

## CHAPTER THREE

### President Mkapa's Programme of Action

Give therefore your servant an understanding heart to judge your people, that I may discern between good and bad:...

*Supplication of Solomon, 1 Kings 3:9*

When Solomon had an opportunity to ask from Almighty God for whatever he wanted and a prior guarantee to be instantly granted his request, he did not ask for personal comfort, honour, fame or riches. He asked for wisdom and understanding; not in order to win debating points but in order to enable him distinguish between right and wrong and act accordingly. There is a well-known joke in Tanzania, whose different versions are also available in many parts of the world about two envious neighbours who were granted a similar opportunity like that of Solomon. In one version, the king invited the two envious men and told them to ask for and would be granted whatever they wished on one condition: the first to make the request would get what he asked for, but his neighbour would get twice as much. "If you ask for twenty bars of gold", the king said, "your neighbour will get forty". For six hours no one made a request, each one told the other to submit his wish to the king. Then one of them told the king, "Oh king, remove one of my eyes from its socket"!

It is economically costly to have a large section of society marginalised in education and public life, whether on grounds of gender, ethnicity or religion. And religious inequalities are politically more dangerous than gender inequalities. Except in Aristophane's comedy, *Lysistrata*, it is very improbable for gender imbalances to precipitate any society into a violent civil war between men and women. However, religious injustices are capable of inflaming members of society into an armed conflict. It is far better for all of us in Tanzania to have the majority of Muslims in college than to have them in prison. And yet as I shall attempt to show in this chapter, there are some influential Tanzanians who behave as if they would prefer suffering the pain and disadvantage of having one eye, to seeing a neighbour who has two eyes like themselves.

### Mkapa's proposals to resolve the problem of religious discrimination

On 19 January, 1999 almost a year after the Mwembechai killings, President Mkapa was a guest of honour at the Diamond Jubilee Hall Eid Baraza jointly organised by Muslim groupings of different schools of thought. As I noted in the previous chapter, Muslim public anger was approaching dangerous proportions. And from the onset of the Mwembechai crisis until that day, President Mkapa had not made any public statement of either condemning or consoling Muslims. But his chairing of the NEC and CC meetings which commended government operation at Mwembechai, and his Tabora declaration of war speech which was perceived as having set in motion the whole crisis, encouraged Muslims to include President Mkapa in the list of political villains. But he did not top the accusation list. Top on the list of public condemnation was the Catholic clergy, particularly Padre Camillius Lwambano and the Catholic

Radio Tumaini for giving maximum publicity to Lwambano's seditious fabrications, followed by Makamba, Gewe, Ameir, Omar Juma, Sumaye and then Mkapa. At the same time when President Mkapa was attending Eid Baraza at the Diamond Jubilee Hall, there was another historic Eid Baraza taking place a kilometre or so away, at Mtambani mosque, along Kawawa Road, Kinondoni. The Mtambani Eid Baraza was historic because it attracted thousands of Muslims not only from Dar es Salaam but also from Morogoro, Tanga and Mwanza. It was historic because it was held in defiance of a government order not to hold it. The government sent a large contingent of para-military police in full gear, but they wisely decided not to disrupt the Baraza. It was historic because the tape of the Mwembechai killings was shown to thousands of people at one time. At that Baraza some of the above public figures including the President were also incriminated for their failure to apprehend and try the Mwembechai culprits.

It was against the above background that Alhaj Ramadhani Madabida, on behalf of the Muslim community in the country, presented to President Mkapa Muslim grievances about religious discrimination in the country. By way of illustration he cited religious imbalances in education, employment, and imprisonment, the disregard of Muslim Personal Law, religious prejudices against OIC membership, and the handling of the Mwembechai crisis. And it was in that socio-political context that President Mkapa made his milestone speech. Before I look at his response, it is important to keep in mind the immediate public reaction to his speech. The reaction was mixed, and generally polarised along religious lines. While many Muslims exploded with joy, and were generally pleasantly surprised, many Christians seethed with apprehension and genuinely felt the President's speech was ill-advised. All newspapers except the Muslim weekly newspaper, *An-Nuur*, sidelined the President's speech. It was the Muslim newspaper *An-Nuur* (January 22-28, 1999) which published the full texts of both, Madabida's speech and Mkapa's response.

In his initial response to the political grievances aired by the Muslim community, President Mkapa encountered the dilemma faced by his government in addressing such complaints. He also suggested procedures which he believed could amicably resolve the problem. His dilemma was, as far as the government was aware, in its vision, in its constitution, and in actual practice, Tanzania had always abhorred discrimination in all its forms and manifestations, which included religious discrimination. And yet a large section of the Muslim community seemed to believe that while in theory Tanzania was religion-blind, in the sense of giving equal opportunities to all citizens, in practice the government was not only openly biased in favour of Christians, and especially Catholics but also decidedly anti-Muslim. Again from the government's point of view there was absolutely no policy, overt or covert, to marginalise Muslims, despite the latter's insistence that their under-representation in education and key government positions was not fortuitous but calculated.

To resolve that political enigma the president proposed a three-pronged interrelated procedure. First, the government would painstakingly re-examine the claims of Muslims with a view to establishing their credibility. Second, the Muslims should dispassionately re-inspect their claims and back them up with adequate, reliable and scientifically verifiable data. After all the *onus probandi* rested with the Muslims. The third step would involve a joint meeting between Muslim and government representatives to share and exchange notes. If a sober and unemotional scrutiny of available evidence would seem to support Muslim claims, the government would take measures to rectify the situation within available resources.

On the face of it, the *modus operandi* proposed by the president appears to be quite reasonable. In fact it encouraged a number of serious-minded Muslims to start mustering the required evidence. It would appear to me that the whole exercise is predicated on wrong-headed assumptions. If carried out, the exercise promises to be a cruel political hoax in effect even if not in intent.

As I have noted in the previous chapters, the Mwembechai killings were a tragic summation of a long process of Muslim demonisation. Subsequent events since then have compelled more and more Muslims to admit that their ardent, patriotic hopes of building a peaceful and just society whereby Muslims would also be considered as rightful citizens like anyone else were probably unrealistic and therefore alternative options would have to be explored. A careful reading of the political signs on the wall would seem to suggest that unless the government takes bold and far-reaching measures to redress Muslim grievances Tanzania may find itself engulfed in a violent political turmoil. The programme of action outlined by the president is too superficial to be of much political value in stemming growing Muslim discontentment which has been building up for many years.

Before pointing out those weaknesses, I wish to acknowledge that his speech of 19 January, 1999 marked an important watershed in the political history of Tanzania. President Mkapa is the first, incumbent national leader in the history of independent Tanzania to admit in public the existence of Muslim grievances (irrespective of whether they are real or imagined). He is also the first leader to call for a candid re-examination of those grievances. No other incumbent leader before him, with the possible exception of Professor Kighoma Ali Malima, was courageous enough to address the Muslim question. All along the general tendency has been to pretend that all was well, and to suppress the expression of those grievances. Whether or not Muslims agree with his views, President Mkapa will go down in the history of Tanzania, and will particularly be remembered by Muslims as the first leader who made the attempt to look into their demands. The fact that I believe his views are mistaken, does not and cannot in any way diminish the political milestone he has achieved in this regard.

## **The basic assumptions are untrue and invalid**

As far as access to education and employment are concerned, Tanzania today is divided into two major classes; the privileged and the underprivileged. For reasons which I shall point out herebelow, the vast majority of Tanzanians who happen to be Christians are in the former category while the majority of citizens who are Muslims belong to the latter class. There is probably no serious researcher who can deny that Christians constitute a disproportionate majority of the best trained minds in Tanzania. And since the majority of the finest medical doctors, lawyers, professors, engineers and professionals in other fields are Christians, naturally Christians also predominate in almost all key positions in government administration. It is very unlikely that the government which is served by such highly qualified personnel should be ignorant of the marginalisation of Muslims. It is therefore inconceivable that Muslims can provide any new information to the government, considering that, unlike Muslims, the government has unhindered access to all data. The problem is not lack of adequate information but lack of enough political will to confront the problem. The problem is political not statistical. As I pointed out in the first chapter, acknowledging the problem carries serious implications which may involve a radical reallocation of scarce national resources in favour of Muslims. The privileged class is naturally apprehensive, and if historical evidence is anything to go by, it will do everything in its power to maintain the *status quo*. In the Tanzanian context members of this class would do so not because they are Christians but because they are beneficiaries. The following examples may illustrate the futility of the whole exercise of data collection.

