against local Adventists and other Christians.

I must also point out that tribes once won by Islam in Kenya are harder to convert to Adventism. Conversion into Islam takes place when one adopts a new name, new rules and regulations, and a new religious system. But the values still remain the same since they (converts) still belong to the same Muslim African society or community.<sup>1</sup> Based on the facts discussed above, I therefore conclude that in order for Adventists in Kenya not to appear as a Western religion, Adventism must be indigenized and Africanized. I therefore propose the formation of the “Kenyan Community Center of Isa.” This center is basically an Africanized Adventist Church in a Muslim setting, preaching by contextualizing the gospel and eliminating any Western cultural effects missionaries brought with them and communicating Christ in ways that are understandable in the Muslim culture. Likewise we can show that “however much new converts feel they need to renounce for the sake of Christ, they are still the same people with the same heritage and the same family.”<sup>2</sup> It is on this note that I will examine the basics of the Kenyan

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<sup>1</sup>Woodberry, 226-227.

<sup>2</sup>Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, *Willowbank Report, A Report of the Lausanne-Sponsored Consultation on Gospel and Culture* (Occasional Paper, 23 October 1978, Abington, Pennsylvania) Partnership 12.

Community of Isa in the next section.

### **The Kenyan Community Center of Isa**

A genuine Kenyan mission lies underneath the development of the African Adventists who are given the power of self-support and self-propagation and led to guide the converted towards winning their own Muslim friends. The emphasis is on the grassroots efforts of the laity who are very much in contact with Muslims on a daily basis. Again, most evangelists both from Kenya and abroad are ignorant about Muslims in Kenya. There are very few indeed in Kenya who have the much-needed qualifications to reach the Muslims but are either ignored or not supported.

In this setting, the “Kenyan Community of Isa” is fundamentally an Adventist Church as we know it, but carries the name of “Kenyan Community of Isa,” placed in an Islamic region and should, by all means, avoid terms like “Christian, Adventists, etc. While in the predominantly Islamic area, these Adventists with a new identity can meet anywhere but in a Christian church. The converts should decide where they should meet: for example, in a mosque, town hall, social hall, or even build their own unique house of prayer, that is not associated in the manner of the (Western) Adventist Church. Deliberating on the issue of Muslim identity preservation, Whitehouse indicates that the messianic congregation with Islamic socio-religious identity, which he calls C5 model, is the best way for the Muslims to accept Christ and have fellowship with each other.<sup>1</sup> Thus,

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<sup>1</sup>Jerald Whitehouse, “Reaching the Muslim World,” in *Adventist Mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. Jon L Dybdal (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1999), 194-196.

members of the Kenyan Community Center of Isa, composed of Muslim-sensitive people, need to dress and live just like any other African Muslims but uphold the Adventist third angel's message in their services and lives. The center of Isa should observe the seventh day which is indisputably clear in the Scriptures and should be taught to the Muslims. The Community Center of Isa corresponds with what John Stott comments about the possibility of "Jesus Mosques."

The very word Christian in a Muslims mind with all that he abominates most the memory of those brutal crusades, the materialism and moral decadence of the west, and our incredible espousal of Zionist imperialism. It is inconceivable to him that he should ever betray his Islamic inheritance. To become a Christian would be treason as well as apostasy and would deserve the death penalty. So the question is whether a whole new way of presenting the gospel can be developed. Is it possible to conceive of converts becoming followers of Jesus without so forsaking their Islamic culture.<sup>1</sup>

In Kenya, the Muslims recognize the seventh day of the creation week, but according to their Swahili calendar they start their first day on "Jumamosi" (Saturday) and "Ijumaaa" (Friday) as the seventh day. As explained in chapter 2, the seventh day in the Kenyan calendar is called "saba," which indicates it has the "Sabbath" root in it. But the Kenyan calendar has been influenced a lot from Swahili, the language of the Muslims. I believe that when these Muslims are taught the truth, the truth will set them free and will worship on Sabbath, the seventh day of the creation week both expressed in the Bible and the Koran.

Paul used the Greeks' own monument to an unknown God to preach Christ to them. Paul spoke of becoming a Jew to the Jews, a Gentile to the Gentiles, "so that by all

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<sup>1</sup>John R. Stott, "Christians and Muslims," *Christianity Today*, 1 December 1978, 35.

possible means I might save some” (1 Cor 9:22). Since there is freedom of worship in Kenya, the “Kenyan Community of Isa” would appeal to many because everyday churches are mushrooming in Kenya. This is a very general name of a Community Church which by all means seeks to avoid confusing Muslim converts and should not appear as a deceptive lure for other uninformed Muslims. Those who come to worship in this church are those who have made the decision to follow Jesus Christ as their personal savior. The tendency to accommodate the African religion contrasts greatly with that of Adventists, and so many people see Islam as an easy and simple religion. Most of the indigenous people are not serious Muslims. The basic attitude for the traditional people is for them to continue the practices of their cultures as long as they retain the basic doctrines of Islam, including the belief in one God and at least keep the prayers, if not all five pillars of Islam. With this background, Adventists have a great opportunity to witness to Muslims if they adapt to their environment and spread the three angels’ message among Muslims as Muslims.

The name of this congregation simply implies “the followers of Jesus in Islamic communities.” The Muslim converts in the “Kenyan Community Center of Isa,” who are African Adventists but still live in the Islamic culture and environment, will eventually be missionaries or witnesses to their own Muslim people with the eternal messages of the Gospel, with Jesus as the foundation and center of it all. Conversion does not unmake, it remakes says Cragg, emphasizing that it is important for the Muslims to remain Africans but remake them by presenting the compelling truths of the Bible.<sup>1</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985), 340-345.

Sabbath services remain the same as that of any Adventist church, minus anything Western, like the quarterly studies, mission stories not related to Islam etc. In other words, the core messages of this community will meet both the needs of Adventist messages and also the Muslim without isolation.

The evangelist or the missionary, having been trained to tackle in-depth language study and to be culturally sensitive, needs to spend time building relationships with the people. The following sections emphasize the friendship relationship model for successful evangelism towards the Muslims. Once the evangelist or missionary has a good grasp of the language and culture, he/she begins presenting the Scriptures, using a chronological approach, presenting the Gospel that centers on Jesus Christ (Isa). I would like to propose four reasons for considering the Kenyan community center of Isa.

1. It helps to avoid social disorientation. Often when an individual in the Islamic context joins the Adventist Church, he or she is individually extracted from society. He or she is left without the social support of family and friends, leaving them feeling isolated and lonely. By joining them to the “Kenyan Community Center of Isa,” these converts to Adventism will continue with their life in the Islamic community, with their families, but in reality will be bearers of the Adventist message.

2. It helps to avoid cultural disorientation. By becoming a member of the Adventist Church in the form of “Kenyan Community Center of Isa” should not mean having to abandon one’s own cultural support. Members do not have to give up their African language, dress, food, etc., in essence, their culture.

3. It helps to establish a community of Adventist (Isa) believers. Community

has a way of giving needed support in the African way of life (spiritual, physical, and emotional) to each one of its members. As a group, members are afforded the opportunity of being accountable to each other, allowing each member to be given opportunities to mature and be “pushed forward” in their spiritual walk.

4. It helps to establish a sense of “ownership.” Many indigenous people criticize the Western church (be it Adventist, Catholic, etc.) for making them feel like guests instead of being a real part of the church. People who feel as though they have ownership of something are more readily willing to support it with their time, energy, and finances.

### **Some Characteristics of the Kenyan Community Center of Isa**

Those working among the Muslim people need to know how to approach them with strategies that accommodate their beliefs and practices aimed at bringing about deliverance. I have chosen a few such beliefs and practices as follows.

#### **Foot Washing (Ablution)**

Footwashing (John 13:2-14) before the Lord’s supper could be adopted in the Kenyan Community Center of Isa, with its high significant number of former Muslims. This meets the Islamic quest for symbolic cleansing. The idea also shows the desire not to regard anyone higher than another before the Lord in the community of believers. Instead of washing their own feet, they would be encouraged to wash each others, in the custom set forth by Jesus Christ (John 13:15-17).

**Prayer**

The role of prayer is very crucial for both Adventists and Muslims. Prayer is an open communication to and with God. As discussed in chapter 2, Friday is the official day of prayer but not a day of rest. This prayer routine should be encouraged in the Kenyan Community Center of Isa, but emphasis should be placed on the day of rest, the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. Through prayer, giant men and women in the Bible executed great miracles that were manifested in God. Prayer with lifted hands, i.e., with palms held towards heaven (Ps 141:2), kneeling (Ps 95:6; Luke 22:41, 44), or bowing down (Ps 95:6) are common practice in Muslim worship as well as African traditional life. Such is also found in the Adventist Church and should be adopted into the Kenyan Community Center of Isa. But the outstretching of fingers in Muslim prayers should be discouraged and stopped after conversion because they indicate fear of evil powers/or evil eye.

**Fasting**

Fasting is both biblical and Koranic. The Bible contains numerous examples of fasting and prayer (Neh 1:4; Esth 4:16; Luke 4:37; 1 Cor 7:5; Matt 17:21; 6:16). Jesus said that healing and miracles can only be done through heartsearch, fasting, and prayer (Mark 9:29). Fasting has both religious and physical implications, but above all it helps on concentration. This is an element that should be part of the Kenyan Community Center of Isa.



### **A Place of Worship**

The Bible makes it clear that whenever two or more are gathered in Jesus' name, He is among them (Matt 18:20). John 4:19-24 points out that a place of worship is not as important as the "reason" to worship. In the same temple, Jesus condemned the Pharisee's prayers but commended that of the publican who had a genuine reflection of repentance and petition. Thus we can conclude that a place of worship can be any place, as long as the worship facility does not portray any sign of rebellion to the local culture. I would propose putting a structure that resembles the cultural influence of the indigenous, that will be non-threatening to the inquiries and new believers as well. As seen above, the name to be adopted, Kenyan Community Center of Isa, is culturally acceptable because it comprises the indigenous (Kenyan) and the Muslims (Isa). In regard to shoes, the local believers can decide this by themselves depending on the circumstance. In worship places with a prayer mat or skin or a piece of cloth and no pews, then it is a matter of neatness to remove the shoes before entering. The Kenyan Community Center of Isa, being a Muslim convert church, should use no pews. In some cultural villages, the indigenous may use a stool, bench or any other object, while in some places pews may be used. Such a matter should be left to the discretion of the new believers themselves because it is an issue of cultural adaptation and not a theological one.

### **The Pastor and the Imam**

The pastor in the Kenyan Community Center of Isa ( a Muslim convert church) functions as a Muslim Imam, as an Adventist minister, and as a traditional healer

or diviner who is familiar and can expend magical practices to meet the people's physical, spiritual, and emotional needs. A minister or clergy is generally known to lead the worshipers in prayer, and his function includes new powers associated with the spoken word of the Koran, or in this case the Bible for magical purposes.<sup>1</sup>

After becoming an Adventist, the new convert will have a void in the absence of an Imam and so it would be necessary for the Adventist pastor to function as an Imam and meet the needs of the new converts. He also must function as a counselor, and help new converts cope with the new faith. He has also to function as a businessman, to help motivate members to get better employment through training so as to support both their nuclear and extended families as in the African tradition. But above all, the minister must function as the pastor, lifting Jesus in every context. At the same time, he must be ready to pray for the sick. Some of these sicknesses involve spirit possession that is common especially along the Kenya coast. The Adventist pastor, though, should be careful about engaging in power encounter. His main job is to tell the truth and persuade the sick to accept Jesus as their personal savior. It is also true that an Adventist pastor can pray and the sick can get well. It has happened before and it can happen again. In this context the pastor must be the Imam, minister, teacher, and discipler to be as a model to those who would be disciplers.

### **Camp Meetings/Pilgrimage**

At first Mohammad rejected idolatry and its ceremonies of which pilgrimage

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<sup>1</sup>Newell S. Booth, "Islam in Africa," in *African Religions: A Symposium*, ed. Newell S. Booth (New York: Nok Publishers, 1977), 337.

to Mecca is one of them. But today it is part of Islamic culture and Adventists must find a way to substitute it. I see the camp meetings as a good example where all the members of the Kenya Community Center of Isa in the same region come together to experience oneness in purpose, unity, strength, and brotherhood. The Muslim who goes to Mecca expects to be renewed, revived, and rededicated and so our camp meetings, which are held once a year, should do likewise.

### **Tithes/Alms**

Tithing for the Adventist is a matter of doing God's will and to the Muslim it is a great part of *baraka*. The pastor of the Kenyan Community of Isa should teach the Muslim converts about the systematic way of giving to help them see the need to return tithes and offerings (Mal 3:6-12). It is not just an issue of giving a tenth of what we earn to God. In reality it is God who has done the giving to us, and claims the return of only 10 percent of His own property. Tithing is not taking a tenth of our own money and giving it to God, but it is returning a tenth of what was already His to begin with. The Scripture says, "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, And of Your own we have given You" (1 Chr 29:14). God is so generous to us. He gives us the 90 percent and retains only 10 percent of what is rightfully His and the new Muslim converts need to be taught this principle. Indeed there are more blessings in giving than in receiving. The Muslim converts need to be taught that for the Church to grow, we must be not only self-propagating and self-organizing as mentioned above, but also self-supporting.

**Messiah**

The Muslims conception of the Messiah is completely different from the Adventist perspective. Adventists believe that the Messiah was crucified and was an atonement for the sins of humanity. On the third day He resurrected because He is God, the Almighty and has eternal life in Him (1 John 5:11; John 11:25). Muslims believe that the Messiah was never crucified but will come back from heaven to die. The Muslim convert can be taught that Jesus was the only one in history to resurrect from death and was seen by many as He ascended to heaven and is at the right hand of God (Acts 12:4; John 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:16-18; Acts 2:22-33; Rev 1:1-7, 17-19). There is no account of Mohammad's resurrection and ascension to heaven. The Bible has irrefutable evidence of Jesus' presence in heaven (Acts 1:9-11; 8:55-56).

