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**MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS IN MUSLIM
PREDOMINANT STATES: A Case Study of Zanzibar**

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Of the Requirements for the Bachelor's Degree in Theology

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflection. I have submitted this for the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the bachelors' degree in Theology. It has never been submitted to any Institute, University or College for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and duly acknowledged.

Signed:

Name of Student:

.....

Date:/01/2017

This long essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the college supervisor.

Signed:

Name of Supervisor:

.....

Date...../01/2017

DEDICATION

With respect and honour, I dedicate this long essay to the Spiritan Community in Nairobi, to which I belong. I also dedicate this work to my parents, my brothers and sisters.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost I thank God for good health and insight to pursue my goal. This work has been made possible through the help of many people who have assisted in many ways. I owe a special and unalloyed gratitude to Rev. Fr. Patrick Mwanja C.S.Sp., who played a tremendous role as the chief moderator of this work. I appreciate his fellowship and insightful comments which actually enriched my knowledge in this discipline.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Christianity has been in existence since the 1st Century in the Middle East. Islam was founded by Prophet Muhammad, born around 570 C.E in Mecca. Hence encounter between Muslims and Christians can be traced back to the 7th century. The Bible and Qur'an are the deposits of faith for Christians and Muslims respectively. From a religious point of view, both Muslims and Christians agree that they share in common origin, common humanity and common destiny. They all believe in One Creator of all that exists and who will judge them in the life to come. On the other hand, the animosity that exists between Muslims and Christians is influenced by differences in their truths of faith and relations over centuries. History has records of good and bad relations between Muslims and Christians. In this work, I intend to examine Muslim-Christian relations with particular reference to Zanzibar. Generally speaking, the relations between Muslims and Christians still leave much to be desired. There have been tension and animosity in different Muslim predominant states where Christians are minorities. They include countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Sudan, Somalia and Zanzibar. This arose curiosity in me to examine what transpires in Zanzibar where Christians are a minority. I lived in Zanzibar in the whole of 2014. As a Christian I had much fear of the Muslims, based on the perceived image the world has about Muslims and Islam. There is a common notion that "every terrorist is a Muslim but not every Muslim is a terrorist." This comes as the aftermath of world terrorism in which Muslims are perceived to be ringleaders.

Personally I consider Zanzibar to be a special case and a role model as far as the relation between Muslims and Christians is concerned. Despite some few challenges between Muslims and Christians, Zanzibar still stands as an island where peaceful co-existence reigns.

In this work I endeavor to tackle the following questions: How did Muslim and Christian communities emerge in Zanzibar? How are the relations between Muslims and Christians like in Zanzibar? What are the causes of some incidences of animosity between Muslims and Christians in Zanzibar? How do Christians perceive Muslims in Zanzibar and vice versa? I will also examine the efforts both religious groups make to improve Muslim- Christian relations in Zanzibar.

I expect that this work will be resourceful and helpful to people who are committed to work for peaceful co-existence between Muslims and Christians in Zanzibar. It is an eye opener with regard to Muslim-Christian relations over centuries. This work is a call for change of perspective about Muslims as enemies or dangerous people.

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGINS OF MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

IN ZANZIBAR

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Zanzibar as a name is etymologically of Persian Origin. It refers to Zangh Bar meaning the Negro Coast. Also, the Arabs traced the etymology of the name from Arabic terms as Zayn Z'al Barr meaning Fair is this land. Zanzibar comprises two islands that is, Unguja and Pemba situated in the Indian Ocean. They lie off the East African Coast. The East African Coast cities near Zanzibar include Dar es Salaam, Tanga and Mombasa. Both islands have an area of 2,322 square kilometers. Unguja has 1,464 square kilometers, while Pemba has 868 square kilometers. The longer island, Unguja is 36 kilometers away from the East Coast, 76 kilometers away from Dar es Salaam and 248 kilometers from Mombasa. It is a good place to be, naturally endowed with beautiful extensive beaches.

1.1 Historical Background of Zanzibar

The commonly asked question is “where did the first people to live in Zanzibar come from?” History has it that Zanzibar has been in contact with the mainland of Tanzania since ancient times. Archaeologists hold that there have been human settlements in Zanzibar for about 20,000 years ago. Historical records indicate that “first settlements in Zanzibar were established by immigrants from numerous sections of the African mainland. Having entered the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba at a number of different points, they created separate village communities whose characteristic form of government was a monarchy or

chieftainship.”¹ History proper began when Zanzibar came into contact with traders from the Middle East from the 7th century.

The proximity of Zanzibar from the mainland and similarities in culture presupposes the early contact between Zanzibar and Tanzania mainland, especially the East African Coast. Historical records indicate that the indigenous people of Zanzibar were the “Wahidimu” who came from the East Coast. However, Zanzibar had early contact with other parts of the globe such as Persia or Iran, Goa (West Coast of India), Arabia and Pakistan. “Among the first immigrants to arrive continuously and to live and intermarry with the local African population in large numbers were the Persians who arrived in about the tenth century.”²

The main groups of people in Zanzibar include the Wahadimu, the Watumbatu, and the Wapemba. All these are collectively known as Washirazi who claim to be descendants of the early intruders from Shiraz in Iran. Due to the early contact between Zanzibar and the Middle East, the natives of Zanzibar embraced some customs from the Arabs and Persians. This led to the emergence of a language referred to as *Swahili*. The name Swahili is etymologically from Arabic language meaning *coasts*. “The new culture that developed along with the Swahili language merged Arabic and Persian Cultural elements with an indigenous substratum.”³ This was indeed a genesis of a new civilization in Zanzibar.

¹Cf. M. F. LOFCHIE, *Zanzibar: Background to Revolution*, 23.

² Cf. M. F. LOFCHIE, *Zanzibar: Background to Revolution*, 24.

³ Cf. A. RABASA, *Radical Islam in East Africa*, 35.

It is also important to note that, the Persians and Arabs influenced Zanzibar in terms of religion. In the 16th century the Portuguese endeavored monopoly of the Indian Ocean Trade and to Christianize East Africa. They succeeded to capture Zanzibar and to halt the Arab influence. In 1698 the Arabs managed to regain Zanzibar and to end the Portuguese influence. Although they laid seeds of Christianity, their motive to convert Zanzibar into Christianity was a failure.

The influx of Arabs in Zanzibar escalated in the 18th and 19th century during the slave trade. It was during this period that missionaries came to spread the seeds of Christianity to the ransomed slaves in Zanzibar. Since then Zanzibar became also a home to descendants of freed slaves of African Origin.

After the 1964 Zanzibar revolution, Julius K. Nyerere, the President of the Republic of Tanganyika and Abeid Karume the President of the Republic of Zanzibar merged their states on the 22nd of April 1964. This marked the beginning of the present day Tanzania. Currently there are many immigrants from mainland Tanzania living in Zanzibar.

1.2 Current Population Status of Zanzibar

The population of Zanzibar has been increasing tremendously year after year. The natives are healthy perhaps due to sea foods. According to the 2012 National Census, the population of Zanzibar is estimated to be 1.3 million people. Christianity is 1percent. The Muslims are the majority. They constitute more than 90 percent of the population.

The remaining percentage is covered by other religions such as Hinduism, African traditional religion and those who don't belong to any religion.

Christians in Zanzibar include the Catholics who are the majority, the Anglicans, Evangelistic Assemblies of God Zanzibar (EAGZ) and other Pentecostal Churches. The Catholic Diocese of Zanzibar is under Rt. Rev. Bishop Augustine Shao CSSp. The Catholic Church is more vibrant compared to those of other denominations. “The Catholic Diocese of Zanzibar has an area of 2,352 square kilometers, with a total population of 1,420,000, based on 2012 National Census. The number of baptized Catholics is 10,152. Other Christian denominations are 4,000.”⁴ The total number of non-Christians is 1,405,848. Hence Christians are a minority.

1.3 Emergence of Christian Communities in Zanzibar

The first missionary enterprise in Zanzibar was held by Portuguese in the 15th century, “Portugal intended to use her power to establish national monopoly of the Indian trade and to convert the local population to Christianity.”⁵ It included the Augustinian missionaries who arrived with Vasco Da Gama in 1499. By then, Zanzibar was under the Arabs. In 1503, the Portuguese were able to defeat the Arabs and drive them out of Zanzibar. However, their evangelization was less significant. Around the year 1698 the Arabs managed to recapture Zanzibar due to the Oman-Arab conquest. This marked the end of their mission in Zanzibar. Hence the first Christians in Zanzibar can be attributed to Portuguese mission (1503-1698).