Charity begins at home. Members of Parliament are supposed to be representatives of their respective constituencies. A number of researches, using sophisticated research instruments have established that the vast majority of Tanzanians are very poor (although I think our poverty is so conspicuous to need such researches ). *The World Bank Development Report* (1993) listed Tanzania as the second poorest country in the world. And according to a study by Jazairy and Pacuccio (1992) 60 per cent of Tanzanians in the

rural areas were in 1988 living below poverty line. And in April 1999 the government confirmed that at least 45 poor peasants died of starvation in Mahenge District alone (*Majira* 17 April, 1999). Yet in the same year those representatives of the poor passed with record speed a bill which entitled national leaders and all members of parliament huge terminal benefits and privileges, which are not by any standards commensurate with our economic status as the second poorest country in the world. While the electorate complained that the bill allowed their leaders to “loot” the country, some members of parliament complained that the allocated amount was but a pittance. Our honourable members of parliament passed the bill not because they lacked sufficient data about the distressing poverty of their electorate. They were actuated by personal interest. To provide the MPs with detailed, well researched scientific data about the poverty of the country and her people using different indices of poverty could not have possibly induced them to scale down the monetary benefits awarded them let alone to torpedo the bill altogether. The difficulty of accepting scientific data is in this case aggravated by the fact that the decision makers and the beneficiaries coincide. As we noted earlier the rules of natural justice demand that the accused or defendant should not at the same time serve as judge.

## The addictive and corrupting power of privileges

In situations where some members of a society are oppressed, the oppressor would often seek to justify and perpetuate the unequal relationship, even if that meant resorting to selective recall of evidence, fabrications, blaming the victim and providing proofs which are nothing but self-fulfilling prophecies. It will be seen from the following examples that there are striking points of similarities between the arguments which were used to justify oppression elsewhere and those which are being advanced today to rationalise the marginalisation of Muslims in Tanzania.

In his book, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, Fredrickson (1971:47) has quoted William Drayton, the lawyer, justifying the continued enslavement of Africans by saying:

Personal observation must convince every candid man, that the Negro is constitutionally indolent, voluptuous, and prone to vice; that his mind is heavy, dull and unambitious; and that the doom that has made the African in all ages and countries, a slave -- is the natural consequence of the inferiority of his character.

It is worth recalling that the German colonial authorities decided it was necessary to use forced labour including the use of the lash to induce the African to work. They also believed that Africans, all Africans had criminal tendencies, lacked personal initiative and self-discipline and were lazy by nature (Koponnen, 1995). Similar arguments are now being presented by the privileged group in Tanzania to explain the gross under-representation of Muslims in education and in key government positions. Muslims, we are told have no one to blame except themselves. This is because they do not value education, they are lazy and extravagant, and being fatalistic, they lack the enterprising spirit which is so crucial for personal advancement. In his widely acclaimed book, *The Life and Times of Abdulwahid Sykes: The Untold Story of the Muslim Struggle against British Colonialism in Tanganyika*, Said (1998) has presented a detailed account of not only how Muslims spearheaded the struggle for independence but also how their numerous programmes to advance themselves were (and still are being) interfered with by the Christian-dominated government. So far no one has as yet challenged the evidence presented by Mohamed Said. Nor has anyone questioned the devastating findings reported by Sivalon (1992). But since the problem is not lack of information but a determination to maintain the *status quo*, the derogatory charges against Muslims continue unabated.

At the beginning of the 19th century, a scholar called Richard Colfax published a scientific study titled *Evidence Against the Views of the Abolitionists, Consisting of Physical and Moral Proofs of the Natural Inferiority of the Negroes*. In it Colfax argued that Africans were so inferior both physically and morally as to resemble beasts. And evidence from history had shown that ‘over a period of three or four thousand years Africans had many opportunities to benefit from personal liberty and “their proximity to refined nations”, but they had “never even attempted to raise themselves above their present equivocal station in the great zoological chain” ’(Fredrickson, 1971:49-50). And as the 20th century was coming to a close, two American scholars, Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray (1994) published their book, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* which uses charts, graphs and statistics to prove that Africans are genetically inferior.

In Tanzania no one has so far come out with an explicit statement to the effect that Muslims are genetically inferior. The supposed inherent inferiority of Muslims is suggested by insinuation; by ostensibly allowing facts to speak for themselves. In 1984 the *Africa Events* magazine (which I forgot to record its volume and issue numbers) under the heading: “Tanzania: A Question of Numbers” wrote that ‘out of 33 students accepted at the Medical school only one was a Muslim, and out of 14 who qualified as dentists, only one was Muslim. Is the ratio 1:33 or 1:14 ?’ The following year another magazine, *Arabia* (May, 1985) wrote under the heading “A Closed Door to the Corridors of Power”: ‘The majority of pupils in Tanzanian primary schools are Muslim (80 percent), a percentage which dwindles to 15-20 percent in secondary schools, sinking to a mere five percent at University level’. Almost fifteen years later, on 2 February, 1999 the Member of Parliament for Kigamboni Hon. Kitwana Kondo told the parliament that out of every 100 students who sat for the standard seven examination in Dar es Salaam in the year 1998, 71 were Muslim and 29 Christian. But out of every 100 students selected to join government secondary schools only 21 were Muslim while 79 were Christian. The MP wanted to know whether Muslim children were inherently dull (*An-Nuur*, February 5-11, 1999). Such statistics along with those which show a low rate of enrolment and a high rate of truancy or drop outs in predominantly Muslim areas are calculated to suggest that somehow Islam is incompatible with education and development. In fact in its editorial of 27 January, 1999 *Mtanzania*, one of the leading daily newspapers in the country called for a national campaign to save the Coast region education wise. This call came in the wake of a disturbing report that by that time Muhoro secondary school in Rufiji had registered only two students for Form One. And the most popular historical evidence used to prove that Muslims devalue education is the nationalisation of religious schools in 1969. If thirty years after the nationalisation of those schools Muslims are still a minority in higher educational institutions and have not “even attempted to raise themselves above their present equivocal station”, the problem lies squarely at the door of Muslims themselves.

Another standard response of the oppressor is to believe or to pretend that the oppressed are happy and contented except for a few misguided elements. Even in the wake of Nat Turner uprising of 1831 white slave owning masters continued to argue that the African “found happiness and fulfilment only when he had a white master”. And singing was regarded as betokening that satisfaction. Douglass (1845) a former slave says, ‘I have often been utterly astonished, ... to find persons who could speak of the singing among slaves, as evidence of their contentment and happiness. It is impossible to conceive of a greater mistake’. In Tanzania the government believes or seems to believe that except for a handful individuals in the Sheikh Ponda Committee, or the Dar es Salaam Imams Consultative Assembly headed by Sheikh Juma Mbukuzi, the overwhelming majority of Muslims are very happy and contented with their lot in the country! Goaded by that conviction the government directed its police force to launch a crack down operation of all suspected members of the committee. And quite unsurprisingly, the editorial of *Mtanzania* (7 May, 1999) not only endorsed the move but also lamented its belatedness. In the wake of the pork butcheries riots of 1993, the then minister for Home Affairs Hon. Augustine Mrema actually said that the Muslims they knew

would never riot. In the same year the then Arch-bishop of Dar es Salaam, now Polycarp Cardinal Pengo (1995) issued a pastoral letter in which he condemned the few confused Muslim extremists and pledged to co-operate with moderate civilised Muslims. I have already pointed out why that analysis is a gross misreading of the political signs on the wall.

Usually beneficiaries of a socio-political order would endeavour to perpetuate it, no matter how unjust it may be. In the United States for example, the slave-owning churches of the South solemnly resolved in 1864 to maintain the enslavement of the black people when they said, “we hesitate not to affirm that it is the peculiar mission of the Southern Church to conserve the institution of slavery, and to make it a blessing both to master and slave” (Ahlstrom, 1972). In the same reference Ahlstrom says ‘the most violent and radical pro-slavery men were ministers’ and that in defence of slavery ‘The pulpits resounded with a vehemence and absence of restraint never equalled in American history’. And Douglass (1845) notes that the most cruel slave-owners were the religious people because ‘they found religious sanction and support’ for their cruelty:

As an example, I will state one of many facts going to prove the charge. I have seen him tie up a lame young woman, and whip her with a heavy cowskin upon her naked shoulders, causing the warm red blood to drip; and, in justification of the bloody deed, he would quote this passage of Scripture -- “He that knoweth his master’s will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes”.

Another example is the ordeal which Elisabeth Kecklye (1825-1905) underwent at the hands of a Christian minister. ‘For several months, a young Christian minister flogged her every Saturday because he thought it is his Christian duty to induce in her demeanour more fitting for a slave’ (Barksdale and Kinnamon, 1972:306). I have already mentioned how in Tanzania His Eminence Polycarp Cardinal Pengo invoked the Bible to sanction the Mwembechai killings.