**Health/Eating Habits**

Muslims consider it an offense to eat pork. According to Adventists, God's original diet for humanity was fruits (Gen 2:16). After the fall of man, herbs were added to the diet (Gen 3:16). God found the world to be too sinful and destroyed the world with all its vegetation. God specified which animals were clean to be eaten and also the unclean (Gen 7:2; Lev 1-47) and allowed Noah to eat meat (Gen 9:3-4) and thereafter man has continued to eat meat. In heaven there will be no meat and so Adventists on earth emphasize the need to abstain from meat eating in preparation for the Kingdom. While abstaining from meat eating, it solves the problem of Church members offending Muslims by eating pork. These are harmful foods and Dr. Parrett says that there are more than fifty

different diseases found in animal meat.<sup>1</sup> The members of the Kenyan Community Center of Isa should avoid such foods not necessarily not to offend the Muslims, but for their own health and animal rights to live.

Thus in conclusion, the key feature of holistic evangelism among the Muslims, as discussed, includes advocating for Islamic indigenous approaches that would provide the basis for the establishment of the Kenyan Community Center of Isa belief system. The next section examines the intermarriage issue in Muslim evangelism, not as a deliberate projection, but as an occurrence.

### **Intermarriages**

When the Muslims came to Kenya via the coast as discussed above, they intermarried with the natives, creating a new breed of siblings who were faithful to Islamic faith. Since cross-cultural marriage was the main factor for the propagation of Islamic faith by then, I see it as a missiological strategy to reach the Muslims today. Since we meet our spouses in different circumstances (college, social club, churches, etc.), the “Kenyan Community Center of Isa” will be no exception. Young Adventist men, especially, should be encouraged to marry converted or unconverted Muslim girls if the opportunity arises. The general practice in Kenya is that a woman once married belongs to the men’s family side.

A matrimonial union between Seventh-day Adventist members with Muslim girls or boys, with the purpose of raising Adventist biological children among Muslim

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<sup>1</sup>Owen S. Parrett, M.D., *Disease of Food Animals Review* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1974), 4.

people, clearly transcends the chores the Muslim girls/boys may experience as a result of the merger. Cross-cultural marriages are not new in Kenya. There can be a powerful in-law relationship that can act as a medium in carrying the gospel to a family, clan, and even a tribe. Due to evidence of cross-cultural marriages, more and more cultural differences are dissolving away in Kenya. There are many people who went to mission fields with a goal to evangelize, only to acquire spouses in addition. These include missionaries from the West to the so-called third world countries, and vice versa. If this is happening between people of different nationalities, how much more should it be encouraged among the natives, especially between Adventists and Muslims in their common setting, "The Kenyan Community Center of Isa." Ruth came to know the God of her husband by marrying one of the sons of Naomi. Ruth was a Moabite girl, worshiped Chemosh,<sup>1</sup> who was appeased by human sacrifices (2 Kgs 3:26-27). In Malawi there is an example of a non-Adventist church that succeeded in witnessing to the Muslims through intermarriages. Malawi is a country that has experienced converts to Christianity through marriage.

Samiullah reports an example:

People came into the villages from Mozambique and other areas of the community, who were not Muslim. Some came with their families while others came as single males and sought the hands of the maidens in marriage in the Muslim villages. With the predominance of females, the parents had no choice but to welcome these strangers, some of whom were very staunch Christians, who offered high bride prices and with their superior education and greater economic prosperity soon became influential and managed to convert not only their wives and children but others as well into Christianity. This process went on for many years and hundreds

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<sup>1</sup>"Ruth." *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F.D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1954), 2:425.

of Muslim villages became Christian.<sup>1</sup>

I need to emphasize that in Adventist-Muslim encounters, such as “the Kenyan Community Center of Isa,” intermarriages should not be planned as such, but should be allowed as it occurs. The next section examines the second strategy and how small groups can be a powerful instrument in “The Kenyan Community Center of Isa.”

### **Strategy 2: Develop Friendly Small Group Relationships**

Small groups stress the need to form a basis of friendship on which evangelism can take place. In dealing with Muslims, every effort should be made to avoid controversy, negative terms, blame, arguments, etc. Small groups can be very effective if taken in the friendly relationship model. Since the indigenous peoples of Kenya are communal, this model would be suitable since it is part of their lifestyle. This model is based on discussions that help the group understand issues without taking sides. The kind of evangelism about which I am talking simply is helping others realize that Jesus is interested in their lives. The Kenyan Community Center of Isa must genuinely be interested in Muslim relationships. If we are insincere in our relationships, this will be picked up, and our message will have no impact. Petersen says, “We should be prepared to keep social occasions strictly social and not to think in terms of using them as bait for a session in the Bible.”<sup>2</sup> Ford has expressed friendship by citing an example of Scott and

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<sup>1</sup>Mohammad Samiullah, comp., *Plight of Muslims in Africa and Asia; Collection of a Few Heartrending Articles* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1982), 18.

<sup>2</sup>Jim Petersen, *Living Proof: Sharing the Gospel Naturally* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1989), 212.

Susie who are Muslims.

To this day neither Scott nor Susie has made a decision for Christ. One day maybe they will. That's not up to me. That's between them and God. If they never become Christians that will not affect our friendship, because our friendship isn't based on whether or not they respond to our gospel. I love them as friends, and that's why I want them to know about Jesus Christ. They know what I believe and how much I care for them, but I won't force my gospel down their throats. My Christian faith doesn't get in the way of our friendship, and I think the reason it doesn't is that both Scott and Susie know that our friendship is real and human, not programmed or scripted to produce a certain result.<sup>1</sup>

Relationships can be built in many ways, and at many different levels. The key factors, however, are that relationships must be built on time spent listening to each other, and must be ongoing. Relationships cannot be built at once. This evangelism strategy must be designed to allow time for friendships to grow. Friendship evangelism is a lifestyle. It is evangelism by showing others what it really means to live with Christ as our Lord and Savior. In my opinion, a small group should consist of two or more people who are united by social relations and interact together on the basis of shared expectations about each other's welfare. Groups have three qualities:

1. They are bounded. They have boundaries based on attachments (social bonds).
2. They share role expectations. They have beliefs in common (interests and values).
3. Shape interactions in patterned ways. They have behaviors that distinguish the group (based on their purpose).

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<sup>1</sup>Kevin Ford, *Jesus for a New Generation* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1996), 256.



I would like to suggest eleven principles of successful small groups that the Kenyan Community Center of Isa Churches can emulate:

1. Keep the group small, 6 to 15 persons maximum. Anything beyond this becomes too large and the group will end up breaking up into smaller subgroups. Anything beyond this size becomes too large for most homes. The minimum size for an effective small group is six.

In the Kenyan Community Center of Isa small groups, a primary Adventist community is developed and fostered. Converts are nurtured, equipped, and released for God's work in the world. They also provide an opportunity for intimacy, mutual support, practical love and service, learning about the Christian faith, prayer, and sharing what God is doing in our midst. All groups should be led by trained lay leaders from the congregation who are given continued oversight and support.<sup>1</sup>

2. The single most important factor for the success of a small group is commitment. Without commitment, the group will not last. It is the "glue" that holds the group together. Commitment is the discipline to make the group a priority in one's life and to be there on a regular basis. This does not mean that one cannot miss on occasions, on vacations, special dates, and unforeseen as well as planned events that take a person away from the weekly gathering. As a rule, the meeting should be canceled and rescheduled if four or more persons will be absent. In this case, fellowship can be defined as seeking to share with others what God has made known to you while letting them share

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<sup>1</sup>Notes I took from *Special Approaches to Evangelism*, CHMN 586 class at Andrews University, Spring Quarter 1995. The contents were given in an American setting, but the principles and the objectives can be realized elsewhere.

what they know of him. This becomes a means of finding strength, commitment, refreshment, and instruction for one's own soul. The Scriptures/Koran give us numerous commands concerning how we should interact in fellowship with one another. We are told to encourage one another, serve one another, rejoice and weep with one another, correct, instruct, sing, build up, accept, and love one another. There is no better way to commit yourself in a position to fulfill these commands than by becoming part of a Kenyan Community Center of Isa small group.

3. Small groups work best when the objective is clear. Every member is to be involved for spiritual growth, and not a time for one person to lecture while all others just listen. The leader of a small group is not one who takes control of the group, but is a facilitator who seeks to involve all participants in the discussions, dialogue, and decisions, and may not necessarily be the same person all the time. Decisions in these small groups are made on the basis of consensus, group harmony, and not by a democratic process, a majority vote. While consensus does not work for large groups, it is the principle of operation for small groups. The primary reason for a small group, as opposed to a large group, is because everyone present can become involved and feel a part of the group.

4. Members comprising a group should have a common bond, interest, and purpose. Even though not all persons in the group have common personalities, they should have a common goal. As individuals they have differences of interests, personalities, temperaments, and just plain group chemistry. But this does not mean that group members should be duplicates of each other. It means that some persons are more compatible with certain persons than with others. Effective small groups all have members

with a common interest.

5. The group needs to be semi-closed, meaning that the same persons meet week after week. If the group membership is different every time, it will lack continuity. Different persons every week results in a lack of commitment, in that there is no responsibility to be there on a regular basis. Moreover, it prevents a sense of “family,” attachment, openness, trust, and frankness to develop. Every time a new person enters the group, the dynamics of the group change. The old group bond is disconnected and has to be reconfigured, and it takes time to bring it back to the old level of trust and attachment. For this reason it is important that “their bond of union (be) unbroken.”<sup>1</sup> Semi-closed also means that if someone wants to bring a visitor, this will be all right, as long as the rest are informed. But the point is for the same group of people to be meeting together week after week to build a sense of relationship, group comfort, trust, commitment, and confidentiality.

6. Confidentiality is a requirement. Without confidentiality no sense of trust and commitment will develop in the group. People should be free to share whatever they desire, since this is one of the purposes of the group, to allow for freedom of expression. People should be free to say whatever is on their minds and hearts without experiencing a spirit of negative judgment. Whatever is shared in the group stays in the group. There is no discussing or sharing of comments or contents of sensitive material with anyone outside the group. This is also the reason why the group needs to be semi-closed. The

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), 7:22.

key to developing confidentiality in a group is respect. All members of a group need to feel that their persons, ideas, and contributions are valued. This does not mean that all ideas and contributions are of equal worth. But the principle here is, to treat the Muslims the way they want to be treated-with respect.

7. The group must select a topic, a book for discussion, article, or theme for every session that is of interest to all. This will ensure the involvement of all present. By having a “say” in the selection of topic or book, all can take ownership and feel a sense of belonging. There should be a variety of topics or materials available that are of interest to all in the group. Kenyan Community Center of Isa small groups are a place where individuals who are seeking truth can be invited and encouraged to enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ. In addition, the discussions serve as a place where we can remind one another of our call to share the gospel and pray for those with whom we are sharing the good news that God has reconciled us to Himself to us in Jesus Christ. Community small groups are a place where spiritual gifts are discovered and exercised within the group itself, within the larger church, and to the world. This is a place where a vision for ministry and service are developed. “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up” (1 Thess 5:11) and “Speaking the truth in love....the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Eph 4:15-16).

8. Use a simple format for the meeting. Usually a small group meets once a week for 2-3 hours. It may begin with a meal, light or heavy, prepared by the host family or it can be a potluck. This is not necessarily required, but it does bring about a sense of

closeness, since there is nothing like sitting around a table and breaking bread to bring about a sense of family in the group. The fact that each hosting family has to make an investment to provide for the rest, results in attachments and a sense of commitment.

What is included in the format depends on the desires of the group. Allow at least an hour for discussion of topic or book or article.

9. It is often best to meet in different homes, in a more informal, relaxed atmosphere. Investment of time, place, and refreshments results in a high commitment. For groups whose members have small children, arrangements should be made to meet the needs of the children separate from the group. The early church certainly recognized that the essence of being the church was to face every-member ministry in small groups. In 1 Cor 14, Paul assumes that when they meet together “each one of you has a psalm, a teaching.... Let all things be done for building up (*oikodomeo*).” Paul is clearly talking of house churches, in which everyone participated. He assumed everyone ministered. The New Testament epistles talk of “the church that meets in their house” (1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:5). Acts 2:24 and 20:20 tell how the Christians all met in homes as well as in the temple courts.

10. Meet on a regular basis without breaking up for long vacations, except on special occasions, such as Christmas, Ramadan, or any Islamic big day. To break up for long holidays (two or more months), for example, makes it hard to get started again. It makes it harder to establish a sense of commitment to the group as discussed in number 2 above. Regular meeting year round gives a sense of the importance and value of the group to the lives of all members.

11. Small groups are not for everyone. Not everyone will be comfortable in a small group. Some people do not like to open up to others, and others find the intimacy of the small group threatening to their sense of privacy and protectiveness. Also some people like to control, and do not like the thought of having to be on an equal basis with others. Thus, their presence, dominance, and attitude will disrupt the successful functioning of a small group. To be an effective small group member means that one needs to be accepting of self and of others on an equal basis. Finally, citing prominent missionaries, Professor Peters in his paper said:

“They were masters in developing personal friendships and in personal dialogue lovingly and tactfully presented the gospel of Jesus Christ to individuals or small groups.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Promote Adventist Women to Become Involved in Small Groups.**

Women will play a major role in affecting Islamic cultures. Women can enter the inner section of the house and have a beverage or can cook with Muslim women. Starting a conversation can easily make her open up. There is a wall of genders in Islam which means that sometimes a Muslim woman can relate more closely to a Adventist woman than to her husband. The bond begins to emerge, and the husband would later come to realize that there is a genuine concern of care. Effective evangelism among Muslims means incarnating the love of Jesus through friendship, patience, humility, and

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<sup>1</sup>George W. Peters, “An Overview of Missions to Muslims,” paper presented at the North American Conference on Muslim Evangelization, Colorado Springs, Colorado, October 15-21, 1978; quoted in McCurry, *The Gospel and Islam: A 1978 Compendium*, ed. Don C. McCurry (Monrovia, CA: Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center, 1979), 393.

tenacity. It comes down to our relationship with Jesus Christ because that is the only thing they do not have. In addition, the next section analyzes the equally important aspect of dialogue.