The remarkable evangelization of Zanzibar took place in 19th century. It was the second evangelization of Zanzibar around the year 1845. It involved the Capuchins and Holy Ghost Fathers. Missionaries came during the era of slave trade. “It was the work of the French Congregation of the Holy Ghost among the ex-slaves of Reunion which prompted Bishop Maupoint to visit Zanzibar and to establish a

⁴<http://www.catholicdioceseofzanzibar.org>

⁵ Cf. M. F. LOFCHIE, *Zanzibar: Background to Revolution*, 28.

permanent mission there in 1863.”⁶ The main concern of the Holy Ghost Fathers in island was the ransoming of slaves who eventually were converted to Christianity. “The evangelization of slaves first brought the Catholic Church to Zanzibar, and resources flowed in from Catholics elsewhere who were anxious to save souls through ransoming and baptizing.”⁷ So to say, the ex-slaves formed the local church. History has it that “the first East African Catholic marriages in modern times took place in Zanzibar on the 2nd of September, 1867.”⁸ The ex-slaves embraced Christianity in word and deed. It was a successful evangelization compared with the prior attempt by the Portuguese.

Apart from the Catholic Church, there were Anglicans and Lutherans. Also there were other Christians originating from other parts of the world. They lived in Zanzibar due to different motives including trade and white-collar jobs. “Christian groups, who were confined to the town included Goans, who came from the Indian Peninsula. They were Catholics and settled around the Roman Catholic Cathedral at Baghani, built between 1897 and 1900.”⁹ When referring to this cathedral, the natives use a *Kiswahili* term “Minara Miwili” meaning “Two Towers” because of its two highly elevated towers. The Cathedral was an icon of hope and liberation brought about by the gospel in the islands. The evangelization of ex-slaves was the fulfilment of Christ’s message that is “to proclaim liberty to captives...to let the oppressed go free.” (Lk.4: 18). The aim of the Holy Ghost missionaries was to restore the lost human dignity. Ransoming of slaves was followed by a holistic evangelization that involved catering for their health, intellectual and spiritual needs.

⁶ Cf. R. OLIVER, *The Missionary factor in East Africa*, 18.

⁷Cf. P. V. KOLLMAN, *The Evangelization of Slaves*, 267.

⁸ Cf. P. V. KOLLMAN, *The Evangelization of Slaves*, 135.

⁹ Cf. A. SHERIFF, *The History and Conservation of Zanzibar*, 77.

With the closing of the slave market in Zanzibar in June 1873, Christianity enjoyed peace and tranquility. During this period Zanzibar was still under the control of Arabs.

However, the Arabs were perceived as a threat to Christians. They ruled Zanzibar till the year 1964 when the revolution occurred. Christians endured as silent witnesses of the gospel. It was after this revolution that the national constitution was put in place that allowed freedom of religion.

1.4 Emergence of Muslim Communities in Zanzibar

Muslims are the followers of prophet Muhammed, the founder of Islam. The act of submission to the will and law of *Allah* (God) is what is termed as *Islam*. To be a Muslim is to submit oneself to the will of Allah. After the founding of Islam in the seventh century, there was a marked intensification of Arab contact with Zanzibar and the East African Coast.

Hence the emergence of Muslim communities can be attributed to Arabs and Persians who arrived in the 7th and 10th century respectively. This also led into a new civilization whose “principal components were Arab architecture, art and dress, Muslim religion and the Swahili language which gives this culture its name.”¹⁰ This kind of civilization is still evident among the natives of Zanzibar up to date.

The presence of buildings especially mosques have served as a source of historical facts. “The remnants of a Persian mosque built during their era in Zanzibar (1107A.D) can still be observed at Kizimkazi. There was also another at Msuka – Pemba, dated 1414 A.D but now it has disappeared completely.”¹¹

¹⁰ Cf. M. F. LOFCHIE, *Zanzibar: Background to Revolution*, 26.

¹¹ Cf. A. H. MOHAMMED, *A Guide to a History of Zanzibar*, 12.

Despite the adoption of Islam by the local population, Zanzibar became also a center of learning in East and Central Africa.

In the past, Zanzibar produced prominent Muslim scholars exchanging knowledge with other centers of Academy like Al-Azhar University in Egypt.

Islam was consolidated around the year 1832 when the Oman ruler by the name Said bin Sultan decided to shift his capital from Muscat (Oman) to Zanzibar. After Said bin Sultan, Islam was propagated by other rulers who succeeded him such as Seyyid Said bin Sultan (1832-1856), Sultan Barghash Bin Said (1870-1888), Seyyid Ali bin Said (1890-1893) Seyyid Hamed bin Thuwainy (1893-1896), Sultan Hamoud bin Mohammed 1896-1901), Sultan Ali bin Hamoud (1902-1911), Sultan Khalifa bin Haroub (1911-1960), Sultan Abdulla bin Khalifa (1960-1963) and Sultan Jamshid Abdulla bin Khalifa, who was overthrown by a 1964 Zanzibar Revolution. Up to the time of the revolution, “Zanzibar town was predominantly Muslim, belonging to different sects: Ibadhi, Shia, Ahmadiya and Sunni, which is the dominant sect; but other religions were also practiced such as Christianity, Confucianism and Buddhism, although the latter two had limited numbers of followers.”¹² Therefore it is the constant contact between Zanzibar and the Middle East that influenced the civilization of Zanzibar.

¹² Cf. A. SHERIFF, *The History and Conservation of Zanzibar*, 62.

1.5 CONCLUSION

Zanzibar has a long standing history since Ancient times. The evergreen and hospitable land influenced settlements from the East African Coast and abroad.

Persians were the first farthest group to settle in the islands, followed by Arabs.

This diversity was a source of richness in terms of trade and civilization. Despite other enterprises, the Persians and Arabs were key in the propagation of *Islam* in Zanzibar. They associated Islam with 'ustaarabu' (civilization) and other practices as 'ushenzi' (barbarianism). The influx of Portuguese towards the end of the 15th century could not successfully implant Christianity in the islands. The successful evangelization was that of the 19th century spearheaded by missionaries. Despite the effort made, Christians still stand as a minority group till today.

CHAPTER II

MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN PERCEPTIONS OF EACH OTHER

2.0 INTRODUCTION

After the genesis of Islam in the 7th Century, there was a wide-spread of Islam in the Middle East. Christianity that was in existence since the 1st Century began to encounter Islam. The Second chapter traces back the Muslim-Christian perceptions in history, popular writings and official documents of the Church.

2.1 Muslim-Christian Relations in History

There have been Muslim-Christian encounter since the 7th century. Prophet Muhammad, the founder of Islam enjoyed a peaceful encounter and co-existence with Christians since his childhood. “As a young man of 12 years old, Muhammad went on a trading mission to Syria with his uncle, Abu Talib. He is supposed to have met a Christian monk by the name Bahira who identified him with the features of a prophet.”¹³ The first Muslim-Christian encounter occurred before the *Hijra* whereby because of oppressions at home on declaring his mission; Muhammad instructed some families to seek refuge in the Christian Kingdom of Abyssinia (Ethiopia).

The Abyssinian King Negus granted Muslim refuge and sheltered them from their enemies, the Meccans. *Hijra* means “migration” in Arabic. It refers to the historic journey the prophet Muhammad made from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE. It signifies the genesis of a Muslim community centuries ago and the beginning of the Islamic calendar.

¹³Cf. N., KAHUMBI, “Contemporary Issues in Christian-Muslim Dialogue”, 6.

Another encounter was a delegation of a group of about 60 Christian leaders from Najran, a Southern Arabian province that included 73 villages with a majority Christian population. The leaders went to meet Muhammad at Medina. He welcomed them and answered their questions about the nature of his message. Also history has it that “the Islamic State which was established by Muhammad and later by the Orthodox, Caliphs: Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali granted religious freedom to, and protection of life and property of Jews and Christians.”¹⁴ The Islamic State also protected churches, cathedrals, temples, synagogues and other worshipping places of the Non-Muslims. After the death of Muhammad, Muslims were under the successors of Muhammad known as Caliphs. Abu Bakr was the first Caliph (632-634 CE).

He followed the footsteps of Muhammad by treating the Non-Muslims fairly.

Even when battles broke out, He instructed his combatants not to kill Christian Monks and Hermits

Furthermore, Umar the Second Caliph (634-644 CE) ensured that Christians and Jews were given full freedom of religion. He safeguarded their places of worship such as churches and synagogues. There are also instances when Christians were employed by Muslim leaders. For example during the Fatimid Caliphate (969-1171 CE) the Copts won the trust of most of the Caliphs.