It is also quite significant that whenever Muslims accuse the government of marginalising them, those accusations elicit very strong and hostile responses not from the accused, which is the government, but from church leaders. For example in 1993, Alhaj Aboud Jumbe, the former President of Zanzibar and Vice President of the United Republic of Tanzania, in a series of articles published in a weekly newspaper *Mwananchi*, argued quite persuasively and from his personal experience in government that there was in Tanzania a methodical but underhand scheme of marginalising Muslims in education and employment. Jumbe (1994) repeated and backed up those charges with statistical evidence in his book, *The Partnership*. In his book, Jumbe called for a full-fledged research to investigate the nature and magnitude of religious discrimination in Tanzania. Jumbe’s candid observations provoked an animated official reaction from the churches. In an impassioned response published in *Rai* ( April 13-19, 1995) under the heading “Askofu Mkuu amshambulia Jumbe” ( The Arch-bishop attacks Jumbe ), the Arch-bishop of Dar es Salaam (now Cardinal ) Pengo described Jumbe as a dangerous person bent on sowing seeds of discord in the country (See also *Watu*, April 24-27, 1995). It is important to bear in mind that the intriguing tendency of church leaders to arrogate to themselves the role of government spokespersons is not a recent phenomenon. Way back in 1963, the patron of Da’wat-El-Islamia, the late Sheikh Hassan bin Ameer (1963) noted with grave concern, the vehement attacks which church leaders directed against Alhaj Chief Abdallah Fundikira for speaking in Parliament of the need to rectify religious imbalances in education. In their response published in a Catholic newspaper, *Kiongozi* ( 17 July, 1963 ) under the heading “Amani na Haki vimeponzwa” (Peace and Justice betrayed) they charged that Fundikira’s statements deeply hurt the feelings of Christians and of the government and endangered peace and justice in Tanganyika. His words, they said were like rubbing powdered pepper on a healing wound. And quite prophetically they ended their

acrimonious reply by saying that Chief Fundikira was deceiving himself (for the *status quo* would be maintained at all costs?).

## Demonisation of Muslims in the Mass Media

In his book, *The Jew and the Cross*, Runes (1965) says in order to justify the discrimination against the Jews, the church deliberately planted stories which depicted Jews as ritual murderers and poisoners of wells. 'This type of propaganda was so successfully put forth by the clergy that the church-going masses suspected every Jew of crucifying children on church holidays' (1965:57). He also notes that in Norwich 'a Jew was burned alive for refusing to admit that Jesus was God'. There are probably very few well-wishers of Tanzania who may have failed to notice that in recent years Muslims are increasingly being demonised both in the official and private media. Available historical evidence does not seem to suggest, even remotely that Tanzanians who happen to be Muslims and their fellow country-men and women who are Christians are sworn enemies. On the contrary, although as citizens, Muslims are grossly underrepresented in educational opportunities and employment, Muslims have never considered Christians as their enemies who should be hated or killed. Muslims have continued to live in harmony with Christians without any alarming traces of social or religious animosities.

The same cannot be said of Tanzania today. Tanzania which until very recently was praised by Rasmussen (1993) as setting a fine example in Christian-Muslim relations in Africa, has now begun to experience the hostilities which come with "the demise of social unity" (Kaiser, 1996). The seeds of religious discord and hatred are deliberately being planted by repeatedly painting Muslims as ignorant, misguided zealots whose highest ambition is to cut the throats of Christians. Newspapers, with tacit government approval seem to vie with each other in tarnishing the image of Muslims in the country. For example, in its second issue, *The Family Mirror*, ( May, 1993 ) an influential and otherwise sober magazine wrote:

### **Balukta calls for shedding of Blood as 500 youths register for 'Jihad'**

At least 500 youths are believed to have registered in Dar es Salaam to serve in the Islamic Army which is reportedly being formed to fight in the 'Jihad' (Holy War) declared by fundamentalist Muslim faction (Balukta) against alleged marginalisation of Muslims by Christians, according to investigations by the *Family Mirror*.

Investigations have also revealed that two containers of arms caches were recently intercepted by customs officials. The Islamic Republic of Iran was the chief supplier of arms and money to fight in the Jihad.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Augustine Mrema who is also responsible for the Home Affairs Ministry confirmed the government has received information in this respect and was working on it.

In its earlier issue the same magazine wrote in an eye catching headline:

### **Religious Tension in Tanzania: Iran funding Muslim fundamentalists, Vatican Embassy to be set on fire? Arch-bishop of Dar es Salaam to be killed?**

*Tanzania Analysis* ( July 22, 1995:1 ) joined the Muslim bashing bandwagon in style. In its maiden issue the magazine wrote that the Muslims in the country had solemnly vowed ‘to prevent the prospect of a Christian from taking over the Presidency’ and that ‘The president (Mr. Ali Hassan Mwinyi) has himself armed them sufficiently to slash the throats of all Christians in this country’. Of course *Tanzania Analysis* was merely repeating the accusations which the clergy had heaped on the president the previous year in a document signed by Rev. A. Shila. Among other things the church leaders accused the president of ‘opening up the floodgates of bloodshed in the form of MUJAHEDDIN who are resolved to burn down Christian schools and hospitals in the country’ (*Watu*, August 12-16, 1994 ). Jews in Christian Europe were accused of ritual murders and wells poisoning. Muslims in secular Tanzania are depicted as bloodthirsty hoodlums bent on spilling Christian blood.

They are also depicted as untouchable ignoramuses who have a particular aversion for schools. This image is daily reinforced in Radio and Television “Entertainment” programmes where Muslims and their religion are vilified through the use of indirect satire. In medieval Europe Jews were burned for rejecting the divinity of Jesus, in modern Tanzania Muslims are arrested, denied bail and harassed for refusing to believe that God Almighty is Jesus son of Mary.

While Catholics constitute a privileged religious group in Tanzania, Muslims are the ultimate religious “other”. To justify their continued suppression, Muslims are painted in the worst possible colours. They are bloodthirsty, lazy, and hate Christians and education. It is instructive to recall that in nineteenth century Catholics were also vilified in the United States. Not because Catholics were or are particularly evil people compared to other groups; but primarily because the Protestant Church was dominant in the country and wanted to maintain the *status quo*. Protestants believed they had a special mission to mould the United States as a Protestant nation. They hated the idea of sharing power with Roman Catholics. But they did not say so. Instead they attempted to prejudice the people against Catholicism by unleashing fabricated stories against them.

Some of those fabrications have been reported by Ahlstrom (1972). He has recorded Thomas Jefferson’s argument that the Catholic church was extremely dangerous because it represented the most powerful institutionalisation of ‘medieval superstition, sectarian narrowness, and monarchical despotism in religion’. The writings of Episcopal bishops were less refined. They resorted to what was known as “horror literature”. The first in a long series of such literatures was *Six Months in a Convent* (1835) supposedly written by Rebecca Theresa Reed. It was followed by Maria Monk’s *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal* (1836). In those books and subsequent ones the authors were ostensibly presenting first hand accounts in the form of confessions about horrifying sexual misdemeanours of Catholic priests and nuns. The illegitimate children who ensued as a result of the sexual orgies between priests and nuns were murdered and quietly buried in the subterranean dungeons of church buildings. Of course the so-called “confessions” were actually written by some of the Protestant clergy with the express purpose of vilifying Catholics. Catholic bishops and priests made desperate efforts to deny and even to disprove those allegations but with little success. The problem was not the presence or absence of scientific data; the problem was whether Catholics should have equal rights with Protestants.

From the above examples one major inference can be drawn: it is naturally difficult for a superordinate group to “understand” the need for sharing its privileges with a subordinate group. On the contrary it will attempt to perpetuate the subordination of the underprivileged group. No sober mustering of evidence by Muslims in Tanzania to argue their case can make any significant impression. To use a famous political aphorism, “Rights are taken, they are not given”.



## Popular myths about Muslims and Christians in Tanzania

Anti-Muslim propaganda in Tanzania is being engineered by geniuses who wield immense political power in moulding public opinion. As a result the campaign is registering remarkable success as far as Christians are concerned. A growing number of sober Christians, not all of them of average intelligence, have sincerely come to believe that Muslims are a problem in the country. On the other hand the same propaganda seems to have a boomerang effect on the Muslims. Many patriotic Muslims, who had for many years lived with the comforting illusion that their country accepts Muslims as full-fledged citizens, are now becoming increasingly disenchanted. In fact that disenchantment has reached absurd levels. The image of a Muslim leader may easily be ruined by his being publicly praised by government leaders. (Like a Tanzanian president being praised by American imperialists in the early 1970s)! This trend indicates that our country is on a collision course.

Anti-Muslim propaganda is pervasive and takes a variety of forms. It is not possible to address all its forms and manifestations here. Instead I shall look at the popular myths disseminated to legitimise the subordination of Muslims. These are:

- (a) Religion and criminology in Tanzania
- (b) Muslims undervalue “secular” education
- (c) Christian churches help the government in providing education and health services
- (d) Muslims are disorganised
- (e) Muslim public preaching “Mihadhara” may disrupt peace and stability

## Religion and criminology in Tanzania

One of the major pillars of anti-Muslim propaganda in Tanzania is the supposed linkage between religion and crime. While in apartheid South Africa and in the United States (and even in colonial Tanganyika) the linkage was between race and crime, in Tanzania efforts are being made to create the impression that Muslims are comparatively more criminal than other religious groups. By insinuation Islam is supposed to be the cause of their criminality. In practice a Muslim is considered a potential criminal or a legitimate suspect.