### **Strategy 3: Dialogue Approach**

How many of us have wondered why there are so few Muslims converted to Adventism in general, when we know that we speak for truth? Why is it that we are so convinced of the gospel, yet the vast majority of Muslims with whom we speak walk away believing our message is wrong? Could it be that our methodology is wrong? Furthermore, is it not curious that those who do come through are not the opinion-makers or leaders within their community? The Adventist Church in Kenya has raised a generation of young people ill informed about who the Muslims are and what they believe, and even less equipped to defend their faith among Muslims in public. At the same time the church sends the youth to take on the challenge of Islam by attempting to preach to them. They are given few rebuttals and even fewer models to emulate. This ends up in confrontation. Schantz suggests that in order to avoid confrontation, three basic needs should be considered, namely, tolerance, dialogue, and mission.<sup>1</sup>

It might be helpful first to examine what I mean by dialogue. In the book of Acts, the apostle Paul used the word “dialogue” a number of times, and exemplified it in his own methodology. He first went to the Jews, and entered the synagogues, where he engaged in dialogue, which is translated “to think different things, ponder, and then

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<sup>1</sup>Børge Schantz, *Islam: Introduction to Islam and Muslim Evangelism* (Bracknell: Global Center for Islamic Studies, 1993), 240.

dispute.”<sup>1</sup> I am inclined to think that Paul’s principle for dialogue here was not simply to learn from others, and from there to compromise his beliefs in order to evolve another set of beliefs. He knew this would bring about syncretism. He used dialogue as a two-way flow of ideas. It was not limited to the pursuit of clear communication, as many modern missiologists may define it. Rather, he sought to prove what he said (Acts 17:3). He rallied arguments to support his case, provided evidence, and therefore engaged in argument. By argument I do not mean hostile, rude, or aggressive behavior. Arguments can and do come about whenever there is a difference of opinion. Aggressive behavior enters in when one party runs out of good ideas. When arguments are weak, shouting gets louder. We must make sure our arguments are not weak. As Paul said, “What I am saying is true and reasonable” (Acts 26:25).

It is rare that a Muslim, while in dialogue with an Adventist, fails to remind us that our Bible is not only corrupt but that our Lord is nothing more than a man. We hesitate to castigate them for speaking their mind, because we respect all peoples and believe they have the freedom to be who they are and want to be. It is always fascinating to know that we as Adventists give our Muslim friends the freedom that we deny ourselves. Consequently we are fighting the battle with one hand tied behind our backs. I believe the Adventist Church in Kenya need to rethink its missiology, which will in turn change its methodology, to reflect this new environment. The battle is much greater than simply outperforming our neighbors in kindness. The person won by an argument is at the

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<sup>1</sup>Peter May, *Dialogue in Evangelism* (Nottingham: Grove Books, 1990), 240-243.



mercy of a better argument, while a person won by an experience is at the mercy of a better experience, and a person won by charity is at the mercy of a better charity.

Evangelism should be centered on how to win people to Christ.<sup>1</sup> Those evangelized in return may need to see the evidence of Christ abiding in the hearts of the Adventist church members. Ask Muslims what their impression is of Bible-believing Christians and you will find few who would criticize us for the way we act. What they say is that we have no credibility in the way we act because the authority for what we believe has been invalidated by the truth of Islam.

The good news is that we as Adventists do have evidence for what we believe. That is where our apologetics come in. We also have evidence to dispute their assertion that the Koran invalidates the revelation which preceded it since it is the purest and final revelation from God. Historical evidence points to many impurities in the Koran. It brings into question whether the Koran was written or even existed at the time of Muhammad. Such must be communicated and I consider it unloving not to do so. We often correct friends and loved ones when we feel they are incorrect. To do otherwise would not be friendly. Why, then, is it not acceptable to do the same with our Muslim friends, particularly when to keep quiet will have eternal consequences?

We need to take a closer look at who we are communicating the gospel to, the Muslims. Other denominations have succeeded in reaching the Muslims, especially in

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 242.

Mombasa, by going to where they are.<sup>1</sup> Muslim meetings in city parks are indeed very confrontational and provocative. Unfortunately, some Adventist evangelists, who do not know much about Muslims, have reacted angrily and fought back, creating communication barriers for any further possible evangelism.

Paul not only went to the Jews on their home ground, the synagogues, and reasoned with them using their Scriptures (Acts 17:1-2), but he went outside his community to the Greeks in their territory as well. He reasoned with them from within their traditions, vs.17. In Ephesus, a pagan city, he began by “arguing persuasively” at the synagogue for three months (Acts 19:8). When he was forced to leave, he went to the lecture hall of Tyrannus, a secular institution, where he continued his discussions with both Jews and Greeks for two years (Acts 19:9-10). In Rome from morning until evening for two years he boldly “tried to convince” those who came to him about Jesus (Acts 28:23-31). It is important to note that when Paul went to the people, he did not go with religious stereotypes. Instead, he learned to speak to them on their level. While in Athens, he learned about the Greeks’ beliefs. He studied the objects of their worship (Acts 17:22-23). He knew their philosophies, both Epicurean (remote God) and Stoic (pantheistic). He even quoted their writers, Epimenedes of Crete and the poet Aratus (Acts 17:28). After understanding them on their level, he demonstrated the inadequacy of their ideas (Acts 17:29).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Greg Livinston, *Planting Churches in Muslim Cities* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 60-61.

<sup>2</sup>G.H.C., Macgregor and Theodore P. Ferries, “The Acts of the Apostles.” *The Interpreter’s Bible*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 9:233, 236.

Additionally, the apostles went outside their community and used dialogue to reach those outside the Christian community. Likewise, when confronted by members of the Synagogue, the Jews of Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia, Stephen did not return to his own. Instead, he held his ground and returned their arguments, so much that “they could not stand up against his wisdom” (Acts 6:9-10). They finally reverted to executing him (Acts 7:57-8:1). Philip was equally comfortable in dialogue with the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40).

Jesus also involved himself in dialogue with outsiders. Consider his encounter with the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16), his confrontation with the Pharisees and Herodians (Mark 12:13), the dispute with his Pharisee host at a dinner party (Luke 7:36-50), his contact with Nicodemus (John 3); and his meeting with the Samaritan woman (John 4). What has been our response to the newly aggressive evangelistic stance taken by Islam in Kenya? Very few Adventists standing up to defend themselves against these attacks. Whether it is through fear, ignorance, a misguided missiological position, or simply procrastination, the church has refused to defend its beliefs. This is lamentable and crippling, because I strongly believe it is giving Muslims the wrong message.

We need to ask ourselves what Muslims are hearing from us. When we fail to stand up for the authority of our Scriptures, when we refrain from speaking about the lordship or divine nature of Jesus Christ, or are reluctant to define, let alone defend, the Trinity, and when we continually apologize for what we believe to be true, the message the Muslims hear is that we not only misunderstand our beliefs, but we are unsure whether they are accurate. How can we convince them of the truth of the gospel when we look

and talk as if we are doubtful ourselves?

The closest parallel we have are our evangelistic “crusades.” Yet, the very vehicle which works so well for those coming to Christ in our own communities, we refuse to use with Muslims for fear of hurting their sensibilities. Attempting to be “Christ-like,” we come across as elusive, docile, subdued, and timid. Instead of running from a healthy exchange with our Muslim friends, we must take on their challenge and begin finding answers. Let us go to those who dispute us and respond to their claims resolutely, showing them that we do have answers to their questions. But let us do it with a conviction born out of honest friendly debate. This will help strengthen the church, because it forces us to go back to our apologetics and find answers which we know exist. Like Peter we must be “prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks [us] to give the reason for the hope that [we] have” (1 Pet 3:15). Inevitably our convictions will engender a response in kind, particularly where it involves refuting what Islam believes. We must be prepared to not only defend against their attacks, but to take the same questions back to them passionately. To encounter Islam, they have to be reached from where they are. That is where we are going to face Islam, not in our churches, but on the streets and into their communities, using their language, culture, and theology. But again, we must be very sensitive about the Muslims teachings and beliefs. The next section discusses how to witness to them using their own theological inclinations.

#### **Strategy 4: Approaching the Muslims with Their Own Theological Inclinations**

The major obstacles of ignorance, fear, and prejudice are complicated by the

foreign influences of missionary leadership on the Adventist and Islamic sides who may not know much about Africans, and find the central battlefield in the ethical debate to which Africans are much more sensitive. It is fortunate to see that on the ethical ground there are many similarities between African religions and the Abrahamic religions. Nevertheless, understanding what the Muslims believe is the key factor for setting a stage to reach them. The goal of reaching the Muslims with the Gospel requires the development of specific theological strategies. First, I will examine the positive use of the Koran, then explore its discrepancies, what the Koran says about Jesus, its perception to Christians, and its theological disagreements with the Bible.

### **Positive Use of the Koran**

In this approach, there are many positive statements in the Koran concerning God, Jesus, the Bible, and other topics of mutual interest that can foster openness to a biblical perspective: for example, the Koranic doctrines on prophethood, sin, salvation, God, Jesus, God's word and God's mercy. In due course, areas of agreement should be affirmed while areas of disagreement need to be stated sensitively and nonaggressively, putting the biblical view attractively on the limelight. Colin Chapman calls this "to recognize all the common ground we can find between the two faiths, working within that area where the two overlap."<sup>1</sup> Such a gentle confrontation will lead a Muslim from the truth he/she knows into the new world of the Bible. Theologically and methodologically this approach is sound. In addition, it reiterates Paul's approach in Athens (Acts

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<sup>1</sup>Colin Chapman, *Cross & Crescent* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995, 1996), 318.

17:16-31) and has potential with intellectuals, personal friends, and the curious seekers about the Bible. This approach also communicates grace and kindness, promoting personal trust (2Tim 2:23-26). Those doing evangelism should eventually provide a clear distinction unquestionably between common, and absolute, Adventist ground. Otherwise there is the temptation to stay in the comfortable discussion area of common ground. Mistakably, the Muslims may assume that the Koran is regarded as true revelation.

### **Examining Koranic Discrepancies**

Exploring the inconsistencies between the Koran and orthodox Islam provides signs to invoke doubt in Islam and opening the Muslim minds to the Bible. This approach focuses on the Koran's testimony to the prior scriptures and on the positive statements in the Koran about Jesus. Moreover, the Koran itself does not testify to the corruption of the Bible, but rather warns against people misrepresenting biblical texts. The Koran describes the greatness of Jesus' attributes which is against the Islamic view that he was just a human prophet. Jesus' sinlessness and uniqueness, in comparison with other Koranic prophets (including Muhammad), are highlighted. This approach follows Paul's exhortation to take every thought captive to Christ (2 Cor 10:5). Again, one needs to state clearly or else the Muslims may assume we regard the Koran as revelation, or in charges of deceit, using the Koran to pull Muslims away from Islam. But these are countered by stating that the Koran is the starting point for discussion, since its authority is accepted by Muslims.

## Koran and Jesus

The Koran mentions Jesus many times and although it generally has a positive attitude toward Jesus, it forcefully denies his deity, his crucifixion, and his resurrection.<sup>1</sup> The passages embracing the positive view of Jesus may be used to create interest in a Muslim to know more about Christ. The following will survey the passages which are favorable towards Jesus and also delineate the false views which the Koran holds about Jesus. In the New Testament the Koran presents Jesus as a prophet in the line of the other prophets such as Abraham, Moses, etc. (2:136-137).<sup>2</sup> Unlike some of the prophets, Jesus' ministry was validated by signs (i.e., miracles; 2:253ff).<sup>3</sup> The third surah (i.e., chapter) of the Koran spends an extended time reviewing the life of Christ. In this surah, Mohammed affirms the virgin birth (3:47; cf. 66:12, etc.). There is also a debatable passage which apparently identifies Jesus as the Word of God. The passage reads, "O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus" (3:45). Perhaps of more significance is the fact that here Allah announces Jesus' name which indicates his task, as savior and Christ. Jesus is also designated in the third surah as being "one nearest to Allah" (3:45) and "a righteous one" (3:46). In addition, the translation of Jesus to heaven and his place in heaven near Allah is noted (3:54-55). Jesus is also described as

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<sup>1</sup>Dale, *Tafsiri ya Kurani ya kiArabu Kwa Lugha ya KiSwahili, Pamoja na Maelezo Machache (The Koran in Swahili)*, 50.

<sup>2</sup>The Koran used throughout this study is by: Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Quran* (Brentwood, MD: Amana Corp., 1989).

<sup>3</sup>Kate Zebiri, "Contemporary Muslim Understanding of the Miracles of Jesus" in *The Muslim World* (Hartford, CT: Hartford Seminary, 2000) 90, no. 1: 75.

one who turned “enemies to friends” (3:103).

The nineteenth surah of the Koran presents another extended commentary on Jesus. The miraculous event of the birth of John the Baptist is affirmed (19:1-14). The virgin birth of Jesus is clearly recounted. However, the deity of Christ is denied (19:15ff.). There is also a reference which seems to indicate Christ’s death and resurrection (19:29ff.). This is doubtful however as the resurrection of Christ is elsewhere denied (4:157) and a parallel passage in the immediate context uses the same “death and resurrection” terminology in reference to John the Baptist (19:75).