They worked as advisors, administrators, ministers, treasury managers. Also some Fatimid Caliphs had Coptic women as wives and mothers.

Another living example is in Egypt whereby when the Muslim captured Egypt, the Muslims protected the Coptics from the Byzantine persecution.

¹⁴ Cf. N., KAHUMBI, “Contemporary Issues in Christian-Muslim Dialogue”, 7.

On the other hand, the relations between Muslims and Christians were marked by hostility and conflicts. During the Umayyad Dynasty (661-750 CE) and the Abbasid Dynasty (750-1258 CE), there was a discriminatory law (*Dhimmi* or *Ahl-al Dhimma*) that aimed at protecting the Muslim community and making sure the Christians and Jews paid *jizya* (tax) for protection. Similarly, during the reign of the last Fatimid Caliph, Al-Hakim, the Coptics were compelled to wear special clothing so as to distinguish them from Muslims. More still, churches were looted, church land confiscated and the use of church-bells was abolished.

The major differences between Christians and Muslims were also doctrinal. Prophet Muhammad objected the doctrine of the trinity. For him, God is one and undivided. If He has a Son, He must be having a wife. The denial of the triune God eventually led him into the rejection of the divinity of Christ. Muhammad understood and revered Jesus as one of the greatest prophets of God. The doctrine on original sin was another point of departure between Muslims and Christians. For Islam there is no responsibility of sins committed by a remote ancestor. On the other hand, the Church teaches that “All men are implicated in Adam’s sin, as St. Paul affirms: “By one man’s disobedience many (that is, all men) were made sinners...” (CCC, 402). So to say, the doctrinal issues also led into polemics between Christians and Muslims.

In the 11th up to 13th century the Church experienced a number of crusades that mainly aimed at pursuing religious motives. Crusades can be referred to as wars originally undertaken to deliver the Holy Place (Jerusalem) from the hands of Muslims. The crusades were considered as expeditions to recover the Holy Sepulcher, but before they started it is necessary to review the relationship between Islam and Christianity.

The prophet Mohamed born in 570 CE started his prophet-hood in 610. At that time, Islam spread fast in the Middle East. It therefore presented a threat to Christianity because of its rapid conquests in the mid-seventh to mid-eighth centuries.

Jerusalem was considered a Holy place for Christians because it was the place where Jesus preached, was crucified and buried. For the people of the time, it was very important to do a pilgrimage to visit the Holy Places. For Muslims also was a sacred place because is the place where the Prophet Mohammed ascended to heaven. Above all, Jerusalem was a site of pilgrimage for both religions. Muslims became a threat when they occupied the 'Holy Land'. In the year 980, Palestine was conquered by the Mohammedans of Egypt. "These latter oppressed their Christian subjects, desecrated the Holy Places and subjected pilgrims to various insults and indignities."¹⁵ In the year 1071 CE, the Seljuk Turks conquered Jerusalem. That made it difficult for Christians to visit their holy places safely. Hence the crusade had to spark out. Christians were ready to fight to secure the Holy Land and the tomb.

The eight crusades were waged between the years 1095 to 1270. After crusades there developed animosity between Muslims and Christians for centuries. The hostility between the two has been of misrepresentation of the other. For instance in the Medieval period, the Christian West referred to Islam as a "military conqueror" and a "religion of the sword." In East Africa, the Christian missionaries referred to Islam as "the religion of the slave trader" so as to discourage its spread.

¹⁵ Cf. T.GILMARTIN, *Manual of Church History*, II, 116.

Muslims have been involved in *Jihad* as a means to propagate Islam and safeguard the entire the Muslim Community. *Jihad* means exerting oneself for the cause of *Allah*. (God).

It is done through preaching, writing, medical services and Holy War.

Fighting, in Islam, is only one aspect of jihad. In its basic sense, jihad is striving against evil, whether in one's own life or that of society.

Sayyid Qutb, one of the most influential Muslim thinkers of the 20th century, sees jihad as a struggle against oppression whatever it may be. Jihad must not be used to compel people to embrace Islam but to free them from oppression...it is the protection of the Muslim community, and especially its youth, from being lured away from their faith.¹⁶

When the Portuguese occupied the Arab East African Coast in the 16th century, they endeavored to establish national monopoly of the Indian trade and to convert the local population to Christianity. Also in the second half of the 19th century, historians argue that “the missionaries came purposely to pre-empt and if possible, stop the spread of Islam by promoting Christianity.”¹⁷ It was in such cases that Muslims called for *Jihad* to save their threatened religion and to protect Muslims from being lured away from their faith.

2.2 Muslim Perceptions of Christians in Quran

The Qur'an is the Holy Book containing God's revelations through Muhammad. In the Holy Qur'an, Christians are regarded as “People of the Book”. The Prophet counted Christians among believers. He praised their humility.

When referring to Christians the Qur'an say: “And there are, certainly, among the People of the Book, those who believe in Allah, in the revelation to you, and in revelation to them, bowing in humility to Allah: they will not sell the signs of Allah

¹⁶Cf. I. A. OMAR, ed., *A Muslim View of Christianity*, 48-49.

¹⁷ Cf. B. OKELLO, *A History of East Africa*, 102.

for a miserable gain! For them is the reward with their Lord, and Allah is swift in account.” (Q. 3:199)

In addition to that, the Qur’an also portrays the Christians as loving and affectionate towards Muslims. It reads: “Strongest among men in enmity to the believers wilt thou find the Jews and pagans; and nearest among them in love to the believers wilt thou find those who say: “we are Christians”; because amongst these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and they are not ignorant” (Q. 5: 82-83).

However some Quranic verses have influenced negative attitude towards Christians. In the Qur’an, Christians are accused of having distorted the original message of humankind and the unity of God (Q. 2: 138-140).

There are also Quranic verses that advise Muslims not to befriend the Christians and Jews because they take Islam for a mockery. “O ye who believe! Take not for friends and protectors those who take your religion for a mockery or sport—whether among those who received the scripture before you, or among those who reject faith; but fear ye Allah, if ye have faith” (Q. 5:57). Such verses have resulted into prejudice and suspicion about Christians.

The Qur’anic verses have also been misused by Islamic Religious Extremists to justify *Jihad* and oppression of Non-Muslims in the name of religion. For instance the verse that reads: “Fight such men who do not practice the true religion—as those who have been given the book---until they pay their proper tribute and are humbled” (Q. 2: 29). Those who still take such verses literary have been in constant animosity with Christians. In a nutshell, the Holy Qur’an presents us with both positive and negative perceptions about Christians.

2.3 Muslim Perceptions of Christians in Hadith

The term *Hadith* is etymologically from Arabic language meaning a “report”. Hadith therefore refers to a collection of various narratives or reports of Divine Sayings in Muslim Traditions. Hadith contains the sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad after his death. Hence it is next to the Qur’an. Just like the Qur’an, Hadith is part of Islamic beliefs.

The parable of the vineyard labourers (Mt. 20: 1-16) has its resonance in the Hadith. Christians are portrayed as labourers who complained because they received less whereas the Muslims received more.

The messenger of God declared: The only comparison I find for you (Muslims), the Jews and Christians is that of a man who hired workmen. He said: He who works for me until midday will earn one carat. The Jews then worked for one carat, then the Christians worked for one carat. Then you came, working from the time of the afternoon prayer till that of sunset at the rate of two carats. Then the Jews and Christians got angry and said: We worked more and received less! God said: Have I in any way encroached upon your rights? No! This is my favor: I give it to whoever I want.

(Sahih Bukhari: Chapter No.37, Hadith No. 471).

Muslims believe that Prophet Muhammad is the last prophet who came to seal all revelation. Hence Muslims are presented as favoured ones although their revelation came last. Even on the day of resurrection the Muslims whose revelation came last will be the first to meet the Lord. “I heard *Allah’s* apostle saying ‘we (Muslims) are the last to come but will be the foremost on the Day of Resurrection, though the former nations were given the Holy Scriptures before us.” *(Sahih Bukhari: Chapter No.13, Hadith No. 1).*

Aisha, one of Muhammad's wives, narrated that the prophet in his fatal illness said: "Allah cursed the Jews and Christians for they built the places of worship at the graves of their prophets." (*Sahih Bukhari: Chapter No.23, Hadith No. 414*). In a way, Muhammad was instructing the Muslims not to do likewise.