A Catholic bishop in colonial Tanganyika by the name of Cassian Spiss was convinced that “Muslims had no morals, were deceitful and all had venereal diseases. To educate them was useless, they were friends of the Government out of greed only” (Hornsby, 1964:85). The Anglican bishop Steere insisted that schools should be located far away from Muslim areas so as to avoid “the demoralising influence of the coast peoples” (Swatman, 1976:108). The same prejudices are repeated today but in a refined scientific garb. Statistical figures are presented by our experts to prove the high rate of criminality among Muslims. The proof is based on police records of (a) the number of people arrested, (b) the number of people in police custody, and (c) the number of people serving jail sentences. For example it was reported in the *Mfanyakazi* newspaper (April 9, 1997) that in rape cases reported in Dar es Salaam, Muslim men committed 56 per cent of those cases, whereas Christians committed 43 per cent and Traditionalists 1 per cent. *Mtanzania* (12 May, 1997) reported that 90 per cent of Keko remand prisoners were Muslims. And

according to the *Mfanyakazi* (1 October, 1988) report 111 Keko remand prisoners died between 1984 and 1988. Presumably the majority of whom were Muslims.

Even if we assume that the above statistics are accurate (and I have no reason to doubt their accuracy), they do not provide conclusive evidence that Muslims have a greater propensity for crime than non-Muslims. A number of problems attend the above statistics. The first one is their representativity or sampling error. What is the percentage of Muslims, Christians and Traditionalists in Dar es Salaam? What is the religious percentage of remand prisoners in Tunduma or Bunda? To use a concrete example, there are Muslims in Mwanza and Shinyanga regions. In recent years over 4000 old women suspected of being witches were killed in the two regions. From available police records there is no Muslim who has so far participated in those murders. Would it be appropriate to conclude from this evidence alone that non-Muslims are more liable to commit murder than Muslims are? Sheikh Mbalamwezi, a famous religious leader in Mwanza thinks so. He cites as further evidence the non-participation of Muslims in the 1994 Rwanda genocide. Anyone who sought refuge in a mosque was protected by the Muslims irrespective of ethnicity, religion or gender. The same could not be said of the Catholic churches. Some clergymen actually participated in the killings. I think this is a hasty generalisation and more factors should be taken into account.

The second problem is that of reliability. Police statistics of arrests are not a very reliable guide in establishing the linkage between religion and crime. Every year thousands of innocent people are arrested by the police, and every year the police are unable or unwilling to arrest thousands of people who have committed crimes. And in the Tanzanian situation conclusions based on the police register are even more suspect because there is more than enough evidence to show that the police are more enthusiastic in suspecting and apprehending Muslims than Christians. And this is hardly surprising in a situation where employment at all levels is disproportionately biased against Muslims. I have already pointed out how the Mwembechai crisis illustrates the magnitude of the Muslim predicament in Tanzania with respect to the rule of law. In practice religion is a classifying factor in the administration of justice. The experience of Muslims and the rule of law in Tanzania is like that of a King's Messenger in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. The Messenger was being punished in prison before his trial had begun. His trial had been scheduled to start the following week. The trial would proceed and reach a verdict before knowing for which crime he was being tried. Only after his trial had ended would his offence be mentioned! In July 1994, the Morogoro para-military police force (FFU) bombed the Uwanja wa Ndege mosque with tear gases because they believed Muslim preachers who were setting up microphones at the mosque would eventually make offensive utterances about Christianity. Subsequently, two Muslims died (*Majira* 18 July, 1994). Against this background police arrests alone are not a reliable indicator of Muslim criminality.

The third problem is that of validity. Is it Islam or poverty which actuates many young men and women to commit crimes? Is it Islam or lack of employment opportunities? This can only be established in a situation where Muslims and non-Muslims enjoy equal opportunities. At present Muslims are disproportionately sidelined in education and employment. In a socio-political set up whereby the majority of the unemployed are of a particular religion or race, it would not be surprising if the people of that religion or race make up the majority of jail in-mates. Correlation should not be confused with cause.

The fourth problem lies in what such statistics conceal. It may be true that over 80 per cent of Tanzania's convicted prisoners are Muslims. What are the crimes which landed them in prison? Are they street crimes (of the *kibaka* and *changudoa* type) or suite crimes (of looting the national banks type)? In his celebrated book, *Trusted Criminals* Friedrichs (1996) says that suite crime, or white collar crime involves human behaviour in its most devious and diabolical forms. 'We cannot fully understand our political, economic and social institutions without attending to white collar crime' (1996: xvii). Who are the trusted criminals

in Tanzania? What is their religious identity? What is their percentage in jails? What is their percentage in police registers of arrests? In their Pastoral Letter of 21st November, 1993 the Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC) noted with concern how trusted criminals (they did not use that phrase, they called them “people entrusted with leadership”) were ruining the country. Such expressions of concern are few and far between. It is common knowledge for example that extreme poverty coupled with the alluring hope of living like dignified human beings have compelled some young Muslim boys who should have been in secondary schools to risk their lives by being carriers of cocaine and other drugs. When they refuse to be carriers, and most of them refuse after their first trip, they are usually found dead in dubious circumstances. They are given two choices, to continue being carriers or to die. Muslims who are denied education and decent jobs are then turned into perpetual slaves of trusted criminals. The trusted criminals are not only treated as respectable citizens but are also provided with the “ultimate security” in the country. Recently a Catholic priest was caught with packets of heroine and bhang. The case received very little publicity. Only one daily newspaper reported it in a small corner of the inside pages. In his judgement the Kisumu Resident Magistrate gave him the option of either serving a four month jail term or paying a fine of 200,000 Tanzanian shillings, about 250 US dollars! Of course he immediately paid the fine (*Majira* 27 August, 1999).

### **Muslims undervalue “secular” education**

As a result of the interplay of factors mentioned in chapter one many of our Christian friends find it extremely difficult to come face to face with the grim reality of religious discrimination in Tanzania. In a way their cognitive dissonance is understandable. It was easier to see and condemn the apartheid policies of the white racists. It was easier to believe that white people even if they were good Christians, were still capable of discriminating black people, even if those black people were also good Christians. The recent examples in Bosnia and Kosovo have shown that white people, even if they were good Christians, were quite capable of massacring their fellow countrymen and women, even if they were also white, if those white people were Muslim. It was easier to see and accept that the Somalis were capable of spilling the blood of other Somalis even if those other Somalis were also Muslim. It was easier to accept the possibility of white Catholics hating and even killing white Protestants in Northern Ireland. The Tutsis and Hutus of Rwanda and Burundi were capable of killing each other even if they are all black people and rightful citizens of the same country. Tanzanians who were above such primordial politics could even play the role of mediators in Burundi and elsewhere. A comforting illusion is being orchestrated in Tanzania to the effect that somehow Tanzanians are a unique species. Christians in Tanzania, even if they dominate all spheres of national life can never discriminate against other Tanzanians. In fact this argument was used in 1998 by the Minister for Home Affairs and by some church leaders not only to justify the exclusion of Muslims, but also to condemn as dangerous the idea of including them, in the National Board of Parole (*Taifa Letu* June 7-13, 1998 )!

Christians find the reality of discrimination in their beloved country is just too bitter to drink unsweetened. As we all do in such situations, to relieve their guilt excuses are supplied. Muslims, it is said, should blame themselves. They overvalue religious instruction in their “Madrasas” and shunt aside secular education. The government has no policy of marginalising Muslims in education. It should be appreciated however that it is extremely difficult to convince Muslims to take education seriously. The situation is painted as resembling that of the proverbial horse which can be driven to a well but cannot be forced to drink water! This is probably the most used propaganda ploy to cover up religious discrimination in the country. And as if by instruction, the few show cases Muslims who have been appointed to serve in the government would unflinchingly repeat this propaganda in all Muslim functions they are invited to attend. Perhaps one of the most nauseating examples in recent years was the ill-advised speech delivered by the Vice President Dr. Omar Ali Juma on Eid-el-Haj day at Tandika mosque on 8 April, 1998. Muslims were so amazed by Dr.

Omar's puzzling unawareness that ten days later Waislam wa Tanzania (1998) wrote and disseminated an eight page document as a reply to his speech.

Fr. Peter Smith (1992) acknowledges that Muslims lag far behind in education. He argues that this is a natural outcome of Muslims' unwillingness to accept a secular system of education. A similar observation is made by Professor Malekela (1993:26), the current Director of University of Dar es Salaam's Bureau of Educational Research (BERE):

Since staunch Muslim believers equate Western schooling to (sic!) Christianity, they need to be helped in changing such false beliefs...It will be difficult for them to participate fully in the process of democratisation if they are having only the traditional teachings of the Qur'an.

In his doctoral dissertation on access to secondary education in Tanzania, Malekela (1983) found that 78.5 per cent of secondary students were Christian and only 18.6 per cent Muslim. Likewise the 1994 US Report on Human Rights in Tanzania acknowledges the significant disadvantages facing Muslims in education and employment. It also notes the existence of widespread Muslim resentment in the country. More importantly however, the Report says religious imbalances in Tanzania are a result of historical circumstances rather than deliberate discrimination (US Department of State, 1995).

