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Critical Analysis of the Influence of Islam on Igembe People in Meru County, Kenya

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Abstract:

This study was on the influence of Islam on Igembe people of Meru County. The research was driven by the slow and evolving importance of Somali Muslims in the activities of miraa business in the Igembe. The study was guided by objective: the influence of Islam on Igembe people of Meru County. The study employed Islamization theory by Bungler (1972) and immigration theory by Lee (1966). The combination of the two theories was the best to explain the influence of Islam on Igembe people. Descriptive research design was used and data collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. Stratified sampling technique was used to draw a sample size of 383 participants from the target population of 126,000 miraa farmers, miraa vendors and miraa traders' association officials. Qualitative datasets were analysed by NVIVO and quantitative was analysed using SPSS version 22.0. The study findings revealed that Islam has pervaded Meru region and particularly spread among the Igembe people with significant impact being noticed as a result of their presence and influence. The study established that trade has played a significant role on the presence of Islam in Igembe region. The study established that there is both positive and negative influences on Igembe people by the presence of Islam religion. The study recommends guidelines to eradicate negative influence as Islam religion interacts with the life, culture, and traditions of Igembe people.

Keywords: Miraa/khat, miraa trade, Islamization, Igembe people

1. Introduction and Background to the Study

The Igembe are the Bantu speaking people and are among the nine sub-ethnic groups that form the old Meru, living in the North Eastern part of the slopes of Mt. Kenya with land known for its fertile soils, well-watered agricultural areas to low-lying semi-arid lands. Igembe, with three sub counties lies between latitude 0° and 0.17° N. and between longitude 37.8° and 38.3° E (Njeri, 1985). According to Fadiman, generally the people of Meru originated from Mbwa, an island community which sat on an edge of huge water joining a great sea. Nyaga (1997) found out that this history has made several people to believe that the Meru may be the descendants of one of the lost tribes of Israel.

Islam is the second largest religion in the world currently after Christianity with an estimated 1.6 billion followers, which, by proportion constitutes over 23% of the world population. In fact, other than Christianity, Islam is the most studied religion in the world since its inception in the year 622 CE in the 7th Century (Armstrong, 2007). Roff (2014) asserts that Islamic religion was spread by Muhammad and his followers through the Islamic teachings with the initial spread being through military expeditions, called futuhat or literally openings. After the death of Mohammed, Islam spread very fast through the formation of several caliphates. Otayek & Soares, (2007). The Sufi missionaries were therefore able to spread Islam religion to the Africans with ease unlike the other religious groups which often found resentment because of their stringent rules which were often contradicting the traditional beliefs of the communities. Bernard (1988) points out that the trade between the Somali Muslim community and the Meru people was commonly livestock, agricultural farm products and miraa. Miraa, a psychoactive plant started featuring as a prominent item of trade in the 1960's when its commercialisation by Somali tycoons led to miraa exports to nearby Somalia. Miraa business interest of the Somali Muslims in Meru contributed greatly to their settlement in the region.

Miraa is an evergreen shrub that contains cathinone and other stimulant chemical derived from the wild plant *Catha edulis* that grows in Igembe in Kenya, some parts of Eastern Africa and the South-Western Arabian Peninsula. It is a plant that holds a special socio-economic value to the Igembe people and whether owning small or large scale of its farming is of vital importance to the social, cultural and economic value to the community. According to Mailutha and Kikechi (2014), nowadays however with the commercialisation of miraa, multiple players joined the market and became part owners by

virtue of leasing of miraa plantations and those who come into ownership through birth right. Another class of owners is the miraa seedlings growers who specialize in preparing seedlings for sale to the farmers. The role of trade in the spread of Islam was explored to help in understanding how it contributed to the spread of Islam and their influence on the Igembe people.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Trade especially miraa trade has attracted many merchants and especially Muslims of Somali origin to do business with the Igembe people. The business has created an encounter between the Muslims and Igembe people bringing with it the religio-cultural influences among the Igembe people though this had not yet been established through a structured study hence this research. It has been observed that gradually, there is a takeover of the miraa trade by Islamic actors that has led to loss of income to the indigenous miraa producers. This is happening through repatriation of incomes and profits to places other than Igembe by the investors. This has a direct bearing on unemployment for Igembe people thus leading to an increase in poverty from where many social ills can be traced. Further, the Muslims presence has enticed the Igembe people changing their lifestyle including dressing code, religion, intermarriages, leasing of their land to the Somali's, children dropping out of school, and increased conflicts between Igembe people and Somali adherent among others. This research therefore focused on the influence of Islam on Igembe people, an area that had not been studied.

