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# 9 “A good believer is a good citizen”

## Connecting Islamic morals with civic virtues in rural Tanzania

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### **Introduction**

One of the tasks of this book is to analyse existing practices and the kinds of citizenship habits acquired through participation in them (Holma & Kontinen, this volume). In sub-Saharan contexts, religious practices provide some of the most important spaces for the exercise of citizenship when understood from the perspectives of belonging and active participation. In this chapter, we approach religion and faith from the pragmatist point of view, as practices of specific communities that offer an everyday space where “the art of living” is developed in interaction with others (Rogers 2009, 109), and citizenship habits are shaped in connection with tradition and fellow community members (Stitzlein 2014, 64). In development, the majority of rights-based initiatives perceive a “good citizen” as an individual actively engaged in claiming personal rights, whereas critiques of this stance have pointed out that people in sub-Saharan Africa tend to be firmly integrated into communities, interpreting experiences from the position of social belonging rather than from that of a right-holder (Robins et al. 2008).

Religious communities as arenas for public life are prevalent examples of social embeddedness. For example, the Afrobarometer survey in 2008 showed that 71 per cent of the adult population in Tanzania identified themselves as being religiously active (Manglos & Weinreb 2013, 202). In recent years, the close connection between religion and citizenship in Africa has been widely discussed, especially in the context of Christianity and in relation to the spread of the Pentecostal and other charismatic churches (Bompani & Frahm-Arp 2010; Englund 2011; Jones 2012) that shape the “politics from below” through people’s everyday participation (Bompani & Valois 2017). Thus, exclusion of religion from the design of citizenship initiatives may disregard influential and central elements of everyday identity and agency, resulting in a failure to understand the prevailing ways in which citizens engage. The common separation between “development” and “religion” in development policies becomes obscure from the point of view of everyday experiences, as a person is not a believer at one moment and a liberal state citizen at another.

In recent research on sub-Saharan Africa, Islamic religion has received relatively little attention, notwithstanding its significant role in the area since the start of so-called “Arab imperialism” on the coasts of the Indian Ocean in the 14th century. Today, Loimeier (2007, 138) places Tanzania in a category of countries with a sizable Muslim population, although no official statistics of religious affiliations in Tanzania<sup>1</sup> are available. Thus, the Islamic faith plays an important role in the everyday practices of the Muslim population in Tanzania, its religious morals shaping perceptions of a “good citizen”. There is, however, no institutionalized connection between Islamic morals and the state, as Tanzania has no official religion. Indeed, throughout its history, there have been both political and everyday contestations between the two “imported faiths” of Christianity and Islam (Ndaluka & Wijzen 2014; Njozi 2000), although today, religious disputes are more commonly linked to matters of rituals and the interpretive authority of competing Islamic scholars or movements (Loimeier 2007). In contrast to directions taken in the recent expansion in research on Islamic radicalization in East Africa (Kfir 2008; Stith 2010), in this chapter we are, rather, interested in everyday Islam in non-radicalized rural contexts, and the civic virtues considered important by community members themselves.

Building on the pragmatist framework of this edited volume, we contend that, through participating in communities, people acquire habitual ways of addressing the common good and interacting with each other (Stitzlein 2014). In situations where the Islamic faith characterizes the immediate community, Islamic morals are important in defining what is good and appropriate, not only within the religious community, but in also in other spheres of society. In our understanding, habits concerned with general public life, and judged good by the participants in a community, can be labelled civic virtues. Thus, the notion of civic virtues here refers to characteristics of good citizenship as understood by the members of three Islamic communities in rural Tanzania. We ask how community members connect faith and citizenship, and how they reflect on relationships between Islamic morals and civic virtues. Based on our interviews in Kondoa District, we analyse how community members explain and articulate what it means to be simultaneously a good believer and a good citizen. In what follows, we first revisit the conceptual terrain of religion, civil society and civic virtues relevant to our purposes, before briefly discussing the status of Islam in contemporary Tanzania. We then offer an analysis of community members’ ideas on religious morals and civic virtues. In conclusion, we reflect on the implications of Islamic morals in shaping particular citizenship habits.