Throughout the rest of the Koran, Jesus is described as being a “messenger” and “Spirit” from God although this same context denies the idea of the trinity (4:171).<sup>1</sup> Jesus is identified as being the Christ or the Messiah in Surah 5:72 although His deity is rejected in the same context. Jesus is noted as confirming the Torah (5:46), receiving the Gospel from Allah (57:27ff.) and his disciples as being “helpers of Allah” (61:14). The signs (i.e., miracles) which validated Jesus’ ministry are also affirmed (43:63ff.). The second coming of Christ is thought by most Muslims to be predicted in Surah 43:61.

There are several negative aspects of Jesus in the New Testament that Mohammed opposes. First, the Koran repeatedly condemns the deity of Christ as blasphemy and idolatry (2:116; 3:58; 4:171ff.; 5:17, 73, 116; 9:30-31; 10:68; 18:3ff.; 19:26ff.; 21:26; 23:90; 25:2; 39:4; 72:3ff.; 112:1-4). Jesus is presented as being a mere man (3:59; 4:171ff.; 5:75). In addition, Jesus is continuously described as “the son of Mary,” a designation carefully chosen to deny that Jesus was the “son of God” (4:171ff.).

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 76.



Second, the Koran denies the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus (4:157ff.). Muslims hold that Jesus did not die, citing this passage. However, there is another passage where Allah speaks to Jesus saying, "Jesus, I am about to cause you to die and lift you up to Me" (3:55). Thus another view held by some in Islam is that Christ did die but not by crucifixion.

Third, the Koran denies the possibility of the atonement or vicarious sacrifice of Christ (6:164; 35:18; 53:41; 22:37; 39:7). Numerous times the Koran states, "No soul shall bear another's burden. To God you shall all return and He will declare to you what you have done." (39:7).

Fourth, the Koran rejects the doctrine of the Trinity. In Surah 5:73, orthodox Christians, including Adventists, are termed as unbelievers. Lastly, the Koran accepts various spectacular stories concerning the early years of Jesus, such as Jesus preaching from the cradle and breathing life into a clay bird (5:111ff.).<sup>1</sup> There are also additions and contradictions to the gospel record concerning the early years of Jesus, such as Allah sheltering Mary and Jesus, and Zachariah losing speech for only three days (19:22ff.; 23:50; 19:10). A careful understanding of these concepts will equip the Adventist evangelist to carefully prepare, plan, and execute the message. These concepts will only provide avenues to be used by the evangelist, but a knowledge about what Muslims think of Jesus cannot be ignored.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 82.

### **Koran's Perception of Jews and Other Christians**

Generally, Christians, including Adventist, are considered as being unfaithful to God and enemies of Islam. However, some of the People of the Book are considered as believers if they live a good life obeying the Word of God (3:76, 110). In some cases, Muslims are called to respect the piety and humility of Christians (5:46-48). Jews are generally criticized for rejecting Jesus and Mohammed while the Christians are generally criticized for idolatry (i.e., the believing Trinity), monasticism, and praying to saints (39:4; 57:27ff.; 45:19).

The Koran's instruction regarding relationships with the People of the Book is varied. In one place the Koran will declare that Muslims should live peacefully with the People of the Book, with the hope that they will see the error of their rejection of Mohammed (43:89). However, in other places the Koran clearly states that anyone who rejects Mohammed and the Koran is an unbeliever and that unbelievers are enemies to be conquered (66:9; 48:16, 29; 9:29, 123). In one place the Koran states that it is acceptable to marry a wife who is a Christian (5:5) or be friends with an unbeliever provided they do not make war on your religion or take your home (60:8ff.), but in another place it declares that a Muslim should never befriend a non-Muslim (3:118; 5:51). The latter instruction, however, presents a formidable barrier to evangelism and if most Muslims followed this guideline, they would never befriend or believe anyone unless they follow Islam (3:73; 3:118; 5:51).

### **Theological Disagreement between the Bible and the Koran**

The major areas of theological disagreement between the Bible and the Koran, in addition to issues relating to Jesus Christ and the Bible, are significant. First, there are numerous differences concerning salvation. The Koran's view of salvation is one of salvation by good works. The judgment of God is compared to a set of scales where good deeds must outweigh bad deeds in order for an individual to enter heaven (7:9; 21:47; 23:100ff.). Surah 49:14 states, "If you obey Allah and His apostle, He will not deny you the reward of your labors. God is merciful and forgiving." Elsewhere, the Koran describes true Muslims as those who say "God, we have believed. Forgive us then our sins and save us from the agony of the fire" (3:16).

A concept similar to purgatory is also espoused in Islam as some sinful Muslims will go to hell for a limited time in order to pay for their sins before going to heaven.<sup>1</sup> The unbeliever or idolater, on the other hand, remains in hell forever. The Muslim cannot have assurance of salvation because it is strictly up to God whether he wills to forgive or not (2:28). Mohammed has declared, "We ardently hope that our Lord will forgive us our sins because we are the first of the believers . . . and who, I ardently hope, will forgive me my sins on the Day of Judgment"<sup>2</sup> (26:51- 81).

Second, the Koran presents an optimistic view of human nature. The Koran and Islam deny the teaching of original sin but instead affirm that all humans are born

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<sup>1</sup>Phil Parshall, *The Cross and the Crescent* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1989), 190.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 139.

sinless (30:30). Due to an idealistic view of the prophets, Adam as the first prophet is considered to have forgotten God's command as opposed to actively disobeying God<sup>1</sup> (20:114-115). However, the Koran does affirm that all humans were cast out of paradise because of Adam's sin (2:38) and are corrupt and subject to Satan's control (2:28-30; 17:16-17; 62-64; etc.). As a result, modern Islamic theologians often admit the fallen condition of man.<sup>2</sup>

Third, the solution to humanity's problem of sin is likewise in conflict with that of Adventists. The Muslim solution to sin is the guidance of God. Now that man has the law of God given in its final form in the Koran, man has only to obey this law. In Adventism, the conversion of the human heart through the blood of Christ and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is required for all to overcome sin.

Fourth, the Koran's view of heaven also differs from that of Adventists. In Islam Heaven is described as a place of wine and beautiful women<sup>3</sup> (44:50ff.; 78:33). One Muslim author writes, "If I get there (i.e., heaven) and find no cool rivers, no date trees and no beautiful girls . . . to keep me company, I shall feel badly defrauded."<sup>4</sup>

To the Muslim, the Koran is considered very important. The section that follows is a strategy that expounds on how the Koran can be used in evangelism.

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<sup>1</sup>Woodberry, 150.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 158.

<sup>3</sup>Parshall, *The Cross and the Crescent*, 199.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

### Strategy 5: Using the Koran in Evangelism

There are a number of suggestions that would be useful for using the Koran in evangelism. I would strongly encourage the use of Koranic teaching on Jesus as a starting point in working with Muslims. Since the Koran presents a high view of Jesus, as the Word of God, one nearest to God, one who is alive in heaven, etc., the Muslim inquirer may want to know more about this one who seems to be greater than even Mohammed.<sup>1</sup> The Bible would provide the source for this additional knowledge as the Koran clearly upholds the teaching of the Old and New Testaments and may even declare its inerrancy. Surah 6:115 declares, "The word of the Lord is perfect and none can change His words."

The Koranic passages which refer to Jesus as the Word of God may provide a focus for this investigation. Chapman suggests that Mohammed probably derived this idea from Christian teaching even though modern Islamic scholars interpret this passage as referring to Jesus being conceived by God's Word.<sup>2</sup> The idea of Jesus being the Word of God can be explained by looking at the gospels and how Jesus creates, heals, and forgives by his Word. This study of the gospel presentation will hopefully lead to greater interest on the part of the Muslim inquirer. Another suggestion for study is the concept of prophethood and how Jesus was a prophet. Christians have tended to ignore this aspect of Jesus' mission as our prophet, priest, and king. The concept of prophet is central to Islam. Thus the Koranic teaching on the prophets can be used as a transition to the

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth Cragg, *Jesus and the Muslim* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985), 43-45.

<sup>2</sup>Colin Chapman, "God Who Reveals," in *Muslims and Christians*, ed. J. Dudley Woodberry (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1989), 133ff.

biblical accounts of the prophets and their mission. The life of Jeremiah is particularly helpful because of its vivid presentation in the Bible and his teaching on the new covenant which is fulfilled in Jesus.<sup>1</sup> The Koranic emphasis on God being merciful and forgiving may also provide another bridge to sharing the gospel with Muslims. Numerous times the Koran declares that God is merciful and forgiving (6:147; 39:53; 23:118). The parables of the Prodigal Son and Two Debtors may be used to effectively communicate the gospel to Muslims as they portray both man's responsibility to the law and God's mercy and forgiveness when the law is broken.<sup>2</sup> Thus, in this section I will examine how the Koran can be recognized and used in evangelism, using the Koran in a Muslim-convert Church, negative and positive elements of witnessing to Muslims.

### **Recognize the Koran during Evangelism**

The Koran can be treated as a complementary revelation from God. But, to acknowledge the Koran as authentic revelation is a theological compromise in Adventist evangelism. This approach may be seen to contradict many church programs that emphasize dialogue with Muslims. Rather, recognizing the Koran aims not at conversion, but to find common ground to foster mutual respect. Moreover, since Muslims recognize this theological compromise, it only reinforces their position. Muslims strongly hold the Koran to be the final revelation to mankind that supersedes any other.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 129ff.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 141.

## **How to Use the Koran in Evangelism**

Using the Koran in evangelism is a controversial and contentious issue among Adventists in Kenya. Many evangelists agree that our goal is to communicate with people, not just preach at them. Those involved in Muslim outreach, including converts from Islam, advocate using the Koran as a bridge for leading Muslims from their Islamic mind-set into an understanding of the gospel. Still, others are equally opposed. To determine the right approach there is need to explore ways for using the Koran in evangelism. At the same time we need to comprehend the theological, methodological, interpersonal and spiritual issues involved and the dynamics of conversion from Islam to Adventism. The three methods proposed include recognizing the Koran, using the Koran in a Muslim-convert Church, avoiding its negative use, and using it positively.

## **Using the Koran in the Muslim-Convert Church**

The Koran could possibly be used in the context of a Muslim-convert church but it would be treated just like any other extra-biblical reference. For example, certain praise sections from the Koran could be used as part of prayer and worship in the same way that Christian hymns and poetry are used.<sup>1</sup> Of course these praise sections would have to espouse proper theology and it should be clear to all worshipers that just because the Koran is being used for worship, it does not mean that it is inspired. Phil Goble suggests that the first surah of the Koran be used during prayer times.<sup>2</sup> The first surah

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<sup>1</sup>Goble and Munayer, 84.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

reads,

In the name of Allah,  
 Most Gracious, Most merciful,  
 Praise be to Allah  
 the Cherisher  
 and Sustainer of the worlds.  
 Most Gracious, Most Merciful.  
 Master of the Day of Judgment.  
 Thee alone do we worship  
 and Thine aid we look for.  
 Show us the straight way.  
 The way of those on whom Thou  
 has bestowed Thy Grace  
 those whose portion is not wrath,  
 and who go not astray.  
 Amen.

Since there is nothing theologically wrong with this prayer and much that is theologically right, it seems possible that such Koranic material may be used in the worship of God. The Koran might also be used in the new covert church setting (The Kenyan Community Center of Isa) as illustrative material for sermons and teaching. A biblical precedent for this activity is found in Acts 17 when Paul addresses the Athenians. For example, the teaching in the Koran about the sacrificial meal at the end of the Hajj can be used to illustrate the communion meal prefigured in the Passover and instituted by Christ.<sup>1</sup> But there is the danger of the listener confusing the Adventist preacher's reference to the Koran as implying that the Koran is inspired. Thus care should be exercised when using the Koran in preaching.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 103ff.



### **Avoiding Detrimental Elements of Witnessing to Muslims**

Evangelists working among the Muslims should refrain from convincing them to get saved through their (evangelists) own strength. They need to be directed to trust the Holy Spirit to convince them to believe in Jesus. If God could save the apostle Paul, He can do it to anyone, anytime. Our work is to share the gospel, and the harvest is God's.

Adventists should refrain becoming hostile with Muslims; they are not enemies to be conquered but are fellow human beings for whom Christ died on the cross. It is also a good idea to avoid overwhelming the Muslims with Scripture. They will not listen. Do not use a King James Bible because, according to some Muslims, King James himself translated this version and corrupted it. I recommend using the New International Version in witnessing to them. Abstain from using the Bible in which you have written notes or made marks. This indicates disrespect for the Word of God to the Muslims. Avoid all pictures of God, Jesus, or other biblical personalities. Do not use the word "Trinity" because this word often connotes the worship of three gods to the Muslims. You can let them know from the Scriptures that God is indeed one Being, and this one Being exists eternally as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In dealing with the Muslims, remove all offenses except the cross. They view Christian symbols as offensive.

### **The Positive Elements of Witnessing to Muslims**

The greatest weapon in witnessing is prayer. This is true when witnessing to

any Islamic group. Learn to demonstrate love and patience when witnessing. “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35, NIV). Know what you believe and why you believe it regarding the essentials of the historic Adventist faith before witnessing. Know the original even before beginning to attempt to learn about the counterfeit. All Muslim groups are different. Know which Islamic group you are witnessing to. Share the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as God manifested in the flesh with the Muslims. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6, NIV). Remind the Muslims that according to the Koran, “No true prophet of God can lie.” If that is true, since they believe that Jesus is a prophet of God, then Jesus told the truth about being the only truth and way to God. Let the Muslims know that true righteousness does not come through man’s righteousness, but through the righteousness of Christ’s perfect life imputed as a free gift to those who believe.

How can Muslims be evangelized without dislocating them from their communities? Whichever way we look at it, there are consequences that we must be vigilant. The following strategy is an examination of how it can be done. Also discussed are the problems associated with converting Muslims and the Adventists perception of the same.

### **Strategy 6: Converting without Dislocating**

There are so many problems facing those who have been converted from Islam to Adventism in Kenya. Restrictions in Islam, both religiously and culturally, are

very strict and there are a handful Adventist lay evangelists among Muslims who have experienced considerable difficulties in helping Muslim converts adapt to their newfound faith in the Adventist Church.