1.2. Objective of the Study

The objective of this study was to critically analyse the Influence of Islam on Igembe people in Meru County

2. Literature Review

According to Miller (1995), Islam is an Arabic word denoting peace, surrender and submission to Almighty God (Allah). That is surrendering of one's will to Allah, which brings the attainment of peace. Hence, a Muslim is one who submits and follows the laws of Islam. In relation to secular history, Islam's origin can be traced back to Saudi Arabia in the 7th Century making it one of the world's great youngest religions. The religious situation around the beginning of the 7th Century CE has commonly been used to help account for the origins of Islam that is equated with Muhammad's missionary career. According to Wang (2016), Muhammad who would become the Prophet of one of the world's great religions Islam, was born in the year 570 CE, in Mecca on the Arabian Peninsula to a family in Quraish clan, a city in North Western Arabia, Hijaz region. In the year 590CE, Muhammad in his twenties married Khadijah a merchant widow of whom he served by trading caravans to the north. Nawwab, Speers, and Hoyer (2006) point out that when Muhammad reached his forties; he began to withdraw from the society and went to Mt. Hira outside Mecca to meditate. It is in this place that Muhammad heard Angel Gabriel voice that ordered him to pronounce "In the name of thy Lord who created man from a clot of blood" (Qur'an, 96:1-2). Muhammad pleaded his incapacity thrice but finally recited. Maller & Kenedi (2002) emphasizes that Islam's most important teaching and doctrine is acknowledging the Oneness of Allah, being the cornerstone of the faith and the basis for salvation. He further argues that all Muslim teachings and doctrines are derived from Qur'an. A central teaching is that there is only one God (5:73; 112:1-4) called Allah (5:73) who sees all things (40:20) and He is omnipresent (2:115; 7:7).

Roff (2014) noted that the spread of Islam originally took place from Arabian Peninsula all the way to the modern Spain in the west and northern India in the east. The spread took place in many ways through these regions. At times it was transferred through military conquest (futuhat), the formation of caliphates, pilgrimage and the work of missionaries. Other times it was carried in great caravans or sea vessels traversing vast trade networks on land and sea. Trade has been a significant medium for spreading Islam since the religion started in the 7th Century. The spread of Islam to Africa is particularly attributed to trade and influx of Sufi Missionaries who integrated with local communities consequently converting them into Muslims. This was well blended with the political situation in Africa where the conversion of the rulers was almost a guarantee that the community would also convert (Otayek & Soares, 2007). Since independence, Islamization has continued in Kenya because of the links of the Somali community especially business links as people of Somali ethnicity are known business affluent. The Somali community predominantly belongs to Shuni sect of Islam which has strong roots in Arab and Yemen (Azumah, 2014). Similarly, in Maua town in Kenya, which is a core town for this study, there are multiple economic activities with immense influence of Muslim traders who their effect is not only obvious in miraa trade but also felt politically and socially.

The spread of Islam to Meru can be attributed to several factors. First and foremost, the proximity between Meru and other communities like the Boran and Somali who have significant Muslim presence. This has greatly influenced the social interaction between these communities. The extensive social links especially due to inter-marriages between these communities have led to a diffusion of social customs from various communities (Mwakimako, 2007). This study examined in detail the level of trade links between the Igembe community and the Somali Muslim community. According to Mwakimako (2007), there is no doubt that miraa business is the most significant reason for the majority of Somalis in the mainland to be found in the Igembe region.

Miraa usage evolved from a social and ceremonial to commercial role therefore miraa has become a regular item of exchange between the Muslims and the Igembe people through the Isiolo route where goats and hides were exchanged for miraa. As Aden et al. (2006) point out, miraa trade extended from Maua to Isiolo town, which functioned as access point to Northern Kenya towns such as Garissa, Moyale, Mandera, and Wajir as demand for miraa was boosted by earnings from the goats' trade. This led Isiolo to become the major destination for Igembe miraa and became significant for

Northern Kenya's market. Traders from Isiolo, Garissa, Moyale and Mandera were most Somali who were also Muslims. Thus, they created a clear link between miraa traders and Muslim traders.