Available historical evidence, both past and present, would seem to contradict the popular belief that Muslims hate or fear education. It is certainly true that in the past Muslims rejected, as they continue to reject today, the Christian principle of using *diakonia* (services like education and health) as means of evangelisation. People should enter into Christianity out of conviction and faith in the Word of God, not as a condition of getting food, clothing, medical treatment or education. I believe Christians would have reacted in a similar fashion were they to find themselves in a situation where educational institutions served as instruments of Islamisation. In fact recently Christian Members of Parliament took to task the Minister for National Education and Culture, Professor Juma Kapuya (a Muslim) for enforcing a long-standing government secular which allowed Muslim students to put on head scarfs. He was accused of harbouring a secret agenda of Islamising public schools, although Christian nuns have been doing so since colonial times!

The German colonial policy of education was to establish government schools which would be secular. The Germans believed that it was dangerous for the government to depend on mission schools because 'the products of mission schools rarely proved of sufficient quality for government service and could never be relied upon for total loyalty as they always considered themselves "children or servants of the mission" ' (Swatman, 1976: 108). In retrospect, it would appear that the Germans were correct. In Tanzania today Muslims are discriminated, maimed or killed not because the constitution says so; but because the majority of Christians who hold key offices in the government were educated by, and consider themselves servants of, the missions. Mr. Mgandu, a good Christian friend of mine told me in 1988 as we were going to Segerea Seminary, that although 95 per cent of the University of Dar es Salaam lecturers were Christian, 60 per cent of them were trained in Christian seminaries. Naturally but quite unfortunately, their first loyalty is to their church leaders. As a result we have cases in present day Tanzania whereby government scholarships to study abroad are announced to church-goers on Saturday or Sunday, while the same information is withheld from other members. In May 1999 a Muslim student who has asked for anonymity came to my office to seek for my recommendation to study abroad. A Christian friend of his got the information from his church and tipped him. And his Christian friend made a personal appeal to the desk officer responsible for those scholarships to consider his Muslim friend. He was the only Muslim to get the scholarship and is presently studying abroad. He is so grateful to his Christian friend that he would not like to betray him or

the desk officer in any way. Or as I mentioned in the first chapter (s), a situation where the Director of Information Service, in the Vice President's Office, instead of dealing with matters of national interest, was busy promoting the sectional interests of Catholic Old Boys and reporting the matter not to the Vice President, but to Rev. Walsh ( Sivalon, 1992:15).

The German principle that government schools should be free of religious influences enraged the Catholics who accused the government of bias in favour of Muslims. The first schools were located in the coastal area; Tanga, Dar es Salaam, Bagamoyo, Pangani and Lindi. The residents of those towns were and still are predominantly Muslim. And as Hornsby (1964:84) noted, 'It is not surprising then that the majority of the pupils were Muslims. This fact was seized upon by the missions (mainly the Roman Catholics) who accused the government of being pro Islam'. As early as 1892 Muslims were the majority in government schools which offered Western education. Yet a century later, and in independent Tanzania, Muslims of the same areas are unashamedly described as hating or fearing Western education. And to give a serious touch to this comic drama (in the style of Oscar Wilde's comic play, *On the Importance of Being Earnest* ) *Mtanzania* in its editorial of 27 January, 1999 wrote, apparently in dead earnest, "Pwani yahitaji Kampeni ya Kitaifa Kuiuokoa Kielimu" (The Coast Region needs a National Education Rescue Campaign). The burden of the editorial's tale was that the people of the Coast region who are predominantly Muslim do not value education. A national campaign be mounted to educate them about the importance of education!

Since initially Muslims dominated in education, they also dominated in government employment. This fact was not lost to Christian missionaries. As Roland Oliver (1965) notes in his book, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa* Christian missionaries soon realised that the spread and prestige of Islam grew 'largely from the fact that there was a

Muslim in nearly every subordinate post in the government' (1965:205). And this had a bad influence on the Africans who followed their Traditional religions because 'They now knew that they could have civilisation without Christianity, for they saw educated yet polygamous Muslims at every government station' (1965:206). This violated the Christian principle of using *diakonia* for Christian proselytization. A vigorous campaign was launched to ensure the marginalisation of Muslims in education and employment. That campaign was perfected during the British colonial period. As Roland (1965:206) says, 'In British territories, strangely, it was the government rather than the missions which saw the dangers of Islamic expansion, and which took what steps they could to forestall it'. That process of marginalisation has continued since. Forty years after independence, Muslims are still perceived by the missions and the government as religiously and politically dangerous!

The open discrimination and marginalisation which Muslims suffered under British colonial rule impelled them to spearhead the struggle for independence. They struggled against the British not because they feared, but partly because they were denied education. In fact AMNUT in 1959 petitioned for the delay of Tanganyika's independence until Muslims in the country had achieved greater educational progress. Nyerere's argument at that time, (an argument which made a lot of sense) was that it was the British who deliberately marginalised Muslims in education, and the British could not be expected to redress the educational imbalance. It was only independent Tanganyika which was capable of bringing educational progress and social justice to all citizens. Yet after independence the question of religious imbalance in education was made to appear extremely sensitive. To remind the government of its promise was to encourage "udini", a word coined by Nyerere to mean parochial, religious interests. Way back in 1961, in a debate on educational policy in the National Assembly Muslims criticised the continued religious discrimination in schools and severely attacked Christian teachers for spending most of their time in trying to get converts. They called for the nationalisation of schools. Nyerere rejected the idea of nationalisation and said he 'would have expected most of the speeches to be of gratitude and not of criticism' (Westerlund, 1980:119). And according to Msekwa (1977:25) the discussion of TANU NEC (National Executive

Council) members on educational policy in the country in 1962 recorded: ‘the members complained bitterly about the policy which was being followed, pointing out that there were schools which accepted only the children of the members of their religious denomination’. And as Westerlund (1980:122) suggests, the nationalisation of the schools in 1969 was probably intended to pacify the strong discontentment of Muslims following the government’s decision to dissolve their religious body (EAMWS) and to create for them a puppet organisation (BAKWATA). And now, following the stunning confessions of the Roman Catholic church itself, as published in Sivalon’s book (1992), we know that Nyerere banned EAMWS at the request of his Catholic church which considered and continue to consider Islam as its chief enemy in the country. And ‘Nyerere (who once alleged that TANU was “fiercely secular”’ (Westerlund, 1980:65) has been quoted in Bergen (1981:335) as saying that he had deliberately appointed a Christian minister to head TANU’s Department of Political Education because of his strong religious faith.

In 1987 the then Minister for Education and Culture the late Professor Kighoma Malima discovered that deserving Muslim candidates were deliberately being denied access to secondary education.(It is curious to note that throughout his 25 - year rule, Nyerere had always appointed a Christian to head the Ministry of Education and a Muslim to head the Ministry of Home Affairs.) The trick used by the Christian dominated panel was to select the candidates after decoding their examination numbers. Professor Malima directed the panel to select and announce the results using examination numbers only. In that year the percentage of selected Muslim candidates rose by 40 per cent! He alerted the president about the matter and suggested a thorough investigation be carried out. He was branded “Mujahidina” and removed from that portfolio and the selection panel reverted to its old system. He repeated those charges at a public rally in Dar es Salaam in 1995. Any government which is “fiercely secular” would certainly wish to know the truth of the matter. Apparently there was no need for the government to investigate the obvious. On July 7, 1999 Muslim leaders paid a courtesy call to President Mkapa at the State House in Dar es Salaam. In the course of their informal discussions Muslims raised the issue of decoding examination numbers. According to my informant the president was clearly surprised. When he asked his Minister for Education and Culture who also attended the talks, the minister confirmed the Muslims’ account. As a result one of the numerous but supposed “isolated” cases came to light in January 1999. A Muslim candidate one Adam Ramadhani Kindenge of Gilman Rutihinda primary school was not selected. His father disputed the fairness of the selection process and demanded to be shown the scripts. It was an embarrassing case. Christian candidates with lower points were selected and Adam who had higher points was left out. No one in the ministry could hazard an explanation. The case was disconcerting in view of Kitwana Kondo’s question in Parliament. But it was a case which like others in the past the ministry managed to suppress. For details see Ramadhani Kindenge’s two letters to the Ministry of Education and Culture (1999). Despite protests from Muslims, the same ministry had also successfully managed to hide from many unsuspecting Tanzanians another discomfiting letter bearing Ref. No. E10/MMC-1/183 of 9 June, 1998 from the Morogoro Municipal Education Officer directing all Headteachers to submit to that office the names of all Standard Seven Catholic students! When a weekly Muslim newspaper *An-Nuur* confronted the ministry with that letter the spokesperson was too embarrassed to comment. He promised however to investigate the matter. A time-tested device of dropping a hot potato!

