

THE DIVERSITY FACTOR IN THE HISTORY
OF ISLAM IN NAIROBI 1900 - 1963

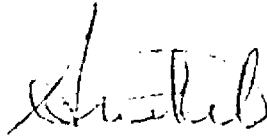
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts at the University of
Nairobi.

October, 1987

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.



ANNE N. MAINGI

This thesis has been submitted for Examination with my approval as University Supervisor.



PROFESSOR AHMED IDHA SALIM

To my dear Kagendo,
I dedicate this
work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis owes so much to the assistance of so many. My thanks first go to Professor Ahmed Idha Salim of University of Nairobi, who supervised my work and gave me the full benefit of his wise counsel and wide knowledge. I appreciate greatly both the time he expended and the interest he showed.

I should also like to thank Dr. Z. Nthamburi of Kenyatta University for all the assistance he offered me.

Mr. Badr D. Kateregga, my mentor, patient and sympathetic teacher, encouraged me from my undergraduate days.

I also thank Professor R. Murungi of Kenyatta University for his assistance particularly in the difficulty initial days of the research.

Thanks are due to Dr. J. Mugambi, who, in his capacity as the Chairman of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Nairobi, was always ready to help.

To many friends, I extend my sincere thanks. In particular, mention must be made of Micheni Nkari, who very generously contributed his time and ideas.

To my parents, Samuel and Tabitha; and my brother Ezekia, must go that special gratitude reserved for those who have encouraged, prodded and loved me through every venture,

Finally, I would thank my husband who constantly helped and steadfastly sustained me throughout the period of the study.

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GLOSSARY

- Adhan* - Muslim call to prayer.
- Ahadith* - (plural of Hadith) - Prophetic traditions.
- Ahan* - The feast held by the Somalis forty days after the death of a person.
- Allahu Akbar* - God is great.
- Almarkaz al-Islami* - Islamic Centre.
- Amil* - Dai's personal representative in a Jamat.
- Anjumane Himayatul-Islami* - The community for the defence of the faith.
- Ansar* - Supporters. Usually it means the People of Madinah who welcomed and supported Prophet Muhammad.
- Ashhadu anna-la ilaha illa Allah* - I bear witness that there is no (other) god but Allah.
- Ashhadu anna Mohammad Rasul Allah* - I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.
- Assalaam Alaikum* - Peace be upon you. It is a salutation.
- Atfal* - Children.
- Baiat* - The oath of allegiance given by the people to a Caliph. Here it is used in connection with Ghulam Ahmad the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, demanding it from his followers.
- Baitul-Hikma* - House of knowledge or wisdom. Usually it refers to the famous 9th century library in Baghdad.

- Baraat* - Social boycott applied by the Dai, the leader of the Bohra Community, to those members who are sympathetic towards the Reformists.
- Barakat* - Blessing. Sometimes it refers to mystic powers of saints in some muslim communities where saints are venerated.
- Batin* (from *batn* - stomach, belly) inside. In the context of this study it means esoteric interpretations, or meanings of the Quran.
- Dai-al Mutlaq* - His Holiness the leader of the Dawoodi Bohra community.
- Dawat (Da'wah)* - Islamic call, propagation.
- Dhul-Hijja* - Last month of Islamic calendar.
- Djumada:* Jumada I - 5th month of Islamic calendar.
Jumada II - 6th month of Islamic calendar.
- Dua* - Invocation of God, prayer.
- Farman* - Edict which is given by His Highness the Aga Khan to his followers, the Ismailis.
- Fatih al Ulum* - Opening, beginning of knowledge.
- Ghayba* - Disappearance, invisibility.
- Ginan* - Songs, hymns.
- Hajj* - Male Muslim pilgrim to Makkah.
- Hajjah* - Female Muslim pilgrim to Makkah.
- Haram* - Forbidden. Sometimes it is applied to the Holy Cities of Makkah and Madinah.
- Idul Adhaa* - Feast of Immolation, Greater Bairam.
Feast coinciding with the Pilgrimage to Makkah.

- Idul Fitr* - Celebration, feast of ending the fast during the month of Ramadhan
- Ijaza* - Permission. It also means certificate.
- Ijma'* - Consensus. It is one of the sources of Islamic Law.
- Ilm* - Knowledge, science.
- Imam* - Leader of prayer in the mosque. It is also applied to Ali and his successor among the Shia Muslims.
- Isnad* - Chain of authorities, transmitters of Prophetic Hadith.
- Isra* - Prophet Muhammad's night journey to Jerusalem.
- Istihsan* - Good, Goodness. In context it means the right of preference based on the principle of good.
- Jahiliyya* - Ignorance, Pre-Islamic period regarded as the Days of Ignorance.
- Jamat* - Society, Community.
- Jamia* - Mosque.
- Jum'a* - Friday.
- Kafara* - Atonement.
- Kafiri* - Infidel.
- Kamadia* - Accountant in an Ismaili Jamat Khana.
- Kanzu* - Long shirt worn by male Muslims.
- Karamat* - generosity.

- Khalifa* - Successor of the Prophet as temporal leader of the Muslims, beginning with the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs who succeeded Prophet Muhammad and includes any Muslim leader during the reign of various dynasties.
- Khatim* - Seal.
- Kitab al Muallim* - The teacher's book.
- Kuanza Kuvunja Ungo* - The beginning of puberty.
- Kuoga Mwaka* - Symbolic bath by Swahili Muslims to signify the end of the year and the beginning of another according to the Islamic calendar.
- Kutahiri* - To circumcise, to cleanse or purify.
- Kutiwa maji ya kata* - To be sprinkled with water from a nutshell.
- Kuzunguka Mji* - To go round the village.
- La hukma illa li Llahi* - There is no judgement except by God.
- Lajina Imaillah* - The adults' group among the Ahmadis in Nairobi.
- Leso* - One or two pieces of light, coloured cotton material used by the Swahili Muslim women both as indoor and outdoor apparel.
- Madhahib* (plural) - Schools of legal thought. Usually it means the four Sunni schools of thought.
- Madhhab* (singular) - School of legal thought.
- Madrasa* - School, Quranic school.

- Mahaji* - Swahili version of Hajj which was applied to the Kikuyu Muslim converts. It was also applied to the Digo.
- Mahdi* - The rightly guided one, the expected one.
- Maktab* - office.
- Mapenzi ya Mungu* - The Grace of God used as the name of the Ahmadiyya newspaper.
- Mawla (al)* - The Lord.
- Mfungo Sita* - That is, Rabi al Awal in the Arabic/ Islamic calendar,
- Milad-un Nabi* - Celebrations of the birthday of the Prophet.
- Miraa* - A plant whose suckers are chewed.
- Msondo* - A Swahili dance taught to the young girls.
- Muadhin* - One who makes the call to prayers.
- Muhajirun* - Emigrants, those people who accompanied the Prophet to Madinah.
- Muharram* - / That which is forbidden, the month in Islamic calendar when the Shia Muslims commemorate the massacre of Husayn at Karbala.
- Mukasir* - Breaker, the third in rank from the Dai.
- Mukhi* - The treasurer in an Ismaili Jamat Khana.
- Mulla* - One of the low rank leaders in a Bohra Jamat.
- Muungwana* - A civilized person, one who belonged to the higher stratum in the Lamu Social stratification.

- Muzoo* - The second in rank from the Dai.
- Nabi* - Prophet.
- Nandi* - Food which is taken for offering to the
Jammat Khana.
- Nass* - People, in context, it is used to mean a
chosen person from the House of the Prophet.
- Pir or Peer* - Missionary.
- Qadi* - Judge.
- Qibla* - Direction of Makkah for the purpose of
prayer by Muslims.
- Qiyas* - Standard, one of the sources of Muslim Law,
analogical deduction.
- Raja* - Hope, in context, the hope that the Imam in
Ghayba will come back.
- Sahaba* - The companions of the Prophet.
- Salaam* - Peace.
- Salat* - Prayer.
- Sari* - Light long dress for Asian women.
- Satr* - Hiding.
- Saum* - Fasting.
- S.a.w.* - May God bless him and grant him Salvation
- Shaban* - Eighth month of the Islamic calendar.
- Shahada* - Certificate, Confession that there is no
god but Allah and Muhammad is his Messenger.
It is the first pillar of the faith.
- Shiat al Mahdi* - Mahdi's Party.
- Shura (al)* - Consultation, the electoral body which
was formed by Umar to select his successor.

- Taharat* - Cleanness, purity.
- Ta'lim* - Teaching, instruction.
- Tawabbun* - Penitent.
- Tawassul* - Achievement, re-union.
- Ulama* - The learned men, scholars.
- Ummah* - Nation, people, Muslim Community.
- Wakf* - Fund, endowment.
- Wana vyonu* - The Scholars.
- Waungwana* - (plural) the civilized people of the
higher class in the Lamu social
stratification.
- Wudhu* - Ablution.
- Zahir* - Clear.
- Zakat* - Alms given to the poor or needy.
- Zafat* - Hospitality, reception given to the Dai by
his followers.

ABSTRACT

After the death of Prophet Muhammed (s.a.w.) the Muslim Ummah was rocked by succession disputes. One group was in favour of the principle which was devoid of the notion of heredity, while the other favoured succession by members of the House of the Prophet. Gradually the Sunni and Shia theological positions began to take form.

After the death of Imam Jafar as Sadiq in 765 the Shia group was split between the followers of his two sons, Ismail and Al-Kazim. The followers of Ismail became known as the 'Seveners' and those of Al-Kazim as the 'Twelvers'. Again in 1094, after the death of Al Mustansir, the Seveners were divided. The majority pledged loyalty to Nizar and others to his brother, Mustali. While all these schisms took place, the Sunni remained united except for the formation of the four schools of thought. As Islam spread, the various sects found their way into India, Persia and Africa.

As a result of the trade contact between the East Coast of Africa and the Muslim world Arab and Persian Muslims had settled in the Coastal towns of Kenya by mid 8th century. Gradually an Islamic - Swahili culture was developed. By the time the Portuguese arrived in the 15th century

the coastal belt was predominantly Muslim in population and culture. It was this Islamic - Swahili Culture which was later passed on to the ethnic communities which embraced Islam. The coastal Muslims were the exemplars of the faith. The Asian Muslims arrived much later and with them, came the religious diversity which now characterises Islam in Kenya. However, Islam remained confined to the coast for many centuries. It was not until the beginning of the second half of the 19th century that Islam reached some parts of the interior of Kenya through Arab/Swahili traders.

In the process of colonization the British moved from the coast towards the interior, using coastal peoples as porters and soldiers. At the turn of the century, some of them settled in what is now known as the Pangani area of Nairobi. Since they had been recruited from areas which were traditionally Muslim, they formed the nucleus of the Muslim community which absorbed immigrants from nearby Kikuyu, Kamba and Masai areas. Also, there were Somali and Nubian Muslims who settled in separate camps.

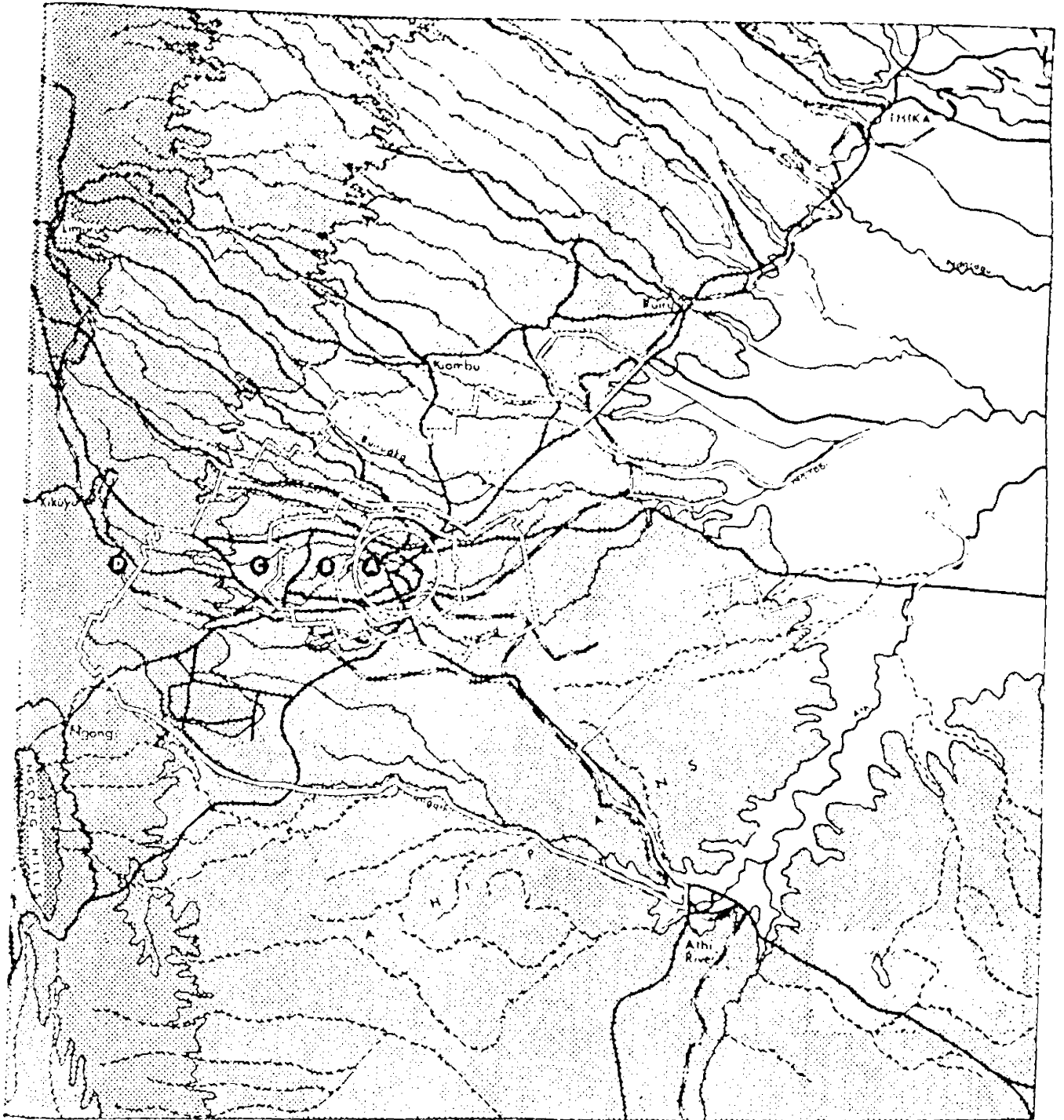
The coastal Muslims dominated the religious affairs and the leadership of the villages. After the first World War, the 'converts' began to show resentment at this domination by the coastal Muslims. Consequently, tribal mosques were constructed and tribal identity was emphasised by the Kikuyu and the Kamba Muslims and unity was not achieved

even after they were moved to the new Native Location. Most of these disagreements were given religious interpretation. On the one hand, the 'converts' argued that the Swahili Muslims had distorted the Islamic message, while on the other, the Coastal Muslims looked down upon them as 'converts' and therefore inferior to those born into the faith.

During the construction of the railway to Uganda, many Asians were recruited from India. They were employed as administrators, clerks and indentured labourers. After the completion of the railway they settled in Nairobi and, later on, they were joined by others from the Coast. They established their own social, economic and religious institutions. The institutions established by the Shia groups were essentially sectarian up to the late 1950's. Religious affiliation determined membership of societies and participation in communal activities. However, in comparison to the Shia Institutions, the Sunni Punjabi Mosques and clubs were open to all muslims and the Sunni adopted a non-sectarian attitude. But the Ismailis built an elaborate educational system for the Ismaili children in Nairobi. In these schools, the children were trained to be good Ismailis first and foremost.

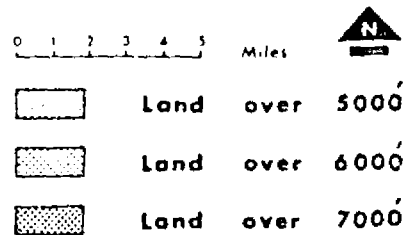
Children from other communities were not admitted into the school until after independence. The Bohra also managed a school for their children and other children were not admitted there until 1969. The Ithna' ashari and other small communities which were not able to establish their own schools, sent their children to the Indian government schools in Nairobi, while religious education was imparted in the mosques and at home.

In conclusion, it can be said that sectarianism is one of the most salient characteristics of Islam in Nairobi.



NAIROBI : Boundary Changes Since 1900

- (A) - 1900
- (B) - 1920
- (C) - 1927
- (D) - 1963



INTRODUCTION

Before I set out on this research, I thought that it was possible to investigate the religious diversity factor among all the Muslim Communities in Nairobi. At that time, I had read a few sources in which the authors argued that in East Africa, all the sects of Islam are represented and that it is a microcosm of universal Islam.

But when I entered into actual field work, I found that the task before me was too wide to be covered thoroughly within a field research period of four months. There are numerous Muslim Communities in Nairobi, both of African and Asian origin. I therefore decided, with the help of my supervisor, Professor A. I. Salim, to narrow the task down and only cover the religious diversity factor among the major communities in Nairobi.

I carried most of my fieldwork between December 1985 and March 1986. The field work took place in Nairobi, and sometimes, I had to trace informants outside Nairobi, in places like Karai, which is occupied by Muslims who had been removed from Pangani in 1938; and Ongata Ongai, better known as Ongata Rongai, which is occupied mainly by Somali Muslims.

In my field research, the main problem that I encountered was the close-knit nature of most of the Muslim communities.

For some of them, especially the Ismailis, it was a "special offence", to reveal any information about the community, its activities or the Imam. Others, like the Bohra, had to seek permission, from their leader, which was not forthcoming. Not only the Asians were closed to outsiders, but also the Nubians and the Somalis.

Another problem was that, I, being a non-Muslim, most of the informants were quite apprehensive and unwilling to give me information about their faith. However, I managed to meet many Muslims of different communities and different walks of life, who were willing to be interviewed and gave as much information and help as they could. Also some of them allowed me to read their private files and make copies when it was necessary to do so.

The Aim of the Study

Sectarianism in Islam developed after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.). Gradually, the Shi'ites (non-Orthodox) distinguished themselves from the Sunni (Orthodox). As Islam spread to India, Persia and Pakistan, other sub-sects came into existence. Many schools of thought were soon developed. Today these sects are scattered all over the world. The aim of this study, therefore, is to trace the historical development of this phenomenon and investigate how it features among the Muslim communities of Nairobi.

An attempt is also made to show how most of these diverse communities came and settled in Nairobi and established their own religious and social institutions.

It is my contention that Muslim religious diversity has not been adequately studied in a general perspective or in particular case studies, especially in Kenya. The colonial records on Nairobi residents deal with them as Europeans, Asians and Natives. Therefore, very little information, if any, is given about their religious life. Here an attempt has been made to study the main groups in a kind of cross-section with a view to examining the extent to which their sectarian doctrines affect the social welfare activities and institutions.

Literature Review

Since Islam in Kenya is an area which has not been given due attention by the scholars, few of the studies that have been done describe the process of Islamization and the reaction to, and effect or impact of, Islam upon various ethnic groups. Given this background, the literature related to Islamic religious diversity in Nairobi was found to be quite scarce. In the light of these limitations, archival material was heavily relied upon. It also became necessary to visit the office of the Registrar of Societies where some information about societies and associations of various Muslim communities was obtained.

However, extensive library research was carried out and, following, are the most important sources, though many of them were not directly related to the diversity factor. One of the authors who have written on the origins and development of sectarianism in Islam is Benard Lewis. In his book, The Origins of Ismalism, he says that divisions among muslims began immediately after the death of the Prophet. Shi'ism began as a purely political movement demanding that Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, be the successor of the Prophet. During its early period, it was an Arab movement, expressing legitist aspirations and untouched by social and religious ideas. For the first half century of the Islamic era, Shi'ism retained this non-religious character. The supporters of Ali differed in no way from the rest of the community as regards religious beliefs. After several decades, Shi'ism was transformed into a muslim sect, having failed as an Arab faction. This book is relevant to this study in that it traces the origins of sectarianism in Islam, thus giving us an insight into the phenomenon which characterises Islam in Nairobi, and the subject of this study.

Another author who has written on the origins of sectarianism is Jafri S.H.M. In his book, The Origins and Development of Early Shi'ite Islam, he discusses different opinions about the favourable position Ali enjoyed among some sections of the *Ummah*, during the lifetime of the Prophet. He goes on to say that there was already a group which was being referred to as the *Shia of Ali*, meaning partisans of Ali, but this was not a religious group. Jafri gives a systematic and detailed account of the origin and historical development of Shi'ite doctrines. He traces the development of Shi'ite ideas throughout the period of the Glorious Caliphate; the Umayyad period; the Fatimid period; and the schisms within the Shi'ite community on various occasions, particularly after succession disputes. But the book seems to show a Shi'ite bias because during the early period the different religious opinions had not yet been formulated and the *Ummah* was united. However, this book has been an important source of information for the chapter on the origin and development of sectarianism in Islam.

In his book, Islamic Philosophy and Theology, Montgomery W. Watt, surveys the historical development of philosophical and religious thought in Islam. He traces the origin of sectarianism to Kharijites, the part of Ali's army which "seceded" after Ali favoured arbitration during the battle with Mu'awiyah.

He says that the existence of a belief that salvation is to be attained by following a charismatic leader and the desire to belong to a particular community, explain the appearance of the Kharijite and Shi'ite movements. He discusses the various stages of development of both Shi'ite and Sunnite points of view, and their interaction with Greek philosophy. His book is a unique source because he objectively analyses the development of the Sunnite theology.

John S. Trimingham has written extensively on Islam in Africa, but of particular relevance here is his book, Islam in East Africa. This work, though a history in breadth rather than in depth, is apparently the most comprehensive on Islam in East Africa. Here, the author discusses, however inadequately, many themes of Islam in East Africa. These themes include the settlement of the early Muslims along the Coast, what he calls the contemporary Muslim communities and the Swahili. He briefly discusses the spread of Islam into the interior, the sects and the Sunni *Madhahib*, schools of thought. The work is useful to the study in that it gives more information and in more dimensions, than many other works in which a chapter or two is devoted to Islam in East Africa. But because of the size of the territory he handles, the book tends to be very general.

Also, Ahmed I. Salim's The Swahili Speaking People of Kenya's Coast, was consulted. In this book, the author surveys the Coast as it was in the latter half of the 19th Century, beginning in the 1860's to the middle of the 20th century. It is a brilliant work on the history of the Coast. In the introductory chapter, the coast during the pre-colonial period is discussed in great detail. In the second chapter, he deals with the period between 1895, a significant date when Kenya was declared a British Protectorate, and 1912. This is mainly the encounter between the colonial authorities and the coastal Arabs and Swahilis.

In the third chapter, the economic decline of the coast is analysed. The fourth chapter deals with the conflict between the Western culture and the coastal traditional Muslim culture. In the last chapter, the political activities of the Arabs and the Swahili between 1945 and 1965 are discussed.

Though this work mainly focusses on the history of the coast and not on Islam in Kenya, it was found to be very useful for this study as it offered a general historical background to Islamic culture in Kenya.

The chapter on cultural conflict was particularly important in providing some of the material which was used to link the traditional Muslim education with the situation on the coast during colonial rule and the clash that arose between this traditional education and secular education.

Another relevant work was Islam in Africa, edited by Kritzek, J. and Lewis, W.H. The contributors to this volume have discussed, in general, the various themes of Islam in Africa. These themes include expansion, Muslim law, Asians in East Africa and South Africa and particular regional developments. In the latter they include the Sudan, Central Africa, Congo, Nigeria and Coastal West Africa. In East Africa, they have discussed Islam in Tanzania and Uganda. Kenya is left out.

But most relevant in this book is Hatim Amiji's article, "The Asian Communities" in East Africa. In it, the author analyses some important aspects of the Asian religious and social organizations. He discusses each of the Shia communities: their origins: religious organization and practices; fiscal affairs; secular organization; and their problems and prospects in post-independent East Africa.

This article proved very useful to the study of the religious practices and other important aspects of the sectarian Asian Muslim communities.

But the author omitted the Sunni Asian Muslims who are also a significant minority and play an important role in East African Islam.

Cynthia Salvadori, in her book, The Asian Cultures in Kenya, discusses the cultures of all the Asian communities in Kenya: Jains, Goans, Buddhists, Sikhs and Muslims. But most relevant to this study is her section on the Muslim communities. This section is devoted to the Sunnis under their ethnic and occupational groupings and the sectarian Shia communities. She discusses their historical origins in India; their arrival and settlement in Kenya; their religious beliefs and practices; secular organization and communal institutions. This was an important source as it was the only work of its kind - specifically on Kenyan Asians.

Parin I.V. Mawani carried out a study on the role of the Jamat Khana among the Ismailis in Kenya. In this thesis, "The Jamat Khana as a Source of Cohesiveness in the Ismaili Community in Kenya", the Jamat Khana is described not only as a place of prayer, but also a centre for communal life of the Ismailis.

This work is relevant and useful to this study in that it provides information about the Jamat Khana, which is an element of Muslim diversity which is dealt with in the present study. Mawani gives us a brief history of the Ismaili community and the background to the development of Nizari Ismailism. He also goes further to summarise the history of their settlement in Nairobi.

He also discusses the Ismaili activities and festivals which take place in the Jamat Khana. He describes the Ismaili religious practices, thus providing useful information in the comparison between the Ismaili religious practices and those of the other Shia groups. It is an important source as it is the only work which is specifically on the religious activities of the Ismailis in Kenya.

Also Mohamed N. Abdullah's dissertation, "Some Aspects of Coastal and Islamic Influences in Mumias from the late 19th century to the Early 20th Century", was useful to the present study. The dissertation aims to probe the Coastal and Islamic influences in Mumias. It is mainly concerned with who the first arrivals in Mumias were, the nature of the influences they introduced and to what extent these influences were assimilated, tolerated or rejected by the Wanga Society.

The author examines the European factor, that is the colonial rule and missionary activities in relation to the introduction of the Swahili Islamic culture into Mumias.

This dissertation, though not on Nairobi or the diversity factor, is relevant to the present study in that the author accounts for the presence of Islam in Mumias in the second half of the 19th century, even before the advent of colonialism. This account gives us an insight into the history of Islam in Mumias which became an important Islamic centre in the interior and played an important role in the spread of Islam in many parts of Western Kenya.

Quraishy's book, Text Book of Islam has been written specifically to meet the demands of the Islamic Religious Education syllabus in secondary schools. Therefore, the author devotes some sections to the history and spread of Islam in East Africa; and others to the Quran.

But of particular relevance to this study, is what Quraishy says about Islam in Nairobi. He says that most of the early Muslims in Nairobi were from Tanganyika, the Coast or Eastern Congo (Manyema). He gives the example of Maalim Mtodoo (a Tanganyikan) who is considered to have been an important Muslim pioneer in Nairobi.

However, he does not give us adequate information when he says that the early Muslims built three villages in what is now Nairobi, namely Kampi ya Somali in Pangani and Eastleigh; Mji wa Kabete in Kabete and Kibera where the Sudanese were settled. There were more villages which were built by the early Muslims in Nairobi, for example Mji wa Mombasa which was only second to Pangani, yet it had 160 huts. (See p. 123). Apart from giving us a brief general introduction to the Asian Muslim sects he goes further to say that the Sunnis built the Jamia mosque and the Muslim girls school in Nairobi. But he does not discuss the activities of the Shia Muslims in Nairobi. However, the book is helpful to this study because the author discusses Islam in Kenya; the pioneers at the Coast and the spread into the interior to a reasonable extent, thus providing an important historical background.

But even more useful to this study is Kenneth G. McVicar's thesis, "Twilight of an East African Slum: Pumwani and the Evolution of African Settlement in Nairobi". This is a Ph.D. thesis on Pumwani. The author gives the historical background to the development of Nairobi and the beginning of African settlement in the early Muslim villages. He also surveys the events which led to the creation of the Native Location, Pumwani.

He gives a detailed account of the location and in his examination of the dynamic forces within the Pumwani population, he devotes a small section to Islam. But in this small section, he briefly summarises the salient features of Swahili Islamic culture and does not say much about the religious practices among the Muslims of Pumwani, though he admits that "Muslims have made Pumwani what it is".²

The thesis, however, was quite useful to the present study, especially in providing information about the early villages and the events leading to the creation of the Native Location, and the location itself.

Janet Bujra's report, "Pumwani: The Politics of Property A Study of Urban Renewal Scheme in Nairobi, Kenya", also provided useful background information about the Muslims of Pumwani. This was a report of a study sponsored by the Social Science Council, in which Bujra makes a general survey of the old muslim villages in Nairobi. She goes a step further than McVicar to give the factors which facilitated the conversion to Islam of the upcountry immigrants who settled in the villages.

She attempts to analyse the internal dynamics of Pumwani Society, particularly the rivalry between the various groups. This rivalry is expressed through such religious activities as the celebration of *Milad-un-Nabi*, the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.)

But she seems not to have been able to perceive this religious rivalry in relation to the composition of the residents of Mji wa Mombasa, who formed the majority of the initial population of the 'New Native Location' and the Lamu background of social stratification.

However, the report is useful to this study as it is an important source, particularly for the analysis of the divisions that existed among the African Muslims in the location.

Methodology

The main method that was used was the oral interview. Oral interviews were conducted of as many informants as possible. Caution was taken to interview at least five members of each community in an attempt to verify the information and avoid possible individual biases of the informants. An unstructured questionnaire was used for the purpose of guiding the researcher on the appropriate questions to be posed to the informants. Thus, the questionnaire was not distributed as such, except in two cases where the members were not willing to be interviewed. These two cases were among the Ismailis and the main Bohra group. The Ismailis gave typed answers, which were later discussed with their leaders.

Also group interviews were held on several occasions especially with the African Muslims. The choice of the oral interview method was based on the fact that most of informants were not willing to be taped. Most of them were quite suspicious and others just did not like it - even those who understood the purpose for which it was being done. Also some of them were quite apprehensive about their names appearing in the footnotes. Therefore I used their initials instead of full names though the list of the informants is available.

To begin with, I did not know the right people to approach in my search for information; but my supervisor suggested a few names of various community leaders and potential informants. Some of these in turn suggested the names of others and that way, I was able to reach many resource persons. I also approached some community leaders through the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims Office in Nairobi. Most of the informants were interviewed at their homes after work or at the weekends. Most of the offices of Muslim organizations were visited and in that way some information was obtained from their files.

The other method that was used was library research. This was done especially for the historical development of sectarianism which was traced from the death of the Prophet through the centuries.

Finally, archival research was done in the Kenya National Archives (K.N.A.) and the City Council Archives. As it is evident from the notes, quite a substantial amount of information was obtained from the National Archives.

Footnotes

1. Watt, M.W., Islamic Philosophy and Theology,
Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1979,
p. 3.
2. McVicar K.G., "Twilight of an East African Slum:
Pumwani and the Evolution of African Settlement
in Nairobi", Ph.D. Thesis, University of
California, Los Angeles, 1968, p. 147.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Origins of Sectarianism in Islam

Sectarianism is a phenomenon which characterises Islam all over the Muslim world. The main distinction is between the Sunni and the Shia.

Some Muslim scholars have tried to explain the causes of theological differences between these two groups and to trace their historical development through the centuries. Some of them have differed in their views on the origin and causes of differences which have resulted in the division of the Muslim nation (Ummah), first into two distinct groups or sects and later into sub-groups or sub-sects. Let us examine some of the explanations which have been put forward.

Jafri¹ traces the origin of sectarianism to the composition of the Muslim Ummah in Madinah. The Ummah was divided into two different groups: the Northern, of whom the Qureish was the most important and dominant; and the Southern, that is the Aws and Qayla who comprised the *Ansar*² of Yathrib (Madinah). For the latter, religion was predominant even in the *Jahiliyya* period (pre-Islamic period of ignorance), when they attributed their successes to their gods and prayed to them in times of distress. In contrast, the Northerners were not so sensitive to religion.

How the Prophet Mohammed (s.a.w.) united these two groups to form an Ummah in Madinah is known too well to need any description here. This difference in religious sentiments was portrayed at the death of the Prophet. To some, his succession was more religious than political, while to others, it was the opposite: more political than religious. Certain of the *sahaba*, companions of the Prophet, could not agree to the interpretation given by Abu Bakr and his supporters because they understood the leadership of the community as, above all, a religious office. To them the idea of heredity was supported by the following Quranic verse:

"Verily, God has chosen Adam and Noah, the family of Abraham and the family of Imran above all people."³

The commentators on this verse have all unanimously explained that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) belonged to the family of Ibrahim. For example one of the renowned translators and commentators, Yusuf Ali, commenting on this verse says:

"The Prophets in the Jewish-Christian-Muslim dispensation form one family literally...."⁴

This ancient tradition was well known among the Companions (Sahabá) and the section of the community which stressed the religious aspect.

Another commentator, Mir Ahmed Ali commenting on the same verse says:

"As the Holy Prophet and his divinely chosen issues or the Holy *Ahl Bait* all belong to the posterity of Abraham, in the clear declaration made by this verse, the Holy Prophet and his Holy *Ahl Bait* are the chosen ones of God who are naturally made superior to everyone in the human race as a whole."⁵

Therefore, to a section of the *Sahaba*, the Prophet had to be succeeded by one from his family. Heredity, being supported by the Quran, gave these companions a strong point in the argument and they would not compromise. Ali was the one most suitable for this position and there were several arguments advanced in his support. First, he was the great-grandson of Hashim and the grandson of Abd al Muttalib. He was the son of Abu Talib (whose other name was Imran)⁶, who was Muhammad's paternal uncle. The significance of this relationship is that Ali and the Prophet had the same paternal descent Abd al Muttalib was their grandfather. Also when Abd al Muttalib died, Abu Talib took the young Muhammad into his care. In this way Muhammad was like an elder brother to Ali.

On the other hand, their great-grandfather Hashim, traced his descent to Kusayy, who had promoted the Quraish to a prominent position in Makkah and reorganised the pilgrimage.

Hashim performed the religious duty of providing water and food for the pilgrims. Through him, therefore, Ali could trace his descent to great religious office-holders of the Quraish tribe. To most of the Companions, Ali was the nearest blood relative and closest associate of the Prophet. The Prophet had acted as his guardian and subsequently adopted him as a brother. He was the first male to accept Islam, the son-in-law of the Prophet and the father of the two of the Prophet's grandsons: Al Hassan and Al Husayn. These qualities earned Ali a group of devoted followers during the lifetime of the Prophet. This was the view of those who advocated hereditary succession.

The other view, the one which was devoid of the primacy of hereditary succession, was based on several arguments in favour of Abu Bakr. It was reported that the Prophet once said that he was protected from hell.⁷ Later, because of his humble and trustworthy character, Abu Bakr was known as 'al Siddik', the truthful or the upright.

Second, while the Shia argued that Ali was the first male to accept Islam, the Sunni on the other hand say that it was Abu Bakr. Ali was only a child while Abu Bakr was an adult. Talking of the embryonic days of Islam, the Prophet said:

"Whenever I invited any one to accept Islam, he argued with me and initially rejected my words save the son of Abu Quhafa (Abu Bakr) who accepted immediately and remained steadfast therein".⁸

Therefore, to emphasize that Ali was the first to accept Islam is to overlook this saying of the Prophet and also the fact that Ali was only a boy, while it was Abu Bakr, the adult, who could grasp fully the teachings of Islam. He was always beside the Prophet. He was the first to believe the Prophet's story of Isra', the night journey to Jerusalem. During the Makkan period, he was second in command to the Prophet. While Ali was the Prophet's son-in-law, Abu Bakr was the Prophet's father-in-law. The closeness of Abu Bakr to the Prophet cannot be overshadowed by that of Ali. This can be illustrated by the Quranic references to the role of Abu Bakr during the critical period of the Migration to Madinah. The Prophet chose Abu Bakr to accompany him on this perilous journey:

"If ye help not (your Leader)
It is no matter for God
Did in deed help him,
When the unbelievers
Drove him out: he had no more
than one Companion. They were
two in a cave.
And he said to his Companion
'Have no fear for God is with us'"⁹

The two hid themselves in the cave of Thaur, three miles from Makkah, for three nights surrounded by the enemy. The 'Second of the Two' later on became Abu Bakr's title. While they journeyed together, Ali was left behind to bluff the hostile Makkans, which the Shia argue was a dangerous action by Ali to protect the Prophet. But the Sunni argue that this was no more important than the Prophet's choice of Abu Bakr to accompany him and the hardship that they shared in the cave.