Miraa in Igembe region is a commodity of much significance and it is part of the social-economic fabric of the people in this region. As a result of the Muslims settling in Igembe, there has been a slow but gradually increasing presence of the Islamic and Somali way of life among the indigenous Igembe people. This can be attributed to the increasing numbers of Muslims from conversions and others immigrating to the area. According to Aden et al. (2006), the key indicator here is the increased number of Mosques in regions previously considered predominantly Christians. Such Mosques are erected at Maua, Kiengu, Karama, Kangeta and Muthara. Similarly, there are many business premises set up, and their owners are Islamic adherents, likewise in the local primary and secondary schools, there has been a surge in the numbers of Muslim school children enrolled. All of this is evidential that a process is in progress that is gradually Islamizing the people of Igembe.

Lewis (1996) observes that once a community has come into contact with Islam either through trade or migration, the diffusion of Islam or lack of it will be contingent upon other attendant variables associated with population pressure, tribal expansion, prevailing patterns of economic interests and tribal ethos. Lewis further argues that it is, therefore, necessary to look at the social-economic changes that affect conversion to Islam, for Islam provides for both the individual and the group a form of identity where social changes are taking place. Burger (1972) subscribes to the same view in his study of the Pokomo in which he identifies three variables in the process of Islamization; the traditional culture of those who convert to Islam, the culture of the group who introduce it and the precise nature of the contact. Therefore, in the case of Pokomo, there is a clear cultural impact of Islamization.

Bat Ye'or (1996) in her publication has pointed out that the Islamic religious obligation to fight the Christians in India required a permanent state of war, which justified the organisation of seasonal raids. They sometimes consisted of short pillaging incursions to collect booty, steal livestock and enslave the villagers. Other campaigns led by the caliph in person called for considerable military preparations. Provinces were ravaged and burned down, towns pillaged and destroyed, inhabitants massacred or deported. From the beginning of the conquests in Syria and Spain and other conquered provinces, the Christians had ceded to the Muslims half of their Churches which became Mosques as a result of the Muslim influx. In the Maghreb where endemic anarchy prevailed, sources mention the massacre in 1033 C.E of five to six thousand Jews in Fez. The Almohad persecutions in the Maghreb and Muslim Spain (1130-1212) eliminated Christianity there.

Bat Ye'or (1996) provides an eye witness that, "I had witnessed the destruction in a few short years of a vibrant Jewish community living in Egypt for over 2,600 years and which had existed from the time of Jeremiah the Prophet. I saw the disintegration and flight of families, dispossessed and humiliated the destruction of their synagogues, the bombing of the Jewish quarters and the terrorising of a peaceful population. I have personally experienced the hardships of exile, the misery of statelessness and I wanted to get to the cause of all this". Still in India, Islam made Hindu societies exclusive and caste-ridden. Sati was made stricter and the Hindu woman was veiled. The seclusion of women from men, unknown in early days of Hindu rule, was introduced in the Hindu society. Women lived in seclusion in the sphere of their homes. The evil of infanticide by Indians was an overreaction against the invading Muslim practices. The Hindu adopted the practice of infanticide (killing girls at the time of their birth) to escape the risk of their virgins losing chastity at the hands of the Muslims. Some Hindu chiefs and well-to-do persons were compelled by the Muslim rulers and nobles to give their daughters in marriage. To escape all these ignominies, they started practising infanticide (Mason, 2014).