To those working among Muslims there is perhaps no more baffling unsolved problem than the care of the new convert.<sup>1</sup> The problems take many forms. On the one hand the convert, particularly in predominantly coastal areas, faces rejection from his family, is likely to be banished from his/her community, and pushed on to the fringe of the society, may well lose employment opportunities, and even suffer the ultimate penalty for conversion from Islam, namely death itself. On the other hand the convert is invariably saturated in Islamic culture and on becoming an Adventist does not necessarily wish or intend to forsake his/her heritage. Christianity, and in this case Adventism, was always intended to be a universal faith which could express itself in any culture, but unfortunately it has become so synonymous with Western civilization and culture that, to this day, conversion to Christianity seems to many to involve an adoption of the Western way of life. This only intensifies the problem, as does the fact that, in Islam, religion and culture are so intertwined that it is difficult at times to distinguish between them.

Among those working with Muslims today many agree that every effort must be made to avoid snatching Muslim converts out of their culture and to safeguard against attempts to Adventize them. This objective has led to a widespread conviction that Muslim converts should be allowed to remain wholly within their societies and

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<sup>1</sup>J. C. Heinrich, "'Shell-Shocked' Converts" *The Muslim World* (New York, NY: The Moslem World, 1928), 18:246.

communities and keep their place in the universal Muslim *ummah*, yet Adventists. Such a group should not be called Christians or Adventists at all but rather “followers of Isa,” in this case, in the Kenyan Community Center of Isa, and that they should exercise their faith in Jesus in an Islamic context and setting, either by forming separate groups who nonetheless worship according to traditional Islamic forms, or by remaining in their own mosques and societies, expressing their faith in Jesus in more direct Islamic forms.

The emphasis here is that Muslims converted to Adventism should accept Christ without completely dislocating them culturally. It is not an easy issue, but nevertheless, the issue must be resolved with some reservations and caution. I will refer to the Bible that lays down certain guidelines that should be followed and that there are critical dangers of compromise in many of the theories being propagated these days which seem to take us from one extreme to the other. The idea is to endeavor to promote the methods that are safer for both the Muslims and the Adventists. I believe that Muslims who believe in Jesus Christ and look to him for eternal life must break from Islam and become united to the Adventist Church. As a Church we are not entitled to compromise in any way. Some teachers such as the great apostle to Islam, Samuel Zwemer, stood firm against this form of evangelism. He quotes an American professor who defined this new form of approach:

This approach would not require the Moslem inquirer to forsake his Moslem communal relations, but would rather urge that, continuing to live in the Moslem community, the young convert would follow the Jesus-way in that world.... Thus, it is argued, we will have a truly indigenous Moslem Christian theology, and a truly

indigenous form of organized Moslem Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

He expressed himself against any form of evangelism that must inevitably lead to syncretism and at the same time reminded us that Jesus called on his followers to become fishers of men, saying:

We will not progress far by forsaking the use of all hooks and nets in order to feed the hungry fish in their own environment. . . . Unless we ask the Moslem enquirer to make a clear-cut decision, to break with his past to accept a new way of life in Christ, we are really doing him an injustice. The easy way is not the way of the Gospel."<sup>2</sup>

The question arising is, why are we trying to avoid disturbing the Muslim convert's culture and heritage, and why do we want to smooth a path that Jesus said would ever be hard and stony? (Matt 7.14). Have we lost sight of our calling and also sight of the implications of conversion from Islam? The New Testament commands involve the possibility of family antagonism and personal persecution. "A man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matt 10:36); "If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me" (Matt 16:24). We cannot seek either for ourselves or for others to facilitate the Christian life so as to be disloyal to its nature. The church of the Apostolic generation became a church of the Catacombs. Therefore, costliness has always been a characteristic ingredient of Christian discipleship.<sup>3</sup>

There is always a price to be paid by the Muslims for their faith in Jesus and

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel Zwemer, "The Dynamic of Evangelism" in *The Muslim World*, (New York, NY: Kraus Reprint, 1968), 31: 110, 111.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 111, 112.

<sup>3</sup>Cragg, 345.

their conversion may prove equally costly for those who seek to bring them to Christ. Yet we have a perfect example in Jesus himself who suffered and died that we may live. The apostle who could say so confidently of himself, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1), spoke often of his hardships for the Gospel. "To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are ill-clad and buffeted and homeless," he wrote to the Christians at Corinth (1 Cor 4:11), adding in a second letter that he was regularly "in toil and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure" (2 Cor 11:27). Just as Jesus himself suffered not for his own sake but that others might be saved, so Paul spoke of his sufferings in the same way: "Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which in Christ Jesus goes with eternal glory" (2 Tim 2:10).

We must be prepared to endure much that Muslims may come to Christ and set them an example in our conduct, patience, and perseverance. Similarly, we must encourage them to make a complete commitment to Christ and come out from Islam, boldly declaring allegiance to Him and His Church. If this involves much loss, hardship, and suffering, so be it. Such must always be the course of those who would truly follow Jesus. "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict which you saw and now hear to be mine" (Phil 1:29-30). "What has a believer in common with an unbeliever"? asks the Church's greatest ever missionary to the world (2 Cor 6:15). Many who have had the privilege of evangelizing Muslims have spoken with one voice of the need of Muslim converts to break from Islam and join the Christian Church. Wilson talks

about someone who speaks from experience and says:

It is interesting to note that many of those who accepted the Christian faith at first made an earnest effort to live with their own families and in their Moslem environment. In every case I have noted this was not possible. Either the person was forced to compromise his Christian conduct and profession or he was forced to leave his family and the Islamic environment. The decision is fraught with suffering and torment of soul, but it seems that only through such travail can the new man in Christ be born out of Islam and the foundation stones of the church laid in Moslem lands.<sup>1</sup>

Phillips begins his reflection on the question of whether Muslim converts to Christianity can remain within Islam or fellowship outside the universal Christian Church by stating the issue plainly:

If Christianity were a plan of life evolved by man, then there might be some real reason for propounding the question, "Should Moslem converts be persuaded to unite with the church?" On the other hand, if Christianity has its source in God as revealed in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, then to ask the question is to answer it.<sup>2</sup>

Proceeding from the principle itself to the subjective side, namely practice and experience, he comes automatically to the same conclusion:

Let us ask, then, can the Moslem who is intellectually persuaded of the truth of the Gospel be kept alive spiritually, growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, if he refuses to break with Islam by receiving baptism and openly associating himself with the visible church? It never has been done, and in the light of universal missionary experience in our own day and from the beginning it is safe to assert, without fear of successful contradiction, that it cannot be done.<sup>3</sup>

There is a lot of work for those who work in predominantly Muslim societies and cultures

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<sup>1</sup>Christy J. Wilson, "Moslem Converts", in *The Muslim World*, (Hartford CT: Hartford Seminary, 1948), 34:175.

<sup>2</sup>H. E. Phillips, "Should Moslem Converts Unite with the Church?", in *The Muslim World*, (New York, NY: Kraus Reprint, 1968), 26: 19, 120.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 125.

and who grapple earnestly with the problem and seek to resolve the issue of leading Muslims to Christ without disrupting their lives and cultural heritage. It is happening particularly at the coast of Kenya with the highest Islamic concentration in the country. Muslims in urban towns can easily associate with the Adventist Church without foregoing their heritage. The Islamic culture and religion may not be as strong. In less Islamic-concentrated towns and suburbs, Adventist Churches prevail over mosques, employment opportunities are in no way affected by conversion, and the convert will find himself/herself perhaps even identifying more meaningfully with the prevailing society rather than being banished as is the case in the total Muslim community.

In my interviews with Muslims in Nairobi and Mombasa I found out that Muslims who become Adventists and yet refuse to break with Islam and its practices and join the church are constantly tempted after a while to revert to Islam, at least in form, and backslide and so lose their Adventist momentum first love. As a result, the joy of salvation weakens, the scope for growth becomes stunted, and the convert often becomes unhappy, critical, and envious of those who are well settled in the Church. We must at least be clear in our minds about the need to call Muslims out of Islam to Christ and his Church and cannot afford to compromise this principle.

### **The Problems Associated with Conversion from Islam**

Is it possible for the Muslim who is willing to profess faith in Jesus Christ, but who expresses unwillingness either to be baptized or to join the Adventist church, to be identified an Adventist? Some converts express fear and, even though they have seen the



truth, are willing to remain in the Muslim society, be Adventists and yet not baptized. The New Testament clearly sets forth the command to believers to be baptized as an outward sign of their unity with Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection. Jesus sent his disciples out to make more disciples of all nations with the command “baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19, also Mark 16:16), and on the Day of Pentecost Peter declared that those present should repent and “be baptized every one of you” (Acts 2:38). Therefore, the convert from Islam must be encouraged to submit to baptism. Many Muslims converted to the Adventist faith in the country notify their families that they only wish to become Christians and the families respond by allowing them to believe in Jesus Christ, but avoid baptism or church membership. A converted Muslim to Christianity may feel comfortable to follow all forms of Islam to remain a true Muslim at heart and be accepted in the Islamic environment. But the Bible is very clear on instruction. If they do not submit to baptism, which is the passage of rite of the Christian faith, then they have not really become Christians. Baptism is, therefore, the symbol of a Muslim’s final detachment with Islam and his embrace of Adventism.

According to Marsh, Muslims regard baptism as the decisive break with Islam because it constitutes an open profession of faith in Christ.<sup>1</sup> Christensen adds that, globally, people seem to be aware of the fact that baptism makes a real difference to a man’s standing in the community.<sup>2</sup> The converts from Islam must therefore be encouraged

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<sup>1</sup>Charles R. Marsh, *Share Your Faith with a Muslim* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 88.

<sup>2</sup>Jens Christensen, *The Practical Approach to Muslims* (North Africa Mission: Leicester, 1977), 153.

to be baptized in obedience to our Lord's command. This is not a matter of personal choice, it is one of open acknowledgment of the Gospel of Christ. When the first Gentiles became believers and received the Holy Spirit, Peter immediately "commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:48). Baptism is an imperative confession of faith and one which will greatly strengthen all who submit to it. Just like the early missionaries, who were abundantly filled with the Holy Spirit, the question regarding baptizing Muslim converts would never be raised.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, how will the Adventist Church deal with those who do not wish to be baptized or join a local church? They must not be rejected, but accept them as God's children. We must care for them as much as for any other convert and seek to build them up in whatever way we can and fellowship with them as often as possible. Nevertheless it should be made plain that the convert is not being true to Christ and is likely to suffer from a "maimed and halting religious experience if there is not complete association in these family and community affairs with the environment which has its source in Christ."<sup>2</sup> Our approach can only be to exhort, encourage, and uphold those who are weak in the faith, always remembering that each is a "brother or sister for whom Christ died" (1 Cor 8:11) and that he/she is greatly beloved of God. Wilson comments that some will even face the supreme penalty for their testimony more readily than a complete break from their families:

For the most part they declare themselves willing to face death for their faith if that

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<sup>1</sup>Phillips, 26:123.

<sup>2</sup>James Thayer Addison, *The Christian Approach to the Moslem*. Report by the Inquiry on the Evangelization of Moslems (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 306.

should be necessary. Far stronger as a deterring factor in their open declaration of their faith is the fact that it will break the bonds of family life and will bring aspersion and persecution not only upon themselves but upon members of their own household whom they love. . . . The social ostracism of the convert and even his whole family is a very real fact.<sup>1</sup>

We must remember, as the proverb says, that blood is thicker than water.

Many times, on becoming an Adventist Christian, a convert from Islam is immediately rejected by his family, disowned, and cast out. Such converts face consequences with great endurance. The bonds of family ties, however, often lead the family to relinquish their hostility and even welcome him/her back as a member of the household, provided he/she does not attempt to convert them to Christianity as well. The devil may take advantage of this situation (Luke 4:13) and the convert will find that his own mutual love for his family will possibly become a severe temptation to make appropriate concessions. We need to be both sensitive and watchful at such times, "to keep Satan from gaining the advantage over us, for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor 2:11).

I am reminded of a lady Muslim convert from a strict Moslem family, attending an Adventist school in Kenya. She got the message while in college and was baptized in hiding. Actually, her friends never knew she was baptized, but she kept attending church services. When her parents learned of her apostasy, they treated her with absolute coldness, and would not even speak to her. During one summer holiday, she went to visit her family at coastal Kenya and she felt the rejection. She loved her parents as we love ours. She could see the depth of their sufferings and it was painful to her. Did she have the right to make them suffer like that? How could she ever hope to lead them to her

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<sup>1</sup>Wilson, 34:172.

new faith, because she started out by offending them. She left and went back to college and after she graduated, she had nowhere to go. The college provided her employment and she acquired new friends. After a while, her parents, strangely, invited her home. On arrival, she was quickly forced into marriage with a strange man secretly chosen by her parents. The pull to go back to Islam was so strong, as strong as the bonds of family affection or a congenial relationship. But her marriage did not last long. She eventually abandoned the family and left for the city of Nairobi far away from home. As an Adventist I think we can do better to convert Muslims and still preserve their family ties.

Despite the challenges, I think the right approach in the Kenyan Community Center of Isa will always be to make plain to the convert that allegiance to Christ must be unshaken, but to be as gentle, compassionate, and tolerant as we can be when our counsel does not have the desired effect, remembering that we also have our own shortcomings and that we probably have not faced the same consequences for our faith in Christ.

Addison sums it up:

Knowing their own failures as disciples under conditions far less severe, they are not prepared to judge the secret believer. Rather they are ready to welcome any sign in him of an awakening response to the power of the living Christ. Nor would they willingly force the pace of his Christian growth. But such sympathy and understanding are consistent with the firmest resolution not to sanction as complete any form of Christian discipleship which falls short of surrender to Christ without qualification. . . . To be grafted into the body of Christ is to draw upon resources divine and human, in sacrament and fellowship, without which the Christian can never grow to full stature.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Addison, 308.