Tabatabai¹⁰ says that the course of the first manifestations, and the later growth, of Islam during the twenty-three years of the prophecy, brought about many conditions which necessitated the appearance of a group such as that of the Shiites among the companions of the Prophet. Jafri and Tabatabai enumerate Ali's good deeds and mention various occasions when he displayed his unique qualities. One of the events that is stressed by the Shia authors is that of Ghadir Khum. During the Prophet's last pilgrimage, he is said to have addressed a big gathering at Ghadir Khum on 18th Dhul Hijja 11 A.H // 6th March 632 A.D, and made the famous statement, which later became the strongest support for the Alid cause. He is said to have taken Ali by the hand and asked the followers whether Ali was not superior in authority and person, awla, to the believers themselves.

The crowd cried out in one voice:

"It is so, O Apostle of God." The Prophet then declared: "He of whom I am the mawla (patron, master, leader, friend), of him Ali is also the mawla (man Kuntu Mawlahu fa Ali-un Mawlahu) O God be the friend of him who is his friend and be the enemy of him who is his enemy."¹¹

From the Shi'ite point of view, this declaration of the Prophet was meant to be a clear designation of Ali as his successor. Even before this event, already there were references to the 'Shia of Ali' and the 'Shia of the Household of the Prophet'. However, at this early period, the term 'Shia' meant "supporters" or "party", it did not denote a group with different theological or legal views.

What is the other side of the story? Let us briefly examine Abu Bakr's position and activities during the lifetime of the Prophet. In critical situations, he was always beside the prophet and offered him unwavering support. Not only did he support the Prophet but he was his chief advisor. For example, when others, including Umar who became the second Caliph, questioned the decision of the Prophet to make peace during the Battle of Hudaibiya, Abu Bakr immediately and wholeheartedly supported the decision. He was one of the signatories to the truce on behalf of the Muslims.

There are several indications that Abu Bakr was a marked successor as he deputised the Prophet on many occasions. For example, he was appointed by the Prophet to conduct the pilgrimage of 9 A.H. / 632 A.D. and to lead the public prayers in Madinah during the Prophet's illness. He led public prayers seventeen times during the lifetime of the Prophet. And the Prophet prayed behind him as he led the prayers.

Parallel to the Ghadir Khum event which is stressed by the Shia, the Prophet, during his illness, went to the great Mosque and addressed the congregation in these words:

"God offered to one from among His servants the choice of this earth or that which is high unto Him. And he has chosen that which is high unto God."¹²

Abu Bakr understood the importance of these words and tearfully answered the Prophet:

"We would rather sacrifice our lives and those of our parents."¹³

Here, Abu Bakr's words were a kind of oath or promise that he would protect Islam after the death of the Prophet, even if it would mean sacrificing his own life.

We are told that Aisha implored the prophet to relieve her father, Abu Bakr, of the duty to lead the community after him because he was old and so soft at heart that he was moved to tears whenever he recited the Quran. But the Prophet did not grant her request.

As mentioned earlier, the two main divisions of the Ummah - the Northerners and the Southerners, were not equally religiously sensitive. However, among the Northerners, there was a popular notion of the sanctity of the Banu Hashim. This notion and the declaration at Ghadir Khum, coupled with events like the Battle of Uhud, where the Muslims were commanded by Ali, led to the crystalization of a point of view that Ali was the one ordained to succeed the Prophet.

On the other hand, the Battle of Badr was more important than that of Uhud. The Battle of Badr (2 A.H.) was decisive because their defeat would have dealt a staggering blow to the Muslims. The Muslims numbered only three hundred, only one-third of the enemy's army, which was a thousand. The Prophet was aware of this grave situation and he prayed aloud:

"O Lord! I beseech Thee to fulfil the promise Thou has given to me, O Lord! if Thou shall allow this band of Muslims to perish Thou will not be worshipped on earth."¹⁴

At this moment when the prospects looked bleak, it was Abu Bakr who comforted the Prophet:

"Prophet of Allah! Be of good cheer. May the lives of my parents be sacrificed over you...."¹⁵

Abu Bakr's son, Abdur Rehman was in the enemy ranks and his father rebuked him.

At the Battle of the Trench (5 A.H.) Abu Bakr commanded the contingent that guarded the side of the trench. On another occasion, the Prophet commissioned him to lead expeditions against the Banu Kalas and Banu Fazarah.

According to Jafri, the bone of contention between the Shia and Sunni was not the authenticity of the event of Ghadir Khum, not even the declaration of the Prophet in favour of Ali, BUT the meaning of the word *mawla*, used by the Prophet. The Sunni interpreted it to mean friend, nearest of kin or confidant, while to the Shia it meant leader, master and patron. To the Sunni, the Prophet simply meant that his followers should respect his son-in-law especially because some of them were complaining that Ali did not distribute evenly the spoils of the expedition of Al Yaman. The Shia did not consider the circumstances which led the Prophet to speak in favour of Ali; and to them, the declaration became a clear designation of Ali as the successor of the Prophet.

The event of Saqifa marked the earliest manifestations of Shii feelings among the companions of the Prophet.¹⁶ As soon as the news of the death of the Prophet broke out, the people of Madinah gathered in the hall named Saqifa, where they usually met to discuss issues. The purpose of this meeting was to select a successor. It took place even before the Prophet was buried.

Here some voices were raised in support of Ali. The conflict between the supporters and opponents of Abu Bakr centred on the consideration of 'what is necessary' and 'what ought to be done.'¹⁷ The supporters of the House of the Prophet came out in open opposition to the selection of Abu Bakr because it was not what ought to have been done. Jafri observes that:

"This episode marks both the first open expression of ~~and the~~ point of departure for what ultimately developed into the Shi'i understanding of Islam."¹⁸

This is the Shia version of the Saqifa event. According to the Sunni version, it was the *Ansar* of Madinah who assembled in the hall to choose a leader from among themselves. A messenger brought this news to Abu Bakr who was at the Prophet's house where he was busy with the funeral arrangements rather than succession to power. On receiving the news he hurried to the meeting which was already in progress.

The *Ansar* said:

"We are the legion of God and you Muhajirin are few in number. Still you are thinking of cutting our roots and turning us away and to let us have nothing to do with the Caliphate."¹⁹

Abu Bakr replied:

"Every word which the citizens have uttered in their praise is true, but in noble birth and influence the Quraish are paramount and to none but them would Arabia yield obedience."²⁰

They (*Ansar*) proposed to have their own leader on the grounds that whenever the Prophet sent a *Muhajir* on any mission, he was accompanied by a *Nasir*. Finally, Abu Bakr told them to choose between Umar and Abu Obaida. But the two replied "Thou has already, at the Prophet's bidding, led the prayers; thou art our chief. Stretch forth thy hand." They took his hand in theirs as a token of allegiance and their example was followed by all those who were in the group. According to this information, the *Ansar* initially opposed the election of Abu Bakr because, being the majority, they did not want to be dominated by the minority *Muhajirin*. However, Abu Bakr was elected unanimously by the group at Saqifa. The issue of succession was more political than religious at this time.

The Shia remained silent during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr, only to be provoked by the events of the *shura*, electoral body. Umar set up an electoral body which comprised of Ali, Uthman, Zubair, Sa'd, Talha and Abdul Rahman bin Auf to select his successor.

He said that he did "not consider any one more qualified for the Caliphate than these people with whom the Prophet was pleased till the end of his life."²¹ But these members of the electoral committee disagreed, each pressing the claim of his own group. To avoid dissension, Abdul Rahman offered to withdraw his own claim on condition that the other members agreed to abide by his decision. At this point, it seems that Abdul Rahman assumed the position of the leader of the electoral committee. He had come to occupy an important position after he had been won to Islam by Abu Bakr. But the two prominent candidates now were Ali and Uthman of the Houses of Hashim and Umayyah respectively.

On the one hand, the Shia version of the story is that during this time, Ali was offered the Caliphate by Abdul Rahman on condition that he would rule according to the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet and that he must follow the precedent established by the first two Caliphs - Abu Bakr and Umar. He declined to take the offer because he would not comply with the second condition. He is said to have declared that he would use his own judgement whenever solutions to problems would not be found in the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet. This, of course, meant deviating from the established precedents. Therefore the Caliphate was offered to Uthman.

On the other hand, according to the Sunni version of the events that took place at Umar's succession, Abdul Rahman "conferred with the people and they gave preference to Uthman..."²² After consulting with the people, Abdul Rahman declared Uthman the Caliph, since he was more inclined to use the precedents of the previous two Caliphs than Ali. However, the ideological difference between Ali and his supporters, and Uthman's did not surface until the former succeeded to the Caliphate.

The selection of Ali after Uthman was seen in two different perspectives: first, it was a triumph for the particular view of succession which had been frustrated by the selection of the three Caliphs preceding him. Second, it was a shock to all those who had adopted the principle of leadership devoid of notions of primacy based on hereditary. With the succession of Ali, these two rival views came into genuine conflict for the first time and crystallised into definite forms. The former view that succession to the Prophet should be hereditary, soon defeated again, was to find expression in a separatist tendency towards a sectarian organization. The other view, that leadership should not be hereditary re-emerged victorious and more vigorous this time. This view eventually shaped itself in such a way that it became the centre of the Islamic *Ummah* or *Jama'a* (the Sunni).

But Hodgson²³ says that the tendency for Ali's partisanship to develop into real sectarianism was rather slow and not as fast as Jafri implies. The people of Kufa looked to the family of Ali for political leadership just like the people of Egypt looked to Abd al Aziz, the Fatimid Caliph from 975 to 996 A.D.

From the outset, the role of the Caliph was both religious and political. Therefore after Ali succeeded to the Caliphate, he began to reshuffle the administration by dismissing most of the governors appointed by his predecessor. In the process of streamlining the administration, he disagreed with the governor of Syria, Mu'awiyah Ibn Abi Sufyan a relative of Uthman (Ali's predecessor). At this point Mu'awiyah took the opportunity to avenge for the martyred Caliph, Uthman, for which he gained strong support from a wide range of people who felt that by failing to punish the assassins, Ali was an accomplice and therefore unfit for the Caliphate. As a result, Mu'awiyah's Syrian army faced Ali's at Siffin. After a long battle, Ali agreed to arbitration which proved disastrous for him since a large part of his followers seceded. The seceders, who were later referred to as 'Kharijites', formed the earliest sect of Islam.²⁴ They adopted the slogan *la hukma illa li llahi*, meaning arbitration belongs to Allah alone. Their sectarian importance lies in the development of the theory of the Caliphate and the justification of faith by deeds or works.

They asserted that it was the obligation of the believers to proclaim illegitimate and depose any Imam or leader who strayed from the right path, thus justifying their action against Ali. They declared that any pious member of the community could be elected to the office of Imam. They became extremists and regarded other Muslims as apostates. Their doctrine demanded purity of conscience and body for the validity of worship.

Probably as a result of this extremism, one of them, Abd Allah b. Ibadh, dissociated himself from the main group in 65 A.H. He became the leader of the moderates, who were later known as 'Ibadhis'. But it was his successor, Djabir b. Zaid al Azdi, who established a definite form of Ibadhite doctrine. This doctrine developed independently without any relationship with the Shiite partisanship for Ali. It can be said that the Ibadhite doctrine developed parallel to the Shiite doctrine. In its initial days the Ibadhi movement was based in Basra, but, later on, its members moved to Oman, where they remained independent until 280 A.H. when the Abbasids reconquered the country. The earlier Kharijite doctrines were replaced by the Ibadhi ones. But later on, the Ibadhis also broke up into various sub-sects, the Wahhabi being the most important one, which has continued to exist down to modern times. Now the Wahhabi doctrine is strongest in Saudi Arabia.

After this brief survey of the earliest sect in Islam, we shall go back to the development of Shi'ism. The martyrdom of Husayn in 680 A.D. assumed a deep religious significance for those who championed the Alid cause. But Hodgson says that was one of the events which gave the Alid cause "an emotional and moral, and therefore a religious turn."²⁵ Yet Husayn himself was aware of his dignity as a grandson of the Prophet and the son of Ali. Therefore, the Shia exaggerated Husayn's relationship with the latter. Thus the *tawwabun* combined loyalty to Ali with loyalty to the Prophet himself because this was an essential element in making the matter a strictly religious one. The *tawwabun* was a group of penitents who had failed to stand with Husayn in the hour of trial in Kufa. This movement was started under the leadership of five of the oldest associates of Ali. In 680 A.D., they held their first meeting. They put emphasis for succession on the basis of kinship to the Prophet. The main part of the speech at the meeting, which called for the killing of the murderers of Husayn in order to avenge his blood or to be martyred in order to expiate their failure to support Husayn and thus to seek God's forgiveness, was a new dimension added to the gradually developing Shiite ideas. But we cannot say that there was yet a comprehensive division of the faith into Shia and Sunni.²⁶

The importance of the event concerning the *Tawwabun* was the glorification of the grave of Husayn where they wept and mourned. They went to war with the Syrians at 'Ayn al-warda, where they were all butchered and thus fulfilled their desire to sacrifice themselves. Thus martyrdom, which became a characteristic of later Shias, was taken a step further.

It was after the Karbala massacre that the Muslims conceived the idea of *Mahdi* and the first to be so proclaimed was Ali's third son, Muhammad Ibn al-Hanafiya. This propaganda was championed by Mukhtar b. Abi Ubayda ath - Thaqafi on behalf of Ibn al-Hanafiya and the movement called itself *Shiat al Mahdi*. Soon it became a sect in its own right, assuming the name of Kaisaniya. After the death of Ibn Al-Hanafiya in 701 A.D., the extremists among his followers believed that he had gone into *Chayba*, concealment, and would return, *Raja*. Thus the origin of *Chayba* and *raja* which became characteristic of later Shi'ism.

As long as Husayn was alive, the Shia remained united as they considered him to be the only head and Imam of the house of the Prophet. But his death and the quiescent attitude of his only surviving son, Zayn al Abidin (Ali), threw the Shia into confusion and created a vacuum in the leadership of those who believed in the *Ahl al - Bait*. This resulted in the division of the Shia into two groups: the followers of Zayn Al Abidin and those of Muhammad Ibn al Hanafiya.

These were further divided between the two sons of Zayn al Abidin - Al Baqir and his half-brother, Zayd. These two quarrelled over the issue of whether the Imam should rise against his oppressor. Zayd was of the opinion that an Imam should use the sword and Al Baqir was opposed to its use. They also disagreed on the issue of the first two Caliphs - Al Baqir, restricting himself to only accepting that they were Caliphs and concealing his real opinion about them and Zayd emphasising that they were legally elected, though Ali was the more preferable candidate. Here the question of the two Caliphs was important in that Zayd was inclined to accept the practice of the traditionalists of Kufa, who identified themselves with the Sunnah; while Al Baqir adhered to ideas derived from Ali (we have already said that Ali had declared that he would use his own judgement whenever he found it necessary to do so.) This disagreement of the two - Al Baqir and Zayd - and the tendency of the latter to accept the practice of the traditionalists - shows that Shi'ism had not taken any definitive form yet. However, the Zaydi movement ended when Ja'far as Sadiq emerged with his followers. Ja'far was the eldest son of Al Baqir. He was born in Madinah in 704 A.D. On the paternal side, he was a descendant of Ali and, therefore, to the champions of the Alid cause, he was the first choice. He was brought up under the care of his grandfather, Zayn al Abidin, from whom he acquired religious learning.

At this stage there were three separate groups: the extremists and the Mahdi group; the former Zaidi group now supported by the Mutazilites, or those who believed that a grave sinner was neither a believer nor an unbeliever, but one who is in "intermediate position", and the traditionalists of Kufa and Madinah. And Jafar soon gathered a seizable following. These groups did not have any clear-cut ideological differences. Watt says that the Umayyad "Shiism lacked any semblance of a coherent theory. It was a manifestation of a deep unconscious need..." for "a charismatic leader to follow."²⁷

While all this development of Shiite ideas was taking place, there were pious men who had adopted an attitude of neutrality. This group which later came to be known as "pious opposition"²⁸ had members in such important centres as Kufa, Basra, Madinah and Damascus. In these centres, they often met in the mosques to discuss legal and religious questions, but without a discernible distinction between the two issues - the Sunni and the Shia. But it was during the Umayyad period when separate disciplines were developed in the field of law and religion, especially after the development of the Science of the Traditions. In the latter half of this period, there emerged a "general religious movement"²⁹ of men with various interests, which included theology, mysticism and ascetism, but mainly focussed on legal issues.

At this time, there were numerous schools of thought, each with its own points of disagreement with the others. Each of these schools began to claim superiority over its rivals.

In 750 A.D., the Abbasids succeeded the Umayyads and persuaded these schools of thought to unite and agree with each other. Thus the general religious movement received government support for giving special status to the Traditions of the Prophet. As a result of the government inclination to support those groups which championed the Traditions, all the schools began to claim that their teachings were based on the Quran and the Traditions. To check against the invention and alteration of the Traditions, the scholars of the times devised a method where each tradition was required to be supported by an *Isnad*, a chain of authorities or transmitters. Through this method, they established a canon of 'Sound' Traditions and 'weak' Traditions. Gradually, as the Science of Traditions developed, more emphasis was laid on the 'sound' traditions and even the transmitters were classified into various grades: weak and sound. Seen in a different perspective, the emphasis on 'sound' traditions and the classification of both the Traditions and the transmitters, was part of the struggle between the Sunnite and the Shiite ideas which were slowly but surely evolving.

Watt tells us that:

"The Sunnite Religious and political attitude was now supported by a tolerably coherent body of doctrine and therefore strengthened vis-a-vis its rival."³⁰

Such an achievement was made possible by the existence of the Traditionists Movement which had been formed during the Umayyad period. It was this movement which developed a Sunnite theological stand based on the Quran and the Traditions of the Prophet. At this time, out of the numerous schools which were using the Quran and the Traditions to justify their stand, four emerged as the dominant ones. These were the Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki and Hanbali.

The earliest of these schools, *Madhahib*, was that of Abu Hanifa of Iraq. He was born in 700 A.D. and died in 798 A.D. Abu Hanifa was a scholar and a renowned jurist. He insisted on the right of speculation and emphasised the principle of analogical deduction, *Qiyas*; and also on the right of preference, *istihsan*.³¹ It is said that a third of the Muslims in the world adhere to the Hanafi *Madhhab* and it is the most tolerant of the four schools of law.

The Madinah school was founded by Anas Ibn Malik (715 A.D. - 795). He was respected for his strict criticism of *ahadith*, Traditions. Ibn Malik differed from Abu Hanifa in that he did not regard the Traditions as the highest legal authority.

He exercised his own opinion, *ra'y* in cases where the Traditions and the already established Madinah *idjma*, consensus of opinion, did not offer solutions.

The Iraqi school of Abu Hanifa is said to have been quite liberal, in comparison to the Madinah School of Ibn Malik. But the third school which was founded by Imam Al Shafi'i, (767 - 820 A.D.) who was a student of Ibn Malik is said to be in an intermediate position between the liberal and the conservative schools. Shafi'i differed from Abu Hanifa in that he laid strict rules for *qiyas* and rejected *istihsan*. In modern times, the Shafi'i *madhhab* is dominant in lower Egypt, Western Sudan, Southern Arabia, India and Eastern Africa. In East Africa, virtually all the Arab, Swahili, Somali and other African Muslims (with the exception of the Nubians) are of Shafi'i persuasion.

The last of the four Sunni schools was that of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (780 - 855 A.D.). Ibn Hanbal was a student of Al Shafi'i. Ibn Hanbal was uncompromising in his adherence to the traditions and conceded to *ra'y* only when it was absolutely necessary. He preferred decisions based on weak *ahadith* to any other means of judgement. As a result of strict adherence to the traditions, the Hanbalite school of thought became more intolerant than the other three Sunni Schools. Followers of this school are relatively few.

However, the four Sunni schools of thought do not differ in any significant way.

They were founded between 700 and 850 A.D. Therefore, they shared the same social and historical circumstances as the founders were contemporaries. Also the founders influenced each other, especially in the case where Al Shafi'i was a student of Ibn Malik. Probably this influence affected the extent to which their opinions differed and brought them closer to each other. This assertion is based on the fact that they differed on small details of law and not the essentials of religious doctrine as did the different Shia groups. For example the Malikites differ from the Hanafites in relation to *adhan*, call to prayer. The Malikites repeat *Allah Akbar*, Allah is most great, twice while the Hanafites repeat it four times. Also the Hanafites forbid the second repetition *Ashhadu an la ilah illa Allah*, I testify that there is no god but Allah; and *Ashhadu anna Muhammad rasul Allah*, I testify that Muhammad is the apostle of Allah, while the other three schools accept it.³² This example will suffice to illustrate that the four Sunni schools do not differ in the essentials of faith. Their followers regard each other as orthodox Muslims. Thus the Sunnite position unlike the Shi'ite one, was now supported by a systematised body of knowledge.

The Traditionists Movement culminated in the four orthodox schools of law. While the Sunnite theology was taking shape, the Shi'ites were also active.

Therefore, we shall go back a little and see what was happening to the Shiite doctrine.

At this misty period in the development of separate doctrines for the Shia and the Sunni, it was Jafar as-Sadiq who introduced order by giving an elaborate doctrine of the *Imamat*. It was the political discontent caused by the Umayyad autocratic rule combined with the already mentioned religious groupings which gave Jafar a propitious opportunity to elaborate on the doctrine of the *Imamat*. It was his policy to keep out of politics; so he emphasised the religious rather than the political role of the Imam.

In an attempt to elucidate the doctrine of *Imamat* in a definitive form, he put the utmost emphasis on two fundamental principles: The first was that of the *nass*, that is the *Imamat* is bestowed by God upon a chosen person from the house of the Prophet, who, with the guidance of God, transfers the *Imamat* to another by an explicit designation (*nass*) before his death. Jafar elaborated further that *nass*, initiated by the Prophet, came down from Ali to Hassan and from Hassan to Husayn and strictly through that line to himself (Jafar).

The second principle in the doctrine of *Imamat*, as emphasised by Jafar was that of *ilm*. This means that the Imam is divinely inspired and possesses special knowledge of religion which can only be passed on before his death to the following Imam.

This way, the Imam of the time is the exclusive authoritative source of religious knowledge and therefore, without his guidance no one can follow the right path. This special knowledge includes *zahir*, the exoteric, and *batin*, the esoteric meanings of the Quran. *Nass* then, means the transmission of this special knowledge from one Imam to another, as the legacy of the chosen House of the Prophet through Ali.³³

It was Ali, Hassan and Husayn who introduced the concept and function of the Imam while Zayn al Abidin and Al Baqir laid down the concept of the legitimacy of the family of the Prophet, and the function of the Imam restricted to religious and spiritual guidance of the community. Therefore, by the time of Jafar, the *Imamat* had become hereditary. But the idea of the infallibility of the Imam gained emphasis during the life of Jafar. As we have already seen, a system of doctrine was elaborated and served as a basis of the Ismaili religion of later days.³⁴ Jafar is regarded as the founder of Shi'ism as a theological school in Islam.

His death in 765 A.D. resulted in the first major schism in Shi'ite Islam. So far we have been discussing the development of Shia doctrine after the death of the Prophet. We have so far been having two main distinct groups, but now a third one is born after the death of Iman Jafar as-Sadiq.

Hitherto claims to the *Imamat* had been mostly claims to secular power (we have already seen that Zayn al Abidin and Al Baqir disagreed over the issue of whether the Imam should or should not take up the sword and publicly assert his right to the *Imamat*).

Now a dispute arose regarding the validity of *nass*, formal designation of Jafar's son, Ismail, as his successor. The majority of the Shia accepted Musa al Kazim on the grounds that Ismail had been dispossessed of his inheritance by his father due to his tendency to like alcohol and other forms of what was regarded as loose behaviour - unbecoming of an Imam. Those who believed that the original *nass* could not be abrogated pledged loyalty to Ismail. These became known as the *Sabaiya* or the Seveners, while those who followed Musa became known as *Ithna'ashari* or the Twelvers. The 'Seveners' got the name from their belief in seven Imams: Ali, Hassan, Husayn, Zayn al Abidin, Al Baqir, Jafar and Ismail. The 'Twelvers' (the followers of Musa) believed in a line of twelve Imams. After the death of Jafar, they pledged loyalty to Musa al Kazim and five more Imams after him. These were: Al Rida (d. 818); Mahdi al Jawad (d. 835); Al Hadi (d. 868); Hassan al Askari (d. 874) and finally Muhammad al Muntazar who disappeared in 940. (See the chart on p. 56).

Fyzee aptly summarises the origin of Ismailism in the following words:

".... Ismailism, itself came into being as an independent sect of Islam in circumstances closely resembling the case of Nizari, and the immediate causes of the split of the Shi'ite community was exactly the defence of the dogma of the irrevocability of the *nass*; The sect was formed by the followers of Ismail, the son of Jafar as-Sadiq, who refused to recognise the legality of the second *nass*, to Musa al Kazim...."³⁵

The position of Musa al Kazim was accepted by the secular authority but that of Ismail's son after him, Muhammad bin Ismail, was made difficult. Consequently he left Madinah for Kufa and later for Persia. Lewis says that around Muhammad Ismail was created the historical Ismaili movement,³⁶

The movement flourished later under the protection of the Fatimid Caliphs. The Ismaili doctrines were taught in schools and savants of esoteric doctrine addressed regular assemblies.

Let us briefly see who the Fatimids were. The Fatimid dynasty takes its name from Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet, and through her they trace their descent to Ali. The dynasty was first established in North Africa by Ubayd Allah Sa'id in 297 A.H./909 A.D.

But before this time, the ground had been prepared for him by the Ismaili missionaries who had been sent to North Africa by the Dai of Yemen, Ibn Hawsab Mansur al Yamani. However, when the Fatimid rulers established themselves there, they came into conflict with the Sunni, who were predominantly Maliki, and the Kharijites. Opposition to the new Ismaili doctrine caused a revolt which was quelled with the support of the Umayyad ruler of Cordova in Spain (Spain was then under the Muslim rulers who had conquered the Iberian Peninsular in 711 A.D.). However, the Fatimids finally triumphed.

The first four Fatimid Caliphs reigned in North Africa from 297 A.H./909 to 362/973 A.D. The fourth Caliph, al Muizz, sent one of his generals to conquer Egypt. This powerful general was Djawhar. He entered the old city of al Fustat on 12 sha'ban/1st July 969. This general is said to have introduced Shia doctrines there and the transfer of the Fatimid's headquarters from North Africa to Egypt also meant the transfer of the Ismaili movement. Djawhar built the town of Al Qahira, Cairo, and laid the foundation of the famous Al-Azhar Mosque college on 24 Djumada-359/4th April 790 A.D. which became a centre for the propagation of Ismaili doctrines.

Vagheri gives us a concise summary of the role of the Fatimid dynasty in the development of the Ismaili doctrine:

"The dynasty, born of an original ideology movement within Shi'ism which developed to a degree hitherto unknown and aroused extra-ordinary devotion for the triumph of the cause, established itself by force of arms in North Africa and formed a powerful empire in Egypt. To them were turned the eyes and aspirations of the Ismailis throughout the Muslim world..."³⁷

Under the sixth Caliph, Imam al Hakim, (d. 1021 A.D.) the stability of the Fatimid Empire was considerably upset and, on his death, a group of followers dissented from the main body to form the Druze sect, whose members are found in Yemen, Syria and Lebanon. However Al-Hakim's successor, Az-Zahir (427 A.H./1036 A.D.) and Al-Mustansir (487/1094) reverted to the policies of the early Fatimids and peace and order prevailed in Egypt. But the death of Al-Mustansir was yet to cause another significant dynamic dispute and an internal schism which was to split the Ismaili mission.

Al-Mustansir's son, Nizar was the heir apparent to the Caliphate and *Imamat*. His position was challenged by his brother al - Musta'li, who was supported by the chief Wazir, al Afdal. The majority preserved the original *nass* and pledged loyalty to Nizar and his successors.

These are the Nizari Ismailis and from them spring the Khoja Ismailis of India and Kenya, among other places. The followers of al Musta'li became the Eastern Ismailis or the Bohra from whom spring the Bohra of Kenya and India. Thus, the split in 1094 A.D. resulted in two different groups which later developed their separate doctrines and became sects as we shall see presently. First we shall briefly examine the development of the Nizari branch.

With the move away of Nizari supporters from Egypt to Iran, where the Imam took refuge in Alamut fortress in the Elburz mountains, Nizari Ismailism became independent of the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt. Between 1094 A.D. and 1162, the Nizaris became quite powerful in Persia. Hassan al Sabbah became the official representative of the Imam. Under him, the small communities of Persia were organised and to them the doctrine of *ta'lim* was emphasised. The absolute authority of the Imam was deemed indisputable.

Hassan al Sabbah died in 1124 A.D., and was succeeded by two other Dais, Kiya Buzurg Umid and his son Kiya Muhammad. In 1162 Hassan 'ala dhiKrihi'l Salam assumed the authority of the mission, but since he was not inclined to a religious interpretation of Ismailism he relaxed the rigid observance of *sharia*. This tendency culminated on the 10th day of Ramadhan 1164 A.D. in the 'Great Resurrection' in Alamut.

On this day, he broke the ritual fast, proclaimed himself *Imam* and *Khalifa* and declared the non-necessity of adhering to "the right of religious law and established habits of worship,"³⁸

The underlying theme of the 'Resurrection' was an emphasis on the spiritual discipline, an awareness of the *batin* (esoteric) as being fundamentally more exalted than the *zahir* (exoteric) interpretation. The emphasis on esoteric truth became more heavily pronounced and the Fatimid dualism of *batin* and *zahir* was lost. This means that the two concepts were equally important during the Fatimid Caliphate. But now, Hassan abrogated the existing habits of worship and emphasised the spiritual discipline, the esoteric became more important than the exoteric interpretation. In this way, the doctrine of *Imamat* acquired a new dimension. Its essence lay in the esoteric understanding of the personality of the Imam.

This was the situation up to the first decades of the 14th century when Nizari Ismailism split into two groups after the death of the Imam Shams ad-din Muhammad in 1310 or 1320 A.D. One group followed his younger son, Mumin Shah and became known as the *Muminiyya*, while the other followed his eldest son, Qazim Shah. In the 19th century the Imams of the latter group emerged as noble men in the Persian Court. But after a quarrel, the Imam was murdered in 1817 A.D.

So to appease his followers, the ruler gave the Imam's son and successor, Hassan Ali Shah, the governorship of Khum district and one of his daughters in marriage. This ruler also conferred upon the Imam the title of Aga Khan.³⁹

After the death of Ali Fatch Shah, a civil war broke out and the Imam was involved in it. The hatred of the Prime Minister of the Shah and the court intrigues against the Imam forced him to flee to Sindh in 1842 and later to Bombay in 1848, where he established his headquarters. Here he was received cordially by the whole Khoja population in the city and its neighbourhood. The Dais had been active in teaching Ismaili doctrine in India since the period preceding the Fatimid conquest of North Africa in 909 A.D. The tradition preserved among the Khoja Ismailis shows that they were converted by Pir Sadardin who was sent by Imam Islam Shah in mid- 15th century. They received the title 'Kwaja' which means disciples but was later corrupted to Khoja. They spread into Kutch, Kathiawar and Gujerat.

Up to this point, we have been tracing the origin of the Ismailis whose headquarters moved to India in the 19th century and some of whom came to Kenya in the same century.

We have already mentioned that there was a split in the Ismaili community after the death of the Fatimid Caliph, al-Mustansir in 1094 A.D. and we have traced the development of one of the branches - the Nizaris - to their present situation.

Now we shall briefly examine the other branch, the Musta'li. Ahmad al Mustali was the younger son of al-Mustansir. After the split, the minority of the Ismailis followed him, but he died at an early age and was succeeded by his son al-Amir. Al-Amir was assassinated in 1130 A.D. but before his death, he had appointed his infant son al Tayyib, as his successor and his cousin, Abdul Majid as regent. Abdul Majid showed signs of usurping the caliphate from the infant Imam. Therefore, to protect the rightful heir, al Tayyib was taken into seclusion and the faithfuls believed that he had gone into *Satr* (indefinite seclusion) in 1132 A.D. and will one day reappear.

The Yemeni community appointed the first *Dai al Mutlaq*, the Vicegerent of the Imam on earth, and up to 945 A.H./1539 A.D. he resided in Yemen, where the faithfuls made pilgrimages and paid tithes to him. In 1539, the Da'wat headquarters was moved from Yemen to India and the two geographically separated communities continued to function as a unit for some time. However, in 1591, the twenty-sixth Dai, Daud b. Adjab Shah, died and there arose a succession dispute which split the community into two groups. The Gujerat who were the majority, recognised Daud b. Qutb Shah, while those in Yemen and a small proportion of the Indian community, accepted the claims of Sulayman b. Hassan Shah (d. 1621) who claimed to be the rightful successor of the Dai.

The Daudi, having broken ties with the Sulaymani group, started to develop their own organization in India and around 1920 the Dawat headquarters were transferred from Surat to Bombay. The Daudis were traders, so they became known as *Bohia* which means to trade. From India many of these merchants came to East Africa.

Having discussed the Ismaili groups, we shall go back to the major schism that occurred in 765 A.D., and briefly discuss the development of the other Shia group - the Twelvers. As already mentioned, the death of Jafar as-Sadiq resulted in a permanent schism in the Ismaili community. As it is shown in the diagram below, they follow Twelve Imams - from the first, Ali, to the twelfth, Muhammad al Mahdi, who disappeared in 873 A.D. They firmly believe that he will one day reappear (we should remember that Shi'ism had a foothold in Iran since the early days after Husayn married the daughter of Yazdgerd - the ruler of one of the princedoms of Iran). In their early days, they lived in scattered communities in Iran, but in 1502 A.D. they were organised by Shah Ismail under whom they managed to conquer one princedom after another and established Shia Ithna'ashari as the official sect in Iran. From the early period missionaries or *Pirs* had been sent from Persia to India and many Hindus had been converted to be Shia Ithna'ashari. They spread westwards from Northern India and the Deccan Plateau. But most of the Shia Ithna'ashari in East Africa today were originally Nizari Ismailis as we shall see later.

While Shi'ism continued to divide itself into different branches, each developing its own set of doctrines, the Sunnis remained united. Many of the schisms that occurred among the Shia were due to succession disputes.

However, Sectarianism did not remain confined to the Ismailis or the Shia branch of Islam and sectarian tendencies were still developing as late as the last quarter of the 19th century. This period was crucial for the Indian Muslims. Externally, they were threatened by the Christian missionaries as the British had launched a vigorous campaign to spread a new culture in India. The Christian missionaries who, in many cases, had been the vehicle for western culture, were involved in an active proselytization.