Child marriage also became more popular probably as a result of the Muslim rule in India. The Muslim rulers and other high officials quite often kidnapped beautiful Hindu girls. Under the circumstances, the Hindu parents thought it desirable to take to child marriage. It was emphasised that the proper age for the marriage of girls was seven and that marriage after the age of eleven or twelve was sinful. The cruel practice of Sat was started during Muslim rule. One of the negative consequences of Islam religion was creation of slavery into Hindu societies, which was common in Muslim traditions. However, Islam impacted positively on the lives of Hindus as well, especially in respect of legal system, pride in one's religious beliefs, human dignity and equality. Foods eaten by Muslims like Biryani, Kabab and Palan were adopted by the Hindus. Indian music and musical instruments were equally influenced by Islam. Indian musical instruments were modified, and new instruments were introduced. A fusion of Hindu and Iranian systems of music led interactions with Muslim singers and this led to evolution of new modes of architecture. New art and crafts emerged in the country such as enamellings, metals, jewels and papermaking. Workshops were set up for silver and gold articles and embroidery. Linguistic synthesis rose as a result of Hindu-Muslim contact, Hindi language was influenced by Muslim contact and Urdu became the people's language. Hindu culture was tinted with the Islamic culture as a result of their closeness and long association. According to Yusuf (2017), before the establishment of the colonial rule, Islam had remained confined to the coastal strip of Kenya and a few areas in the interior, such as the North-eastern and Western regions where caravan traders had penetrated through Tanganyika trade routes early in the nineteenth Century. Commercial activities intensified as trade picked up. European and Asian businesses succeeded in attracting secondary industries and as commerce expanded, new job opportunities were created. Good wages attracted migrant labourers from as far as Kamba, Kikuyu and Luhya communities. Scores of Kamba, Kikuyu, Luo, and Luhya found their way to the coastal towns such as Mombasa and Malindi, to the numerous plantations and some even crossed the sea to Pemba and Zanzibar. Many of these were eventually converted to Islam, and when they returned home, they propagated the religion among their people.

According to Sperling (2013), the rapid process of Islamization of the upcountry people at the coast became so alarming to the colonial administrators. This made the Provincial Commissioner, C.W. Hobley to issue a circular to all his District Commissioners cautioning them that, "It must be realized that it is not in our interest or the interest of the people of the Mohammedan faith that the sharia should spread among the aboriginal tribes. In fact, one may go as far as to say

that the policy of the administration should be antipathetic towards Mohammedan propaganda and proselytization". It was in these villages that Muslims established contacts with migrant labourers some of whom eventually converted to Islam. Muslim traders were also important in the spread of Islam into Western Kenya. Many of these men initially settled at Mumias in search of ivory and other items of trade. They brought with them commodities such as cloth, wire, beads, cloves and firearms. Sharif Abdallah bin Mansab was very active in spreading Islam throughout the Rift Valley and was appointed Kadhi of the province.

Corcoran (2015) cites that Kenya is one of the countries grappling with violent radicalisation. Corcoran (2015) further points out the need to change strategies to contain religious violence in Muslim dominated areas. This violence has been fed by older disputes about the treatment of ethnic Somalis and Kenyan Muslims or the way in which religious rights between Christians and Muslims should be enshrined in the Kenyan constitution have increasingly given way to a context in which Kenyan security forces and extremist groups like al-Shabaab are operating with much more serious consequences thus raising the spectre of religious violence in the country. In conclusion and having examined extensively the literature of other scholars, organizations, government reports and research carried out for academic purposes, the researcher noted that most of the studies have been directed towards the influence of miraa on education of school going children, socio-economic, socio-cultural and health effects on human physiology. Studies on the influence of miraa on delinquency, crime and insecurity have similarly been carried out. This is evidenced by the works of Kithao (2015) who examined the influences of miraa business on pupils' performance in Kenya certificate of primary education in Igembe east division, Meru County. Karimi (2013) did a study on the effects of miraa trade on regularity of attendance of primary schools in Meru County. The study findings discovered that harvesting, selling and consumption of miraa negatively influenced regular school attendance, even though earnings from miraa did have both positive and negative effects on regular school attendance as per her research objectives and findings. Based on these findings, it is evident that a critical analysis of the Influence of Islam on Igembe people in Meru County has not been researched thus the desire to explore this dynamic underlying effect of Islam on Igembe people.

2.1. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The study used Islamization theory by Burger (1972) which provided insights into the pre-Islamic religion, how Islamization takes place, the agents of Islamization, the form of Islam introduced and the contact situation between Muslims and non-Muslims. This theory helped to understand how Igembe people came into contact with Islam hence the influences on their life, culture and traditions. Lee's (1966) immigration theory further assisted the Burger's (1972) Islamization theory to explain the reasons and factors for settlement of Muslims in new unwelcome environments such as Igembe of Meru.