### **Religion, civil society and civic virtues**

Religion has consistently been a contested area in international development initiatives that focus on strengthening civil society and citizenship. While many influential international NGOs are faith-based organizations,

development policies often disconnect participation in civil society and in religious life, especially in the liberal view of civil society, which tends to exclude religion from public life. This distinction is based on the argument that negotiations over shared issues in religion do not comprise democratic deliberation, nor are they based on ideas of equal rights; rather, they are dictated by divine doctrine, dogmas and authoritarian rules within hierarchical social systems (Habermas 2006; Sapir & Statman 2012; Elshtain 2009). However, religion is a significant public space in Africa in which ideals pertaining to the "good citizen" are cultivated and citizens are mobilized to undertake practical initiatives for contributing to the common good, while activeness in religious groups increases participants' civic consciousness in general (Bompani & Valois 2017; Bompani & Frahm-Arp 2010; Englund 2011; Jones 2012; Manglos & Weinreb 2013). As a result of this somewhat artificial distinction between citizenship and religion, the practical designs of education for active citizenship and human rights often encounter what Ahmed (2012, 728) calls a "liberal dilemma", which entails the tendency to presuppose a certain kind of individual autonomy that rests on Western "truths considered to be self-evident and universal". These assumptions leave little room for "non-Western people" to challenge these taken-for-granted liberal ideas that they might perceive as "non-negotiable, dogmatic and oppressive" (ibid.). For instance, an autonomous individual as a locus of rights – a view held by many NGO-education initiatives – might appear a strange idea in an Islamic context where the individual is seen as a member of a community of faith in which "goodness is not just an individual matter [and] society has a duty to publicly uphold moral behaviour and religious practice" (Halstead 2007, 289).

The existing biases towards Western political theories and the challenges related to the liberal ideal of civil society in international development have been acknowledged by many scholars (e.g. Chambers & Kymlicka 2002; Lewis 2002). An "Islamic civil society" that has been proposed as one of the alternatives to a liberal version (Hanafi 2002), is not particularly conversant with contexts like Tanzania where different religions, such as Christianity, Islam and Hinduism, co-exist and mix with more traditional belief systems (Ndaluka & Wijisen 2014). In this chapter, we approach the regulating impact of religion as part of what constitutes everyday civil society, producing a public sphere wherein people organize themselves around shared issues (see Holma & Kontinen, this volume). While much Islamic practice is concerned with "religion", with an institutional "body of beliefs and practices", it also entails "religious" experiences connected with achieving an attitude that provides faith in the possibilities of an ideal, which can likewise be displayed in the spheres of "art, science and good citizenship" (Dewey 1934, 9, 21). This Deweyan distinction between "religion" and "religious" guides our attention not primarily to the institutionally defined pillars of the Islamic faith, but to everyday faith-related practices through which certain kinds of citizenship habits, the "layered dimension that underwrites identity and thereby provide

the starting points for future judgements and behaviour” (Rogers 2009, 109), are acquired.

Therefore, our interest is not in the explicitly defined virtues taught in the Qur’an – such as justice, benevolence, piety, honesty, integrity, gratitude and chastity (Halstead 2007, 284) – but those articulated by community members in relation to their everyday life. From a pragmatist perspective, these virtues do not only have a definite status granted by institutionalized dogma; they are also “tentative” attitudes or virtues that are connected both to the institution of Islam and the sphere of public life in general (Rogers 2009, 127). Moreover, while for Islam, as for other religions, morals and virtues are considered truths given by God rather than something negotiated among human beings (Halstead 2007, 283–284), it is also assumed that discovering what it means to be a human is a life-long effort of guided reflection rather than the simple adoption of certain dogmas (Ahmed 2012). We use the notion of civic virtues in a very general, everyday way in reference to “characteristics of a good citizen” that contribute to the common good (Lovett 2015). We contend that the ideals related to such characteristics are continuously learned through participation in religious communities where certain citizenship habits are acquired.

### **Islam in Tanzania**

Although our primary interest lies in local perceptions of connections between religious morals and civic virtues, we first engage briefly with the historical context of the Islamic faith in Tanzania, and the dynamic relationship between Islam and the officially secular state. Although there is no consensus over the exact date of its arrival, history suggests that Islam has been established on the East African coast since at least the 8th and 9th centuries. On its arrival, Islam remained confined to coastal regions for some time and in the 10th century (1007 AD), the oldest still-intact building in East Africa, a functioning mosque, was built in southern Zanzibar. During the 14th century, Islam spread widely across the Indian Ocean area wherever Muslims controlled trade and established coastal settlements in South East Asia, India and East Africa (Liviga & Tumbo-Masabo 2006; Lodhi & Westerlund 1997).