Internally, the Muslim communities were torn by sectarian polemics which often resulted in bloodshed. There was a kind of religious unrest all over the Indian Sub-continent. Consequently, people developed a liking for esoterics and they were ready to accept any new idea. Punjab province was, as it is even today, the centre of religious unrest. It is against this background that Mirza Ghulam Ahmed appeared with his message in 1889, that he was the Messiah. He was deliberately founding a new sect as he himself wrote:

"During these days, the foundation of a new sect will be laid in the heavens and in order to support this sect, God will blow (His trumpet) 'Be... and every fortunate one will be drawn to it except those who are doomed and have been created to fill up the Hell.'"⁴⁰

This sect is regarded as heretical by both the Sunni and the Shia groups. It is distinguished from all the other sects by its acceptance of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as the expected Messiah and Mahdi in whom all the hopes and prophecies of Islam are fulfilled.⁴¹

The origin of the name of the movement is given by Zafrullah Khan:

"The name which is appropriate for this movement and which we prefer for ourselves is Muslims of the Ahmadiyya sect. We have chosen this name because the Holy Prophet (PBUH) had two names, Muhammad and Ahmad; Muhammad was his name of Glory and Ahmad was his name of beauty... his Meccan life was a manifestation of his name Ahmad and... in Madinah his name Muhammad was manifested.... But there was a prophecy that his name Ahmad would be manifested again in the latter days and that a person would appear through whom the qualities of beauty... would be manifested...."⁴²

Ahmad claimed to be a recipient of divine revelation and published a manifesto stating that he was commanded by God to accept *baiat*, oath of allegiance from people and take them into his discipleship.⁴³ This announcement was made on 4th of March 1889. But in 1891 he declared that the Muslims were in error in believing Jesus to be alive and this triggered stiff opposition especially from Maulvi Muhammad Hussain, who stirred the whole of India against the movement. Ahmad faced opposition from the orthodox Muslims when he claimed that he was the *nabi* or Prophet. Here the dispute centred on the interpretation of the two words: *khatim* (seal) and *nabi* (prophet). Ahmad argued that there were prophets who were not law-givers. He also claimed to be the re-incarnation of Prophet Muhammad himself. This caused opposition from all the Muslims since they did not believe in re-incarnation. To support his claims, Ahmad relied on revelations and visions and used both Biblical and Quranic prophecies.

Ahmad died in 1908, leaving behind a small but devoted group of disciples. It was the second Khalifa, Mawlawi Nur el-Din, who expanded the movement beyond India. After his death in 1914, the movement split into two - a dissident minority moved to Lahore, while the majority remained in Qadian.

The latter group chose Ahmad's son, Bashir ed-Din Mahmood as Khalifa al Masih II (He was chosen by an electoral Committee established by Mawlawi Nur el Din before his death. This committee consisted of the companions of the Ahmad; and it resembles the one established by the Umah, the *shura*).

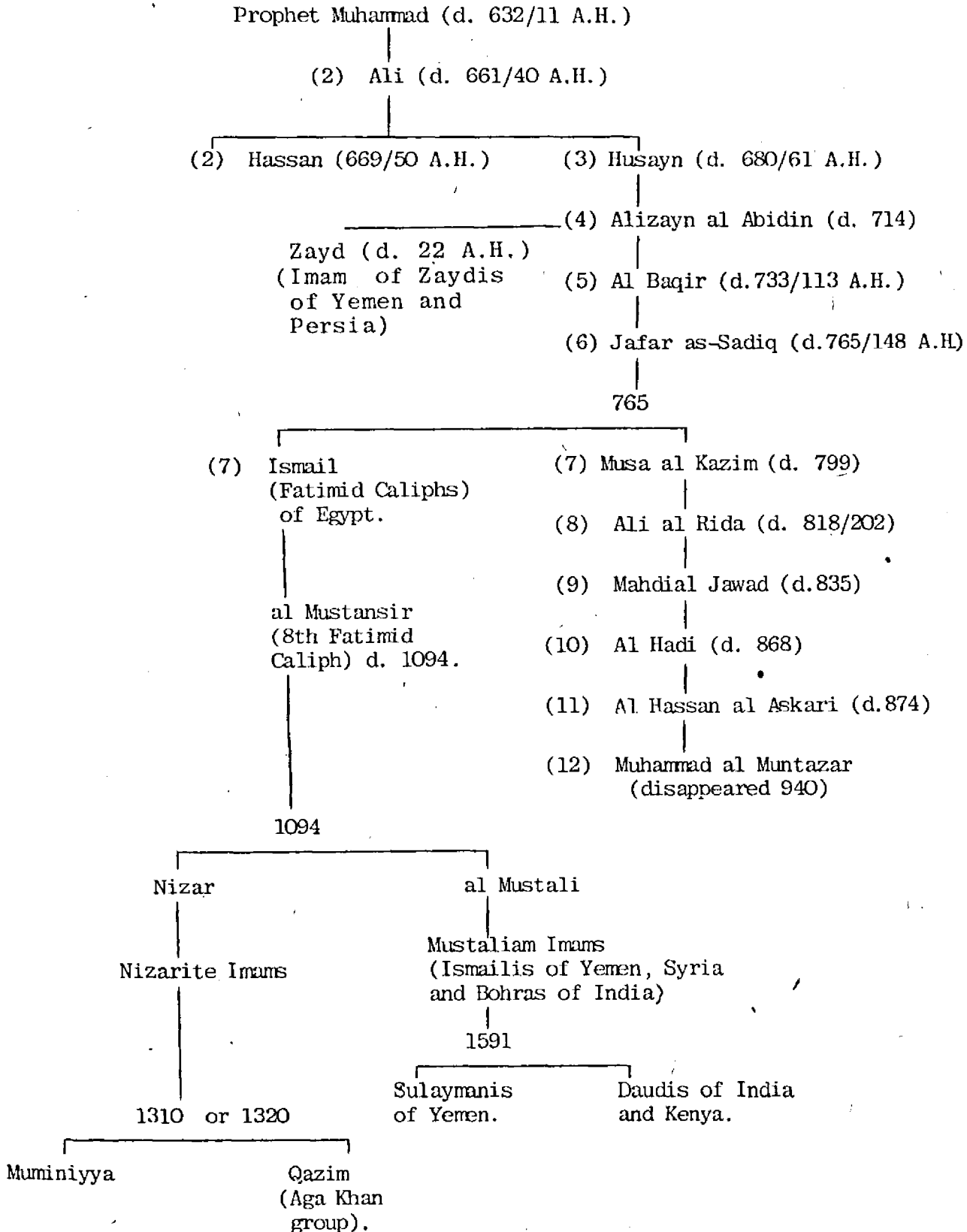
In 1947, India was partitioned and the Lahori Ahmadis found themselves in Pakistan and in the following year their counterparts moved to Rabwa. Here they bought a piece of land from the government and built a big centre. But they faced such stiff opposition from the Sunni that all their members had to be removed from the Pakistani government, including the Foreign Minister Zafrullah Khan.⁴⁴

It is interesting to note that as late as 1974, there were Ahmadiyya and Sunni confrontations in Pakistan and consequently, the Ahmadis were officially denounced and declared to be non-Muslims for the purpose of law and constitution. More recently they were officially barred from using the Muslim greeting or salutation, 'Asalaam Alaykum', since they were regarded as Kafirs or infidels.⁴⁵

In conclusion, it can be said that most of the Shia Schisms occurred as a result of succession disputes. The Sunni remained united and the members of the different *Madhahib* have continued to regard each other as orthodox Muslims.

The Ahmadiyya sprang up from the Sunni matrix and they are viewed with suspicion by all the other Muslim sects. Below is a chart illustrating the various stages of development of sectarianism in Islam.

A Diagrammatical Illustration of Sectarianism in Islam.



FOOTNOTES

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15. Ibid., p. 16.
16. Jafri, S.H.M., op.cit., p. 27.
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18. Ibid., p. 58.
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30. Ibid., p. 75.
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34. Ibid., p. 289.
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CHAPTER II

THE ADVENT AND SPREAD OF ISLAM IN KENYA

Introduction

After tracing the origin and development of sectarianism in Islam, it is, at this stage, necessary to briefly discuss Islam in Kenya because it will give us a background to the study of Muslims of Nairobi, which would, in turn, enhance our understanding of the diversity factor among the Muslim communities. This in turn makes it necessary for us to mention the pioneers who brought Islam to Kenya and when this happened.

There are no reliable statistics on the Muslim population in Kenya, and, therefore, different sources give different figures. According to the Islamic Foundation, the Muslim population comprised 29.5% of the total population in 1976. But according to the Centre for Advanced Studies on Modern Asia and Africa (CHEAM), Muslims comprised 7.3% in 1981. There is a big difference between the two estimates and the Islamic Foundation seems to have escalated the figures.¹

In the pre-Islamic period, there existed a maritime intercourse between the Kenya coastlands and Southern Arabia. These trade relations are described by the author of the *Periplus of Erythrean Sea*, written in the first-second century A.D.

The navigators of this period used the monsoon winds across the Indian Ocean to sail to and from the East African Coast. Trading centres developed along the coast but the exact foundation dates of these settlements are not known. These coastal towns exported precious timber, ivory, rhinoceros horns, leopard skins, tortoise shells and ostrich feathers.

African and Swahili Muslims

Due to this commercial relationship, when the Arabian Peninsular became Islamized, it was natural for the Arabs to carry the Islamic faith and influence to these East African coastal trading centres. But it has been difficult to give a definite date for the arrival of the first Muslims and their settlement on the coast. Though there is no archaeological evidence to support the claim, the local traditions have it that Muslim settlement goes back to the time of the 2nd Khalifa, Umar b. al-Khattab (634 - 644 A.D.)

It is also related that in 740 A.D. some followers of Zayd (see page 35) were persecuted and, so, they sought refuge in East Africa and settled in Shungwaya.² There is also the story of Hassan bin Ali and his six sons who came to East Africa in the tenth century. It is said that the family sailed in seven ships and one of the sons founded Mombasa, another Pemba and Hassan himself, Kilwa.

Recent excavations have indicated that Manda was a thriving city in the 10th century.

Archeological work has been going on at Shanga on Pate Island, one of the Islands of the Lamu Archipelago since 1980. In April 1986 a team of archeologists from Oxford University and the National Museums of Kenya unearthed mosque walls dating to about 900 A.D.³ Before this find, the earliest known mosque dated 1107 in Zanzibar.

Again in 1986, the team unearthed five mosques that had been built at the same spot over a period of about 250 years, the earliest of them dating 750 A.D. Dr. M. Horton, who supervised the excavation work, stated that the Shanga discovery pointed to the existence of a "Pre-Islamic coastal civilization which was converted to Islam" in the early period.⁴

Due to this long period of contact with the Muslim lands, the coastal towns acquired an Islamic culture. Trimingham observes that:

"The result of the interaction was Bantu-Islamic civilization moulded by Afro-Persian elements."⁵

It is important to note that though the coastal Muslims were predominantly Sunni of Shafi'i persuasion, owing to the earlier migration from Southern Arabia, there was also a Shiite element. The followers of Zayd were Shias, but their influence was not felt even in the early days.

The Hadhrami Seyyids are said to have moved in large numbers to the East African coast during the 14th and 15th centuries.

Salim aptly summarises the role of these Seyyids in the following words:

"Over a long period of time, the Hadhramis and their descendants came to determine not only the sectarian school of East African Islam, The poetic verse form and content, the methods of teaching religion, the Manuals used, the saint cult and the respect for the Sharifite family are examples of material coastal culture which are the legacy of this South Arabian settlement."⁵

Here, I do not intend to summarise the history of the coast, but it is necessary to mention a few historical events which affected Islam in one way or another.

Between the 13th and 16th centuries the coastal Muslim states enjoyed their greatest days of cultural and material efflorescence.

In the 16th century, the Muslim states received a staggering blow, which could be compared to the one the Muslim world received from the Mongols in the 16th century. The Portuguese took advantage of the rivalry and enmity that existed between the city states and began to play one against the other. Finally, they were all conquered. The Portuguese burnt down many towns - Mombasa was burnt down at least twice, the first time in 1509, in what seems to have been an attempt to wipe out Islam in East Africa.

However, despite their two-century period of plunder of the Muslims, they did not affect the spiritual side of the faith, though they nearly succeeded in destroying its material and cultural dimensions.

During the two hundred years of Portuguese presence, the Muslims were engaged in periodic active resistance. In 1652, the Muslims of Mombasa appealed to the Imam of Oman for help against the Portuguese. The war of liberation started and continued for some time, and the whole coast was free by 1728. Omani involvement ushered in the Ibadhi sect but by this time, the Shafi'is had already established their particular school of law as the dominant one. It is also to be noticed that some Ibadhi Arabs gradually adopted the Shafi'i school of thought. But this conversion took place more significantly in the latter half of the 19th century, particularly as a result of the activities of Sheikh Ali bin Abdallah bin Nafi Al Mazrui. Sheikh Ali, a distinguished scholar and a convert from the Ibadhi sect encouraged other Ibadhis to follow his example and disputed Ibadhi doctrines in his writings.

Through the centuries, Lamu had developed into an important centre of learning which played an important role in coastal Islam. The role of Lamu in East African Islam is closely linked with the arrival of the Sharifs of Hadhramaut.

Therefore, it is necessary, at this juncture, to briefly discuss their activities and religious influence in the stratified Lamu society, which in turn, was reflected much later in the Muslim villages of Mji wa Mombasa and Pangani in Nairobi.

There is a tradition in Lamu that some people came from Yunbu in Arabia. They fled their homelands due to religious hostilities after the murder of the third Khalifa (Uthman). They settled at a hill which they called Hidabu. Later another group arrived during the reign of Harun al-Rashid (786 - 809) and settled at the northern end, at a place which is now called Vuyoni. This latter group comprised of Syrians, Iraqis and Persians. For sometime, none of the two groups knew of the existence of the other. Later, when they discovered each other, a quarrel ensued. The Hidabu, having been the first to arrive, claimed to be the possessors of the Island as well as the right to subject Vuyoni people. When, one day, they met to discuss peace terms, the Hidabu people killed all the members of the Vuyoni delegation. This weakened the Vuyoni people and their women were taken by the victors, the Hidabu. The Wavuyoni children were regarded as inferior and those born to the women who cohabited with the Hidabu men were more superior, though still inferior to the Hidabu. These children were called Wayumbili Ng'ombe and they were considered to be free, while their half-brothers were looked upon as slaves.

The Wayumbili Ng'ombe intermarried with the Hidabu and changed the name to Yumbi Pembe. This group later divided into the *Waungwana*, the *Wafamao* and the *Kinamte*.⁷

This is how the stratification in Lamu society began. Now we shall briefly examine the role of the Sharifs in this stratified society. Islam in Kenya was strongest on Lamu Island. The Sharifs, those who trace their descent to the Holy Prophet, played an important role in coastal Islam. There are four traditional groups of Sharifs. The first to arrive in Lamu were the Mahdali Sharifs from Somalia. They were respected and so they were allowed to lead the daily prayers, but not the Friday prayer, the feast prayer or the prayers during the holy month of Ramadhan.

This group was followed by the Husseini Sharifs. These had come from Hadhramaut to Pate where they had been invited to assist against the war-like Wagalla of the mainland. Later, they left Pate for Lamu, where they were warmly received. Lamu society, as already mentioned, had for many centuries been stratified into the high, middle and low levels. So these two groups of Sharifs tried to fit themselves into the different strata existing in the society. The Mahdali Sharifs married only from the *Wa Yumbili Ngombe*, while the Husseini Sharifs occupied top position and married from the *Kinamte* sub-group.

Religious activities were carried out in this context of social stratification. For example there were three types of *Milad-un-Nabi*, birthday of the Prophet, celebrations: Maulidi ya Barzanji, Maulidi ya Rama and Maulidi ya Kiswahili. The last Maulidi was for the low class and no *Munqwana* would attend it. Religious education was not given to the slaves; it was a preserve of the elite. This was the situation in Lamu until the arrival of another group of Sharifs - the Jamalil Leil Sharifs.

The arrival of the Jamalil Leil Sharifs is of particular importance to us because it marked the dawn of a re-evaluation of the Lamu status quo. In 1866 Sharif Saleh, a young man of 15, followed his uncle, Sharif Ali, to Lamu from the Comoro Islands. He studied many subjects under different teachers and obtained *ijaza* or special licence in each of them. He began to teach and associate with the Comoro Islanders and ex-slaves. This move angered the *waungwana* for it was the first time a Sharif associated with the low people in Lamu.

"He saw the *waungwana* were discriminating against other groups. He was internally burning because of the horrible non-Islamic system which was existing in Lamu. The strong people used to devour the weak and the rich dominated and manipulated the poor. The learned men, *Wanavyoni*, were silent; they accepted everything the *Waungwana* were doing, and they were interested only in educating their children and those who were able and eligible for education."⁸

Sharif Saleh took Islam to the socially inferiors of Lamu. He opened an Islamic school and asked the ex-slaves to take their children there. This was too drastic a change to be easily accepted by the members of the higher class and, therefore, it earned him expulsion from the town by the *Waungwana*. He settled at a sandy place outside the town but near the gardens where the ex-slaves worked. This place was strategic for the slaves as well as himself because they were not allowed into the town. Here he built a mud-walled mosque with the help of ex-slaves who considered it their mosque. Later on, he collected money and the ex-slaves donated their labour for the construction of what today is known as the Mosque College of Lamu. This mosque was named *Riyadha* after the one in Hadhramaut. But we are told that this name was significant because it means paradise and the slaves who had been forbidden to enter the town were now living "in paradise."

Thus, we see Sharif Saleh revolutionised Islam in Lamu. The *Jum'a* Mosque was solely for the *Waungwana*, and when he refused to pray there, the *Husseini Sharifs* and the *Wayumbili Pembe* followed him. The town was split over this issue until they were reconciled and he agreed to pray there.

As a result of his activities, many people acquired education, especially those who had not been eligible for it before, and soon his mosque became a famous centre for learning.

Lamu produced some of the most outstanding scholars in East Africa in the second half of the 19th century, for example Abd al Rahman bin Ahmed, who was appointed the first Chief Qadhi of Kenya in 1897. Lamu played an important role in the Islamization of the interior. As we see, in the case of Nairobi, most of the *Waalimu* (teachers) were trained in Lamu or hired from there for the African Muslims in the old villages of Mji wa Mombasa and Pangani. Also, Lamu was the Islamic model for the early African Muslims in Nairobi, especially since most of them had come from the coast.

Even today, Riyadhha Mosque College plays an important role. It offers advanced courses in Islam, Arabic language and Muslim herbal medicine. It attracts students from all over Eastern and Central Africa and Zaire.

Though Islam had reached the East African coast probably by the end of the 8th century⁹, it remained confined to the coast for many centuries and it was not until the late 18th century that it started penetrating into the interior. Several historians have given reasons for this. For example, Chittick says that "these cities of the coast looked across the ocean", their society was primarily mercantile.¹⁰ The attention of the coastal society was turned towards the ocean rather than the interior.

Trimingham says that Islam did not reach the interiors in the early period because:

"... first the Bantu organization was based on uncoordinated family groups; there were no organised states anywhere near the coast, whilst vast areas were uninhabited or roamed over by war-like nomadic, Nilotic or Hamitic tribes; and second because the outlook of the coastals was diverted outwards upon the ocean and not inwards upon Africa."¹¹

Coupland also testifies to this when he says that one of the major factors which hindered Muslim-Arab penetration of the interior of East Africa, was the lack of "settled organised and peaceful ethnic groups."¹² Many parts of the interior were not permanently settled until the late 15th century as the various ethnic groups were characterised by migration and movement in search of pasture for their animals and due to inter-tribal wars. This being the case, trading expeditions could not be organised into the interior.

Here, we should ask ourselves what were the factors which facilitated the penetration into the interior which resulted in the spread of Islam to such areas as Mumias in Western Kenya? Bennett says that the initial stimulus for the trade relations between the interior and the coast, came from the Africans of the interior, especially the Nyamwezi, Bisa, Yao and, in case of Kenya, the Kamba, who opened routes which were later followed by the Arab and Swahili traders.¹³

Thus they facilitated penetration into the interior.

Another factor was that by the latter part of the 18th century, the people of the interior had developed political organizations that made it possible for Arabs to travel inland in search of ivory and slaves.

Seyyid Said's settlement at Zanzibar was a major factor in that more slaves were needed to work on the clove plantations, thus adding to the already big demand for them. Seyyid Said also encouraged Indians to migrate to East Africa and later on some of them moved into the interior. Besides the financiers, there were some who were recruited into the armed forces, especially the Baluchis who made good soldiers for the Omani rulers. Commenting on this, Alpers says:

"So far as the coast is concerned then, the most important factors that led to the rise of large-scale Arab caravan trade from the coast to the interior in the 19th century were Seyyid Said and his overwhelming desire to exploit the riches of the East African interior and the presence of substantial Asian capital interests... which were encouraged and protected by Said and his successors."¹⁴

The relevance of the caravan trade here is that along the routes, stopping places emerged.

These places were dominated by the Muslim Arab and Swahili traders and they later became permanent homes to some of the traders, for example Masaku (Machakos) and Mumias. In this way, then, there was contact between the Coastal Muslims and the interior peoples. The result of this contact was the spread of Islam. However, we should not see it as an effort on the part of the traders to propagate their faith among the interior peoples. But through contact, the Muslims from the coast attained a higher status and so did those who associated with them. Consequently, those Africans from the interior who wanted to make the best out of the trade relations became Muslims. Some of the traders also made deliberate attempts to convert those who were involved in trade relations with them.

Even before we move further into the interior, we realise that the Pokomo were Islamised through trade. They sold rice and, in turn, obtained cloth, sugar and salt from the Arab-Swahili merchants of Lamu. Some of these merchants seemed to have an interest in spreading Islam to the Pokomo, not only out of piety, but as a means of cementing good relations with their customers. Bunge gives us two reasons as to why Islam was attractive to the Pokomo: first, they were attracted by the Muslim mode of dress, that is the cap, sandals, white turban and the long shirt (Kanzu). Second, Islam offered a more effective means of dealing with the supernatural in a society where death was attributed to sorcery or to angry spirits.

Islam also offered a way of attaining social equality with the envied merchants who had access to the outside sources of cloth, beads and salt.¹⁵

Similarly, the Digo were Islamized through trade contact with the Arab-Swahili Muslims of Vumba Kuu, one of the Swahili settlements on Kenya's southern coast. The Baluchis went to Likoni to trade and therefore, they came into contact with the Digo.

Thus, Islam gradually gained roots among the Digo. It is interesting to note that sickness and spirit possession were significant factors in the Islamization of the Digo.¹⁶ The traditional society had no solution for sickness and spirit possession. The Muslims took advantage of this and explained that if a sick or possessed person converted, he would get better. And, interestingly enough, there were cases where some people were healed after conversion. Subsequently, Islam came to be associated with more efficacious supernatural powers than those of the traditional Digo society. As a result, Islam gained superiority over the traditional practices which, however, were retained even after conversion.

Trimingham assumes that Islam spread to the interior by accident. This assumption is disproved by the fact that some traders made deliberate attempts to spread Islam. For example, Sharif Hassan and Sharif Omar in Mumias, which later became an important Islamic centre in Western Kenya.¹⁷

The pioneer Muslims arrived in Mumias around 1870. They came in four groups and the leader of the first caravan was Mwinyi Mshima and his brother Sudi Mshima, who is said to have converted Chief Mumia.¹⁸ In the second group, which arrived in Mumias in the 1880s, there was Idi Rajab, who is said to have gone further north through the Turkana country to Ethiopia. In the third group were Mwinyi Kombo Wazango, Mwinyi Amanzi, Juma Amonga of Segeju and Sharif Hassan Abdallah al - Mahdally. (Probably he was one of the Mahdali Sharifs of Lamu, as his last name suggests). Later on, he featured predominantly as the Muslim leader in Mumias.¹⁹

Mumias became an important Islamic centre in the interior and it played an important role in the Islamization of many inhabitants of Western Kenya. Probably the strength of Islam there could be attributed to the conversion of Chief Mumia, who encouraged his subjects to adopt the new faith. From Mumias, Sharif Hassan sent missionaries to several places, for example Akida Jeshi was sent to Kisumu, Sharif Abu Bakr to Bungoma and Maalim Mtodo to Nairobi.²⁰ Most of the early traders originated from the Mrima Coast opposite Zanzibar. Thus the caravan route that they followed was the third one from the Mrima Coast through Chagga, Maasai and Kikuyu country to the eastern shores of Lake Victoria.²¹

Since the Sunni Shafi'ite Islam had dominated the Coast despite the influx of the Shiite Persians and Ibadhi Omani Arabs, the branch of Islam that reached most of the interior through the Arab-Swahili traders was Sunni of the Shafi'ite school of thought.

Following the same route, Islam reached Kisumu. Some Muslims also reached Kisumu from Uganda. These were either Egyptian, Sudanese or Somali soldiers, and, by 1904, there were 500 Ganda Muslims.²² But the earliest among these were the traders from Tanganyika. Also a great number of Muslims from the Coast went to Kisumu as porters during the construction of the railway. After the construction, many accompanied the British administrators as clerks, interpreters, houseboys, tailors and Askaris, most of whom were brought from the coast, and the Nubians who were traditionally Muslim.

Many Luo adopted Islam as a result of the contact with the Muslims. In this case, the army became a factor for the spread of Islam in that most of those who were recruited embraced Islam.²³ Apart from the military camps, Swahili culture was attractive to the Luo people who lived among the Swahili Muslims, for example funeral activities and the concern of the Muslims for the dead. This caused a desire among many Luo to be identified with the Muslims and the means to acquire such identity was to embrace Islam.²⁴

Let us now see how Islam spread among the Kamba. According to K.M. Hakim,²⁵ a Kamba commercial settlement had been established in Rabai before 1836 - the year when there was an influx of Kamba refugees to Rabai. He says that Kitui and Mumias share the same history of Islamic advent. In the latter part of the 19th century, the Kamba trade with the coast was on the decline. As a result, the coastal Arab and Swahili traders were able to control the northern trade route from the coast to the interior, which in turn, necessitated their movement inland. Through trade contacts between the Kamba and the Arab and Swahili traders, many of the former embraced Islam. However, there was no actual proselytising in Kitui and the spread of Islam was secondary to trading activities. The Swahilis were mainly from the coast and they included the Wamrima from Tanganyika, Wajomvu and Wachangamwe, Comorians and Swahili from Lamu and Vanga. Arab/Swahili settlement in Kitui began in 1898.²⁶

It is interesting to note that in the early period, the Muslims in Kitui shared almost similar circumstances with those who were in Nairobi. In Kitui the Muslims experienced several evictions by the colonial authorities and they were always feeling insecure. There was an eviction after the war in 1918 - this time to allow the preconceived business premises for Asians. This was similar to the one which took place in Pangani, first in 1920 and later in 1938 to create room for the Asians. (See P.137).

The colonial administrators in Kitui expressed the same attitude towards the Muslims as their counterparts did later in Nairobi:

"The township is like all others, the resort of loafers and vagrants of all sorts, principally Akamba who have been converted to Islam. Scarcely any of these or the Swahili have any property and live merely from hand to mouth and debts."²⁷

These words echo those of Nyeri's Provincial Commissioner, who referred to the Muslims in Nairobi as "deruralised natives." (See P.113).

The innermost parts of the Kenyan interior which did not receive Islam through trade contacts or the railway, remained so until the arrival of the colonial administration. For example, it reached Kakamega in 1918 through the Arab soldiers during the first world war. In 1918, there was a fortress in Kakamega and soon villages grew around it. After the war, many soldiers did not return to their places of origin but remained there. These soldiers started intermarrying with the local women and teaching the villagers how to pray.²⁸

In 1925 there was an outbreak of plague in Mumias, which as we have already said, was a big Muslim centre. It is interesting to note that the fear of the plague became a factor in swelling up the Muslim population of Kakamega, 51 kilometres away.

Many people moved to Kakamega. The present mosque in the town was built in 1940 and the entire community is Sunni.²⁹ Also, some of the Luhya who went to Mumias for employment during the war, returned to Butere after having already embraced Islam.

Tilalwa in Nandi district, became a stopping centre during the caravan trade. In 1885, the traders built a temporary mosque. Later, centres like Kaptum were Islamised and in 1900, the Tilalwa and Kaptum Muslims made Kapsabet their religious centre. In 1904 some of these Swahilis went to Kericho and established a Muslim centre there. It is also said that some Muslim Swahili traders settled a short distance away from Kericho town. Later on, they were joined by the Somalis who built their village nearby. Through contact, some Kipsigis embraced Islam. But Islamization was to be reinforced later by the ex-soldiers after the war, who returned home as "civilized" people, after having embraced Islam during the war. The ex-soldiers converted members of their families to whom the Islamic way of life seemed to be superior to their traditional one. Gradually, Islam spread to the neighbourhood and now there are 4 mosques in Kericho town. A majority of the Muslims are Sunni of the Shafi'i school of thought, although there are a few Ahmadis.²⁹

Kisii seems to have had a different story. Islam was taken there by the Nubian soldiers who accompanied the Germans in 1901.

These Nubians settled there and erected a temporary mosque and began to teach Islam to those who associated with them. By 1910, about 20 families had embraced Islam. By 1948, when the present mosque was built, the Muslim population had grown to about 800. Today the Muslim community has well over 2,000 members and there are two mosques, one for the Sunnis and the other for the Ismailis. The latter group settled there after the establishment of an urban centre and, therefore, its members are the minority.

As said earlier, Mumias had become an important centre in the region. Therefore, it was from there that some Muslim traders reached Kendu Bay. Traders and their associates enjoyed a certain amount of prestige. It seems that conversion to Islam provided a gateway for this prestigious position for the local people. As a result many of them embraced Islam. Since the Muslims had now acquired a high status in the society, the local people were willing to give their daughters to them in marriage. Consequently, marriage became a factor in the spread of Islam in the area. By 1950, there were 300 adult Muslims in Kendu Bay.³⁰

From this brief summary of Islam in the interior one can say that the coastal traders were the main vehicle for its spread, followed by the railway and the arrival of the colonial administration.

But the North-Eastern Province and parts of the Eastern Province do not share the same history as the Western Province.

This area is mainly occupied by nomadic peoples, largely the Borana and the Somali, who came into contact with Islam through the north, from Somalia and Arabia, as we shall see presently.

Relations between Somaliland and Arabia are of great antiquity.³¹ Traders from ancient Egypt, Persia and Southern Arabia visited the Somali coast during the pre-Islamic period. They called it the land of Punt.³² When the Arabian peninsular became Islamised, large numbers of 'missionaries' from the Yemen and Hadhramaut poured into this region to preach Islam to the Somali tribes. The Somalis sent Muslims to the centres of learning in Madinah, Makkah and Baghdad. Soon the Somali produced wondering missionaries, for example Sheikh Ibrahim Abu Zarbay, who made Harar his centre in 1430 and converted many Somalis to Islam.

In medieval times, the Somali Kingdom lost power after the death of Imam Ahmed bin Ibrahim in 1543. Their enemies and the need for pasture forced them to spread into the Galla territory and occupy it. They also occupied a long and bare stretch of the area north of Lamu.

In the 17th century the groups which form the present Somali of North-Eastern Kenya headed south. These were the Hawiyah (the Degodia, Garre, Murrule and Ajuran) together with the clans of the Ogaden. The Hawiyah settled in the northern part of present North-Eastern Kenya, while the Ogaden settled in the southern part.

In the last quarter of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the Somali country was divided politically by the colonial powers into French Somaliland, British Somaliland and the United Nations Trusteeship Territory of Somalia administered by Italy and Ethiopia. The Somali now inhabit an area of approximately 1800 by 500 square miles in the horn of Africa.³³

The Somali sub-tribes were in constant conflict with each other, especially during the dry seasons when grazing areas were insufficient, and therefore, they moved far and wide in search of pasture. In the course of this movement, they came into contact with the Galla and the Borana, and, as a result, the latter groups gradually embraced Islam. But initially the Borana were not receptive to Islam because they assumed that it was for the Somalis, with whom they were never on good terms. Now, most of the Borana are Muslims of Shafi'i school of thought.

The Somali spread Islam to Isiolo and the surrounding areas, including Meru, which has a large Somali population. To a certain extent, we can compare the role played by Mumiá in the spread of Islam in Western Kenya with that of the Somalis in North-Eastern Kenya. However, this comparison is being made in spite of the fact that the Wanga Kingdom did not share similar historical circumstances.

The point being made is that each of the two groups of people played an important role in the spread of Islam to its neighbours.

In the interior, the Muslims were (and still are) referred to as 'Waswahili' and a Muslim became synonymous with a 'Mswahili'. The reason for this was that those who embraced Islam adopted a different lifestyle, outwardly symbolised by a different mode of dress, whereby the women wore long dresses and covered their heads, while the men wore caps, *kanzu*, (long shirt) and sandals.

Prior to the 18th century, trade movements were made mainly from the interior to the Coast particularly by the Kamba. But after the 1850s the Arab and Swahili traders began to move towards the interior in order to acquire goods directly from the source. In conclusion, therefore, it can be said that Islamic influences reached many parts of the interior through the caravan trade in the latter part of the 19th century, particularly after Seyyid Said transferred his capital from Muscat to Zanzibar. However, it was after the advent of colonial administration that most of the interior was Islamised as a result of the employment of the coastal Arab and Swahili Muslims as porters, guides, servants and clerks. The Nubians and the Somalis were also employed as soldiers. The railway played an important role, in that many of its workers were Muslims and it opened up the interior.

Besides opening up the interior and providing modern means of communication, the railway ushered in fresh Asian immigrants, most of whom were Muslims of various sects.

The Asian Muslims

In this section, the historical background of the Asian Muslim Communities in Nairobi will be briefly discussed. The Asians are first divided into Shia and Sunni branches of Islam, then the Shia are divided into different sects, each adhering to its own doctrine of *Imamat*. Here, the Asians are treated separately because, essentially, they differ from the African Muslims even in cases where they owe allegiance to Sunni Islam. The reason for this essential difference is their Hindu cultural background. Hindu practices feature predominantly. Consequently, the Ismailis and the Bohra do not attempt to spread their branches of Islam to Africans. But it is important to note that the Ithaa'ashari are an exception: in recent times the Bilal Mission in Mombasa has been involved in missionary activities which have resulted in the conversion of several thousands of Africans. In view of their sectarian differences then, each community will be discussed separately.

The Ismailis

The Ismailis made their mark on East Africa quite early.

It has been mentioned that Seyyid Said encouraged Asians to settle in Zanzibar. By 1844, Captain A. Hamerton, the British Consul in Zanzibar, was reporting that there were about 700 Indian Muslims there and other parts under the jurisdiction of the Sultan.³⁴ Most of these Indian traders were Ismailis. By 1871, the Ismaili population had multiplied sixfold. By then, they were 2558 in East Africa, forming the majority of the Indian population.³⁵

The economic situation in India forced Ismailis and other Indians to seek other alternatives. It was the British colonial policy to find new markets for her surplus goods and, therefore, restrictions were placed on imports from India. As a result, prices for Indian cotton produced in the Kutch region fell drastically. This, combined with frequent periods of draught in the Kutch and Kathiawar regions, made life difficult for the Ismailis in these areas and, thus, gave them the impetus to migrate. Later on, after the declaration of British East Africa Protectorate in 1895, other Ismailis from Gujerat came to East Africa on their own initiative and followed the railway into the interior. However, we should not get the impression that there was a mass movement of Ismailis to Kenya. They came on an individual basis. As already said, they were well-established in Zanzibar in the first half of the 19th century both as maritime merchants and seasonal inland traders.

The most enterprising of the inland traders was Musa Mzuri who, with his brother Sayyan, visited the mountains of the Moon, that is Unyamwezi, in 1825. These Indian merchants of the coast financed many caravans inland, and quite a number of them accompanied the caravans. The explorer Richard Burton, is said to have commented that the "Khoja travel far and wide; several of them have visited the lake region."³⁶

One of the pioneers of the Ismaili community in Kenya was Waljee Hirjee. He came with his brother from Kathiawar to Zanzibar in 1867. He was a banker by profession and founded a big banking business. He arrived in Mombasa at the turn of the century, where he became the main banker in the early colonial period. His son, Rehimtullah, used the family funds to extend the business to other areas outside Mombasa.