### **The Adventist Church's Perception of Muslim Converts**

Inasmuch as the Muslim convert to Christianity might not be entirely faithful to the Lord, there is the possibility that the Adventist Church may likewise be failing in its duty to Christ by refraining to welcome the converts and care for them sufficiently. Could it be true that the Adventist churches, especially in a predominantly or even partly Muslim environments, are unwilling to receive Muslim converts for fear of the consequences and the possible wrath of the Muslim community upon themselves? Muslims who become Adventists will always have to pay a considerable price for their faith to join the Adventist church. Is it fair to give them a cold shoulder simply because our own comfort and complacency may be simultaneously threatened? Many new converts from Islam can tell of cases where they have been received unsympathetically. If we did not make the first move to evangelize the Muslims, they would not be facing the challenges they face from their communities when they convert to Adventism. It is hard to understand any legitimate circumstance where a local church could refuse the warm hand of fellowship to a brother or sister from Islam, and I have little doubt that wherever this does occur, it will be nothing less than the church's concern about its own vested interests that will be the root cause of it. It is especially important that converts from Islam, cut off as they probably will be from their families and their Islamic community, be received as beloved members of a Christian church.<sup>1</sup>

Wilson expresses the seriousness with which we must consider our willingness

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<sup>1</sup>William M. Miller, *A Christian's Response to Islam* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1977), 141.

to receive those who have been willing to forsake family and heritage for Christ by saying that “there is urgent need that the church make the convert feel at home.”<sup>1</sup> If the Church is the Body of Christ, it cannot refuse fellowship to any who are united to him and to all true believers. The Adventist church in Kenya must realize that conversions from Islam are going to involve troublesome consequences for us as well as the converts and we must face them. Do we have any idea of what conversion may mean for a Muslim? Do we realize the possible cost for any Muslim who wants to become a disciple of Jesus? Do we realize the possible cost for ourselves?

### **Conclusion**

The greatest temptation of all, to hold back on total commitment to Christ, will come from the convert’s own family members. I think there is need for the Adventist church to be particularly sensitive. Many of us have had to make family sacrifices in pursuit of our faith in Jesus Christ. Indeed it is my conviction that converts should be encouraged to maintain good family relationships as far as they can and, where we feel they are of their own choice leaning too far towards their families and thus compromising their faith, we must nonetheless avoid being judgmental and endeavor to be as sympathetic and as understanding as we can be, even if they refuse to heed admonition.

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<sup>1</sup>Wilson, 34:176.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Conclusions**

This study was conducted with the main objective of understanding the Muslims in Kenya and to suggest to Adventists that there is nothing that gains the heart and confidence of a Muslim like true love put into practice. Among the many things that make up true friendship evangelism, none is more vital or important than selfless love from the heart. If Adventists are to truly give Muslims a foretaste of the kingdom of God, they must act towards them charitably, unselfishly, and with a caring spirit. This would, however, change the existing relationship between the two religions, which is characterized by antagonism. If Adventists criticize Islam, unnecessary opposition may be aroused. If Islam is commended, the impression will be made that the Adventist is really a Muslim at heart.

Adventists need to understand that since Mohammad died six centuries after Jesus began His ministry, it is plain that Islam got most of its theology after the path of Jesus. Thus their theology as such is as original as that of Christianity. Therefore Adventists have a unique opportunity to advance the truth to the Muslims, if only they are handled with respect and love.<sup>1</sup> This, again, is the friendship model that I have emphasized throughout this project.

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<sup>1</sup>Addison, 11.

The creation of the Kenyan Community Center of Isa is the ultimate solution for preserving Adventists in a Muslim setting. The Adventist evangelist must know what the Kenyan Muslim believes, and must try to state the full Adventist message in the way least offensive to them.<sup>1</sup> Evidently, the survey results in chapter 3 indicate that Adventists in Kenya do not understand who the Muslims are, and that the majority of them have a stereotyped mind-set that Muslims are enemies, commonly known in Adventist circles as the “beast” or “babylon.”

As discussed, the advent and spread of Islam and Adventism precipitated a different kind of religious situation in contemporary Kenya. A vast majority of the population have abandoned the religions of their ancestors to convert to one or another of the missionary faiths now available in the country. In spite of the many problems and difficulties confronting the converts, it is unarguable that both Islam and Adventists have sunk deep roots in Kenya. The faith of the vast majority of the population now lies mainly with Islam and Christianity. This project suggests that we can as individuals, churches, Fields, Conferences, Unions, and the Division use some of the strategies for Kenyan Muslim evangelism. I do realize that this is a field not many have ventured into for various reasons. Nevertheless, the religious hunger for souls which evolved from the traditional religious background to the contemporary plural society still persists.

I conclude on a theme that reverberates in the hearts of both Muslims and Adventists religious communities that, although the responsibility of evangelizing the Muslims in Kenya presents a formidable task, Adventists must press on to fulfill the commands of our Lord (Matt 28:18ff.). It will involve great sacrifices to fulfilling those commands. The

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<sup>1</sup>Miller, 149.



Adventists and Muslims consider themselves as accountable to a community of faith or believers and to their God/Allah. It is not enough to believe in isolation, we must relate our lives with brothers and sisters in the faith. It is with this communal concept found in Islam that I have emphasized friendship relationship in all the six proposed strategies. Moreover, there are many similarities and also differences between Adventists and Islam in Kenya as discussed in chapter 2. One may wonder what evangelistic approach should be adopted. I have come up with only six strategies that act as a guide to point out sensitive elements that Adventists ought to be aware. The emphasis is on finding agreements at least on the reality of God, revelation, scripture, angels, and judgment. Disagreement areas about Christ's identity, death, and resurrection, and the authority of the Bible can be dealt with carefully and passionately after laying the common ground and winning respect.

As we have seen, Islamization in Kenya was essentially carried out by Africans themselves, who shared the same life, spoke the same language, and lived in the same cultural locality entirely. We are the same people who find ourselves working side-by-side with Muslims in banks, offices, schools, stores etc.,. Many have Muslim landlords or tenants. These social contacts provide God-given opportunities to continue to develop friendships and relationships, not just casual acquaintances, but real, genuine friendships where Adventists can show their true character and the meaning of the knowledge of Jesus Christ in their lives. In this way the Adventist gets to know the Muslim as a person and with this knowledge will come an appreciation of the Muslim's problems, hopes, frustrations, interests, joys, and sorrows. When this experience develops into a sympathetic attitude towards the Muslim's needs, a willingness to share his fears and expectations, and an open desire to rejoice with him

in his joys and feel with him when he suffers, the Muslim will begin to know what true Adventism is and what really motivates the believer. This is one of the most important steps on the road to leading Muslims to the knowledge of the source of genuine Christian love, the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

I maintain that we need to yearn for an all-round form of ministry to Kenya Muslims, a comprehensive approach that takes in the ability to handle Muslim objections to the Bible and to relate the Gospel effectively to them against the background of their own beliefs. I appeal to all who contemplate Muslim evangelism to make a sincere effort to get to know the Bible well, and to likewise strive to obtain a sound knowledge of Islam including some knowledge of the Arabic language. On achieving these, the Adventist will be surprised to discover how much more effective he/she can be in his/her witness to Kenyan Muslims.

### **Recommendations**

This study has notified the SDA Church in Kenya about the characteristics, effects, and urgency of Muslim evangelism. It has suggested some strategies that may be helpful to heal the existing wounds between Islam and Adventism, resulting in mutual friendship and respect for each other. In addition, I would like to offer the following recommendations:

1. The East African Union of the SDA Church should create and appoint a full-time pastor to coordinate the Muslim evangelism department. Funds should be provided for materials and training for all the pastors within the Union and its Conferences and Fields.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 131.

2. Each Conference of the SDA Church in Kenya should have a Muslim coordinator, to cater for the needs of the Conference in Muslim evangelism.

3. The University of Eastern Africa, Baraton and Kamagambo College should introduce courses in Islam. Such basic courses may include: Origin and implications of Islam in Kenya, Dynamics of Kenyan Islam, Islamic Sects in Kenya and Their Beliefs, Folk Islam, and Strategies for Muslim Evangelism.

4. There is need to construct churches or buildings ( the Kenyan Community Center of Isa) that may resemble Mosques, especially in Muslim concentrated areas in Kenya.

5. Each Kenyan Community Center of Isa in Muslim areas should be encouraged to have small groups that emphasize the friendship model. Discussions about topics from both the Adventist and Islam perspectives should be encouraged, one at a time.

6. All pastors in the country should be encouraged to own a Koran. It is just common sense that if we want to reach the Muslims, we must understand what they believe.

7. Muslims are not enemies to be conquered, but friends to be won.

8. Muslim evangelism is not easy, and many times the results are depressing. Adventist evangelists to Muslims are encouraged to have mercy and endurance.

APPENDIX A  
QUESTIONNAIRE AND DATA

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MUSLIM-ADVENTIST RELATIONS IN KENYA

ADVENTIST CHURCH MEMBERS

SECTION I

Demographic

1. Gender      \_\_\_ a) Male   \_\_\_ b) Female
2. Age         \_\_\_ a) 1-20   \_\_\_ b) 21-29   \_\_\_ c) 30-39   \_\_\_ d) 40 -50  
                  \_\_\_ e) 51 and above
3. Marital status \_\_\_ a) Single   \_\_\_ b) Married   \_\_\_ c) Separated   \_\_\_  
                  \_\_\_ d) Divorced
4. Religion    \_\_\_ a) Adventist   \_\_\_ b) Anglican   \_\_\_ c) Catholic   \_\_\_  
                  \_\_\_ d) Muslim  
                  \_\_\_ e) Hindu   \_\_\_ f) A former Muslim (now Adventist)  
                  \_\_\_ g) Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
5. Identify yourself \_\_\_ b) A lay Adventist member   \_\_\_ c) Adventist administrator
6. Name your location \_\_\_ a) Town   \_\_\_ b) Upcountry (Rural)
7. Name your town   \_\_\_ a) Nairobi   \_\_\_ b) Mombasa   \_\_\_ c) Nakuru  
                          \_\_\_ d) Mumias   \_\_\_ e) Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

SECTION II

Please put a (✓) mark on the appropriate line for each of the “YES” or “NO” questions.

- |   | YES |     |
|---|-----|-----|
| 8. I believe public evangelism (open air) is effective in reaching Muslims in Kenya | ___ | ___ |
| 9. Do you have a Qur'an?  | ___ | ___ |
| 10. Have you ever been a church pastor before?                                      | ___ | ___ |
| 11. Have you ever done any type of evangelism before?                               | ___ | ___ |
| 12. Have you ever encouraged a Muslim to accept Jesus Christ as Savior?             | ___ | ___ |
| 13. Has anyone ever prayed for a Muslim in your prayer meetings?                    | ___ | ___ |
| 14. The SDA church is ready to evangelize Muslims in Kenya                          | ___ | ___ |
| 15. Have you ever faced any conflict with Muslims before?                           | ___ | ___ |
| 16. Do you have any Muslim as a close friend?                                       | ___ | ___ |
| 17. The SDA church is not ready to evangelize Muslims in Kenya                      | ___ | ___ |
| 18. Is there Muslim evangelism Department in East African Union?                    | ___ | ___ |
| 19. Do you know of any Conference or Field in Kenya that has Islam evang. Dpt       | ___ | ___ |
| 20. Is public evangelism (open air) effective in reaching Muslims in Kenya?         | ___ | ___ |

21. Can you reach a Muslim with the Gospel if given the opportunity? \_\_\_\_\_
22. Do you have difficulty sharing your faith with Catholics? \_\_\_\_\_
23. Do you have difficulty sharing your faith with Muslims? \_\_\_\_\_
24. Should a Muslim who becomes SDA continue to read and practice the Qur'an? \_\_\_\_\_
25. Should a Muslim who becomes SDA continue to observe the Ramadan? \_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION III

## MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Please put a circle on the appropriate letter that applies to you. Some questions may need more than one answer.

26. How many times have you visited a Muslim family
- Once
  - Twice
  - Three or more times
  - Never
27. How would you rate your personal relationship with Muslims
- Very good
  - Good
  - Poor
  - Very poor
28. How would you rate the SDA churches' involvement in Muslim evangelism in Kenya
- Very good
  - good
  - Poor
  - Very poor
29. How would you rate your knowledge about Islam (in terms of their doctrines and theology)
- Very good
  - Good
  - Poor
  - Very poor
30. What is your experience in Islamic evangelism?
- Very good
  - good
  - Bad
  - None

31. Which of the following religions do you think are *easier* to evangelize
- Anglican
  - Pentecostals
  - Catholics
  - Muslims
  - Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
32. Which of the following religions do you think are *difficult* to evangelize
- Anglican
  - Pentecostals
  - Catholics
  - Muslims
  - Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
33. Which type of evangelism have you done before?
- Door to door evangelism
  - Hospital evangelism
  - Public evangelism (Crusade)
  - Literature evangelism
  - Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
34. Which of the following statements comes closest to expressing what you know about Islam!
- I don't know anything about Muslims being converted to SDA in Kenya
  - I don't know whether there are Muslims in Kenya who practice SDA faith
  - While I have doubts, I feel that Muslims could be in Kenya.
  - I know Islam exists in Kenya and some of them do practice SDA faith
35. Please think about this belief and indicate how certain you are that it is true "The Muslims should be left alone.
- Completely true
  - Probably true
  - Probably not true
  - Definitely not true
36. How often have you wondered why SDA church is not actively involved in Muslim evangelism?
- Often
  - Sometimes
  - Never
  - Don't know

37. How often do you hear of Adventist-Muslim conflicts?
- Often
  - Sometimes
  - Never
  - Don't know
38. Have you experienced any form of conflict with Muslims before?
- Yes
  - No
  - Don't know
39. Which of the following religion is more acceptable in your own village.
- Seventh-day Adventist
  - Islam
  - Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
40. On average, which of the two religions has more air time on the Kenya Radio.
- Seventh-day adventists
  - Islam
41. On average, which of the two religions has more air time on the Kenya Television.
- Seventh-day adventists
  - Islam
42. Which religion were you in before becoming an Adventist.
- Catholic
  - Protestant
  - Atheist
  - Islam
  - Other (Name it) \_\_\_\_\_
43. In your opinion, what factors have worked against Muslim evangelism in Kenya?
- Lack of funds
  - Strength of Islam and folk religion
  - Fear of Muslim reaction and hostility
  - Lack of committed people to be involved in Muslim evangelism.
  - Church administrators do not favor it.
  - There are more urgent matters to attend to.



