

## **Religion and Society**

The peoples of the Kenya Coast follow a variety of religious traditions. Whereas Islam has been present in the region for centuries, the beginning of Christianity in modern times only goes back some 150 years. African religious beliefs and practices existed long before the coming of Islam or Christianity. This chapter examines the religious traditions of the Kenya Coast, looking first at their historical origins and development. Rather than attempt a detailed description of the tenets and practices of each of the traditions, the chapter seeks to explain how they have influenced and interacted with each other. At the same time it assesses their overall importance, their relation to the social life and political economy of the region, and what their general circumstances are today.