Another important individual and pioneer of Ismailis in East Africa was Allidina Visram. He arrived in Zanzibar at the age of 12 in the latter part of the 19th century. After some time, he began to trade in Zanzibar, and, later on, moved to Bagamoyo, from where he expanded his business to Mombasa. Gradually, he built up a commercial empire throughout East Africa. In the first decade of this century, he established good relations with the colonial government and, as a result, he was given several contracts.

He provided most of the transport in those early days. He employed about 500 Indians, most of whom were Ismailis and this way he helped to take Ismaili Muslims further into the interior.

In 1871, another pioneer, Lakha, (his first name is not given) arrived from India and settled in Lamu. His family built up a big business that soon spread throughout Kenya and even Uganda.

Due to these individual commercial activities, the Ismailis were spread throughout the country. Many of them opened up small businesses and soon there was a sizeable Ismaili community in Kenya to warrant a visit by His Highness the Aga Khan, first in 1897 and again in 1905.

Ithna'ashari

The Aga Khan I had moved his headquarters from Persia to Bombay in 1845 and set about reorganising his community. In order to do this, he issued a series of *farmans*, edicts; and since the Aga Khan is considered infallible and inerrant by his followers, these *farmans* should not have been disputed. But they were, because not all the Khoja appreciated the increased control that His Highness was exerting. Some members began to question his financial policies and the management of the large sums he was collecting from the community, as each member was supposed to contribute 20% of his income.³⁷

They also questioned the policy of westernization which was accelerated after his first trip to Europe in 1898. The Ithna'ashari took advantage of this dissention among the Ismailis. They put forth their ideas and principles as an alternative, presenting them as purer and truer to Islam than the Ismaili version, which heavily borrows from the Hindu customs. This Ithna'ashari movement was led by Mulla Qadir Husain, who had gone to Iran for religious studies and had returned to India specifically to give moral and spritual support to the dissident Ismailis. This dissenting group broke from the main body of Ismailis and transferred religious allegiance to the Ithna'ashari. Most of the Shia Ithna'ashari in East Africa belong to this group.

The East African pioneer of the Khoja Ithna'ashari community was Dewji Jamal who built the first Ithna'ashari mosque in Zanzibar, which became the first in Africa. At the end of the 19th century, they came to Lamu in large numbers, though Jamal had been trading there by 1877. In 1901, his son Nasir, built the Ithna'ashari mosque on the Lamu waterfront. By 1897, there were about 300 Ithna'asharis in Lamu.³⁸

In 1887 a Khoja Ithna'ashari family settled in Mombasa. These were soon followed by friends and fellow traders from India, Zanzibar and even Lamu. Jamal, being the most enterprising of all, had already acquired some plots in Mombasa, and, therefore, in 1899 a prayer hall was built in a garden belonging to his family.

In 1903, the Hyderi Mosque was built in the Old Town. By the turn of the century, there were about 150 members of the Ithna'ashari Community in Mombasa and about 75 in Nairobi.

Bohras:

The Bohras form the second largest Shia Muslim Community. We have already said that the Bohra Community split into two groups in the 16th century. The Suleimanis remained in the Yemen while the Daudis developed their own organization in India. It was the members of the latter group who migrated to East Africa and, by 1875, there were about 543 of them along the coast. At the end of the 19th century, the Dai al Mutlaq, their administrative and spiritual head, appointed *amils* to Zanzibar and Mombasa. The Bohra merchants at the Kenyan Coast specialised in palm-frond sacks for packing cloves and mangrove bark, which was exported to India to be used for dyes. By the last decade of the 19th century, they were well-established traders in Mamburui, Takaungu, Vanga, Rabai, Malind and Mombasa.

The pioneer Bohras who settled in Mombasa were Esmailiji Jeevanjee and Essaji Galamdar, who arrived there in 1880. The most famous Bohra pioneer was A. M. Jeevanjee. Before he came to East Africa, he had traded for some time in Australia.

By 1890, he had become a renowned trader, wealthy enough to obtain a contract from the Imperial British East Africa Company to recruit for the company labourers, artisans, and police from India. In 1891, he transferred some of his Karachi business to Mombasa. He played an important role in the establishment of the Bohra Community in Kenya. Most of the labour force which he provided for the construction of the Kenya-Uganda Railway and his own employees, were Bohras. It was Jeevanjee who started the first newspaper in Kenya, the *Mombasa African Standard*, which became the *Mombasa Times* in 1903, and was later incorporated into the East African Standard of Nairobi.³⁹

He became so prominent that he was the first Asian to be appointed to represent the community in the Legislative Council. In Mombasa, he financed the construction of a beautiful mosque in 1902. Mombasa has had quite a large number of Bohras as can be inferred from the number of their mosques in the town - there are four of them - while Nairobi has only one.

Unlike the Khoja Ismailis who spread rapidly into the interior, the Bohras limited themselves to the coastal area for a long time. It was only recently that they moved upcountry and today, there are well-organised communities in Eldoret, Kisumu, Kitui and Nyeri, though they have no mosques as yet. Meeting in borrowed or rented premises before they build a mosque, has been a characteristic of the Bohras in Kenya for a long time.

The Baluchi Sunnis

As mentioned earlier, the Oman rulers used Indians as financiers and soldiers first in Muscat and later in East Africa. They were good soldiers and this earned them favour with the Sultan, especially since they were faithful servants in the administration of his East African possessions. In 1860, the Mazrui leader, Sheikh Mbaruk bin Rashid built for them the Mbaruk Mosque. Between 1874 and 1875, they collected funds and built another mosque for themselves - the Baluchi Mosque.⁴⁰ They, unlike their Omani employers and the Swahilis among whom they have lived for a long time, adhere to the Hanafi school of thought, like all other Sunni Asian Communities in Kenya, excepting the Kokni. There was peaceful co-existence between the Baluchi Hanafite school, the Omani Ibadhi and the predominantly Shafi'ite Coastal Muslims. The Baluchi Community is comparatively small and they are almost all in Mombasa except a few who moved inland to Uganda and Zaire.

The Cutchi Sunnis

In 1705 a Badala Dhow Captain, Jusuf Adam, is said to have settled in Mombasa. This shows that the Badala settled in Kenya quite early. Salvadori says that the Badala were the first Sunnis from Cutch to settle in Kenya and their name came to be applied to Cutchi Sunnis in general.

The Cutchi who came in the 19th century, first settled in Lamu and some moved from Zanzibar to Mombasa. Some of the earlier settlers in Mombasa, arrived in 1885 and these were Ladha Nana, Ahmed Issa and Ayub Mohammed Sodha and Osman Alu. But there were earlier settlers because by the 1880's, the Cutchi of Mombasa had their own cemetery, around which they organised themselves. They built three mosques in Mombasa. Here, we realise that though the Badala Mosque is said to be open to all, it is basically a Cutchi-Sunni Mosque.

Traditionally, the Cutchi are divided into twenty occupational groups.⁴¹ These groups include fishermen and boat builders (the Badala) and the Dhobis (washermen). This reminds us that most of the laundries in Nairobi are owned by Indians, though one cannot confidently say that the majority of them are Cutchi Sunnis. However, the Luhar Wadha (blacksmiths and carpenters) are said to be the most numerous of all the Cutchi occupational categories. In Mombasa, the members of each of these groups formed its own congregation or Jamat. The Badala, Luhar Wadha and Khumbar, each formed its own Jamat, while the other smaller groups joined together to form one Jamat, the Ahle Sunnat Samatri Jamat. This pattern does not occur in Nairobi, probably because the members of these groups are quite few and, in other cases, some groups are not represented there.

The Kokni

The pioneer of Kokni Muslim Community in Kenya was Haji Khambiye. He was an engineer with the Smith MacKenzie Company in Zanzibar in 1880 and was transferred to Mombasa in 1888. Unlike many other Indians, the Kokni did not come to Kenya as indentured labourers but on their own initiative as individual immigrants. However, many of them found employment with the railway, and, as a result, there was quite a large proportion of them in Nairobi. They did not see the need to build sectarian mosques. They follow the Shafi'i school of thought and therefore they were quite comfortable in the Shafi'i Swahili and Arab mosques. The majority of the Koknis are found in Nairobi and their activities there will be discussed later.

The Memons

There are several branches of memons, but only three are represented in Kenya: the Halai, the Akai and the Nassapuria. There is no significant religious or even social difference between these groups. They use the names of their settlements to distinguish one from the other. Between 1845 and 1855, the Mithwani family and two members of the Suleiman family (Sumar and Ismail) were the first Nassapuria to come to Kenya.⁴² They are said to have set sail in a dhow bound for Zanzibar, probably between 1884 and 1855, but on the way, the dhow lost its way and they found themselves in Mombasa.

They found that Mombasa could make a good market for their goods, especially as the textile trade of Zanzibar was on the decline. Also, the people of Mombasa were quite friendly to the Memons and even a story is related how they welcomed the strangers who had been terrified to find their dhow in a place which was unknown to them. As a result of this good relationship, many of the Zanzibar-based Nassapurians migrated to Kenya. One of these merchants, Mohammed Haji Kassam Harunani is known to have settled in Mombasa in 1872.⁴³

By 1870 the Nassapurians had established a common burial ground and they built their mosque in 1880, the Memon Jamia Masjid. Throughout the colonial period, the memons were confined to Mombasa. It was only after independence that a few individuals moved to Nairobi. Their activities were concentrated in Mombasa and, in 1926, they prepared a constitution for the community. They also formed a board which directed the educational and other affairs of the community.

The other memon branch is the Halai. The pioneer of this community in Kenya was Mohammed Moti who went to Meru in 1910. Later on, the Adam family came to Nairobi. (They are the founders of Adam's Arcade). Moti came from Veravel.

The Akai came after the first world war and went to Meru, from where they spread to Isiolo, Garissa, and many other parts of the Eastern Province. In Nairobi, there are one or two families of Akai Memons.

From these groupings, we see that the Asian Sunni Muslims were divided mainly according to their places of origin and not really on sectarian grounds, as all of them, except the Kokni, adhere to the Hanafi school of thought.

The Ahmadiyya

The building of the railway in the British and German territories at the turn of this century stimulated an influx of Indians. In addition to the main labour-force, there were professionals, medical practitioners, administrative staff involved in all the various aspects of the railway department, military officers, sub-contractors; and traders. Among these groups there was a small contingent of Ahmadis. They were mainly professionals rather than members of the mercantile class. Several of these Ahmadis were *sahabees* (Sahaba), companions of the founder of the movement.

Among the earliest Ahmadi immigrants to Kenya, was Dr. Mohamed Ismail Guryani, who arrived in Mombasa in 1895. He is remembered as a notable companion of Mirza Ghulam Ahmed. Another Ahmadi who came to Mombasa at the same time to work as a railway store clerk, was Babu Mohamed Afzal. Other pioneering Ahmadis were Mohamed L. Khan, who came to Kenya in 1900 and Meraj - ud - Din in 1906.⁴⁴

Sayyed Meraj - ud - Din was based in Nairobi, but moved to Mombasa in 1935.

After his death in 1936, his widow gave the substantial contribution of Shs.60,000/- for the construction of the Ahmadiyya Mosque in Mombasa.

For a long time the headquarters of the Ahmadiyya movement in East Africa remained in Dar-es-Salaam. The genesis of an aggressive missionary endeavour is traced to the arrival of a remarkable missionary, Sheikh Mubarak Ahmed, in November 1935. The Nairobi Ahmadiyya community had made an appeal for a project in Tabora and contributed some funds for this purpose. In response a missionary was sent from India. The new missionary, Sheikh Mubarak, proceeded to Nairobi and later on left for his destination, Tabora. He headed the East African Mission.

By the end of 1960, the East African states were preparing for independence. As a result, there arose a need for a thorough reconsideration of the Mission and its role in the future independent nations. This led to the decision to divide the East African Mission into three separate missions in 1961.⁴⁵ The leaders at Rabwa, the international headquarters of the movement, were consulted and informed of the decision to divide the mission. There was no objection and three separate missions began to operate in July 1961.

Sheikh Mubarak remained in Nairobi as the Chief Missionary of the Kenyan Mission and the overseer for the whole of East Africa. In 1963 he was succeeded by Nur ul Haq as the Chief Missionary for Kenya.

In conclusion, it can be said that the presence of Asian Muslims in the interior, just like that of African Muslims, was mainly due to the opening up of the interior by the railway and the establishment of the colonial administration. This was especially so for most of the Asians who were professionals in the railway department and in other private capacities. This accounts for the presence of both the trading and non-trading communities.

FOOTNOTES

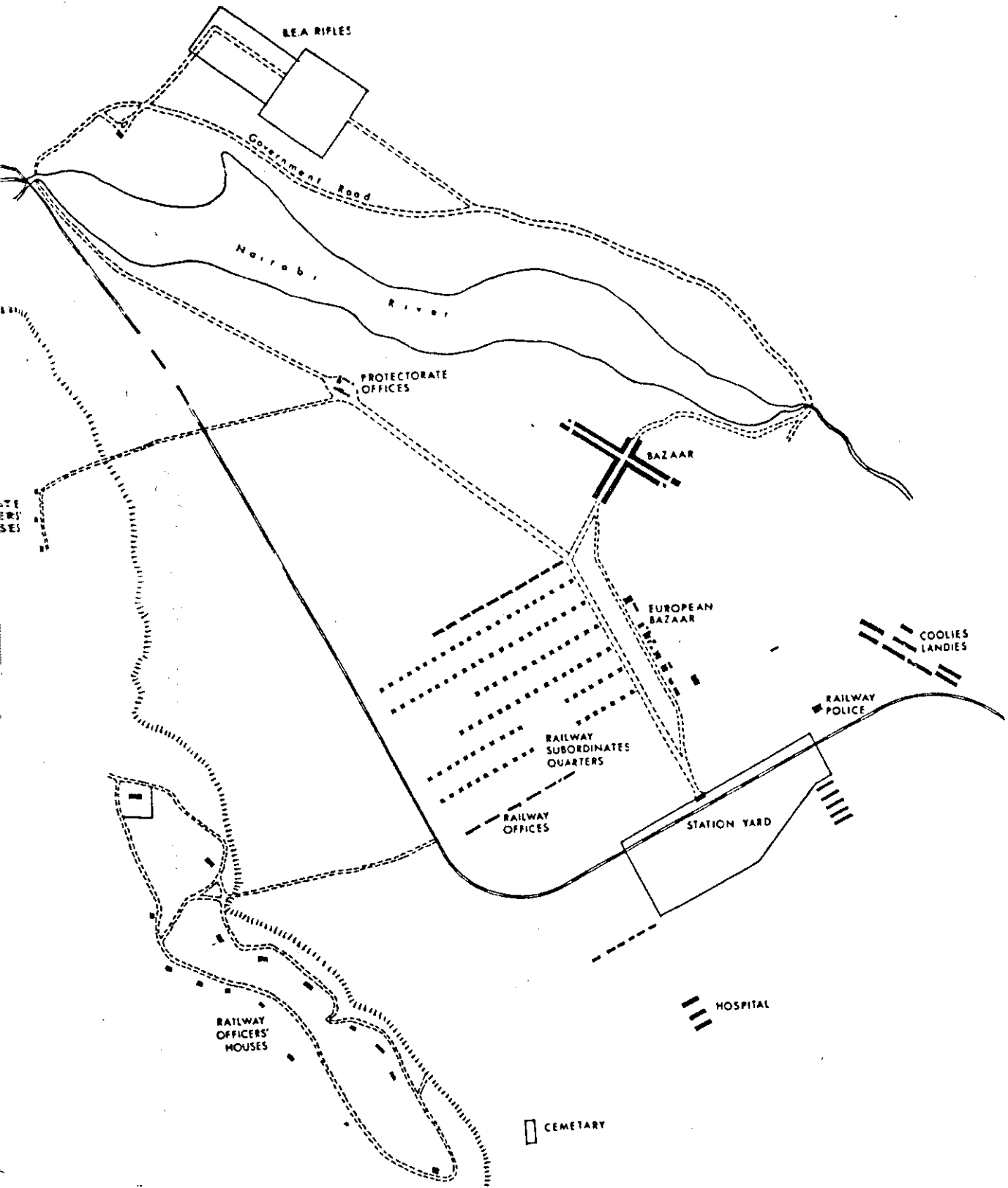
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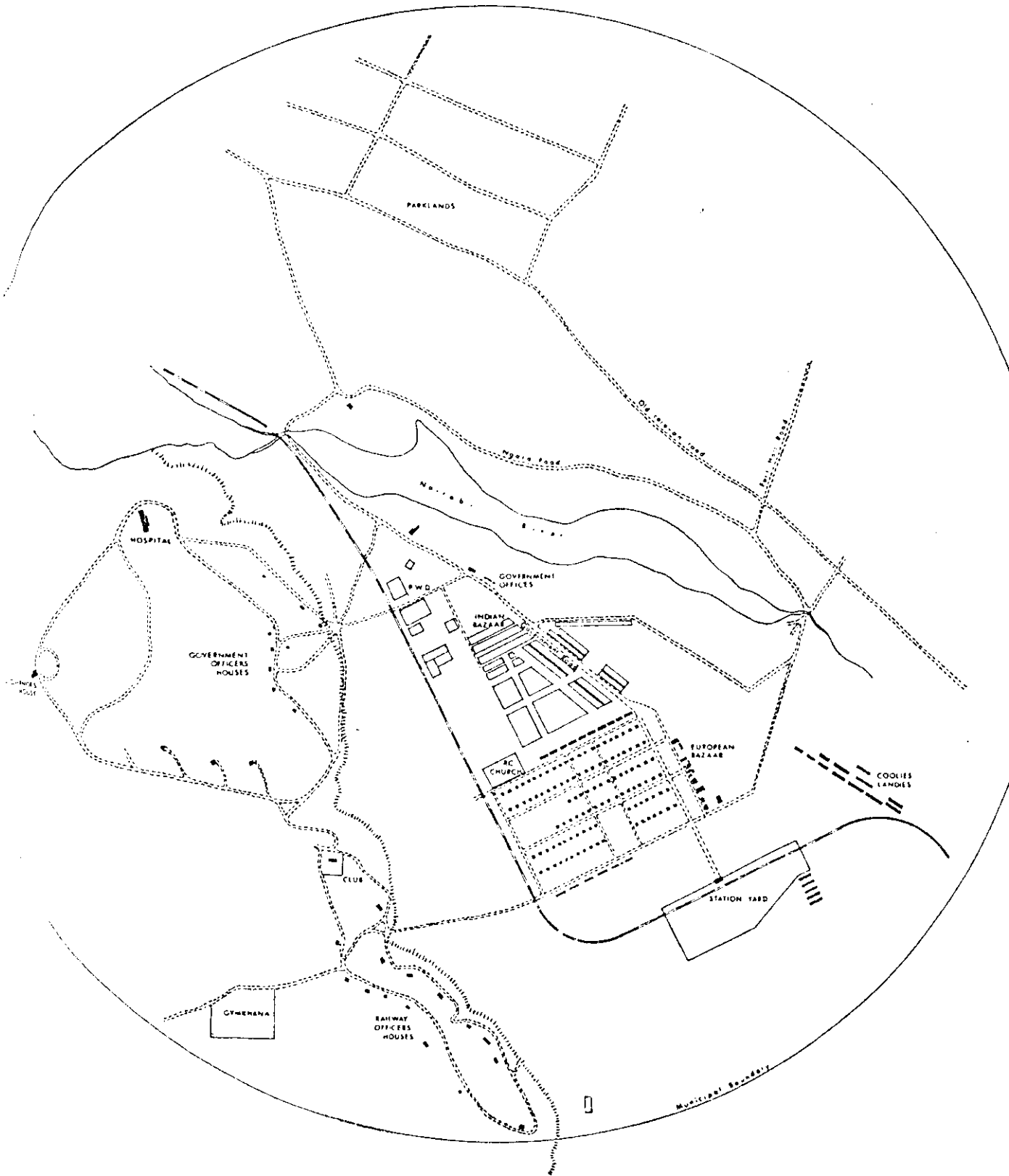
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NAIROBI 1901



CENTRAL NAIROBI 1905



CHAPTER III

THE AFRICAN MUSLIMS OF NAIROBI

Introduction

In discussing the diversity factor in the history of Islam in Nairobi, it is necessary to briefly discuss the African Muslims because, first, they are part of the history of Islam in Nairobi; second, they constitute a large proportion of the Muslim population of the study area. Though real religious diversity is found among the Asian Muslims, it is important to try and show to what extent religious and ethnic diversity affects the African Muslims. Also it is necessary to discuss the two categories of Muslims in order to draw a contrast between them, in relation to the religious diversity.

The Early Period: Late 19th Century to 1920

The first description of the area now known as Nairobi was that of Joseph Thompson in 1885, which mentioned the trade that existed between the Kikuyu, the Maasai and the Dorobo.¹ They traded with agricultural products from the Gikuyu side and sheep and skins from the Maasai side. Also, the traders from the Coast, who, from 1850 onwards, used the Northern route passing through Ngong close to Nairobi River, established relations with the upcountry people. They used big caravans and, therefore, they needed large quantities of food. But there were only three places between the coastal fringe and Mumias where food could be obtained.

These were Kibwezi, Machakos and Kikuyu. Muriuki says that:

"The Swahili traders entered Karura by way of Ngong Bagas, which was to remain a depot for essential provisions until it was replaced by Fort Smith in 1892. Fort Smith became one of the most important stations along the route because, after crossing the foodless and waterless *Nyika*, it was absolutely essential to obtain food before marching to the west, as there was little food available before Mumias was reached."²

The southernmost tip of the Kikuyu homeland in the Ngong-Kikuyu-Nairobi River area became the scene of this large-scale trade. Soon a centre where traders could stop and exchange goods developed in this area. This centre was used later by the European hunters and their servants on safaris. For example, Martin's caravan, which had 150 Zanzibari soldiers and armed porters, passed through it. It was these men accompanying the Europeans who first passed through this area.

In their process of colonization, the British worked from the coast inland using coastal peoples as soldiers and porters. The Imperial British East Africa Company (I.B.E.A. Co.) established stations at Machakos and Fort Smith and these "were manned by troops who were virtually all Muslim - Sudanese, Swahili and Arab regulars."³

In the 3rd Battalion of King's African Rifles (3rd K.A.R.) about 600 out of a total of 1000 soldiers were Swahili.⁴

In this Swahili group there were people who had adopted Kiswahili and Islamic culture irrespective of their differences as far as tribe and place of origin were concerned. Thus, they were people of diverse social and cultural background. Some of them had been recruited from Zanzibar and the Mrima Coast. Others had come from as far as the Congo, Malawi and the Comoro Islands. There was also a significant group from the interior of Tanganyika, especially the Nyamwezi and the Wasukuma. Hobley says that:

"A good proportion of these were Coast-born but others were Wanyamwezi, Wasukuma and even from the West of Lake Tanganyika, the majority having first been enslaved and then embracing the doctrine of Islam."⁵

Also in the latter years of the 19th century, the IBEA Co. had recruited its employees from the Kenyan Coast, especially from Lamu, Malindi and Mombasa. These diverse communities established the Muslim villages of Pangani, Mji wa Mombasa, Unguja, Maskini and Kileleshwa. Thus, Mji wa Mombasa had a large population of Bajuni and Barawa people from Lamu.

As to how the villages came into being, J. Bujra and K.G. McVicar have differed in their accounts.

The latter says:

"there were clusters of mud-walled thatch-roofed houses, many of which were occupied by Kikuyu women Porters from the Coast or the Congo filtered into these settlements. This place was called Nga'mbo before names like Pangani and Mombasa were used...."⁶

But Bujra⁷ says that it was the porters and Askaris who settled there first. Whatever the truth was, oral information suggests that it was the porters and Askaris who first settled in the area which developed into the Muslim villages. They were later followed by the Kikuyu, Nandi and Maasai women, who had fled their homes due to natural calamities and economic hardships. One of my informants stated:

"The first porters were settled at the present site of the National Museum. The majority were from Tanganyika and each group wanted its own place. When they were moved, those from Tanganyika built their village and called it 'Pangani' and the Zanzibaris built Mji wa Unguja and their own Mosque. They requested the colonial authorities for farming land and they were given Kileleshwa which was then a forest. Some of them settled there."⁸

A grandson of one of the early founders of Pangani had the following to say:

"Those who had come from Tanganyika decided to give their village the name of Pangani so that they could remember their homeland. Those from the Kenyan coast formed Mji wa Mombasa."⁹

These names would always remind them of their different places of origin. It is therefore clear that from the beginning each group wanted to have its own identity and, to underline its different origin, named its settlement accordingly. The earliest of these settlements were established about the year 1893. The memorandum of the Pangani residents to the colonial government supports this estimate:

"The settlement of Pangani took place in the reign of Queen Victoria about 40 years ago...."¹⁰

Forty years before 1933, the time of the evidence, gives the year as approximately 1893, almost six years before the railway arrived in Nairobi. The original Pangani is said to have been at the present site of the Fire Station before the villagers were removed to the present Pangani.¹¹

There seems to have been another Muslim village near the present Kenyatta Hospital. The residents of this village were moved to Mombasa village as:

"... it was further stated that some of the occupants of the round huts in Mombasa village had been removed there from a native village on Hospital Road in 1908 when it was found that they had severed connection with the reserves and could not return there."¹²

Pangani and Mombasa were the largest. The former was the larger of the two; yet there were 160 huts in Mombasa village alone.¹³

The other villages were located in the area around the present Pangani and Ngara, as we are informed that the Kiambu-Fort Hall and Forest Road area was part of the land which was "occupied by the villages of Mombasa and Kaburini."¹⁴

It has also been said that quite a large number of the Wanyamwezi who settled here were ivory traders, besides those who were porters. Several of the people who were interviewed said that their fathers or grandfathers were involved in the ivory trade. These early traders did not come with wives as most of them were single young men. Naturally they married local women. Mwinyi Pembe who has been named among the pioneers, was one such trader.

These early inhabitants were joined by many up-country peoples, especially the Kikuyu, Kamba and the Maasai from the vicinity of the-then embryonic town. In the case of the Maasai, they were driven towards Nairobi by natural disasters: cholera had broken out among them in the 1860's and it was followed by an epidemic of pleuropneumonia, which attacked their cattle. As if this was not enough, in the 1890's, there was an outbreak of smallpox which was also followed by a serious famine. Coupled with the natural calamities was the rivalry that broke out between Lenana and Sendeyo, the two sons of the Maasai leader.

As a result, Lenana sought peace with the Kikuyu, Francis Hall acting as the intermediary and about 500 Maasai took refuge in Fort Smith at the beginning of 1894 and by July there were more than 1000 Masai at Fort Smith.¹⁵

The same phenomenon of natural disasters accounts for the influx of the nearby Kabete Kikuyu into Nairobi. Between 1894 and 1899 there was a locust invasion and the crops were extensively damaged and, consequently, there was a severe famine in 1898 - 99. This situation was worsened by an epidemic of smallpox at the same time. Describing this situation, John Ainsworth wrote:

"Very serious state of affairs exists in (Machakos) district owing to the terrible swarms of locusts which have come in ...

Kikuyu is in a far worse condition than (Machakos), there is absolutely no food in the country at present."¹⁶

In addition, after the introduction of the colonial administration, there was a sudden and radical change from a traditional economy based on barter system to a monetary one. Therefore, many people went to Nairobi in search of work, especially after the land alienation. The numbers of these people were swelled by their relatives who followed them to the town. Many of the survivors of the first generation who have been interviewed say that "my father/mother followed his/her sister/brother, who had come to Nairobi to look for work."

Most of these people settled in these villages which became Islamic in population and in character, with the coastal people forming the nucleus.

Besides these, there were the Somalis largely from the modern North-Eastern Province. Generally, the Somalis had come into contact with Islam almost a thousand years ago. (See page 82). According to Lewis,

"... both the Northern and Southern Somali coasts have unquestionably been in extensive contact with the Muslim world for almost a thousand years...."¹⁷

Owing to this long contact, they had all become Muslims. Quite a number of them frequented the area in question from the early days of this century. According to Ainsworth:

"During 1900 and subsequently, numbers of Somali traders arrived in Nairobi; they were practically all itinerant traders. Somalis, as a rule, do not mix with other people and so these traders got located towards Muthaiga on the Nairobi side."¹⁸

In his diary he states:

"A lot of Somalis have arrived here from time to time; there are now over a hundred men and rows are frequent. I have therefore established a system of a headman of the camps with three assistant headmen and ten volunteer police."¹⁹

According to McVicar "down on the flats next to the river, the first seeds of settlement had been sown. Somalis had built houses on the north side of the river where Ngara Road is today."²⁰ Their cows were tended by the Kikuyu who lived at the present junction of Ngara and Parklands. Therefore, they arrived at the same time as the other Muslims and since they did not mix with them, they established the Somali villages.

They have also been mentioned in the statements made by the Pangani representatives in 1933 as having been allocated two places at the same time as the Pangani Muslims. Also, there were some among them who had come with the IBEA Co. administration, as one, Juma Abdillah had stated:

"They came with the government and fought for the government.... When the Uganda war was over, they asked for somewhere to go and the government told them to live here. The Maasai were told to live on the south side of Mbagathi River. The Maasai were told to live there because the government wanted to give them (Somalis) this place.... We have been there for 33 years...."²¹

No other evidence has been found to indicate that the Maasai were evacuated to give room for a Somali settlement. However, the Somali camp can be regarded as one of the early Muslim settlements in Nairobi.

By 1901, there was already a large number of Africans in Nairobi. This 'big' African population attracted the attention of the Colonial Municipal Council which attempted to control it by introducing by-laws which allowed the council to remove any persons whose presence in the area was unauthorised.

The Muslims were not distinguished from the other Africans by the colonial authorities. But there is evidence that most of the Africans who were in Nairobi in the early period were Muslims as we can see in the composition of Pangani Village: There were 312 houses owned by 293 persons. Of these 247 were Muslims; 12 were Christians and 34 "pagan". Therefore 84% of the house owners were Muslims.²² The Kikuyus were the largest group and they formed about 48% of the total land owners. The Nandi and Maasai formed about 8.5% each; the other Kenyans about 12.6% and those from Tanganyika 12.6% while the others, including the Baganda and the Comorians, formed 13.2%.

The African population swelled up after the construction of the railway. The colonial authorities were alarmed; and their attitude can be summarised in the words of the Commissioner of Lands and Settlement

"The Nubian is a man to whom the colony owes much, but the second generation and hybrids arising from the mixed unions are degenerate."

Elsewhere in the same report he states:

"all over Nairobi there is a race of detribalised natives... who cannot be sent home as they do not know what reserve they belonged or have lost all desire and even the means to live in the reserve to which their fathers belonged."²³

The conditions in which many of these Africans left their homes have been mentioned above, but this was the way the colonial officer saw the situation. Owing to this attitude, it was decided to segregate the various groups by putting them into locations and instituting pass laws to keep out of the town those Africans who were not in employment. It was the Bransby William Commission which recommended segregation in 1907. The segregation policy was partly influenced by that prevailing in South Africa, since the Feetham Commission, which was set up to look into the plan of the embryonic town of Nairobi, was headed by Feetham, a former Town Clerk of Johannesburg.

Most of these Africans were Muslims according to the Nyeri Provincial Commissioner:

"The problem of detribalised or deruralised natives is becoming acute in the vicinity of all large townships and municipalities and, in Nairobi itself, the situation is now causing considerable anxiety... Besides the settlement of genuinely detribalised and foreign natives in Kibera, there is all over Nairobi a race of deruralised natives of this and neighbouring colonies who cannot be sent home.... They are nearly all Mohammedans. Most of them call themselves Swahili."²⁴

This population continued to swell as more immigrants from upcountry embraced Islam. Let us examine some of the factors that facilitated conversion.

As already stated, the earlier Muslim soldiers and porters were men whose homes were far from Nairobi and most of them had come as single men. They apparently did not feel it necessary to go back to marry; therefore, most of them first converted and then married local women. Naturally, their children were brought up as Muslims. In this way, marriage was an important factor in enlarging the Muslim population.

Secondly, people who had left their distant homes, were cut off from them by the distance, especially at a time when means of communication were difficult; and, for some of them, the conditions in which they had left their homes, made it difficult for them to return. Such conditions were draught, domestic quarrels and epidemics as we have already mentioned in the case of the Kikuyu, Kamba and Maasai. Others were forcefully recruited into the service of the British. The people who had lost effective contact with home areas were particularly more likely to embrace Islam as an urban alternative to the rural social community from which they had come.

Thirdly, most of the initial K.A.R. troops were recruited from among the Swahili, the Nubians, and the Somali, people who were traditionally Muslim.

Later on, the Kamba, Luo, Nandi and members of other ethnic groups were enlisted into the army. Here the colonial armed force became a factor in the spread of Islam as these peoples who were originally recruited into the already predominantly Muslim force, embraced the faith. In 1933 Colonel Wilkinson testified that:

"We take in a great number of Akamba, Nandi and Kavirondo. When they come to us, the biggest proportion are pagans but it is the fashion, I think, to take on a religion and the tendency is... in the K.A.R. to embrace the Mohammedan religion. We do not have any Christians except in the 4th Battalion in Uganda."²⁶

The other factor is of course the prestigious position occupied by those who were associated with the traders, who have already been discussed as agents in the spread of Islam to many parts of the interior of Kenya. In Nairobi, the person who was responsible for the conversion of the other was sometimes regarded as a 'spiritual father' of the converttee. The young girls who came from upcountry were absorbed into the Muslim families which served as their adoptive homes.

By 1910, the "native villages" were "on the further side" of the river "at a distance of about half a mile." These were: Somali village under Hassan Hersi; Mombasa village, with Lali bin Hamid as chief; Somali camp, with Hussein Ali as the headman; Maskini village; Pangani, under Juma bin Mahunza; and Unguja, with Bakari as leader.

There was a third Somali village with Muhammad Daffir as the leader.²⁷ There was also a Kikuyu settlement in the Municipal Forest Reserve in Parklands with Karanja wa Hiti as the headman. Lali bin Hamid was "the recognised head of all but the Somali communities" and was "of considerable assistance to the government in the collection of hut tax, poll tax and in other ways." We are further informed that by this time,

"The population of the four villages (Pangani, Mombasa, Maskini and Unguja) is very mixed, consisting of Swahilis, Wanyamwezi, Baganda, Nandi, Maasai etc."²⁸

Also, there was "a small village inhabited mainly by railway labourers" with Abu Bakr as the headman. It is clear that there was a distinction between the Muslim villages and the Kikuyu settlements. The latter had Kikuyu leaders, for example Karanja wa Hiti, who was not given a Muslim name; and Irega, whose location was between the watchman's land and the Roman Catholic Mission.

By 1914, not much change had taken place, except that Unguja had been absorbed by Pangani.²⁹

The Muslim population in these villages and a few others which were scattered in the town, where they worked as domestic servants, was large enough to warrant the services of a Qadhi.

Consequently, though it was not the policy of the colonial government to maintain paid Qadhis outside the coastal belt, the office of a Qadhi was established in Nairobi sometime before 1910. The following table shows Africans,²⁹ Somalis and Asiatics in Nairobi during the early period:

Nairobi Population Census Table

Year	Asiatics	Africans	Somali
1906	3,071	9,291	-
1909	3,171	9,524	-
1911	2,615	10,459	401

Here the Asians are not divided into religious groups or sects, but from later censuses, it was evident that the Muslim Asians were more than the non-Muslim Asians, especially because of the recruitment into the railway labourforce from the Punjab, Cutch and Kathiawar districts. The Asians were not all Muslim, but, by 1911, half of them were.