- 44. What is your experience in Islamic evangelism?
  - a) Very good
  - b) good
  - c) Bad
  - d) None
  
- 45. In your opinion, what is the most effective way of reaching Muslims?
  - a) Public evangelism
  - b) Small groups
  - c) door to door
  - d) Individual evangelism
  - e) Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 46. Apart from Islam, which other religion(s) do you know
  - a) Catholic
  - b) Anglican
  - c) Seventh-day Adventists
  - d) Pentecostal
  - e) Traditional
  - f) Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 47. What is your general attitude toward Islam?
  - a) A caring religion
  - b) Apostate religion
  - c) Don't belong to family of God
  - d) They should be left alone
  
- 48. What ethnic group do you belong to?
  - a) Kikuyu
  - b) Kisii
  - c) Luo
  - d) Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Please write any comments, suggestions and remarks you wish to bring to the attention of the questionnaire. Use extra paper if need be.

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## Questionnaire for Adventist administrators

### SECTION I

#### Demographic

1. Gender        \_\_\_ a) Male    \_\_\_ b) Female
2. Age            \_\_\_ a) 1-20    \_\_\_ b) 21-29    \_\_\_ c) 30-39    \_\_\_ d) 40 -50  
                     \_\_\_ e) 51 and above
3. Marital status \_\_\_ a) Single    \_\_\_ b) Married    \_\_\_ c) Separated    \_\_\_  
                     \_ d) Divorced
4. Religion      \_\_\_ a) Adventist    \_\_\_ b) Anglican    \_\_\_ c) Catholic        \_\_\_  
                     \_ d) Muslim  
                     \_\_\_ e) Hindu    \_\_\_ f) A former Muslim (now Adventist)  
                     \_\_\_ g) Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
5. Identify yourself    \_\_\_ b) A lay Adventist member    \_\_\_ c) Adventist administrator
6. Name your location \_\_\_ a) Town    \_\_\_ b) Upcountry (Rural)
7. Name your town    \_\_\_ a) Nairobi    \_\_\_ b) Mombasa    \_\_\_ c) Nakuru  
                             \_\_\_ d) Mumias    \_\_\_ e) Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION II

Please put a (✓) mark on the appropriate line for each of the “YES” or “NO” questions.

**YES**

**NO**

- |   |     |     |
|---|-----|-----|
| 8. I believe public evangelism (open air) is effective in reaching Muslims in Kenya | ___ | ___ |
| 9. Do you have a Qur'an?  | ___ | ___ |
| 10. Have you ever been a church pastor before?                                      | ___ | ___ |
| 11. Have you ever done any type of evangelism before?                               | ___ | ___ |
| 12. Have you ever encouraged a Muslim to accept Jesus Christ as Savior?             | ___ | ___ |
| 13. Has anyone ever prayed for a Muslim in your prayer meetings?                    | ___ | ___ |
| 14. The SDA church is ready to evangelize Muslims in Kenya                          | ___ | ___ |
| 15. Have you ever faced any conflict with Muslims before?                           | ___ | ___ |
| 16. Do you have any Muslim as a close friend?                                       | ___ | ___ |
| 17. The SDA church is not ready to evangelize Muslims in Kenya                      | ___ | ___ |
| 18. Is there Muslim evangelism Department in East African Union?                    | ___ | ___ |
| 19. Do you know of any Conference or Field in Kenya that has Islam evang. Dpt       | ___ | ___ |
| 20. Is public evangelism (open air) effective in reaching Muslims in Kenya?         | ___ | ___ |

21. Can you reach a Muslim with the Gospel if given the opportunity? \_\_\_\_\_
22. Do you have difficulty sharing your faith with Catholics? \_\_\_\_\_
23. Do you have difficulty sharing your faith with Muslims? \_\_\_\_\_
24. Should a Muslim who becomes SDA continue to read and practice the Qur'an? \_\_\_\_\_
25. Should a Muslim who becomes SDA continue to observe the Ramadan? \_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION III

#### MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Please put a circle on the appropriate letter that applies to you. Some questions may need more than one answer.

26. How many times have you visited a Muslim family
- Once
  - Twice
  - Three or more times
  - Never
27. How would you rate your personal relationship with Muslims
- Very good
  - Good
  - Poor
  - Very poor
28. How would you rate the SDA churches' involvement in Muslim evangelism in Kenya
- Very good
  - good
  - Poor
  - Very poor
29. How would you rate your knowledge about Islam (in terms of their doctrines and theology)
- Very good
  - Good
  - Poor
  - Very poor
30. What is your experience in Islamic evangelism?
- Very good
  - good
  - Bad
  - None

31. Which of the following religions do you think are *easier* to evangelize
- a) Anglican
  - b) Pentecostals
  - c) Catholics
  - d) Muslims
  - e) Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
32. Which of the following religions do you think are *difficult* to evangelize
- a) Anglican
  - b) Pentecostals
  - c) Catholics
  - d) Muslims
  - e) Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
33. Which type of evangelism have you done before?
- a) Door to door evangelism
  - b) Hospital evangelism
  - c) Public evangelism (Crusade)
  - d) Literature evangelism
  - e) Other \_\_\_\_\_
34. Which of the following statements comes closest to expressing what you know about Islam!
- a) I don't know anything about Muslims being converted to SDA in Kenya
  - b) I don't know whether there are Muslims in Kenya who practice SDA faith
  - c) While I have doubts, I feel that Muslims could be in Kenya.
  - d) I know Islam exists in Kenya and some of them do practice SDA faith
35. At your staff devotions at the office, has anyone ever prayed for Muslims?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
  - c) Don't know
36. Please think about this belief and indicate how certain you are that it is true "The Muslims should be left alone.
- a) Completely true
  - b) Probably true
  - c) Probably not true
  - d) Definitely not true

37. How often have you wondered why SDA church is not actively involved in Muslim evangelism?
- a) Often
  - b) Sometimes
  - c) Never
  - d) Don't know
38. How often do you hear of Adventist-Muslim conflicts?
- a) Often
  - b) Sometimes
  - c) Never
  - d) Don't know
39. Have you experienced any form of conflict with Muslims before?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
  - c) Don't know
40. Which of the following religion is more acceptable *in your own village*.
- a) Seventh-day Adventist
  - b) Islam
  - c) Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
41. On average, which of the two religions has more air time on the Kenya Radio.
- a) Seventh-day adventists
  - b) Islam
42. On average, which of the two religions has more air time on the Kenya Television.
- a) Seventh-day adventists
  - b) Islam
43. Which religion were you in before becoming an Adventist.
- a) Catholic
  - b) Protestant
  - c) Atheist
  - d) Islam
  - e) Other (Name it) \_\_\_\_\_

44. In your opinion, what factors have worked against Muslim evangelism in Kenya?
- a) Lack of funds
  - b) Strength of Islam and folk religion
  - c) Fear of Muslim reaction and hostility
  - d) Lack of committed people to be involved in Muslim evangelism.
  - e) Church administrators do not favor it.
  - f) There are more urgent matters to attend to.
45. How many years in total have you served as a Pastor, administrator, evangelist, teacher etc?
- a) less than one year
  - b) between 1-3 years
  - c) between 4-7 years
  - d) between 8-12 years
  - e) between 13-18 years
  - f) between 19-25 years
  - g) Over 26 years
  - i) Never
46. What is your experience in Islamic evangelism?
- a) Very good
  - b) good
  - c) Bad
  - d) None
47. In your opinion, what is the most effective way of reaching Muslims?
- a) Public evangelism
  - b) Small groups
  - c) door to door
  - d) Individual evangelism
  - e) Other \_\_\_\_\_

48. Which of the following contributed to your conversion to adventism?(Can answer more than one)

- a) Radio
- b) T.V.
- c) Literature (books, tracts, bible lessons)
- d) Bible study group
- e) Bible correspondence
- f) Medical program
- g) Educational program
- h) Relief or developmental program
- i) Personal witness by one or more people
- j) Large evangelistic Meeting or rally
- k) Theological debate
- l) Audio cassettes
- j) Born Adventist
- m) Other \_\_\_\_\_

49. Apart from Islam, which other religion(s) do you know

- a) Catholic
- b) Anglican
- c) Seventh-day Adventists
- d) Pentecostals
- e) Traditional
- f) Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

50. What ethnic group do you belong to?

- a) Kikuyu
- b) Kisii
- c) Luo
- d) Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

## Questionnaire for former Muslim, now Adventists

### SECTION I

#### Demographic

1. Gender  a) Male  b) Female
2. Age  a) 1-20  b) 21-29  c) 30-39  d) 40 - 50  e) 51 and above
3. Marital status  a) Single  b) Married  c) Separated  d) Divorced
4. Religion  a) Adventist  b) Anglican  c) Catholic  d) Muslim  e) Hindu  f) A former Muslim (now Adventist)  g) Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
5. Identify yourself  a) A lay Adventist member  b) Adventist administrator  c) Pastor, Teacher
6. Name your location  a) Town  b) Upcountry (Rural)
7. Name your town  a) Nairobi  b) Mombasa  c) Nakuru  d) Mumias  e) Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION II

Please put a (✓) mark on the appropriate line for each of the "YES" or "NO" questions.

- |  | YES |     |
|--|-----|-----|
| 8. I believe public evangelism (open air) is effective in reaching Muslims in Kenya                      | ___ | ___ |
| 9. I feel there are particular needs that are better answered by SDA than Islam                          | ___ | ___ |
| 10. Do you have a Qur'an?  | ___ | ___ |
| 11. Do you know anything about Seventh-day Adventists (SDA) in your area?                                | ___ | ___ |
| 12. Have you ever attended any SDA meetings or worship in your area?                                     | ___ | ___ |
| 13. Would other Muslims object if Christians (SDA's) used the Muslim form of prayer, worship and fasting | ___ | ___ |
| 14. Have you ever done any type of evangelism before?  | ___ | ___ |
| 15. Have you ever encouraged a Muslim to accept Jesus Christ as Savior?                                  | ___ | ___ |
| 16. The SDA church is ready to evangelize Muslims in Kenya   | ___ | ___ |
| 17. Have you ever faced any conflict with Muslims before?  | ___ | ___ |
| 18. Have you ever faced any conflict with SDA's before?  | ___ | ___ |



19. Has your family members isolated you since you became Adventist? \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_
20. The SDA church is not ready to evangelize Muslims in Kenya \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_
21. Do you know of any Conference or Field in Kenya that has Islam evang. Dpt \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_
22. Is public evangelism (open air) effective in reaching Muslims in Kenya? \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_
23. Can you reach a Muslim with the Gospel if given the opportunity? \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_
24. Do you have difficulty sharing your faith with Catholics? \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_
25. Do you have difficulty sharing your faith with Muslims? \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_
26. Should a Muslim who becomes SDA continue to read and practice the Qur'an \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_
27. Should a Muslim who becomes SDA continue to observe the Ramadan? \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_
28. Did you find warmth and friendship in Adventist church when you came in? \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_
29. Did you find new friends in Adventist church immediately you came? \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_

### SECTION III

#### MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Please put a circle on the appropriate letter that applies to you. Some questions may need more than one answer.