Although Islam became familiar in the hinterland before the colonial period, due to the mediation of Swahili traders, its expansion into the East African interior came later, during the 18th and 19th centuries, facilitated by Arab trade caravans that set out from coastal cities. For example, centres such as Kondoa, Tabora and Kigoma along the old trade route were attached to Islam, despite people carrying out their local traditions in practice. The expansion of Islam continued under colonial rule in both German East Africa (1884–1914) and British Tanganyika (1914–1961), promising to restore order to a chaotic situation following the disruptions of the Maji Maji rebellion (1904–1907) and the First World War (1914–1918)

(Loimeier 2007; Koponen 1994). After defeating the coastal Muslims, the Germans turned to them as allies in the new administration. Islam was also associated with Swahili culture, which was closely connected with coastal areas, and Germans adopted Swahili as the language of administration and built up a system of education with Swahili as the medium. They also used Swahili people (*akidas* and *liwalis*) in their direct system of colonial rule (1884–1914), hence, in a way, promoting the rapid expansion of Islam (Westerlund 1980; Iliffe 1979).

British colonial rule (1914–1961), on the other hand, prioritized local chiefs over coastal Muslims. In response, coastal Muslims participated in struggles for independence and later played a significant role in building Tanzanian socialism. At the beginning of the 1950s, the Tanganyika African Association (TAA) in Dar es Salaam had strong Muslim elements in the persons of Abdul Sykes, Ali Sykes, Dosa Aziz and others who formed an inner circle that also included non-Muslim members such as John Rupia. In 1953, however, Julius K. Nyerere was chosen to replace Abdul Sykes as chairperson of the TAA to spearhead the interests of Africans (Liviga & Tumbo-Masabo 2006). Soon after Tanzania gained independence in 1961, President Nyerere established a nation-building programme managed under the philosophy of Ujamaa Socialism, with the vision of establishing a secular state; in fact, he discouraged religious divides among the people. In this regard, religious activity belonged to the private domain (Nyerere 1968). Nyerere pleaded for religious tolerance and the avoidance of offences against even small religious minorities, in addition to discouraging debates and research on religious matters (Liviga & Tumbo-Masabo 2006). When he abolished the multiparty political system in 1965, the decision was meant, among other things, to discourage any kind of divisions in Tanzanian society, including those based on religion. Although a Muslim-based political party, the All Muslim National Union of Tanganyika (AMNUT), existed both before and after independence in 1961, while the ruling political party (TANU and later CCM) emphasized that ethnic, race and religious identities had no role to play in a secular, socialist agenda of nation-building (Campbell 1999). In the same vein, during the re-establishment of a multiparty political system in 1992, legislation outlawed the registration of any political party which exhibited the features of, or associations with, any religious orientation.

Today, the majority of Muslims in Tanzania are “Africanized” and flexible about their religious habits in terms of everyday practices, such as praying, fasting and marrying across religions. In everyday life, there are no serious tensions between religions – nor between Shias and Sunnis, Tanzanian Muslims being predominantly Sunnis – with everyone “praying their own religion” alongside each other. In the public education system, religion has no significant influence: at the primary level, religious subjects are not taught officially in government schools, only in private faith-based schools; at the junior (ordinary) secondary level, religion sessions take the form of informal classes; while at the senior (advanced) level, “Islamic Knowledge”

and “Bible Knowledge”, with formal subject status, give students the opportunity to sit for a final national examination in these elective subjects. Thus, most Islamic education is concentrated in *madrassa* classes outside of formal education, and in parallel with the religious education delivered in the course of other Islamic religious activities, at social gatherings and within households.

### **Learning civic virtues through Islamic practice**

This study explores the ways in which members of rural Islamic communities in Tanzania draw connections between religious morals and civic virtues; analysis is based on data drawn from individual interviews (n=28) with religious teachers and community members, out of whom six were females, from three selected villages in Kondoa district, Dodoma region. Kondoa itself, the capital of the district, is positioned along the ancient caravan route; consequently, the majority of the population is traditionally of the Islamic faith. Kondoa is famous among the Muslims of the country for its high quality, Islamic education institutions. Islam is evident in the everyday life-rhythm, the way people dress, and the number of *madrassas*, or classrooms for Islamic education. Two of the selected villages were located relatively far from Kondoa town along a negotiable but not well-established road. The other village was nearer the town and easily reachable, mostly along a main road with a tarmac surface. Two Tanzanian researchers, a male and a female, one of whom was a Muslim himself (the first author of this chapter), conducted the interviews related to religion. The first author, and sometimes the second as well, also observed daily life in the villages and engaged in informal chats on the issue.