3. Research Methodology

The study used descriptive survey design and stratified sampling technique. Descriptive research design was used and data collected using questionnaires. Stratified sampling technique was used to draw a sample size of 383 participants from the target population of 126,000 miraa farmers, miraa vendors and miraa traders' association officials. This yielded rich data helpful in finding out how the involvement of Muslims in miraa trade perpetuates the spread of Islam and the influence thereof to the people of Igembe. Qualitative datasets were analysed by NVIVO and quantitative was analysed using SPSS version 22.0.

3.1. Research Findings

The study sought to establish the extent of the spread of Islam among the Igembe people of Meru County. The perspectives presented here are the miraa farmers, miraa vendors and miraa traders' association officials. The respondents were asked to indicate for how long they had been seeing Muslims in the region. Their response is shown in table 1 below.

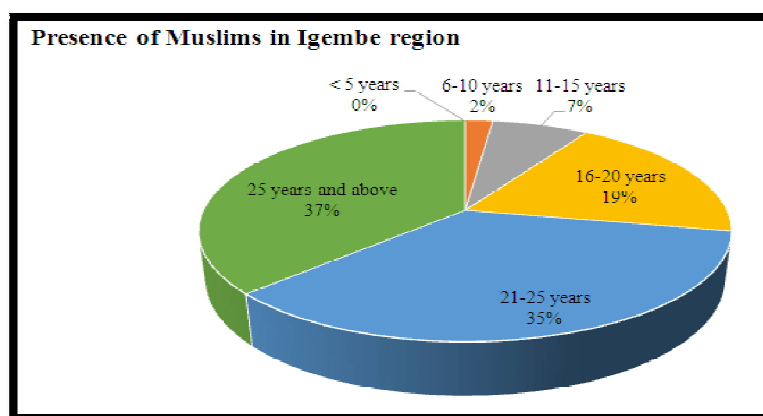


Table 1: Number of Years the Respondents Started Seeing Muslims

Majority of the respondents 37% (104) started seeing Muslims in the region for over 25 years. This is followed by 35% (97) of the respondents who started seeing Muslims in the area for between 21-25 years, 19% (52) respondents for

16-20 years, 7% (19) respondents for 11-15 years, 2% (5) respondents for 6-10 years, and 0% (0) respondents for less than 5 years. The study findings showed that Muslims have been in Igembe for more than 25 years. This confirms the study by Fadiman (1979) that the presence of Muslims in Meru was as early as 1908.

The researcher sought to establish from the respondents whether they had Mosques in their localities and the responses are indicated in table 2 below.

Availability of Mosque	Frequency (n=277)	Percent (%)
Yes	168	61
No	109	39

Table 2: Availability of Mosques in the Area

Majority of the respondents interviewed 61% (168) stated that they had Mosques in their areas while 39% (109) said they did not have Mosques in their areas. The presence of Mosques portrays presence of Muslims and a sign of acceptance of Islam religion in Igembe. This is supported by Bekdil (2016) who agrees that one of the ways a country can see the rise of Islamist authoritarianism is the rise of the number of Mosques, pupils' enrolment in schools and opening of Muslim trade centres coupled with religion-cultural changes. For instance, Muslim presence has been experienced in coastal towns, Eastleigh in Nairobi, and Maua in Igembe among others. Wrong (2005) affirms that when Muslims move to a new place, they set up businesses, buy properties, built Mosques, venture and become affluent traders.

The study sought to explore if there are Muslims of Somali ethnicity who had bought land and settled in the area and for how long. Table 3 analysis the responses.

Years bought land and settled	Frequency	Percent (100%)
< 1 year ago	0	0
2 -5 years ago	2	1
6 -8 years ago	18	6
9-10 years ago	33	12
10 years ago<	224	81
Total	277	100.0

Table 3: Years Muslims of the Ethnic Somali Had Bought Land and Settled in the Area

Majority of the respondents 81% (224) stated that Muslims of the ethnic Somali had bought land and settled in the area for 10 years and above. This was followed by 12% (33) respondents who stated that Muslims of the ethnic Somali had bought land and settled in the area for between 9 and 10 years, 6% (18) respondents stated that Muslims of the ethnic Somali had bought land and settled in the area for between 6 and 8 years ago while 1% (2) respondents stated that Muslims of the ethnic Somali had bought land and settled in the area for between 2 and 5 years ago.

The study sought to establish whether there were Muslims of ethnic Somali who had leased miraa farms in the area. The findings are presented in table 4.