By 1910, the Qadhi of Nairobi was the registrar of "Mohammedan marriages and divorces." The then Qadhi, Sheikh Abud, was enjoying a government salary and the fees received by him, that is 2 rupees for marriage registration and 3 for divorce, were remitted to the District Commissioner's office. There were complaints about the Qadhi and after an inquiry, he was dismissed.

The post of the Qadhi of Nairobi remained vacant for some time; but, in June 1911, Ali bin Hassan, a respected Somali, was appointed. But as he was an unpaid official, he was allowed to retain the fees that he collected.

Between the Muslim villages, there was rivalry which was expressed through religious activities. Each village had its own mosque(s) and performed its own religious activities independently. It is said that the villages competed to see which one would outdo the others during the *Maulidi*, birthday of the Prophet celebrations. The rivalry between Mombasa and Pangani came to a head when Ali bin Khalid disagreed with Lali. As a result of the quarrel, Khalid moved to Pangani, where he was warmly received.

Despite common adherence to Islam, the attachment to ones ethnic group was strong. Those who embraced Islam have been regarded as "detrribalised natives", but there was no actual detribalization as many of those converts retained some traditional practices. They regarded themselves as, for example 'Kikuyu' or 'Kamba' Muslims. This can be illustrated by the words of the first Kikuyu scholar of repute, Maalim Haji Khamisi:

"Mkikuyu Muislam akiwa hana Kinyongo
(spite) sio Mkikuyu."³¹

This means that if a Kikuyu Muslim has no *spite*, he is not a true Kikuyu. The implication of this statement was that despite conversion, Kikuyu converts had to remain unchanged and their loyalty to their people had to remain strong.

To support this strong ethnocentric feeling, the Kikuyu Muslims made reference to the time of the Prophet, when the Qureish were the most prominent among the other tribes. The Kikuyu Muslims regarded the coastal Muslims as foreigners in their land.³²

On the other hand, the Kikuyu converts were looked down upon by the coastal Muslims who referred to them as *Mahaji*. *Haji* is an important title for those Muslims who have made the pilgrimage to Makka, but this was not the context in which it was being used. It was used in a derogatory sense to refer to the Kikuyu Muslims and not the Kamba. It implied that the Kikuyu Muslims were elevating themselves to a high status when in fact they were "mere converts", "watu wa Kuja" or newcomers to the faith.³² (The same term, *Haji*, was also used contemptuously by the Swahilis for the Digo Converts).

In Pangani, the different groups disagreed over several issues and the outcome was the construction of two 'tribal' mosques. The Swahili mosque had been built around 1898 by the Swahilis from the coast.³³ It is said to have been the first mosque in Nairobi, the second being the railway mosque, which was built in 1900 in the railway yard for the railway staff. The quarrel began when the Coastal Muslims began to look down upon the *Mahaji*. They made a distinction between *wazaliwa* and themselves.³⁴ The Kikuyu could not tolerate this for a long time; so they built their own mosque and called it *Al - Noor*, meaning the light.

The Kamba built theirs and called it Riyadhha, after the one of Lamu. Probably they named it after the one of Lamu because, during this period, the coast served as the example to be emulated by the upcountry converts, especially during and after the First World War, when the link between Nairobi and the coast was intensified.

The Swahilis were accused of giving lip-service to the faith. They did not live up to the teachings of Islam. This feeling became widespread among the converts especially after 1915, when there was an influx of Muslim scholars from the coast. Apart from these scholars a few students had been sent to the coast for religious education and when these returned, they were instrumental in enlightening their people about the tenets of the faith.

Initially, there were no trained teachers and many Swahili non-Islamic practices were adopted as religious practices by the converts. Conversion during this early period entailed being sprinkled with water, *kutiwa maji ya kata*, by the Sheikh. The person willing to adopt Islam would go to the Sheikh and state his wish. Then, the Sheikh would sprinkle some water on him using a coconut shell, after which he would choose for him a name. The convert would often adopt the name of the Sheikh who converted him, for example he would be called Hassan wa Mwinyi Kombo. The girls who were thus converted were married to these Sheikhs or their sons and others were married off to the Sheikh's friends as his daughters.

After being sprinkled with *Maji ya Kata*, the convert was given a *kanzu* and a cap by the Sheikh.

But this was not all; circumcision was to follow. If the convert had not been circumcised before, that is if he was a *zunga*, the complete operation, *Kutahiri*, that is to purify or cleanse, would be performed. After the operation, the converts would be put in initiation houses to learn the Swahili culture. For the girls, when they reached puberty, *Kuanza Kuvunja ungo*, they were assigned to tutors, who were called *Somo*. These were elderly women and the qualifications of the initiate varied according to the experience and fame of the particular *somo* under whom she received instruction. Their training places were called *Unyagoni*. The training included matters pertaining to housework, sex and general behaviour. They were also taught a dance called *Msondo*. The training was highly valued and therefore necessary for all the girls.

During this initiation, it was the Swahili culture which was transmitted to the converts. These practices had been incorporated into religious practices as many of the coastal tribes had had a long period of contact with Islam. Therefore during this period, they transmitted a 'Swahilised' form of Islam. For example, there was a popular ritual of going round the village boundaries, *Kuzunguka Mji*, reciting the Quran during times of disaster. This practice was common even among such interior peoples as the Meru.

Though the converts knew that this was a non-Islamic practice, they came to associate it with Islam just because the Swahilis, who served as their religious exemplars, advocated the practice. During the occasion, the people went round saying prayers. They slaughtered an animal and buried the sacrificial meat. Many such practices passed for Islamic ones throughout the early period.

After the initiation period, the converts were taught how to perform prayers and read the Quran which they did not understand. Before the First World War, Maalim Mtodoo had taught the Quran without translation. This was the situation until the arrival of Sheikh Ali bin Khalid, among other teachers. This Sheikh tried to teach the meaning of the Quran and severely criticised the unIslamic practices which characterised Islam during this period. As a result, he faced stiff opposition from the Sheikhs who had transmitted these practices. This was partly the reason why Lali disagreed with the Sheikh.

As the converts began to understand the Quran and the essence of the religious teachings they had received, they began to see the contradiction between the daily activities of the Swahilis and their teachings.

One of them described the Swahilis thus:

"The Waswahili (from the coast) came and taught us Islam. That was good. They taught us to read the Quran and pray. But we did not understand the meaning of the Quran. Later when some of us became educated, and understood the faith of Islam and the meaning of the Holy Quran properly, we realised that they had distorted the message. They themselves did not live up to the teachings. Consequently, there arose disagreements and we began to set up our own madarasa.³⁵

Besides this, ethnicity also played an important part in these divisions. Bujra observes that

"... in urban areas... far from creating a community in which differences of tribe are transcended by common adherence to the faith, Islam provides religious symbols of one sort or another in which to assert an ethnic exclusiveness."³⁶

This probably accounts for the reaction of the Kamba that led them to build their own mosque. Like the Kikuyu, they had a grievance against the Swahilis; yet instead of uniting with the Kikuyu, they went ahead and built their own mosque. This is also true of the Nubians - Islam for them was a means of asserting their exclusiveness. It appears that religion was the most handy tool that the groups used against each other.

Let us briefly discuss the role of the three mosques in Pangani in this context.

Despite the prescribed Islamic rule for the Jum'a prayer, that all should congregate in the Jum'a Mosque unless it is too small for the congregation, the three mosques were used on Fridays. There were separate Friday prayers in each of the mosques. This conflict took a definite shape in the early 1920's. Maulidi was read in each of these mosques, beginning in the "Msikiti wa Mahaji." The "Maulidi ya Wakamba" was read on the last Thursday of *Mfungo Sita*, that was on the same day as that of Riyadhha Mosque in Lamu. The "Waswahili Maulidi" was the last to be read on the 20th or 23rd day.³⁷

The incident which sparked off the actual rift within the Pangani Muslim group took place in the Mahaji Mosque. As already said, Sheikh Ali bin Khalid, had come to occupy a prominent position among the African Muslims. He was the leading Sheikh and Maulidi celebrations would not start without him. The date is not given but one day, there was Maulidi in Msikiti wa Mahaji and the crowd sat and waited for the Sheikh. After some time, Haji Khamisi authorised the reading of the Maulidi to start. On his way to the mosque, the Sheikh heard that the Maulidi had started. Instead of proceeding to the mosque, he went back to his house. Haji Khamisi and other Sheikhs went to call him and despite their pleas, he refused to attend. He was supported by many Swahilis who laid the blame on the "Kikuyu Maalim", and consequently, there arose the conflict between the Kikuyu and Swahili Muslims.³⁸

It was so serious that the Qadhi of Mombasa, Sheikh Alamin bin Ali had to intervene in an attempt to reconcile the conflicting parties. But his efforts were in vain and unity was not restored until Pangani village was dismantled in 1938. The mosque became the centre of this conflict and the religious activities in future provided a means of expressing the rivalry between the groups. Commenting on the situation, the Secretary of the Jamia Mosque Committee wrote:

"Building of separate mosques for separate tribes is not only opposed to the recognised principles of fraternity in Islam, but is also fraught with dangers of tribal feuds and dissensions."³⁹

All along, the Coastal Muslims had been trying to differentiate themselves from the 'converts'. But this concept of cultural difference between the coastal and the upcountry peoples has a long history behind it. In the previous chapter, we saw that Lamu society was divided into the upper middle and lower strata. The *Waungwana* did not attend the Maulidi of the ex-slaves and the Jum'ā mosque was solely for them and out of bounds to the latter group. In the 19th century, there was increased contact between these coastal peoples and the upcountry peoples whose way of life was entirely different from their own.

This difference between them was conspicuous and Janmohammad noted that:

"while they (the Swahilis) themselves possessed a universalistic faith with a book, a literary tradition and an urban civilization, the people of the interior were seen as possessing none of these characteristics."⁴⁰

This situation was reflected in the Muslim villages and the terms that were used in the Lamu social stratification began to be applied to the upcountry immigrants. This concept was sharpened further by the colonial authorities who regarded the coastal people as more civilized than the upcountry 'natives'. The Kikuyu Provincial Commissioner stated:

"Some of these natives are personal servants.... They and a few Coastal natives are the decent element in the deruralised class."⁴¹

Given this background to the divisions among the Muslims, the Pangani conflict could not be resolved. The Kikuyu Muslims formed a rival group called *Ngumba*. The aim of this group was to separate the Kikuyu Muslims from the Swahilis. There was an interesting incident which took place when the Kikuyu Muslim women decided to dramatise the conflict. The Swahili women bought *leso*, a multi-coloured piece of light cotton material, which was used by both groups as indoor and outdoor dress.

The Kikuyu women, under the leadership of Fatuma wa Nyaithiru, bought similar *leso*, with exactly the same design as those bought by the Swahili women, and tied them on dogs. This "insult" to the Swahili women almost caused a physical fight, but the leaders intervened.⁴² At this point, it was clear to both groups that there would be no compromise.

The Kikuyu went ahead and formed Jumuiya-tul-Baladia in 1937 under the leadership of Haji Khamisi. Some of its objectives were: to try to settle the differences among African Muslims and to do everything to create harmony among them; to propagate the doctrines of Islam; and to carry on propaganda among African Muslims in order that they may live according to the tenets of Islam. These objectives reflect the situation during the period when there was disunity among the Swahili and African Muslims and there was need for the society to propagate the doctrines of Islam because the Swahilis had mixed these doctrines with their traditional practices.

Having dealt with the early period, we shall briefly survey the individual Muslim settlements which exist to date.

Pumwani

The muslim villages which have been discussed above, were an eyesore to the colonial authorities. In order to provide and maintain well-defined and separate quarters for each of the three races in Nairobi - the whites, "Asiatics" and "natives" - a native location had to be created.

This location was to house all the natives in the African villages as well as those "scattered" all over the town. Describing them, D.C. Hoskins said:

"... Most of these people have been born to prostitutes in Nairobi and the new Pumwani would have no room for these parasites."⁴³

The reasons for putting the "natives" together was couched in the words of the health officer as being sanitary; to prevent plagues and epidemics from the Africans, who posed 'a health hazard' to the whites. Also, "... a disease-ridden African is not a good workman"⁴⁴ and therefore "the provision of social and recreative services to ensure a more contented labour supply" was begun.

The uncontrolled settlement had to be controlled and this meant that the villages had to be demolished. In 1905, the land committee for the East Africa Protectorate had recommended separate locations for separate races. In the following year, the Sites Committee was set up to look into the matter and, in the same year, the site for the African location was chosen. Two years later, a special committee was appointed to consider the plan for the location.

In 1913, the Simpson Report proposed the following segregationist policy:

"It has to be recognised that the standard and mode of life of the Asiatic, except in the highest class, do not consort with those of the European and that, on the other hand, many European habits are not acceptable to Asiatics and that the customs of the primitive African, unfamiliar with and not adapted to the new conditions of town life, will not blend with either. In the interest of each community and of the healthness (sic) of the locality and country, it is absolutely necessary that in every town and trading centre, the town planning should provide well-defined and separate quarters for European, Asiatic and African...."⁴⁵

While they intended to segregate the different races, they were also aware of the divisions that existed among the Muslims in the villages. Therefore, it was proposed that the different blocks in the new 'native' location be allocated to different categories. The sections were to be allocated as follows:

- (a) Section I - the Christians would get blocks 2, 3 and 5; while the CMS would get block 6.
- (b) Section II would be reserved for Christian extension.
- (c) Section III and IV would go to the Kavirondo (Luo).
- (d) Section V would be left unallocated pending development.

- (e) Section VI - the western part would be occupied by stand holders, (Probably this would be the shopping centre).
- (f) Section VII - Mohammedans, Somalis, Coast Natives and block 6 and 7 to be reserved for a mosque.
- (g) Section VIII and IX would be allocated to the Kikuyu and Kamba.⁴⁶

However, this proposal was not implemented and when the natives were removed from Mji wa Mombasa, Maskini and the other small villages, individuals were allowed to choose their own plots.

In 1917, the rules to govern the location were drawn up. The Mombasa village residents had been moved several times before. As we have already mentioned, some of them had been moved from a place near the Hospital in 1908. Before the name 'Pumwani' was accepted, it is said that:

"the natives were anxious that a name should be given to the location and had suggested it be called 'MOMBASA MPIA'. This was not considered suitable and it was left to the Native affairs officer to get further suggestions... It was resolved on the suggestions of the plot holders in the location, whom Mr. Hamilton had consulted, to recommend that the name of the location be in future Pumwani".⁴⁷

The name 'Pumwani' means 'place of rest'. Here they would rest after being moved from their original village.

On 26th May 1920, the inhabitants of Mji wa Mombasa were given six months' notice to leave the area. The village in Parklands was said to have "provoked the wrath of Mr. Gordon and this combined with other complaints, induced the municipality to remove both this village and Maskini"⁴⁸ which was outside the municipal boundary. Another one between Upper Hill and Westlands was later "to prove annoying to the European residents and was removed."

Once again, the strife-torn Muslims of Mji wa Mombasa and these smaller villages found themselves together in Pumwani. Here, tribalism became the umbrella for the age-old divisions. The superiority of those born into the faith over the converts assumed its old position and the ranking system was once more effective, as it was in Mji wa Mombasa. First, when they came to Pumwani, they set up a temporary mosque in the space that had been earmarked for it during the division of plots. This temporary structure was used until 1935 when the present mosque was constructed.

We have already said that in Pangani, the mosques provided important centres for the conflicting parties. Therefore, the Pumwani mosque was to play the same role. It was named Riyadhha, after the one of Lamu, which was symbolic of the role of the Lamu Muslims even in the new location. It became the centre of the controversy as the Bajunis and other coastal Muslims tried to dominate the others.

Since they posed as the standard-bearers of the faith, they made the leadership of the mosque their own prerogative. Therefore, the first Imam and his deputy were Bajunis while the *Muadhin* was a Comorian. When this Imam died, after leading the mosque for almost twenty years, he was succeeded by another coastal man. All this time, the Muslims quarrelled among themselves - the Kikuyu and Kamba resenting the domination of the mosque and the religious affairs in general by the coastal Muslims. The Kamba formed the Akamba Muslim Progressive Association, while the Baladia intensified its activities. The former association had the following objectives: to unite all Wakamba Muslims in Nairobi under one organization; to foster educational, religious, cultural, social and welfare activities amongst Wakamba Muslims; to foster voluntary services to any Muslim cause; and to establish unity of purpose amongst Wakamba Muslims and demonstrate that unity of purpose whenever and wherever necessary.⁴⁹ Membership was forbidden to "all other tribes than Wakamba."

As said earlier (see p. 119), the Wakamba were more friendly to the Swahilis than the Kikuyu and that was the reason why they were not included in the derogatory reference to the *Mahaji*. Therefore, in Pumwani, when there was an attempt to unite the groups, the Wakamba and the Swahilis formed the *Muungano* (unity) group. The Baladia refused to join the *Muungano* group.

One of the Baladia leaders declared;

"Faith unites people in prayer, but the equivalent of the position occupied by the Qureish during the lifetime of the Prophet is now occupied by the Kikuyu Muslims organised around the Jumuiya-tul Baladia."⁵⁰

These words echo those of Haji Khamisi, (see p.118 above).

Therefore, the divisions which characterised the Muslims of Pumwani (and are still present in one way or another) can be traced back to the old days of Mji wa Mombasa and other villages. Even when Pangani was demolished in 1938 to give room for the settlement of Asians, many of its residents were not willing to go to Pumwani. According to McVicar,

"... Kikuyu elders understood the conflict between Muslims of Pumwani whom they considered to be nearly as bad as heathen."⁵¹

After the demolition of Pangani, many of the Muslims were not willing to move and they were advised to consider the possibility of their selecting a site at the Coast. Some of them went to Kakuyuni near Malindi, others to Karai and a few to Shauri Moyo, which had been built for them.

It can therefore be concluded that the earliest inhabitants of the area which later came to be known as Nairobi were African Muslims of diverse cultural and ethnic background.

Gradually they established villages, which, later on, played host to those who migrated to town in search of work. In these villages they established social and cultural set ups, which were predominantly Islamic. Swahili Islam had acquired a host of non-Islamic practices which mainly characterised the period up to the end of the First World War.

The divisions and disagreements between the various Muslim groups appear to have been partly religious and partly ethnic. The Kikuyus wanted to assert themselves, claiming that they were the land owners while the other groups, especially the Swahilis, were newcomers. It also seems that the Lamu social stratification had an influence upon the coastal Muslims, who looked down upon the converts, thus causing disputes over religious affairs. In reaction to what the converts saw as discrimination against them, they constructed 'tribal' mosques in Pangani. Later on, the quarrels between the Coastal Muslims and the Kikuyu and Kamba Muslims were centred on the Pumwani mosque. For a long time, the leadership of the mosque was in the hands of the Bajunis and other Coastal Muslims, a situation which was resented by the other Muslims, notably the Kikuyu. It is interesting to note that the Kikuyu and Kamba Muslims did not unite against the Swahilis. The Kamba were more agreeable than the Kikuyu and probably this tolerance was responsible for the subsequent alliance and cooperation between the Kamba and the Swahilis, which led to the formation of Muungano group in Pumwani.

Many Kikuyu Muslims identified with Haj Khamisi and real unity was not achieved among the African Muslims in Nairobi.

The Somali

Now, we shall compare the Somali with the other two groups. As already said, (see p. 116) there were three Somali villages by 1910 and there were squabbles between them and the Swahilis. The Somalis had a low opinion of the Swahili Muslims. They regarded the Swahili as immoral and lazy. This opinion was based on the Somali feeling of superiority over other Africans, which emerged from an old tradition among them, which traced their ancestry to the Arabs. Most of them had come to Nairobi from former British Somaliland. The Somalis are divided into clans and rows between the clans were so frequent that a court had been set up at the present site of Khoja Mosque to settle disputes between them.

The two main divisions were the Ishaq and the Harti. The Ishaq comprised Habr Awal, who were the majority and were rich traders; the Habr Toljaala and Habr Yunis. The Harti group comprised the Dolbohanta, the Warsangeli and the Mijertein.⁵² These groups were constantly fighting. Therefore, Col. J. Ainsworth appointed headmen of the camps and volunteer police to maintain law and order.⁵³

During the First World War, they were moved from the Ngara area to what came to be known as Eastleigh.

The company which owned this area approached the Municipal Council with a scheme for Asians and Africans. The area was not under the municipality, but, according to the scheme, it would be municipally-controlled if necessary. ⁵⁴

Now we shall see how the doctrinal and tribal, or regional, differences manifested themselves within Somali Islam in Nairobi and how they distinguished the group from the other African Muslims. When they settled in Eastleigh, the two determining factors were clannism and adherence to two religious orders, the Qadriyya and the Salihyya. During this period, these orders were quite strong. Here, while the African Muslims belonged to different ethnic groups, the Somalis were divided into clans. But it seems that clannism among the Somali was stronger than tribalism among the African Muslims. For example, the Kikuyu and the Kamba were not such bitter enemies as were the Habr Awal and the Harti groups.

Besides clannism, adherence to religious orders played a vital role and affected the relationship between the different groups. The members of the two orders were such bitter enemies that they fought at the least provocation. It is said that even when two individuals, a follower of the Qadriyya order and a follower of the Salihyya order quarrelled, each of them was supported by others belonging to his order and, in many cases, after such a quarrel, a big fight ensued. They would not even bury each other's dead, though they shared the same cemetery. ⁵⁵

This kind of enmity, based on adherence to religious orders was not found among the Swahili and Nubian Muslims.

It was the adherence to these orders which partly determined their settlement in Eastleigh. In Section III, the Habr Awal, who belonged to the Qadiriyya order, built the Shafi'i Mosque, and in Section II, the Habr Toljaala, most of whom were followers of the Salihyya order, built their mosque on the present 8th Street. (This mosque was recently rebuilt and named Sheikh Humood Al Jabar al Sabah). The Habr Yunis, the majority of whom belonged to the Salihyya order, built the Somali Mosque in Section I (now known as the Islamic Centre). The members of each group used to go to their own mosque for religious functions; though no one was barred from praying in any mosque, they rarely mixed.⁵⁷ Describing the rivalry between the adherents of the two orders, one of them said:

"A Somali of the same religious order as me but of a different tribe (clan), is nearer to me than my own brother who belongs to a different order."⁵⁸

This suggests that loyalty to an order was stronger than loyalty to tribe or clan.

There was a popular story among the Qadiriyya which was used to discredit the Salihyya: There was a famous Qadiri Sheikh who was once asked why he shook his leg, and he answered that he had seen a follower of Salihyya drinking alcohol in Cape Town and, therefore, he was kicking him.⁵⁹

In order to understand Somali Islam, let us briefly examine the basic differences between the two religious orders. The Qadiriyya order was named after Abd al Qadir al Jilani. He was born in 470 AH/1077 A.D. in Jilan south of the Caspian Sea. His doctrine was Orthodox, with mystic interpretations of the Quran. The general theme of this doctrine was the necessity of a period of asceticism, during which a person should remove himself from the world while in communion with the deity. After this period the person may return and enjoy his portion converting others. The Sufi belief that everything in this world or the next is a veil between the aspirant and the deity, was one of his major doctrines. He is believed to have worked miracles. He was a renowned jurist and the body of doctrines which had his authority was sufficient to constitute a system. All those who prescribed to the order were promised paradise and it gained popularity. During his lifetime, his sons preached the doctrine in Egypt and Morocco, with Baghdad as the centre.

Although the order reached Somalia in the early days, it was Sheikh Uways bin Mchamed al Barawi, who gave it a kind of revival there. This Sheikh read under a Qadiri, Sheikh Mohamed Tayin, and, in 1870, went to Baghdad for further instruction. Eventually he became a fully-fledged Sufi and received the body of the secret spiritual knowledge transmitted from the founder.

From Baghdad he went back to the Somali country and arrived in Barawa (Brava) in 1880, where he became the undisputed leader of the local Qadiris.

The Salihiya order, which became the greatest rival of the Qadriyya among the Somalis, was introduced there in the 1880's. It was a radically different tradition and its doctrines were utterly opposite to those of the Qadiris. The rivalry which existed between the two orders reflected the tribal and regional differences (the South versus the North). It also arose from profound doctrinal differences, which, after some time, resulted in a controversy between the two orders. Such was the religious background of the Somalis who settled in Nairobi.

The Salihiyya order took its name from a Sudanese Muhammad ibn Salih al Rashidi (1854 - 1917), who lived in Makkah. It spread from South Western Arabia across the Red Sea into Somalia, where it gained many adherents. Doctrinally, it descended from the Ahmadiyya Brotherhood which was founded by the Sheikh Ahmed bin Idris al Fasi (1758 - 1836). Its doctrines were puritanical and, therefore, rejected the practice of visiting the tombs of saints to ask for intercession, tawassul. Unlike the Qadriyya, they did not believe that a deceased saint should serve as an intermediary between the believers and God. The Qadiris were the more fanatical and they were severely criticised for their custom of visiting the tombs of saints.

To the Salihyya, this custom was improper and irreligious.

Soon, Sheikh Uways used poetry to directly attack Sheikh Abdallah Harse, the leader of the Salihyya. Consequently, Sheikh Uways was assassinated by Salihyya adherents in 1909. At this time, the adherents of the two orders were slaughtering each other in Nairobi at the slightest provocation. It is said that in 1914, several Somalis shot one another over religious differences in the Somali camp in Nairobi.

At this time, the orders were very active. The Qadiris in Nairobi met every Wednesday (the day of Abd al Qadir's feast) at the mosque. The Quran, and poems in praise of the Sheikh were recited. The members would go to the mosque with tea which would be served after the recitation.⁶⁰ Another practice which was popular among the Qadiriyya followers was "Maulidi for the departed parents." Forty days after one's death, there was a big feast, *Ahan* "to sacrifice to him from his property."

The Salihyya used to go to their mosque on Thursdays, where they would also sit and recite poems and sing, swaying from one side to the other.⁶¹

In Somali Islam of the Qadiriyya order, saints play an important role as intermediaries between man and God. They are divided into three categories: the founders of the *tariqa*, who are respected and venerated for their *baraka*, mystical powers and *karamat*, miracles; then there are those saints who are venerated for their own personal piety; and, finally, the saints who are the founders of lineages for example, Ishaq.

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The members of Ishaq group used to celebrate his birthday. There is a story among the Somalis that a light is kept burning at his grave every night. A sub-group of Habr Yunis are said to have once put off this light; and, to expiate for this wrong, they had to keep the light burning for ever. During the birthday feast, each individual contributed as much as he could afford and took it to the mosque where the celebrations were held. A sheep was slaughtered by an elderly respected person and the meat was eaten by all. Then, prayers were said. There was a feeling that if this was not done, the ancestor would be hurt and consequently the people would not prosper.

After the Second World War, the orders became less active. This was partly due to the arrival of new groups of Somalis in Nairobi, and, partly, due to the fact that the Somali pioneers were by now giving way to a new generation. The second generation was not as fervent as those who had received the teachings from the Somali founders of the orders. But in the late 1950's and early 1960's, there was a kind of revival of these orders as the Somalis were agitating to break away from Kenya. During this period, they started forming societies and associations. They formed the United Somali Union, but the name was changed to Somali National Association. Its object was "safeguarding and promoting the social, religious, economic, political and other interests of Somalis."

Membership was "restricted to Somali Muslims." This society was registered in 1959. Another society registered at the same time and with almost similar interests was Young Somali Welfare Society. One of its objectives was "to promote social, cultural, educational, economical (sic) and spiritual interests of Somali members and families."⁶² The two societies were deregistered in 1962. The formation of societies was not peculiar to the Somali Muslims since we have seen that the Kikuyu and Kamba Muslims formed societies with similar objectives. (The Somali society which is active to date is the Somali Independent Union. In 1982, its name was changed to *Al Markaz al Islami*, Islamic Centre. It is based in Eastleigh Section I mosque. This centre has about 300 pupils and 6 classes. Almost all of these pupils are Somalis).

Recently, there has been a kind of reform movement among the Somalis in Nairobi. The members of the movement are referred to as "Salaam Alaikum" because the Somali, though Muslims, do not greet each other in this Arabic form, but in Somali. Yet, the members of the new movement, particularly the women use this Islamic salutation.

All of the leaders of this movement in Nairobi say that it traces its origin to the Wahabiyya doctrine. The name Wahabiyya was given to the unitarians, *Muwahhidun*, who were the followers of Muhammad Abd al Wahhab (1703 - 1787). Initially, Abd al Wahhab was a Sufi and a follower of the Hanbali school of thought. (See p. 39).

He started preaching against such practices as saint worship, which had been incorporated into religious practices after the third century of Islam. (The first incident of veneration of the grave was that of Husain's grave by the *Tawwabun*) (See p. 34). He insisted on following the Quran and the Sunnah and forbade any *bid'a*, innovations. As a result he faced stiff opposition in his home town and moved to Dāriya, where he was warmly received and protected by the Chief, Ibn Saud. The story how he and Ibn Saud conquered the other chiefdoms and established the Saudi family as the rulers of the whole of Saudi Arabia is too long to be narrated here. But it is necessary to say that, though the Wahhabis were in political eclipse at the end of the 19th century, their views were widely held by many Somalis. Therefore, the main aim of this new reform movement is to "purify Islam and unite the Muslims" and in Nairobi, it was founded about ten years ago.

Several Somali youths went to Madinah University in Saudi Arabia and studied Islam. They arrived in Nairobi in 1977 and tried to establish the movement at Sheikh Humood al Jabar al Sabah mosque in Eastleigh. One of the leaders says that the Somalis had fallen easy prey to different Sheikhs due to their ignorance of the Arabic language.⁶³ Therefore, they stress knowledge of the Arabic language to "avoid misinterpretations and alterations of the Quran,"

The movement aims to bring the Muslims back to the Quran and the Traditions of the Prophet (s.a.w.). The first step the movement took in revolutionising Somali Islam was to make the Somali women literate by holding evening classes where they were taught to read and write in the Arabic language. They also insisted that the women should wear the orthodox Muslim dress, laying special emphasis on the veil. They also emphasised that the Quran must be read and memorised as "little knowledge cannot be tolerated."

The movement has tried to reform various aspects of Somali Islam: veneration of saints and praying at the graves were prominent features of Somali Islam of the Qadiriyya order. Indeed, not only were they prominent among the Somalis, but also among the Muslims in Lamu, where the Sharifs came to occupy an important position. (Leinhadt informs that:

"... it was thought by most people that the prayers of a Sharif had particular efficacy. People asked Sharifs to pray that special wishes of theirs may be granted, and... paid them for their trouble. They particularly were asked to make amulets to ward off evil...."⁶⁴

This tradition was transmitted to the Swahili Muslims of the early villages in Nairobi, and there, too, the Sharifs and the Sheikhs were highly respected. Therefore the Salaam Alaikum Movement is bent on wiping out this "superstitious" practice among the Somalis.

They argue that there should be no intermediaries between God and man and no Sheikh is holy.

The movement does not advocate any form of sacrifice. Instead, Muslims should give charity. No other ceremonies are allowed except the two Idds: *Idul-Fitr* and *Idul Adhaa*. The celebration of Maulidi is forbidden because it is regarded as *bid'a* or innovation.

Among the Somalis, circumcision of girls is a traditional practice, but the members of Salaam Alaikum forbid it on health grounds. They also prohibit the chewing of *mirra*, which is a popular habit even among the most staunch Somali Muslims. They say that it is a drug and any drug is *haram*, strictly forbidden, in Islam. The Salaam Alaikum members feel that these practices are prevalent among the Somali Muslims because they have generally become lax in practising Islamic principles.

In its attempt to reform Islam, the movement has used the following methods. First, their teachers give lectures, especially in the 8th Street Mosque, where they had almost established themselves in the initial days. Secondly, they conduct daily evening classes for women. Thirdly, they organise seminars, where they elaborate on their teachings. They also meet on Sunday afternoons, especially the women and the boys, but separately. Finally, they distribute free literature and run a small library.⁶⁵

The movement faces stiff opposition from the Somali Sheikhs and the members of the older generation, some of whom adhere to the Qadriyya and Salihyya orders. However, one cannot speak of an actual struggle between the movement and the orders, since the latter had already become less active after the Second World War. But the movement is totally against adherence to religious orders and reverence for Sheikhs.

It has been accused of "spoiling the women". Opposition came to a head when they preached that emphasis should be laid on Allah and not the Prophet who, they argue, is "just like one of us".⁶⁶ He should not be glorified, and therefore Maulidi should not be celebrated. The mosque at 8th Street has since been the battleground between this reform movement and the traditionists among the Somali Muslims. Several years ago, there was an incident which resulted in a physical conflict: one day, during the Maulidi, many Muslims had come to the mosque and as the Maulidi was being read, a member of Salaam Alaikum stood and started to deliver a lecture against Maulidi. Soon there was a quarrel between the two groups and a fight broke out in the mosque. After two days, another fight occurred outside the mosque and some members were arrested. The Nairobi Qadhi tried to intervene in vain. However, the movement's members did not insist on using this mosque for their lectures.

Instead, they shifted to the one in Section I for prayers only and since they were not welcome even there, they founded their own places to conduct their meetings, sometimes in rented halls or in the members' houses.⁶⁷

It is necessary to assess the Wahhabi influence upon the movement. Its leaders do not openly admit that there is a strong Wahhabi influence, but they say that, like Muhammad Abd al Wahhab, they are determined to reform Islam. They also trace their teachings to the Wahhabiyya. Furthermore, the Somali Youths who lead the movement in Nairobi, were trained in Madinah University where they were well-acquainted with the Wahhabi doctrine. A close examination of the practices which the movement has tried to reform, reveals a strong Wahhabi influence. For example, it forbids saint-worship and praying at the graves, which is strictly forbidden by the Wahhabis. Also, it does not advocate any form of sacrifice or intermediaries, and, therefore, Sheikhs and Imams are not holy; and adherence to their schools of thought and religious orders is strictly forbidden by the members of the movement.

Besides preaching the Wahhabiyya doctrine of puritanical Islam, the movement is linked to Saudi Arabia by the material support it gets from there.

The Nubians

We have already mentioned that the colonial authorities used the Nubians as soldiers in the East African Rifles, which later became the King's African Rifles (KAR) when the IBEA Co. handed over the area to the Foreign Office in 1895. The colonial administration intensified its activities in order to be able to annex and exploit the land fully. One of the main initial tools for this purpose was the army. So the Sudanese who had been used in Uganda and other parts of Africa were brought to Kenya as soldiers.

These soldiers were not members of one ethnic group in the ordinary sense of the word, yet they came to form a Muslim enclave in Kibera. 'Kibra', which has been corrupted to Kibera, is a Sudanese word meaning forest. The land was assigned to the KAR authorities in 1904. The main objective of this reserve was to provide a home for the Sudanese soldiers who had, from time to time, fought in various campaigns.⁶⁸ In 1906, Colonel Halson told them to apply for plots, which they did, but the land belonged to the government and they could be moved whenever it was deemed necessary to do so. The Acting Commissioner for Local Government, Mr. W.M. Logan wrote:

"The land at Kibera was not granted to these ex-soldiers in lieu of pension but permission was given to them to live there until such a time as the land was required for other purposes, when other arrangements would be made for them by the government."⁶⁹

However, the issue was dragged by the colonial authorities and the land was not occupied until much later, when Colonel Branding, then commanding the Battalion, was faced with the problem of finding homes for all those people. He took up the matter of this land, which had been allocated to the KAR as a military reserve, and his activities resulted in a survey in 1911. The first individual grants were made in 1912. In that year Colonel Graham of the 3rd KAR gave the first two 'Natives' permission "to make a *shamba* in the military reserve and to build a hut."⁷⁰ These two were Native Captain Mohamed Ratibu Effendi and Native Captain Salim Makau. Grants were made in considerable numbers in the same year.