There were at least two mosques in each village: a BAKWATA-organized mosque,<sup>2</sup> largely attended by relatively older members of the communities, and an Answar-Sunni mosque, which mainly attracted young Muslims. Some members of the older generation described the younger generation as aggressive in its approach and interpretation of a number of religious practices. The majority of the interviewees, many of them religious teachers and leaders, were attached to the BAKWATA mosques. Community members regularly attend prayers in the mosques, especially the five prayers a day which are the second pillar of Islam. The research team visited the villages during the month of Ramadan in 2018 when the majority of the villagers were fasting and regularly attending prayers. Nevertheless, a small group of youths and somewhat older people seemed to skip or not attend prayers at all, something described by members of the older generation as representing a decline of religious morals and ethical values. For the purposes of this chapter, observations and interviews were analysed from the point of view of community members’ perceptions of how religiously-grounded morals connect with civic virtues to produce the characteristics of a “good citizen”.

***Islamic practices: formal and informal learning venues***

The villagers identified two basic ways of learning religious morals: first, education on Islamic principles was provided in organized classroom settings (*madrasa*) attended by both children and adults; second, considerable learning took place through participation in activities related to religion, ranging from attending prayers to contributing to community initiatives. *Madrasa* settings provided an opportunity for learning and teaching the Holy Qur’an, *hadith* and *tafsir*. In practice, learning involves reciting the Holy Qur’an and discussing the essence of respective *surah* and verses. As recitation takes place in Arabic, teaching starts with the basics in order to introduce an elementary understanding of the language among participants. *Hadith* and *tafsir* are generally about making sense of the Holy Qur’an through the contextualized meaning of the words of God (sacred *hadith*) and detailed deeds: that is, the teachings, statements and actions of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him (noble *hadith*); *tafsir* goes further to translate the teachings of the Holy Qur’an from Arabic to Swahili.

Educational activities conducted in *madrasa* settings, among both school-aged children and adults, play an important role in cultivating an Islamic worldview. Class sessions are scheduled so that they do not compromise other routine activities. For example, children in groups that include both genders attend *madrasa* from around 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. during the weekdays after their formal education, and for longer periods of time at weekends. Adult students, in groups separated by gender, attend *madrasa* sessions after completion of their duties in farming, small business management and domestic activities. While the adult men had the opportunity to extend their classes until around 8:00 p.m., adult women often left during *magharib*<sup>3</sup> as they had to attend to their families and household responsibilities.

While this difference can be seen as a practical matter, it also essentially relates to the gendered difference in the virtues to which people aspire. Religious morals as social norms assigned family care and household responsibilities to women (“good wives”) rather than their male counterparts (“good husbands”), socially constructed, gender-divided roles that have been seen to reflect inequality in regard to the public space provided (Hakura et al. 2016; Strachan 2015). In a similar vein, both male and female interviewees indicated that control over behaviour related to dressing and social interactions was stricter for girls than for boys. Nevertheless, for adult women, even with the time limits, *madrasa* sessions also served as public spaces, as platforms for sharing experiences of parental roles and other issues, as well as providing opportunities to participate in established income-generating groups. As Loimeier (2007) observes, in rural areas religious education provides important space for such interaction on shared issues, as other events, such as NGO seminars, are rare compared to urban settings.

In addition to *madrasa* settings, the inculcation of religious morals took place in many other daily activities and community gatherings. In the



interviews, religious leaders and teachers emphasized that the five pillars of Islam – *shahada* (declaration of faith), *salah* (everyday obligatory prayers), *zakat* (compulsory giving), *sawm* (fasting in the holy month of Ramadan) and *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) – provide a profound cognizance, helping believers to accept, commit and adhere to the faith. They further explained that these formed the basis for daily activities and that each of the five pillars complements the others, as every Muslim believer must practice all of them, except for *hajj*, which requires financial capacity. For example, the interviewees placed importance on regular attendance in mosques to offer the five obligatory prayers, fulfilling their compulsory giving, taking part in voluntary community activities and contributing in cash and in kind to any community request. Involvement in Islamic social gatherings – either in joys (Eid-al-Fitr, Eid al-Hajj and Mawlid al-Nabi)<sup>4</sup> or in sorrows (burial ceremonies) – were also important. In addition, related religious projects, such as the cleaning, construction and renovation of mosques and *madrasas*, included religious teaching to remind members of their primary purpose of existence from an Islamic point of view. Indeed, religious leaders stated that gatherings such as these also socialize community members by encouraging certain types of “good behaviour” while assisting to transform, revitalize, redirect or reshape the patterns of those which are not appreciated. Therefore, even informal gatherings contributed to the continuous construction of an ideal member of a Muslim community. For instance, one female villager summarized the significance of participation as follows:

Participation in religious activities makes me feel liberated. This is because religious morals can counteract some mental factors that lead to bad practices such as greed, hatred and delusion.