Leased Miraa Farm	Frequency (n=277)	Percent (%)
Yes	198	71
No	79	29

Table 4: Muslim of the Somali Ethnic Who Had Leased Miraa Farm in the Area

Most of the respondents 71% (198) interviewed stated that Muslims of the ethnic Somali had leased miraa farm in the area. This is confirming with Mailutha & Kikechi (2014) that commercialization of miraa brought in many players who gradually started leasing miraa plantations and farms.

The study sought to find out whether there were Igembe people who had been converted to Muslims. The findings are presented in table 5.

Converted to Islam	Frequency (n=277)	Percent (%)
Yes	272	98
No	5	2

Table 5: Igembe People Who Had Been Converted to Islam

Majority of the respondents 98% (272) agreed that there were Igembe people who had been converted to Islam. The findings were in agreement with the study by Nkirote (1995) that marriages between Muslim men and Igembe women made it automatic for the married woman to convert to Islam. The study sought to establish methods through which Igembe people were converted to Islam. The findings are presented in table 6.

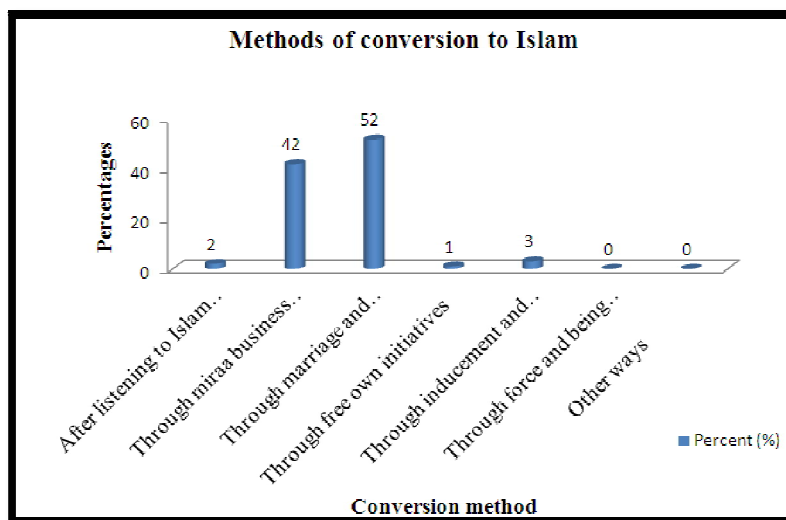


Table 6: Ways Igembe People Were Converted to Islam

Most of the respondents interviewed 52% (145) cited that Igembe people were converted to Islam through marriage and assimilation. This was followed by 42% (115) respondents who stated that Igembe people were converted to Islam through miraa business contacts. Marriages between Muslims and host communities led to an easy conversion to Islam (Kubai, 1995). The findings also confirm a statement made by NCST (1996) that people from Igembe and Somali have been reliant on the miraa business to an extent of Somali settlers in the area agitating for political inclusion, change of lifestyles, and increased intermarriages between the two communities.

The study sought to establish ways in which Muslims used to Islamize Igembe people. The responses are presented in table 7 below.

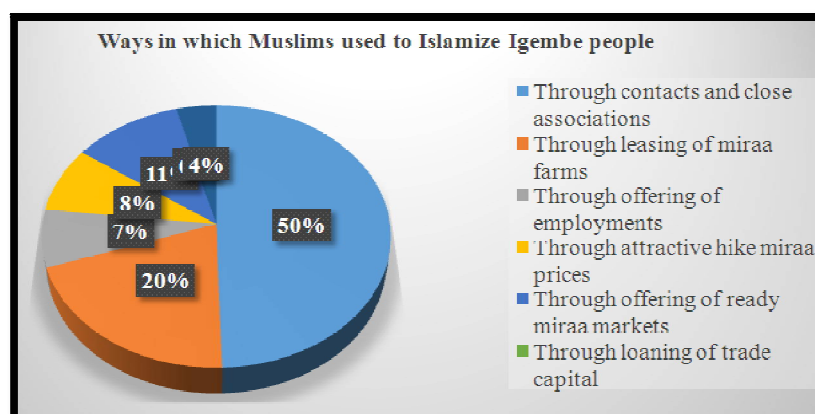


Table 7: Ways in Which Muslims Used to Islamize Igembe People

Majority of the respondents 49% (135) respondents stated that Muslims used miraa trade to Islamise Igembe through contacts and close associations. This was followed by 20% (55) respondents who cited that Muslims used trade links to Islamise Igembe people through leasing of miraa farms. During the key informant interviews, one of the respondents stated that:

"The constant contact between the Somali and Igembe people has influenced some to join Islam. Others have intermarried and therefore changing their moral status."