Although Christians are counted among believers, they are perceived as going astray. This could be due to the dissimilarities in what Christianity and Islam hold as truth. As Hadith puts it: "Allah's apostle said 'say Amen' when the Imam says 'Ghair-il-maghdubi alaihim wala-ddal-lin'; not the path of those who earn your anger (such as Jews) nor of those who go astray (such as Christians) (*Sahih Bukhari: Chapter No.12, Hadith No. 749*). As elucidated in Hadith, the Muslims' perception of Christians leaves much to be desired. However, it is a work of Muslim Scholars to understand and interpret the Hadith according to its time and context.

2.4 Christian Perceptions of Muslims in Official Documents of the Church

On the face of other religions, the Church always called for collaboration and mutual understanding. She respects and acknowledges the possibility of salvation in other religions. Thus, the Church documents reflect a positive outlook as far as the relationship with Muslims is concerned.

What the Church postulates in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (no.841) is in accordance with what St. Paul says in his First letter to Timothy that "This is good and pleasing to God our saviour, who wills everyone to be saved and

to come to knowledge of the truth” (I Tm 2:3-4). On the relationship with Muslims the Church admits that “the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place among these there are the Moslems, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind” (*LG*, 16). Christians and Muslims believe in One Creator, giver of life, who will judge the universe. Hence both are brothers and sisters with Abraham as our common ancestor. God created the world because of his love. He created the world with a purpose. All people created by God have a common origin, common humanity, and common destiny. Hence we all tend towards the creator for salvation.

All true religions are indeed expected to define the meaning and purpose of our life, of what is good and evil, of death, judgment and life after death. The teachings of any religion must be true and objectively moral. “The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy...” (*NA*, 2). This changes the perspective of the church on other religions like Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam as non-salvific.

Islam is explicitly well discussed in *Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on the Relationship of the Church) inviting mutual comprehension and collaboration. Islam and Muslims cannot be overlooked in the history of the church. Christianity experienced hard time with a series of crusades against the Muslims. Indeed the church had a bad experience with Muslims. “For over thirteen centuries the history of the relationship between Christianity and Islam has been one of wars of conquests and reconquest, of bitter and often injurious theological polemics.”¹⁸ It calls for the attitude of friendship and brotherhood towards Islam and Muslims.

¹⁸ Cf. M. L. FITZGERALD - R. CASPAR, *Signs of Dialogue*, 238.

The Council dwelt much on what unites us as opposed to what separates us. “Muslims adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men” (NA, 3).²

This becomes a point of dialogue. Our God is one but what is revealed to us about Him and salvation is different. “Muslims take pain to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God.” (NA. 3). According to other scholars, “Submission means to surrender one’s soul or one’s face to God, according to the beautiful formula in the Qur’an (*aslama wajhahu li-llah*).”¹⁹ Christianity is not opposed to this. Christians are also called to do the will of God. Abraham stands to be the father of Jews, Muslims and Christians.

The acknowledgement of Jesus and Mary in Qur’an explains how one we are but with diverse understanding of the revealed truths. “Mariam (Mary), the mother of Jesus, holds a unique place in the Qur’an. She is the only woman who is mentioned at length and given great honour.”²⁰ Unity in diversity is indispensable between Christians and Muslims because what unites us is greater than what separates us.

2. 5 CONCLUSION

The official Church Documents on Islam and Muslims are so positive.

Above all, Vatican II Council was indeed sacred and open to the signs of time. It led to an end the extremism that portrayed the Catholic Church as the only password to heaven. The church’s acceptance of what is true and holy in other religions calls for peace, respect, collaboration and mutual understanding in this world of religious

¹⁹Cf. M. L. FITZGERALD - R. CASPAR, *Signs of Dialogue*, 240.

²⁰ Cf. M. L. FITZGERALD - R. CASPAR, *Signs of Dialogue*, 242.

pluralism. *Nostra Aetate* and *Lumen Gentium* are fundamental as far as dialogue with Muslims is concerned.

CHAPTER III

CONTEMPORARY MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS IN ZANZIBAR

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Zanzibar is the focus of this work. It is my Case Study of Muslim-Christian relations. Having explored Muslim-Christian perceptions in history and traditional writings, the next pace is to examine the contemporary Muslim-Christian relations in Zanzibar. Christians in Zanzibar belong to different denominations mainly: the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Evangelistic Assemblies of God, the Pentecostal Evangelical Fellowship of Africa to mention but a few. The Catholic Church is the most vibrant with the majority Christians. The Catholic Diocese of Zanzibar is currently under Bishop Augustine N. Shao, C.S.Sp. My target is to find out whether the past history between Christians and Muslims still influences the contemporary Muslim-Christian relations or not. I also endeavour to point out the contemporary perceptions and areas of tension between the two.

3.1 Contemporary Christian Perceptions of Muslims

Generally Muslims in Zanzibar co-exist harmoniously with Christians despite some elements of animosity. The perceptions that Christians have about Muslims are mainly socio-cultural, historical and religious.

Socio-culturally, Christians views Muslims as good people to relate with.

They are renowned for their hospitality. In various celebrations such as weddings or religious festivals, Muslims invite Christians to share their joys. Christians and Muslims also cooperate in schools and in sad events such as death.

Their civilization (*ustaarabu*) is highly cherished in the island. Good manners are part of Islamic civilization. This is reflected in their gentleness and use of polite language.

For instance the use of the expression “*naomba...*” literally meaning “I am requesting for...” is part and parcel of their politeness. Their dress code is admired by natives and visitors. The common dress for ladies is a long gown usually black known as *hijabu*. Women cover their body parts including the head and arms because their beauty is strictly for their husbands. They are not expected to entice men.

Men appear in a long white tunic. Generally Muslims in Zanzibar dress decently.

On the other hand, the rampant terrorist attacks have greatly tarnished the image of Muslims and Islam in general. Muslims have been associated with terrorism due to the rise of Muslim Militant groups such as Al-Qaida, Al-Shabab, Boko Haram and Hizbollah. The world view of some Muslim groups as perpetrators of terrorism led to the famous axiom that goes: “every terrorist is a Muslim but not every Muslim is a terrorist.” This has led to suspicion when relating with unfamiliar Muslims.

Historically, the prior experience of Slave Trade and the study of History in schools portrays Arabs as brutal harbingers of slave trade. This has led to the view of Muslims as followers of the religion of slave traders. Some people view Muslims of Arabic descent as a legacy of slave-traders (Arabs).

As regards religion, Muslims are renowned for their commitment to pillars of Islam. Islam has five pillars that are the frame-work of the Muslim life. They include: the testimony of faith (*shahada*), prayer (*salat*), almsgiving (*zakat*), fasting the Month of Ramadan (*sawm*) and pilgrimage to Mecca (*Hajj*). Christians view Muslims as committed to prayer and fasting. Islam has five prayer times that are compulsory to each Muslim. Prayer times are usually determined by the position of the sun.

These include: dawn prayer (*fajr*), noon prayer (*dhuhr*), afternoon prayer (*asr*) sunset prayer (*maghrib*) and night prayer (*isha*).

My first shock in Zanzibar (Pemba) was when I went for shopping during the day only to find all shops closed. I found it important to know their prayer times so as to fit in accordingly. This is something worthy of praise! On the other hand, the rise of some Islamist separatist groups such as *Uamsho* (the awakening) in 2012 disfigured the countenance of Islam and Muslims. *Uamsho* group was a cause of commotion and unrest in the Island. The target of *Uamsho* was to fight alcohol consumption, to ensure that foreigners observe the indigenous dress code and to seek the independence of Zanzibar from Tanzania mainland (Tanganyika).

3.2 Contemporary Muslim Perceptions of Christians

Christians are a minority group in Zanzibar. However their presence is much felt due to their life of witness. The encounter between Muslims and Christians has

led to perceptions that are both positive and negative. The perceptions can mainly be categorized into historical, social and religious dimensions.

Historically, Muslims view Christianity and Christians as a threat to Islam. This is due to the historical fact of animosity between the two. “Although crusades occurred almost a thousand years ago, Muslims have not forgotten the outrage of the crusades, and the emotive power of these memories still colours their perceptions of Christians.”²¹

For some Muslims, Christians are perceived as a residue of colonialism because of Christian colonizers from the West.