At the time of Colonel Hoskin's annual inspection, the Battalion was paraded and the men appear to have been told to make their own selection within specified areas. A permit was given to each grantee. The original grant, having been surveyed in 1911, was gazetted in 1918. The village was outside the Municipality and, therefore, it was not under the jurisdiction of the Native Affairs Officer for the Municipality.

In 1911, the survivors of the Serenli Outbreak, about half a company of 'B' and 'C' of the 3rd KAR, were returned to Nairobi with their women, the widows and dependants of the men killed at Serenli.

At the same time, the Sudanese and ex-soldiers living in Kiambu and Machakos were ordered by the then District Commissioner-in-charge of these areas, Mr. R.W. Humphreys, who was positioned at Machakos, to find other homes for themselves. They appear to have been told that since they were ex-KAR men, it was up to KAR authorities to find a suitable area for them to live in. The men therefore returned to Nairobi, some of them settling at Kileleshwa and others at Kibera.⁷¹

The Kibera area remained a military reserve for the period between 1912 and 1928, during which it was under the direct administration of army authorities. When it was handed over to the District Commissioner in 1928, those who were not descendants of the ex-soldiers were regarded as outsiders.

As has already been mentioned, the Nubians formed a Muslim enclave which remained separate from the other communities, with the colonial authorities playing a major role in making it so. After having set apart an area for them, they made sure that no other communities settled among them. It was ruled that only soldiers, ex-soldiers and their descendants would be allowed to settle there. D. Clark observes that:

"What made the process of retribalization in Kibera such an important feature of the community was that the immigrant group was thrown back on to itself so much...."⁷²

This group regarded itself as distinct from the other Muslim communities in Nairobi and more privileged than the others. They even wanted their members to be issued with Sudanese identity cards. This identity card was intended to differentiate them from the 'Natives'. The Sudanese Welfare Society claimed that these cards should be issued to "Pure Sudanese". Islam played an important role in strengthening this feeling of distinctness. The two identities of being of Sudanese origin and of being Muslim, reinforced each other to create a strong sense of unity. The members of the community were deeply conscious of their immigrant nature, to which they attached a positive value. This can be illustrated by the words of one of them:

"We came here in the service of His Majesty's government. The Europeans recognised what we had done for them and that is why they gave us Kibera."⁷³

This idea still lingers in the minds of the descendants of the soldiers and the ex-soldiers who were first settled at Kibera and they proudly talk about the services their forefathers rendered to the colonial government.

Since the Sudanese had come into contact with Islam many centuries before they came to East Africa, many of their practices have been Islamized and Islam was used to evaluate these practices. An example of such practices was *Kafara*. It was a communal purification ceremony held at the beginning of the Muslim year.

It was essentially a Sudanese traditional practice but it was first Islamized by being performed at the beginning of the Muslim year. It was performed to ensure the prosperity of the community. On that day, several goats are led from the mosque along the community boundaries and then slaughtered in the open and eaten by the members of the community.⁷⁴ Special water is drunk and parts of the Quran recited. The water was believed to have the power of washing away ill-health. The act of walking round the community boundaries with the goat was believed to have the power of keeping away the evil spirit and bringing prosperity. The practice was Islamized by beginning the procession at the mosque.

In a way, this practice compares with the Swahili practice of *Kuzunguka Mji* (see p. 121). However, the two differ in the details of the feast. For example, the Nubians did not bury the meat while the Swahili did; but essentially, the intention was the same in both cases - to protect the community from evil. *Kafara*, to a reasonable extent, can also be compared with the Swahili practice of *Kuoga Mwaka*, whereby the whole village went to the river to literally wash the dirt of the ending year according to the Islamic Calendar. To both communities, something had to be done at the beginning of the new year to prevent misfortunes and keep the community healthy.

These were essentially traditional non-Islamic practices, but since syncreticism is characteristic of African Islam, the Islamic calendar and Quranic verses had to be used during the occasions.

Naturally there was a difference between an organised military group and groups of other immigrants of the Muslim villages of Mombasa, Pangani and the smaller villages. Most of the occupants of these villages had come as porters and domestic servants of the Europeans, though a significant proportion of the Swahilis had come as *Askaris*. But these askaris were not settled in the kind of the military reserve that the Nubians were given in Kibera. Apart from this, they were not really organised into army ranks as were the Nubians. Therefore, soon they were absorbed into the Swahili Muslim Community, which comprised many groups of diverse ethnic backgrounds. (See p. 116). Unlike the feuds among the Pangani Muslims, the Nubians were settled in camps which were religiously and socially united.

They regarded themselves as superior to other African Muslims, especially the Swahilis and, consequently, they regarded their Maliki Islam to be superior as well. It has been said that they used to follow the same calendar as the Muslims in the Sudan. This means that they sometimes started fasting before the other Muslims in Nairobi, depending on the sighting of the moon in the Sudan, which sometimes differed from the East African time owing to the different geographical positions of the two zones.

This, in turn, made them break their fast before the other Muslims and therefore, celebrated *idd-ul-Fitr* earlier. They had a derogatory term, *labbi* which they used to refer to non-Sudanese. They would not allow their girls to marry outside their community as this was seen as an act of utter degradation. Clark observes that:

"... Kibera represents a very distinct enclave of society within the Muslim world of Kenya and it maintains relations with other muslim enclaves very much in the manner of different states maintaining relationship with each other. Within Nairobi itself, there is the greatest amount of interaction between members of various distinct enclaves through work ties, commercial ties and interaction during leisure activities, yet the most important social ties are still bound by one's enclave of origin, whether it be Pumwani, Eastleigh, Kibera or Riruta, all of which are in Nairobi."⁷⁵

To illustrate the relationship that existed between the different Muslim groups in Nairobi, Clark draws a parallel from the relationship that exists between different states. As we know, different states have internationally-recognised boundaries and each is independent of the other, yet there are occasions when projects or other activities may be carried out jointly. At the same time, each state has its own internal affairs in which another state may not interfere.

Likewise, every Muslim group in Nairobi has its own boundaries that separate it from the others.

In many cases, these boundaries are based on ethnic, sectarian or theological differences or both, especially in the case of the Asian Muslim communities. Actually, there is a kind of sperate organization and development for each group. This can be illustrated by the existence of numerous autonomous mosque communities. Each of them runs the mosque and organises its own activities around the mosque. But, beside ethnicity and sectarian differences, the colonial authorities were responsible for the creation of these enclaves. Their role has been discussed above. The African Muslim groups do not seem to have had any sectarian differences among them. There were two reasons for this: first they were all Sunni Shafi Muslims except for the Nubians and the four schools of law differ only in small details and not in any significant way; second, even in the case of the Nubians, who are of Maliki persuasion, and the Swahili, who are Shafi'i, most of them did not really understand the differences between the schools of thought. many of the Nubians say Ibn Malik was their Sheikh but as far as the doctrines are concerned, most are quite ignorant of them. But for the Somali adherents, the two religious orders, Qadiriyya and Salihyya, gave their Islam a real theological difference from that of the Swahili and the Nubians.

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CHAPTER IV

THE ASIAN MUSLIMS: THE VISIBLE EXPRESSIONS OF SECTARIANISM IN NAIROBI

In the previous chapter, it was related that the African Muslims were all Sunni of the Shafi'i school of law and, therefore, there were no significant theological differences observed among them. The differences in their practices were mainly as a result of diversity in ethnicity. The Swahilised Islam in Pumwani was compared with the Somali and the Nubian versions. But it was the Asians who introduced religious diversity to Nairobi and Kenya in general. They played an important economic and social role and they still continue to play it, especially when we consider the social service schemes created and run by a group like the Ismailis. Reiterating the role of the Asian Muslims, A.M. Jeevanjee, a prominent Bohra pioneer said that:

"... the man who has practically founded the colony of British East Africa is a Mohammedan from Bombay and Karachi...."¹

Even if this is an exaggeration, their role cannot be ignored. Below is a population census table illustrating their religious grouping.²

DISTRIBUTION OF ASIANS IN KENYA BY RELIGION

Religion	1911	%	1926	%	1931	%	1948	%	1962	%
Muslim	5,939	-	11,520	43.	15,006	34.4	27,585	28.2	40,057	22.7
Hindu	3,205	-	12,262	46.	19,748	45.3	51,395	52.6	97,841	55.4
Sikh	-	-	2,089	8.	4,427	10.1	10,631	10.9	21,169	12.0
Christian	1,136	-	-	-	4,131	9.5	7,613	7.8	16,524	9.3
Other	971	-	-	-	311	0.7	473	0.5	1,022	0.6
Total					43,623	100.0	97,687	100.0	176,613	100.0

From this table, we notice that the Muslims were the majority in 1911, but by 1926, they had been overtaken by the Hindus. This trend continued and by 1962 they were half the Hindus. For Nairobi, the following table illustrates the distribution of Asians by religion as in 1966.³

DISTRIBUTION OF ASIANS BY DISTRICT AND RELIGION

District	Hindu	Muslim	Sikh	Christian	Other	Total
Nairobi City	46,284	15,752	14,387	9,577	453	86,453
Nairobi Peri-Urban	194	44	161	67	3	469
Total	46,478	15,796	14,548	9,644	456	86,922

In Nairobi, the Muslims were the second largest of the Asian groups.

However, these tables do not show their distribution according to sects, though the different Muslim sects of the Indian sub-continent are all represented in Nairobi. One observes even the smallest elements of sectarianism, including the ones which have evolved in the 20th century, for example the Bohra Reform Movement.

Mombasa shares this diversity of the world of Islam, but, in contrast to Nairobi, the former has a different historical background. For many centuries, the whole coastal belt down to Zanzibar had been under Muslim influence. The coastal towns maintained strong trade relations among themselves which facilitated free movement of traders from one town to another. As a result, many Asian Muslims moved from Zanzibar and settled in Mombasa. These and others, since they settled in a predominantly Muslim environment, concentrated on the development of their own communities. It was some of these Mombasa Asian Muslims who moved to Nairobi during and after the construction of the Uganda railway. The importance of the relationship of the two towns lies in the fact that for the early days of the embryonic city of Nairobi, the Mombasa communities served as the model. Mombasa also served as the centre for most of these communities until they were firmly established in Nairobi. A good example is the Ithna'ashari community, whose members settled in Nairobi in small numbers and even up to this day continue to look up to the Mombasa Jamats whenever there is a task which is beyond their means to handle.⁴

On Arrival in Nairobi, the various Muslim communities were faced with a phenomenon which had been absent in Mombasa for all the years of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century - the colonial factor. Though the colonial racial policies did not affect the religious divisions among the Asians, to a great extent they influenced the relationship between the Asian Muslims and the African Muslims. The most conspicuous impact of these racial policies was the evacuation of the African Muslims from the Muslim settlements of Pangani and Mji wa Mombasa and the creation of the 'Native Location' for them. It seems that the creation of racial zones facilitated the settlement of the Asians according to their religious affiliations. It is only in this Pangani - Muranga Road area in Nairobi, that one observes the presence of all the Asian Muslim groups: the Sunni have their mosques and school; the Ismailis their Jamat Khana; the Ithna'ashari their mosque and the Imambara; and the Ahmadiyya have their mosque and offices close by. It is only the Bohra who are not found in this area.

In this chapter, religious diversity in Nairobi will be approached thematically. Here, it is to be remembered that Islam is a way of life; there is no dichotomy between religious and secular affairs. The implication of this is that all the activities are governed by religious doctrines. Religious beliefs are expressed through the activities of the believer.

This idea is expounded by Martin who says;

"In religion, belief and actualization are inseparable. Doctrine and practice cohere in that the latter is the affectual manifestation of the former in the everyday life of the believer."⁵

In view of this, the visible expressions of sectarianism will be categorised under social organization; religious practices; the provision of social amenities through the various institutions; and other outward expressions. The Asian communities are numerous in Nairobi and it is not possible to discuss all of them in detail. Therefore, each theme will be discussed in relation to the main groups, both Shia and Sunni. It is hoped that this approach will facilitate a cross-sectional survey of the sectarian phenomenon in Nairobi.

Social Organization

Each Muslim community in Nairobi has its own social organization. As said above, Islam is a way of life and all the activities are governed by religious doctrines. The Shia groups seem to have a more elaborate social organization than the Sunni. The social organization of the Shia groups is based on the institution of the Imamate - the Imams have representatives among the Ismailis and the Bohras.

The administration of the Ismailis is centralised, and the system is hierarchical, with the Imam at the apex.

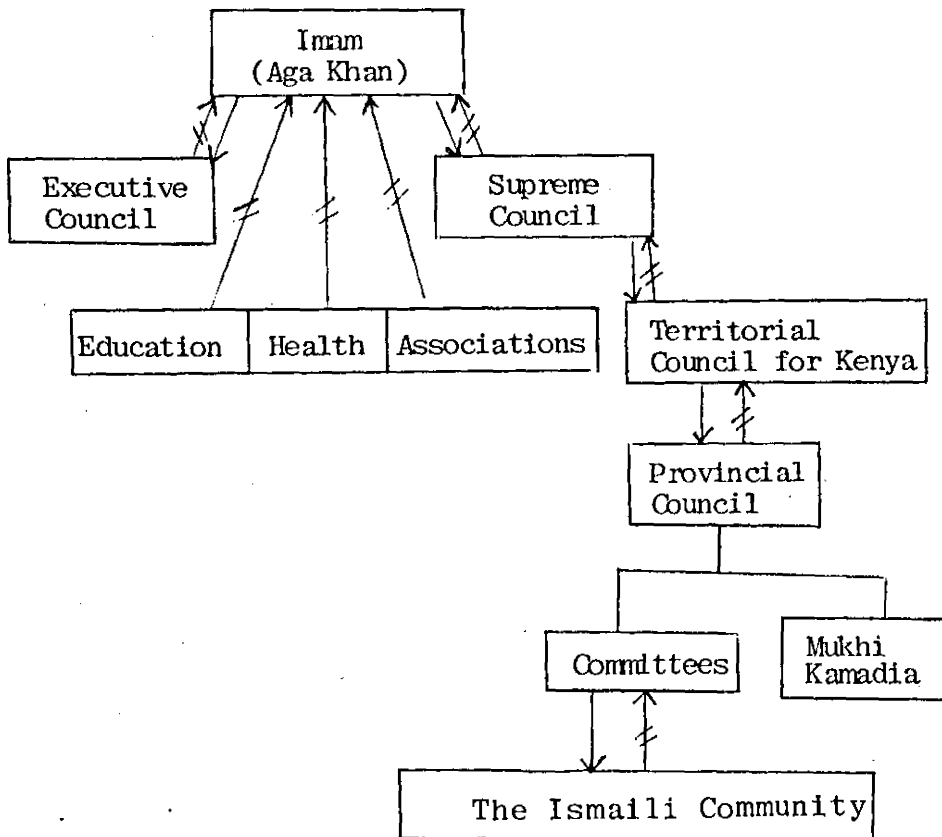
He governs the community through the *farmans*, edicts, which are executed by the various councils. Also the Ismaili constitution is of great importance in the daily activities of the community. The first constitution for Africa was promulgated in 1905. It was revised in 1937 and again in 1946. In 1956 it was revised for the third time; but seven years later, it was revoked and replaced by a new one in 1962.

The constitution sanctions the hierarchical structure of the community and defines the roles of the various councils. Below the Imam is the Supreme Council for Africa, which has its headquarters in Nairobi. This council oversees Ismaili activities in all the African countries where Ismailis are found. Members of the council are nominated by the Imam. Below the Supreme Council is the Council for Kenya, which coordinates the Ismaili affairs in Kenya. Next in order of seniority is the Provincial Council. There are three Provincial Councils in Kenya: in Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu, where Ismailis are found in large numbers. Below the Provincial Councils are the Committees. Membership of these include the *Mukhi*, treasurer, and *Kamadia*, accountant, who are the leaders of the community at the local Jamat Khana level.

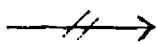
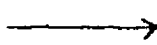
It is to be remembered that the nomination of each of the members of any council is subject to ratification by the Imam.

It is the divine position of the Imam which has played an important role in the creation of an efficient system of administration. All the leaders and community members are responsible to the Imam. The Imam receives reports and money in the form of offerings from the leaders of the councils. In turn, his resolutions and monetary aid go to the community members through the same chain of councils. There is an elaborate system of an effective two-way communication between the Imam and the community as the following diagram illustrates:⁶

ISMAILI SOCIAL ORGANIZATION



Key

-  Reports, Finance, Voluntary offerings and gifts.
-  Resolutions, money for schools and medical facilities.

As a result of this centralised administration, the Ismailis have been able to develop such economic institutions as the Jubilee Insurance, the Diamond Jubilee Trust and Industrial Promotion Services (I.P.S). Also they have the Aga Khan Foundation through which various social welfare programmes are organised.

The Ismaili social organization is fundamental to the faith. The basis of the Ismaili system is the voluntary service which is rendered by the members of the councils and the community as a whole. Voluntary offerings, donations and bequests to the Imam are important sources of funds which are used to develop and run the Ismaili institutions. The members participate in these activities in order to serve their Imam and, in so doing, they seek heavenly reward.⁷

Like the Ismailis, the main Dawoodi Bohra community is governed by a constitution and His Holiness the Dai al Mutlaq is at the top of the social triangle. The constitution and the hierarchical structure of the community are some of the principles on which the reformists have disagreed with the main community. Therefore, the hierarchy here is only for the latter.

The Dai is revered and there is no activity which takes place in a Jamat without his permission. He has absolute power over the Dawoodi Bohra Community worldwide. He appoints a group of learned advisors to work with him.

Below the Dai, is the *Muzoon*, second in rank. After *Muzoon*, comes the *Mukasir*.

In the Bohra hierarchy the Dai appoints personal representatives, *Amils*, in every *Jamat*. The Dai also bestows upon men, who have distinguished themselves in learning and service to the community, the titles of *Sheikh* and *Mulla*. *Sheikh* is higher than *Mulla*, and therefore comes after the *Amil*. Below the *Mulla* comes the other members of the community. The Bohra constitution, like that of the *Ismailis*, sanctions this hierarchy, which is fundamental to the Bohra branch of *Ismailism*. They "believe that the Dai al-Mutlaq, as the representative and the vice-regent of the Imam on earth... enjoys and exercises all powers and authority of the Imam. The position of the Dai al-Mutlaq is an essential part of the creed..."⁸

Under the leadership of the Dai, the main Dawoodi Bohra Community in Nairobi has been able to develop several economic and social welfare institutions. For example, *Burhan Industries*, *Dr. Syedna Taher Saifuddin Memorial Foundation*; and *Public Relations, Information and Development*. (See p. 206).

Unlike the *Ismaili* and the Bohra Shia Communities, the *Khoja Shia Ithna'asharis* do not have a distinct social structure or a centralised administration. In 1946, they formed an organization for the "Federated *Jamats of Africa*".

This federation embraced the Khoja Ithna'ashari Jamats in all the African territories. According to its constitution, "any town, trading settlement or area having a total number of 25 persons or more Khoja Ithna'asharis"⁹ was a Jamat.

The administrative task of the federation was performed by a central council which called a conference once every three years. This council was the supreme and final authority over all the constituent Jamats and individual members. This conference was empowered to confirm, reverse or alter the decision of the central council, laws or decisions of the constituent Jamats and draw the procedure for the conduct of provincial councils. The office bearers of the Federation were representatives of the members of the various Jamats and its main function was to give guidance on social and political matters.

Therefore, the Jamats were autonomous and free to conduct their own affairs. After independence, the federation became less active as the members "became more nationalistic".¹⁰ Each Jamat has a corporation which has an elected executive council. Below the council there are committees for various institutions, for example the mosque committee and the educational committee. The managing committee maintains the community's premises and conducts communal ceremonies. The members of the community are not responsible to any one individual.

Their hidden Imam is not represented on earth and it can be said that their social structure is almost similar to that of the Sunni Muslims.

There is no discernible social organization among the Sunni Muslim groups. It seems that a distinct social structure is found in the communities where there is a recognised religious leader to whom all the members owe allegiance and obedience. Among the Sunnis, where such an office is lacking, all the members are equally involved in the community affairs. Though there is an Imam among the Sunni Muslims, his duty is to lead prayers in the mosque and preside over important occasions which take place at the mosque. For example, he conducts marriage ceremonies.

The title of *Sheikh* is given to any responsible male Muslim. One attains this title through learning and participating in the affairs of the community.¹¹

Another important title is *Hajj* for a male Muslim who has gone on pilgrimage to Makkah and "*Hajja*" for a woman. Though "*Hajja*" is the feminine form of "*Hajj*", it is not used regularly and usually it is the men who are all referred to as al-Hajj which becomes part of the name.

In conclusion, it can be said that there is no centralised leadership, among the Sunni Muslims. In Nairobi each group is organised around the mosque committee.

Though the committees have leaders, one cannot really speak of a distinct social structure. Muslims esteem learning and the learned men, *Ulama* and the *Mu'alim*, teacher, are respected by the other members of the society, but it is only respect that is accorded the learned men by virtue of their knowledge. It is interesting to note that some Muslims in East Africa had assumed that the *Ulama* in the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah were the leaders of the Sunni Muslims. Therefore when there was a dispute among Zanzibari *Ulama* in the late 19th century, they appealed to the Mufti of Makkah for a solution *Fatwa*.¹²

Religious Practices

It is the religious practices which distinguish one Muslim group from another. These practices provide the most effective way in which adherence to a particular religious doctrine is expressed. Naturally then, the different Muslim groups have their own activities and rituals to express their religious affiliation. For example, the Ithna'ashari mourn during *Muharram*, when they commemorate the sacrifice that Husayn made at Karbala; while the Ismaili do not mourn because they have a living Imam.

We shall start by briefly examining the Ismaili practices which are based on the doctrine of the *Imamat* and the *batin*.

But then, it is necessary to first get a historical background of the Ismaili community in Nairobi. The pioneering Ismaili families in Nairobi include those of Suleiman Virjee, Mohammaddali Katanalli, Alidhai Hajee, Walji Hirji, Alidina Visram, Alidhai Virji and Walbhai Hasham. These came mainly from Kutch and Kathiawar.¹³ They were joined by others from Bombay and, by 1900, the Ismaili had already built the first Jamat Khana in Nairobi. This was built at the spot where the present Fire Brigade station is opposite, Nation House. During the early period, the Ismailis clustered around the Bazaar - River Road area. This Jamat Khana remained in use until the present DarKana Jamat Khana (popularly known as Meena Mosque) was built in 1922. The members of the pioneering families contributed large sums of money and the foundation stone was laid by the then Governor of Kenya, Sir, Charles C. Bowring on the 14th of January, 1920.¹⁴ The construction work took two years under the supervision of the then president of the Shia Imam Ismailia Council, Hussainbhai Suleiman Virjee.

The architectural work was done by Virjee Nanji. On the 14th of January, 1922, the building was officially opened by the then Governor, Sir Edward Northey. The Ismaili population was increasing and by 1925, many of them had settled in the Pangani area. A second Jamat Khana was built there. In 1931, a third Jamat Khana was built in Parklands.

By 1958, the Ismaili population in Nairobi was in the region of 5000.¹⁵ Thus the Ismaili community, from its early days in Nairobi, has enjoyed a numerical strength.

We shall now go back to their religious practices and see how they differ from those of the other communities. The Ismaili life is centred on the person of the Imam, the Aga Khan. He is both the spiritual and the secular head of the community. It is the *batin*, esoteric, which gives the Imam his immense powers and the infallibility which is attributed to him. As a result, the Ismailis have their own interpretation of the five pillars of the faith: the *Shahada*, *Salat*, *Saum*, *Zakat* and *Hajj*. In defence of their own interpretation, the Aga Khan said:

"The Quran leaves the door open for all kinds of possibilities of interpretation, so that no one interpretation can accuse another of being non-Muslim."¹⁶

Though they affirm the *Shahada*, the confession of faith: *La illah illa Allah Muhammadun - Rasul - Allah* (There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Prophet), in addition they pledge loyalty to the Imam of the time. They believe that he is the 49th from Ali and therefore, a direct descendant from Prophet Muhammad. They pledge that:

"I am a true Shia Imami Ismailia and I am a follower of our spiritual Lord, His Highness the Aga Khan (now Prince Karim Shah al Hussein). I hereby further affirm my entire and complete devotion and loyalty, to His Highness the Aga Khan whom I believe to be the rightful descendant to the throne of the Shia Imami Ismailia Imam,"¹⁷

The second pillar of faith is *Salat*, prayer, which is observed five times a day by the Orthodox Muslims. But the Ismailis pray three times a day: at about five o'clock in the morning; in the evening; and at night. The Friday congregational prayer is strictly observed but not without the Ismaili additions. After the prayer, there is a ritual which is the climax. This is the ritual of pure water which has been sanctified by the Imam. The faithful sip this water which is believed to have a purifying effect and it is symbolic of the drinking of the Divine will of the Imam.

The third pillar, *Saum*, fasting, is not obligatory for the Ismailis.

Zakat, is the fourth pillar and it is also given *batin* interpretation. It is set at a fixed rate. Paying *Zakat* or *dasand* is quite important for the Ismailis because it is the main source of finance. They also give voluntary alms, *Satkar*. On such occasions as birth, death and marriage, members make a voluntary offering of about Kshs.100/- to the Imam. This offering is called *memani*.

The first pillar, *Hajj* is not obligatory for the Ismailis. Instead, the members of the community are encouraged to visit the Imam of the time whenever it is possible to do so. Thus the pillars reflect the divine role of the Imam and belief in the *imamat* as being fundamental to the Ismaili creed.

The Ismailis do not openly admit that they pray to the Aga Khan but Mawani informs us that the "Ismailis pray for the forgiveness of their sins everyday by addressing their prayers silently to the Imam." They pray through the Imam because they believe that he is "the Guide to the right path."¹⁸

Praying to the Imam may not be observed by a non-Ismaili, since it takes place only in the Jamat Khana, but the activities during the celebration of *Id-e-Ghadir*, "the day when Hazrat Ali was declared the first Imam by the Prophet at Ghadir Khum",¹⁹ are noticed even by non-Muslims. On this occasion, there is a lot of festivity among the Ismailis and all their premises in Nairobi are decorated. They celebrate *Milad Ali*, Ali's birthday, with almost as much enthusiasm as other Muslims celebrate the Prophet's birthday. The most important day is the Imam day, that is the day when the Aga Khan IV, the 49th Imam of the Ismailia Muslims ascended the throne of the Imamat. In Kenya, it is celebrated according to the prevailing situations in the country. That means that it can be postponed to a more suitable time so that it does not collide with any national day. The current Imam ascended the throne in 1957. On the anniversary of that day all Ismaili premises are decorated and the Parklands Ismaili complex and settlement turns into a beehive of activity.

While the spiritual and material life of the Ismailis is centred around the person of the Imam, that of the Dawoodi Bohras is centred on the Dai al Mutlaq. He makes the residents of an area into a Jamat and bestows upon them a constitution which governs them. Since the Imam is in seclusion, the Dai is the Vice-regent on earth. Traditionally, he was above the law and his decisions were unquestionable, until the schism occurred at the beginning of the 20th century. Daiship, like the *Imamat*, was part of the creed since the two communities, the Ismailis and the Bohras, emphasized the *batin*. But then, the Bohras do not deviate too far from the general Islamic principles based on the five pillars of faith. They also take an oath of allegiance to the Dai, *Mithaq*, which serves the same purpose it does among the Ismailis, that of safeguarding the position of the leader. The Bohra also pray three times a day, but unlike among the Ismailis, the third pillar, *Saum*, is strictly observed during the month of Ramadhan and Hajj is obligatory for all who can afford it.

Taharat, cleanliness, is almost a seventh pillar among the Bohras. All Muslims perform *wudhu*, ablution, before praying but the Bohras attach particular importance to it. Bohras also observe *Muharram*, the month of sorrow when Husayn was killed at Karbala. They hold two sessions daily except the first day of *Muharram*, which is the new year's day according to the Muslim calendar.

During the sessions they pray and recite hymns as they sway from side to side. On the day of *Ashura*, the day of the massacre of Husayn, they actually mourn and the whole congregation sobs as the members beat their chests.

But now, after the recent Schism, the Bohra Community cannot be seen as one group. The first Schism among the Bohra took place in the 16th century (see p. 49). but the reform movement can be traced to the beginning of the 20th century. Previously, though, the Dais were powerful; the various Jamats continued to enjoy a degree of autonomy and carried out their own activities under the leadership of the Dai's representatives. The Dais also continued to enjoy loyalty from the community members until the Daiship of the 51st Dai. Things began to change after the ascension of Syedna Taher Saifuddin to the throne, although the 50th Dai had shown tendencies towards centralization of the administration of the community.

The members of the community began to be apprehensive and questioned the policies of the Dai. However, the situation remained calm until 1912, when a group of Bohras opened a school in India. Initially the Dai was not opposed to the idea of opening a school, but later on, in 1910, it was proposed to convert it into a high school because some members felt that it was necessary for their children to acquire modern secular education. The Dai objected and took some measures against the school.

tion offered an opportunity to a section of the
ity, whose discontent had been simmering for
a decade. At the same time, the members
ned the management of the "Charity Box". The
had been collecting huge sums of money which he
used to build himself a palace. As a result,
members of the community took legal action against
in 1917. In response, he claimed absolute power.
Interesting to note that in the already mentioned
case, the Aga Khan had claimed similar rights and
ute power over the Khoja Ismailis. Probably the
was influenced by the results of this case which
gone in favour of the Aga Khan and placed him in
extremely powerful position. The Khojas were against
absolute power the Aga Khan was exerting on them
the large sums of money that they were contributing
His Highness. Similarly the Bohra reacted against
increased control over the Jamats. When the Dai
discovered that there was discontent, he changed the
and framed it in such a way that it conferred on
absolute and unquestionable power. Those who
opposed his policies became the worst sinners as

Following extract illustrates:

"And you shall not permit yourself to be induced to with-
draw assistance to the Dai, service and obedience to
him.... Further you shall not suffer any disobedience
to turn you away from taking the oath of covenant to
the Dai. You shall render perfect service with your
property and with the offer of your life to the Dai.
The master of your life is the Dai. Say Yes."²⁰

Although the Dai lost the case, he ex-communicated all those who had taken legal action against him and their supporters. Thus the Dawoodi Bohra Community was split.

Now we shall examine the effects of these activities on the Nairobi Bohras. A. M. Jeevanjee played an important role in the establishment of the Bohras up-country. Without intending to give his life history, I think it is necessary to mention some of his activities which directly or indirectly facilitated the establishment of the Bohra Community in Nairobi in the initial years of this century. He led the way for the Bohras who settled in Nairobi. He did not only lead them, but also helped them to settle down as most of them were his employees.

He obtained a contract from the government to build houses for the colonial administrators and in 1899, he built the first stone house in Nairobi for John Ainsworth. He also built the Municipal Market. Before he moved to Nairobi in 1899, the community had confined itself to the coast. He was the first person to create public gardens in Nairobi, the Jeevanjee Gardens. He donated four acres of land to the Municipality and planted it with Jacaranda trees. In the garden, he erected the statue of Queen Victoria which was unveiled in 1906 and stands to date. He was quite rich and he is said to have owned most of the properties in Bazaar and Victoria Streets (now Biashara and Tom Mboya respectively).²¹

In the early period, he donated a piece of land for the mosque behind the present Coblantra shop in Biashara street. He also donated a plot for the Bohra grave yard. From the early days, the Bohra Community had applied for a site to build a mosque, but it was not granted by 1915 although the municipal authorities:

"... had ruled sometime back that a free site for a mosque be granted to the Bohra Community, but the matter had been left in abeyance... the area desired by the Bohras was to the North of Victoria street."²²

As a result of this and other hardships the Bohra Community did not construct a mosque until 1931, when the original mosque was built on the site where the present one stands. The first one was built by the family of Karim Jeevanjee of Zanzibar. It was Mrs. Mohamedali Karim Jeevanjee who built this mosque in memory of her daughter who had died in Nairobi. This historical background will enable us to perceive the events of the Bohra schism in relation to the Nairobi community.

A.M. Jeevanjee was a member of the reform movement and he represented the liberal outlook of the Kenya Bohras. As a result, he and his sympathisers were ex-communicated in 1919. But the Dai was not on good terms with the colonial authorities in East Africa, so he was forced to sanction a democratic constitution for the East African Jamats in 1955.

The constitution enabled the Nairobi Jamat to carry on its activities and enjoy a degree of autonomy for almost ten years. Up to this time the discontent had been fermenting and their disagreement had not manifested itself in any significant way.

The present Dai ascended the throne in 1965 and withdrew the democratic constitution, replacing it with another one which was rejected outright by the reformists. His visit to Nairobi two years later, worsened the situation and in 1968 the Jamat split. The reformists were "socially boycotted". The rest of the community broke all ties with them and they were molested and beaten up whenever they tried to go to the mosque or attend any other Bohra function. The reformists formed the Nairobi Group Charity Society (N.G.C.S.) under which the movement started to organise itself.²³ They did not have a mosque of their own, so they resorted to Sir Yusuf Ali Club for all their religious and social activities. Now, they are about 200 and they claim to constitute the second Bohra Jamat in Nairobi.

When the present Dai, Syedna Burhanuddin annulled the constitution which had been sanctioned by his predecessor in 1955, there was a new wave of reformist activity in Nairobi. The Nairobi reformists joined those of India and the Dai was sued for the third time. The Supreme Court of India ruled that the Dai could ex-communicate certain members on religious grounds and laid down a strict procedure.

To circumvent this ruling, the Dai applied *baraat* or social boycott which, as one of the reformists put it, "was just another word for ex-communication."²⁴

The reformists regard themselves as "the enlightened section of the Bohra Community". The schism seems to focus on fiscal matters, but a close examination of the complaints put forward by the dissidents reveals that they are questioning the role and the character of the Dai, that is the *Mithaq* and the very fundamentals of Bohra Ismailism are being questioned. Two points can support this assertion: they say that the Dai claims:

"(1) that he is God on earth;

"(2) that he has the powers of the Prophet Muhammad and that he can make amendments in the Quran and the Shariat."²⁵

The reformists do not openly admit that there are any theological differences between them and the main group. But then if the Dai is the Vice-regent of the Imam on earth and his position is being questioned and his powers disputed, that in itself becomes a different theological point of view. The N.G.S.C. has gone a step further and drawn their own "list of the Majlis and their particulars as passed by" them. This list is derived from the main Bohra Calendar, which, as Salvadori describes it, "is full of sectarian holidays commemorating the births, enthronements, and deaths of the various Dais",²⁶ and it does not include for example, the birthday of the present Dai which is celebrated with great joy on 20th Rabi-al-akhir.

Previously taking the *Mithaq* made one a 'legitimate' Bohra, now that it has been rejected by the reformists, the implication is that they find it unnecessary.

They have also objected to the various taxes and tithes which are paid to the Dai. Some of them are: Salaam to the Dai; *zifafat*, offering of hospitality to the Charity Boxes; Fees at the birth of a child; Fees at the death of a member of the family so that the Dai could send him off to the next world; the price of a grave; 23rd *Silatul-Fitr* during Ramadhan which is 20 or 30 shillings for every member of the family, dead or alive; and *Nazadi Mukam*, money which is collected at home in a box.²⁷

Finally, the main loyalist group in Nairobi published "Kenya Dawoodi Bohra Community Directory" in which they clearly defined the members of their community. This was intended to make it clear that the members of the Nairobi Group Charity Society were not members of the Bohra Community in Nairobi as far as the main group was concerned. Such a bold move could not have been prompted by merely disagreeing on the use of public funds, as many of them would like the public to believe. It must be deeply rooted in the essence of the creed itself which the members of the reform movement claim to be "polluted with un-Islamic practices,"²⁸

The third Shia group in Nairobi is the Khoja Shia Ithna'ashari.