30. How many times have you visited a Muslim family
- Once
  - Twice
  - Three or more times
  - Never
31. How would you rate your personal relationship with Muslims
- Very good
  - Good
  - Poor
  - Very poor
32. How would you rate the SDA churches' involvement in Muslim evangelism in Kenya
- Very good
  - good
  - Poor
  - Very poor
33. What is your experience in Islamic evangelism?
- Very good
  - good
  - Bad
  - None

34. Which of the following religions do you think are *easier* to evangelize
- Anglican
  - Pentecostals
  - Catholics
  - Muslims
  - Other, please specify
35. Which of the following religions do you think are *difficult* to evangelize
- Anglican
  - Pentecostals
  - Catholics
  - Muslims
  - Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
36. Which type of evangelism have you done before?
- Door to door evangelism
  - Hospital evangelism
  - Public evangelism (Crusade)
  - Literature evangelism
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
37. Please think about this belief and indicate how certain you are that it is true "The Muslims should be left alone.
- Completely true
  - Probably true
  - Probably not true
  - Definitely not true
38. How often have you wondered why SDA church is not actively involved in Muslim evangelism?
- Often
  - Sometimes
  - Never
  - Don't know
39. How often do you hear of Adventist-Muslim conflicts?
- Often
  - Sometimes
  - Never
  - Don't know

40. Have you experienced any form of conflict with Muslims before?
- Yes
  - No
  - Don't know
41. Which of the following religion is more acceptable in your own village.
- Seventh-day Adventist
  - Islam
  - Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
42. On average, which of the two religions has more air time on the Kenya Radio.
- Seventh-day adventists
  - Islam
43. On average, which of the two religions has more air time on the Kenya Television.
- Seventh-day adventists
  - Islam
44. Which religion were you in before becoming an Adventist.
- Catholic
  - Protestant
  - Atheist
  - Islam
  - Other (Name it) \_\_\_\_\_
45. In your opinion, what factors have worked against Muslim evangelism in Kenya?
- Lack of funds
  - Strength of Islam and folk religion
  - Fear of Muslim reaction and hostility
  - Lack of committed people to be involved in Muslim evangelism.
  - Church administrators do not favor it.
  - There are more urgent matters to attend to.
46. How many years in total have you served as a Pastor, administrator, evangelist etc?
- less than one year
  - between 1-3 years
  - between 4-7 years
  - between 8-12 years
  - between 13-18 years
  - between 19-25 years
  - Over 26 years

47. What is your experience in Islamic evangelism?
- Very good
  - good
  - Bad
  - None
48. In your opinion, what is the most effective way of reaching Muslims?
- Public evangelism
  - Small groups
  - door to door
  - Individual evangelism
  - Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
49. Which of the following contributed to your conversion to adventism?(Can answer more than one)
- Radio
  - T.V.
  - Literature (books, tracts, bible lessons)
  - Bible study group
  - Bible correspondence
  - Medical program
  - Educational program
  - Relief or developmental program
  - Personal witness by one or more people
  - Large evangelistic Meeting or rally
  - Theological debate
  - Audio cassettes
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
50. What influenced you towards accepting Christianity? (SDA).
- Dreams and visions
  - Answered prayer
  - Observing lifestyles of a particular member or members
  - Dissatisfaction with practitioners of Islam
  - Observation of the power of Christ in a specific situation
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
51. Were there any adventist beliefs or teachings that made it difficult for you to become a member of the SDA church church?
- The doctrine of trinity
  - Sabbath keeping
  - Incarnation of Jesus as Son of God
  - Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

52. Were there any social or political influences which made it difficult for you to become or remain a member of SDA church?
- Pressure from the Muslim community
  - Pressure from Muslim family members
  - Conversion forbidden by law
  - The SDA church did not welcome you or worshiped in ways that are foreign
53. Which of the following ideas do you think made it difficult for you to become a SDA church member or remain a member?
- Christianity has persecuted or exploited Muslims
  - Christianity is a western religion
  - SDA's have a secular lifestyle
  - SDA's are not friendly to new converts
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
54. Apart from Islam, which other religion(s) do you know
- Catholic
  - Anglican
  - Seventh-day Adventists
  - Pentecostals
  - Traditional
  - Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
55. How often do you read the Koran?
- Regularly
  - Once in a while
  - Do not read
56. What teachings and beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church are relevant to you?
- Old Testament teachings e.g. Moses, Abraham, Jacob etc.
  - Health message
  - Alms giving (tithe).
  - State of the dead
  - God's judgement
  - Fasting and prayer
  - The seventh day Sabbath
  - Power and miracles of God
  - Others, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

57. What teachings and /or beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church are offensive or repulsive to Islam?
- a) About God
  - b) Deity of Christ
  - c) Trinity
  - d) Others, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
58. Which terminologies, jargons and language used by SDA's are offensive to you?
- a) Evangelize
  - b) Crusades
  - c) the remnant church
  - d) Others, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
59. What is your general attitude toward Seventh-day Adventists?
- a) a caring church
  - b) Trouble makers
  - c) Are very knowledgeable in religious matters
  - d) Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
60. Who do you think Jesus is?
- a) One of the prophets
  - b) Son of God, our savior and Lord
  - c) Someone who heals us
  - d) An intercessor between God and human kind
61. How do you relate to Jesus?
- a) I sometimes ask Jesus to help me
  - b) I pray to him and try to obey him in all things
  - c) I do not relate to Jesus, but I try to follow his example in my life
  - d) I do not know how to relate to him
62. Who do you think belongs to the community of faith?
- a) The Muslim *umma* is the only household of faith
  - b) Jesus followers from the Muslim *umma* are the household of faith
  - c) All who confess Jesus as savior are the household of faith
  - d) Both the Muslim *umma* and Christian
63. Where do you belong?
- a) To the followers of Jesus from the Muslim *umma*
  - b) To those who confess Christ as savior and Lord
  - c) To the Muslim *umma*
  - d) I do not feel I belong to any community of faith

64. How do you understand the Scriptures?
- a) The Qur'an has more authority than the Bible
  - b) The Bible is the final Scripture
  - c) The Bible has more authority than the Qur'an
  - d) The Qur'an is the final Scripture
65. What do you do with the Scriptures?
- a) I only follow the Qur'an
  - b) I only follow the Bible
  - c) I follow the Qur'an more than the Bible
  - d) I follow the Bible more than the Qur'an
  - e) I follow both the Bible and the Qur'an
66. What ethnic group do you belong to?
- a) Kikuyu
  - b) Kisii
  - c) Luo
  - d) Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
67. What category of Islam did you belong to before?
- a) Sunni
  - b) Shi'a
  - c) Sufi
  - d) Folk
  - e) Other \_\_\_\_\_

Please write any comments, suggestions and remarks you wish to bring to the attention of the questionnaire. Use extra paper if need be.

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APPENDIX B

CORRESPONDENCE



July 13, 1999

Dear fellow Muslims, Lay members, Administrators, pastors etc.....

I am pleased to inform you that I am about to complete my doctoral studies at Andrews University, in Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA. In my studies I would like to know more about the Muslim-Adventist relations in Kenya.

Since you as a Muslim, Adventist administrator, lay member converts and non-converts to and from Islam to Christianity (Seventh-day Adventist) and vice versa, you are in a position to assist me to complete my academic(aspirations) requirements by completing the following questionnaire. Your participation is voluntary and there will be no penalty nor any influence whatsoever on your work. You don't have to answer any question that you object.

The research is purely academic and not political. All the information you provide will be kept confidential. You do not have to write your name anywhere on the questionnaire, and your name will not appear in the manuscript. This is to assure you of anonymity with respect to any personal data and opinion which will be obtained.

Realizing that the completion of a questionnaire can be a nuisance for individuals with a tight or hectic schedule, the questionnaire is designed in multiple choices and "yes" or "no" format, and will not take too much of your time.

I value your input and hope that you will be able to spare a few minutes of your time to fill out the questionnaire. A copy of my dissertation will be placed in the Andrews University Library, USA and also at the Central Kenya Conference in Nairobi, Kenya so that any interested individuals can read the findings.

Thank you in advance for your time and co-operation.

---

Dr. Walter Douglas  
Academic Advisor

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Joseph Kilonzo  
Student

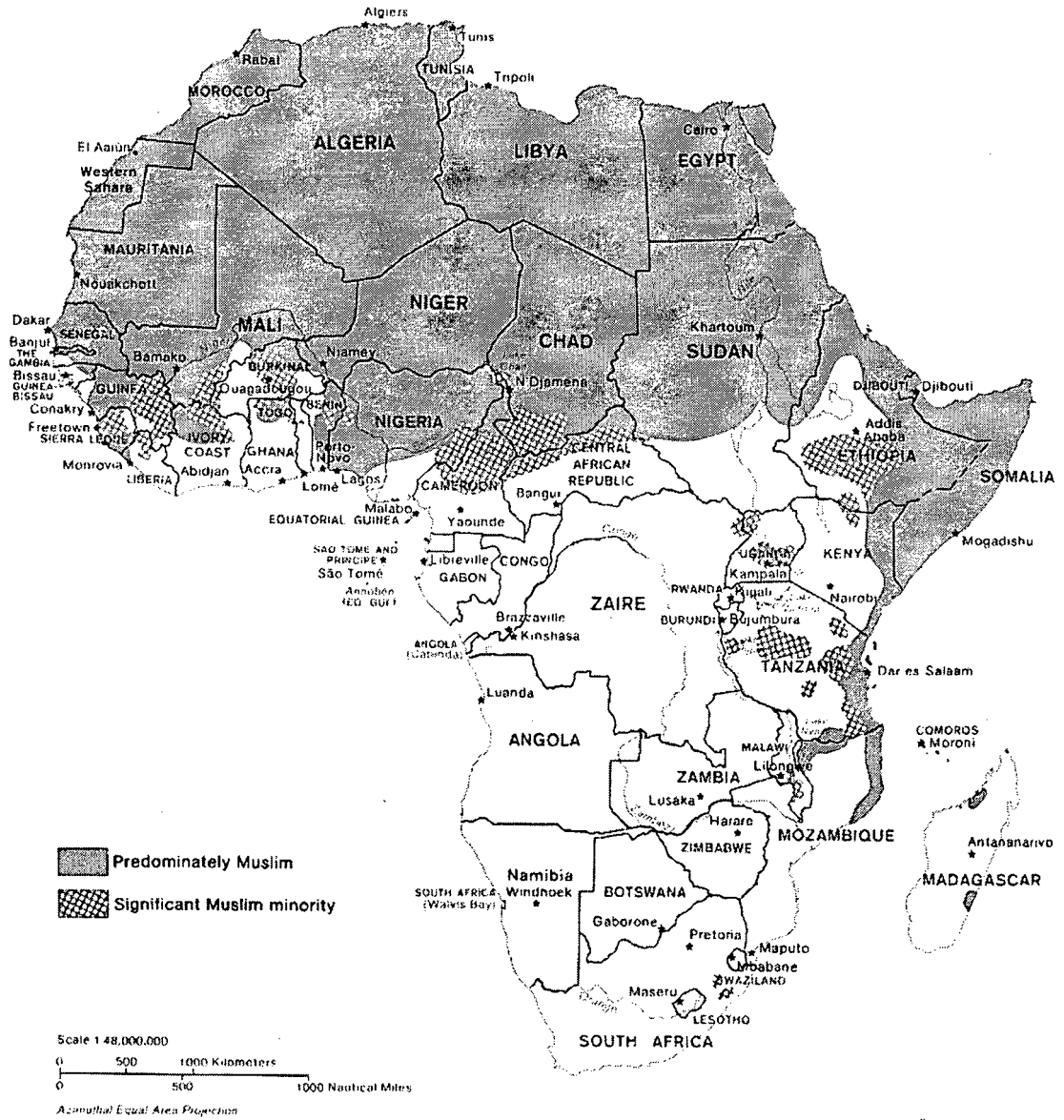
APPENDIX C

MAPS

# ISLAM DISTRIBUTION IN AFRICA

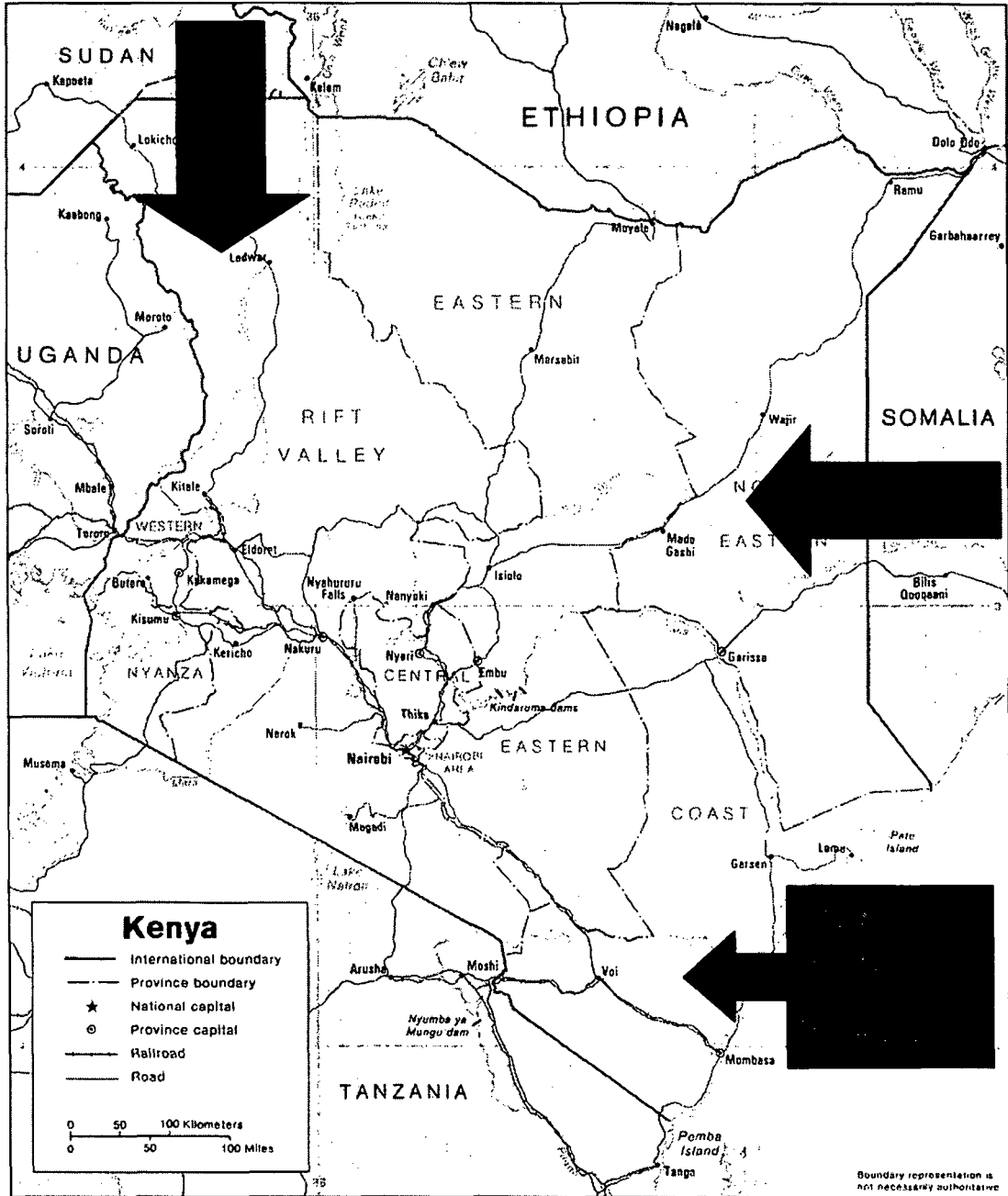
Islam in Africa

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### KENYA: ISLAM IMMIGRATION



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