Of more recent memory, and perhaps for that reason, more galling, is the colonial period when for more than two hundred years virtually the entire Muslim world was governed and controlled by a handful of Christian nations. The multiple indignities suffered in that period—the replacement of the indigenous and time honouring ways of behavior with new and allegedly superior codes of government, law, personal conduct, and education, the paternalistic ideologies of the “white man’s burden” and “la mission civilatrice,” the economic exploitation, and the reduction of Islam to a “pegan” religion—are resonant memories that powerfully affect the ways that Muslims regard Christians today.²²

Just as Christians associate Islam with slave-traders, Muslims also associate Christianity with colonizers from Europe. During colonial rule “Zanzibar and Coastal Tanganyika were administered Islamic law, while the rest of the country was administered under British Common Law, whose values had been shaped in Christianity.”²³ Thus the presence of Christians and Christianity is conceived as a

²¹ Cf. T.F. MICHAEL, *A Christian View of a Islam*, 63.

²²Cf. T. F.MICHAEL, *A Christian View of Islam* 63-64.

²³ Cf. H. HOLGER, *Religion and Politics in East Africa*, 299.

threat to the implementation of Islamic Law. Such prejudices are magnified by tendencies of misrepresentation of the other so as to win more converts.

Socially, Christians are known as peaceful, trustworthy and learned people. As one of the staff members at Tumaini Nursery School, one of the Catholic schools in Zanzibar; we were entrusted with a good number of children at their tender age from Islamic families. Muslims believe that Christians cannot harm their children because Christianity upholds forgiveness, love and mercy. Christians' non-vengeance and non-violence has become part of their identity. Their way of life is admired by Muslims. They admire their solidarity and love for each other. Indeed Christians are silent witnesses of Christ in Zanzibar. On the other hand, they are sometimes considered immoral due to their free-style way of dressing that is contrary to Islamic dress code. Christians are also associated with luxury and drunkenness because they own bars and clubs.

In terms of religion, Muslims understand Christians as followers of prophet Issa (Jesus). Christianity is renowned as a religion that preaches peace, love, forgiveness and justice. Christians and Muslims agree on their common origin, common humanity and common destiny. Muslims cherish the Christians' scriptures Especially the Old Testament. They argue that the New Testament has distortions. Saint Paul is considered to be a protagonist of this distortion. As regards God, Muslims agree with Christians that God is One and the Creator of all that is. They deny the notion of a Triune God. For Islam God is one and undivided. However, Muslims also consider Christians as not committed to religion especially prayer. Some still perceive Christians as followers of the untrue religion. They refer to Christians as *kafirs*

(Non-believers) because “they worship statues and have three gods instead of one”.

3.3 Areas of Tension between Muslims and Christians

The relations of Muslims and Christians in Unguja and Pemba have been marked by a peaceful co-existence. *Ujamaa* (brotherhood) is still evident in the lives of people. *Ujamaa Policy* was instituted on the 5th of February 1967 by Julius K. Nyerere (First president of Tanzania) in the Arusha Declaration. One of its goals was to promote equity and brotherhood. *Kiswahili* language was and is still used as a uniting factor from the grassroots up to the national level.

The conflict between Muslims and Christians is based mainly on socio-religious and political differences. Some Muslim extremists have always been accused of escalating animosity because of their radical religious views. Also the political parties in the Islands have been a source of conflict especially during the national elections. C.C.M Party (Chama Cha Mapinduzi) is perceived to be for Christians probably because its founder is a Christian (Julius K. Nyerere) with the majority Christian members in Zanzibar and Tanzania mainland. CUF Party (Civic United Front) is perceived to be for Muslims in Zanzibar and the mainland because of its majority Muslim membership, ideology and Muslim founders. Key figures in CUF are

Ibrahim Lipumba in Tanzania mainland and Seif Sharif Hamad in Zanzibar.

Political affairs have been a cause of animosity and division between Christians and Muslims. Political parties have been used as tools enhance this division. Politicians divide people on the basis of religion so as to the majority support. Since Christians constitute a minority, religion is used to attract the Muslim majority.

This has been a case even before the independence of Zanzibar in 1963.

For instance ZNP (Zanzibar Nationalist Party) founded in 1955 propagated party ideologies that were in favour of Islam. “Party ideology frequently identified the ZNP as the defender of Islam in a Muslim country threatened by powerful Christian enemies, and envisioned the consequence of its electoral defeat as the destruction of the Islamic faith in Zanzibar.”²⁴ Also CUF (Civic United Front) founded in 1992 has been convicted of dividing people on religious lines. Its famous slogan is “Haki sawa kwa wote” (Equal justice for all). This is due to the feeling among many that they are exploited and there is no equal distribution of resources compared to Tanzania mainland. They also wish to pullout from the mainland Tanzania and become autonomous. According to Rabasa, “In Muslim-Majority Zanzibar, there is a growing interest in independence, or at least in achieving greater autonomy within Tanzania. Zanzibar is becoming more religious and conservative- a trend observed throughout all of the Muslim parts of East Africa.”²⁵ They believe Zanzibar is for the indigenous Muslims. Tanzania mainland is viewed as a stumbling block to implementation of *Sharia* (Islamic law). According to Dr. N. Kahumbi, “Muslims have always expressed a desire to remain semi-autonomous, to apply *Sharia* (Islamic law) and to have a direct link with the Arab world. Christians in Zanzibar and Pemba have to contend with misunderstanding, hesitance, uncertainty and sometimes intolerance, hostility and open conflicts from Muslims particularly during parliamentary and presidential elections.”²⁶ The desire for Zanzibar as an independent state is a true story. During CUF’s political rally in Pemba (May 2015) I could hear CUF supporters chanting in the streets of Wete town “Tunataka nchi yetu” (We need our country).

²⁴Cf. M. F. LOFCHIE, *Zanzibar: Background to Revolution*, 229.

²⁵ Cf. A. RABASA, *Radical Islam in East Africa*, 38.

²⁶ Cf. N. KAHUMBI, “Contemporary Issues in Christian Muslim Dialogue”, 25.

Despite politics, religion has greatly acted as a discriminatory factor between Christians and Muslims. Religious-doctrinal issues have influenced people's thought and attitude. According to Lofchie, "in broad terms, the Koran postulates an essential and inevitable conflict between Muslims and Non-Muslims (particularly Christian) communities, and it enjoins all faithful Muslims to wage an external struggle – Jihad against non-believers"²⁷ In a way the Quran doesn't encourage Muslims to befriend Christians. For Muslims who strictly abide by what the Quran postulates, this has been a cause of negative attitude towards Christians. The belief that Christians adore statues is still in the minds of Muslims today. I got a number of similar questions from various Muslim students. Indeed actions speak louder than word. When at Wete Parish in Pemba, I witnessed the incident of a broken statue of Mary in front of the Church.

This serves to explain why churches in Zanzibar have no outdoor grottos for fear of similar experiences. Such detestations are due to dissimilarities in religious views.

A Muslim's perception of a statue is different from that of a Christian. This also makes interreligious dialogue indispensable for peaceful co-existence between the two.

Muslim *Da'wah* (outreach) has also been a cause of animosity. *Da'wah* is meant for propagation or spreading of Islam. Some *Imams* (leaders of Islamic worship services) use it as a device to water down Christianity and Christians so as to promote Islam. Also the use of *Mihadhara* (Street preaching) has been instrumental in the conversion of Christians to Islam. This is made possible through the misrepresentation of Christianity. For instance an ordinary Christian who is not well versed with Christianity could easily be convinced that Christians have three

²⁷Cf. M. F. LOFCHIE, *Zanzibar: Background to Revolution*, 129.

gods and they adore statues. On the other hand, whereas Muslims are free to propagate their religion, Christians are not permitted to proselytize. Any kind of public proselytization could not be tolerated by the Muslim Community. When I was at Wete Catholic Parish in Pemba, for the first time I experienced Palm Sunday processions held in the church. Also there were no processions on the solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, traditionally referred to as *Corpus Christi*. Lack of religious freedom is a drawback for Christians to freely and explicitly express their faith. Christians express their fear to make the sign of the cross before meals in hotels and other public places. Some Christian ladies dress typically like Muslim ladies due to feelings of insecurity.

Marriage between a Muslim and a Christian has always been in favour of Islam. According to Islam, a Muslim man can marry a Christian woman but a Christian man cannot marry a Muslim woman. On the other hand, when it comes to mixed marriages, “in its rulings the church makes no difference between man and woman. Islam, on the contrary, permits a Muslim man to marry a Christian woman but prohibits a Muslim woman from marrying a Christian man.”²⁸ This has been used as a loophole for Christian ladies to marry Muslim men and eventually convert to Islam. The church loses some of her flock who due to poverty are easily swayed by wealth of their Muslim partners. Any attempt of a Christian man to marry a Muslim woman has always been a cause of tension. Hence as far as religion is concerned, Islam stands a greater chance to make more converts in Zanzibar.