Adam Kindenge’s case above is not an isolated one. Muslims have a long list of such cases. The name of a selected Muslim candidate, Kopa Abdallah of Kichangani primary school, in Kilosa was in 1983 unfairly cancelled out in favour of a Christian, Mr. Anthony Samirani who scored less points. Mr. Kopa is today employed as a driver. Was it merely a case of corruption? In his long career as a Secondary School Headmaster and later as a high ranking civil servant, Mr. Bori Lilla was twice confronted with incredible discoveries of religious discrimination in the country. Mr. Bori Lilla is today one of the highly respected Muslim elders in the country and is affectionately referred to as “Mzee Lilla”. He told me and he has repeated this account to many others that he was once in the marking and selection committee and was

mistaken for a Christian. After marking the scripts he decoded and recorded the names according to their pass marks, and there were as many Muslims as there were Christians. A fellow panelist who was a Christian saw the list and was very furious, he said in a loud voice, “*Wewe huoni kama orodha yako ina Waislamu wengi sana, au wewe ni mgeni nini hapa?*” ( Don’t you see that your list has so many Muslims, or could it be that you are a new comer here?). Mzee Lilla says that he responded in an equally loud voice, “*Mimi siyo mgeni, mimi ni Muislamu*”. The room was gripped with an eerie silence.

Mzee Lilla witnessed the second revelation of deliberate religious discrimination when he was in the selection panel for allocating High School places for deserving Ordinary Level candidates. It was during the Islamic holy month of Ramadhan and they had almost finished their task when Christian panelists broke for lunch. The panel had only two Muslims who stayed behind. The other Muslim panelist, Mr. Abdulrahman Mwalongo, was writing something and needed a ruler which was in the Chairperson’s draw. When he opened it he found along with the ruler, a list of 25 First class Muslim candidates who had not yet been allocated any place in High Schools while all their Christian counterparts had already been placed. And the panel’s chairperson who was also a Reverend had not even hinted that there was such a list. Mwalongo is from the Hehe ethnic group. And the Hehe are known in Tanzania as fierce warriors. When their colleagues returned, Mwalongo reminded the chairperson about the list in his draw. He brushed aside Mwalongo’s concern saying that those candidates would be taken care of later. Quite unexpectedly, Mwalongo banged his table so forcefully that all members were taken aback. Shaking with rage Mwalongo told the chairperson no business would take place in that room before the allocation of the 25 Muslim students. The chairperson backed down and those students were placed. In July 1997 I cross-checked Mzee Lilla’s account with Mwalongo himself. He confirmed the story. As I am writing this book, both of them are still alive and can easily be contacted for further details.

Before and after independence, Muslims in Tanzania have been complaining about the inferior position they are accorded in education and employment. Yet many Christians would like to believe that Muslims fear or devalue education!

## **Churches help the government in providing education and health services**

While Muslims are often reproached for disregarding education, Christian churches are invariably praised for holding education dear as well as for helping the government in the provision of education and health services. This is making a virtue of necessity. By means of this propaganda decoy, a dangerously false impression is created: that churches provide education and health services because they want to supplement government efforts in these important services. Nothing could be further from the truth. The churches have always provided those services as basic instruments of evangelisation.

In his book, *Ujamaa na Dini*, Westerlund (1980:119) writes:

First and foremost it must be emphasized that the mission schools were the classical means of converting the masses. For that reason, the Church accommodated as many Muslims and adherents of African religions as possible in their schools. Catholic children, on the other hand, were only in exceptional cases allowed to attend non-Catholic schools. “The Church cannot give her approval to the principle of neutral or multi-denominational schools; still less can she allow Catholic children to attend

schools conducted by those who profess a religion other than the Catholic Faith”...Although the Catholic schools did not force the non-Catholic pupils to attend Catholic religious instruction, they were nevertheless under pressure to change their religion. It was the fundamental concept of Christian education that religion should pervade the entire atmosphere of the school. Hence the problems were great for the Muslims and the adherents of African religions,...

And yet ‘Financially, the churches became more and more dependent on state aid’ (Westerlund, 1980:120). Likewise, in their book, *Christian Education in Africa* the All Africa Churches Conference (1963:31-32) mentioned the following as among “The Principles of Christian Education”:

(4) The Church is charged with the commission *to make the truth entrusted to it available to each generation*. Each new generation must be taught the truth that sets mind free and be challenged to live at its fullest and best, and so *to fulfil the purpose of God*. Each person must learn what it means to live an abundant life in his community. *And each community must learn God’s purpose for it and for the world*.

(5) *The spread of education is not therefore a secondary consideration of the Church, but stands at the very core and centre of the Christian message...*(My emphasis).

In his article “The Theory and Practice of Evangelism” Morrison (1930:555) says that ‘Experience has proved that the corporate life of a Christian institution is the most fruitful of all missionary agencies’. He therefore urged the churches to put emphasis on the establishment of schools, hospitals, baby welfare centres and dispensaries.

In his discussion about educational problems in Tanganyika, Raum (1930:564-565) observes that since ‘In the right type of mission school there is no contrast between secular and religious instruction; even in geography and hygiene we teach as messengers of Christ’, the idea of admitting Muslims into those schools was unacceptable because ‘Moslems are fanatical and self-conscious; they would hardly accept instruction given in a Christian spirit with Christian text-books’. He suggested that Muslims should have their own schools with Muslim teachers.

Small (1981:36) says ‘There is no doubt that education was a method of evangelisation’. A similar observation was made earlier on by Smith (1963:102) who noted that ‘The Roman Catholic Missions had always believed in education as an integral part of their missionary work’. And since education was considered as an effective instrument of proselytization, quite understandably there was intense rivalry between Catholic and Protestant missions as Swatman (1976:111) says:

Intense rival missionary activity, in fact, sometimes resulted in an overconcentration of educational institutions in certain favourable districts. The profusion of Lutheran and Catholic schools, set up in close proximity in both Moshi and Bukoba areas, were clear-cut examples of this. In the Southern Highlands, there was an even greater multiplicity of voluntary agencies which were all competing. Mission rivalry there reached its peak during the ten year development plan, 1947-1956, when primary education was expanded with government aid. In parts of Songea District, in 1958, there were over thirty half full primary schools, including eighteen U.M.C.A. schools near Lake Nyasa and twelve Benedictine schools further inland, whereas about twenty-two schools could have probably accommodated all the primary school children in the area. The intense rivalry represented by this situation was clearly reflected in the



Benedictine Bishop of Peramiho's sworn ambition to "drive the U.M.C.A. back into the Lake".

The spirited competition between the U.M.C.A. and the Roman Catholics has also been reported by Gallagher (1971). In an article "Jinsi Kanisa Lilivyoendelea" (How the Church Developed) published in a Catholic magazine *Mwenge* (21 July, 1968, NB. 376) the Roman Catholic church admits that 'the mission hospitals played an important role in spreading Catholicism' (Gallagher, 1971:331). Green (1995:29) notes that 'widespread "conversion" to Christianity was not the result of aggregate choices of individuals attracted by the "message" of Christianity, but a direct consequence of colonial educational policy, in particular, the British government's policy of grants in aid to missions...Baptism was a routine part of a child's progression through primary school, and for the children of non-Christians, was performed when a child reached the third standard'.

It is clear therefore that the churches provide educational and medical services not as a selfless expression of *agape* (love) to the needy nor as an altruistic supplement to government efforts, but as an effective instrument of Christian proselytization. It should be emphasised here that this is a statement of fact not of judgement. A question which critical minds are likely to ask themselves is: If it is quite proper and legitimate for Muslims to use "Mihadhara" (public lectures) as an effective tool of converting adherents of Traditional religions and even Christians into Islam, why should it be considered improper or sinister for Christian churches to use schools and hospitals as influential agencies of evangelisation? To be sure, there is nothing wrong at all for Christians to use their schools and hospitals for ecumenical purposes. But what is certainly wrong and unfair is for a presumably secular government to use tax-payers' money to fund Christian evangelisation activities.

During the colonial period, under the grants-in-aid scheme, Christian schools received substantial financial support from the government. To give but one example, when the colonial government decided to open classes for Advanced Level School Certificate in Tanganyika, it chose to begin providing such opportunities in three schools: the government secondary school in Tabora, the Roman Catholic secondary school at Pugu and the Protestant secondary school at Minaki. And according to Sydenham (1959:6):

To meet these needs, Government promised a Capital Grant to Minaki, spread over four years, of 40,000 pounds to cover the cost of buildings required, with contributions towards the cost of new equipment and an electrical installation. Further, new staff Grants-in-Council, to enable the Mission to offer salaries commensurate with the qualifications, experience and responsibility of those to be engaged to teach in these specially selected schools.

While in theory even Muslims could receive government financial support, in practice Muslim schools rarely benefited from such grants. Muslims were actually restricted from opening schools. In those places where Muslim schools had been built the DC and the Provincial Education Officer (P.E.O.) directed that secular subjects should not be taught. And even the few approved schools were denied monetary assistance (*Zuhra*, No. 71 of 12 December, 1958 and No. 72 of 19 December, 1958).