The pioneering member of the community was Walji Banji. He was followed by S. Jiwa, R.G. Dato, Jaffer Dewji and Noorali Banji. By 1903, there were about 75 members of the community in Nairobi. In January 1904, they applied to the colonial authorities for a plot on Duke Street (now Ronald Ngala Street) to build a mosque but it was not granted. They applied again in 1913 and this too, was kept in abeyance. The Municipal Council finally approved of an application made in 1919, but in the absence of any reply from the applicants to the Commissioner of Lands' request for their views on the conditions which were proposed, the offer was withdrawn and the applicants informed that any further application would be considered on its merits.

But later, the town planning committee decided that if the community applied for a plot in Ngara Road area, it would be approved by the council on the following conditions: the area of the plot should not exceed half an acre; a reasonable rent proportionate to the value of the land would be imposed; a short lease renewable on application would be granted; the community to build a suitable building for religious purpose to a minimum value of £1,000 which should be completed within two years. Failure of the applicants to implement any condition of the grant would result in the land reverting to the crown.²⁹ These conditions were part of the problems which the community could not surmount before 1939.

The first condition did not pose a problem because the small size of the community did not necessitate the construction of a large mosque. Therefore half an acre would have been quite sufficient for both the *Imambara* and the mosque before other needs were identified.

The second condition was quite difficult to fulfil because the rent would be about "shs.75 per annum with restricted use". But the fourth was the most difficult of all. First, it did not allow them to construct a temporary building for religious purposes. Second, a building valued at £1,000 was by 1913, quite expensive for a community whose members did not exceed 75, and, worse still, it had to be completed within two years. Therefore, for many years, the Nairobi Ithna'ashari Jamat met in private homes and rented halls until they built their mosque in 1938. The Nairobi Jamat remained small in comparison to Mombasa and one of the leading members of the community estimates them at about 400.³⁰

In their religious practices, they abide strictly by the five pillars of faith. Comparatively, they are nearer to the orthodox practices than any other Shia group. Their Sharia is based on the Quran and the Sunnah, though they add the teachings and sayings of the twelve Imams. Those of the sixth Imam, Jafar-as-Sadiq constitute about two thirds of these additional hadiths. Unlike the Khoja Shia Ismailis, they believe in a hidden Imam who will reveal himself in the days to come.

He will come as the *Mahdi* and there will be signs to warn of his coming. Though they abide by the pillars of faith, they add the Shiite auxiliaries; for example, during *Salat*, they salute their Imams as they face the Qibla.

They celebrate the main Islamic festivals, but the most important is the *Muharram* which is the first month of the Islamic year. During this month, they commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Husayn. The congregation meets every day for an hour. A sermon is given by one of the community leaders. After the sermon, he relates the events of Karbala and then the whole congregation breaks into a sob of beating of the breast. The *Ashura*, the 10th day, is the climax as it is the day of the final massacre. We have seen that the Bohra commemorate the event of Karbala in almost a similar manner (see p. 176). The Nairobi Ithna-ashari community holds the sessions at daytime. Salvadori observes that:

"....In Nairobi, the *maatam*, is done outside the *Imambara* in the courtyard but in Mombasa it is done within the *Imambara*...."³¹

Ashura ends in a procession through the streets but the Nairobi community, probably due to their small numbers and the tendency to keep a low profile in the sectarian scene, did not start to organise this procession until quite recently.

It is interesting to note that despite all the sectarian activities which have been discussed, the Ithna'ashari allow thier members to go to the Sunni Jamia mosque for Friday prayers. Asked why this is allowed, one of their leaders said that it is optional and also "highly recommended in order to meet more people and it earns the participant the pleasure of Allah"³² because the function of the Friday prayer is to enhance unity. But he stressed that an Ithna'ashari would not go to any Shia mosque but his own. This is paradoxical because they are supposed to be closer to the other Shia groups than to the Sunni who are diametrically opposed to them. Probably this can be explained by the previous relationship between them and the Khoja Ismailis as most of the Kenya Ithna'ashari are members of the group that broke away from the Ismailis. Thus there is a tendency among the Nairobi Ithna'ashari to identify with the Sunni Asian Muslim groups.

All the Sunni Asian Communities in Nairobi, with the exception of the Kokni, are of Hanafi persuasion. Though there is no statistical evidence for this, the Sunnis put together are more numerous than the Shia groups. The grouping among the Sunnis is determined by the Indian sectionalism or places of origin but not really by sectarian or theological differences as is the case with the Shias.

The Sunni group comprises of the Punjabi, forming the largest proportion; the Cutchi; the Kokni; and the Memons. The Punjabis came to Nairobi as indentured labourers, administrators and other professionals in all the railway departments. They played an important role in the establishment of Islam in Nairobi. They built their first mosque in Nairobi in 1900 at the railway yard and later, in 1902, they built the Railway Landhies Mosque. Their role in the establishment of Sunni Islam in Nairobi is reflected in the activities of individuals like Maula Dad who built a big mosque on Park Road and Imtiazali who built a small but beautiful mosque on his private property behind the Khoja Mosque. Among the Punjabi pioneers were Abdul Momin, who was the Imam of the Landhies mosque from 1900 to 1935; Seyed Abdullah Shah, who is credited for his efforts in the construction of the Jamia Mosque; and Shams-ud-Din, who served as the representative of the Asian interests in Legislative Council for a long time. He occasionally assumed the role of spokesman for the Nairobi Muslims; for example, when he intervened in the Pumwani dispute over the site for the mosque in the 1920's. Abdullah Shah is not only credited with the construction of the Jamia Mosque, but he also in the 1920s and 1930s became the leading Muslim personality in Nairobi. There is a story that is told about him, that one day, as he was praying he saw two lions in the mosque garden but he did not disturb them.

He said that they also deserved the right to submit to their Creator as did the human beings,³³ In his memory, the Sayed Abdullah Shah Library was established at Jamia Mosque in 1956.

There is no sectarian difference between the Punjabi Sunnis, the Memons and Cutchi. The Kokni belong to the Shafi'i school of thought, but there are no significant theological differences between the four Sunni *Madhhab* (see p. 40). Therefore, all the Sunni groups strictly observe the five pillars of the faith in a kind of uniform way. The variations which may be observed are largely due to the diversity in cultural background. In many cases, these cultural variations portray a Hindu background; for example, the Cutchi women were not allowed into the cemetery as it was believed that their presence might offend the spirits of the dead, a belief which did not exist among the Punjabis. There was a tendency among the Sunni Asian Muslims, especially the Punjabi, to overlook the cultural background whenever there was need for a joint effort to champion a common Muslim cause. The Sunnis have been quite tolerant of the Shia Muslims. Their tolerant attitude was demonstrated early in the 1950s when the Aga Khan was invited to pray at the Jamia Mosque. Describing the occasion, the leader of the Jamia Mosque Committee, said that it was intended to show their attitude towards Islamic brotherhood,³⁴

Besides common adherence to Sunni Islam, some communities in Nairobi were too small to build their own premises, for example the Memons who are said to have arrived in Nairobi after independence. In Mombasa, they had built the Memon Masjid as early as 1880 and later they constructed the impressive Memon Complex, while in Nairobi they number less than a thousand. It was only recently that they formed the Nairobi Memon Jamat.

Mosques

Construction of mosques has been one of the major visible expressions of sectarianism in Nairobi and Mombasa. The mosque is a sign that there are Muslims in that particular place. Similarly, the presence of sectarian mosques in any one place is a pointer to the sectarian element of the Muslim community in that place. For example, the Pangani-Park Road area which has already been mentioned. Below is a table showing the mosques built in Nairobi before 1964.

MOSQUES BUILT IN NAIROBI BEFORE 1963

	Mosque	Community	Sect-Imadhhab	Date
1	Railway Landhies	Punjabi	Sunni-Hanafi	1900
2	Jamia Landhies	Punjabi	Sunni-Hanafi	1902/1959*
3	Jamia	Mainly Punjabi	Sunni-Hanafi	1902/1933*
4	Imtiazali	Punjabi	Sunni-Hanafi	before 1938
5	Maula Dad	Punjabi	Sunni-Hanafi	1939
6	Eastleigh Jamat Khana	Ismaili	Shia Imami	Closed down in 1980s
7	Eastleigh 3rd Street	Punjabi	Sunni-Hanafi	
8	DarKhana Jamat Khana	Ismaili	Shia Imami	1922
9	Parklands J. K.	Ismaili	Shia Imami	1931
10	Murang'a Road J. K.	Ismaili	Shia Imami	1958
11	Saifee	Bhora	Shia (Ismailis)	1931
12	Ithna'ashari Imambara	Ithna'ashari	Shia	1939
13	Riyadha	Africans	Sunni-Shafi'i	1935
14	Shafi'i	Somali	Sunni-Shafi'i	1940
15	Al Jabir al Sabah	Somali	Sunni-Shafi'i	1930s/1980s*
16	The Islamic Centre	Somali	Sunni-Shafi'i	
17	Pangani S. Moyo	African	Sunni-Shafi'i	1940s
18	Makina	Nubian	Sunni-Maliki	
19	Ahmadiyya	Mainly Punjabi	Ahmadiyya	1931

Key * - indicates the mosques which have been rebuilt on the same sites as the original ones. For some of them, the plaques have been removed and it was difficult to find out when they were built.

Out of the nineteen mosques, seven have been built by Punjabi Muslims. The mosques constructed by the Punjabis were non-sectarian in that they were used by, and were open to, all Muslims.

The Jamia Mosque occupies a central position in the city centre. It was first built in 1902 on a site where the Somalis were said to have erected a temporary structure for prayers.³⁵ Then it was rebuilt in 1933. All the Muslim Communities claim to have contributed to its construction but it was the Punjabi Muslims who did most of the work. To many Muslims and non-Muslims alike, Jamia Mosque is the 'central mosque' in Nairobi. But it is its central location in the city which gives that wrong impression. There is no central mosque in Nairobi. Even the Ismailis do not admit that DarKhana Jamat Khana is the centre for all the Ismailis in Nairobi. Besides its location, the impression that the Jamia Mosque is the central mosque, is based on the assumption that since it was built through the efforts of all the Muslims in Nairobi, it was a joint venture to build a centre for them all. Also, the leaders of this mosque have from an early period, assumed the role of spokesman for Nairobi Muslims, as its committee secretary wrote in 1938 when the African Mosques in Pangani were being demolished:

"My Committee looks after all the mosques in Nairobi, including the Jamia (central mosque), the Mosque at Intiazali's old premises and the Landhies Mosque and has also under contemplation the building of a new mosque on the plot granted by the government on Park Road."³⁶

The secretary to the committee said this in order to convince the council authorities to hand over the plots allocated for the three African mosques to the Committee, most probably for its own use because it is clear that the Jamia Landhies mosque had its own Imams and its own mosque committee which looked after it. Though the Jamia Mosque was built through a joint effort and was "open to all" at its completion, it was dominated by the Asian Muslims. The secretary of the Mosque Committee described the situation in the following words:

"The Jamia Mosque which has been built at the cost of several thousand pounds belongs to Natives as much as to the Indians, and the Natives in fact make full use of it and eventually it will be handed over to the Natives if and when the Indian Muslim population is diminished at some future date."³⁷

As a result of such ethno-centric views as are contained in this extract, many African Muslims continued to regard it as an 'Asian Mosque', even after the first African Imam was appointed in the 1960's. And despite the fact that the Imam is a black man, the mosque has not been "handed over" to the African Muslims because the "Indian Muslim population" has not yet "diminished".

For the African Muslims, it was the racial question which determined their participation in the activities organised by the Mosque Committee, while for the members of the Landhies group, it was Indian sectionalism.

Thus the latter restricted their activities to the Railway Mosque and the Jamia Landhies Mosque.

These two mosques were built near the railway station and Maula Baksh is credited for his initiative and zeal during the construction,³⁸ The railway workers had brought materials obtained from the dismantled mosque at Kilindini in Mombasa. The mosque which was constructed with these materials was named Jamia Mosque. These two mosques were built for, and by, the railway staff. The original Jamia Landhies Mosque was replaced by a bigger one in 1922 which by 1959 had become too small for the congregation. It is interesting to note that in order to distinguish themselves from the 'central' Jamia Mosque, the railway staff named their mosque Jamia Railway Landhies and still retain this name. The word 'Landhies' means a long building which initially referred to the long buildings in which the railway workers were housed,³⁹ but gradually it came to be associated with those Punjabi Muslims who worked in the railway departments and were settled at or around the railway yard. The members of the Jamia Railway Landhies are, even to this day, proud to be associated with the railway.⁴⁰

The other Sunni Asian Muslims did not build sectarian mosques as they felt at home in the Punjabi mosques.

While the Punjabi Sunnis have been credited with a non-sectarian attitude, the Ahmadis endeavoured to make an impact on the sectarian scene of Nairobi.

The development of the Ahmadiyya movement has already been traced above (see p. 53). The Nairobi congregation is happy to have been "blessed" with the presence of six of the "Companions" of Ghulam Ahmad. From its early days, the Ahmadiyya movement tried to establish a system of *Sahaba* and therefore the 'Companions' of the founder are highly respected by the Ahmadis. Among the Ahmadi pioneers in Nairobi, were Dost Muhammad Qureish and Shah Muhammad Qureish.

The Ahmadiyya Association which had been founded in 1917 opened a mosque fund in 1923 and in 1931 the construction of the mosque on Murang'a Road was completed. It is the only Ahmadiyya Mosque in Nairobi and the community is organised around it. They go to the mosque for their religious and social functions. The community is divided into groups according to their roles: the men who are above 40 years are called "Helpers in the way of Allah"; those between 16 and 40 years are "servants of Ahmadiyyat"; between 7 and 17 years are children or *atfal*. These attend religious classes five times a week at the mosque. Below 7 years are the infants. For the women, the helpers are those between 7 and 16 years, the *Nasirat*. Above 16 are the *Lajina Imaillah*.⁴¹ At the mosque, the members of these groups participate in various activities. The ladies meet on Saturdays and their activities include reciting poems, reading books which have been written by Ahmadiyya scholars and listening to recitals of the Quran in Urdu and Kiswahili.

The Kiswahili recitals are from the Swahili translation of the Quran by the late Chief Missionary Ahmad Mubarak.

Another important activity which takes place mainly at the mosque is listening to cassettes. Information which is valuable to the Ahmadis is recorded in cassettes which are kept in the office-cum-library near the mosque. Poems in praise of the founder of the movement forms the largest part of this recorded literature. Groups of the faithful come to the mosque to listen to these cassettes. They can also borrow them during the week. Therefore these cassettes provide an effective medium of teaching the Ahmadiyya doctrines.

The Nairobi community carried out missionary activities using several methods:

- (1) Organising preaching days once a month, especially on Sundays. All the members met at the mosque where they were divided into groups of four or five persons and were armed with pamphlets to distribute freely to other parts of Nairobi. During these preaching tours, they would answer questions and give instruction in the Ahmadiyya doctrines.
- (2) For the *atfal* group, question-and-answer sessions were occasionally organised at the mosque, after which there would be refreshments for all who attend.

(3) Publishing cheap Kiswahili and English books. This has been one of the main missionary activities. It has been crowned by the publication of *Mapenzi ya Mungu*, a monthly Kiswahili newspaper, in which there are articles on Islam and Christianity. There is a free column for any one to write in response to any item in the paper or to give his own opinion. They encourage discussion and dialogue with other groups. As their leader puts it, they try "to reach the people, both Ahmadis and non-Ahmadis through *Mapenzi ya Mungu* and other dailies." They use the *Taifa Leo*, which is also written in Kiswahili and sometimes *The Standard* to discuss and elaborate on issues which are of common interest to both Christians and Muslims. For example, they say that Jesus did not die on the cross but escaped and went to Kashmir in India where he lived for a hundred and twenty years.⁴²

Asked why they tend to direct their missionary propaganda to the Christians, their leader said that they want to correct the mistake and prove that Jesus died at Kashmir and they even say that his grave is still there. But their interest in Jesus and Christianity should be traced to the fundamental doctrines of the movement. It has been mentioned above (p. 52) that at the time that the Ahmadiyya movement was founded, the Indians were faced with an external threat from the Christian Missionaries as the British had launched a vigorous campaign to spread a new culture in India.

It is not clear whether this Christian threat influenced Ghulam Ahmad, but he proclaimed himself a prophet and messiah. He said that he was the expected Messiah and *Mahdi*, in whom the persons of Prophet Muhammad and Jesus were re-incarnated. Thus, from the very beginning, the doctrines of the Ahmadiyya movement incorporated some ideas about Jesus which later provided the foundation of their conflict with, and interest in, Christianity.

Among the Shia groups, the mosque as an expression of sectarianism is more significant than it is among the Sunnis. For example, among the Ismailis, the *Jamat Khana* is the social centre, with all the Ismaili activities taking place there. It is not only a place of prayer: there are offices, and since food is brought to the prayer hall as offering, there are utensils and other general paraphernalia of Ismaili social life; even doves are kept in the same premises. It is in the *Jamat Khana* that the Ismaili sectarian elements are found - the *batin* has been mentioned and it is here where all its dimensions are practically expressed. The most important of these dimensions is the relationship between the community and the Imam. The image of the Imam physically dominates the *Jamat Khana*. Even when the plan of the *Dar Khana* *Jamat Khana* was drawn in 1919, it was taken to the then Imam to approve before the construction work began. Inscribed on its wall, in bold letters, are the following words:

"The Sole Owner, Master and Proprietor of this
Jamat Khana is His Highness, Sir Sultan Mohamed
Shah Aga Khan, G.C.I., G.C.I.E., LLD".⁴³

In Islam, a mosque is not owned by an individual; it belongs to Allah, and it is a sacred place of worship. But to the Ismailis, the mosque belongs to the *Imamat* and all the activities that take place in the *Jamat Khana* are aimed at manifesting the divine role of the Imam. In the *Jamat Khana* the *Talika*, the official communique from the Imam is read. Also the recitation of the *Ginans*, hymns, most of which exhort the believer to accept the Imam, takes place there. In the prayer hall, the faithful face the portrait of the Imam when praying. Entrance to the Ismaili prayer hall is restricted to the Ismailis. As a result, many non-Ismaili muslims are suspicious of the activities which take place there and it is alleged that many of these activities are un-Islamic. For example, men and women pray together in the hall; and food offering, *Nandi*, is made. After offering, this food is auctioned and it is believed that those who offer food will never want food in their lives. Therefore, the *Jamat Khana* is the place where all the sectarian elements of Ismailism are found and doctrines put into practice. Even the architectural design of the *Jamat Khana* is an expression of the *batin*. There is no *qibla*, since Makkah has little significance for the Ismailis. Therefore, there is a great difference between the architectural design of the *Jamia Mosque* and the *Khoja Mosque*, which are just a few hundred metres apart. To a visitor to Nairobi, the latter would easily pass for another old building.

The mosque or the 'house of God' for any religious group offers a concrete symbol of the relationship that exists between them and their God. This relationship is symbolised by the elements which are found in a place of worship. For example, if it is a church, one finds a cross to distinguish it from the neighbouring buildings. Though there is no general pattern for the construction of a mosque, inside an Ismaili Mosque one finds large portraits of the Imam and even the Begum, his wife. Also there is a kind of throne on which there is a picture of the Imam of the time, *takht*. Below this, the faithful occasionally place a bunch of flowers. Mawani informs us that:

"Being therefore symbolic of the throne of Imamat, it was a sacred and concrete symbol of the existence of God...."⁴⁴

He goes on to say that "the *takht* is that link between *Mumin*, the believer and the Imam, tangible and concrete, which provides a convenient object of reverence". Therefore the *Jamat Khana* provides a place where the relationship with the Imam, and as it is believed, ultimately with God, is actualised. Thus the sentiments which are attributed to the symbolic throne of Imamat.

The construction of a mosque as a visible expression of sectarianism can also be seen in another way. When the main Bohra group disagreed with the Nairobi Group Charity Society, the disagreement was actually dramatised at the mosque.

The only Bohra mosque in Nairobi had been built by the Karimjee Jivanjee family of Tanganyika who were members of the reform movement. Therefore, if the main group continued to pray in that mosque, it would not be possible for them to expel the reformists from the mosque and they could not rightly claim its ownership and, thus, social boycott would not be effected on people with whom they prayed shoulder-to-shoulder. As a result, the Dai ordered the mosque to be demolished and even the plaque bearing the name of Karimjee and the other reformist pioneers was removed. The mosque was reconstructed on the same site and it was declared out of bounds for the reformists. Now, it is the mosque of the Dawoodi Bohra Community members who are the followers of His Holiness the Dai. The Nairobi Group Charity Society, which has no mosque of its own, resorted to the Sir Yusuf Ali Muslim Club for all their activities, as has already been pointed out.

Finally, the presence of a mosque in any corner of Nairobi is a pointer to the presence of a sizeable group of Muslims in that particular part. Therefore, the Jamat Khana and the Imambara indicate that there are Ismailis and Ithna'ashari in for example the Pangani area, which is dotted with mosques of various muslim communities.

Sectarianism as Reflected in the Provision of
Social Amenities

Islam is a complete way of life. There is no dichotomy between the secular and the sacred, the spiritual and the material. The community's activities are governed by the religious doctrines. Therefore, the provision of social amenities in Nairobi by the various muslim communities has been determined by their sectarian doctrines. The groups have tried to provide housing, leisure facilities and economic assistance to their members in varying degrees, contingent on the social organization of each community. In the provision of these amenities, the chief criterion is religious affiliation or membership of a particular group. As has already been said, Shi'ism has been more dynamic in its development of different branches than orthodoxy. Therefore, since the orthodox muslims do not differ in any significant way, they have shared common facilities in Nairobi. Most of these community institutions were established by the Punjabi Sunnis and other Asian Sunnis felt at home in them. Here, the Shia groups will be discussed first.

Each Shia group in Nairobi has tried to provide housing schemes for its members only. Even the Ithna'ashari who have been said to be few and to keep a low profile on the sectarian scene of Nairobi, saw the need for a guest house for the travellers of their community who might be stranded in Nairobi, especially in those early days when lodging houses were very few.

So they constructed a few rooms near their premises where these travellers would put up at the cost of shs.30 per night with food provided for them. Later in the 1950's they raised money to build six flats which are rented to the less fortunate members of the community and the money so raised is used to maintain the place and also given as gifts to the *Molvi* or *Sheikh*.⁴⁵

The sectarian element in the provision of shelter will be further illustrated with the Ismaili scheme, which is more elaborate than that of any other group. As earlier mentioned, the Imam plays an important role among the Ismailis, and his holy *farmans*, edicts, are obeyed to the letter. He looks after the spiritual and material welfare of his community. The present Aga Khan has established an award for architecture, which is awarded to the best designers of Islamic buildings in any part of the world. Discussing his interest in all the aspects of the life of the members of his community, he once said:

"In my own commitment to the well-being of the Ismaili Community, I have come to be even more concerned with the physical form... the houses we live in, our places of work, the institutions that serve us, the gardens and the parks where we rest, the markets and of course the mosques."⁴⁶

It was the same concern which moved his grandfather, His Highness, Sir Sultan Mohammad Shah Aga Khan, to encourage the Nairobi Ismaili Community to establish the Parklands Housing scheme in 1952. The scheme was established to enable the members to acquire comfortable homes at affordable rates. Probably, it was also necessary for the members to live close together for social integration. It seems that after they settled in this place in large numbers there was need to concentrate all the Ismaili institutions nearby in order to cater for all the needs of the community. Therefore the hospital was built in 1958, the Aga Khan Platinum Jubilee Hospital and the club. The school, which had been built before, was also close by. Among these facilities, it was only the hospital which was open to all in this early period. Thus, they were basically Ismaili institutions for the Ismailis.

Living together strengthens community spirit and enhances a sense of belonging, and in this case belonging to the Ismaili community in Nairobi. Mawani also observes that:

"The growth of Parklands area illustrates the tendency to settle in a region where members of the community were already settled. The establishment of a cohesive unit within the community comprising of institutions that catered for all the requirements of the Ismailis,"⁴⁷

With the cultural centre situated near the residential area, it was easier to "carry out social activities mostly in counselling the members of the community and advising them in various aspects of daily life", as one of their leaders put it.

The Sunni groups are not organised on sectarian lines but rather according to their places of origin. Unlike the Ismailis and the Bohra, who are organised under a religious leader, the Sunni are amorphous in their religious organization. There is no centralised administration of economic or social affairs so an individual or a group of individuals strive on their own. But in Mombasa, where most of these communities are in big numbers, they form separate Jamats.

The case of the Cutchi Sunnis will suffice to illustrate this. It has been mentioned earlier that the Cutchi are divided into numerous occupational groups, some of which have been long-established in Mombasa. Among these were the Badala, the Luhar Wadha and the Khumbar and each of these formed its own Jamat. But in Nairobi, some of these groups are not represented and the Cutchi form one Jamat. These Jamats have not developed sectarian facilities in Nairobi as they feel quite at home in the communal institutions which have been developed by the Punjabi Sunnis. For example, Sir Ali Muslim Club was built and fully maintained by the Punjabi, yet it is open to all Muslims.

Another form of expression of sectarianism is the formation of societies. The ideas and aims of each community were expressed in the constitution of its society or association. The Bohras offer a good example of a society which was formed to express a different theological point of view. This was the N.G.C.S. (already mentioned) under which the reformists organise themselves (see p. 181). In the name of this society, they carry out social and religious activities. It is the focal point for the reformists in Nairobi as it provides an identity for those who do not identify with the Dai. This society has approved a series of events to be celebrated throughout the year. In their calendar, they have omitted the events which reflect the position of the Dai (see p. 182). In this way, they ensure that the principles on which they differ with the main group, are put into practice. On the other hand, the main group has formed about nineteen institutions which cater for their spiritual and material needs in Nairobi. Some of these are Dawat-e-Hadiyah office; Dr. Taher Saifuddin Memorial Foundation; Burhan Foundation, Saifee Majid Religious and Social Affairs, Jamat Hall; Public Relations, information and development, EKjan Consumers Cooperative; Burhan Industries; Bohra Primary School, Madresa-e Mohammedia; Qutb Sports Club; Burhan Women's Association, Burhan Nursery and Qutb Scouts. The members of the N.G.C.S. cannot participate in any of these and, thus, they are sectarian institutions.

It has also been mentioned (see p. 169) that the Ithna'ashari had formed a Federation for African Jamats with its own constitution in which its objectives were laid down. Two of these objectives will suffice to illustrate the sectarian aims of the federation:

"(b) To coordinate and unify customs, conventions and observances of the community....

"(g) To safeguard the religious, moral, social and economic interests of the community."⁴⁸

From these objectives, we conclude that the community was aware of its different religious observances and consciously endeavoured to "safeguard" them.

Now, the formation of societies will be examined among the Sunnis. In the 1920's, the Punjabi Sunnis formed the *Anjumane-Himayatul-Islami*, the community for the Defence of the Faithful. Its founders were Shams-ud-Din and Sayyed Abdullah Shah. From this, in 1925, started the Jamia Masjid Committee whose task was to build a mosque. The committee remained in force even after 1933, when the mosque was completed, with twenty elected representatives, whose duty was to elect the Imams and to maintain the mosque and the complex. They also formed the central Muslim Association, but it was a purely political society.

In 1947, the Muslim Women's Association was formed by the Punjabi women, but others joined in 1948.

In this association the Punjabi practically demonstrated their non-sectarian attitude by including the Ismailis and the Africans in the executive committee, though this was done much later. The objectives of this association were restricted to social and religious affairs; for example, religious instruction, sewing and child care lessons for women. Other associations were formed by other Sunni Asians, but their aims were to uplift their communities socially and economically. Kokni Muslim Union was one such society which was formed by the Nairobi Kokni Jamat. In its regulations and rules, the community was defined as "The Kokni Muslim Community - Nairobi." Some of its objectives were: "To create and promote unity among the Kokni Muslims of Nairobi; to reform cultural, social and economic conditions of the Kokni Muslims in Nairobi; to cooperate with other Muslim Associations in religious matters."⁴⁹ These aims, unlike those of the Ithna'ashari Federation, show that the society was purely for social and economic activities and not to safeguard any particular religious observances.

However, membership was "restricted to the Kokni Muslims." It was possible to restrict membership to the Kokni because during this period, there were over a thousand of them in Nairobi. Small groups like the Cutchi, included the Halai and Akai in the association which they formed in 1911. Therefore, the societies and associations among the Sunnis can be said to have been formed largely for psychological reasons and partly for the coordination of social activities.

It has been said that most of the Sunni Asian groups were amorphous in their religious organization. Therefore, the members of each community felt the need for a body with which they could identify themselves. Thus they resulted in the formation of societies along ethnic lines, unlike the Shia societies which carried out the sectarian activities of their communities.

Other Outward Expressions of Sectarianism

The mode of dress has been a visible expression of religious affiliation for a long time in all parts of the world. This is not peculiar to Muslims since we see that the Christian clergy wear the collar to denote their pastoral role in society. But in Nairobi, the mode of dress has been used by some communities to distinguish themselves from others. A good example of such are the Bohra. Since there are two Bohra Jamats in Nairobi, one of the ways in which an observer can distinguish between the reformists and the 'followers of the Dai' is by their mode of dress. The reformists regard themselves as the enlightened section of the community; therefore they have adopted the western mode of dress. Also their women have discarded the *Ridah*, the traditional coverall for the head, used by the Bohra women. These women, to the horror of the main group, work in offices and other public places.

The main group, on the other hand, has retained a distinct mode of dress: the men wear the white-gold-embroidered cap and a long shirt, matching the trousers which are usually in bright colours.

This attire is also used for prayer and it seems to be more prevalent among the older generation. They also wear trimmed beards which is insisted upon by the Dai. This is worn by both the young and the old, unlike the wearing of the cap which is not strictly observed by some of the members.

The other example is that of the Ismailis who have adopted the western mode of dress because they regard themselves as being progressive and consequently ahead of the other Muslim communities. In the streets one observes that most of the Asian women are clad either in *sari*, their long traditional dress, or the orthodox Muslim dress for the Sunnis and the Ithna'ashari or the coverall for the Bohra. But then there is another group clad in different fashions from the west, that is the Ismaili group. Their adoption of the western mode of dress has its origin in the farmans of the late Aga Khan, Sir Sultan Mohamed Shah, who urged the members of the community to adopt the western culture, especially in matters of dress and eating habits. Reiterating his role in these matters, he said:

"In matters of social reform, I have had to exert my influence and authority sensibly and progressively. I have always sought to encourage the emancipation and education of women. In my grandfather's time and my father's time the Ismailis were far ahead of any other Muslim sect in the matter of strict veil. I have completely abolished it; nowadays you will never find an Ismaili woman wearing the veil."⁵⁰

For the Ismailis in Kenya, he said:

"... in the British Colony of East Africa, I strongly urge them to make English their first language, to found their family and domestic lives along the English lines and in general to adopt British and European customs...."51

Therefore, they are encouraged to speak English and adopt western culture, and westernization has become one of the main characteristics of 20th century Ismailism, the reform having been started by Aga Khan III. It has been mentioned that his activities included a vigorous policy of westernization and it was partly the reason why the Khoja Ithna'ashari transferred their allegiance to Shia Ithna'ashari. 'Modernization' has become the excuse for discarding some traditional or orthodox practices among the Ismaili Muslims, for example, the mode of dress and the separation of men from women, especially in public places.

All along, it has been said that the various Muslim groups used their institutions, both social and religious, to express religious sentiments and to establish a separate communal identity for each one of them. Even, the 'non-religious' institutions acquire a religious significance because in Islam there is no dichotomy between the religious and the secular aspects of life, as already said. Interestingly enough, the cemetery is part of these institutions.

To support this assertion, we shall examine an incident which took place among the Bohras and another one between the Sunni and the Ahmadiyya Muslims concerning the cemetery. First we notice that the "Mohammedan cemetery" is divided between the various sects in Nairobi.

Among the rituals on which the two Bohra Jamats have differed are those concerning the burial of a member of the community. The Bohra graveyard in Nairobi was donated by A.M. Jeevanjee. After the reformists were ostracised, they were not allowed to bury their dead in the common cemetery. The matter was taken up by the Nairobi Group Charity Society (N.G.C.S.) leaders who reported it to the police. The police enforced the law and ensured that the reformists were not thrown out of the cemetery on sectarian grounds. The main group was warned that legal action would be taken against them if any further fight over the burial ground took place.

The issue of a common graveyard has been a thorny one to the Nairobi sectarian groups since the early days as we notice from the following extract:

"A letter was submitted from the General Secretary of the Central (East African) Ahmadiyya Muslim Association forwarding a copy of the letter received from the Honorable Secretary of Anjumane Islamia in which the latter community objected to the former community burying their dead in the same portion of the Mohammedan cemetery and asking that the council should apportion of such cemetery for the purpose of burying their dead."⁵²

Since their appearance in 1889, the Ahmadis have faced stiff opposition from other sects and they are regarded as heretics. Therefore, the Sunni Muslims found it difficult to share the cemetery with them. Thus, the cemetery became part of the sectarian institutions or a facility which could not be shared with those who had deviated from "the right path" because they became worse than non-believers.

Finally, we shall give an example of an actual confrontation between the Sunni and the Ahmadiyya Muslims. In 1934, the arrival of Sheikh Mubarak in Nairobi, was to cause a fresh wave of antagonism between the Ahmadis and the Sunni Muslims. He started a vigorous missionary activity which resulted in an actual physical confrontation between the two Muslim communities. The following is an extract of his letter describing the encounter:

"On 24th November 1934, I reached Nairobi and the following day I delivered a lecture on the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad in a public gathering arranged by the local community. A few days later, the Sunni Molvi, Lal Hussein Akhtar, also came to Nairobi and a public debate was started between himself and myself. The venue was the open ground now occupied by the Sir Ali Muslim Club near Kariokor. A huge gathering including non-Muslims of Asian origin assembled every day to hear the debate. Mounted police consisting of European officers stood by. The debate was tough and emotional. Feelings were very tense. It lasted three days, divided into five or six sessions limited by mutually agreed timetable. Ahmadiyya point of view was vigorously expounded and amply promulgated.... Molvi Hussein Akhtar did not stay long. He returned to India after a sufficient amount of hate and spite had been fermented in the minds of his admirers...."⁵¹

The confrontation between the two groups on this particular occasion was based on different theological points of view and it was an outward expression of sectarianism. Each of the two sects was represented and the debate was "tough and emotional".

In conclusion, it can be said that various groups have used their institutions both social and economic, to express their religious affiliation and through them, the religious doctrines have shaped their material and spiritual lives.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 A.M. Jeevanjee, "An Appeal on Behalf of the Asians in East Africa", Memorandum to White House, London 1910, K.N.A. JEE 270. p. 3.
- 2 Derived from Kenya Population Census, (Non-African Population) Vol. 4, Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, 1966, p. 5.
- 3 Ibid., p. 6.
- 4 O.I. with Mr. Dato. Nairobi, 1986.
- 5 Martin, E.R., "The Ahmadiyya Muslims in East Africa", Ph.D. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1974, p. 118.
- 6 Derived from Walji, S., "The History of Ismailis in Tanzania", Ph.D. Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1974, p. 141.
- 7 Ibid., p. 143.
- 8 Salvadori, C., The Adian Cultures in Kenya, Kenaways Publications, 1982 citing "Speaking Among Friends", by Dawood Bohra Friendship Guild. (Page not given).
- 9 Khoja Shia Ithna'ashari Constitution, May 1946. Office of Registrar of Societies, Nairobi.
- 10 O.I. with Mr. Dato, op.cit.
- 11 O.I with S.M., Nairobi, 1986.
- 12 Salim, A.I., op.cit., p. 142.
- 13 O.I. with A.S., Nairobi, July, 1986.
- 14 Mawani, op.cit., p. 60.