There are also socio-economic and socio-cultural matters that widen a gap between Muslims and Christians. One of the challenges Christians face is lack of job opportunities. In Pemba, the Sukuma and Nyamwezi people (originally from

²⁸ Cf. B. MAURICE, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, 85.

Tanzania mainland) work as casual labourers in coconut and clove plantations that belong to Muslims. Sunday has been a cause of controversy between the Muslim employers and the Christian employees. As Anderson puts, “on Zanzibar and Pemba, although the islands are very Islamic, Christians have occupied some high positions. Church attendance has been high, although Christians feel pressure of having to work on Sundays.”²⁹ Some Christians have ended up neglecting the Sunday obligation for fear of losing jobs. Where religion is used as a password to employment, Christians either hide their identity or convert in order to secure jobs. This goes hand in hand with the changing of their Christian names. For instance a person by the name of John or Catherine would introduce oneself as Abdul or Aisha.

Land has also been a cause of misunderstandings. Christians cannot easily acquire land for permanent settlement regardless of one’s richness.

It is also difficult for the churches to acquire land for fear that they would eventually construct church buildings. Consequently, renting of houses is the only plausible solution for many Christians.

Although some Muslims have no problem with renting houses to Christians, they are against the use of their buildings as prayer houses. In such apartments Christian communities meet outside or any other conducive place for prayer. Also, Christians have been accused of not observing the dress code of the place. Like in any other Islamic state, Christians are not expected to keep pigs or drink alcohol especially in public places. The use of the term *kafir* (non-believer) when referring to Christians sounds offensive in the ears of many Christians and those who respect them.

3.4 Rising of Islamic Religious Extremism

²⁹ Cf. W. B. ANDERSON, *The Church in East Africa*, 137.

Despite some challenges faced by Christians, generally Zanzibar has been a peaceful Island. With the rise of Islamic religious extremism, Zanzibar experienced serious tensions between Christians and Muslims. There arose an Islamic separatist group known as *Uamsho* (the awakening) in 2012. This group was a main cause of commotion and unrest. It tarnished the good name of Zanzibar as an Island where peace prevails. *Uamsho* endeavoured to fight alcohol consumption, to ensure that foreigners observe the indigenous dress code and to seek the independence of Zanzibar from Tanzania mainland.

There are various factors that led to the rise of such separatist groups some of which are external and others internal. Beginning with external factors, I concur with Rabasa that the remote causes include “the effects of the world- wide Islamic revival of the last several decades, the influence of International Islamist Organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood, the export of Saudi funds and ideology, the impact of Islamic revolution in Iran, and the spread of International radical Islamist networks.”³⁰ Islamic religious extremism is propagated and funded by different Islamic Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that come in the name of relief and humanitarian assistance. “Others are engaged in long term development activities. Some are involved in *Da’wah* (literary, ‘the call,’ Islamic Missionary Activity). And yet others have been used as vehicles to spread Political Islam or to support militant groups.”³¹

Christianity in Zanzibar is perceived as a threat to the future of Islam. After the union between Tanzania mainland (Tanganyika) and Zanzibar in 1964, there have been an increasing number of local immigrants from the mainland to the islands. Following the increasing number of Christians, different strategies have

³⁰ Cf. A. RABASA, *Radical Islam in East Africa*, 39.

³¹ Cf. A. RABASA, *Radical Islam in East Africa*, 41.

been put in place to safeguard and reinforce Islam. “Since the 1980s wealthy individuals from the Gulf States have funded mosques, madrasahs, health clinics, secondary schools, teachers’ training colleges and universities in Zanzibar, and young Zanzibar men have been given scholarships to study in Medina, Khartoum and elsewhere.”³²

There are also internal factors that have spearheaded the rise of Islamic religious extremism in Zanzibar. Apart from the perception of the Christian missionary activity as a threat to Islam, there have been “mass tourism that exposes the island to ‘Western values’ that are perceived as a threat to ‘Islamic values’, while on the other hand money from the Gulf States, Islamic scholars and Islamic teachings expose the population to new kind of Islam.”³³ One of the objectives of *Uamsho* was to bring to standstill such external influences that are contrary to Islamic civilization.

For instance putting on a mini-skirt in Zanzibar is a clear sign of moral decadence and paganism. A traditional Muslim woman is expected to cover all body parts including the head. When Tanzania became a multiparty state in 1995, there was a new political environment that created room for separatist movements and religious extremism. Despite the political environment, “Islamic revival was part of ‘opening up’ and ‘reconnecting’ with the Muslim world after years of isolation.”³⁴ Generally speaking, the rise of separatist groups in Zanzibar has always been associated with political and Islamic instigation. Radicalization and manipulation of a young generation is made possible by taking advantage of their ignorance and poverty.

Young men who have studied Islam abroad come with revolutionary ideas of “going back to the roots” whereby Islam was propagated through fighting against

³² Cf. S.TURNER, “Globalization and Islamic Revival in Zanzibar” 238.

³³ Cf. S.TURNER, “Globalization and Islamic Revival in Zanzibar”, 239.

³⁴ Cf. S.TURNER, “Globalization and Islamic Revival in Zanzibar”, 238.

infidels. This includes the misinterpretation of Qur'anic verses such as: “when you meet unbelievers, smite their necks; after you have made a large-scale slaughter of them, tie fast the bonds....Those who are slain in the way of God, He will guide them and He will admit them to Paradise.”(Q.47:4-8).

The other verse that concerns people of the book (Christians) reads: “Fight such men who do not practice the true religion—as those who have been given the book---until they pay their proper tribute and are humbled. (Q. 2: 29). In this context, “going back to the roots” for Christians would mean declaring another crusade and looking at other religions as sheer paganism. This makes interreligious dialogue a necessity in order to cast light on such shadows in terms of context and signs of our time.

3.5 The Impact of Animosity on Muslim- Christian Relations

Despite healthy relations between Muslims and Christians in Zanzibar, there are shortcomings that spring from animosity. One of the major impact of animosity is *Islamophobia* that is, a perceived fear of Islam. It is a fear prompted by the past and present external and internal experiences of Islam and Muslims. The world experiences of terrorist attacks and the internal experiences of *Uamsho* and other forms of Islamic extremism have led into prejudice and suspicion of Muslims and Islam. This can be verified by the way some Christians interpret their day to day experiences of each other. For instance when a Christian is offended in any way by a Muslim, the quick conclusion could be “It is because I am a Christian.” Also when a Christian wrongs a Muslim, the act would quickly be associated with religion.

This has led to using of religion as a loophole to justify guiltiness even if one is on the wrong.

Misrepresentation of the other is another phenomenon resulting from animosity. This is implemented by portraying a false image of Christianity or Islam and their followers. It is quite common in Zanzibar to hear Christians referred to as *kafirs* (non-believers) by some Muslims. The title implies that the Christians are not practicing a true religion, hence non-believers.

Some Christians also refer to Muslims as terrorists. All these are verbal manifestations of attitude and animosity among them. This renders interreligious dialogue to be a *conditio sine qua non* as far as mutual understanding is concerned.

Furthermore, Christians have a limited freedom of religion compared to Muslims. Muslim extremists detest public proclamation of the gospel and similar evident strategies that propagate Christian faith. In the year 2014, Zanzibar experience the torching of some Churches and their leaders were affected.

Churches that were affected include the Evangelistic Assemblies of God Zanzibar (EAGZ), Pentecostal Evangelical Fellowship of Africa and the Anglican Church at Mkunazini Street in Zanzibar town.

Lack of religious freedom is a drawback as far as the evangelization of Zanzibar is concerned. Christianity was and is still viewed as a threat to Islam in Zanzibar. Although Zanzibar is part of Tanzania, it is very difficult for a Christian from the mainland to acquire land in Unguja or Pemba. The influx of Christians into the islands of Zanzibar is indirectly discouraged. It is also hard or literally impossible for any church to buy land in view of constructing a church. Hence the only reliable way to proclaim the gospel is by becoming “silent witnesses of Christ”. Bearing witness is not necessarily verbal. It can be done through deeds as the gospel puts it: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (*John. 13:35*).