During the key informant interviews one of the respondents stated that the presence of Islam had contributed positively into the lives of Igembe people:

"They have brought business for our people. Offered employment."

However, the respondent cited that Islam presence has contributed negatively to the lives of Igembe people:

"Boys drop out of schools, early marriages, insecurity, a lot of conflicts, and unlawful land leasing."

The study sought to establish whether Islam presence had any influence on the Igembe people. The study findings are presented in table 8 below.

Whether Islam Had Any Influence to the People of Igembe	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	261	94
No	7	3
Don't know	9	3
Total	277	100

Table 8: Whether Islam Had Any Influence on the People of Igembe

Majority of the study respondents 94% (261) stated that Islam influenced the people of Igembe in some ways. During the interview, one of the respondents stated that:

"Many young people have embraced Islam because of miraa trade." While another respondent said that presence of Muslims in Igembe has brought both positive and negative influences to the community. The women have adopted to the new dressing of "buihui" and men are donned in "Kanzu", eating habits have changed, among others.

The study sought to establish whether the respondents had experienced some violence, conflict, crime and poor pay among others because of Islam presence and involvement in trade. The findings are presented in table 9.

Whether Experienced Violence, Conflict, Crime, and Poor Pay	Frequency	Percent (%)
Violence	99	36
Conflict	56	20
Crime	50	18
Poor pay	40	14
None	7	3
Others	25	9
Total	277	100.0

Table 9: Whether Experienced Violence, Conflict, Crime, Poor Pay

Majority of the study respondents 36% (99) stated that they had experienced some form of violence from Muslim adherent because of miraa trade. This was followed by 20% (56) respondents who experienced some conflicts. During the interview one of the respondents stated: "Miraa business has led to unlawful leasing of land. A family member can wake up and lease land without seeking the consent of all the family members. The situation has resulted in conflicts."

Another respondent stated that:

"There have been clashes between Merus and Somalis because Somalis tend to monopolise miraa trade."

Also, another respondent said that, "For reasons unknown, miraa business is done in a violent environment that at times result in fatal incidents. Many court cases are emanating from miraa businesses, either from the farms, vending, transporting, packing etc. I propose that civic education be carried by concerned bodies to bring sanity in this locomotive business that is the livelihood to the Igembe people and beyond."

Miraa business as found, is generally done in a hurry and is highly competitive as it takes place in a liberalized market and is extremely perishable. Some of these conflicts become fatal and lead to endless court cases. This environment becomes a thriving area of poverty, crime, animosity, and business rivalry. This seems similar to the initial trade activities that immensely relied on sword and conquest which was associated to economic activities at the coast of East Africa (Karabell, 2007). Nevertheless, there are places where business is done in serene atmosphere. According to Laguerta (2012), Islam's cohesiveness helped in establishing their religion in new settlements hence facilitating trade.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The study established that Islam presence has contributed both positively and negatively to the lives of Igembe people. Positive influence was evidenced in business partnerships, offering ready markets for their produce and other chain markets. Negative influence was apparent in cases of conflicts, violence, child labour, unethical business practices, and illegal leasing of land without following due process of law. Land cruisers are mainly owned and driven by Somalis, but when a Meru buys one, he/she must give it to a Somali to manage it, otherwise it risks getting stolen once it gets to Garissa or disappears into Somali. Due to ignorance of Igembe people, leasing of land has become the order of the day. The extended lease agreement is not formalised or legalised, and Somalis do not count rainy seasons (March to May) to avoid bearing the losses as miraa flood the market during this period. The cycle recurs and thus causing some land leases to extend beyond 10 years. Somalis control miraa prices and often return unsold miraa to farmers. The farmers are forced to replace miraa that has been spoilt for free.

5. Recommendation

The study recommends guidelines to eradicate negative influence as Islam religion interacts with the life, culture, and traditions of Igembe people.

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