Thus, the basic idea that participation in religious activities provides spaces in which to connect with God also supports a holistic understanding of the distinction between good and bad in both spiritual and very practical conduct in any sphere of life.

### ***Identifying religiously grounded morals***

Examining community conceptualizations of religiously grounded morals raises a more general question concerning the ways in which Islam shapes the public sphere – from everyday life to the national level – in engagement with a secular state (Turam 2004). Halstead (2007, 287) suggests that in Islam morality largely falls into three categories: first, obligations and duties; second, values and manners related to good upbringing; third, personal qualities demonstrated in everyday life. While all these elements receive their specific meaning in Islam as an institutionalized religion, they can, nevertheless, be conceived of in terms of more general civic virtues, as part of the good conduct of a human being as a member of a community (Dewey 1934).

In our analysis, we focused on the kinds of morals and virtues to be exercised in everyday life which were identified by the interviewees.

Top of the list was helping and giving charity to the poor, helpless and disadvantaged people in the community. Interview narratives highlighted that religious teachings call for the provision of care and love for one another, especially the sick and deprived in the community. Villagers expounded further that, in addition to allowing recipients to meet their needs, helping and giving charity is deeply rewarding in the Islamic faith; in whatever form it may take, helping others is crucial, not only for the wellbeing of the needy, but also for the ultimate happiness of the entire community. As one interviewee summarized:

In our faith, it is encouraged to give charity because it shows how good-hearted one is. Therefore, one need not be super rich in order to give charity. Rather, the motive should be the need to help the needy.

Cooperating with, and showing kindness, to the rest of the community – both in joys and in sorrows – emerged as a second form of religiously grounded behaviour that distinguishes who may be identified as a religious person. Interviewees first noted that religious teachings require them to demonstrate generosity to everyone, thereby further highlighting that, since they live a collective kind of life, friendly relations are necessary. From the perspective of the villagers, the Islamic faith teaches them to practice kind and gentle behaviour and offer mutual support to other community members. As summarized by an interviewee:

In our daily life, problems find anyone, anytime. Therefore, one has to show humanity by comforting and supporting those in such situations. In fact, you never know, the same may happen to you.

Furthermore, community members associated religious people with characteristics such as forgiveness and keeping promises, thus underscoring that in the Islamic faith, human beings are not “perfect creatures”, and can make mistakes that negatively affect others. On this basis, villagers expressed the importance of forgiveness as a way of appreciating “human weaknesses”, while creating harmonious relations in the community. Meanwhile, they described a promise as moral duty that requires an individual to do whatever has been said would be done. As a moral duty villagers felt that a promise carries the kind of obligation that does not need legal enforcement but rather, is fulfilled due to considerations of right and wrong within the Islamic faith. On the importance of forgiveness, one religious leader noted:

In addition to bringing harmony, another benefit of forgiveness is the reward that one receives from God. Therefore, we encourage people to

forgive one another because if you do not forgive, the same will be reciprocated to you on Judgement Day.

In addition, interviewees pinpointed that tolerance was an important attribute among religious people, elucidating that Islamic teachings forbade them from being judgmental of others. They further stressed that the beauty of being tolerant to each other is that it produces a better community, characterized by love and care for everyone. Tolerance makes people remain humble and capable of controlling their emotions, thereby enabling them to accommodate the opinions and ideas of others. In this regard, it was claimed that tolerant people respect everyone, as demonstrated in the way that communal life brings people together from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. As one interviewee remarked, “Without tolerance, there is no harmony.”

Similarly, interviewees mentioned that religious people must demonstrate decency and truthfulness in their ideas and practices, elaborating further that religious teachings forbid qualities associated with deceit; on the contrary, religious morals always promote telling the truth. Villagers noted that it was considered good behaviour in their community to demonstrate a high standard of honesty, both in private and in public life, with one interviewee observing, “It is only by possessing a reputation for telling the truth that the rest of the community can respect you.” Decency and truthfulness are thus considered a way of showing respect for others, while expecting reciprocity in return.