Although Christians are expected to accept and cherish their identity, some hide their identity because of fear. For instance some Christian ladies dress typically like Muslim ladies so that they will not easily be identified as Christians. When Christians begin to betray their faith and deny their identity because of fear, also their mission by presence among Muslims becomes insignificant.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Despite the challenges, Muslim-Christian relations in Zanzibar are worthy of praise. Muslim-Christian relations in Zanzibar cannot be compared to other Muslim Predominant States where Christians are a minority. The causes of tension have always been due political or religious extremism. However, the study has proven that the bitter past between Muslims and Christians still carries some legacy up to date. Some shortcomings in Muslim-Christian relations render Zanzibar as an area of interreligious dialogue. However, it wise for newcomers to be flexible in accordance with the norms and customs of Zanzibar so as to fit in well.

CHAPTER IV

INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AS AN IMPERATIVE OF PEACEFUL MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN CO-EXISTENCE IN ZANZIBAR

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that Zanzibar is a peaceful Island, the study shows clearly that there are issues pertinent to Muslim-Christian relations that make interfaith dialogue indispensable. According to Pope John Paul II: “dialogue is a means by which people discover one another and discover the good hopes and peaceful aspirations that too often lie hidden in their hearts. True dialogue goes beyond ideologies. Dialogue breaks down pre-conceived notions and artificial barriers.”³⁵

³⁵ John Paul II, “World day for Peace 1986: Peace is a value with no Frontiers: North-South, East-West” no. 4.

It brings together people of different religious beliefs as one family. The main objective is to promote a more healthy interaction and enrichment between people of different religions. Interfaith dialogue will help to create the Ideal Zanzibar where positive and constructive mutual understanding, respect and collaboration between Muslims and Christians are prevalent.

4.1 Theology of Interreligious dialogue

The theology of dialogue can be traced back to God himself. God the Father created human beings after dialogue with the Son and the Spirit. As the book of Genesis puts it: “Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness” (*Genesis*. 1:26). This presupposes understanding, cooperation, unity and communication in the trinity. Dialogue also aims at realizing communication, solidarity and mutual understanding in this world of religious pluralism. God himself is our role model of dialogue.

Christians and Muslims acknowledge God as their creator and saviour. God created mankind in his image (*Genesis* 1:27). Hence each individual bears the image of God (*Imago Dei*). We are all the same with reference to the image of God. More so, we are all capable of making personal relationship with God. We are naturally endowed with reason and will that help us to contemplate God. We have a common humanity and life originating from God, regardless of ethnicity, nationality, gender or race. Thus, we can easily enter into dialogue with people of other faiths with whom we share the same nature and origin. According to Magesa, our dialogue of life is not an easy task. “It involves a fundamental *yes* response: a commitment to the goal of transforming the world in favour of life in the best way one can. On the

basis of this fundamental response, communities of faith from the grassroots up can fruitfully converse.”³⁶

God has been in dialogue with humanity since the beginning of creation. In the bible we have God’s dialogue with Adam and Eve, Abraham, Israel, Moses and finally through his beloved Son, Jesus Christ. The message God conveys to all humanity is: “This is my beloved Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him” (*Luke* 9:35). Listening calls for total submission to God’s will. Submission to God’s will is also a hinge of Islam. It is against this background that interfaith dialogue is a medium through which we listen and appreciate each other. It is also through listening that we discover the will of God in other religions.

Mankind was created for a purpose. The divine plan of creation finds fulfilment in the final destiny of all humanity. Muslims and Christians believe in One eternal Creator, almighty, provident, who will judge all humanity at the end of time (final judgement). Both religions believe in the hereafter where there will be judgement, and reward. Those whose who abided by God’s statutes will be rewarded in heaven whereas those who persisted in evil will be punished in hell. Thus, together with people of other faiths we await in hope and patience for salvation.

The salvific value of religions can be ascribed of the universal action of Christ. For St. Paul, Jesus is the universal saviour because there is no other name given to men, and through which we will be saved (*Acts* 4: 12). God does not abandon his creation. Hence the Church carries the mission of God to ensure that the purpose of creation is achieved. God wills everyone to be saved and come to knowledge of the truth (*I Timothy* 2:3-4). The Church uses all possible means to make this dream a reality for all humanity.

³⁶ Cf. L. MAGESA., *African Religion in the Dialogue Debate*, 194.

Interfaith dialogue is also a way of promoting unity in diversity. As Christ prayed for his disciples so that “all may be one” (*John. 17:21*), the Church also upholds interreligious dialogue as means to bring about harmony among believers of different religious affiliations. In order to promote unity and harmony Maurice proposes the following:

Christians and Muslims should develop their dialogue on the four levels necessary for human communication. First there is the generous sharing as brothers and sisters, which is a dialogue of hearts. Next is the dialogue of life, requiring the courage to expend themselves in the promotion of human values, of which God alone is the final guarantee. In the dialogue of speech the partners dare to make discourse on both God and humankind. And finally there is the resolute dialogue of silence in which God speaks directly to the heart of each of the partners.³⁷

Thus, unity in diversity is possible through dialogue based on our common origin, common humanity, common environment and common destiny.

4.2 The Value of Inter-religious dialogue

Interreligious is dialogue is part of the Church’s mission of evangelization. Interfaith dialogue focuses on those who do not know Christ and his gospel especially people of other religions. “Our engagement in interfaith dialogue offers us the opportunity to move beyond the world of our respective confessions, to come to see “with the eyes of others” their concerns, their hopes, their beliefs, and yes, also their complaints.”³⁸ This eventually leads to mutual understanding and respect between Catholics and people of other faiths.

Cf. B. MAURICE, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, 114.

³⁸ Cf. T.F. MICHAEL, *A Christian View of Islam*, 10.

Also, it is through interfaith dialogue that the mystery of incarnation is made manifest. God entered into dialogue with the fallen humanity through his Son, Emmanuel (God amongst us). Hence interreligious dialogue is another way of making God's presence felt among all people. The church as an icon of salvation endeavours to safeguard peace and reconciliation in the world. The church enters into dialogue to reconcile societies deprived of justice and peace by promoting love and forgiveness.

With the gift of the Holy Spirit who leads us into the knowledge of truth, dialogue is a means used to discover what is true and holy in other religions. The values that we have in common can be used as a yardstick to enhance dialogue. For instance, Muslims believe in the Decalogue (10 Commandments) as given to Moses. If Christians and Muslims observe God's commandments, the world will be deprived of human killings, robbery, deceit, debauchery; among many others.

Also the discovery and appreciation of what is objectively good for human salvation leads to spiritual enrichment.

4.3 The Church's Effort In Zanzibar

The Catholic Church in Zanzibar still flourishes amidst threats, critics and intimidation. The Catholic Church in Zanzibar is under the local ordinary, Bishop Augustine Shao CSSp. The diocese comprises 13 priests. 10 of them are diocesan and 3 are religious missionaries of the Holy Ghost Congregation (Spiritans). There are also 4 women religious congregations. They include Our Lady of Usambara from Tanga, Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters from Morogoro, Precious Blood Sisters from Kenya and Evangelizing Sisters of Mary from Kenya. Zanzibar Diocese has 8 parishes: 2 in Pemba and 6 in Unguja.

The main challenge faced by the Catholic Church in particular is religious intolerance. Lack of freedom of religion is a stumbling block to the Church's mission. The Church is not free to proselytize as the Muslim Community freely does. Hence the Church in Zanzibar stands as a silent witness of Christ and a symbol of love and forgiveness for everyone. Religious intolerance and hostility manifested itself through various shocking incidents. On the 25th of December 2012, Fr. Ambrose Mkanda was shot three times and seriously injured. On the 17th of February 2013, Fr. Evarist Mushi was killed by unknown aggressors. On the 13th of September 2013, Fr. Anselm Joseph Mwang'amba was attacked by acid. Despite such terrible experiences the Church still advocates for love and forgiveness as opposed to hatred and revenge. The silence of the Church when these incidents happened was another way of doing dialogue. Her silence had a dialogical dimension. Silence and harmony among Christians powerfully communicated what the Church teaches and upholds.

When referring to these incidents, one Muslim (name reserved) said "Ukimya wenu unauma sana" literary meaning "Your silence is so hurting." It was a dialogue life that manifested itself through forgiveness and love for the enemies. The powerful message of the Catholic Church for Christians in Zanzibar is inscribed on a banner at the entry to St. Joseph's Cathedral "Minara Miwili" (Two tower Church). It reads: "Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you" (*Mathew 5:44*).