- 15 Ibid., p. 61.
- 16 H.H. The Aga Khan, The Religion of My Fathers,
Shia Imami Ismailia Association for Kenya,
Nairobi, 1970, p. 9.
- 17 O.I. with A.S., op.cit.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 "The Oath of Allegiance" Misaq. Exhibit No. 17 of
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- 21 O.I. with F.H., Nairobi, 1986.
- 22 Minutes of General Meeting N.C.C. Files 21/4/1915.
- 23 O.I. with F.H., op.cit.
- 24 O.I. with M.J., Nairobi, 1986.
- 25 Central Board of Dawoodi Bohra Community Memorandum
to the Nathwani Commission Bombay, p. 2.
- 26 Salvadori, C., op.cit., p. 189.
- 27 O.I. with F.H., op.cit.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Nairobi Municipal Council Minutes, op.cit., p. 67.
- 30 O.I. with Mr. Dattoo, op.cit.
- 31 Salvadori, C., op.cit., p. 179
- 32 O.I. with D.M., Nairobi, 1986.
- 33 O.I. with Y.K., Nairobi, Jan, 1986.
- 34 O.I. with P.A., Nairobi, Dec. 1985.
- 35 O.I. with M.S.N., May 1986.

- 36 Secretary to the Jamia Mosque Committee to
Commissioner of Lands and Settlement,
N.C.C. Files, 1/12/1938, p. 2.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 O.I. with Y.K., op.cit.
- 39 O.I. with Sr. Qamar Jeham, Nairobi, 1986.
- 40 O.I. with Y.K., op.cit.
- 41 O.I. with Sh. Rafiq, Nairobi, 1986.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Information obtained from the plaque in the
DarKhana Jamat Khana, Nairobi.
- 44 Mawani, P., op.cit., p. 80.
- 45 O.I. with Mr. Dato, op.cit.
- 46 His Highness the Aga Khan Speech, New York, 1979,
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- 47 Mawani, P., op.cit., p. 59.
- 48 Shia Ithna'ashari Constitution, op.cit.
- 49 Office of Registrar of Societies, File No. 860.
- 50 His Highness the Aga Khan, op.cit., p.2.
- 51 Ibid., p.25.
- 52 Report of the General Purpose Committee, N.C.C.
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- 53 Martin, E.R., op.cit., p. 190.

CHAPTER V

SECTARIANISM AS PORTRAYED IN THE EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS OF THE VARIOUS MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

In this chapter the provision of education to the youth of the various Muslim Communities will be examined with a view to establishing the extent to which it was a sectarian activity. Muslim Education in Kenya is a wide topic. Therefore, it would have been difficult to cover it adequately if it had to be included in the previous chapter on social amenities.

Muslims are enjoined to acquire education even if it means going far in search for it and the Prophetic Hadiths emphasise the importance of education:

"To acquire education is obligatory for every Muslim, man and woman" and also
"a father can confer upon a child no more valuable gift than a good education."¹

Therefore, the provision of education to the youth is a religious duty. It is usually carried out according to the religious doctrines of the particular muslim sect. This then implies that the content and method of instruction cannot contradict for example, the Sunni doctrines for the Sunni Muslim children or the Ismaili doctrines for the Ismaili children. This being the background to the provision of education, each Muslim group in Nairobi has provided educational facilities for its own members which are in line with its religious interpretation.

Before discussing the methods of teaching and the facilities of each community, it is necessary to give a brief survey of the method and content of education in the early Muslim era. From the very beginning of Islam, the Arabs took interest in philosophy, subject and method of education. The Arabic pedagogical literature dealt with the teacher-pupil relationship and the science of teaching, which in modern terminology, is called 'philosophy of teaching'. The earliest work on this subject, *Kitab al Mualim* was written by Amr b. Bahr al-Jahiz between 163 A.H. and 255 A.H. (780 - 869 A.D.), but al Gazzali's *Fatih al ulum* is the most famous of the Arabic works on education.²

By the 10th and the 11th centuries, the Muslims had become concerned with what has now been called 'the psychology of learning' and they had divided the memory into sharp and short categories. They had also identified the appropriate time for study. The aims, objectives and the course of study were laid down. The students paid fees and the teachers were salaried. During the lifetime of the Prophet, there were eight mosques in Madinah which served as schools and there was a platform reserved for the *Muhajirun* who had dedicated themselves to the study of religion. The second *Khalifa Umar* (634 - 644 A.D.) was a pious man and he loved education. He was instrumental in the compilation of the Holy Quran and during his Caliphate many teachers were sent out to teach the Quran and the system of prayer to the new converts at the mosque.

Learning the Quran by heart was the starting point and next came the study of Hadith. Imamuddin states:

"With the recitation of the Quran was associated the art of writing which developed more in the East (of the Muslim world) than in the west, giving rise to the manifold forms of calligraphy in the East while the original stiff Kufic script did not change much in the West...."³

The early Muslim institutions were divided into the elementary, *MaKtab* and the higher school, *Madrassa*. Both of these were located in the mosque. It was much later that the state organised schools, like *Nizamiya* were established. Some of these mosque schools developed into universities and therefore, the Muslims have been credited with the founding of the oldest universities in the world, for example *Al-Azhar* (969) in Cairo in Egypt and *Cordova* in Spain.

Besides universities, they also developed libraries of international repute for example the *Bait-ul-Hikma* of Baghdad. The city of Baghdad had developed into a great centre of learning, with thousands of mosques in the 9th century and each of them was a potential school. The entire muslim education was built on a purely voluntary basis. Teachers volunteered to teach and the mosque school was *wakf*, a trust for the whole community. Though the teachers were paid salaries, it should not be understood in the modern sense where teachers are trained and then recruited into teaching force.

In this early period, teachers volunteered and in many cases taught even without any salary being paid to them. Thus there was no formal appointment.

There was strict discipline in schools and the *Mualim* (teacher) stressed regular attendance. Children were sent to the *MaKtab* at the age of seven. Keeping in view the sanctity of the mosque, they were not allowed to sit in the mosque. They sat on the verandah or the open court and to many mosques, additional rooms were attached for this purpose. Elementary education was well-established by the early Umayyad period and Dahhaq b. Muzahim (105 A.H/723 A.D) maintained a free school in Kufa.⁴

After acquiring elementary knowledge in reading and writing, a youth usually set out from his village for the next big town where he would attend higher classes for five or more years. Pilgrimage to Makkah was also important to those in search of knowledge because they were able to meet distinguished scholars. There was no fixed time for the course and completion depended on the student's ability.

The curriculum of the higher education included *fiqh*, science of law from the Quran and Hadith, grammar and logic. On completion, the students were issued with the *ijaza*, certificate, of his master to teach the subject in which the teacher considered the candidate to have excelled.

On the ijaza was the date of issue and the name and signature of the issuing authority, whose fame as a scholar determined the importance of the certificate. Probably this was the birth of the idea of recognised institutions of today especially universities.

In big mosques, one had to obtain permission to deliver a lecture. Also one had to obtain permission to use the books of others. Thus from the early Islamic period, authors held the copyright of their books.

Teaching was considered a religious duty and teachers were highly respected. Muslim educationists had developed most of the principles of education that exist in modern times by the 8th century. The first school for Arabic literature was opened by Ibn Abbas in 687 A.D. near Makkah. It was a boarding school where students paid fees and received stipends. The material needs of the students were met by public funds and rich endowments. On the Azhar campus, 35 professors were housed. This complex system of education spread with Islamic civilization to many parts of the world, including East Africa. Islam was well-established in East Africa by the 9th century, as shown by the recent Shanga archeological discoveries (see p. 64 above), therefore this type of education was introduced to the East African Coast quite early. Salim informs that:

"The poetic verse form and content, the methods of teaching religion, the manuals used,...."⁵

are the legacy of the Arabian settlement on the coast.

There were Quran teachers in every town or village wherever a Muslim community was to be found. Gradually towns like Lamu and Siu developed into important centres of learning on the East African Coast. In this early period, such centres looked to Arabia and Salim further informs us that:

"Mecca, Medina, sometimes Cairo and (in very rare cases only) even Istanbul helped to mould the scholastic minds of generations of Coast theologians. Students of Islam from East Coast visited the Hijaz, Egypt and Hadhramout to study under renowned scholars there."⁶

Every ordinary Muslim sent his son to the Quranic school to learn the basic tenets of his faith, after which he would pursue the trade of his father, for example, if the father was a fisherman the son would learn the skills from him. But in Lamu, as earlier said, (see p. 68), the society was stratified and the social inferiors and the ex-slaves were not eligible for education until the arrival of Sharif Saleh. The members of the upper class encouraged their sons to get education and some families could boast of a long line of scholars. Even in East Africa, the system of Ijaza was used and students travelled from their own towns or villages to the nearest centres of learning.

When Islam started spreading to the interior in the mid 19th century, this type of education was passed on to the converts.

They were taught the system of prayer and there was a Quranic school wherever there was a mosque. At the Quranic school, popularly known as *Madrassa*, the children were taught to read and write the Arabic characters. The curriculum included Arabic language, reading the Quran and elementary history of Islam. They also learnt by heart a few hadiths and as many *sura*, chapters, as possible, sometimes without understanding the meaning. The teachers in these *Madrassa* were imported from the coast to places like Mumias, where a Muslim community was established before the colonial period, (see p. 76).

But it is to be remembered that these *Madrassa* were not organised, with a defined curriculum and a laid down course of study. As was the case in the medieval system, the studies took any number of years. Some of those students who proved to be good were sent to the coast for further studies and after some time they returned as teachers in their own villages or towns.

This educational heritage was later to have an impact upon the converts in the interior. First, it was one of the reasons why the coast remained the model for the interior converts for a long time, for example Qadhis of the coast were requested to settle the disputes between the Muslims of Pangani in Nairobi. (See p. 125). Second, it was partly the reason why the converts were looked down upon by the Coastal Muslims who could boast of a literary tradition while they (the converts) could not.

As a result, the Kikuyu and other converts of Pangani village developed a strong interest in Islamic education, with Hajj Khamisi on the forefront.

In the latter part of the 19th century and the initial years of this century, the coastal *Ulama* class had produced some outstanding scholars who were famous throughout East Africa. For example, Seyyid Ahmed bin Sumeyt who became the Qadhi of Zanzibar between 1883 and 1886;⁷ and Sayyid Adul-Rahman bin Ahmed (1844 - 1922) from Siu, who became the first Chief Qadhi for the British East Africa Protectorate. He had studied religion under local *ulama*.

But this type of Islamic education did not offer any change to the old Arabic culture, rather it was to perpetuate the status quo. This type of education did not enable the students to acquire any technical skills. Also, we have not come across any woman scholar among the renowned East African *Ulama*. This happened because it was only the sons who were encouraged to study, this of course, was in line with the Arabic culture whereby the women were not supposed to lead a kind of public life. They were instructed in the basic tenets of the faith and given enough education to enable them to read the Quran at an early age in the *Maktab*. This was the situation for many centuries, until the arrival of the colonial rule late in the 19th century.

The colonial administration introduced western culture, and of course, western education.

The age-old Muslim system of education was faced with a new and big challenge and it was soon to prove its inadequacy. The change was so drastic that the coastal 'learnedmen' could not comprehend the events which had turned them into illiterates as they could not read anything written in English. It was the dawn of a new era and with it a new way of life where the success of an individual depended on acquisition of western secular education. In 1909 an Education Board was set up and three years later, three categories of schools were defined; one for Europeans, one for the Asians and the other one for the Africans and the Arabs.

In this new type of education Kiswahili would replace Arabic language and there would be no lessons on the Quran. Consequently, the Muslims were even more opposed to the idea of taking their children to the school which was opened in Mombasa in 1912.⁸ At the same time, there was the C.M.S. Buxton School in Mombasa which was run by Christian Missionaries and the parents were even more opposed to this one because it was regarded as a means of taking their children away from the Islamic religious teachings. All this was happening in Mombasa while Muslim education continued undisturbed in other parts of the Coast.⁹ It was not until 1919 that a school was opened in Malindi.

A change which was not easy to accept for the Coastal Muslims was the acquisition of secular education by the Arab girls.

But gradually the girls attended the primary school and a separate girls school was established in 1938. However, by 1940, the Coastal Muslims had accepted a compromise between the secular and the Islamic religious education, though the latter was accorded prime importance.

Let us now examine the situation in Nairobi at that time. In the Muslim villages of Pangani, Mombasa and Unguja, there were teachers who gave religious instructions at the Quranic schools. As mentioned earlier, most of these teachers were imported from the coast until after the war when a few students were sent to the coast to acquire religious education. The 'Natives' in these villages were not given secular education until the Native location was created and those in Mombasa and other smaller villages were settled there. It was not until 1923 that the colonial authorities saw the need to provide some education for the "natives in the location". After it was proposed, the Municipal Native Affairs Officer said that the government would provide a teacher if the premises could be found. He suggested that the fees of two shillings and one shilling-and-fifty cents be charged per month according to the standard as in the Church Missionary Society school. There would be a graduated scale for bigger boys. Soon, in one of the Municipal huts, the school was started. The problem that now faced the authorities, was to find a suitable teacher for the school.

The then Acting District Commissioner for Nairobi suggested that they should have "a Mkamba as this would avoid sectarian complaints being raised in the location,"¹⁰ However, the choice of a Mkamba would not have solved the problem because it did not seem likely that the coastal Swahili and Arab residents in the location would have accepted a Mkamba to teach their children.

Three months after the school was started, the Director of Education suggested that the "school be regarded as a government primary school."¹¹ It was assisted by the Municipality in respect to buildings and equipment. The Education Department paid the difference between the amount of fees collected and the teacher's salary and also supplied a few books. The town engineer supplied five benches.

By April, there were 18 boys attending the school during the day and 51 at night. The Pangani Muslims also requested that a school should be opened there. This was going to be expensive for the education department as it would:

"... entail a certain outlay for school material and also it would be necessary to increase the salary of the clerk at Pumwani for taking the night school there.... It was estimated that a further grant of £5 would be required for materials for the two schools."¹²

But as was the case in Mombasa and other parts of the Coast, the Muslim in the Native Location were opposed to secular education. There was fear that it might lure their children to Christianity. This fear of the Pumwani Muslims was not unfounded as there was a missionary school in the location and the parents could not tell the difference between a government school and a missionary school. Also the missionaries had shown an interest in the school. Father MacNamara of the Roman Catholic Mission had offered to take over the school and the Education Department had agreed on condition that no religious education would be given since it was a government school. Fortunately for the Muslims, the Missionaries would not accept this condition and the idea was dropped. But many parents were reluctant to take their children to the school, and so after only one year, that is by 1924, it was closed on account of poor attendance. The Native Affairs Officer reported that:

"In view of the small attendance at the school at Pumwani, the Director of Education proposed to close it down as from 30th September (1924)."¹³

As mentioned above, this situation was similar to the one prevailing on the coast and the Pumwani School can be compared to the school at Lamu. The government had opened a day school at Lamu but the attendance remained very low.

Therefore in November 1931, "on visiting Lamu, the Inspector of Schools, found the school practically empty and it was closed."¹⁴ Similarly, the school at Pumwani was closed as the committee "had been informed that there were plenty of children in the village but they could not be made to attend the school."¹⁵

But in 1926, after the school had been closed for over two years, a few elders began to see the need for secular western education and they approached the authorities in an attempt to have the school re-opened. The District Commissioner reported that:

"I have been approached by the elders of the Native Location of Pumwani with the request that the government establish a school there... The elders, however now guarantee that the children to the number of 30 or 40 will attend regularly if the government will start the school again."¹⁶

After this appeal, a sum of £50 was allocated from the brewery fund (a brewery had been set up to "provide liquor for the natives") for the purpose of erecting a temporary iron and wood building for the school. But of course the Muslims did not know that the money was obtained from the brewery fund,

Now, having discussed the pre-colonial Muslim educational system; its expansion into the interior; the arrival of the colonial administrators and with them the western secular education, its impact; and the gradual compromise by the African and Arab Muslims, we shall examine the extent to which provision of this secular education was affected by sectarianism among the Muslim communities of Nairobi.

The African Muslims in Nairobi did not establish their own schools during the early period because, as already mentioned, the education for the natives was controlled by the missionaries and the Department of Education. But it was among the Asian Muslims that education was used to portray sectarian differences. The colonial policy of segregation and division of society into racial groups cannot be held responsible for the kind of 'separate development' that existed among the Muslim Communities in Nairobi. For instance, it would be wrong to state that the Africans could not attend Ismaili schools because they were regarded as inferior to Asians. After all, the other Shia groups, the Bohra and the Ithna'ashari were also not being admitted into these schools. It therefore becomes clear that education was one of the ways in which sectarianism manifested itself among the Muslim communities in Nairobi.

All the Asian Muslim Communities tried to provide education for their children, but the Ismaili managed to develop an impressive educational set-up under their Education Board. This takes us back to the important role of the Imám in the life of the Ismailis as we are informed that:

"His Highness, Sir Sultan Mohammad Shah, the third Aga Khan, during his visit to East Africa at the end of the last century and again at the beginning of the present century, made urgent *Farmans* to his followers regarding education and pointed out to them the importance of education... These *Farmans* had a tremendous effect..."¹⁷

As a result of these *Farmans*, the first Ismaili school in Nairobi was founded in 1918. Later on, the Ismailia Education Board was formed and the management of all educational affairs passed to the hands of this body. The first school was located at the Jamat Khana which was then on the site now occupied by the city Fire Station. It was moved to the DarKhana Jamat Khana when it was completed in 1922.

The Ismaili educational efforts clearly portrayed sectarian tendencies as can be seen from their aims:

"The whole aim of the education of the Ismaili child should be the training of the child to find its union back with God by being taught His will, He communicates to us through the Imam and by being enabled to execute this will to the letter and that without question..."¹⁸

And this aim is "in perfect keeping with the Ismaili philosophy of life as expounded by our reverend Pirs..." (Pirs are the missionaries who are said to have converted the Lohana Hindus to Ismailism. The most famous of these were Satgur Nur, Shams al-Din and Sadardin. Shams al-Din and Sadardin were Iranian Ismailis who were sent by the 29th Imam from Alamut to India). The aims of the Ismaili education reflect the doctrine of the *Imamat*. It is the Divine will which is communicated through the Imam that the child learns.

As a result, their schools were meant for their children only. This divine will could not be communicated in any schools other than the Ismaili school and by Ismaili teachers. The sectarian element in the Ismaili educational efforts can be further illustrated by the words of the secretary of the Ismaili Education Board, Nairobi, who stated that:

"I am further instructed to submit that the history and tradition of our schools show the advantage of identical communal and religious ideas and home influence which make it possible to impart a better mode of character than is possible in a general school with students from different communities."¹⁹

Therefore, the Ismaili schools in Nairobi, and even Mombasa, in the early period were meant to provide a means for transmitting the community tradition and ideas in order to mould better Ismailis, first and foremost.

As a result of this, the schools were unfit, and out of bounds for other Shia Muslims and worse still, for the Sunni Asian Muslim children. As for the Africans, they were not eligible on racial grounds. Even the Arabs could not be admitted despite the efforts of the Education Department to bridge the racial gap when it was absolutely necessary, as "necessity knows no law." For example, in the Plan for 1951 - 1956, no provision had been made for expenditure on Arab education outside the coast province. So the Director of Education suggested that the Arab children be admitted to Asian schools but this was not done "as the principals were not willing to take them."²⁰

The Ismaili children were taught by Ismaili teachers. The Ismailization of the staff was necessary in order to develop a hierarchy of sentiments which would gradually lead to the union with the Supreme Being. Thus they would not allow their children to be taught by non-Ismaili, for to do so, "would be tantamount to calling an agriculturalist to do some engineering for us", as one of them wrote. Probably that was the reason why they formed the Education Board after the first Ismaili Girls' School was started in Nairobi. This Board concentrated all its energies into providing education for the children of the community without allowing participation of any other community or organization in their educational affairs. As early as 1931, it was proposed to open a government school and the Ismailis were asked if they "wish to send their girls to the government school".

But they were not willing and the Ismailia Education Board of Nairobi remained solely "responsible to the Nairobi Ismailia Council". This clause ruled out possible interference from any other group or quarter.

When the girls' school was started in Nairobi, it was clearly stated that it was:

"... open to all girls who are followers of His Highness the Aga Khan... no fees are charged."²¹

Those who were not followers of His Highness were not admitted to the school. In this particular case, the criterion for admission was religious sectarianism and not racialism or ethnicity. Even the curriculum and the organization of the school were Ismaili in character: in the evenings, there were religious classes where *Dua*, (prayers) *Ginana*, (hymns) and the history of the *Pirs* were taught.

Gujerati was the medium of instruction, which means that non-Gujerati speakers could not attend the school. During the two years of pre-primary education, children were taught the Gujerati alphabet and at the age of 9, they moved to class two. By 1936, the classes had been extended to standard seven and, in the same year, seven girls sat for the Cambridge Preliminary Examination. Ten years later the nursery was started behind the Rehimtulla Walji Trust Building where the school had been housed since 1938.

In 1951 the primary school was separated from the secondary, and His Highness Prince Aly Khan laid the foundation stone of the present primary school in Parklands.

The Ismailis continued to improve their educational system and in 1953, the school was removed to the new building on Limuru Road with 471 pupils. But then it was only the Ismaili children who enjoyed these facilities. Other Asian Muslims were kept out despite the claim that the schools were open to all. Abreau also observes that:

"The community has claimed that their schools have always been open to all children of other communities. This of course has been practically impossible owing to, until very recently, religious and language difficulties. Also the management of the Ismaili schools was entirely in the hands of Ismailis, so that the rest of the Asian Communities could make no suggestions at all for the running of the schools."²²

It was not only other Asian Muslims who could not make any suggestions. Even those which were made by the Director of Education had to be first considered by the Ismailia Education Board before they were implemented. The Education Board was autonomous as it was not responsible to the Director of Education but to the Ismailia Council of Nairobi. Even after the racial element was removed in early 1960's, the Aga Khan schools in Nairobi remained predominantly Ismaili in population. For example 50% of the pupils in the primary school were Ismailis; 22% of Africans and another 22% of other origin.²³

Like the Ismailis, the Bohras began a school at their mosque which was built in 1931. By 1933 there were seventeen boys and twenty-two girls on the register. However, the Bohras differed from the Ismailis in that the Bohras were little interested in secular education. They were more interested in the religious education for their youth, that is the passing of religious knowledge from one generation to another. That was probably because they were mainly business people and not professionals whose livelihood would depend on western educational achievements. Therefore, even when they structured a school curriculum, it was based on the Bohra religious doctrines. Describing the condition of the Bohra school in 1940, the Inspector of Schools remarked that:

"Classwork is entirely poor and I am forced to conclude this school is merely an excuse for teaching young members of the Bohra community the principles of religion of this sect."²⁴

The school building, situated on Bohra Road had cost £5,000 donated by the family of Mulla Mohammedali Noorbhai. Initially, it was to accommodate 150 children and teach the Quran but after the first floor of the building was equipped, secular education was introduced into the curriculum. Today, the children of the members of the reform movement are not admitted into the school. So they have established a *Madrassa* at Yusuf Ali Muslim Club.

Although their educational efforts were comparatively small, they were not short of Sectarianism. Children of other Muslim Communities were not admitted to the school and it was only in 1969 that the school was opened to all, as the following table illustrates:²⁵

ENROLMENT AT THE BOHRA SCHOOL

YEAR	ASIAN	AFRICAN	TOTAL
1962	50	-	50
1963	80	-	80
1964	90	-	90
1965	85	-	85
1966	105	-	105
1967	110	-	110
1968	115	-	122
1969	117	5	122
1970	105	11	116
1971	104	16	120
1972	101	18	119
1973	95	27	122
1974	98	49	147

From the table above, it is clear that the African children began to be admitted into the school only five years after independence and even then, their ratio to that of the Asian children remained quite small.

Now the education of the Bohra children (of the main group) is placed under the communal institutions responsible for education and development, while religious education is placed under *Madresa-e Mohammedia*.

The other Shia group, the Ithna'ashari, in Nairobi were too few to found any sectarian school. Their children were given religious education five days a week by volunteers among the members of the community. This was organised through the managing committee and there was a laid down syllabus. The children attended the *Madrasa* from the age of about four to fifteen years. The sect laid great emphasis on the religious education of children. Some of the subjects taught at the *Madrasa* were the basic principles of Islam (of course not without the Shia bias); need for religion; Tawheed; life of the Imams; Quran and Hadith; the prayers; and the moral code.²⁶ Since they did not establish their own schools, their children attended such schools as the government Indian school, Nairobi.

The Ahmadiyya also did not found their own schools. Their children attended the government Indian school for western education, while they acquired Ahmadi sectarian education at the mosque and at home. The Ahmadis have a different attitude towards the ordinary *Madrasa*, they do not believe in having one *Mualim*, teacher for the children because any adult member of the community could have something which the children could learn.

Therefore parents are encouraged to teach their children at home and "every home is a madrasa."²⁷ The children are also taught at the mosque and there is a laid down syllabus for these religious classes, which are officially coordinated by the leaders. After every four months and during Ramadhan, the children are given a test at the mosque.

Having discussed the Sectarian schools among the Shia, we shall turn to the Sunni Asian Muslim school. The Punjabi Sunnis started the Muslim Girls' School in 1930. The school was started with 20 girls and one teacher. As on many other important occasions, the Punjabis invited the then Aga Khan, Sultan Muhammad Shah, to lay the foundation stone of the Muslim Girls' School in 1937. The construction work took about a year and in 1938 the new building was completed at a cost of £3,000 obtained from contributions and donations.²⁸

It was the aim of the Punjabis to give a religious education to their children in the school to balance the western education. As the headmistress stated in 1956:

"The school is being run on modern lines. Our aim is the training of body, mind and spirit, that is the full and complete personality. The modern ideas in education have been introduced but religious education still plays an important part in its curriculum.... I feel education with religion omitted is no education at all...."²⁹

The Punjabis have been credited for their non-sectarian activities.

However, in the initial days, only Punjabi children were admitted into the school. Later, after the Second World War, it was open to all. Unlike the other sectarian schools during this period, English was the medium of instruction in the Muslim Girls' School.

By 1942, there were 120 girls and four teachers and classes were up to Standard Four. By 1952 the institution had acquired the status of a full primary school and had three secondary classes. It was mainly a girls' school with only a few boys in standard one and three, who were first admitted in 1945.³⁰ Before this the boys went to the government Asian schools but the Muslim girls did not attend the government schools because they were mixed. Therefore, "all the denominational (sic) schools concentrated on girls,"³¹ as the former headmistress of the school put it.

Admission into the school was not based on sectarian grounds as it was not intended to inculcate Punjabi Sunni ideals, but Islamic culture (of course Sunni) and traditions as the headmistress put:

"We have established a comprehensive school for Muslim girls where they can be educated from childhood to adolescence. The parents want their girls to be educated here as they are aware of the fact that though I am a supporter of progressive methods of teaching and run the school on modern lines, at the same time, I have never tolerated that our girls should become strangers to our culture, traditions and religious values."³²

The school was entirely in the hands of the Punjabi Muslims. The Education Department was only represented in the Board of Governors. As the headmistress would not allow the girls to become strangers to their "culture traditions and religious values", it should be borne in mind that these were Sunni religious values. Therefore to a reasonable extent, it can be said to have been a Sunni Muslim school and that was the reason why the Ismailis did not feel comfortable in a "school with students from all different communities". The issue of education was quite thorny in the early period as we are told that the parents wanted their girls to be educated there because they knew that, though progressive methods of education had been adopted, their culture and religious values were safeguarded and transmitted to their children. This in itself is a pointer to the extent to which the members of a particular Muslim Community were concerned about the content of education offered to their youth. Thus education was an effective means of preserving and transmitting ideals of each community. This concern was the motive behind the provision of education on a community basis among the Muslims of Nairobi.

In conclusion, we can say that the provision of education was one of the ways in which sectarianism made itself manifest. All the Muslim groups were concerned with the preservation of their cultural and religious values.

In all the constitutions of the societies and associations which were formed by the members of these groups, one of the main aims was to provide secular and religious education for their children. Some of the Asian Muslim communities which did not establish their own secular schools failed to do so largely because their population was too small in Nairobi and so they tried to make themselves comfortable in other Asian schools where they could obtain admission.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Sahih Bukhari.
- 2 Imamddin, S.M., "Mosque as Centre of Learning
in the Early Middle Ages", Islamic Studies,
Vol. XXIII, No. 3, 1984, p. 162.
- 3 Ibid., p. 162.
- 4 Ibid., p. 163.
- 5 Salim, A.I., The Swahili Speaking Peoples of the
Kenya Coast, E.A.P.H., Nairobi, 1975, p. 141.
- 6 Ibid., p. 141.
- 7 Ibid., p. 142.
- 8 Ibid., p. 150.
- 9 Ibid., p. 151.
- 10 K.N.A. Ed1/115.
- 11 "Report of the Committee on Native Location", N.C.C.
Minutes, 1923, p. 135.
- 12 Ibid., p. 137.
- 13 Ibid., p. 138.
- 14 Salim, A.I., op.cit., p. 152.
- 15 "Report of the Committee on Native Location", op.cit.,
p. 158.
- 16 K.N.A. Ed.1/115/1.
- 17 H.H. The Aga Khan, The Religion of My Fathers, Shia
Imami Ismailia Association for Kenya,
Nairobi, 1970, p.2.
- 18 Dharsi, S.W., "Ismaili Education", Africa Ismaili,
No. 11, 1962, p. 32.

- 19 K.N.A. Ed.1/1741.
- 20 K.N.A. Ed.1/664
- 21 K.N.A. Ed.1/1160
- 22 Abreau, E., "Self-Help in Education: The
Contribution of African and Asian
Voluntary Organizations to the Development
of Education in Kenya 1900 - 1973".
M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1974,
p. 118.
- 23 K.N.A. Ed.1/1163.
- 24 Inspector of Schools' Report, 1940, Abreau, E.,
op.cit., p. 131.
- 25 Abreau, E., op.cit., p. 133.
- 26 O.I. with Mr. Dattoo, Nairobi, 1986.
- 27 O.I. with Qamar Jehan. Also see Muslim Girls'
School Magazine, 1956.
- 28 Ibid., p. 9.
- 29 Ibid., p. 10.
- 30 O.I. with Qamar Jehan, op.cit.
- 31 Ibid.
32. The Headmistress,
Muslim Girls' School Magazine, op.cit., p. 9.

CONCLUSION

It was after the establishment of the colonial administration that Islam effectively penetrated into the interior. The colonial administrators opened up the interior and facilitated movement, particularly after the construction of the Kenya-Uganda Railway, which became an important factor in the spread of Islam to many parts of the interior. Though the Muslims Swahili, Nubian and Somali soldiers, guards and porters had started to settle in the Pangani area during the period between 1893 and 1898, it was the railway which was mainly responsible for the arrival and settlement of various Asian Muslim communities in Nairobi. Thus the history of Islam in Nairobi is closely related to the construction of the railway.

From the outset, there were different Muslim communities in Nairobi, both of African and Asian origin, adhering to different *Madhahib* and sects. Of the four Sunni *Madhahib*, Shafi'i commanded the largest number of adherents, followed by Maliki. The Sunni Asian Muslims, except the Kokni, adhered to the Hanafi school. It was only Hanbali which did not seem to have had a significant number of adherents. All Muslim sects and sub-sects were represented in Nairobi. It was this religious diversity which became the most salient characteristic of Islam in Nairobi.

While the tensions and disagreements among the Swahili and other Muslims in early Muslim settlements of Mji wa Mombasa and Pangani reflected the Lamu social stratification into *Waungwana* and *Washenzi*, the sectarian divisions among the Asian Muslims reflected the situation in India, where the population saw itself in terms of different religious communities.

Among the African Muslims, the period between 1900 and the First World War, was characterised by intense Islamization. In the history of Islam in Nairobi, that was the period when Islam gained the most converts, but the trend slowed down after 1920. Conversion during this period entailed the adoption of Swahili Islamic culture, which was strongly influenced by Lamu traditions. It was not until after the first two decades of this century, particularly after the arrival of Shaikh Ali bin Khamisi that this type of Islam began to be questioned. The emergence of the two individuals, though they parted company later on, marked a turning point for the Swahili Muslims and the converts.

Also, the Nubian and the Somali Islam had acquired a host of traditional practices. Of all the African Muslim groups, it was only the Somalis who strictly adhered to religious orders. From the early period, though the African Muslim group did not differ significantly on theological issues, three types of Islam were discernible in Nairobi: the Nubian, the Somali and the Swahili. The basis of this tribal Islam was ethnic diversity.

Mixing of traditional and Islamic religious practices was not confined to the African Muslims. A close examination of the religious practices of the various Asian Muslim communities in Nairobi revealed that in almost all of them, traditional practices featured predominantly. Since most of them, both Shia and Sunni, were Hindu converts to Islam, some Hindu practices were still prevalent even among the Khoja Ismailis, the Muslim group which has adopted the western culture. But then this has to be understood in terms of the relationship between religion and culture: the former being part of the latter, it is difficult to draw the boundary line between the two. It is to be remembered that both the traditional and the revealed religions, of necessity must assume the culture of the people who practice them or through whom they are revealed. This rule gives us an insight into the dualism which characterises the Muslim communities.

The Shia communities portrayed a cohesion which was not found among the Sunni Asian Muslims. The axis of that cohesion was the doctrine of the Imamatus, which was variously interpreted among the Ismailis, the Bohras and the Ithna'asharis. It was this doctrine of the Imamatus which determined and defined the community activities among the Shia groups in Nairobi. During the period covered by the study, membership to most of the communal institutions was restricted to the members of a particular religious community, especially among the Shia groups.

But the Sunni groups, particularly the Punjabis, did not portray a sectarian attitude and most of their institutions were open to all. It should be remarked that the Punjabi Muslims played an important role in the establishment of Sunni Islam in Nairobi. They built many mosques on private and communal basis. The other Sunni Asian communities joined hands with them.

However, the involvement of various Muslim communities in education was contingent upon ethnicity and sectarianism. As a result, the Muslim communities which were not organised under a spiritual leader like the Dai or the Aga Khan, were not able to establish an intricate educational system. This leads to the conclusion that it was the role of the Imam which enabled the Ismailis to develop an effective system and organization whereby the communication was two-way. It was through the *farmans* that the community was given an incentive to uplift its members. It was also the basis of the voluntary service given by individuals, which played an important role in the Ismaili system.

It can also be said that numerical strength was an important factor which determined the organization of a particular Muslim community in Nairobi. Some communities like the Khoja Shia Ithna'ashari, the Kuchi, the Halai and the Akai, were too small to make their impact felt, while the Memons were new-comers on the Nairobi sectarian scene.

On the whole, the Muslim communities in Nairobi have shown a tendency to keep each to itself. Each Mosque Committee organised its daily activities around the mosque, while each of the Shia groups organised its activities on a large scale, that is, involving all the members of the community.

Even after independence, there has not been any significant change among the Muslim communities of Nairobi. The most conspicuous change is that most of the sectarian institutions, schools and hospitals, are now open to all. The relationship among the various Muslim communities has been characterised by fears and jealousies which to an appreciable extent, have undermined the success of such a national body as the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims. Various Mosque Committees have their parochial interests which they are not willing to place under somebody else. As a result, the Muslims of Nairobi cannot be said to have achieved any measure of unity. We can therefore conclude that Islam in Nairobi is organizationally fragmented along ethnic and sectarian lines. One cannot speak of a "Muslim Community" in the strict sense of the word.

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