### ***Drawing connections between religious morals and civic virtues***

When describing and identifying religious morals, interviewees also reflected on the connections between these morals and characteristics of good citizenship, or civic virtues. They understood civic virtues to refer to the abilities that enable individual community members effectively to undertake their responsibilities at the household level and in the community. Therefore, developing certain habits by participating in religious activities contributes to cultivating a “good citizen” with the behavioural patterns required for a well-functioning civic and political life. The link between religious morals and civic virtues appeared quite self-evident as the interviewees were largely of the opinion that Islamic religion was a way of life in their community. They further explained that Islamic religious morals offer mental and spiritual guidance that resonates with other spheres of human activities, including that of the state and politics. As a religious leader said:

Islamic religious values forbid behaviours related to theft, corruption, drug abuse, telling lies, and much more, while the government does the same in social and political life. Therefore, if you ask me, a good religious believer is also a good citizen.

Almost all the interviewees, especially religious leaders, stressed that religious morals remind people of the difference between good and evil in the context of Islam and, thus, in life in general. They further emphasized that religious morals do not only guide the good conduct of individuals, but also define the kind of society that will produce good members. However, interestingly, many interviewees did not only mention Islamic morals, but were of the opinion that religious morals in general establish solid grounds for good citizenship. As a female interviewee described:

In Islam there is love, in Christianity there is love. The Christians worship, the Muslims worship. You see, it is the same. I cannot say about other religions as I do not know then based on my experience (...) We depend on each other, we help each other, and thus, we bring development together.

Above all, villagers articulated that people with religious morals are motivated to engage in activities that promote the wellbeing of the community. Yet they also acknowledged that a combination of factors influence community wellbeing that includes social, cultural, environmental, economic and political conditions, in which all community members have the role to play. Villagers were of the opinion that religious morals hindered passiveness, and thus supported being active in joint initiatives in the community. Likewise, interviewees articulated a view according to which "good citizens" should know what the community expects from them and, thus, can act proactively. These articulated expectations were often gendered. For example, interviewees noted that religious morals make women perform their roles as mothers and family caretakers to the full, while requiring their husbands to ensure the social and economic wellbeing of the family and society at large. Villagers highlighted that people with religious morals habitually feel a sense of responsibility and demonstrate control over their deeds, adding that they greatly appreciate individuals who take the required action or complete tasks without any external pressure.

Furthermore, according to the interviewees' perspectives, a person with religious morals takes all the necessary initiatives to avoid corrupt practices, thereby making it clear that corruption in any form is unacceptable, both in religious teachings and in civic life. Indeed, villagers emphasized that corrupt practices destroy ethical values and justice, and in the end can destabilize society. The understanding of good civic habits was thereby linked to individual behaviour that upholds justice and avoids corrupt practice in the family, workplace, community and the nation at large. In this respect, interviewees expressed the need for both men and women to demonstrate a sense of uprightness in the face of corrupt practices in different roles embedded in the family and society. Villagers observed that, because of the harm that corruption can bring to a community, it is the moral and civic duty of every community member to fight it, directly or indirectly. As one interviewee stated:

Corruption affects us all. It is not fair to stay aside and keep lamenting on gross misconduct in political processes, especially when one has an opportunity to take part in changing the situation. Before God, everyone will have to account for what you have done to change the situation, given the little opportunity you had.

In addition, interviewees appreciated religious morals for their role in moulding community members to reject cruelty, violence and abuse. According to them, a good community member will always avoid practices that dehumanize fellow members or human beings at large. They further noted that it is morally wrong, according to their faith, for an individual or group of people to harm someone else's life or cause suffering to others. With this in mind, some people in the villages took part in the campaigns against killing people with albinism and preventing suffering caused by violence against women and children. In line with this, villagers were of the opinion that a good citizen always refrains from cultural practices that in any way encourage or lead to cruelty, violence or abuse against fellow community members. They emphasized that it is the responsibility of every citizen to ensure that all community members enjoy their basic freedoms and that the entire society, including women and children, lives in a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere.

Similarly, villagers were of the view that religious morals cultivate law-abiding behaviours among community members. In their understanding, each society has its own ways of doing things, often enunciated in the different laws, regulations and procedures that should be followed. Interviewees were of the opinion that it is morally unbecoming to disobey the laws of society. For them, discipline starts at the family level where children must obey their parents, wives respect their husbands and husbands reciprocate this respect by meeting their responsibilities, hence scaled up to the society level. In this respect, villagers noted that a good citizen obeys the established laws and regulations generated in cultural, religious and political arenas. Therefore, a good member of their community has to ensure that he/she fully understands the laws and follows them accordingly.