The Church's dialogue in Zanzibar is mainly through provision of social services such as schools, colleges and health centres. "It is the dialogue of concerned neighbour with their adjacent churches and mosques, who work together and live on the same street. This type of dialogue is concerned with issues of social justice, pollution problems, and teenage children in mixed public schools with their

problems of sex and drugs and a host of other issues.”³⁹ Education is one of the possible means to eradicate ignorance and poverty in the society. An ignorant and poor person could be easily manipulated and used cause commotion in society. Anderson proposes that “Christians and Muslims must overcome the ignorance of the past, forget the injustices of other times, and renew their knowledge and appreciation of one another.”⁴⁰ This dream can only be achieved through dialogue with education persons. The Church has 20 nursery schools, one primary school, one secondary school and one Vocation Training Centre for carpentry, masonry and tailoring. All these are open to all regardless of religion. Muslims and Christians discuss and play together in schools.

Parents also meet to address common matters pertinent to the welfare of their children regardless of their religious affiliations. It is through schools that Muslims and Christians meet and unite to pursue common dreams.

The Church’s dialogue is also through provision of health services. The diocese owns 3 dispensaries that offer services to all regardless of religion. Good treatment and care that Muslims enjoy in these dispensaries has made them confess that Christians are so loving and do not revenge. Hence dialogue is not necessarily verbal, limited to debates and discussions as many would think. It has nothing to do with implicit or explicit conversion. Mere good deeds through services offered and concern for people’s challenges regardless of religion is enough to convey a silent powerful message and proclaim who you are. Hence dialogue through actions is better because actions speak louder than words.

³⁹ Cf. I. A, OMAR,ed., *A Muslim View of Christianity*, 68.

⁴⁰Cf. B. MAURICE, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, 112.

The Church also takes part in various seminars that aim at enhancing religious tolerance. Previously Muslims co-existed peacefully with Christians. According to Sheriff : “Islamic milieu tended to foster tolerance even of the Shia’s sects; similarly both Hindus and Christian missionaries enjoyed considerable religious freedom in Zanzibar.”⁴¹ The current situation is attributed to external instigation and internal political ideologies that use religion to divide people. Zanzibar needs to imitate “Nyerere, himself a practicing Roman Catholic, who overcame sectarianism with his policy of Ujamaa (socialism) which insists that there must be no discrimination based on race, religion and tribe.”⁴²

Justice and Peace is another area of the Church’s concern. The church is indeed a mediator of justice and peace in the island. The message of peace has been highly emphasized through meetings, seminars, publications and sermons.

The Pontifical Missionary Children (PMC) in Zanzibar are referred to as “Watoto wa Haki na Amani” (Justice and Peace Children). Through them the message of justice and peace has been disseminated in Unguja and Pemba. Indeed “Pax et Unitas” (peace and unity) has been a concern and an appeal of the Church to all people in Zanzibar.

Also a mere presence of the Church in Zanzibar is another way of witnessing and entering into dialogue. According to Magesa: “Dialogue is fundamentally witnessing. If for Christians God’s self-disclosure is necessarily tied to Jesus of Nazareth, they must witness to it.”⁴³ The presence of the Church in Zanzibar is enough to make the Muslim Community aware of the existence of other religions and people whose beliefs and theology are different from theirs.

⁴¹ Cf. A. SHERIFF, *The History and Conservation of Zanzibar*, 62.

⁴² Cf. W. B. ANDERSON, *The Church in East Africa*, 137.

⁴³ Cf. L. MAGESA., *African Religion in the Dialogue Debate*: 197.

4.4 Interfaith Dialogue in Zanzibar

There have been local and national initiatives to promote a peaceful co-existence between Muslims and Christians. The major means to enhance dialogue is through education. Formally Muslims used to give more priority to the study of the Holy Qur'an and Islamic faith in *Madrassa* (Islamic School of religion). Nowadays primary and secondary education is compulsory. Lack of education has been a cause of misinterpretation of the Qur'an to justify evil.

For instance, the following Qur'anic verse could be misused: "When you meet unbelievers, smite their necks; after you have made a large-scale slaughter of them, tie fast the bonds....Those who are slain in the way of God, He will guide them and He will admit them to Paradise."(Q.47:4-8). I concur with Turner that nowadays "Education is central to Islam in Zanzibar. Whereas people used to simply recite the Qur'an in madrasahs, many now know Arabic and are able to interpret the texts and reflect on their meaning."⁴⁴ Likewise, large amounts of texts are being written in Kiswahili and English. It is by educating the society first that interfaith dialogue will be successful.

Polemics between Muslims and Christians are also caused by the misrepresentation of each other through religious debates and recorded preaching. Respect for each one's faith is paramount. Touching one's faith is touching one's being. According to Omar:

Muslims must not seek to explain Christianity on the basis of what the Qur'an and subsequent Islamic tradition have said about it but should seek to understand Christianity from its own sources and on its own terms. Similarly, Christians must not interpret Islam, especially its sacred scripture, in accordance with their own

⁴⁴ Cf. S.TURNER, "Globalization and Islamic Revival in Zanzibar", 240.

understanding of the divine economy of salvation... but should take seriously the Islamic worldview and its divine plan for the attainment of forgiveness, salvation, and bliss in the hereafter.⁴⁵

The government has made effort to promote sports in Zanzibar. Through sports Christians and Muslims play together as brothers and sisters. Many schools have sports programs. It is through such programs that Muslim-Christian relations are socially improved. Solidarity between Muslims and Christians is vivid in business, funerals, marriage ceremonies and religious festivals.

Thus, interfaith dialogue in Zanzibar is fostered through socio-economic services. However, common problems of poverty, ignorance, diseases and funerals have also been uniting factors.

⁴⁵Cf. I. A, OMAR, ed., *A Muslim View of Christianity*, 67.

5.0 GENERAL CONCLUSION

Muslim- Christian Relations in history have been of joys and sorrows.

With reference to Zanzibar, the relations between the two are far better compared to other Islamic States where Islamic Militant Groups exist. The main cause of tension was the rise of Islamic extremist groups that came in the form of *Uamsho* (Islamic revivalism). The Muslim community is generally peaceful and friendly to Christians. Terrible reported incidents are perpetrated by few radical individuals. The differences between them are magnified by external influences and internal political and religious fundamentalism. Kiswahili language and the spirit of Ujamaa play a great role as far as peaceful co-existence is concerned. With free education policy in Zanzibar, I foresee a bright future of Zanzibar. It is through education that ignorance and poverty will be halted. I enjoyed a peaceful coexistence among Muslims in Zanzibar. They were good to me. The good name of Zanzibar has been tarnished by few radicalized people. Differences in belief don't stop us from being human beings. Let us continue to be in solidarity with Muslims due to our common origin (life from one God), common ancestry (Adam, Abraham and Moses), common humanity, common environment (home) and common destiny (One God who will judge us.)

Zanzibar is a role model where Muslims and Christians live as brothers and sisters. The reported cases are subjective. Objectively speaking, Zanzibar is a peaceful island where the seeds of *Ujamaa* (brotherhood) as planted by J.K. Nyerere are still evident up to date. The study has proven that what unites us is greater than what separates us. We are brothers and sisters because of our common origin, common humanity, common ancestry and common destiny. Mutual collaboration and understanding is key to peaceful co-existence.

The feelings of animosity are aroused by Political and religious extremism. If the two are brought to halt Zanzibar will be a paradise. Knowledge of history helps us not to repeat the same mistakes. It is high time for Muslims and Christians to understand their past so that they can better the present and plan for the bright future. I am convinced that one day my dream will come true; that is “to see the world free from religious animosity.” The role of the Church is marvelous. She has tried to cohere all people together and foster a peaceful co-existence.

The way forward for peaceful co-existence in Zanzibar is conscientization of Muslims and Christians by instilling in them a spirit of brotherhood (*Ujamaa*) which they all cherish. This can be achieved through seminars. The emphasis should be put on what unites us as opposed to what separates us. Our adoration of One God, common origin, common humanity and common destiny are key. Since both religions preach about love, Christians and Muslims must love one another for the sake of God.

Moreover, Christians and Muslims should share their content of faith and learn from each other. For instance it is important for Christians to know what a pig means for Muslims; and for Muslims to know what a statue means for Christians. Sharing of faith and learning from each other will lead to respect and tolerance of

one's feelings, habits and beliefs that are different. However, the government should intervene when human rights are violated especially freedom of religion. Also political parties that instigate division and hatred on religious lines should be banned. My recommendation for Christians and Muslims is in line with what St. Paul tells the Romans: "Live in harmony with each other" (Rom. 12: 16).

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