Even after independence, in fact especially after independence, Christian schools were heavily dependent on government funding. The scheme came to an end after the nationalisation of religious schools in 1969. However on 21 February, 1992 a Memorandum of Understanding (1992) was signed between the Christian Council of Tanzania and the Tanzania Episcopal Conference on one side and the United Republic of Tanzania on the other. Under this memorandum the Churches would 'make policies in all matters related to Education and Health services provided by the churches' and the role of the government would be to

seek and provide financial support to church institutions. Muslims opposed and continue to oppose this unfair arrangement whereby the government financially supports educational and medical institutions which are owned, controlled and run by the churches. And since churches use educational and medical services as basic instruments of evangelisation, a government which uses its national resources to sponsor such institutions cannot be said to be religiously impartial. It was in that year (1992) that the late Sheikh Kassim bin Juma was labelled a “fundamentalist” because he was so vocal in denouncing the MoU at his Kwamtoro mosque. Despite strong Muslim opposition, the Christian-dominated government went ahead with its “understanding” of supporting Christian institutions. In the 1992/93 financial year (immediately after the signing of MoU) the government allocated Tshs. 2,015,416,000 as grants to religious medical institutions (Wizara ya Afya, 1992). The satirical contradiction here is that the churches are “helping” the government which is too poor to establish and run quality schools and hospitals!

## Muslims are disorganised

Some of our Christian friends argue that Muslims are neither discriminated against nor deliberately marginalised in Tanzania. The real problem lies with the Muslims themselves; they seem to be in disarray and their priorities are lopsided. This is certainly true, but only partially true. And as is often the case, half-truths are sometimes equivalent to a lie. Like Christians, Muslims were very well organised before and immediately after Tanganyika’s independence. The unity of Muslims was not only pan-territorial but also inter-racial. Muslims had very clear and carefully thought-out priorities. The solid unity of Muslims was considered as constituting a political and religious danger to independent Tanganyika! Muslims had to be disorganised. And the Tanzania government intervention in Muslim affairs has always been so crude and brutal that there is hardly a Muslim today who does not know that it is only Christians who have the right and freedom of organising themselves without undue government interference.

In his doctoral dissertation, Yusuf (1990:189) observes:

It is noteworthy that, in comparison to other religions of Tanzania, it is only the Muslims who were formally and officially connected to the State. The Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC) which is the Catholic Secretariat representing the largest Christian denomination in Tanzania, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) representing the non-Catholic denomination in Tanzania, the Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT) comprising of Protestant missionary societies...were all left free of official control.

And according to Westerlund (1980) Muslims are brought under State control because they are perceived as being politically dangerous. Disturbing details about how the government has been suppressing Muslims can be found in the studies by Said (1998) and Chande (1991). As I have pointed out in the previous chapters it was actually the Christian churches which requested the government to subdue Muslims and superintend their organisations (Sivalon, 1992). As if to confirm the church-government alliance against Muslims, in 1994 the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs Mr. Augustine Mrema called upon the churches to raise funds for the General Meeting of the Supreme Muslim Council of Tanzania (BAKWATA). The bishops raised Tshs. 20 million and Mr. Mrema supervised the election meeting in person. The government funding and management of the 1982 BAKWATA meeting was politically more refined than Mrema’s amateurish performance in 1994. After that meeting angry Muslims nick-named Mufti Hemed “Bishop”. It would appear that in the eyes of the government it is a criminal offence for Muslims to independently organise themselves even in an adhoc committee like that of Sheikh Ponda whose

task is primarily to raise funds and seek legal advice for Muslims who are routinely being arrested by the police. In fact the committee was formed in response to the 1993 massive arrests of Muslims. Yes, as a community Muslims are disorganised, and it is the government which is mainly responsible for disorganising them.

## **“Mihadharas” pose a threat to national peace**

The government bias against Muslims is clearly reflected in the way it handles Muslim preaching. The government has joined forces with the Christian clergy in criminalising legitimate Muslim preaching. Muslim preachers, we are told, endanger national peace and security. On this question it would appear the majority of lay Christians differ with their church leaders. While the church leaders warn their followers against listening to Muslim preachers, many Christians ignore this advice and a growing number of them end up reverting to Islam. Ponda (1998) has recorded a good example which occurred in Mwanza in January 1998 before the Mwembechai episode. A Muslim group AL-MALID delivered a series of public lectures which were attended by thousands of people of different religious faiths. One journalist wrote in a tabloid published in that city that those Muslim public lectures were likely to disrupt peace and should be discontinued. Hundreds of angry Christians and Muslims thronged the Police station and demanded a correction of the false and malicious report as well as an apology from the publishers. The journalist admitted in public that his report was evil-intentioned and the apology was published in the following issue. The actual threat of *Mihadhara* cannot be understood without reference to the history of Christian-Muslim relations in the country.

The early Christian missionaries, the White Fathers and the Church Missionary Society, considered Islam as the most determined enemy of Christianity. They also believed that Muslims could never be converted into Christianity. As a result they hated and avoided Muslims. Later on the missionaries stumbled upon two crucial discoveries: (a) it was actually possible for a Muslim to become a Christian and vice versa, and (b) the number of Muslims who were becoming Christians was bigger than of Christians who were returning to Islam (Holway, 1966). That discovery encouraged missionaries to change their relationship with Muslims as Kasozi (1989:37) notes:

The realisation that Muslims could, and were being converted to Christianity had a fundamental impact on the way Christians related with Muslims. It was realised that in order to win Muslims, there had to be a shift from the traditional adversarial to a new friendly approach which would make Muslims gain the confidence of Christian evangelisers. Christian missionaries were henceforth taught the basic elements of Islam as a preparation to their dealings with Muslims. In Kenya, the National Christian Council of Kenya appointed the Rev. James Ritchie to be its advisor on Islam. He was partly instrumental in the creation of the Islam in Africa Project whose mandate was to advise church workers on Islam. In 1971, the Rev. Tom Beetham took over the direction of the Project.

Muslims in East Africa were too disorganised to note this crucial change of attitude and methods of evangelisation on the part of Christian leaders. Due to their lack of institutional organisations and basic education, they do not seem to have realised the danger implicit in the change by Christians from an adversarial to a friendly (but in reality a more bitter) relationship.

In Tanzania the Roman Catholic church trained her own experts in what has come to be known by a term which sounds like a disease, “Islamology” (the study of Islam for purposes of combating it). The first expert was the famous Fr. Peter Smith whose Ph.D. dissertation was on “Muslim and Christian Relations in Tanzania in the Light of Vatican II”. Now that role has been taken over by Fr. Michael Milunga, who like his predecessor, is very fluent in Arabic and has memorised a good portion of the Qur’an. Babu (1984) noted that the Catholic Christian Democratic Movement had set itself two major objectives: to fight communism worldwide and to combat Islam in Africa. The Limuru conference in that year had two items of the agenda: refugees and the spread of Islam. Rev. Sebastian Kolowa of Tanzania ‘openly and eloquently expressed the fear of the Christian hierarchy on the spread of Islam and suggested methods to stop it...’ Tanzania was allocated 240 million Tanzanian Shillings, and ‘to facilitate their movement the church is constructing 14 airfields in the country, much more than the government’s own airfields.’ Moreover, 10 million copies of the Bible were sent to Africa, some in Kiswahili but printed in Arabic script (Babu, 1984).

Many of those Bibles were distributed to Muslim students in many schools in the country. Even the government-controlled BAKWATA was alarmed. Its Secretary General expressed deep concern in his letter Ref. No. UK/D/10/14/72 of 13 July, 1989 to his counterpart of the Christian Council of Tanzania. Muslims in Tanzania decided to read very carefully the Bibles being thrust into their hands and began to use them to invite Christians to Islam. When “Mihadhara” started in 1984, Christian leaders were very much pleased to find that Muslims who in the past never touched the Bible were beginning to read the Word of God so avidly. In fact the regional itinerary of Muslim preachers was even being reported on the Radio Tanzania’s “Majira” programme. Among the places where Muslim and Christian preachers were officially invited to have public discussions include the Police College, the Marangu Teachers’ Training College and the KCMC medical school all of which are in Moshi (Ponda, 1998). Church leaders thought Muslims’ interest in the Bible would lead to mass conversions into Christianity. However it did not take long for them to discover that many Christians were accepting Islam on the authority of the Bible, and that they could not satisfactorily counter the Muslim reading of the Bible. It was quite clear therefore, that if encouraged or left unchecked, Muslim preachers would soon alter the religious equation in the country. A new button was pressed. And suddenly like in George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty Four* Tanzanians were pressurised to “hate” *Mihadhara*. From 1987 following Mwalimu Nyerere’s speech in Sumbawanga where he wanted to know whether Ustadh Fundi Ngariba, a famous Muslim preacher was a prophet, a sinister and sustained campaign was unleashed to link Muslim preaching with the disruption of peace! It was like the misfortune of a man who lost the good favour of his mother-in-law who used to treat him like a king when he first married her daughter.