Moreover, interviewees pointed out that being hardworking and economically self-sufficient are additional qualities of "a good community member". In their opinion, religious morals teach people to work in order to earn a living by lawful means, thus holding the view that individuals with civic virtues are habitually people who work hard in order to earn their livings lawfully. This implies that civic virtues encourage economic independence at the individual level and thence the entire community, something illustrated by the income-generating activities established by women's religious groups, such as local saving schemes in order to help build the economic strength of their families. Indeed, it was a civic duty for a good citizen to be economically self-sufficient in order to provide for his/her family, and ultimately contribute to the economy of the community. This implies that religious morals provide behavioural

guidelines for organizing the production of goods and services and exchange, distribution, consumption, profit making and price setting. In this regard, one religious leader summarized as follows:

We encourage community members to engage in lawful economic activities. It is a good habit to be independent because our religion forbids the behaviour of begging, especially for energetic people who have no disability that inhibits them from engaging in productive activities. We also discourage people from orienting themselves around super profit making because it is not fair for one person to be super rich at the expense of others. We often tell our business persons to be considerate to their customers, most of whom are poor community members.

Villagers also noted that religious morals cultivate peace and order in their community because they reinforce people’s respect for the legitimate authorities, including religious, traditional and village governments. In this understanding, villagers considered respect for legitimate authority one of the “good behaviours” in their communities. In addition to maintaining social order, interviewees associated respect for the authorities with the need to ensure political harmony; they perceived the authorities to be promoters of common goals, such as equality and justice, meanwhile appreciating the role of religious leaders in strengthening unity and togetherness through their spiritual teachings. Village government leaders oftentimes gave directives regarding various civic rights and duties, such as those related to political elections and participation in other decision-making processes concerned with social and economic benefits. In this regard, a “good citizen” follows sets of rules recognized as legitimate and operational in the community. These rules were considered societal values and used to guide the behaviour and actions of community members, as one interviewee summarized:

A good person believes in God, and God wants his people to observe good deeds such as justice, forgiveness and to repel evil with what is better. If you ask, religious and political authorities emphasize the same things. It is misbehaviour if we do not respect them.

Religious morals seemed to motivate community members to work together not only towards the attainment of religious objectives, but also in addressing social goals. Villagers observed that good citizens voluntarily participate in collective activities including community projects that require the attention of all village members. They favoured the essence of community spirit that enhances the sense of togetherness in their religious faith and other social practices. In this respect, women gave examples of performing cleaning operations in the mosques and cooking at social gatherings such as burial and marriage ceremonies. For their part, men cited examples of participating in manual work such as the construction and renovation of mosques as well as

other community projects that required collective action. From the perspective of the community members, there was little separation between individuals, religion and society. Interviewees stressed how religious morals played a big role in preparing community members for interactive participation in religious and non-religious activities.

Islamic morals guide my way of life. They teach me how to talk to others, how to dress, love and care for my family, and generally in all my practices regarding how to relate to my fellow Muslims and non-Muslim community members.

This quote also illustrates that members of the Islamic community acknowledged the presence of other religious groups in their midst, and promoted mutual acceptance and tolerance among different religious positions.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter we have reflected on the kinds of citizenship habits potentially acquired by participation in Islamic practices in rural communities in Tanzania. Our analysis has concentrated on identifying the ways in which community members articulated connections between religious morals and civic virtues, especially focusing on the positive characteristics of a “good citizen” as understood by community members, based on their everyday experiences. Thus, in this chapter, we did not engage with a holistic analysis of connections between the Islamic faith and citizenship in general, neither were we able to capture differences and discrepancies within the Islamic community. Insights from community members in this chapter hold that “a good believer is a good citizen” because faith influences all spheres of daily life. The characteristics of being a good citizen articulated included being able to distinguish between good and evil, avoiding corrupt practices, being aware of specific rights and responsibilities, rejecting violence and abuse, being law-abiding and economically self-sufficient, cultivating peace and harmony and respecting the authorities.