Ten years later the campaign reached its feverish peak. *Mtanzania* (21 February, 1997) exactly a year before the Mwembechai killings, quoted Bishop Elinaza Sendoro as saying “Mihadhara ya dini itazua vita” (Religious lectures will cause war). *Majira* (10 April, 1997) quoted Bishop Basil Sambano as condemning religious debates. And in its editorial of 2 April, 1997 *Majira* wrote “Ushauri wa Askofu Pengo kuhusu mihadhara uzingatiwe” (Arch-bishop Pengo’s counsel on religious preaching be heeded). What was chillingly ominous about that editorial (and in retrospect quite prophetic) was its concluding statement, made a year before the Mwembechai killings:

*Hakuna sababu ya kuhofia kuudhi mtu au kikundi fulani cha watu. Tunasema katika hilo ni vizuri kutumia mbinu za kumwua nyani.*

There is no reason for [ the government ] to fear displeasing any person or any group of persons. We insist in handling this matter, it is preferable to use the techniques of killing a monkey.

The metaphor used by the *Majira* editor is as frightening as it is accurate. In Kiswahili idiom, it is said that if one is really determined to kill a monkey, then one should not look at the monkey's face. The reason being that the monkey's face so resembles that of a human being one may be overcome by feelings of compassion. In the context of Muslim preachers the editor says the same procedure should be used. The government should not reflect upon the matter, for if it does, it will never kill Muslim preachers. To appropriate the Shakespearean analogy in *The Merchant of Venice*, (Act III, Scene I): A Tanzanian Muslim and his or her Christian counterpart are so strikingly similar. Has not a Muslim eyes? Has not a Muslim hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? -- fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick them do they not bleed? If you tickle them do they not laugh? If you poison them do they not die? Moreover Muslims like Christians are all Tanzanian citizens, guided by the same constitution, and they are all entitled to preach their respective religions, and what is more Muslims have committed no offence. The editor says if the government would consider all these factors and hence make the mistake of looking at the Muslims on the face it will definitely shy away from killing them. And that is exactly what came to pass at Mwembechai. The government killed the Muslims and it has so far rejected to probe the killings. If you want to kill a dog, give it a bad name; if you want to kill a monkey, do not look at its face! Aziz (1998) has made a sober and exceedingly insightful appraisal of how the Tanzanian government has been handling the issue of Muslim preaching. Aziz's long letter to the Attorney General is appended at the end of this book.

In her study, Biersteker (1996) has shown that as way back as 1893 Muslims in East Africa were having public religious dialogues with Christian missionaries. In her book she gives many examples of Muslim responses to the attempt by a CMS missionary, Mr. W.E.Taylor to convince them that Jesus son of Mary was a progeny of God. In one of the examples reported by Biersteker (1996:258) a Muslim says in a poem dated 21 July 1893, composed in Mombasa:

Muslims did not ask the government to prevent Rev. Taylor from preaching at the market place, and those

Katika Injili	In the New Testament
haya hukuona:	this you did not see:
Hapana dalili	There is no sign/that
Isa kuwa mwana!	Isa/Jesus was a child [of God]!
Wazua! Si kweli	You prevaricate! It is not true

inter-religious dialogues did not disrupt peace. Maalim Ahmed (1961 rpt.1985) of Mombasa was challenged by a Christian on the radio and he responded by providing scriptural evidence from the Bible. Tanzania's peace is not threatened by Muslim preaching.

## Mkapa's procedure cannot work

It should be clear from what I have noted above that the predicament of Muslims in Tanzania has nothing to do with scientific data or lack of it. I do not think there is anything in my account above which can be considered as providing “new” information to the well trained and very well informed Christian elite in my country. I have largely depended on their researches. The problem is basically that of a negative mind-set. This negative mind-set is extremely difficult to overcome because it is tied up with vested interests. The long-established Muslim complaints of religious discrimination from the colonial period to the present and the disputes about those complaints cannot be assessed disinterestedly, like say a dispute about the annual average temperature of the North Pole.

I am aware that there are exceptions. There are always people who, in Marxist parlance, can commit class suicide. Lodhi (1994:92) for example has quoted Walter Bugoya, an influential and brilliant intellectual in the country as saying ‘It is a fact that Muslims are generally and unfairly treated educationally’. And in a private discussion I had with a Christian professor in the Faculty of Law, University of Dar es Salaam, he candidly told me, ‘I know that Muslims are being marginalised in this country. But mind you I am a beneficiary of the present order, there is little that I can do to change it’. I admired his frankness. Such people are in extremely short supply. Unfortunately, in practice, many Christians consider Muslims as subnormal. And when those subnormal citizens demand equal rights they are noticeably amazed. Examples abound. The government had initially set Sunday as a public holiday and later included Saturday to allow Christians of all denominations to go to their respective churches. Friday is not a public holiday. Muslim students have to seek special permission to attend Friday prayers. And when they do, the Christian teachers are enraged. “You may attend your prayers but classes would continue”,

they are told. And it does not occur to them at all that Muslims who are also rightful citizens are being unfairly treated. And when the Kigamboni Member of Parliament raised it in Parliament he was labelled a mischief monger! Year in year out the Christians, the rightful citizens, spend a lot of public funds to buy Christmas trees, cards and other expensive decorations, to adorn public offices as part of Christmas celebrations. When Muslims query the legality of such expenses and such activities in public offices, Christians are usually shocked to imagine that there is anyone in his or her right senses who could possibly question the importance of a secular government celebrating Christmas. But when Muslims request for similar public funds to celebrate Eid they are considered crazy! With the advent of multipartism in Tanzania it was decided that CCM’s birthday, the 5th of February, should cease to be a public holiday. Instead of scrapping it off altogether, or replacing it with a religiously neutral date, it was decided Christians should have more days of celebrating Christmas. A Muslim who applies for a passport in his country, is required to produce a birth certificate or a certificate of baptism. The same requirement will meet a Muslim who wants to contest for a leadership position in CCM Youth League. A rightful Tanzanian citizen is unconsciously assumed to be a Christian. And just in case anyone had any doubts about the religious affiliation of CCM the Vice Chairman of the Party dispelled those doubts in May 1999. When a Muslim, one Issa Juma wanted to join CCM, the Vice Chairman, John Samuel Malecela had to baptise him into the party by pouring water on his head in public (*Dar Leo*, 7 May, 1999). I believe Malecela who is the second in command in the party, did not do that baptismal ceremony consciously. But the event illustrates the depth and complexity of the Muslim predicament.

And when in the face of all this, Muslims campaign that they are being treated as foreigners in their own country, many Christians are sincerely surprised, and consider such statements as exaggerations. And it seems that they have forgotten that in 1955 Africans in Tanganyika, both Muslims and Christians, complained to the United Nations that ‘*jambo tusilolipenda ni kwamba baadhi yao hutufanya sasa tujione kama wageni katika nchi yetu wenyewe* (What we object is the attempt by some of them to make us feel like foreigners in our own country) (TANU, 1955:15).

In his memorable essay, "Time to read the signs on the wall" Shivji (1993) cautioned the government against using police methods to address political problems. He wrote, 'But when people perceive that they are accorded an inferior treatment and / or are oppressed because of their identity, then it becomes the material for a social volcano'. He called upon the government to seriously confront the problem of the 'unequal treatment accorded to the Muslim community as a community'. Six years later, the situation of Muslims has worsened and Shivji's far-sighted advice has gone unheeded.

I am aware that the president did indeed invite different ministries to examine Muslim complaints and to advise him. I was privileged to see some of those responses. All of them were arrogantly dismissive and extremely hostile. Except for giving BAKWATA more freedom, the experts have cautioned the president against disturbing the *status quo*. Those responses reminded me of the conversation I had with Alhaj Aboud Jumbe in July 1994 when he was finalising his book, *The Partner-Ship*. He told me that immediately after the breakout of civil war in Angola, Mwalimu Nyerere requested him to deliver a special message to Dr. Agostinho Neto, who was the president of Angola at that time. To avert further bloodshed in the country, Mwalimu Nyerere appealed to Dr. Neto to consider the possibility of a political solution. Alhaj Jumbe said, "Dr. Neto listened to me very attentively, and I was very much encouraged. But when I finished, his response shocked me. He said, 'Go and tell Mwalimu, I appreciate and understand his concern. But we must kill each other first if lasting peace is to return to Angola.'" In the 1800s Napoleon said that 'Bloodletting is among the ingredients of political medicine' (Herold, 1955:159). Did President Neto subscribe to a similar view? At any rate, Jumbe said that after what he experienced during the 1964 Zanzibar Revolution, he would not like to see any generation of Tanzanians undergo a similar experience. But if Muslims continue to refuse their inferior status and Christians continue to harbour a negative mindset, how can civil strife be averted in Tanzania? The following chapter looks at the looming political tragedy in Tanzania and the faint hopes of averting it.