These diverse civic virtues reflect certain kinds of citizenship habits acquired through participation in faith-related practices. Primarily, the citizenship habits identified are social, reflecting the argument that in Islam, “goodness is not an individual matter” (Halstead 2007, 289). It was clear that accounts of civic virtues were related to the kinds of “good people” and “good community” desired. An individual is supposed to be a responsible and functional member of his/her community: self-reliant but not dismissive of other members. The idea of a good citizen who contributes but does not benefit from others was related to the need to be economically self-reliant and hardworking, to participate voluntarily in community initiatives, help those in less privileged positions and be against violence and abuse. In this sense, Islamic morals reflected a religious attitude connected to hope and the

struggle for something better (Dewey 1934) and, thus, provided criteria for judging good behaviour in the present life as well (Rogers 2009). Additionally, as is central to any religious thinking, being a good citizen was not only about the present life, but also about ensuring a good life after death, in the afterlife, and conducting good behaviour in God's sight.

The good citizen's characteristics of cultivating peace, being law-abiding and respecting all kinds of authority also reflected "harmony-seeking" citizenship habits. The importance of harmony and peace was shown not only in accounts related to the Islamic community, but in reference to the need to live in peace with community members of different religions and a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Harmonious citizenship habits included respect for the authorities, thus partly contrasting with the idea that the active citizen is one who engages with the authorities to claim his/her rights (Gaventa & Barrett 2012). During our research, we did not receive any accounts of contestations with, for instance, corrupt authorities; however, the narratives indicated that, instead of open confrontation, people gradually cease to respect authorities they consider are misbehaving. Moreover, the notion of harmony tended to maintain rather than contest existing explicit status differences: for instance, in regard to the relationship between ordinary believers and religious leaders, teachers and students, and between women and men.

While many of the characteristics of a good citizen were associated with Islamic morals, they also reflect Tanzania's historical and political contexts. First, the importance of community participation in rural settings speaks not only to the Islamic faith but also to its prevalence in local governance since the early drive for independence (see Nguyahambi et al., this volume). Second, the ways in which community members spoke about the desirability of harmony between members of different religions echoed the ideology of the secular state, dating back to Nyerere's (1968) times. The interviewees explicitly cited common slogans such as "the state does not have a religion; individuals have", or, "you should not mix religion with politics". For the members of the Islamic community in Tanzania more broadly, good citizenship is not about promoting their religion in the public arena but, rather, being a good member of a pluralistic nation in which faith-related practices provide significant spaces of belonging and of identity.

Such community-centred and harmony-seeking citizenship habits could potentially function as a fruitful starting point for any civil society initiative with the goal of strengthening citizenship. This would, however, require acknowledgement of the intertwined nature of religion and civic life, and the realization that undertaking activities that potentially jeopardize harmony or diminish the power of the traditional authorities might be almost unimaginable for ordinary community members, not only because of the need to maintain the good life in the present, but also to ensure a good afterlife. Thus, the implication for the concept of civil society is that ordering and organization on religious principles constitutes a significant part of public and civic life in general, from particular perspectives which are not always conversant with the liberal view of the citizen.



## Notes

- 1 The 1967 census was the last one to categorize people based on spiritual beliefs (Heilman & Kaiser 2002).
- 2 BAKWATA is an abbreviation for Baraza Kuu la Waislamu Tanzania literally meaning the National Muslim Council of Tanzania. It was founded and registered in 1968 and is a well-established, faith-based Islamic organization, with branch offices all over the country and networks from national to the grassroots levels. As the official Muslim council, recognized by the government, BAKWATA is the target of resistance from relatively aggressive Muslims, often referred to as Answar Sunni, many of whom are young. The misunderstanding between the two because Answar Sunni considers BAKWATA an organization that the government uses to control Muslims instead of dealing with their development concerns.
- 3 *Magharib* denotes both prayer time and a prayer itself, which is conducted just after sunset. It is the fourth of five obligatory daily prayers performed by practicing Muslims. In Kondo and large part of Tanzania, *magharib* occurs around 6:00–7:00 pm East African time.
- 4 Eid-al-Fitr, Eid al-Hajj and Mawlid al-Nabi are Muslim religious festivals recognized officially as public holidays in Tanzania. Eid-al-Fitr takes place on the first and only day in the month of Shawwal during which Muslims are not permitted to fast. The holiday celebrates the conclusion of the 29 or 30 days of dawn-to-sunset fasting during the entire month of Ramadan. Eid al-Hajj takes place on the day of Arafah, the second day of pilgrimage rituals, which marks the conclusion of the event of the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca. Mawlid al-Nabi is celebrated to mark the birth of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in around 570 AD.

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